



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

# Seasons

Keabetswe Thapelo Ene  
Botswana

# Beautiful Hearts

Njenga Wanjiru  
Kenya

# MEMORY

VOL. 5 NO. 1



JANUARY, 2021

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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

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# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THEME: REVOLUTION

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her March 2021 Edition in the following categories:

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

The Submission window is open from January 1st to January 14th.

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

There is always a sense of hope, an untold longing for a fresh start, with any new stage in life and with new seasons. It's January, 2021, and we are looking at Memory. We are calling to remembrance what the previous year has meant for us in our little corners of the universe. We recollect individually and collectively.

One of my editors, Temani, put it succinctly that 2020 was a roller-coaster of memories. We were forced to adjust, in small and big ways, to our economies being badly hit, and to lockdowns and the resulting increase in gender-based violence. We were also forced to forge new paths for the creative spirit to thrive in a global pandemic.

Late African American novelist and essayist, James Baldwin, put it this way: "After departure, only invisible things are left, perhaps the life of the world is held together by invisible chains of memory and loss and love. So many things, so many people, depart! And we can only repossess them in our minds".

As we are mindful of the roller-coaster, let's also celebrate the fresh start and hope that is 2021. Our theme for the year for WSA Magazine is 'Revolution' - in all its facets. We invite you to let your voice be heard on this platform; submit your work, read and share this magazine in your networks, and give us your honest feedback because that is the only way we can grow.

Most of all, enjoy this roller-coaster of a read!

Namwanja,  
Chief Editor

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# Forgetting Jacob

Omoghene Ewoma  
Nigeria

Rebecca watched rain droplets patter on her window. The crash of lightning made her cat jump. The poor thing ran towards her and rested its furry body at her feet. Her thoughts went to Jacob, the love of her life. Today made it six years since he decided to leave Nigeria for the United States of America.

The rainy day reminded her of the day he left. Despite the god-awful traffic and the flood that reached her knees, Rebecca made it to the airport just to see her lover one last time. She ran towards him, her clothes dripped, and her shoes squeaked. Jacob covered his face with his hands to hide his grin.

"I'm here! I told you that I would make it."

"You didn't have to do this, Rebecca. We said our goodbyes yesterday at dinner."

"I know, I just had to see you one last time."

"You'll get sick. I can feel it."

Jacob felt her cold forehead. He was a doctor, her very own doctor. He catered for her like she was his favourite child, paying particular attention to all her medical needs. She dreamt of the day that she would marry him and make him hers forever.

The day Jacob left the country was one of the worst days of her life. She was inconsolable for weeks. She made all efforts to cling on to the memories of their time together; every detail was super important to her.

Rebecca yearned for his attention with every passing hour; she rehearsed the epistles he sent her every week, holding on to whatever

they had left. Her birthdays turned into periods of mourning. Even though Jacob compensated his absence with money, Rebecca wanted more.

The thought of Jacob was forever imprinted in her memory. Although he lived miles away, Rebecca incorporated him into her life. She let him in on every detail of her life, from the high moments to the low ones. Every night she knelt by her bed and bowed her head in prayer, begging her Creator to make his career successful.

Rebecca anticipated his return more than she expected the Second Coming. She brought it up in every conversation. His excuses became insurmountable by the day. Two years had passed, and Jacob had no plans to visit his lover.



Rebecca became suspicious. Jacob had begun to forget about her.

"Time is precious. You can't wait for Jacob forever," her mother often told her. Rebecca's friends had the same opinion too. "You are getting old. Dump Jacob before it's too late," they always teased.

After three years, she started seeing other people. He permitted her to have fun but keep herself for him alone. All her relationships failed; they couldn't be with someone who had her heart with another man. Her ties with Jacob made them feel insufficient and insecure like she would never love anyone else. Jacob quickly went from the best thing she ever had to an embargo she carried about.

After four years, she received a phone call on a sunny day in April. Her birthday was two days away. She held the phone to her ear elatedly, waiting to hear his voice that sounded like that of a million angels.

"Rebecca, I have to get married next week."

"This is a funny way to propose Jacob. You know my answer already. Shall I tell my people to make preparations for your coming?"

"I'm not getting married to you, Rebecca. My parents got a girl for me. Her name is Adunni, and she's a doctor."



"How long have you known about this arrangement?"

"We've been courting for three years. I love you, but my mother needs to see her kids before she dies. You know she has ovarian cancer."

Rebecca hung up immediately; she couldn't believe her ears. For three good years of her life, she was

deceived into thinking that they were meant for each other. She had named their four children in vain: Simi, Fola, Tolu and Fade.

She was angry and sad at the same time. Jacob had laid waste to all their memories, caused her to keep herself and then run off with another woman. Rebecca spent the days that followed in silence and sorrow. She hid from the world, shutting herself up in her dark bedroom. Nothing appealed to her anymore. This went on for a long time. Eventually, she recovered and found love again. Once again, she was happy.

Rebecca peered out of her window. The rain had finally stopped. She saw the sun's rays piercing through the clouds, and a rainbow draped the sky. Her cat was asleep now, curled up into a ball, it purred. She closed the curtains and turned on the radio. Jacob's favourite song began to play. Rebecca paused to evaluate her feelings and started to dance. She felt nothing for this man, Jacob had finally been forgotten.



# Forever in Our Hearts

Deborah Ikape  
Nigeria

What is life without memories; the memory of a family, of a little one been given birth to, the memory of a loved one moving to college, the memory of a pregnancy, even the memory of the death of a loved one; the memories that stem from childhood like the memory of how I used to write stories upon stories during my primary school days before all of that was taken captive by the 'system' and I lost concentration. But, that memory ignited what used to be a talent that was left abandoned and uncultivated.

Memory is the substance that gives us the means by which we draw on our past experiences in order to use this information in the present. It's an intrinsic part of a man's life, an entity that can't be done without.

Memory is that which is held by a human until his death, but

lives on in the hearts of his loved ones. Take a flashback to the night of 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, the Lekki Toll Gate Massacre in the most talked about state in Nigeria; Lagos, the centre of excellence. That place stands as a memorial because of the memory that will live on in our hearts forever, and a thing to be remembered throughout generations as compatriots arose and stood at the forefront demanding good governance and fighting for justice in the most peaceful way you could ever think of. This memory will keep us fighting as a country until it stands as a great nation.

How about the fight against the Apartheid government in South Africa led by Nelson Mandela, which in the Nineties brought about a revolution. We can go on taking trips down



memory lane, with many more historical events that live on in our hearts, and we'll teach them to the younger generation till the world becomes a better place.

How powerful, how vast, how deep our memories can be, they hold so long in our hearts, like cuneiform texts that can't be easily washed away. They may come as tiny bits and pieces that'll eventually coalesce into a whole. Memories can tiptoe or flood themselves into our thoughts and meditations, not making sure they are really noticed but in the long run, they are seen, noticed and paid attention to because they reign in our hearts and minds.

# The Place of Poetry in African Society

Plandie Ruzindana and Tom Patrick Nzabonimpa  
Rwanda

## Introduction

African poetry encompasses the wide variety of traditions arising from Africa's fifty-five countries and from evolving trends within different literary genres. It is a large and complex subject, partly

because of Africa's original linguistic diversity but, primarily because of the devastating effect of slavery and colonisation, which resulted in English, Portuguese and French, as well as Creole or pidgin versions of these European languages, being

spoken and written by Africans across the continent.

When one considers the position of oral poetry in Africa, an obvious element that emerges is that this medium of expression takes the form of a collective activity from time immemorial; it has been expressed at funerals, marriages, child naming and other ceremonies. An instant, collective response is achieved because generally, oral poetry is expressed through a language and an idiom which the entire community understands.

There is much of this collective activity which has been lost throughout the written form. Written poetry is a recent innovation in Africa and one which requires the participants to have acquired reading skills



through the existing educational system. In other words, written poetry has assumed a class form in that it is written for the elite. Consequently, a majority of these people are cut off, partly through the use of English language or any other foreign language and partly through characteristics, of obscurity associated with formal education. It is the above artistic development which inspires one into the evaluation of written poetry in its modern context in the communication line between the poet and the public.

According to Prof. Joseph A. Ushie of the University of Uyo in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, "Modern written African poetry has a double heritage- pre-colonial and Western. As in most post-colonial situations, the tilt of our writing should be more towards the pre-colonial African literary heritage as manifested in the song, dirge, folktale, elegy, panegyric or riddle. Essentially, such art was meant for the whole community rather than for a few initiates." This perspective

contextualises the historical, political and indigenous cultural dynamics that shaped both the written and oral forms of literature (orature) of Africa past and present. If African orature depends on the community and social setting, it can be said that ore "grows out of tradition and keeps tradition alive". Present-day spoken-word and performance poetry, with its multidimensional forms of expression incorporating song, story-telling narratives, rhythm, rhyme, verse, movement/dance plus the modern media forms of digital recording, composition and video projection, can be viewed as logical evolutions of the ancient indigenous oral traditions. Since the year 2000, the Internet has also emerged as a publishing channel for the promotion of both written and performed African poetry.

### **African Poetry In Pre-colonial Era**

Poetry as an art form has undergone several phases of evolution from pre-colonial to colonial and then to post-colonial eras in most African

countries. As an example, in the pre-colonial era in Nigeria (the most populated African country and a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation), poetry was unwritten. "There existed a thin line between poets and musicians, who composed and rendered poetry in musical form. Poets then published their works in form of renditions at funerals and marriage ceremonies, with themes focused on praising virtues and condemning vices in society." Margaret Busby's 1992 anthology **Daughters of Africa** begins with a selection of traditional African poems, including ancient Egyptian love songs.

### **During the Colonial Era**

While the West bears record of African literature from the period of colonisation and the Slave Trade, particularly of works by Africans using acquired Western languages as their medium of expression, the thriving oral traditions of the time- particularly if in a mother tongue, were not recognised for their artistic value or the richness and significance of their content.

Generated by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its opposition, from the 1780s onward, an astonishing and unprecedented array of texts appeared, both pro-and anti-slavery: poems, novels, plays, histories, sermons, speeches, newspaper columns and letters, travelogues, medical treatises, handbills, broadsides, songs, children's books. African authors writing in this period, along with the abolitionists and apologists, raise questions about the relation of British Romanticism to colonialism and slavery. Themes of liberation, independence and *négritude* among Africans in French-controlled territories, began to permeate African literature in the late colonial period between the end of World War I and independence period. Léopold Sédar Senghor published the first anthology of French-language poetry written by Africans in 1948. He was one of the leaders of the *négritude* movement and eventual President of Senegal.

### During the Liberation Struggle and Independence Era



It is the political, economic, social and cultural events of a society that shape its literature. In his essay "Homecoming" (1972), Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o makes this stance very clear when he writes: Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by the

social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and other forces cannot be ignored especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background.

Many African poets suffered greatly and were compelled to cast aside their artistic vocations in order to be involved in the liberation struggles of their peoples. Christopher Okigbo was killed in the 1960s' Civil War in Nigeria; Mongane Wally Serote was detained under South Africa's Terrorism Act No 83 of 1967; his countryman Arthur Norje committed suicide in London in 1970; Malawi's Jack Mapanje was incarcerated with neither charge nor trial; and in 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa died by the gallows of the Nigerian junta.



Sam Awa of the University of Lagos' Department of English states, "Moreover, African literature is protest in nature. It comes as a reaction to various forms of injustices meted out on Africans by the colonial masters and later, post-colonial masters."

### During the Postcolonial Era

"To have any sense of evolving African poetics, one must be aware of the socio-political significance of literary expression and the ideological character of literary theory."

Most African nations gained their independence in the 1950s and 1960s and with liberation and increased literacy, African literature is written in English, French and Portuguese and traditional African languages. This literature has grown dramatically in quantity and in global recognition. Ali A. Mazrui *et al* mention seven conflicts as themes: the clash between Africa's past and present, between tradition and modernity, between indigenous and foreign, between individualism and

community, between socialism and capitalism, between development and self-reliance and between Africanity and humanity. Other themes in this period include social problems such as corruption, the economic disparities in newly independent countries, and the rights and roles of women. Female writers are, today, far better represented in published African literature than they were prior to independence.

### African Poetry Today

Since the 1960s, political, economic, and cultural events have begun to shape African poetry. Gone are the days when the shades of colonialism were an unending preoccupation of African poets. In modern African poetry, works that focus on the healing and purging of the country and families have dominated African poetry. Poets in Africa have faced issues in ways that not only explain how indigenous cultures are absorbed by western standards but also how limiting in vision their

leaders have been.

In January 2000, "Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century", the first conference on African languages and literatures ever to be held on African soil, took place, with participants from East, West, North, and Southern Africa and from the diaspora, including writers and scholars from around the world. Delegates examined the state of African languages in literature scholarship, publishing, and education in Africa as well as celebrating the vitality of African languages and literatures.

Poet and editor Kwame Dawes directed the African Poetry Book Fund and produced a series of chapbooks on emerging voices in Africa.

### Publications

Over the last two decades, aside from individual collections of poetry by African writers, established literary reviews and journals featuring these poets, a significant number of anthologies of

African poetry have been published, predominantly by university presses around the world and increasingly by African scholars based or associated with these institutions. In his article "The Critical Reception of Modern African Poetry" Oyeniyi Okunoye of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria,

criticises publications such as *Modern Poetry from Africa*, co-edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (1963), and *A Book of African Verse* by John Reed and Clive Wake (1969), "for operating within a tradition that is pretentious in claiming the African identity for works that do not truly project diverse African experiences".

By contrast, more recent anthologies not only document the evolution of African poetry with greater objectivity and insight but they are bringing to light and ever-expanding range of African

voices. They reflect greater cultural, gender, generational diversity and a widening scope of themes, styles, and ideologies, as well as alternative framing of these works by virtue of their editorial approaches. A few notable anthologies of this kind are *The New African Poetry: An Anthology*, which launched



its fifth edition in 2007, *The New Century of South African Poetry* (ed. Michael Chapman, 2002), *New Poets of West Africa* (ed. Tijan M. Sallah, 1995), *The Trickster's Tongue: An Anthology of Poetry in Translation from Africa* (2007) and *The African Diaspora* by Mark de Brito. Works of literary criticism and academic investigation are equally important in understanding and

appreciating African poetry and *Ideology and Form in African Poetry: Implications for Communication and Coming Home: Poems of Africa*, the works of Emmanuel Ngara are particularly useful in this regard.

Also significantly contributing to this worldwide exposure of African poets, are online platforms and networks showcasing African poetry, such as Writers Space Africa Magazine, Poetry Web International, Badilisha Poetry Radio and International PEN, that give a spotlight to both the written and spoken word forms, established and emerging voices from the African continent.

Poetry has become a useful tool for different African societies during pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and even today. Both oral and written poetry has influenced African society politically, socially and economically. It is a treasure worth conserving.



# Remembering To Forget

Namse Udosen  
Nigeria

I lie in bed and drift into an endless trance. There is no need to get up. I stare blankly at the ceiling. My mind is a VCR, I rewind the tape. Images come rolling on my memory as I reminisce on life before the corona induced staying at home.

Memory is the process of storing and retrieving information about the world around us. Human memory involves the ability to both preserve and recover information we have learned or experienced. In order for memory to be formed, information is converted to a useful form, this is called coding. However, it is not a flawless and straight forward process. A study of cognitive research over the decades shows that the general default is that memories are not accurate, and that's true for all kinds of memories. When we think about retrieving memories, what exactly do we

remember? A large chunk of memory lies outside of our consciousness. A retrieval process allows us to bring them back when needed. That is why sometimes, you think you have forgotten someone's name until the person appears, then bang; the name comes to mind. Memories could be short term or long term. Short term memories last for about thirty seconds. Long term memories are those everlasting moments that sometimes bring tears to eyes or a smile to our lips.

According to the *APA Journal of Psychology*, "Our attempts at retrieving information of our past tend to be very selective. When we think about a time in our history, it has so many components to it. It is not as straight forward as it seems." Research has shown that memories are not stored as exact replicas of reality; rather, they are modified and reconstructed during recall. As a result of how memories are

encoded and stored, memory recall is effectively an on-the-fly reconstruction of elements scattered throughout the brain. Memories are not as organised as we think. We can look at memory as a sort of collage or jigsaw involving different elements stored in disparate parts of the brain linked together by associations and neural networks. We often pick and choose what we remember. The memory recall process involves the brain replaying a pattern of activities that was originally generated in response to a particular event, echoing the brain's perception of the real event.

Memories are not frozen in time, new information and suggestions may become incorporated into old memories over time. It often said that remembering is an act of creative re-imagination.

Hence, people tend to fill in memory gaps with schemas. So when next someone tells you a story about that awesome party she attended last week, note that it is not an actual recreation of the event.

Fredrick Bartlett, a British Professor of experimental psychology, did extensive studies on schema. He wrote that "a schema is a generalisation formed in the mind based on experience. People tend to place past events into existing representations of the world to make memories more coherent. This corroborates the work of the Memory Centre (2019); it was discovered that memory recall appears to be state-dependent to an extent. That, "individuals tend to retrieve information more easily when it has the same emotional content as their current emotional state and when the emotional state at the time of retrieval is similar to the emotional state at the time of coding." Instead of remembering precise details about commonplace occurrences, people use schemas to create frameworks

for typical experiences, which shape their expectations and memories.

It is therefore obvious that personality and environment plays a role in how people recall the past. We cannot also rule out the role of quality of educational experiences. A person who lives in an environment with lots of positive vibes would most like to build up positive schematics of the past. I have some personal experience to test the hypotheses. We have this social media group for my secondary school classmates. It was a military school with drills and beatings. I can say that we all almost had similar experiences as cadets. As a person, I look back at those moments as the source of my strength and resilience in life. Some of my other classmates are even willing to relive those moments. However, many of my classmates see the hard training we went through as abuse. Many regret ever attending school. It is funny that a few still carry grudges against our seniors more than twenty-five years after.

Do the types of schema we build reflect on how we wear our nostalgia?

Nostalgia has to do with a longing for the past. This past could be personal or historical; however, there are two major influences the types of schemes created.

One is an individual's personality or psychological well-being in the first place. If you have two individuals one of whom is happy in their current life and they're emotionally doing just fine. They might go back and remember bad things and then laugh about them and say, 'wow we've come a long way since those days haven't we?' Whereas someone else who is suffering from something like depression or an anxiety disorder may go in the opposite direction. They might go back and think about the past and then let that further sadden them rather than make them happy by comparison with how far they've come.

Personality and psychological mindset are also important to how we recall the past.

Not just the recollection but how we react to the memories recalled. A person who is not psychologically or emotionally balanced is more likely to create negative schemas which would lead to feeling bad about past events.

Another factor is a person's social influences. The people around you play a massive role

in the development of your perception and memory recall. Social influences begin from the family or household a person grows up in. The communities we live in can also influence the type of schemas we create. Toxic environments tend to bring out the worst in people. Toxic environments can exist in homes, schools, places of worship, workplace and any social setting. Environments with people who make you feel small, insecure or bad about yourself can be considered toxic. They often result in mental and emotional stresses

someone from a non-toxic environment.

So, while we are locked down and waking up to a boring routine, some memories sneak back into our minds. The poor in mind feel sad and moan about the situation. They lament all day long on social media and when they manage to go out. Memories become a



in the development of your perception and memory recall. Social influences begin from the family or household a person grows up in. The communities we live in can also influence the type of

and physical manifestation such as increased heartbeat, sweaty palms and dry mouth. So a toxic environment while growing up could breed bad feelings of nostalgia. The opposite could be said of

thing of pain and regrets. They see nothing good about the past, present or future. I get off my bed with a smile on my face; I create beautiful memories as put on my running gear and step into the light of the rising sun.

# The Clever Snail

Grace Tendo Katana  
Uganda

In a far away land, there lived a Snail among crawling and flying creatures as well as some big animals.

One day, a strong rain came and swept away all their houses together with the food they had stored.

Many animals and all the crawling creatures were displaced since they had no shelter over them neither food to eat. They walked for what seemed like hours in search for something to eat.

Lucky enough, they came across a field of food and gathered as much as they could.

At first, they ate some food so that they gain enough energy to walk back to their land. Some of the bigger animals carried the sticks they needed to build their new homes while the others carried the simpler items.

When they were all set, they began their trek back to their village.

They walked for hours and soon it was dark. One of them scoffed and sneezed like it wanted to say something.

"What is wrong with you, Millipede?" Chipmunk asked.

"I think we're lost!" Millipede said, "and it's already dark. And where is that little Snail?"

The Snail jumped off the back of one of the beavers, "here I am."

"Let us rest here for the night and when it is morning, we shall find our way back," Chipmunk said.

They all agreed and decided to spend the night there.

When it was morning, they began their journey but before they could start moving, the

Snail moved forward and cleared his voice to speak.

"Ahem...!" Snail coughed

"What is it you lazy Snail?" Firrefly asked.

"I made a trail yesterday when we were coming," Snail said.

"So?" Beaver asked.

"We can follow that. It can help us find our way back to our village," he said.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" Chipmunk asked angrily.

"Because you do not always believe me when I say something," said the snail.

"How then are we going to find your trail then?" a puzzled Millipede asked



"Let us look among the trees, I marked them with my sticky saliva, I am very sure we shall find our way back home." Snail said confidently.

At first they were hesitant but then decided to at least try and believe the snail's word.

"But in case you're not telling the truth, you know the outcome!" snared Beaver. And to the Firefly, he commanded;

"Firefly, go on and find that trail then come back and let us know."

After sometime, the firefly came back and told them what he had seen. It led the way and soon they came across the snail's trail. They followed the trail which led them straight to their village.... back to the comfort of their lovely home.

And as soon as they had put

down their luggage, they made a party for having been successful on the mission they had gone to. Also, from there onwards, they never despised the Snail ever again because he proved them that he too was useful on the team.



# Seasons

Keabetswe Thapelo Ene  
Botswana



“Dan, I am pregnant,” I said hesitantly, twitching my fingers. I knew he wasn’t happy and this was going to jeopardise his whole career but I just had to tell him.

“What do you mean pregnant? You can’t get pregnant, Alice,” he grumbled, pulling me and banged my head against the wall.

For a moment, I lost my



balance and was bleeding but, what was new?

“Get the hell out of my house and get rid of that baby,” he barked.

“I won’t,” I said, but before I knew it, I was knocked down and felt an excruciating pain in my belly. He was kicking me and punching me. I yelled for help, but no one could hear me.



The last thing I remember is a spiked pain in my stomach.

“Earlier this morning...” the television interrupted my thoughts, “Police discovered a body which is believed to be Mr Dan Bucks who had been missing for eight months...”

I looked over the table and saw a knife covered in blood. Holding my baby close, I felt the balm.



# Trigger

Temani Nkalolang  
Botswana



**T**he click-clack of heels in the corridor. A loud knock on the door, 'bang, bang' and suddenly-

The door crashed in with a deafening crack of thunder, blasting my eardrums. I am on the floor, curled into a fetal position, hands on my ears. Blindfolded by fear I could hear their boots and batons sinking into his soft flesh. Each beating rewarded with my mother's crying and pleading. The click of handcuffs- every sound is reverberating in my head, tearing my mind apart.

A distant voice keeps calling my name, "Ma'am, ma'am..."

I press my hands tight against my ears but the voice gets louder, fading my mother's cries.

"Madam, are you okay? I have been knocking- oh my, you are sweating!"

I open my eyes and she is staring at me, wide-eyed.

"What is it?" I snap at her.

"Yo...your 2 O'clock is here."

She chokes on her words.

She is still staring at me and I realise I am still holding my ears. I ignore my secretary, gather my files and head for the conference room. By the door, I turn to see her still rooted in the same spot.

"Next time you bang on my door again, I will fire you!"

Her jaw drops and I close the door, slowly until it latches, but

I open the door again and look at him on the wall, ever smiling, reassuring, comforting. That was the last time I had seen my father alive, dragged by the police, for a crime he didn't do.

"I love you dad, always." I whisper to myself.

# Scared Little Boy

**Madeha Ezekiel Malecela**  
Tanzania

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who was scared. She decided to talk to her grandfather on how to overcome her fears.

"Grandpa, I am scared!" Said the little girl.

"Why?" Her grandfather asked.

"I can't sleep alone at night. I feel like there is a monster under my bed." The little girl replied.

Her grandfather laughed, then asked her "Have you ever heard a tale of a scared little boy?"

"No Grandpa! What happened to him?" The little girl was eager to know.

Her grandfather replied;

One summer bright new morning,  
A little boy went out for a walk,  
No sooner the sun started shinning,  
When something was up for a stalk.

He slowly turned to see,  
A mysterious ghost he found,

Like a monster from a sea,  
It stood just right behind.

How huge so tall, so dark,  
He was caught with so much fear,  
He thought the ghost would strike,  
He turned and ran from there.

"Couldn't he call out for help?" Asked the little girl.

Her grandfather smiled.

"Let us see if he did." He responded, then proceeded with the tale.

He ran as he trembled screaming out,  
Escaping from the ghost so giant,  
For help he eagerly sought  
But the road was empty and silent.

He then ran out of breath,  
Behind a tree he hid,  
With fear and chattering teeth,  
Praying to be safe he did.

From a distance on a road,  
He saw a tall fat woman,  
Towards the tree as she approached,  
He realized she too had one.

"The ghost was following the fat woman too?" The little girl asked.

"Yes, her ghost looked much bigger than the little boy's." Replied her grandfather, then proceeded with the tale.

Bigger her ghost appeared,  
But she walked bravely and fearless,  
He kept hiding as he stared,  
Scared he felt and helpless.

He wished to get back home,  
He cried for Mom and Dad,  
What a coward! he thought in shame,  
This made him feel so sad.

Then suddenly like a mighty warrior,  
In a count of one, two, three,  
He said I am not a worrier,  
He stepped out from the tree.

"He decided to face the ghost?" The little girl asked.

"Yes, he had only two options. One was to keep on hiding forever. The second option was to take courage and face his fear." Replied her grandfather.

"But the second option could get himself killed grandpa!" She said.

Her grandfather smiled.

"Let us see what happened." He replied, then proceeded with the tale.

He stood to face his fear,  
The ghost was right ahead,  
He saw it quite so clear,  
From feet to the top of its head.

The little boy learned from then,  
The ghost was giant by morning,  
Smaller it gets by noon,  
Fades when the sun is setting.

The little girl smiled.

"Can you tell me now what the little boy was scared of?" Her grandfather asked.

"Yes Grandpa! He was scared of his own shadow," she replied.

“Very good! If he wouldn't have taken a courage to face his fear, he wouldn't have found out what the mysterious giant ghost was,” said her grandfather.

“Thank you for the nice story grandpa. Next time I will be courageous like the little boy,” said the little girl.



## Bio

Madeha is an enthusiast who loves exploring the world of literature. Apart from that, he holds a bachelor degree in law and an advanced level certificate in literature and arts in general. One of his goals is to play a part in supporting the growth and maturity of African literature.

Madeha's story is first place winner in the [2020 Wakini Prize for Children's Literature](#).

# Beautiful Hearts

**Njenga Wanjiru**  
Kenya

A dose of pain and the slow loss of light,  
I am good to write,  
Not of pretty things but incongruent scenes  
That speak deep.

That beautiful discomfort of a rebel  
Without a cause chose her poison,  
I haven't forgotten the little miracles  
Our hearts had found  
Between the lace and the hold-

Or the life that beat underneath the skin,  
When we were too close and not enough.  
Hopefully I listen with intent  
For a paradigm shift that never comes.

Maybe I've always been an outlier of this  
world.



# The Whispers of Memorial Notes

Oluwatosin Okupa  
Nigeria

Do the days of ages past still mumble in my  
brain?

Do they echo loud like the squalls of a wailing  
child?

As they grow into pyramids of moments  
breaking out of monumental cages  
meeting eye to eye with the blazing sun  
as she sheds a quarter of her glow  
into the pockets of their quiet walls.

Do sailed ships of yesterday still wave their  
banners

to the lighthouse of today's thoughts?

Do colourless traces born from their voyage  
float into the sea of my being?

They do, a million times, they do  
with warring whispers that transcend  
beyond whimsical beats of time

Sometimes, they gift me bags of sleepless  
nights,

Other times, they stock up my mind like beds  
of luminous roses

adding fragrance to the bubbles bouncing in  
my lines.

The patterns of adventures past, gone  
buried alive in a coffin housing unforgettable  
tales,

Of days when 'SUWE' showed me the way  
through

a cascade of boxes leading to curious  
territories,

Of nights when Mr. Monkey Bear sang sweet  
lullabies to my itching ears,

Of many and more moments still ringing loud  
and clear

like bittersweet sirens rolling out of order.





# Within

Ben Sipo Mulilanduba  
Zambia

In the dead of night  
the sun was absent in sight  
but present in soul.



# Memories

Samuel Akindipe  
Nigeria

A sojourner,  
From the future of the past  
To the past of the future,  
Saucy splendor sweetly sour.

Memories;  
Crazy comical cries carrier  
Conceiving the dead alive  
Manufacturer of happiness  
Producer of sadness  
Producing both with sweet splendor.

I thought all was gone  
Until all came back  
Without the sound of a gong,  
The happiest and saddest-  
Rising like a memo,  
The tunes of them rising to a crescendo  
Memo rises to reveal memories,  
What a stupendous experience it is  
All gone to come.





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**Genre: Short Story**

**TITLE: Heaven**

**Writer: Agboni Christiana, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana**

**H**ave you ever wondered "WHERE" death will lead us after here? Does life after death really exist? Agboni Christina gives us a hint of the journey to the afterlife in her short story titled Heaven. 'Heaven' presents to us a 19 year old girl reminiscing on her childhood days, where her mother and Sunday school teacher drummed into her ears and those of her friends; the existence of an elegant and peaceful life after the one here on earth. In an enticing manner, they both give them a vivid description of how Heaven and life over there will be like. Despite all the questions that weigh down her young mind about this concept, she yearns to go there with her signboard being her mother.

Most intriguing in the story is how through simple diction, the writer manages to give us a well-knit story with a 'cozy-sound wave' flow despite the obvious uncertainties and doubts as to whether the afterlife even exists, if yes, whether it is just as the story describes or otherwise.

The writer intends to appeal to the subconscious mind and to this, she succeeds. The hospital room scene where the protagonist and her mother have their last conversation before the latter's transition. Such scenes that directly come to contact with our emotions are really important in getting the reader to concentrate and start to look at their own lives in the perspective of death and what lies ahead.

The writer does a good job at sealing off the story with the sentence 'I sit by my mother's bed and watch as she transitions into the afterlife'. It wasn't too scary an ending even though it involved someone dying neither was it a cliffhanger.

**Genre: Article**

**Title: Telling Our Stories Ourselves: The African Identity**

**Columnist: Namwanja Margaret, Zambia**

**Review: Namse Udosen, Nigeria**

**N**amwanja gives a panoramic reflection on the African Writers Conference held in Lusaka, Zambia. She takes us on a ride through the activities of the conference. A non-personal time is used in chronologically taking the reader through the events of AWC. It begins with the Writers Mingle. Namwanja takes readers through proceedings concept by concept. She analyzes the conversations around identity and its tons of baggage. She begins with issues discussed as related to physical components of identity and then moves to the physiological where some commentators talked about HIV and other ailments.

As with topics of this nature, the monster of stereotype raises its head.

This is tackled in the second day of the conference. The hybrid one. She gives an overview of participants' definitions of African Identity. She also highlights the fact that most participants seemed to agree that many African writers pandered to Western ideals with the writing.

The article rolls over to the last day of the conference. She describes the activities for the conference and panel discussions. She also announces the winners of the African Writers Awards through the voice of Anthony Onugba.

The article reads like a report of the conference. It is very impersonal. A more personal touch with descriptions of people's faces, voices and mannerisms would have made it a more interesting read especially for fans of creative non-fiction. The article however is a rich source of information about the African Writers Conference.



**Genre:** Poetry

**TITLE:** Bridging Panorama

**Writer:** Simon Ng'uni, Zambia

**Reviewer:** Nnane Ntube, Cameroon

**A**fterlife is a large window that opens us to a panoramic view of things seen and unseen. How to zoom in depends on the apparatus used. The quality of the image received depends on the mental framework and mindset. How then do we bridge life when given a second chance and a larger space to sail through?

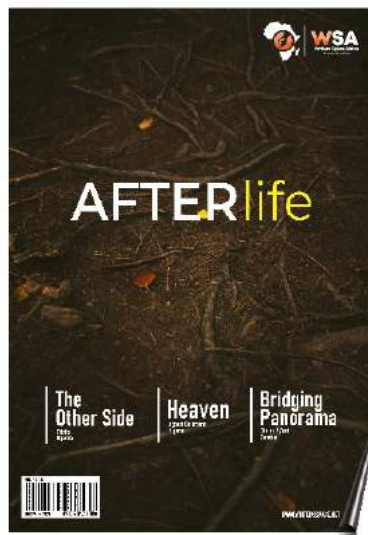
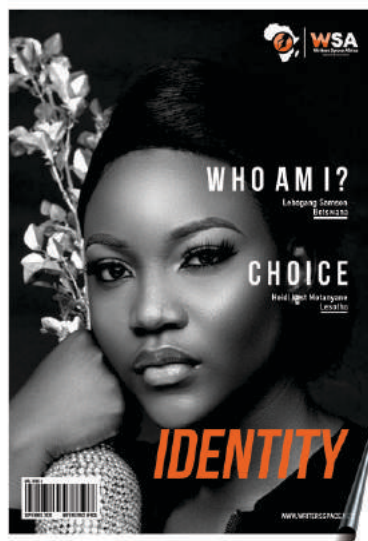
Simon Ng'uni's "Bridging Panorama" paints a picture of a large and vague space full of ambiguity; and the very first meaning he attributes is that "tomorrow never comes." This sets the pace to multiple reflections as the thought of tomorrow is lost in the notion of "voyage" and "time" (S1, L2). How well do we master these terms? The knowledge of "voyage" and "time" is implicitly compared to the knowledge of "good" and "evil" (S2, L2) whose personified nature as created by the poet gives an impression of them being forever there. It is this eminent presence that the poet views as "celestial" (S2, L1). Hence, the idea of a continuous journey – from one frontier to the other, the unquenchable taste of discovery – from wrong to right, right to wrong ("...fruit from rightful tree will be disemboweled and savoured" – an image of the actions of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden where all things evil started). This biblical allusion to the status of right and wrong amplified in words such as "slither" and "crawl" pushes the boundaries of reflections to the understanding of the duration of man's sufferings – eternal?

This unutterable question is a motivation to man's longing for tomorrow even in the face of gloom for "each day is a sunrise [hope] with a new meaning to all of history." But Simon's tomorrow is eclipsed by the loss of time and the loss in time which only knowledge and understanding can bring to lamplight.

"Bridging" is a gerund, a continuous struggle even after all is done and gone. The atmosphere of the poem is very relaxed, the mood is cheerfully gloomy, the tone is polemic and grandiloquent.



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# FREEDOM

50<sup>th</sup>  
ISSUE

VOL. 5 NO. 2



FEBRUARY, 2021

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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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 April 2021 Edition in the following categories:

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We look forward to receiving your best.

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# Editor's Note

**T**he freedom to move and assemble, the freedom to love, the freedom to pursue one's ambitions or dreams, the freedom to stand for political office without fear of arbitrary arrest, detention without trial or even death; the need for freedom is as present as it has always been. The pursuit of freedom is now as potent as ever.

We celebrate this special 50<sup>th</sup> issue of Writers Space Africa Magazine in freedom. We pay homage to the pioneers who saw the need to create a free space for writers to pursue their art. We publicly praise those who carried forward that torch of freedom and passed it on so that others too may shine bright, and in order that the art of writing may live forever within the pages of this magazine.

We applaud the writers, poets and storytellers who pursue their dreams and who honour us with their works every month in our publication. We raise a glass to the readers who have stayed with us from the first issue of the magazine in January, 2017 to the new readers who've come on board since then.

To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others- to quote the icon Nelson Mandela. As we altogether celebrate this milestone edition of WSA Magazine, we look ahead to the next ten thousand publications with a determined sense of freedom of expression.

Happy 50<sup>th</sup> edition! Enjoy!

Namwanja,  
Chief Editor



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# Unbound

**Agboni Christina**  
Nigeria

The woman walks into the room like one who is drunk, carefully placing one foot after the other. She comes to an abrupt halt in the middle of the room. She looks up at the ceiling, then she lowers her eyes and her gaze flits over the room, the threadbare furniture, all mismatched. She sighs like one in pain and staggering towards an orange cushion chair, she flops on it. Her breathing, harsh. Her name is Uwedo.

Uwedo is tired. She is exhausted and drained. She is coming from where she had gone to pay for her transgressions along with her friends. Her friends had complained bitterly about the hike in the prices of their transgressions. Anyo had to sell her Hollands wrappers to pay. The burden was getting too much, but who

would they turn to? The holy book states clearly that anyone who transgresses dies. They do not want to die, and Ebili, the snake had developed a way for them to not die; by paying hefty sums.

"When are we ever going to be free?" Anyo had lamented that morning.

They had been happy at first, with paying the dues and all. But every day, Ebili raised the stakes. They are now stuck between a rock and a hard place. Death, or Ebili.

Whenever Uwedo thinks of everlasting death, painful goosebumps riddle her skin, and a sense of déjà vu glides over her with icy pain. Thinking of paying Ebili with her fast depleting resources brings bile up her throat. She is lost. Truly lost in darkness.

She begins to sniff and later bursts into huge sobs. Her heart squeezes in agony.

\* \* \*

Uba hears a knock at the door and tenses. He drops the glass of wine he is holding in his hand with a thud on the wooden stool beside his seat. Red liquid sloshed over the rim of the glass onto his hand, but he doesn't notice. A million thoughts run through his mind. Surely, not Ebili. It wasn't long ago the snake came to collect his pay.

Ebili always come to Uba's house to collect his fee. Uba pays heavily, but he has no choice. That is what he thinks.

The knock again. He sighs with resignation and goes to open the door. He is surprised to see Edekono standing there.



Edekono never follows them to pay the transgression levies. Uba had dared to ask Ebili once about it.

"Don't you dare ask me that again," Ebili had thundered; his red eyes getting redder.

"I heard she has a master higher than Ebili," Anyo, his wife had told him after Ebili left.

"You'd better not let anyone hear that," Uba had warned his wife.

"Good afternoon, Sir Uba. May I come in?" Edekono asks, shaking him out of his reverie.

"You may," Uba replies and opens the door wider to let her enter the room.

Edekono settles herself in an arm chair in the tastefully furnished sitting room. Anyo, Uba's wife, walks in just then... She stops in her tracks at seeing Edekono, and lowers her eyes, like one ashamed of something.

"Good evening, Mrs Edekono," she greets Edekono.

"Anyo, my sister. Good evening," Edekono replies.

"What can we offer you?" Anyo asks. Her eyes still downcast.

"Don't bother yourself please. I actually came to offer you and your family something tonight," Edekono says.

"What could that be?" Uba inquires.

"I bring you good news. I would like you to serve the master I'm serving," Edekono says.

"Who's your master?" Uba asks.

"The King of Kings, and Lord over everything. He's Jesus Christ," Edekono supplies.

"Are his prices fair?" Anyo asks quietly from her perch on the arm of her husband's seat.

"He doesn't charge at all. You just have to believe in

him is all. He will break you free from bondage into liberty," Edekono responded.

"Our friends must hear of this," Anyo says and stands with a boldness that belies her appearance. She dashes off towards the phone. Edekono beams at her, while Uba looks on with astonishment.

\* \* \*

Uwedo walks into the room in a huff, followed by Ukpalu and Abutabu.

"Anyo! Sir Uba. What is going on?" Ukpalu asks.

"Well, Edekono here says her master charges nothing for transgressions," Uba replies as he gathers the folds of his agbada onto his knees and reclines deeply into his chair.

"I'm sure he just kill transgressors off," Abutabu quips.

"No. Let's just listen to her," Anyo says with firmness.



The others stop and sit down. They never hear Anyo speak like this.

"Unlike your master, Ebili the snake, my master is Love. He loves everyone. Transgressors or not. And the cost of true love is no charge. You have to believe

die. My master has already paid for all our transgressions with his blood. There's no levy that can be as precious and worthy as the blood of Christ," Edekono says.

"What do we do? I'm tired of paying Ebili." Ukpalu

burden. He's the burden bearer," Edekono tells them. "Please, take us to him," Anyo says.

"Just accept, believe and confess him as your lord and saviour. He will come and dwell in, and with you," Edekono says.



"Just like that? Hmm. Please I'm ready to serve your master," Uwedo declares and stands up.

"Me too," Anyo stands.

"From my head to the sole of my feet, your master has all," Ukpalu gets to his feet.

"I'm willing to make your master mine," Uba says and stands also.

"Abutabu, what are you waiting for?" Uwedo asks Abutabu who is sitting down gazing at nothing in particular.

"I'm trying to think," Abutabu replies, scratching her throat.

that," Edekono says. The passion in her voice real.

There is silence. It seems everyone is digesting what is being said.

"But our transgressions must be paid for or we die. The Holy Book says so," Uwedo says.

"Your paying Ebili for your sins is nothing. You will still

lament.

"Yes. It has not been easy. Our resources are fast depleting," Uba says.

"The weight of our transgressions gets heavy every day," Anyo adds.

"My master says, 'come unto me, all ye that labour and heavy laden and I will give you rest' come to my master, let him take over your

"Do you still want to remain in bondage? In this quicksand of anguish Ebili has subjected us to for so long?" Anyo asks her.

"Look. It's not by force. I'm still young. I will serve this master of love later. Let me serve myself first. I don't mind paying Ebili," Abutabu supplies and rises to her feet. She looks squarely at Edekono and says;

"Thanks. But, no thanks." Then she flounces out of the room. Her multi-coloured skirt billowing after her.

"Do something," Uwedo turns to Edekono.

"I wish I can. It's not in me to convince anyone. I just talk and pray, the Holy Spirit works to convict people," Edekono replies sadly, then continues, and this time, in a cheerful voice.

"If you will only confess your transgressions and believe on the name of Jesus, you are saved. And as many as will receive Christ, He gives them power to become children of God," she quotes



from the Holy Book.

She leads them in the confession of their transgressions and taking on her master as their own.

"Today is the day of salvation. Ohhh! You're now children of liberty!" Edekono exclaims smiling from ear to ear.

"Is this all?" Anyo sounds skeptical.

"Yes. As simple as ABC really," Edekono answers, still smiling.

"Wow! No more payments to Ebili," Uba says in a voice tinged with wonder.

"He's going to be pissed," Ukpalu says.

"But, there's nothing he can do. Our master is greater than him. You must not give him wiggle room to try and get you back into the mud you just left," Edekono warns.

"So simple to be set free and we have been walking in abject darkness," Anyo says. "No more! Light has come!" Edekono interjects.

"Freedom! What a sweet experience," Uwedo proclaims as she sinks deeper into her seat.





"Yes. You have all entered into the everlasting rest of God now," Edekono tells them.

"I will make sure to tell anyone I can about this freedom in Christ. They

must get out of the clutches of Ebili," Ukpalu announces.

"Yes. That's the part we've all got to play. Congratulations brothers and sisters," Edekono smiles.

"Tonight, I will sleep the sleep of a freeborn. My master is Lord over everything. I'm free indeed!" Anyo declares.

The rest nod in affirmation.



# The Escape

Arop Lino  
South Sudan

Santino Bol Mel had worked like a donkey for five odd years in the Sudanese town of Kosti. It was not until the end of the fifth year that it struck him that he was not really a contract employee but a slave. When he looked back at the five years, the manner in which he had spent them seemed cleverly orchestrated by his supposed employer, Abu Talib. After his first year of work, he had asked for his payment but Master Abu Talib had called him and brought out a notebook and began to write and make calculations. This, he would say scribbling a figure, is your food expenses for the year and that is the accommodation or water expenses and by the time he was done with calculations, Bol's annual salary of 10,000 Sudanese Dinar was utterly spent. The following year, calculations were made again but, Bol's expenses surpassed

his earnings and thus, it followed that he always owed his employer a good sum of money by the end of every working year.

Bol had a blurry memory of how he ended up in Kosti. One moment, he was in a train carriage in the town of El Daein in 1887 heading to Khartoum and laughing to jokes from guys who were learning Arabic and the next moment, he had leapt out of a window of the burning train amid screams of passengers and the shattering of glass by bullets. He hurt himself badly on the rail but, the real memory that was recurring to him was the triumphant faces of the Northern Army as they watched the train burn. Later, he found out that the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army had ambushed a large government contingent at Kiir Adem and left many fatalities and the president had ordered the

army to retaliate by burning the train full of Southern scum.

Sweat dripped down from Bol's face as he worked in the sugar cane plantations near the Kenana sugar factory amid the hot afternoon blaze. Every new working year, he worked harder than the previous one in order to be able to pay back what he owed Master Abu Talib, but the calculations always produced a deficit greater than the previous year's.

Better to be a slave than dead, he cheered himself up. But, his dreams were always of home, of his parents who were near starvation when he left due to the great hunger triggered by the civil war, of his then young girlfriend he left when he took the journey north to look for work. He was a young man then. He looked at his hands, torn by hard labour in the plantations until they had





become hard as stone. He rarely got to look in a mirror but the last he had looked, he did not recognise the man who stared back at him; haggard, rugged and old. When Master Abu Talib had started calling him a slave, he did not mind because in the north, a black person was called a slave. It was an accepted term, even the newspapers used it. They said that slaves had collected themselves in the South and formed what they called Sudan People's Liberation Army. Master Abu Talib used to condemn the formation of SPLA in the strongest Arabic terms.

"That's Haram," he would say. "Slaves rebelling against their masters! Haram!"

One afternoon, it occurred to Bol while working in the plantations that he might never leave master Abu Talib's household if he kept owing him money every year and nobody else would pay his debts and so, he began his quest for freedom. It seemed easy to slip away from the plantations and head for the train station but, as soon as he had thought about this, he saw for the first time

another worker who, though a worker, had lighter duties than others and was armed with a Kalashnikov rifle. Although Bol had not noticed it before, this man always followed him like a shadow. The man was dark-skinned and from the traditional marks on his forehead, he was a Southerner



from Bol's own home town of Aweil. He was bitter with the man but, part of him knew that he would have taken up that very responsibility if at the end of the day it granted him his freedom.

From then on, Bol had that uncanny feeling of being watched. Even when he went to sleep, the man with the Kalashnikov kept nearby, pacing up and down or

pretending to be doing something.

Better to do it than to live with the fear of it. One evening during Isha prayers, Bol laid his bed in the servants quarters and threw himself on it to sleep since he was tired from the day's tedious work. He could hear the Kalashnikov man polishing his weapon by the door, punctuated by continuous clicks of dismantling and reassembling the rifle. He closed his eyes and lay there for about an hour until he heard the Kalashnikov man walk away. Bol did not take more than a second to act then. He quickly slipped on his worn shoes and made for the door. He passed by the back of the mosque and heard the Imam giving a sermon punctuated by 'Allahu Arkbar' at the end of every sentence. He passed through the market place, taking care to walk in the shadows. At the edge of the market, he paused and listened. He was being followed. He slipped back into the shadows and waited. He barely got a glimpse of the Kalashnikov man as he dashed past him.



Bol changed direction and took the longest route to the train station. He had heard that a train would be leaving for Babanusa that night.

When he arrived at the train station, Bol kept to the shadows still. Passengers were presenting their tickets and entering the train. He saw no chance of entry and was almost turning back when he saw that a wagon half-loaded was still open and unguarded. He thanked the gods and walked towards it, quiet as a shadow. He slipped in and looked back only to see an Arab man's eyes sweep over him briefly and the man focused his sight on other things. Bol was left debating whether he had been seen or not. Nevertheless, he made room behind heavy sacks that contained God knows what and made himself as comfortable as possible. He kept shivering, expecting to see Master Abu Talib or the Kalashnikov man in the wagon searching for him but none came. The wagon closed with a deafening ring of the metal and after what seemed like eternity, the great locomotive roared to life. Santino Bol

breathed deep. Not over yet, he told himself. But he smiled in spite of himself. Any master but Master Abu Talib.

When the train stopped at the station in Babanusa, Bol was tired and hungry and had lost track of time. He knew not how long the journey had been but his immediate problem was how to get out and without being seen at that. He was still exploring possible ways when the wagon was opened and in walked a man. The very man whom Bol had thought had seen him in Kost. He shrunk back behind the sacks. So he had seen me then. Another man followed the first one, touching this sack and that. The first one however walked straight to where Bol was lying and held him by the the arm. Bol was weak from hunger and fatigue, and therefore, offered no resistance.

"My servant," said the man who held Bol by way of explanation to his colleague's alarmed face. From slave to servant, a positive way up the ladder to freedom. He would have laughed at that thought if he hadn't been hungry and fatigued.

Things quickly changed for Bol. Abdallah Al Ramadhan, for that was his name soon had Bol dressed in a neat white and spotless robe. He also provided him food. When he thanked Abdallah Al Ramadhan, he dismissed it saying that Bol could always have time to return his favours once they were in Aweil. The train soon left Babanusa for Aweil. This time, Bol sat in a carriage which reminded him of the tragedy in El Daein. He half expected to suddenly hear screams of passengers and see the train burn. He looked out at the window as they passed through a deserted village. It was burnt to rubble and nothing was alive in it. The Janjaweed. He had witnessed their raids before and there was no mistaking it for they always left their mark behind. Death.

The train continued going deeper into the South. It passed through the tropical rain forests of Aweil. Bol could sense that old humid smell of home and hear the the birds twitter. He was free.



## WSA SUB-GROUP CHAIRPERSONS ON WSA AND WSA MAGAZINE'S 50<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE

### 1. **Tom Patrick Nzabonimpa, Rwanda**

WSA and WSA Magazine have been effective for WSA-Rwanda. Two of its members got published in the magazine. The members learnt through different sessions and lecturers provided by WSA. As a result, there is a vast improvement in their writings. We look forward to the magazine featuring more of our works.

### 2. **Lubacha Deus, Tanzania**

WSA has been an incredible literary space for the Tanzanian subgroup as it has connected the members with the writers' world of Africa and has equipped them with crucial skills such as critiquing, writing, and leadership. With the monthly-issued WSA Magazine, Tanzanian writers have built their reputations as writers and advanced their writing careers through submitting their work and receiving feedback on different themes and genres. WSA has also added value to their writing since any work that appears in WSA Magazine is special because it is guided by the target audience and goes through various hands of experts. As Tanzanians, we hope the magazine will be more diversified to accommodate a great number of submissions per month.

### 3. **Leo Muzivoreva, South Africa**

WSA has grown through leaps and bounds despite a catastrophic 2020. The South African Chapter is still in its infancy but, there are rays of hope for greater things to come. Long live WSA. Aluta Continua!

### 4. **Mimi Machakaire, Zimbabwe**

WSA has meant so much to me as a member. I've met great people online. I'm yet to meet most of them in person yet, they have been friendly and encouraging in my writer's journey; so much so that it has inspired many works to go in ways that I wasn't expecting. I'm thankful for the experience, and I'm sure members of Writers Space Africa (Zimbabwe) would also agree. Consider that we have come together to share our work and help each other grow as writers and as people overall. We have become something of a small family and it has really proven that even though we may not live in the same place, we can still maintain a connection. In all this, thanks to the founder of WSA, Anthony Onugba and others for bringing all of us together as one.

### 5. **Formutar Stanislaus, Cameroon**

Writers Space Africa (WSA) is the furtherance of a new consciousness on the African continent; the consciousness of the fact that we can collectively give orientation to African discourse and relay voices from the peripheries to the centre. It is a means for the expression of the African self-worth and self-concept, pre-requisites to any meaningful human development on the continent.

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# It is not what you think it is

**Blessing Amatemeso**  
Nigeria

Once upon a time, at the outskirts of a village called Kintu, stood a majestic mango tree. This tree had produced fruits for many generations. The villagers didn't eat much mango but, they always plucked them and sent them to the market by train. On this tree grew a young and vibrant leaf called Abbey. Abbey had a lush green colour. He sat at a vantage point on the tree because he always received adequate sunlight and rain, which was all he needed to thrive but, Abbey wasn't happy. He was jealous of the mangoes in his tree and other fruits in neighbouring trees. He wished that he also would be plucked and taken to the city.

The birds that perched on the tree twittered of beautiful cities filled with elegant homes, people dancing to lovely music and making merry. Abbey always dreamt of going to the

city. He didn't just want to watch fruits go and then one day, get old and fall off; he wanted an adventure. The older leaves always told him that this was the best life for a leaf. "The winds would take you high up into the heavens," they said. The oldest leaf, Nana, told Abbey that they were fortunate to live such a long life and not die quickly like the leaves of the Apple tree but, Abbey thought it was a boring life.

One day, as harvesting season drew near, Abbey made up his mind to leave the tree and follow the fruits to the city. Everyone tried to caution him but, he was indignant. He couldn't sleep for fear that he would miss the fruits. When the villagers came to harvest the fruits, Abbey hid behind a mango and got plucked. He was so happy to be free. The villagers washed them and put them in bags and boxes before

loading them onto the train. Abbey was ecstatic. To him, the warm bath was just the start of a good life.

The journey to the city was a long one and though Abbey tried to stay awake and enjoy the sights, he soon found himself fast asleep.

"It's all just grass and trees and more trees", he consoled himself whenever he stirred awake. When the train arrived at the station, the baskets and bags were loaded into a lorry and driven to the market. Abbey was amazed by the sheer number of people there.

They were so many that their voices created a cacophony. The goods were taken to a warehouse and locked overnight. It was hot and dry. Abbey hoped tomorrow would be a better day.



When morning arrived some men came to the warehouse and took some boxes away but, they brought no food. After four weeks, Abbey decided to venture out of the warehouse. He walked awhile around the market and then entered a car. On the way he saw half eaten fruits littered on the road. It sent a shiver through his midrib. When the car arrived at the city, Abbey jumped onto a window sill. Coincidentally it was the kitchen. He saw fruits and other leaves being chopped alive. He became

terrified. His only thought was that he had to warn the others at the village.

Abbey made up his mind to go back but, he was weak. He walked back to the road and entered a car going the direction he had come. He couldn't keep his eyes open this time also but, not because of lack of sleep but lack of energy. He was no longer as green as he was when he left the village. There were patches of yellow all over him and he felt parched. When he got to

the market, he discovered that he couldn't walk for long distances. He had to pause after every six or seven steps. He wished he had listened to old Nana. When night fell, he found a spot under a table and lay down. I will continue the journey tomorrow, Abbey thought to himself. But, before morning, pieces of him had been blown away by the wind. His last thoughts were of Nana and her wise words, "Freedom ain't always what you think it is."





# Q and A with the Penboss

**Piol Tiek Awer**  
South Sudan

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Piol Tiek Awer and I am your interviewer. On the opposite chair is Anthony Onugba, the founder of Writers Space Africa, whose magazine I am interviewing him for. Anthony is also the Executive Director of the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT). Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for Mr. Anthony Onugba, all the way from Nigeria!

**Mr. Onugba:** Thank you Piol and everyone. Good day to you ladies and gentlemen.

**Piol:** You're most welcome and thank you too for honouring our invite. For those that don't know Anthony Onugba, can you please introduce yourself to them?

**Mr. Onugba:** Anthony Onugba is a Nigerian born author of six published

books. These include Amanda's Crime, The Chronicles of Christ, Three Men and a Bottle, and Mixed Emotions. He is a multi-genre writer with works spanning across poetry, prose, drama and children's literature.

Anthony is the brain behind the annual African Writers Conference and the African Writers Awards. He is a consultant to non-governmental organisations and facilitates workshops on conflict management and prevention, leadership, communication, creative writing and film. He has speaking engagements throughout the year at various forums.

Lavender Tales of the Summit is my seventh published work and first poetry chapbook published recently. My website is [www.anthonugba.com](http://www.anthonugba.com)

**Piol:** Congratulations upon your seventh publication. Did you ever think, in the beginning, that the magazine would be around this long and have such an array of team members from the whole African continent?

**Mr. Onugba:** When we began the magazine in January 2017, to be honest, we were not thinking about celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> or even 100<sup>th</sup>. What we were concerned with, then, was building the magazine to get to a point where we will publish works from writers all across Africa. It was only in November 2020, when we were getting ready to release the call for the February 2021 (50<sup>th</sup>) edition that it hit us. This coincided with the appointment of the new editorial team to run for a year.



When we realised this, the Chief Editor, Namwanja, called for suggestions saying this edition must be big! It was only then that I frankly gave it a thought about how far we have come.

**Piol:** It's indeed an achievement worth celebrating. Congratulations. How proud are you about the 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the WSA Magazine?

**Mr. Onugba:** I am very happy and proud about the 50<sup>th</sup> edition and I am sincerely grateful to all those who have made this a reality right from the first edition. The editorial team members are drawn from every region and it is exciting listening to ideas – African ideas. Above all, I am delighted that we are all a family and we work towards the same goal.

**Piol:** Like they say, 'Divided we fall, united we stand'. Indeed, the WSA team seems to live by that saying. Ten years down the line,

what do you envision for the WSA Magazine?

**Mr. Onugba:** Ten years from now, building upon our solid foundation, we would be the go-to magazine for everything literary. We would reach every country on the continent and have a readership way beyond Africa. Currently, our magazine is read in the Americas. Someone even translated a children's literature story from our magazine to Portuguese and shared it in her book club in Brazil. We have the capacity to be more, to do more and to achieve more especially, with our team of passionate and experienced people.

**Piol:** I must say, you've clearly drawn your line and judging by how far you have reached with the magazine, I don't see anything stopping you. I am of the view that WSA Magazine receives huge volumes of submission every month for the calls every month. Have you ever thought of building another publishing

company, again, just like you did with Acacia Publishing, as a way to get the works of writers out there considering all the many submissions?

**Mr. Onugba:** To be honest, no. There are a lot of new publishing houses that do not exploit writers. What we need to do is to expand on our partnership. For example, we currently have a partnership with SOTRANE Publishers in Zambia. They are an international publishing house and they know their onions, chai and coffee! I have visited their office in Lusaka and I can say, they're in business for the long haul and are concerned about their reputation, too. It is easier to leverage on partnership than go into competition.

**Piol:** I couldn't agree more with that. You have published seven books, any advice for the upcoming writers or even established writers?

**Mr. Onugba:** Every writer



And the other is that it is a business. Writers are often stuck with the first personality and do not often entertain the second. Writers need to have a balanced approach where they look at the business of writing. This means they see their book as a product which would sell if it's good. A lot of things must be considered for the product to be good. This includes professional and paid editing, website, publicity, among others. Writers must be 'business' people. This is not easier for those who get traditional contracts. The reason is that if you are not deliberate in promoting what you believe in, you will be forgotten sooner or later.

**Piol:** I have often heard people call writers poor people. I didn't realise it was because those are writers that haven't entertained the second aspect of writing. I suppose you're reading a book, if not books, currently. What book are you reading now?

**Mr. Onugba:** I am currently reading *The Laws of Human Nature* by Robert Greene.

**Piol:** I have heard about the book and the author. I should read that book. Who is your favourite writer and his/her work that speaks to you the most?

**Mr. Onugba:** I would settle for Fulton J. Sheen. He writes on spirituality and I cannot really say which of his books I like the most.

**Piol:** I have been there. It's really hard to settle for one book. You write poetry, novels, plays, television scripts. What is your favourite writing form of these?

**Mr. Onugba:** I do not have a favourite because they all present unique opportunities to tell a story. Being a multi-genre writers helps me more to know what form is best suited for an idea. For example, I may want to write a screen play about two lovers but mid-way through, I can try it out

as a poem and it fits better. But, poetry is easier for me but I only write structured poems. It is a surprise even to myself that my recent book is not written in blank verse which is my preferred form.

**Piol:** I am not surprised you don't have a preferred form. I mean, you're very good with all your forms. What is your personal ambition with regards to the writing and publishing industry? And, considering you're a director, any ambitions for the film industry, too?

**Mr. Onugba:** Mine is to try as much as possible to adapt African stories to the screen. I know that it's a capitalist market out there but notwithstanding, we have really good stories that do not really need the big budget special effects. People are fascinated by a good story with talented casts. We have these in Africa. I would like to leverage on this for the future.



**Piol:** Your passion for film-making and telling African stories is undeniable. As WSA readership, should we also expect the publishing of screenplays or dramas in the near future?

**Mr. Onugba:** Yes, I have some unpublished dramas that I'd like to publish and

even discuss with a theatre company to produce. As for the screenplays, I'd produce them in dear future.

**Piol:** Thank you once again Mr. Onugba for honouring our invitation. I am certain your readers now know the brain behind those amazing books.

**Mr. Onugba:** The pleasure is mine. Thank you for hosting me.

**Piol:** You're most welcome and good luck in your endeavours. With that ladies and gentlemen, we've come to the end of our interview. Thank you.





## WSA SUB-GROUP CHAIRPERSONS ON WSA AND WSA MAGAZINE'S 50<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE

### 6. **Ismaila Saidybah, Gambia**

Writers Space Africa has opened doors of opportunity for young writers in the Gambia who were in dire need of enhancing their literary skills through networking and collaboration.

The WSA magazine has been instrumental in serving as a platform that affords young Gambian writers the opportunity to get their literary pieces to a global audiences.

Members of Writers Space Africa - Gambia Chapter wish that the WSA Magazine keeps the spirit of bringing their literary pieces to a global audience. Equally, they wish to see WSA grow into a very sophisticated NGO that will help African writers to have access to opportunities.

They also wish for WSA to have more partners that can be very helpful in making sure that WSA activities are carried out in a way that is consistent and convenient.

### 7. **Namse Udosen, Nigeria**

I'm glad to be a pioneer member of WSA. I have read all of the 50 issues. The magazine has provided an outlet for many budding Nigerian writers. We are proud to be part of this golden success.

### 8. **Piol Tiek Awer, South Sudan**

As the leader of WSA-SS and a member of WSA, I have gained not only better writing skills, but I've been equipped with leadership skills, too. I am forever grateful to be part of the WSA community.

### 9. **Halieo Motanyane, Lesotho**

We acknowledge, respect and honour WSA for the existence of its monthly magazine to our benefit and Africa at large. Without it, we would not have been such an incredible family of writers. It's a family that is working together to grow authorship in our kingdom and spread the Motherland's wings into homes on all continents. Long Live WSA!

### 10. **Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho, Benin Republic**

I'm a twenty-two-year-old writer and the Co-ordinator of Writers Space Africa- Benin (WSA-BR). The creation of WSA-BR has brought to our attention the fact that the literary arts have not been receiving the attention they deserve in Benin Republic, and that there is need for this to happen for the benefit of the young generation of literary artists. Therefore, WSA-BR has tasked itself with turning this situation around by working on innovative ways to bring back recognition to the arts.

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# Freeing Ourselves

Colin Stanley  
Kenya

Freedom is thought to be something one gets after they are let out of a cage or a not-so-comfortable situation. Freedom, to some, is rising to power, in the examples of great men like Nelson Mandela and Jomo Kenyatta. To start with, youth is indeed a drastic stage of life. It was when they were youths that the revolutionaries that drove away colonialists from the soil of our ancestors. For Kenyatta and Mandela, they faced jail terms for their relentless efforts to fight for the freedom of their respective African people. Even in prison, they still fought for freedom and dreamed of the day when their efforts would bear fruit.

This brings out a perspective that rather shapes the identity of an African leader in reference to the ancient kings and queens that ruled kingdoms. Being young men,

they did what was possible to lead to better execution of governance. For instance, take Barack Obama whose mother spoke of freedom for women. Ann Dunham argued that women should receive equal pay as the men, as they worked the same hours. Obama's mother was a free woman.

Freedom is not usually a cage-escape affair. It is like the satisfaction of achieving a long-sought-after dream. Like Jomo Kenyatta and other leaders across Africa that fought for the independence of their countries, they thought of freedom when they experienced first-hand, and objected, to oppression. My gramps told me that when Kenya attained independence in 1963 and the Union Jack was lowered, jubilations were all over the Central region. One wonders how this happened. Remember, we as Africans, we are more pragmatic compared

to other races. There was heavy vegetation cover in the country that independence day, and people climbed on top of hills in the darkness of the night waiting anxiously for the signal. My grandfather was twenty-one at the time, on top of a hill with his age mates. Then, the signal came, and people shouted all the way through Kikuyu land, from hill to hill. Others lit fires to commemorate the fact that they had gained freedom. What a night it was! My grandfather later became a public servant for ten years; his dedication was to service, or maybe that was his freedom. In this Africa, freedom is an everyday notion. If you had asked a person from the West about Africa before the coming of the internet, they would have classified us as a continent filled with poverty and diseases. It is true that diseases attack our populations.

Poverty has become a part of us. It is by luck that the internet and globalisation, as miniature as they look, came through for Africa, while we have held on to our rich heritage. This is because of the reduced number of casualties compared with great nations like the United States of America. Such have lost specialised professionals in various fields necessary for the recovery of their economies during Post-Covid passé. It comes by nature with freedom there is an opportunity: A tiny

light at the end of the tunnel. Despite the famed tale of slavery, Africa deserves a new badge on its chest, a sign of freedom for the Motherland.

It is evident that the healing and eradication of the Corona Virus is going to take joint efforts by the major stakeholders in the administrative, social, and health sectors. With these engagements, Africa has a chance to display its strengths in the current 21<sup>st</sup> Century timeline. The African youth today plays an important role in

the founding of a strong Africa; an Africa with freedom, and an Africa that is proud to show off its beautiful colours to the rest of the world that was badly hit by the pandemic. With these, I could believe the human instinct of knowing will dissolve the sad memories families in the West may be going through during the post-Covid recovery. This is more of our chance to be free from the analogy of slavery and oppression. I believe that freedom is what the world needs at this time.





# Critical, Yet Humble Voices; WSA Reviews' Corner

**Akinrinade Funminiyi Isaac**  
Nigeria

The Writers Space Africa (WSA) monthly magazine was birthed on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. In its infancy stage, the magazine had the necessary features that every child in her initial stages of development is entitled to; there were different genres and facets in the layout which were befitting of the time. It is said that a humble beginning leads to a lucrative ending. Although WSA Magazine hasn't reached full actualisation, this analogy is an exquisite fit to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of published editions, and is symbolic of progress and a dream come true. The addition of a review section in the magazine began towards the end of 2019, and it displays a great innovation in the league of African literature. Reviewers of the magazine hail from different ends of the continent under the leadership of Akinrinade Funminiyi Isaac (Nigeria). The collective

enthusiasm of review members testifies that they are passionately driven by a creative literary thrust of avid readers, and most profoundly, professional literary reviewers and critics of African descent. Theirs is a task motivated to dissect every written work that finds its way into the magazine. The review team leader selects a review per genre to feature in the magazine. In addition, the reviews are forwarded to the published writers' mails and also published on the WSA Review's medium blog and Facebook page:

<https://medium.com/writers-space-africa-literary-reviews>

<https://www.facebook.com/wsareviews/?=as>

In every sphere of life, new establishments bring with them some forms of euphoric sentiments and good tidings. I

believe this has been the feeling of readers and authors of the review section in the magazine since 2019 as it emits rays of critical, yet humble voices. It is part of our prospects that the WSA Editorial team in liaison with the review leadership will strive to ensure that the constant inception of upcoming editions will acclimatise efficient features that will portray a colloquy of individual and collective literary analyses marked by professionalism and expertise.

Moreover, it is clear cut that every review which finds its way in the issue keeps improving each day. Ancient sages say, die trying; it is under this atmosphere of jubilation in this jubilee (50<sup>th</sup>) edition of the magazine that this joyful influence of our hearts extends the appeal for more membership in the team.



The review team can be reached at [reviews@writersspace.net](mailto:reviews@writersspace.net). One should not bask in the fear of not trying, because growth is in trying and doing something new. 'To be is to try and do'. Thus, we can enrich our culture of reading and writing through reviewing the brilliant stories, poems, articles and flash fictions of the WSA Magazine. In this custom, we become surgeons of African literature. As a review member, I beg permission to wrap up in the following remarks: "As reviewers, we navigate through the minds of esteemed authors providing textual interpretation, translation and transmission of the exhibited texts. Thus, to enable a reader to explore into new perspectives of understanding and reinvigorating the magazine into better dimensions."



**WSA**  
**Writers Space Africa**  
 Empowering African Writers



# Writers are Immortal: Wakini lives in her words

**Temani Nkalolang**  
Botswana

Have you ever been infected by someone's personality? Wait until you hear or read about Wakini Kuria. Everyone who talks about her encodes her personality into their words and it is impossible to decode it without a dose of the same personality as well. We know of charm and her charm was her infectious personality. Her personality carried her vision infused passion- to make an unprecedented change in African literature.

Wakini had a giving heart which enabled her to cultivate her passion for reading and writing in different literary platforms she served on, including Writers Guild Kenya. Her vision birthed fully in Writers Space Africa. Because of Wakini, Writers Space Africa boasts of subgroups and members all over Africa. She

made Writers Space Africa home, not only for herself but, for every writer of African descent. Writers Space Africa now prides herself in this very same principle, giving! Giving a home/space for writers to express themselves, nurture their craft, interact with other writers from across Africa and fostering a discourse on African literature.

Having served in various roles in Writers Space Africa, we cannot overlook her amazing charismatic vigor which she exhibited in her leadership role as the Chief Editor of the WSA-Magazine in 2018. She stood as a pillar of support in the success of the 2018 African Writers Conference held in Nigeria and the 2019 African Writers Conference hosted by Kenya. The 2019 Conference was held shortly following her untimely demise. Yes, her

immortal vision is a vessel that is sailing Writers Space Africa's dream to a mile of success.

Listening to Wakini's voice in messages from every writer that met her, both physically and virtually, one can't help but feel her personality embrace their heart. She truly 'wrote hope in many a soul'. She touched the lives of people she never met, lifted others up even when she was down and now, she is forever lifted up!

With every milestone Writers Space Africa achieves, we remember Wakini. Faced with insurmountable trials, still we remember her smile. 'Never let life beat you into submission' so, we soldier on, engaging a global narrative on the future of the African writer, and the untapped potentialities of African literature with its diverse culture.

Wakini believed in nurturing reading and writing from the grass roots level and in honour of her, African Writers Conference sponsors the 'Wakini Kuria Children's Literature Prize' every year. 'Writing makes writers immortal' so, Wakini lives on!



## THE LATE WAKINI KURIA



# Eight Questions For Chief Saka

**Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi**  
Zambia

**C**hief Saka (Saka Dbosz Jr) is a dynamic Nigerian entrepreneur, philanthropist, publisher, author, magazine proprietor, scholar, music industry guru, and the bankroller of WSA Magazine from 2018 until late 2019. To celebrate this special 50<sup>th</sup> edition of the magazine, we decided to pay tribute to the Chief by way of 'Eight Questions for Chief Saka'.

**1. How did you become involved with WSA Magazine?**

The magazine wasn't there initially. What we had was Writers Space, a WhatsApp group set up by Anthony Onugba. I had met Anthony in another writers group where over time, members were fighting more about politics than paying attention to writing. Anthony told me about the need for a group strictly for writers and I agreed with him.

He then started Writers Space and many of us joined. Later on, Anthony told me of his plans to start a magazine and he came up with the blueprint for Writers Space Magazine. I said this is good, but let's make it unique by adding Africa so that we can be continental. He saw my point and birthed Writers Space Africa. Anthony was handling almost all the work at that time and I thank him for everything.

**2. What drove your passion and commitment to funding the magazine for the period that you did?**

In the beginning, Tonie (Anthony) handled the designs, editing and everything else to do with the magazine, and even his money went into it. We discussed the need to improve the quality of our magazine and the direction we were heading into. As a

result, I said I would pay for the cost to produce the magazine. I didn't hesitate in sponsoring anything that made our platform grow. Most of our members at that time were students, some were still struggling to find their feet, so we just took it upon ourselves to help the best way we could. Besides the magazine itself, we assisted with paying some school fees for some students, held quiz nights and different competitions so that WSA members could get financial rewards. There was no dull moment and members were very active!

**3. How proud and excited are you at seeing the magazine now celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> issue?**

I'm really surprised that we are up to that number of editions. It feels like it's just yesterday when we started the magazine.



I'm very excited at this achievement and very grateful to everyone who has contributed to this success story.

**4. Do you have particular books and authors that have meant something special to you?**

Yes, I grew up on James Hadley Chase and Nick Carter. Quenie by Micheal Korda taught me so much during my school-going days. There is a book titled King of Kings by Malachi that influenced my style of writing. I also crave Toni Kan, Chim Newton, Anthony Onugba and David Dial. I've loved stories from the time I was a little boy listening to my maternal grandmother telling stories all night. We had no radio or television back then. I also love magazines and movies. I think I count myself among those with the largest private collection of reading materials and books, music collection and movies. But, last year, I saw two collections that shut me up!

**5. What words would you have for writers on**

**the African continent?**

On WSA, we talk to everyone about everything. We encourage ourselves to soldier on. I would tell writers to be committed to the art. Writing is not like politics or football where money flows in at will. In writing, you must be strong to that art. You must be faithful to writing. It is a long, slow road and only the committed will survive.

**6. How do you spend your time when you're not working?**

I write and I read. My work involves a lot of writing, memos, minutes of meetings, and so on. They pour in every day. I'm lucky to have this talent because it has helped me so much in my work. I have won awards for my writing and for my job. I also do philanthropic things. I coach and mentor young people. I also exercise a lot and play with my children. We run, play soccer and all that.

**7. Do you have a message for the readers of Writers Space Africa Magazine?**

WSA Magazine is a growing space and we must all grow it, readers and writers alike. I encourage greater readership and to bring whatever contribution they can on board.

**8. What words of encouragement do you have for the Editorial team of WSA Magazine?**

I would advise the Editorial team to see their appointment as an opportunity to contribute to this project. I would encourage them to see this as service to humanity. WSA is involved in training of young minds and that is a lot of work. Keep going, it's good thing that you are part of.

The End





# Ode to The Haiku

**Nneka Joyce C. Duru**  
Nigeria

When blackbird shall sing  
The clouds shall visit the earth  
Larks shall hide in shame

I am steaming black  
When I shall sing my love song  
Fair lark shall go down

Ho! Blackbirds gyrate!  
Play to us the beaded gourd  
Let earth sing our praise!

Fair maiden, dance on  
Dark and beautiful are you  
Let earth sing your praise



Nneka Joyce Duru is a wife, mother, gospel artiste, teacher and a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Rivers State chapter. A graduate of English Language at the University of Lagos, she is a champion of women's literature and women's rights. She has visited several schools where she taught the importance of decency and the well-being of the girl-child.

Ode to the Blackbird by Duru Nneka Joyce is the winner of the [2020 African Writers Award for Poetry](#)

AVAILABLE FOR FREE DOWNLOAD

<http://www.publishwithacacia.com>





# Leaves of Winter Dusk

Kandem Thierry  
Cameroon

Withered by cold winter, overhung by  
trees,  
Tall stood the young saplings of scented  
foliage  
The lawn rimmed with grass once green,  
now brown.  
Leaves all shrivelled by the failed promise  
of rain.

I fancied a soothing saunter into Sillia  
country side.  
Lifting my head to the dawning sky, I  
mused on dark clouds.  
Wandering on down the lane, the question  
whirled in my brain  
Could jollity be begotten amidst this  
gloom?  
\*\*\*

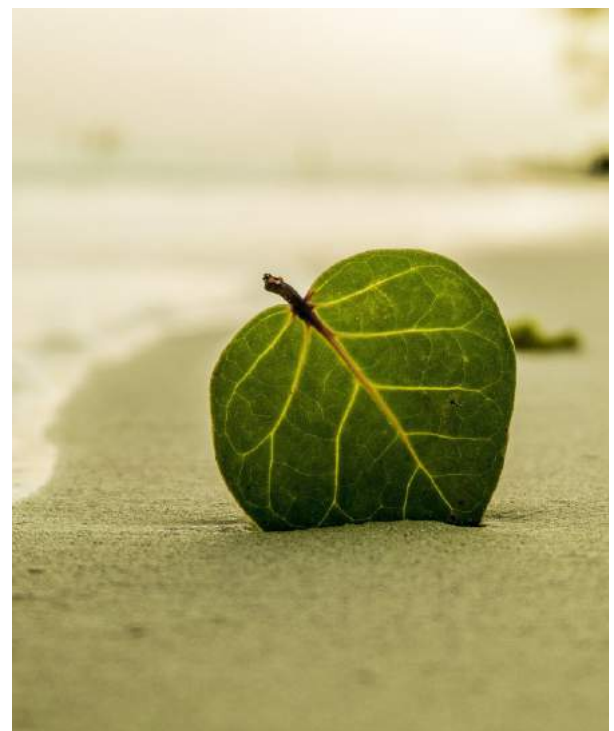
The brown foliage glinted seductively in  
the blaze of the radiance.  
The leaves had been golden, all along.  
A glimmer of radiance had risen amidst the  
unpromising premise;  
Veils of clouds had dwindled to a trickle,  
unveiling an ethereal harmony.

Once green now golden, the foliage  
glistered with colour, with splendour  
Its brilliance bathed Sillia country side in  
ethereal radiance,

Setting the morning aglow in a wash of  
splendour,  
Basking the grass and the mass.

In the balmy breezes I could hear Mother-  
Nature's voice.  
She wove her gentle fingers through the  
flora and down my spine.  
Telling me anew,  
That darkness never prevails o'er light

Humanity must not become commoditised  
Capitalism must not preclude humanity  
For by your sense of humanity, you are  
gauged.





# Daughters of Kush

Rose Awien  
South Sudan



If you search for the daughters of the land  
I ask  
Go past the smoky kitchen and the foul  
market  
Because we shall not be there  
Neither shall we be at our husbands' dingy  
huts  
Fulfilling the only duties, we were taught  
To keep us hostage  
And chain our dreams  
Nor at our father's dusty compounds,  
Living up to the only virtues we were  
taught

To sin not and do what to them was right  
To bar our feelings  
Where are those who search  
For the daughters of the land  
Come see us now and tomorrow  
We are here and will be  
Standing side by side with men  
Building our nation together  
Finally, free  
From the chains of culture and society  
That held us back too long.



# Freedom

Balogun Ayoola  
Nigeria

Freedom smells like the mild touches of  
New year's rain  
Tastes like the icing of  
A chocolate cake,  
Sounds like laughter  
Under the angry sun  
Feels like the journey of water down a  
desert  
Freedom is pain painted in yellow.



# Dreams of my ancestors

Olabisi Bello  
Nigeria



On the back of the Nigerian eagle,  
Unhealed scars carve jagged paths that  
once led to freedom,  
But the wounds still fester,  
And ooze pus that runs across the  
landmarks of a history well known:  
A journey of battles fought,  
Of graves unmarked,  
Of children whose naive eyes closed, never  
to be opened again.

On our land, dead bodies stand as trees,  
Supported by roots of blood travelling  
through the crevices of our rich soil.

When we remember, we cry, and our  
courage fizzles to steam,

But the air becomes too thick,  
And the clouds, unable to hold our grief,  
split open to rain down forgotten dreams.  
They drizzle down our throats, and we  
guzzle on them like ravished dogs,  
And the memories,  
The courage,  
The hopes of the souls we've lost become  
ours.

So, when my father hoists me on the tired  
muscles of his shoulders,  
And I hold one of his placards, pointing it  
towards the heavens,  
I dream of a freedom, so close, so sweet, I  
can taste it on the tip of my tongue.



# Uhuru

Kapondenni Manasseh Phiri  
Zambia

With serenity they fought  
In solemnity they won  
With spirit unbroken victory reign  
With a spirit of Ubuntu, we had Uhuru  
And Africa was free.

That is our story  
Indeed, an African history  
A history we have forgotten  
So many hearts are broken;  
Seeing our rich history going down the  
drain!

The likes of Nkrumah, Kaunda and Mandela  
wail

Their souls cry seeing Africa fighting  
against herself

They cry with questions

Is this the meaning of Uhuru?

Do we have the freedom or we have to  
wait for tomorrow like Sarafina?

Our freedom came as a package

A package of hatred, anger and unrest

A freedom that meant political tension

And then I wonder, are we really free?





# Savor

Sesame Mookodi  
Botswana

Oh, dear sweet taste of freedom;  
Our time is being threatened again,  
Although I enjoyed your tenderness  
seldom  
I've grown quite attached.

When wolves dressed in sheep's clothing...

Trust not the moistness,  
That suckles at your ripe teat,  
But the poison oozing from its tongue.  
I'll make it my daily mantra to repeat  
Carve it over and over  
Till my fingers bleed.



Call themselves love  
And try to coax me  
Out of your warm embrace,  
I'll recall the slicing pain...  
That circled my throat;  
Call it mercy;

Peace seeps from all my pores;  
Takes me on trips  
Usually tightly wrapped in blunts,  
Always left aching for more  
Till I shoot you straight into my vein.



# Freedom Cost

Chidiebere Udeokechukwu  
Nigeria

And from my lonely cell  
I see the rising sun.  
And through my prison bars  
I feel his brilliant rays.  
I shall fear not the grip  
Of my handsome-hempen-tie  
Or the single fatal swipe  
Of the cur-sed silver blade  
That craves my tender neck.



# Tribute to the voices that bled

Charles Nnanna  
Nigeria

Who'd we call free,  
the boy who just made it out of  
the womb or his mother who agonized  
to get him out?/Perhaps if

freedom will speak for itself it  
will point only to the blood that  
broke, and say nothing. It won't be  
misunderstood./Silence is loud,

but blood is louder, stronger,  
having a voice that shatters the bars  
of bondage./Flags fly proudly

in the air 'cause freedom has always  
been a seed that isn't afraid of death,  
never afraid to take

its unkillable voice into the deepest  
of the deep 'cause even right there, its  
roots hold sway./And when it shoots, the  
earth has no choice but to come under its  
puissant shades and breathe an air of  
liberty.

This is a tribute to all the voices that saw  
the brutal edge of tyranny./  
we are, 'cause — like the woman in  
labour — you never quitted in the face of  
agony.





**African Writers  
Conference '21**  
Tanzania

**Coming Soon!**

**African Writers  
Conference '21**  
Tanzania



## WSA SUB-GROUP CHAIRPERSONS ON WSA AND WSA MAGAZINE'S 50<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE

### 11. Oamdang Yowasi, Uganda

I'm a Ugandan poet. WSA and her magazine have exploited the would-be dull potentials in aspiring writers and readers in WSA-Uganda. Personally, WSA has shaped my poetry and being part of her poetry editorial team, I've greatly improved in style and content. The road WSA has taken is a tricky but a good one. It'll one day be the most read African publication.

### 12. Houda Messoudi, Morocco

WSA is a true gem! The adventure has helped me grow as a writer, broadened my knowledge about writing styles and genres, and most importantly, opened the door to meet and interact with writers from all over Africa.

### 13. Marita Banda, Zambia

WSA has been a boon to literary artists in Zambia as it has offered various platforms for local writers to participate in and showcase their skills and talents at different levels including WSA residences, African Writers Conferences, contests and others. In November, 2020, the AWC came to Lusaka presenting an opportunity for a more intimate experience and appreciation of the work of the regional body. Because of the high-level content and diverse monthly themes, the WSA Magazine is circulated beyond the registered membership and readership is constantly on the rise.

### 14. Neo Space-Poet Masetlane, Botswana








WSA unleashed what was hidden within. Coming from a nation that regards writing as a white man's job, or only for researchers and journalists, the magazine has helped a few of us to figuratively come out of the closet and add more to our God-given talent. It is no longer about only writing out of emotions; it is about a talent to nature, a passion to feed and a skill to explore.

### 15. Benny Wanjohi, Kenya

WSA has been the epitome of African creativity, a hub for classic work and a bonding space for writers from different African countries. It showcases the diversity of talents, perceptions and cultures that Africa oozes while concurrently exhibiting the unity that emanates from literature. WSA-Kenya, having had the privilege to produce one of the magazine's Chief Editors, the late Wakini 'Kini' Kuria, looks forward to a more vibrant magazine that will be more inclusive, bringing works to the forefront of writers from the 'unseen' and 'unheard' African countries in matters of literature. Cheers to greater heights with the new Editorial team!

# WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

MAGAZINE IN NUMBERS

-  Most Downloaded February Edition 2020.  
The theme was love
-  Most Liked Cover: July 2017 Cover
-  Most Read Article on the WSA Website:  
Writing a Good Piece: What Poets Should  
Know by Nnane Anna Nthube (Cameroon)
-  The genre with the most submissions received:  
Poetry
-  Number of WSA Subgroups: 21
-  Number of Round Table Hosted: 24 and  
counting (hosted twice a month)
-  Number of AWC editions: 3

Genre: Article

Title: Remembering To Forget

Columnist: Namse Udosen, Nigeria

Review: Joseph Oduro, Ghana

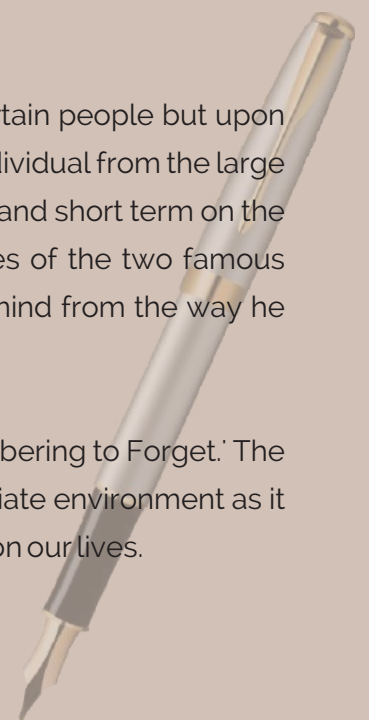
**M**ore often than not our memories are potent enough to stir turmoil within us or grace us with peace. Memories are very important components of a person's life and their relationships with friends and families. This article titled 'Remembering to Forget' illuminates the very premise of neuroplasticity, a study which circumferences the ideals of our experiences, rewires our minds and shapes our personalities. The writer aesthetically defines memory as the complex ways through which events, which are raw data, go through a cognitive process and becomes information. The sharp evolution from the scene of gazing at the ceiling in its impetuous nature, helps the reader to grasp a detailed synopsis of the article's theme.

The chronological order in which the article is written can be likened to glue which pins the reader to their seat keeping them engaged till the last word of the article. That is to say, the orderly arrangement of facts and details relating to the human memory is so precise that it ignites some sense of inquisitiveness in the reader. The writer's references to research about the human memory is purported in building trust and credibility in his work. That makes it all the more factious and commendable.

He goes ahead to tell us the processes through which we retrieve information from the large chunk of data stored in our minds. This suggests that usually, our senses collaborate with our memory responses and sharpness including our senses of smell, hearing, touch, sight and taste. These senses aid in the retrieval of information.

He further makes an analogy that at times you may forget the names of certain people but upon seeing them, reflex response from your memory recovers the name of the individual from the large chunk of data stored. Most of the time, our attention is drawn quickly to long and short term on the mention of memory. He does an excellent job in inculcating the differences of the two famous aspects of memory into the article. He seemed to have had his readers in mind from the way he weaved together each letter, morpheme and word as well as punctuations.

What a way to commence the year 2021 with such a masterpiece as 'Remembering to Forget.' The most important lesson drawn from the article is to be cautious of our immediate environment as it takes an essential role in building our memory and having a direct implication on our lives.





**Genre: Flash Fiction**

**TITLE: Trigger**

**Writer: Temani Nkalolang, Botswana**

**Reviewer: Halieo Motanyane, Lesotho**

**T**he very first question that crossed my mind when I read Temani's title was, "who shot who?" The power of a flash fiction! Before everything, it's glaring that Temani Nkalolang outdid herself with every part of this story.

The title 'Trigger', not only sends shivers for what might be found in the story, but also suspends the mind from the events to unfold in the story.

Getting into the story, Trigger turns out to be everything, but not guns and shootings. Who would have known? The story is set far in a peaceful office space. I say peaceful because it is unlikely to find a person breaking into the office and suddenly shooting everyone around. As far as to what turned out to be, the twist of the story from the title still makes its way into befitting the two perfectly together. When she hears the footsteps outside, the traumatic memory triggers from within and drama starts.

In a very short two minutes, the story of a traumatised woman in a normal office starts and ends right in there. Using the first person narrative, Temani shows a young girl witnessing is assaulted by the men in big boots and batons. Possibly, men who could be policemen. Now one would wonder, why and how could policemen assault a citizen? IN her last sentence, the persona says, "That was the last time I had seen my father alive, dragged by the police, for a crime he didn't do."

Lastly, I applaud the simplicity used in the story. Following through the story, it is very easy to fit into the person's shoes and directly see and feel everything she was going through. Not many writers can master this technique as Temani did in this story.





Genre: Poetry

TITLE: The Whispers of Memorial Notes

Writer: Oluwatosin Okupa, Nigeria

Reviewer: Temani Nkalolang, Botswana

**T**he past is always in the present, compressed and stored in 'moments' by the human mind-memories. Oluwatosin Okupa's poem immediately hypnotizes the reader with "The Whispers of Memorial Notes" and carries the reader with the tide of strong imagery into the cascading waterfall of questions (S1, L1 & L2, S2, L1 & L2).

In a jet stream of metaphors the reader is swooped into the persona's thoughts; whether the past 'breathing in memories' can influence or affect the present. The past accumulates in memories and eventually spills out and meets 'eye to eye' with the present/today/reality (the blazing sun).

The past does affect the present (S2 L3) either positively (S2, L6 & 7) or negatively (S2, L5).

In Stanza 3, the reader is deposited into a pool beneath the waterfall, shifting the persona's tone to a more accepting one of the inevitability of the past affecting the present.

The past is alive in memories (S3, L1) and though stored at the back, out of reach, it always finds its way to the forefront and it becomes hard to keep it out of today's path (S3, L6). In the calm of the pool, 'The Whisper of Memorial Notes' again opens the reader to the reality of the past accumulating in memories and stored in moments. Ready for another ride down the waterfall? The mood is bittersweet dressed in nostalgia.





Genre: Short Story

Title: **Scared Little Boy**

Writer: **Madeha Ezekiel Malecela, Tanzania (winner Of The Wakini Kuria Prize For Children's Literature)**

Reviewer: **Namse Udosen, Nigeria**

This is a tale about a boy who overcomes fear. A grandfather tells his granddaughter about the travails of a little boy followed by a ghost. The writer uses both third and first person narratives to build the story. It is a tale within a tale as it switches from a present conversation to a narration of a tale and on a few occasions, the boy speaks in the first person. The switching is done smoothly, the reader would not notice.

The characters remain anonymous throughout the story. They are described with pronouns and common nouns.

The story is paced in a steady mid-tempo that makes it easy to follow.

Madeha has written a classic with a style that's fresh. It's almost poetic at some point. However, I would have loved to have proper names to the characters.



WSA NIGERIA ANTHOLOGY

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THEME:

## REBIRTH

GENRE: FICTION (SHORT STORY)

SUBMISSION DATE - January 25th - March 7th, 2021.

ALL ENTRIES ARE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THIS EMAIL:

[wsa.nigeria@gmail.com](mailto:wsa.nigeria@gmail.com)

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES\*

Submit one short story no more than 2000 words in a doc./docx./PDF file to the email address above.

The story should be in Times New Roman, Font 12 and single spaced.

Entries are only open to Nigerian authors (born in Nigeria or born to at least one Nigerian parent.)

Include your city, email address, phone number, social media handles and brief biography in the body of the email.

The submission window is open from January 25th- March 7th, 2021.

The anthology is scheduled to be published in July 2021 and all writers will be notified about the status of their submission before then.



**WSA-N**  
Writers Space Africa - Nigeria  
Empowering Nigerian Writers

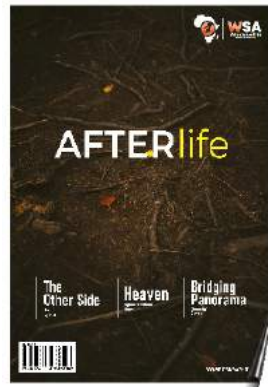
WSA NIGERIA ANTHOLOGY

REBIRTH





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# REVOLUTION

VOL. 5 NO. 3



MARCH, 2021

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# Call for Submissions

THEME: MISERY

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international online literary magazine, will from 1st to 14th March accept submissions for the May 2021 edition in these categories:

- Flash Fiction
- Essays/Articles
- Poetry
- Short Stories
- Children's Literature

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



# Editor's Note

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What's a revolution if not an idea brought to life that repudiates what has been 'business as usual'? What's a revolution if not to create a paradigm shift in how we think about, feel about and/or experience culture, politics, service, love, spirituality?

"Writing is really a way of thinking – not just feeling but thinking about things that are disparate, unresolved, mysterious, problematic, or just sweet." A Toni Morrison quote.

As you dig into this edition of WSA Magazine, we hope the various ways in which our contributors have dissected and tackled the theme Revolution will open up your mind. Look out for 'Editors' Choice'. These are pieces that, for our editors of the different genres, best exemplified the theme. After all, what's a revolution if not to prick at our conscience, at those things 'that are disparate, unresolved, mysterious, problematic, or just sweet'?

Let's do this!

Namwanja,

Chief Editor

# Editorial Crew

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Neo Space Poet Masetlane - Botswana

## CREATIVE EDITOR

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Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy - Cameroon

## FLASH FICTION

Marjorie Moono Simuyuni - Zambia

## POETRY

Omadang Yowasi - Uganda

Temani Nkalolang - Botswana

Comfort Nyati - Zimbabwe

## SHORT STORIES

Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe

Fomutar Stanislaus - Cameroon

## PUBLICITY

Namse Udosen - Nigeria

Bildad Makori - Kenya

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# May 20<sup>th</sup>

Kingsley Aaron Onuigbo  
Nigeria



**M**ay 20th, 2023.  
9 : 1 7 a . m  
Dear Diary,

Today, I woke up with another headache. Just like yesterday's, it started with the same rhythmic drumming on one side of my head. Then slowly, it spread evenly until my head radiated with that familiar throbbing sensation. Like yesterday, I walked straight to the refrigerator to grab a bottle of cold water and a tea bag. Like yesterday, I spilled the water bottle all over the wooden floor and rug. But, today is not yesterday. I closed my eyes, willing the pain to disappear as I drank from my cold tea-bag and s w a l l o w e d t h e paracetamol tablets my doctor recommended for my frequent headaches. Today will be more.

Chinememma walks in just when I put down my pencil

and finally decide on what to wear for today's speech. She has come with two wrappers of steaming moimoi – my favourite. It's smelling of strong, scented leaves and was probably made with suya-pepper and stockfish. The house is cold, and the heat from the food warms me nicely. But, I am nauseous and have no appetite. So, after my first bite, I tell Chinememma about my headache. We talk about yesterday's election results while she eats both moimoi wraps and reads through my hastily-drafted speech simultaneously. I rub my forehead in a circular motion, still trying to get the drumming in my head to stop. I look outside, through these large triangular glass windows, and for a second, I am confused seeing the convoy of black BMW's waiting.

10:24pm

After yesterday's announcement, I disappeared from the public eye. I flew to Port-Harcourt -privately. Chinememma rented this duplex -with its large arched windows, lakeside paintings, and rose gardens- under her name and using her money. She also had my Public Media Assistant announce that I would give a speech at the Yakubu Gowon Stadium in Port-Harcourt. NTA news, AIT, Channels, and some other national television channels sent emails requesting exclusive interviews hours before my speech, but thankfully, she refused all of them. After yesterday's party, I was drained but still with the skull-splitting headache, I managed to draft a speech just before I slept. Chinememma offered to



write the speech, and I knew it might have been better if she did. Still, I wanted my first speech as the incumbent President of Nigeria to be filled with my voice, experiences, and struggles as a woman in politics. Chinememma has definitely been better than my previous PA.

Yesterday, I left Sidney alone with the children. Apart from Chinememma, he was the only one who had my new phone number and knew where I was staying in Port-Harcourt. He calls while I am staring at the convoy through the windows. I talk to Somachi first. She sounds bubbly as she explains the theatrics at

the party which is being held in my honour, at our Lagos house. Burna Boy is performing live. She says there are more people than our large Banana-Island house can contain. She says Senator Chukwuemeka Ekweze is there with his wife, Chizoba Ekweze. I laughed when she mimicked Chizoba's morning greetings, "Ada m, kedụ ka i mere! Ekele diri gi" in a low 'Chizoba' voice. Surprisingly, I remember when Chizoba gave her husband the address to Michael Chikeaze's house and the scandal he created during the electoral debate after finding proof that I aborted Michael's child in college. Once again, the nostalgia of

our past college friendship seeps and intertwines with the red-lined hatred that burns deep in my heart and is probably ingrained in my heart tissues. I feel a sharp pain in my forehead like someone is hacking my brains with a knife. The headache is back. But, I never realised when it was gone. For the hundredth time, I say a quick prayer and promise to never think about the Ekweze's again.

Nzube is next. He is surprisingly quiet on the phone. I expected him to say a lot, like his sister. But all he said was, "Congratulations on the win." Later, I realised why when Sidney tells me Nzube was suspended from school for punching another student. Apparently, the student had called me a 'ho' and said Yusuf Francis should have won the elections, then Nzube punched him. I am proud of his reasoning, but I can't let him know that. The method was wrong. I will probably scold him when I get back home.



Sidney and I have shared homemaking duties since we started dating, so I am sure Nzube and Somachi are safe and satisfied without me. I talk to Sidney about Senator Chukwuemeka, and as we laugh about that situation, I cannot help but remember how it almost ruined my relationship with my children, my career, and my election chances. For a fleeting moment, my head stopped spinning, and the throbbing sensation eased; and this time... this time, I was aware of it.

12:06pm

After the phone call, Chinememma brought a pant-suit for me to wear. The suit was dark blue and short-sleeved, with some embroidered flower design in the chest region. It was so stiffly starched, and I could not imagine walking around in it. She said she had returned the purple blouse and black skirt I picked because the sleeves were too tight, the skirt was not long enough, and the colour was too bright. She

**said many things, but I knew why she returned the clothes I picked. Chinememma has been very protective since the Michael incident. She doesn't even allow me to check my Twitter account since #saynoFunmilayoAbortion was the number one trending topic in Nigeria. I remember how women called me out for being a 'slut' and men said I was unprofessional and could not handle the rigors of Nigerian politics. However, I was not comfortable in the pant-suit, and I wanted to give my speech wearing what I was comfortable in.**

Looking in the mirror, I see my crimson hair resting right above my shoulders; my purple blouse, which stops just above my shoulder blades, has a tailored look that is bold against my brown skin, my lips look fuller because of the purple lipstick I have on, and my ankle-length black skirt is fittingly tight. I feel comfortable with what I am wearing, but as I walk

towards the black sienna waiting for me, I am mildly worried about the critics I will face... not wearing a suit and all. Chinememma spots me. She jokes about the cameramen being distracted by my beauty, and she takes a picture. "By the way, your speech is amazing," she says as we bend low enough to enter the car.

1:34 pm

**The road to the stadium was very bumpy. I will talk to Governor Nyesome Wike about this. We drove in about forty minutes ago, and the speaker has been talking about yesterday's elections for the past twenty minutes. There are so many people here, it still feels like I'm dreaming, and many people are holding placards with the same slogan: "Women in Politics." It warms my heart to read this. I really want to get this speech over with, plus my headache is not any better.**



The speaker finally introduces me, and as I walk to the stage with everyone's eyes burning holes to my back, the pain intensifies. The pain has an unpleasant warmth to it, eating at my empty stomach. I feel nauseas too, enough to make me hold onto the mike-stand for support. I breathe slowly, I have been good at ignoring this pain and hiding it from everyone, but that's not possible now. The pain owns me, dominates my thoughts, and controls my actions. As I fumble with my speech and occasionally change

posture on national television, I hear one of the cameramen whisper to the other, "Period stress no go affect male president." I continue with my speech.

7:09 pm

Dear Diary,

At the end of my speech, everyone applauded me. Everyone was excited, especially women, and I am glad I can be this image of motivation. But as I fumbled initially with the speech, I couldn't help but remember the Ekweze's when those cameramen referenced my period. I

realised something; my experiences as a woman is filled with many tough choices, bad memories, and ruined friendships. Experiences from a marginalised community that I can pick up if I need to learn something; memories I can bend to gain a perspective that will help me to be a better leader; beliefs I can use to re-see situations through the lens of my people's needs and traumas rather than mine. This is my new awakening: to be the person I am destined to be and to lead Nigeria towards a new revolution.

# A Song of Many Voices

**Maurice Kitwaa**  
Kenya

The time is exactly 21:09hrs, the curfew is fast approaching. It is dark outside and there are light showers. The darkness I can explain, but I cannot tell you why it is raining at this time of the year. You see, Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) is to blame for the darkness; they have decided to punish us because of all the illegal power lines snaking through this sham of architecture called the ghetto. This is where we live, this is our home sweet home.

The matatu comes to a halt at a bus stop, and I am the only one alighting at this particular point. Reality sets in hard as I move from the warmth inside the matatu and step into the cold lonely night. This cold wind rushes and hugs me tightly, it grips and embraces me like we are two lovers who have not



locked eyes in years. As the matatu speeds away leaving me standing at the bus stop, I feel like Jonah tossed out into the sea amidst the horrific storms, only this time the rain continues.

I quickly wear my hoodie and cover my precious Afro. The rain is increasing and soon enough it's raining like cats and dogs. I cannot make it home with this rain, I think to myself, it's better if I find some place to shelter. My eyes quickly scan my surroundings and Mwaniki's place comes to view, that is

always a nice place to shelter and I see a bunch of people standing there. Jumping over puddles of muddy water, I quickly dart over to Mwaniki's place.

In a few seconds I arrive at Mwaniki's place, but my arrival is not welcomed. You see, the people sheltering at this place are the blue boys or as we love to call them the beasts; they are the police or the pigs depending on where you come from. They have these long rifles peeping shyly underneath their combat jackets. They look at me and proceed to study me like I am the most wanted criminal. One of them approaches me and asks why I am running. Before I can even answer, they handcuff me and take me to their Land Rover parked just behind Mwaniki's place. There, I come across other people who have been arrested as well.



As we are driven to the police station, one by one, the people I was arrested alongside bribe the police officers in the vehicle are let go. As for me, I still cannot fathom why I have been arrested.

By the time we arrive at the police post, I am the only arrested person the Land Rover.:

The police post is a sad site to behold; it reeks of urine, sweaty, unwashed linen, corruption, and everything else that is not nice. The lady at the booking desk is dozing off, saliva oozes from her mouth, while flies play tag with her face. Momentarily she twitches, and the flies go away. When she finally awakens from her siesta, she quizzically studies me and flashes a smile exposing her brown teeth, probably from smoking too much tobacco, I think to myself, her face seems to say here comes the money.

I am booked on the occurrence book (OB) as caught in the act of robbery

with violence. I have never even slaughtered a chicken, but here I am being accused of disturbing the peace with a dangerous weapon. Such nonsense. The police escort me outside to some metallic huts which are meant to be the cells. Two of these huts are already filled to capacity, I am locked inside the third hut. I am the only occupant at the moment, or so I think.

Inside this metallic hut, my eyes focus and try to see something, anything, in this pitch darkness. I hear rustling and movement. I freeze and listen, not moving not, even blinking, and then I see them. For a moment, I cannot believe what I am seeing. My eyes are playing tricks on me, is this real? No! This cannot be real.

There standing before me are old men and women with nasty dreadlocks; a closer look at them and I immediately figure out who they are.

This are the unsung heroes who fought for our independence.

They suddenly begin chanting and singing revolutionary songs, circling me, and urging me to join them.

At first, I am reluctant, I am still confused, but then I join them singing at the top of my voice, screaming Sheria! Sheria! Fwataaaa! (the law! the law! follow the law!). Stamping the floor while clapping hard, I feel like I have been reborn.

This strange ritual has taken over me completely that I cannot even hear the police officers outside banging and making efforts to open the door. Why would I care though? I am with a legion of freedom fighters, I have never felt so alive in my life; if they want me, they will have to go through my new friends.

The police open the door and rush in to see what the clutter is all about. They look at me strangely. One of them even sniffs me like a dog sniffing out the fear from an intruder.

They then light their torches and scan through my cell. The strange thing is I am all alone in this cell.

I could have sworn there were men and women here urging me to sing and fight for my freedom. I am not crazy.

I cannot be. As the police quizzically study me, prisoners in the other cells begin to sing the same songs I was chanting with my new friends. The whole police post goes on a rampage, a devilish smile dances on my lip as I watch

the fear and confusion written all over the faces of these blue boys.

The lights are back on now and the rain has stopped falling. The time is now. Let the revolution begin.



# Call for Submissions

The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature was established in 2019 to honour the memory and legacy of Wakini Kuria who served on the Advisory board of the African Writers Development Trust and as the Chief Editor of the monthly Writers Space Africa magazine. The previous winners are Marjorie Moono Simuyuni (Zambia), Madeha Ezekial Malecela (Tanzania), Blessing Aliyu Tarfa (Nigeria) and Halieo Motanyane (Lesotho).

For the third edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize, the 1st place winner will receive a cash prize of \$150 and a certificate. The second place will receive \$100 while the third place will receive \$75. We are calling for submissions in the Children's literature genre and it is open ONLY to writers of African descent from 15th February until 1st June, 2021.

Please note that there is no theme for this call. The entry should not exceed 1,200 words and must not have been previously published anywhere including personal blogs. The entry should be sent in MS Word format only to [wakiniaward@writerstrust.org](mailto:wakiniaward@writerstrust.org). Please include your name, country, a short bio and your social media handles - if any.

If you have any questions about the award, please send an email to [info@writerstrust.org](mailto:info@writerstrust.org).

# The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature.



# Trends of Colonialism in Africa; Call for Mental Revolution

Comfort Nyati SDB  
Zimbabwe



Dear reader, I beseech you to read this with a sober mind. While bracketing all the fore-prejudices you may have towards this text, recall that moment when a fist of the colonist knocked you down, either physically or emotionally. I presume you never succumbed to it, you kept soaring to unravel, revolt and decolonise your mind from any form of colonisation.

Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. It is not a modern phenomenon; rather world history accounts many examples of one society gradually expanding by incorporating adjacent territory and settling its people on newly conquered territories. Power and dominance are

basically intrinsic mental cravings in both rational and irrational species. The desire to dominate and be socially feared and honoured and the privilege of getting better portions is what yields the thirst to colonise the weaker ones. Without restrictions to a specific time or place, nevertheless, from the 16th Century, the audible song of Western colonialism in Africa began to pick its lyrics till date.

The interest of this article sees the concept of colonialism as inhering in three trends in Africa. Factually, not static but progressive because it has engulfed the continent through three trends: Firstly, European/Asian perpetual influence – the main tree of colonialism in Africa which has established un-uprooted roots, perhaps necessary to be called

eternal roots. Meanwhile, the following two are merely branches yet powerful. Secondly, despotic appetite – which refers to the tyrannical leadership imposed by many octogenarian African heads of state, followed by their refusal to retire. And lastly tribal superiorities – resulting in massive domestic tribal conflicts that have occurred and are still occurring in many parts of Africa. These three trends are prototypical to what I refer to as Africa's Tripartite Colonialism.

Every nation attained her independence at a given time different from the other. We hoped and embraced the rapture of a triumphant independent Africa anticipating a ceasefire, emancipation of Africans and a peaceful progressing continent.



Stuck in euphoric illusions, little was it known that the downfall of white-to-black colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa ushered a new tide of black-to-black colonialism, initially the uppermost vicious form of human subjugation. Countries like Zimbabwe are entangled in the nightmares of democracy and this makes one question the direction in which the country is headed because ideal independence hasn't befallen the nation; it was simply a transition from British colonisation to Zanu colonisation. Countries like South Sudan, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, to mention a few, are still suffering the yoke of tribalism. We take pride in our diverse tribes, should we not pride in the tribal animosities on the ground?

In the stream of these patterns, it mirrors an active colonialism which is fully alive, at work and at play. Though the very concept is fluid and lacks innocence to an African child due to the penalties borne, we inhabit a continent which is

essentially an end product of colonialism. Actually, the flourishing business in Africa now is the continued disunity and subjugation of the powerless. Living in the web of such unprecedented disparities, a new set of revolution is called for.

Revolution has its complex politics and we should approach it with a critical mind in dichotomising these complexities. Some upheavals are schemed for the worst while some for the better. I am disillusioned with the latter because often times we have been entwined into it. We divide our communities, intensifying racism/tribalism, xenophobia and violence; we demolish bridges and colonise each other. A typical example is the case of Zimbabwe's 2017 well strategised coup which sought to oust the long serving former nonagenarian president. It seemed like a revolutionary schemed motive, on the contrary, it served to harness another tyrannical system. Therefore, the ideal

revolution which Africa starves of today is that which is fronted by philanthropic motives.

Consequently, this has resulted in a diminished originality, a deterred sense of belonging. The original Africanity in one's self is slowly being washed away by the waves of emulation. I admit that the return to our original selves in this era is merely an illusion for we are encircled by a society of structured stereotypes. It is a two-way thing; we are stereotyped and we too, stereotype ourselves. To this we need to rise above the strata of social stratification. The passage to this is not a physical upheaval rather a mental insurrection that fosters a change in attitude, promoting unity in diversity.

To this end, we cannot overlook the effect of colonisation on our educational system. Education in the pre-colonial African society was performative, but colonialism came and crashed that.

Our educational system is at the core of the mental revolution. One of the commendable areas for indigenous resistance should begin in the classroom.

Thus, revolution can only come through an informed, gallant and daring mind. It is not only academic honour that liberates us, but an ideal revolution that begins from the mind – a revolution of the mind – that births a new evolution. Remember that the coming forth of every generation carries a new consciousness that has its demands. While some demands are met, some are

not, we ought to keep revolting against all follies and change of mind-set is key to this.

In his article, *Indigenous Pathways to Action and Freedom* (2005), Taiake Alfred argues that meaningful change to the colonial condition requires a lasting transformation of society through indigenous renaissance. Luckily, there are a few individuals who are challenging despotism and corruption, the likes of Bobi Wine (Uganda), Nelson Chamisa (Zimbabwe) and Aisha Yesufu (Nigeria). Their daring attitude is a seed of resurgence. Nonetheless

the continent still starves for more revolutionary minded individuals, resolute minds that are able to spike a new evolution and make Africa a welcoming home to Africans.

Robin Sharma, a contemporary motivational writer and speaker opens his book *The 5am Club* with a call to heroism: "The world needs more heroes and why wait for them when you have it in you to become one?" Additionally, a hero can only be identified if he thinks revolutionary and wears the mask of philanthropism. "Now, more than ever, the illusions of division threaten our very existence. We all know the truth in times of crises, the wise build bridges while the foolish build barriers. Therefore, we must find a way to look after one another as if we were one single tribe." The pill to heal this crisis lies within you and me, to decolonise our minds, to develop, not skyscrapers rather, our minds; henceforth, an urgent call for mental revolution.



# Genge at the Helm of Ending the Pandemic

Wamuyu Yvonne  
Kenya

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There was obvious excitement when we jumped into the new decade. It has always been the nature of the modern man to make grand plans that help to focus their resolve as they go through their days. No one was ready for how the past year had been. The world was shaken by the pandemic at all levels. Economies grappled in the face of an invisible enemy. Students, teachers, parents, manufacturers, governments, etc. were all singing the same song. There was widespread fear and the call for urgent action by governments and in turn the population, to protect itself.

The world of the arts, particularly music, got hit almost immediately when borders and interactions shut down. All over the world, tours and concerts

were being cancelled. On a national level, clubs and entertainment joints also experienced closures, with little warning. Suddenly musicians, who mostly worked on a freelance basis, were unemployed.

However, in a massive show of resilience, Kenyans turned online for their entertainment when they could not go outside and mingle. The streaming services experienced a massive increase in demand coupled with new subscriptions. Artistes had no option but to keep on giving. They set up their music on the various platforms and sang or rapped our sorrows away. Though in their solitary places, Kenyans came together with other Africans to participate in dance challenges that reminded us that we are one.

Genge is a music genre that emerged at the beginning of the century and has stayed with us for close to two decades. The genre is defined by the use of sheng in rap and it borrows heavily from popular hip hop sounds. Close to two decades later, the genre saw a rebirth in Gengetone. This style of music, also originating from small estates of Nairobi, took the internet by storm. At a time when the people were scared and looking for an escape, Gengetone was there to offer it.

The new subgenre is more akin to dancehall than hip hop. The songs are mostly done by boy bands of young men in colourful attire. The videos have been under siege for seemingly objectifying women by having them dance in scanty dresses.



They have also been criticised for speaking openly about drug and alcohol use as well as sexual matters.

During the pandemic, Gengetone artistes actively made music about emerging issues. They rapped about the quarantine conditions and the impact of the pandemic on society, especially the interpersonal relationships. Gengetone has gained eager listeners; young men and women in their teens and twenties. The characteristic beats can be heard blaring from speakers of entertainment joints, radio

stations, and in almost all public service vehicles that ply the Nairobi metropolitan area and beyond. The impact on the music industry by these young artistes has been so great that they have scored collaborations with older artistes who want to tap into the hype. This mutually beneficial arrangement helps the Gengetone sound permeate through to even older listeners who are looking to challenge their palette.

One of the ways documented that a pandemic can end is dying a social death. This generally

means that people get tired of having their lives interrupted by fear and anxieties surrounding the virus. Gengetone has helped Kenyans feel ready to move on and socialise once again as they dance to good music. In the post-Covid19 world, the genre has a lot of lessons that we can borrow from to make society better. One huge lesson that we can learn from this subgenre is the value of working in groups to create a harmonious sound. The genre is synonymous with boy bands, who are very distinct in their membership.



These groups have also managed to work well with other artistes to promote their music to broader audiences. This type of group work makes it easier for everyone to throw in their voice in a competitive space, all the while developing their style of rap. Another thing that the post-Covid19 world might appreciate is the open discussion of previously hushed topics. They have come out to discuss reproductive health, emergent dating norms, the age-old power play between the genders, the place of money in relationships as well as the repercussions of drug use. These highly inciting messages refuse to be ignored. They have caught the attention of stakeholders and it is easy to find advertisement messages borrowing from a particular tagline to push their message. It will be of benefit to the coming generations if they can be able to access information about their reproductive health and be able to talk

about their experiences, especially the ugly ones, freely. It is the only way to healing.

The competitive nature in the employment field, as well as the higher acceptance of individuals pursuing artistic careers, has become more widespread than in any of the past generations. The pandemic forced most people to turn to online platforms for socialisation and entertainment - phenomena that experts speculate will hold in a post-Covid19 era. Gengetone has given leeway for young people previously unable to access a sound that is their own and an exclusive audience the opportunity to earn money faster for their craft. This will contribute to their lives and consequently to the economic recovery of the country.

The Genge style of music, by tapping into the use of sheng, serves as a unifier. The language, by borrowing heavily from Swahili and other languages spoken

across the country, gives its speakers a singular identity. The only challenge is to keep up with the vocabulary that morphs and grows at high rates. With the rising political tensions toward the electioneering period, the Kenyan youth will need a unifying factor that will help them look at each other as friends rather than foes.

The nature of the music videos does not, unlike other genres, rely on flashy shows of wealth and mentions of shiny things that leave listeners wishing for things they cannot have. Instead, they are a direct reflection of the middle and lower classes, or hustlers, who are the active audience for the music. This is important at a time when there will be a lot of changes and financial pressure. The music does not pile onto the societal pressure of appearance and possession. Instead, it encourages letting go and taking it easy after all is said and done: this is what the world needs right now, an easy transition into the new normal.



# Call for Submissions

Since 2018, Writers Space Africa in partnership with the African Writers Development Trust, has held the annual African Writers Awards as the highpoint of the African Writers Conference. Previous winners include Manu Herbstein (Ghana), Andrea B Matambo (Zambia), Priscillar Matara (Botswana), Asoloko Gloria Akayi (Nigeria), and Benson Mugo (Kenya).

For 2021, we are delighted to announce a call for submission for the African Writers Awards under the theme:

## THE FUTURE OF AFRICA.

This is open from **1st February until 31st May**.

We accept submissions to the following categories:

- Poetry (Structured or unstructured)
- Creative Non-Fiction (1,500 words maximum)
- Drama (6 acts maximum)

A cash prize of **\$100** will be awarded to each winner along with a certificate.

For more information, and to submit your entry, please visit -

<https://www.africanwritersconference.com/awards/>.

Please direct all concerns to

[info@africanwritersconference.com](mailto:info@africanwritersconference.com).



# Mahube (A new dawn)

Temani Nkalolang  
Botswana



**O**n the first day of school after the festive season, Mahube noticed a change in her childhood friend, Tlhong.

Normally, they would chat nonstop about how they spent the festive season, the gifts they received, new clothes and even the food they ate. But the jovial Tlhong was wearing a serious sullen face, even Mahube's silly jokes didn't tickle her at all.

After school, Mahube asked Tlhong what was wrong. Tlhong narrated her painful ordeal to Mahube. Mahube felt bad for her friend and she decided to help Tlhong. So, she accompanied the scared Tlhong to her home to tell Tlhong's mother what happened. Tlhong's mother was happy to see Mahube. "Good afternoon ma. Please

sit down we have to talk to you," Mahube said.

Tlhong's mother chuckled but obeyed. She was fond of her daughter's friend.

"Ok, tell me what you naughty kids did this time," she said jokingly.

"Tlhong's uncle misbehaved with her and we have to go to the police right now!" Mahube blurted out

"You want to... you... you... Tlhong, what is this nonsense?" she asked her voice rising.

"I, it, it's true Mama..." Tlhong stammered.

"Remember when Uncle said he had back pain and asked me to massage his back, he, he, he undressed me and touched me inappropriately and, and..."

she said choking on her tears.

"Shut up! Shut up Tlhong! How can you say that about your uncle?"

The matter spiralled out of control and Tlhong's mother chased Mahube out of their yard, calling her a bad influence on her daughter and warned her never to talk to her daughter again.

Mahube could not sleep that night, she kept tossing and turning. She wondered how she would help her friend without getting her into more trouble with her mother who was so furious. How will she make her understand? She could not ignore what Tlhong's uncle did, she was so angry with him. She kept thinking about what her grandmother taught her, "**Ngwana yoo sa leleng o swela tharing.**"

By morning, she had made up her mind to help her friend no matter what.

Seeing the state Tlhong was in at school tightened Mahube's resolve. She waited by the classroom door for her teacher. When the teacher came, Mahube pulled her aside and narrated the whole story to her. The teacher gave the class work and called the two girls to the principal's office. At first, Tlhong was not willing to talk, but Mahube assured her the teacher will help her and she verified Mahube's narration before their teacher and the principal.

The teacher went with the girls to Tlhong's mother. Tlhong's mother was adamant that Tlhong's story was a figment of her silly

imagination.

That her brother is a good man, he took them in when Tlhong's father abandoned them. She blamed Mahube for instigating her daughter against her uncle. She kept saying if they report him to the police who will take care of them, what will people say.

The teacher finally calmed Tlhong's mother down and made her see reason and asked her to think about Tlhong's wellbeing and future, first and foremost. The police were called in and Tlhong's uncle was later arrested.

After the arrest, the teacher hired Tlhong's mother to help at her house so that she could take care of herself and Tlhong.

Since the arrest, the school took an initiative and set up a functioning guidance and counselling office. They also invite nurses, social workers and the police to sensitise students on Child Sexual Abuse.

This initiative triggered a national response among schools and there is even talk in parliament of setting up a special unit in every police precinct to respond to Child Sexual Abuse as a matter of urgency.

Tlhong has started laughing at Mahube's jokes again. She goes for counselling every day after school and Mahube accompanies her every time.

#### Glossary

#### **Setswana Proverb**

Ngwana yoo sa le leng o swela tharing

#### **In English**

A baby that does not cry dies in the womb.

#### **Meaning**

A person who keeps silent about his problems never gets help





# Sophie, What did you say?

**Blessing Tarfa**  
**Nigeria**

Once upon a time, there lived a girl named Sophie.

Sophie was a clever girl but sometimes, she did not know what to say.

Sophie could do a lot of things.

Sophie knew how to count her numbers 1, 2, 3...

Sophie knew all of her A, B, and Cs.

Sophie could sing the national anthem, she could also name the seven colours of the rainbow.

Sophie knew how to wash her hands. Sophie could also tie her shoelaces all by herself.

But when Sophie needed

something, she did not know what to say.

One day, Sophie wanted to ask Mum and Dad if she could go to her friend Amanda's for a sleepover.

She walked into the kitchen to meet Mum and Dad making sandwiches for breakfast.

"Mum, I am hungry," Sophie cried.

Dad cleared his throat, "ahem, ahem."

Mum shook her head from side to side, "Sophie, what do you say?" Mum asked.

"Give me some food now," Sophie whispered.

"No-no-no Sophie." said, Dad. "You say 'Please, may I have some food?'".

"Please Mum, may I have some food?"

Mum gave Sophie a plate of sandwiches and a cup of hot chocolate- Sophie's favourite.

Sophie grabbed one sandwich off the plate. She was about to take a bite when dad cleared his throat, "ahem, ahem."

Mum shook her head from side to side. "Sophie, what do you say?" Mum asked.

"Yummy!" Sophie replied with excitement.

"No-no-no Sophie." said, Dad. "You say 'thank you.'"

"Thank you for the sandwiches, Mum," Sophie replied as she sat down to eat her sandwiches.

When Sophie finished her sandwiches and the cup of hot chocolate, she belched loudly. "UUUURGGGGHHHHHHH"

Dad cleared his throat "ahem,ahem."

Mum shook her head from side to side. "Sophie, what do you say?" Mum asked.

"Disgusting!" shouted Sophie.

"No-no-no Sophie," said, Dad. "You do not say disgusting. You say 'excuse me.'"

"Oops! Excuse me." Sophie said in a low tone.

Then it was time for Sophie to go out to play.

Sophie pushed off her chair and was on her way out of

the door.

"I am going to ride my bicycle outside," she announced.

"Ahem, ahem. Not so fast, Sophie," Dad said. "Are you forgetting something?"

"Hmm..." Sophie thought. "Yes! My helmet."

"But Sophie, what do you say?" Mum asked.

"Safety first?" asked Sophie.

"No-no-no Sophie," Mum said. "You ask, 'Please, may I go out to play?'"

"O please, Mum and Dad. Please, may I go out to play?"

Sophie pleaded.

When Mum and Dad said yes, Sophie hugged them both and ran out the door with her helmet. Sophie laughed happily as she rode her bicycle in the backyard. Sophie rode her bicycle

back and forth and round and round.

Soon, it was getting dark and Sophie was getting tired. It was time to come back into the house.

Sophie could not open the door herself. She was holding her helmet and pushing the bicycle.

Sophie did not know what to say to get the door to open. After thinking long and hard, Sophie shouted, "Open Sesame!"

"No-no-no Sophie," said, Mum. "You say 'Please, may I come in?'"

"Please, may I come in?" Sophie pleaded.

And Sophie was let into the house by Dad.

When Mum and Dad went to tuck Sophie in for the night, Sophie asked. "Excuse me, Mum, Dad, please, may I go for a sleepover at Amanda's?"

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Dad cleared his throat "ahem, ahem."                               | She said, "thank you, Mum, thank you, Dad."                                  | out to play, she did not shout "safety first."  |
| Mum started to shake her head from side to side.                   | The next day, Sophie went to Amanda's for a sleepover.                       | Rather, when Sophie wanted to go into Amanda's house, she asked, "Please, may I come in?" |
| Sophie was worried that she did not say the right thing.           | When she got to the door, Sophie did not say "open sesame."                  | And when she was given fruits to share with Amanda, she said, "Thank you."                |
| Then Mum and Dad both laughed.                                     | When she was given some fruits, Sophie did not say "yummy."                  | When Sophie belched, she said, "Excuse me."   |
| "Yes, you may go for a sleepover at Amanda's." Mum and Dad agreed. | When Sophie belched, because dinner was yummy, she did not say "disgusting!" | And when they wanted to play outside, Sophie asked, "Please, may we go out to play?"      |
| Sophie was glad she could go for the sleepover.                    | And when she wanted to go  | No one ever asked "Sophie, what do you say?" ever again.                                  |

Blessing Tarfa is a biotechnologist and an educator. When she is not teaching, she enjoys reading and writing fiction. She admires her healthy collection of draft manuscripts.

Blessing was a participant at the YELF Creative Writing Workshop in 2018 and the KABAFEST Fiction Writing Workshop in 2019. Her featured works include "The Northern Nigerian Woman" for the Open Space Blogazine September issue in 2015 and a poem Titled "Indelible" which was published in the portfolio for the African Patrons Cup Polo Tournament Exhibition in 2015.

The trajectory of literacy and education in the country is her current concern and she wishes to contribute content to the library for young African readers.

Blessing's story "Sophie What Do You Say?" emerged the first runner up in the 2020 Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature.

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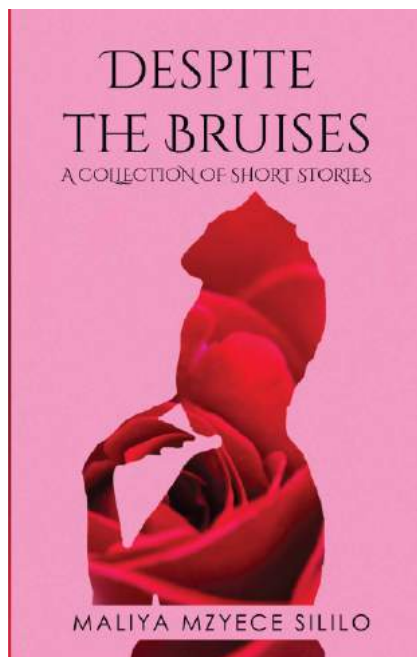


# IN HER OWN WORDS: Thoughts on *Despite the Bruises*

**Maliya Mzyece Sililo**  
Zambia

A young reader once asked me, "What was on your mind as you were writing this collection of stories?" There was one central thought in my mind, and that is that **Despite the Bruises** she receives, the girl child is beautiful and goes through life with fortitude.

My book, **Despite the Bruises** is as a result of questions in my mind about issues surrounding the 'the girl child' in Zambia as well as in Africa as a whole. Is the girl child wanted? Is she appreciated? Has she got a voice at all in the way she leads her life? How does society generally feel about the girl child? What is her role in society, in both the traditional community and the modern world? The only way to answer these questions for me was to write short stories that would lay bare the issues



faced by the girl child and allow the reader to come up with answers to the same.

The first title, **The Visitor** is a translation of a term used to refer to a newly born baby before the elderly women decide that the baby has come to stay and is not just passing through this world. The importance of women during and after child birth is made clear. Besides being midwives, women monitor the growth of the baby and

train the young mother on how to look after the baby. Infant mortality and maternal deaths were, and still are, a sad reality for many communities in Africa. The 'villain' in this story is the innocent five year-old boy who is dealing with being neglected. Makono symbolises how innocence can be both humorous and dangerous. So, the baby girl, with a bubbly personality starts life in a hostile environment.

**A Real Woman, Mwanakazi Ngaye** is a story of a girl of impressionable age growing up and questioning some of the activities and beliefs in her society. How early should parents start thinking about training children in the way they should go as adults? Most leave it too late.



Kupela remembers the values taught to her by her mother at the tender age of eight. A wise mother instils confidence in her child regarding gender issues.

A lot of things happen **When the Flower Blooms**. It looks beautiful and all kinds of insects are attracted to it, for instance, bees notice the new blooms for their nectar in order to go and make something sweet and palatable. Other animals find the blooming flower so beautiful that they want to pluck it out, destroying its potential to create more beauty. One can only imagine the confusion in the flower's mind were it to express its opinion! That is

the confusion of that spindle-legged girl who blossoms into a woman. She is still a child, but there are these confusing emotions that she feels. Unfortunately, some people take advantage of this confused young girl. This story, besides being an appeal to parents, guardians and teachers to be more understanding and more protective of girls under their charge, is also a story of a subtle form of sexual abuse where the abuser often gets away with it claiming the girl got what she wanted.

We meet a well-blossomed flower in **I "Take" Thee**. The story looks at how this flower is regarded both traditionally as well as in the modern world. Jackson, though a nice intelligent young man, is caught between wanting to follow his community's traditional norms and adapting to modern culture. His grandfather thinks his ideas on how to treat women will not work at all. Jackson tries to mix the two which puts him in serious trouble.

One would think that Nseko, would be a contented woman in **Nseko's Business**, but no; she feels frustrated at the very nature of being a woman and having to bare children. She has to put her life on hold after putting in so much work professionally to get where she is. But, Nseko must nurture her children in this story, bringing to light the dilemma many an ambitious woman faces.

**The Most Treasured Possession** dispels the idea that there is nothing to envy about being a woman. There must be something good about being a woman for a young man to risk all to join this rank and file. No one understands what leads the young man to this; is it the beauty? Is it the sex appeal? Whatever the case may be, this is a strange phenomenon in this male-dominated, egocentric community and it leaves his parents devastated. The disregard of the feelings of a woman in a polygamous marriage is clearly depicted.

Cultural differences between the Western world and the developing world are further shown in **The Burial Rites for Tisa**. Sex and sexuality are not topics that are easily discussed in our world. Death, in most societies, still remains a mystery and as such, a lot of rites are performed in its wake.

It would not be believable to write a book about life and living without hinting on corruption. In **Damn the Receipt**, we see that corruption in modern Zambia is not a preserve of men.

The women representing the law wear an old woman out until she succumbs to corruption. One does not have to have a corrupt mind

to participate in a corrupt act.

It is hard for a person to get rid of all the traditional beliefs they've grown up with for Christian beliefs.

This is evident in **A Bruised Rose**. Some actions taken by the church elder in the story are unchristian, but had to be taken in order to save his marriage as well as his standing in the community. In his decisions, the church elder is highly influenced by two women who matter to him a lot, his wife and his "cousin".

A man tries to show his city loving wife **The Beauty of the Wild**. Where he sees beauty, she sees danger. The trip ends up with him

being influenced by his wife instead of the other way around which was the man's hope.

With all the pain that comes with illness, death is looked upon as a **Sweet Relief**. What happens after the relief is anybody's guess. One thing is certain, no matter what one's belief is, when that moment comes, one wants to hang on to something that is familiar; dear life.

Some critics have said that most of my stories lack neat endings. I have always wanted my readers to have something to think about. Maybe, at times, it is to let the reader give a story an appropriate ending.

## About the Author

**Despite the Bruises, A Collection of Short Stories** won the prestigious Ngoma Award for Best Creative Writing (2019) in Zambia. Maliya Mzyece Sililo holds a bachelor's degree in education from University of Zambia (UNZA) and a TEFL post graduate diploma from UWIST in Wales. She is retired having experienced teaching at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Maliya is a keen writer. She has written English text books, TV scripts, children's stories in local languages and stories for adults. **Despite the Bruises, A Collection of Short Stories** is published by Sotrane Publishers. It is available to purchase on Amazon.



# Call for Submi- ssion

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her May 2021 edition.

***African folklore is rich with triumphal stories of legends, young and old, male and female. Write a quatrain poem of five stanzas under the theme LEGACY.***

Submission window is from February 11th until **March 11th 2021**. The edition will be released on May 10th 2021.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrica>. Submissions can be in English, French or Swahili.



# The Conquerer

Gentile Constance Kampire  
Rwanda

The scars all over her body and the pain she couldn't endure like a thundering sword in her chest were what described her as a wife who was abused by a man she cherished the most. It took a lot of work for the therapist until she decided to tell others what happened for the sake of others who were suffering the same. The tears flew unstoppable when she entered the auditorium.

The memories of the past filled her mind unwelcomed and made her sob like an errant child, but she managed to tell them the story. The story of her life and how she was abused, how she reported her husband, and how the therapist helped her. Her speech was touching and emotional, and made some people cry.



Those who listened to her story changed their mind, and started fighting for what is right. That day forward, she managed to inspire many across the world. Some people call her a revolutionary of gender based violence and a true conqueror of her generation.

She no longer cries into her pillow at night because she

knows her worth and what she deserves. She pushes herself from the comfort zone and works for a better tomorrow. She has thrived in her career, and become a role model.

What would have happened then, if she had refused to report him?

# We want change!

**Chipalo Salimu**  
Zambia

“Can't you just pack five dresses? We'll get some more as soon as we reach South Africa.”

“No!” she retorted, while cramming dresses into a duffel bag. “I need all of them. We are fugitives now, so tell me how I'll go shopping without anyone noticing me.”

“Don't stress, I know literally half of the South African ministers. Besides, you can still buy new bags online.”

“Tresor, are you deliberately trying to rile me? These are limited edition Chanel

dresses and you know how much I hate online shopping.”

“Sorry hon, but-”

“Mr. President, Sir,” a bald-headed man in dark glasses interrupted. “The army is closing in and we need to leave immediately. We only have about seven minutes before they surround the place.”

“Nelia hon, you heard the man, we don't have time. Any further delay and you'll trade your Chanel dresses for an orange jumpsuit.”

“Ok, ok! I'm almost done. But you know what's funny?” She stopped packing and turned to face Tresor. “How the citizens are always fooled by this 'wave of change' nonsense. Just three years ago you were the wave of change and now look at the country.”

“What's that supposed to imply?” he responded with a hint of irritation.

“Well, these people can revolt every year if they want to, but no one will ever bring the type of change they fantasize about.”



# Checkmate

**Ben Sipo Mulilanduba**  
Zambia



My dad had a weird love for chess. As soon as I had turned three, he began to grill me into the game. Almost instantly, the knight became my favorite chess piece. It was so unpredictable, capturing the opponent's pieces when it was least expected.

"I want you to be a world-class chess player, Nairobi," Father would say after every game, all of which I lost.

I mindlessly gazed at the raindrops race down my



bedroom windowpane. My birthday was in two days. I wondered who celebrated their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday indoors.

Thanks, rain. Mum had gone out for some groceries with Milly, my younger sister. I turned to grab a drink from the kitchen just in time for a black hood to cover my head and get kidnapped.

The small Volkswagen beetle (I figured so because it sounded like dad's) made a stop and a man gently led my hood-covered head up some stairs into what I suspected was a living room. The fresh varnish on the wooding was strong. The hood was lifted and the man in the balaclava made a hand gesture that I take a seat. The brown floral sofa was soft on my scared, tense bottom.

The rain halted into a young shower outside as the

disguised man came with a fresh Greek salad – my favourite – and a chess board.

"We're going to play a game. Whoever wins gets to eat the salad, and the loser will, well, watch –" he paused and pulled out a Glock, " – and eventually die."

I pushed my white pawn, then bishops, then knights. Queen went flying.

'Checkmate.' I said, not believing I survived death.

The man pulled off his balaclava, "For the first time, huh?"

That was the first time I won a game against my dad.



WSA NIGERIA ANTHOLOGY

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THEME:

## REBIRTH

GENRE: FICTION (SHORT STORY)

SUBMISSION DATE - January 25th - March 7th, 2021.

ALL ENTRIES ARE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THIS EMAIL:

[wsa.nigeria@gmail.com](mailto:wsa.nigeria@gmail.com)

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES\*

Submit one short story no more than 2000 words in a doc./docx./PDF file to the email address above.

The story should be in Times New Roman, Font 12 and single spaced.

Entries are only open to Nigerian authors (born in Nigeria or born to at least one Nigerian parent.)

Include your city, email address, phone number, social media handles and brief biography in the body of the email.

The submission window is open from January 25th- March 7th, 2021.

The anthology is scheduled to be published in July 2021 and all writers will be notified about the status of their submission before then.



**WSA-N**  
Writers Space Africa - Nigeria  
empowering Nigerian writers

WSA NIGERIA ANTHOLOGY

REBIRTH





# Pale Blossoms

Omondi Kelvin  
Kenya

Rattling in between the papers,  
Turning every page in this book in here.  
I vowed to write to you in happier and  
sad times.  
In every word was a tiny fragment of  
my heart,  
The feelings I carried within me.  
Through the dark alleys when you were  
lost,  
I came with a torch to lead your way.  
Sought all the strength from my bones,  
Helped you see through your entire  
disguise.  
Sought every help I could, gave you my  
entire being.  
My heart's soul, as I broke down to cry.  
Chaos of a tortured soul and all that,  
quite a storm that was.  
Still nothing was new under your sun.  
Aimed at my tiny heart were sharp  
spasms of pain, regrets and betrayals  
The aberrational course still sneaked in,  
throttling my neck.  
Rendering me hopeless.  
What remain of me are not the dreams I  
lived for,  
It's the residue of the love we shared.  
It's not the hugs,  
It's the screaming for this nightmare to  
end.  
Face in my palms each day, silent tears

untold.  
In a hurricane of loneliness, sorrow and  
rage  
Within the aftermath of time, someday  
solace ought to be found.



# The Revolution

Adegboro Samuel  
Nigeria

The time has come  
When constant is changed,  
When the ravaging hawk is haunted  
down,  
The time has come.

For the mighty voice in our tears  
And the mighty voice in our blood  
Which groweth of their own accord  
In prayers shall put decadence to its  
cross.

The time has come  
Where the Prince of Persia is fallen.  
The time has come  
For our country's great revolution.



# What is Africa?

**Pelekani Lwenje**  
Zambia

Are we slave superstars?  
Subjected to cruelty  
"What is Africa?"

We celebrate Queens of the world,  
But we have great Queens of our own.  
Our daughters walk like the great  
Queens of the past.  
The women warriors who commanded  
the African sun.

Today people chant "Wakanda Forever"  
Why not "Africa Forever"  
Why not make it reality?  
Why not return our great Kings and  
Queens.  
"Wakanda Forever"  
No.  
Africa Forever!

Africa is earth.  
Africa is the never fading gem stone  
Africa is not religion. It is the beginning.  
Africa is the truth  
Africa is for all, and for all they will find  
worth.  
Africa is the eternal parent  
Africa is creator.  
"What is Africa?"  
This is Africa!



# Wind Sings for the Wise

William Khalipwina Mpina  
Malawi



Happiness sings in the wind  
I see it every day; sailing in the sky  
towards the horizon and back  
I see pregnant minds struggling,  
fighting to get a portion of it  
Happiness doesn't stay at one place  
for too long, but swiftly like a cloud of  
rain skipping with a wall of darkness  
hide its face from stupidity  
and open it to humility  
Happiness shouldn't face one side  
for too long or something is wrong

and that calls for revolution, a stirring  
rod of sanity, butterflies demanding  
justice and whose madness the  
shooting and why the  
misunderstanding  
the city burns, smoke rises  
a voice calling in the streets  
a bitter expression of love  
and why the resistance  
when the chewer says  
your sweetness is gone--  
the wind sings for the wise  
only a fool thinks otherwise.





# A Broken Orchestra

Aisha Kabiru Mohammed  
Nigeria

Let me tell you about a people.

\*Resilient\* \*strong\* \*brave\*

These are words I cannot paint them  
with,  
these people are afraid  
they are always afraid.  
Their motherland has been beaten  
bruised and left with festering wounds.

"Take care of your mother, there's no  
place like home," they were told  
but when home is a black hole that  
sucks light of you, how do you stay?  
When a home is a place that rips out  
your spine and leaves you desperate  
and hungry,  
How do you stay?

One day people filled to bursting  
with rage, glued their broken spirits  
with hope and poured themselves onto  
the tarmac.

They whirled like dervishes to  
the rhythmic beating of bullets  
Added lyrics to the sound of tear gas  
with protest chants.  
Some armed with their keyboards  
became bards of virtual space,  
Harmonised with drumming on  
hashtags,  
Creating a borked people's symphony.

These people turned their bodies into  
peace offerings  
Rolled around in the fire of revolution  
So, their children would have ashes to  
Paint maps to their freedom.



# A Song of Revolution

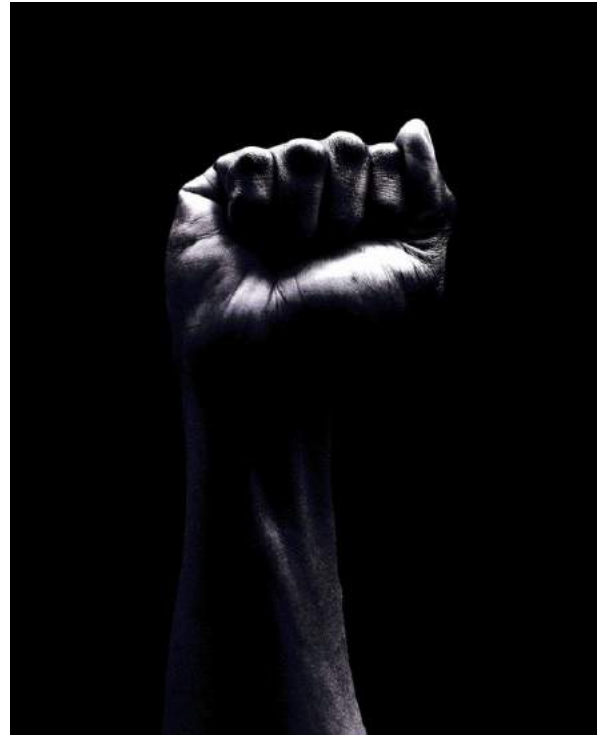
Trisha  
Uganda

---

We sing;  
Paint our faces black,  
Our vision bright and yellow,  
Our hearts bleed red...  
We sing change.

We sing;  
A line, a verse each,  
Contribute a tear drop,  
Or a blood drop...  
Anything for change.

We sing;  
March and chant under the sun,  
Bury our dead beneath a pale moon,  
Bullets through defenseless bodies...  
We sing for a revolution.



# Killings Free Age

Chipo Chama  
Zambia

---

Looking to the skies, it is bleeding.  
Not for itself but for humanity.  
Far we have been driven from  
goodness,  
Greediness settles in our hearts.

We, a term alienated.  
Its only I, nobody matters.  
We end each other,  
Blood of our brothers, sisters, soaking  
the ground.

In the name of politics,  
we have cultivated enmity.  
We are willing to kill to belong.

Is this the kind of life we have to  
prolong?  
What will our children inherit?

Deep is the tribal hatred like cancer.  
Let us wake up from this slumber.  
Why end your neighbor's life on  
political regalia?  
Let us claim our humanity, end this  
behaviour.

Let us rise like a phoenix,  
From these ashes of hatred.  
Say no to political killings.  
Let us call for a revolution, a fresh start.



# The Day Welcomes the Year

**Akanbi Omotayo**  
**Nigeria**

Tick tock, the day draws near  
Pray the young and old take heed  
For the day shall welcome the year.

Slow but steady it shall appear  
Like a mighty tree born from a tiny seed  
Tick tock, the day draws near.

No more grief to bear  
While chanting the survivor's creed  
For the day shall welcome the year.

The day from today seems queer  
Slim the chances to succeed  
Tick tock, for the day draws near.

And that day shall crown the year  
A paradigm shift will it be indeed  
For the day shall welcome the year.

No longer shall we be silenced by fear  
No more shall the land bleed  
Tick tock, the day draws near  
For the day shall welcome the year.





# Dawn

Christina Lwendo  
Tanzania

---



Haunting flutes of ordeal dwindle  
Diffident ears now keen to the sound-  
Reverberance of dreams we dared not  
dream of,  
And melodies of cultures, once  
shunned to oblivion.  
Haunting rhythms of black feet  
dancing,  
Stomping false identities, given.  
Summoning smiles from days of yore.  
Rewriting history on the grounds we  
tread on,  
Haunting streams of black blood  
flowing-  
Resuscitating veins of truth and might,  
Who we are will fade no more,  
Dawn at last.



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Genre: Short Story

Title: Unbound

Columnist: Agboni Christina, Nigeria

Review: **Bildad Makori, Kenya**

**E**nvisioning to attain freedom is one thing and the actual attainment of freedom itself is another thing. In between the two, is the real thing, the real deal which is the process of getting that freedom.

Agboni's Short Story titled Unbound is about one Uwedo who is seen struggling to have some peace of mind for quite a long time. In the short story, Uwedo is enslaved by one Ebili into doing things that she's not pleased with.

I really like the manner in which the writer cleverly structured and narrated the short story. It was not until I reached the second page of the story when I discovered that the short story, Unbound is centered on the theme of religion. Christianity to be precise. That the antagonist in the story who is Ebili represents Satan alias Lucifer and thereafter, Jesus Christ is brought into the story by one of Uwedo's friend, Edekono. How creative?!

Going on, Uwedo, who is the persona in the story, was initially enslaved by Satan to continue engaging in evil ways because of her past sinful nature which she thought it could not be undone. But with the struggles she met while still under the chains of Ebili, through her Christian friends, she was enlightened of how she could finally attain her long quest of having freedom from Ebili, which in the end, she finally attained.

Although the short story has a lot of characters that can make a reader have a challenge of remembering who is who, the different types of figurative language used and the richness of vocabularies that have been used in the short story is really impressive.





**Genre:** Essay

**TITLE:** Freeing Ourselves

**Writer:** Colin Stanley, Kenya

**Reviewer:** Joseph Oduro, Ghana

**F**reedom, an intrinsic, yet an entity pursued by the living, comes with differing connotations per the jurisdiction in which it is used. This essay, "Freeing Ourselves" points out the paradigms in which the word 'Freedom' has been used. The author furthered to ascertain that freedom to some is a rising power; he did this by stating Jomo Kenyatta and Nelson Mandela as examples of leaders who through blood and water, thick and thin, ice and fire, gave their all to see their countries rise above the horizon of imperial colonialism, hence assuming freedom through the rise to power.

The author insinuates that the traits of such charismatic acts of African leaders could be traced to and aligned with the ancient African traditional rulers. However, it is hard to believe such since the author makes no historical reference to a specific ruler who had a twin charisma as those of Jomo Kenyatta and the likes. Although, the concept that great leaders had the charisma of fighting for freedom began in the early stages of their lives is very true. History has made justification to that concept and every charismatic leader may have developed such a character from their youth.

In creating a viable atmosphere to decipher the concept of freedom, the author creates a vivid picture by making notable examples in the context of freedom. Thus, much emphases were made on freedom being victory over oppression and less stretched on freedom being a state of rising above and beyond life compelling situations.

'Freeing ourselves' from the image painted by the west of the African society. 'Freeing ourselves' from poverty and diseases, by changing every situation with positivism and by rising beyond situations to secure better lives for ourselves. The acquittance of freedom is indeed an epitome and blueprint to achieving a better Africa.





**Genre: Children's Literature**

**TITLE: It Is Not What You Think It Is**

**Writer: Blessing Amatemeso, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Namse Udosen, Nigeria**

**T**his story has changed the way I look at mango trees. Anytime I pass a mango tree, I now imagine conversations between leaves, fruit and stems.

Blessing stirs up the imagination with the piece. Children's literature is all about stirring up imagination, isn't it?

She welds several lessons into the story without making loud noises. The theme of freedom is aptly captured.

The tale of a leaf searching for freedom deploys fantasy and personification as tools to tell the children that freedom is elusive.



**Genre: Poetry**

**Title: Freedom**

**Writer: Balogun Ayoola, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Comfort Nyati, Zimbabwe**

**W**hen one scrolls in between the dictionary pages, it is obvious to encounter the definition which states that freedom is the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants. To add, it is also the state of not being subjected to or affected by something uninvited.

Consequently, in this poem we come across a free-verse poem, written with high sense of intelligence. The poet sculpts the poem with an ascription of five senses as the key emblem of the piece.

The lane used in this poem is colloquial and common. As echoed by words such as smells, touches, tastes, sounds and feels and the arrangement of these words follow a unique sequence of odd numbers, thus L1, L3, L5 and L7.

Moreover, the concept of freedom here has been decoratively portrayed by assigning the characteristics of our five senses. The fabric of this, is creatively textured by the constant use of similes to identify the fluid identity of freedom, (freedom smells like...Tastes like...sounds like etc.) From that we can adopt the opinion that the poet has high regard of freedom from the way he metaphorically subscribes to it. Thus, it strikes the chord in me in the sense that the metaphors employed by the poet make us wonder the possibility of smelling, touching, tasting, hearing and feeling freedom. In all these, we navigate the relationship between the poet and the concept of freedom. Their common middle ground is processed through the five senses of human beings. Despite the fact that one may not be fully free, but what I can conclude is that it is important to assign meaning where freedom seems impossible.

Atmosphere: tranquil and welcoming.

Attitude: enthusiastic and reverend.

Overriding Themes: admiration, appreciation.

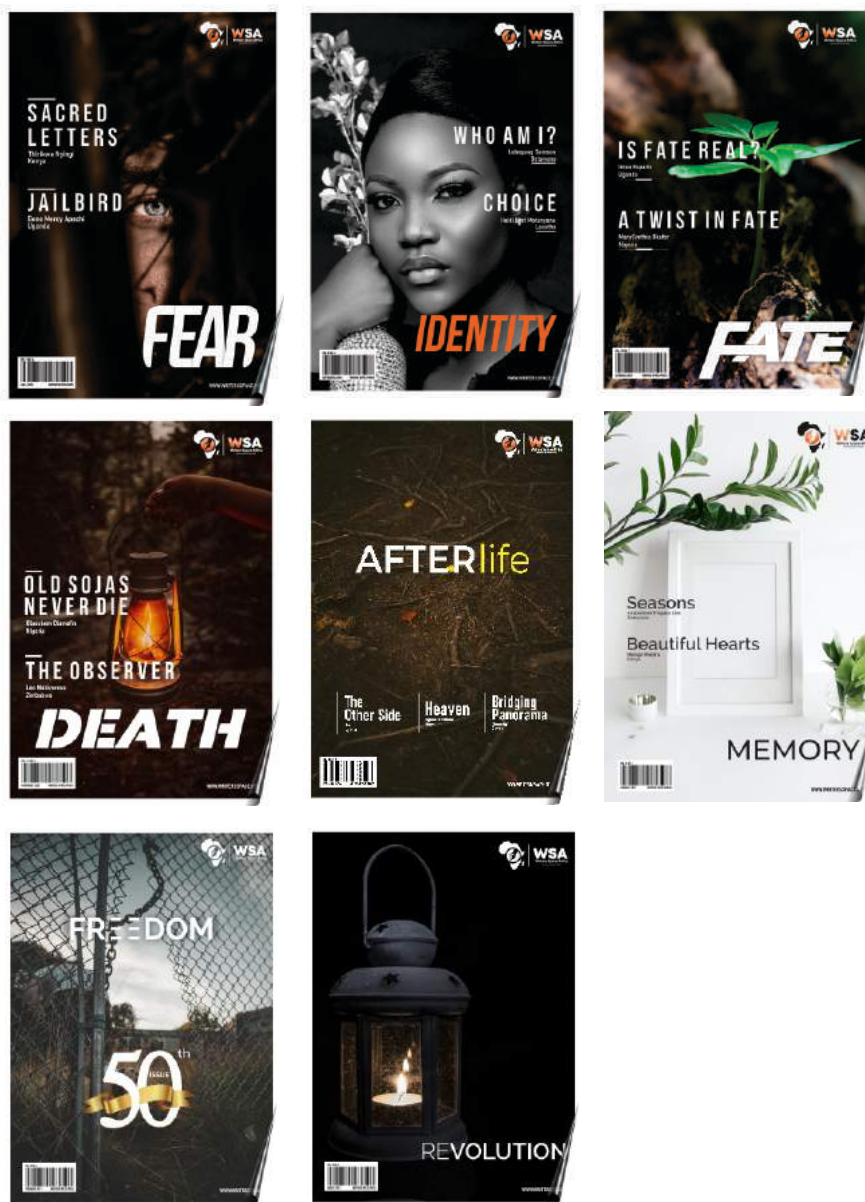
Tone: innocence, jovial and contentment.

Diction: descriptive, narrative, simple.





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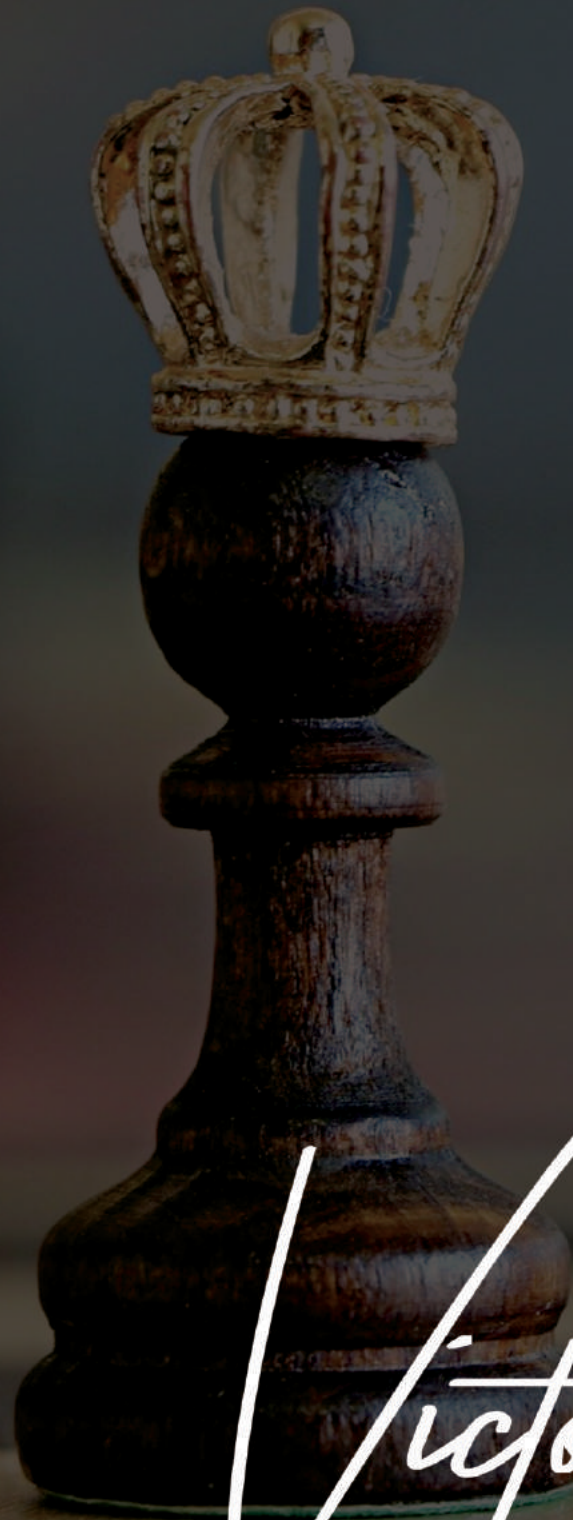
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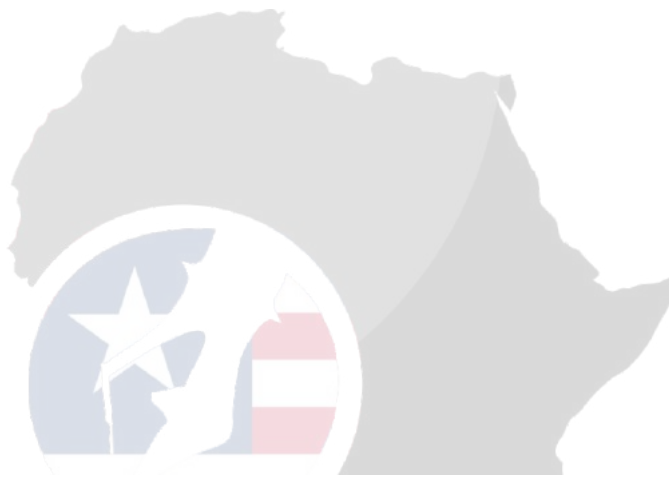
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# SUBMISSIONS

**THEME: PROGRESS**

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- CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

TO SUBMIT, PLEASE VISIT

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# Editor's Note

Our theme for April is Victory. Victory entails battle and battle produces scars. Victory also entails the defeat of an opponent. Now, that defeat of an opponent can be as grandiose and public as a national sports team winning a coveted trophy or a politician winning a hard-fought election or a student proudly holding up his or her university degree at a graduation ceremony.

Victory can also be as quiet and personal as leaving a toxic relationship or landing that longed-for job or even managing one's addiction to alcohol. A friend of mine, Zambian author Jimmy Kanzobya offered these words about one aspect of women and victory: "To every woman searching for her true worth, redefine your beauty and the value placed on you before your birth. Internalise your true-self, past each breath you take."

It just goes to show that Victory is the result of perseverance, having a level of self-confidence, hard work, self-reflection, and it may mean having to relearn or unlearn a thing or two on that journey and in that battle.

We hope you enjoy our buffet offering this month. The select offerings stamped Editors' Choice will also be up on our website. So, do check it out and follow us on our social media pages.

Let's win!

Namwanja

Chief Editor



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# My Husband Never Left

TJ Chikambure  
Zimbabwe



My husband left the day before our fifth anniversary. No, it's not what you are thinking. He still loves me deeply; he just went away for a few days, 364 to be exact. It has been a year now. So, I should be celebrating our sixth wedding anniversary instead of lamenting his one-year absence, while impatiently waiting for him to come home.

His departure has changed my daily routine a little. I don't leave my bed. This is to the dismay of my family that seems to want to fuss and fumble about me now. They never used to. They were never there before. But now, I constantly have one or two of them parading in and out of my room with this or that, trying to get me to eat or to take a bath. It is all so exhausting actually. Can't

they just leave me alone until he comes back?

Rumbi, my elder sister, fusses the most. She is the 'rock' of the family; she is strong and dependable. Rumbi is the rock, Ruvarashe is the river whose vastness of love contains us all, and I am the water that flows aimlessly, following its own will and disrupting everything. That was according to my father the great army leader vaShumba. My father insisted we called him Commander, even at home. I don't think he ever left the war. At times, I saw him fondly cleaning his rifle which he will never fire again. Commander was a single father to three daughters; our mother had died giving birth to me. On the day I was born, he had been asked to make a choice between saving her life or mine. He chose me. I

felt like the most special woman in the world around my father, until I met my husband.

My husband was charming from day one. He wore a gorgeous, flirtatious white-teeth smile that warmed each room he walked into. We instantly connected when we met. We were both filling in college application forms at an internet café when he approached me. We spent the rest of the day together, chatting, laughing, and kissing. It was destiny. I knew I was going to be his wife. I got accepted into colleges in the UK, but he was only accepted into one, the University of Zimbabwe. I was very proud of him.

"Ruveneko, marry me." My stomach fluttered. I rejected all the university offers and accepted the one role I knew was mine forever.

There is a knock on the door. It is probably that time again when Rumbi or Ruva come and pitter patter around my room, denying me the little joy I have reminiscing about precious memories of him. I will not answer. They will come in anyway.

"Should we tell her the truth?" They are murmurings outside.

"No, she would lose it," Rumbi whispers. "She is not strong enough."

"I am scared we are losing her each day," Ruva responds.

The door swings open. I am curled up in my bed, my knitted blanket pulled up to my neck. It is only Ruva who walks. She looks like a flower, as her name means. She is incredibly attractive, slender and everything about her is gentile, down to the way she sits down and gingerly places a plate of food beside me. We go through the routine of our usual conversation. I brought you food, will you

eat? No. I am not hungry. Please sis, just a little. I will try. Then she normally leaves. But this time, she does not leave. She stops by the door on her way out and asks, "I know we have talked about this before, but where do you think he has gone?"

Where has he gone actually? It slips my mind sometimes. I don't like to focus on that day. We had a fight about Jessica again and he left. Yes, the she-witch that worked with him. The first fight about Jessica had been four Christmases ago at his company's end-of-year function. I saw the glances she gave him, and the way she touched his arm. She thought I was dumb, but I saw it all. And then, I saw him.

The way he intimately whispered into her ear and laughed at her jokes. And don't get me started on the kiss. He kissed her in a way that I had never seen, tucked his hand under her braids and pulled her in. Like they did in the telenovelas I loved to watch. When we got

home, I told him I didn't like that. He apologised and explained what had happened. It was all for show to his new work colleagues, a game. Relief washed over me and we made up, passionately.

I got pregnant soon after. I was twenty-two at the time. My husband was overjoyed but then, I lost the baby. The joy swiftly turned into rage. I was heartbroken. He was inconsolable. I forgave him the first time he laid his hands on me. It was my fault I had lost the baby, something about trauma to my womb caused by the complications during my birth. I could never give him a child, so I allowed him to take his anger out on me. I deserved it.

Ruva discovers that she isn't getting an answer. She continues to say, "Ruvneko, I love you so much. I need to tell you something that no one wants you to know."



I push my back to sit up against the headboard. Is he back and here to surprise me?

"Your husband isn't coming back."

"You all keep saying that," I laugh and slid back down into the bed.

"No. I mean that... Commander took care of him."

My brows crease in confusion. But I know what 'took care of him' means when we are speaking about my father. I open my mouth, but nothing comes out.

"Commander took care of him," she repeats with a murky mixture of pain and love evident in her eyes.

"So, he isn't coming back," the words finally pour out of my mouth. "Ever?"

Ruva shakes her head. Silence ping pongs between us until she speaks.

"You need to get up. You need to bath. You need to take control, or he has won again." She pulls the door to a quiet close and it clicks into place behind her. My sister's words plague my mind. He is not coming back. You need to take control, or he

has won again. Won what?

The routine continues in the weeks that follow. My sisters would bring me food that I would never eat, and I would give them the same response, "I am not hungry."

Twice a week, they take turns to force me to shower. I do it mechanically. I never even feel the water or smell the soap. I dry up and go back to bed, waiting for him.

Until one day the waiting s t o p s . I start to feel the bruises on my skin as though his fists on them are fresh. It is painful. I could see the marks. I reach for a photo of him under my pillow and analyse his broad flirtatious smile. The same smile he had given to Jessica that night and then over the years to Yeukai, Colleen, Rachel, Chido, Gwen, Matii, Mutsa, Maruva, Chenai... A smile he had long-stopped giving me. I remember the nights I blacked out from a beating, and woke up in the hospital alone, because he had forbidden me from seeing my family and slowly, they stopped seeing me.

Commander took care of

him. He is gone.

I feel a flutter in my stomach, a feeling I have not experienced in a while. It spreads through my body and bursts out from my lips which curl upwards, ever so slightly but it feels like a momentous feat to me. Slowly I instruct my feet to move and they fall with a thud onto the floor. I amble to the shower and let the water flow down my body. Although the water is hot, it feels like icy needles crashing onto my tender flesh. Then it soothes. I feel my feet against the ground, the droplets on my face, and smell the berry scented shower gel.

If you don't get up, he would h a v e w o n . He would not win, not again. This is not his victory. I wear my favourite bright yellow dress and powder my face. I brush my hair and wear a jersey. The family chatter is audible downstairs. They are having Sunday brunch after church. With steady steps I reach for the handle and with great effort I open the door to the start of the rest of my life.

# In My Name Lies The Answers

**Pearl Mokgatlane**  
Botswana

“They say we belong. They say we have freedom, yet we are constantly chastised by limitation of boundaries.”



When I was born, my family held a naming ceremony for me to select a name that uplifted my strong heritage and opened doors for me. Before I could crawl, I already knew that I was named after a warrior, that amid chaos my role was to continue standing. I was shown where this warrior lay, a small grave piled with rocks and her last trinkets. My mother sent me to my aunt's house in the big village of Ghanzi for school and returned each term break to our small village Xwee. Ghanzi was but a culture shock and I stuck out like a sore thumb because of my dark skin, blue eyes and long wavy hair. In Ghanzi, the people were light-skinned, had kinky, short hair and

they spoke with a click sound. None of the locals could pronounce my name and called me Tala because of my blue eyes.

I became withdrawn and reserved spending whatever leeway of time at the local library. What I lacked in social skills I amassed in intellectual knowledge. The more I learned, the more I surpassed my peers, the more I was a living mythical creature. By the time I was twelve years old, I was studying for the Cambridge secondary exams.

I yearned to spend my time playing with the local kids on the sand dunes, but I just did not fit in. Each time I told my mother how I was different

she would affirm that I was precious not just different. My mother speaks in riddles and doesn't give easy answers. When I'd tell her why the other kids called me Tala, she would say, "Seed of my loins, do you wish to lament that you prefer to be justified as odd or do you know that you are a descendant of the Herero tribe, bone of Wasuri? Does your father's honour mean nothing to you?"

At thirteen, I was awarded a tertiary scholarship to study medicine in New York. My parents told me to go and be with the world but to always listen to the spirit of Wasuri for it would guide me and keep me. I lived with a childless couple, the McCarthy's till I was turned eighteen. They cared for me generously. I excelled in academics. Then, I ran into Chris.

I was drawn to Chris like a moth to a flame; he brought out the rebel in me as he was unapologetic about his life and often rude. Chris was my axis of mortality. However careless he seemed to be, his persona resonated with my many years of frozen pieces of my childhood. Still, no one outside my parents' house had called me by my name. To the McCarthy's I was sweetie pie and to Chris I was baby girl. Over time, I wanted to change my name to Sue or Lucy or Janet. The options to a new identity seemed infinite.

On my fifteenth birthday Chris told me I was ready to be his steady girl. I did not understand what that would mean but the euphoria struck something in me. Naivety had me lusting in dreams of riding cross country on the back of Chris's Harley Davidson motorcycle. I was aware that slowly I was coming into bloom. My usual petite frame was now adorned with lush bust and hips, my blue eyes seemed to intensify in hue, my skin glistened and my hair grew lavishly long, it took great effort to upkeep.

Standing next to a lanky framed, red haired and tattooed Chris, I was filled with superficial feeling of belonging.

Then the dreams started, after few years of being far from home and never really communicating in my mother tongue, I woke up one morning to sense of having been emerged in deep conversations with people back home. I recalled vividly the otjikaiva that rested upon my head. How the contrast between its vibrant pink and yellow cloth made my blue eye's more prominent. The elders said I should look for signs, that they would be signs.

At breakfast I unpacked the details of the dream to my guardians. They were in awe of the details so much that Mrs McCarthy the pro intellectual suggested that we keep a dream board and research on it.

"Sweetie pie, a true intellectual never dismisses anything, anything can mean something in the end or nothing at all. Our role in life is to understand, investigate data gathered

and conclude."

Later that day with the dream long forgotten, Chris and I embarked on a trip to the botanical gardens.

"Creation is God's artwork. I can see why women love flowers. How can one be in the presence of such splendour and not be moved?" Chris murmured to himself. I was about to respond with some witty response when the words got caught in my mouth.

I could not explain it to Chris, but I was drawn away to the edges of the garden shop. I cannot say I heard her cry for he was more than five km away from me.

I tiptoed, using my heart as anchor or perhaps as supersonic hearing. Much to Chris' frustration, I detoured from the mapped trek. I found her and her toddler lying on the floor. I don't believe in coincidence but that day, not only was I lead till the point of tripping over the feet of Ms Palmer as she cooed her baby boy to calmness, I instinctively knew how to help. In subtle tone,

I introduced myself to Ms Palmer, asking if she could let me help her and the baby. I gave instructions to Chris to call for urgent medical attention, as I transferred the pale boy named Ethan from his mother's arm on to the floor and continued to monitor his vitals. They say time crawls in hard times.

As we sat at Princeton University Paediatric Hospital, I recalled, much to the amazement of my guardians, Chris, and doctors, the events that led to us all being gathered in the waiting room. Though I was yet to graduate, I spoke with confidence when discussing Ethan's condition. Ms Palmer begged hospital management to allow me into the discussion as a specially elected next of kin. Minutes clocked into hours, we watched Ethan through the paediatric unit and discussed surgery versus non evasive treatment. I was plummeted by questions birthed by fear and self-doubt.

Why me?

Is this what the dreams were about?

How can I be sure that this is what is right?

Did I have the dreams, or did I

imagine them?

We all sat crammed up in the visitor's waiting room, praying silently for Ethan's life watching the sliding doors that led to his ward. None of us dared to sleep whilst Ethan was in the battle of his life. Needing succour from speech, I whispered to Chris, "When Ethan wakes up, I think we should buy him a mini cactus." He smiled just enough for me to catch it in the light of the neon beams. Every other hour, the matron on duty would come to give a progress update: he is still stable, no changes thus far, we are all watching him.

Dawn came; Ms Palmer's family arrived looking sympathetic yet remorseful. Mrs Palmer clung to my hand, saying I was her spirit sister. A glimmer of hope when Ethan was moved from paediatric high care to the normal ward. By the end of the week, he was discharged from hospital.

My dreams continued sporadically over the years, the McCarthy's and I continued to record with much enthusiasm. I have never had an instance quite

like Ethan's. Ethan lives a normal life, as his diagnosis permits. Ms Palmer still calls me her spirit sister. Chris the wonder of the campus completed his studies with distinctions and joined Doctors Without Borders. With a threat and a kiss, I was bestowed his precious motorcycle. He says if I wreck the bike, I have no choice but to marry him.

So far so good, I still ride the motorcycle to Princeton University Paediatric Hospital where I am completing my residency in paediatrics. Over the years, Chris and I have saved every dollar we can to relocate and open a practice in Xwee, Botswana.

My name is Dr Uataraa Kzingowabugo, daughter of Wasuri and I dedicate my qualifications to my fierce tribe of Herero. In our language they say, "do not give a girl child a pretty name but give a girl child a name that shatters glass ceilings." I have had to grow into my name like when we grow into hand me down clothes as kids. My name loosely translated means I am a beckon of victory.



# Each Little Win

**Oladejo Oluyemisi**  
Nigeria

Champions reserve songs of victory for the wake of history. You and I know a host of them— Nelson Mandela saw the end of Apartheid in South Africa, Mary Slessor ended the infanticide of twins among the Ibibios— we join in their celebration; we supply the refrains for their songs. Sometimes, we amplify their music.

But, there are no drums heralding victory in my battle... hmm... except warriors have other landmark achievements apart from winning this battle, like Tosyn Bucknor who held the sword in one hand and the microphone in the other. She was celebrated, not because she had the ultimate win of this battle, but because she held the microphone skilfully. The champions of the battle I fight never celebrate; they are late. They are never

belted; they are shrouded.

Michael secured his ultimate victory at nineteen, free forever from Vaso-Occlusive Crisis, from attacks of Malaria, from the sickling of the red blood cells, from blood infections, from Leg Ulcer, from Priapism, from Acute Chest Syndrome, from Avascular Necrosis, from the pricks of needles, from doses of Morphine. He didn't get a medal, rather in mournful mood we gathered. The end of the battle I fight is not decorated like a Christmas tree; the end of the battle I fight has the acrid taste of bile. The champions of the battle I fight surrender the sheath in defeat; they leave the war front for the home front. They are champions, though. Here, we don't celebrate the ultimate victory; we celebrate each little win while the battle cries still ring.

We celebrate each Vaso-Occlusive crisis that is over, though we have writhed in pain for hours. We celebrate recovery from each Malaria attack, though we have been bed-ridden for days. We celebrate each return from hospital admissions though the bills have mounted. We celebrate being alive, though we often get asked "Why are your eyeballs yellow?"

You saw me in that parade, marching like a pregnant goat, and you were laughing while I was celebrating my participation in the parade, free from the bone pain that had held me fettered few days earlier, escaped being screened out of the parade with the "incapable ones".

I celebrate days the symptoms of my Avascular Necrosis stay tame.

I celebrate two weeks of not being down with an infection. I celebrate a month without a hospital admission. I celebrate six months without blood transfusion. These are my little wins. They don't come often, but when they do, I celebrate. Yes, I celebrate. I don't look forward to my ultimate win, I just want to keep on celebrating my little wins, and celebrate them often.

Did I disgust you four years ago when I sang "God bless my baby girl", carrying swaddling clothes in my hands, pacing the reception of the Neonatal Unit of Sacred Heart Hospital, and you wondered whether I was sane; whether, indeed, there was a baby in that swaddling cloth? Yes there was, she was the tiniest baby I have ever seen. She weighed only 1 kilogram, but she was a baby. She was! And she is a winner. Ten babies had come and gone before her; and because she came unripe and her life hung on a balance, she underwent a myriad of medical procedures and was nourished the unconventional way, and was kept away from

me for several weeks, and a diamond came with the moment I finally got to hold her. She stays because she won and her win is my win, another little win.

So, you tell God you don't want Paracetamol-induced health. I tell Him I want it anyways – Paracetamol, Paludrine, Hydroxyurea, over-soaked herbal concoction that smells like cow's dung or the combination of everything. Seasons of fitness for me are like oasis in the desert. They are seasons of wins! They are seasons of celebrations!

I could get a bone marrow transplant and get rid of the disorder in my blood; but I would sell my country first. They say miracles happen, that it is at the Cross and at the Crescent Moon, even in the Rusted Metals at the African Shrine. I read their testimonies in the news. On TV, I see them standing in overly decorated altars before an audience of eager listeners who chorus "God is great". I tell them that I know another example of miracle.

It is to see one's thirty-fourth birthday and beyond, even with red blood cells the shape of that Crescent Moon.

"Thrombosis", a word I would later look up in the dictionary, entered my vocabulary stock, not from my many nights at the reading-table, but from my many hospital admissions. I am pricked multiple times as the nurses struggle to find a vein to pass intravenous fluid because blood clots have blocked my veins. And the doctor, his silver-rimmed eye-glasses sitting on his nose, keeps on muttering 'thrombosis', 'thrombosis'. So I lie there writhing in pain from my Vaso-Occlusive Crisis and from the needle pricks, sometimes for an hour, sometimes less, and praying to God that they find the vein. And I celebrate, even in my pain, when they finally find a vein. Nurses join in the celebration when a vein is found in not more than four tries. It's another little win.

They sing it in my ears that I am the hole in my father's bag and why my mother is clothed in rag. They say I am the subject of Wole Soyinka and J. P. Clerk's poem, Abiku.

Even yesterday, a professor of Genetics said spending money on me is like loading money in a sachet and throwing it out of a moving car. And I am supposed to walk around with my head bowed or hide my face in shame? And I am supposed to wear my reproach around my neck like a garland?

An optimistic disposition does some trick. When I emit some cheerfulness springing from a heart of positivity, I attract to myself, even built an enduring friendship with a host of people who would otherwise have been repelled by my story and my skinny arms and my yellow eyeballs and my fatless flesh.

I will be the last person to show up at the crucifixion of Prof.; he is only a mouthpiece; he is acting a script that is team-written. Here, the warriors at our battle are not expected to return home and the tell tales of war. Who then wants to sow seeds in a barren land? But you didn't listen, I was going to tell you about the walls I have scaled and the mountains that I have climbed and the medals I have won, even with my red

blood cells the shape of a crescent moon. These are my wins. I celebrate them, and hope that the wind of time will take my song to Prof.'s ears that spending money on me is not a synonym for throwing money out of a moving car.

And when in a crowd, my yellow eyeballs and tiny arms, the ready herald of my story, stay active, and I get those glares that say 'Oh poor thing', I return a smile that spreads warmth and says 'I love me the way I am'. It's the only way I don't return home brooding.

Perhaps I'm not mom enough for my daughter, because I don't have the stamina to throw her in the air and catch her the way you would yours; because I can't lie on the rug and have her crawl around me; because most times other people take care of her while ill-health keeps me away for days; because family times are as rare as snow in Africa, yet, it's a win that there is a human being for whom I am Number One, a human being who calls me "Mom". No painkiller is as

potent as her voice when she calls "Mom". I have been at the threshold of depression, but counting my little wins has helped me to accept myself, to say yes to life, to dare to dream and live the dream; to share the story of my journey living Sickle Cell Disease. When I, at 34, share my story, I say "With my sickled red blood cells, see how far I have come." I have counted each little win, it has helped me not to give in.

I don't celebrate my little wins with the popping of champagne, or before a congregation of eager listeners. My celebration finds an expression in laughing louder than you consider normal; in unusually heavy make-up; in voicing my opinion where I am expected to stay mute; in locking my fears away in air-tight containers. Today, it is in sitting up late and penning thoughtful lines, while I find a melody in the chirps of crickets.

Each Little Win by Oladejo Oluyemisi is the winner of the [2020 African Award for Creative Non-Fiction](#)

# What shall it Profit a Man?

Ojo-Ibukun Tim  
Nigeria



What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul? This statement is one of the most popular statements made by Jesus Christ. However, it is one of the most unpopular in the minds of people.

Anytime I approach the subject of Victory, this Bible verse comes to mind. It is okay if you are wondering what connection exists between this verse and the subject in question. In Mark 8:36, one word that calls for attention is 'soul' and in the Christian faith, to lose one's soul means to die a sinner. Bear in mind that this is not the context in which I write; rather, to make my case in this article, I seek to portray losing one's soul as being comfortable with anything that discomfords other people as a result of one's actions to gain the world.

This rhetorical question Jesus asked about gaining

the world and losing one's soul self-answers dissentingly. Looking at the reality of our world today, does the answer still remain dissenting? Are there really no profits? Perhaps, the situation may not be the same in every part of the world.

This is the truth; in our world today, many of the most valued personalities in different sectors of society are people who get victory and lose their souls. From very young ages, we're taught to believe that what matters most is the competition for victory, and little focus is placed on the need for cooperation for the betterment of our collective human existence. The challenges put before us as kids are those that show our strength when used against others, not when we use them alongside others to make reality the greatest conceivable ideas.

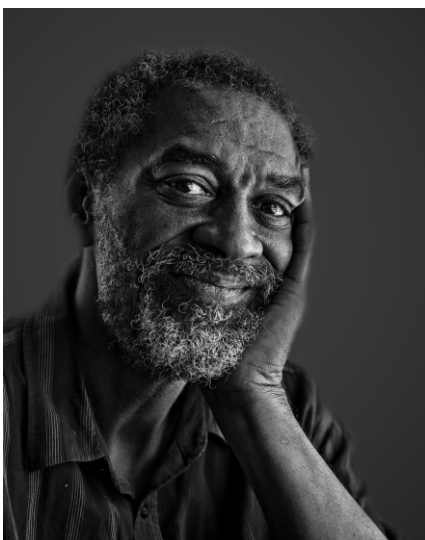
From time immemorial when homo sapiens walked out of the cave, the bond men had therein appears to have disappeared. A new day always revealed to them a new way in which they were different from others. To date, people are trapped in their minds and only see the egoistic delusion that they always have to strive to remain above those they see as different from them. From the fight between Cain and Abel to World War II– the deadliest human conflict in history in which about seventy-five million people perished – it came to my realisation that as human beings tried to differentiate themselves from others, they became worse off and every development they attained fell like a pack of cards.

In recent times, most people are trying to put their money where their mouth is;



little do they know that they involuntarily end up having a taste of everything, including from where they did not put their mouth. Everyone is trying to get victory and to prove themselves. Yes, we all work and create value, but the downside of it is when we belittle some people in society because they fail to make it to the top, even though luck plays a very huge role... in my opinion, of course.

On the path to victory, many of us have the conviction that the end justifies the means, when in fact the means takes all of the time; it is what we experience every second of our lives, when in fact there is no end at all. We all chase success in order to chase more success that doesn't lead to happiness.



In the chase of victory, we lose ourselves from within, thinking it will help us keep everything we have to lose, when we really do not have anything to lose. Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, who we can say lived a victorious life on many pedestals, agrees with me on this. He once said, "Remembering that I will die soon is the most important tool I have ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything – external expectations, pride, fear of embarrassment or failure – just falls away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important." The question that remains then is, what is victory when there is death?

Most of the time, the victory we chase exists only in the future, making us lose every bit of the present moment. Just like others, Hitler chased victory by killing millions; we all might not be murderers but may be guilty of killing ourselves in order to get victory, and hence may lose our soul like Jesus said. When our focus is totally shifted to the future,

destruction of the present becomes inevitable.

Since the invention of the wheel thousands of years ago, the internet has become another invention that has caused terrific change in the world, and in the way humans live. It has also changed our perception of victory, and if you ask me, it has for the worse. Victory today is measured by the number of likes a family picture gets and not the actual amazing family experience everyone deserves. Young people are more interested in the number of followers they get than the productive things they get done, which shouldn't be so. The internet is revealing the weak nature of our shared human connection, and is making it even weaker.

It's about time we reviewed our view of victory, to know that what matters most is the present moment, to understand that the end does not justify the means, and to realise that there is no end to our made-up chase for victory.

# Amaga and the Football Match

Patricia Peace Ejang  
Uganda

Amaga was a very stubborn boy. He was always up to some sort of mischief. He had few friends because he had either played a trick on them or their parents had told them to stay away from troublesome Amaga. This made him sad. He spent his free time climbing trees and playing football on his own. Amaga might have been stubborn, but he was a great football player.

One day, as Amaga wandered around the village, he found a group of big boys playing football. One of them kicked the ball off the pitch and it landed near him. Before he could kick the ball back, a big boy who seemed to be the owner of the ball shouted that Amaga should not touch the ball. He felt hurt and walked away. That night, he dreamt that he was the best player in the village and the village

chief was handing him a gift. This made him exhilarated!

The next day, Amaga walked back to the pitch and asked one of the big boys if he could play with them. At first, the big boys mocked him for being small and said he could not play but he stood his ground and insisted on playing. Tired of Amaga's nagging, the big boys let him play. Amaga was so excited. He took off his shirt and joined them on the pitch. One could easily tell that he was the smallest on the pitch. He however used this to his advantage. As soon as he got the ball, he dribbled it past his opponents, his size helping him to dodge the big boys with ease. Soon it was only the goalkeeper between him and the two poles that made up for the goalposts. Amaga knew a trick. He had practised it a thousand times. He made as if to kick

the ball to the left and when the goalkeeper dived that way, he quickly shifted and kicked the ball to the right end of the goalpost. It was a goal. Amaga jumped up and down, and the big boys, impressed, patted him on his shoulder. He scored two more goals and his team won. That evening, Amaga walked home daydreaming about the many more goals he would score at the National stadium and later that night, he dreamt that he had become the best football player in the world.

Amaga woke up at dawn and ran to Ocuku, the wise old man who stayed near the village square. He asked Ocuku what it would take him to achieve his dream of becoming a great football player.

"Hard work, my child, and discipline," Ocuku said.

Amaga ran all the way home, knowing just what to do in order to become a star player. He was quite cheerful that day, he did not even chase the chicks and neither did he spin the cat around like he usually did. In fact, he helped around with the chores. He swept the compound, washed the dishes and even helped his mother gather firewood. His mother was very surprised because Amaga hated doing housework and would only help a little after his mother threatened to beat him with a slipper.

A week later, the village was celebrating the harvesting

season and in honor of the great dat, a football match was set between Amaga's village and the neighboring village. Amaga had been practicing hard, every single evening as soon as he was done doing the house chores. He replayed the tricks in his head over and over. He dreamt of nothing but winning on that great day.

The day finally arrived, Amaga and his teammates wore orange shirts and black shorts. The other team had big boys, they wore blue shirts and white shorts. They looked tough and very strong. Amaga and his

teammates had prepared very well and therefore knew they were ready to win the match. The drums were beaten and the game started. Amaga dribbled the ball as soon as he got it, dodging opponents here and there, solely focusing on the goalposts. He scored three goals out of the five that his team scored to win the match. So impressed was the village chief that he gave Amaga a special necklace and a pair of brand new shoes.

Amaga swore to work hard, both at home and on the pitch, to be the best football player of all time.



# Muta

**Margaret Njeri Mungai**  
Kenya

This is the story of Muta, he is eight years old. Muta enjoys going to school and playing with his friends. He also loves playing games on his mothers' phone and watching cartoons. Like many boys his age he enjoys action-heroes-themed cartoons and fantasises about being a hero himself. As much as he loves school, he also loves his sleep and sometimes it is a struggle to get out of bed in the morning.

But, he realised that when his mother instructs him to go to bed early so he is able to wake up early in the morning, she was right. Muta now knows that when he goes to bed early he is able to wake up feeling fresh in the morning without feeling like going right back to sleep when his mother wakes him up to prepare for school. Muta looks at this as a

victory, he is winning over the heavy sleepiness that he used to feel in the morning. He is yet to win the battle over wanting to watch his cartoons late into the night and therefore he still looks forward to the weekends and holidays when he gets special permission to go to bed late and sleep till late the following day.

Unfortunately, Muta has been having a hard time understanding the right way to solve mathematical equations. He has been working very hard in his school work, yet this one subject has been giving him a hard time. His mother advised him to talk to his teacher about it and he is glad that he did. The teacher told Muta to first of all read the instructions slowly and carefully so he is able to understand what the question is all about. For example, is it about addition

or subtraction. From there he should take time to do the calculations and then double check his answer. This has been of so much help and Muta is determined to improve his performance in maths. He is also secretly looking at a maths equation like a villain and seeing himself as the hero who needs to have victory just as the super heroes in his cartoons.

Right now, Muta knows victory feels good and he enjoys to win, like when he scores a goal when playing football with his friends. He is also slowly understanding that victory also requires a lot of hard work. His mother also talks to him about failing, that it is not the end when you fail in something. Rather you should be glad that you tried and you also try your best next time.



Muta was also worried because he was not very sure what he wants to be when he grows up. Most adults keep asking him that and sometimes he has so many options and other times he is not sure. At one point he wanted to be a firefighter because he thought it would be so cool to drive the fire truck. At another point he wanted to construct houses because

big buildings fascinated him. At some point he wanted to be a doctor because when he visited the doctor's office it looked really nice not to mention the white coat and the stethoscope fascinated him. Of course, he also wants to be a super hero so he can defeat all the super villains but his mom always insists that super heroes only exist in the TV world and not in real life. This one

really disappointed him.

But as his school principal said, it is okay if you are not sure what you want to be in future. There are very many options to choose from and you can be anything you want to be so long as you put your mind into it and work very hard at, then victory will be yours. You can even be the president, imagine that.



# Silent Master

Temani Nkalolang  
Botswana



Long time ago when the rocks were still wet with mist, people lived in harmony with their master, Soil. Master Soil was spread like a carpet throughout the whole kingdom and sustained life. He took care of his people, made sure they were well fed and happy always. Though Master Soil could only speak with his actions, the people respected him and understood their obligations towards their master. They kept his body covered at all times except the small portion of land where they built their homesteads. So, Master

Soil's kingdom flourished.

One dark night, a piercing whistle was heard tearing through the forest. People woke up to a disturbing sight, trees were blown about, their leaves falling and sand getting into their ears and eyes. Wind galloped into their homesteads neighing like a horse, on his back was his rider, Drought. The people were not happy with Drought's arrival because they could see the damage caused by his horse, Wind. One look at him and they felt pity on him. Drought was thin, dry and smelled like a rotten carcass. The people

ignored Master Soil's warning of falling leaves because they couldn't believe frail Drought could harm them.

With Drought's arrival, life changed drastically. Trees lost more leaves, animals started getting sick and died. Drought realized the people were not aware he is the cause of change in their kingdom so he took advantage of their ignorance and started making up stories. Drought told the people that his kingdom lost all life because of an unexplained occurrence that's why he took his horse and ran away before he died, too. When the people believed him, Drought instigated them against their Master Soil by telling more lies. As result people were occupied with worry and fear such that they did not listen to Master Soil's warnings anymore.





Taking Drought's advice, the people cut trees and built big storages. They collected all the fruits, vegetables and herbs from their kingdom and stored them in their storages. They killed most of the animals that were left, dried the meat and kept it for future use. As far as the eyes could see, Master Soil's body was left uncovered but no one cared because they were busy listening to Drought's lies. Drought's horse, Wind, would be seen galloping around blowing soil all over filling the atmosphere with dust.

With each passing day life became hard for the people and they started getting sick

and dying of hunger with their food storages depleted. Drought had made himself King of their kingdom and anyone who opposed him was punished by hunger until death. Their kingdom looked exactly like Drought, dry, hot, bare and smelled of rotten carcasses. Great fear befell people because they realized Drought was the cause of their hardships. They started sneaking off when Drought was not watching and pleaded with Master Soil to rescue them. But Master Soil was too weak, he had a disease called soil erosion.

The people sat by the dry river bed and cried bitterly.

When their tears wet the dry river bed, Master Soil regained a little bit of his strength. He pitied his people so he told them to gather all the dry seeds they could find and bury them deep in his body where Wind wouldn't be able to blow them away. He told them they had to work fast before Drought turned their kingdom into a desert and stayed there permanently. People scattered all over and gathered as many seeds as they could find and secretly buried them. In the middle of the night when everyone was asleep, Master Soil with all the strength he had left stretched his arms to the heavens and called rain. That night it rained so hard Drought and his horse drowned in the flowing rivers while they tried to escape.

The people were so happy their Master defeated drought and saved their lives. They apologised to Master Soil and vowed never to disobey him again. Life returned to normal and they lived happily ever after.



# The Win with a Price

MaryCythia Chinwe Okafor  
Nigeria



It was the final day of the football competition. One of the two villages participating had hired Kaluana - a dibia - and the opposing team Eleanya, Kaluana's father to make charms for them to win the match.

It had caused quite a sensation that father and son - who were great dibias - who had always been cordial could come to blows.

Eleanya dared his son not to challenge him. "If you do," he had added to the amusement of both villages and his son, "ikuku will take you."

The threat that wind would carry him off sounded a lot threatening. And as he knew his father well enough, Kaluana didn't want to go against him, but the money he was offered cancelled all odds and he overlooked the



threat.

On the day of the match, Eleanya came, walked round the pitch, chanted incantations and went away. Kaluana came after and set kitchen beside the pitch. He boiled his medicine in a clay pot on a tripod without fire under it while he burnt dried leaves on a fire burning beside the tripod. His

supported village won and he rejoiced but his victory was short-lived as that night Eleanya's promise came to fulfillment.

That night, Kaluana went as usual to hunt but didn't come back in the morning. He disappeared never to be seen again and to this day, nobody knew what happened to him.





---

**Chipó Chama**  
Zambia

# I'm Winning

Margaret N. Mungai  
Kenya



To watch this Sunset  
And to have the courage  
to hope for the Sunrise tomorrow  
To wait for a New day  
May not seem like much to some  
But it's me winning  
Against this dark cloud  
This fog  
That makes it impossible  
To see any joy in tomorrow  
Or to have any delight  
In the beat of my heart



# Disciples to Victory

Akin-Ojo Oluwaseyi  
Nigeria

We have trained our men  
To be valiant Lions in any den.  
We know we face a threat  
But in its midst, we shall not fret.

Come at us, you epic enemies.  
Ride the dust and become tragic stories.  
Unsheathe your swords and take your  
stand.  
After the battle, your remnants would  
understand.

Our women have been tortured  
In ways that should not be mentioned.  
Our children have become slaves  
In your smelly low-slung caves.

Our men have been trained  
To be Lions that cannot be tamed.  
We know the threat we face  
And out of it, we shall efface.

# No Apology

Ronald K. Ssekajja  
Uganda



But the sky will never run dry,  
Grow pale with no shooting star!  
The lurid candle will burn in the chilling  
winds.  
Illuminate the paths ahead,  
And paint smiles on willow faces.

It is never too late to embrace the smiling  
future.  
To free the past from the prison of your  
mind,  
It's easy to get stuck in the past,

But it's not the present; so, don't stay  
there forever!

Melt the apology of inefficiency  
In the mouth of the renaissance.  
The syllables of your name  
Breath fire of greatness,  
And it all rhymes.

Your Victory is already in hand  
Have no apology for inefficiency!





# Over Myself

Munashe Nyamazana  
Zimbabwe

An unconquerable will for victory  
Coupled with an avalanche of effort  
A sisyphian life is all I got,  
I've the champagne, I've the glory.  
Triumphed even the gruesome.

The acme of my story  
As a victor, I wasn't born  
Gathered the courage alone  
Rest is history,  
Environs of consistency.

Courage over fears,

Over myself to be victorious,  
Overcoming me was laborious  
Never to drown in my tears,  
The lamentable catalogue of the past.

A self that ensnares  
Begets not being glorious,  
Be courageous  
Victory genes dares  
Subdue yourself in the whim.



# Victory

Mogboyin Olayinka  
Nigeria



On this tunnel, we footlog  
With our bulbs peeled  
On daggers of those  
That lose the battle and win the war

Millions of throats slashed  
Thousand heads dwells on fated strand  
Ones the war cost arms and legs  
Here, we have on bravery  
Heads we win, tails we lose

We may not have hit a home run  
When our arms can be broken by beats  
Nor did we ever after  
dart in and out the fool paradise

We've heard of vain hope  
We've traveled cloud-cuckoo-land  
All in the name, to hold all the trumps

We've tasted sour grapes  
Offered by sour hearts  
Our eyes, like wet weekends  
We've come like ducks to water  
To give mournful kisses,  
To rejoice that we didn't lose  
to bad hair days  
We won.



# Emotional Scar

Masenkane Nahano  
Lesotho

It is between what hurts and what heals  
The testament of our inner strength  
Her unbeautiful truth about to show  
Unbeautiful truth that made her strong  
There is beauty in her scar.

It is between what hurts and what heals  
She is not afraid of what people will say  
She was clinging to life by  
a shredding thread  
She lost her smile, she picked it up  
She lost her people, she reconnected.

It is between what hurts and what heals  
Inside and out we all have freckles  
Her healing process started  
Started with a word received as a  
birthday gift  
A strong human she is.

It is between what hurts and what heals  
All the painful bruises slowly fading  
away Between the shadow of tragedy  
and light of joy  
Only strong people will admit it  
There is beauty in our scars.





# Victory will Come Again

**Bwesigye Laurent**  
Uganda

Victory will come again, I know.

I know we were trodden like grains Of  
sand  
In the desert  
I know, the masters with smite got us  
ridden  
Like slaves in the dirt.

But victory will come to us like the night  
To a bat.

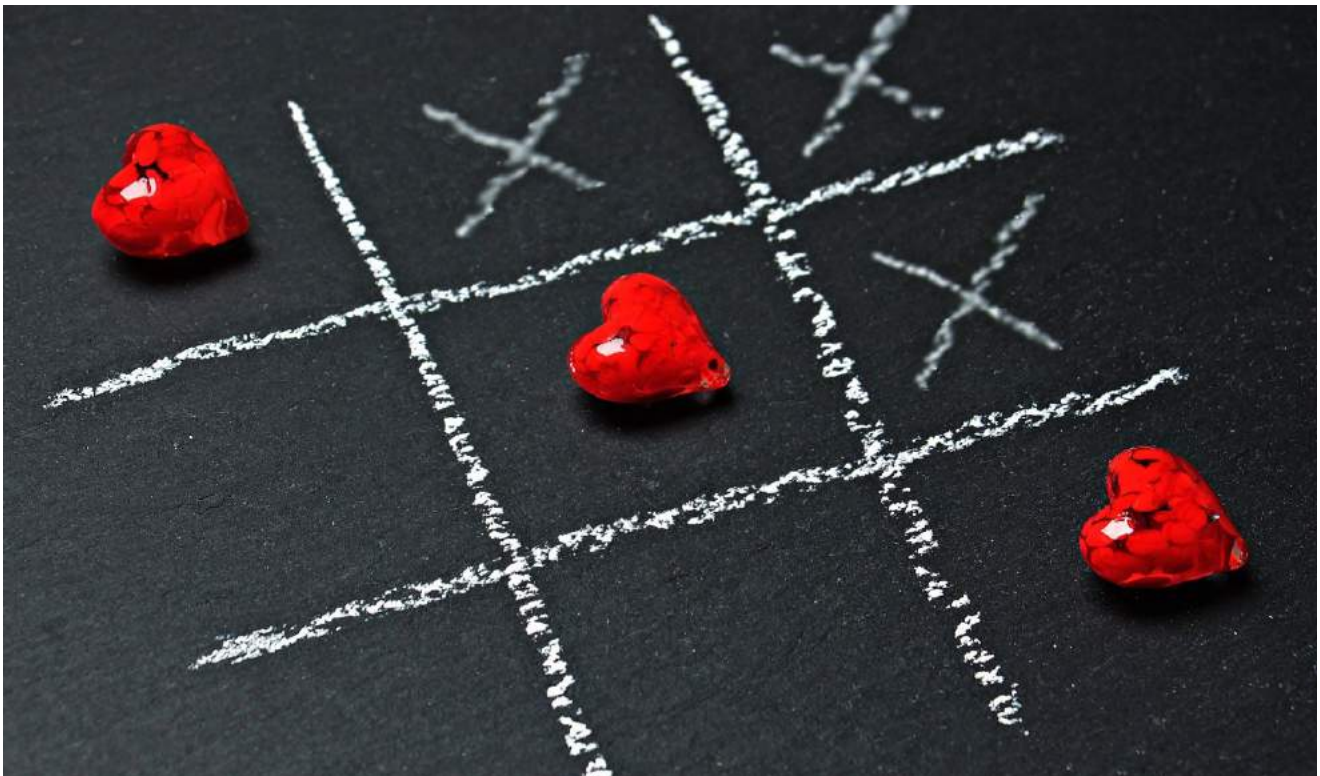
I also know  
The people we trusted, the people that  
surged

Like angry oceans and ran like belligerent  
rivers

To cut the tongues of the masters  
Have now mastered the art of the  
masters.

I know the victory we claimed created  
more chains.

But I also know as I sit in the dark  
And watch the light fade  
That victory  
Will  
Come again.





# Untamed

Simon Ng'uni  
Zambia

We will dance like wild things.  
berth on the ocean floor, we will dance  
like wild things  
melody our lakes with brimming, we will  
dance  
like wild things, when the calm is restored

like wild things, and like wild things, mend.  
like wind, like water, like wild things taking  
up the need.

with the only thing a man holds true  
This story of ember and flame. like wild  
things,  
blade a veil — when the ground weevils  
within  
feat of their horde and nooses

like wild things gazelle, our feet are  
guided by grace  
some say we are savages, I say we are  
born running  
kicking when we crawl out of our shell. I  
say,

it is in our waiting - in what we wait for,  
it is in what we become after. what we do  
in between,  
it is who we've always been. we take wing  
anchoring  
root, we are planted thus. like wild things

into song,  
the gown verdant on bare hills, slews of  
ululation  
stamps in unison commemoration, we  
conquer  
struggle or endeavour against odds or  
difficulty.

I say it is who we are. A taut fleece on  
drum skins,  
the songs we sing, it is in our grace, it is  
in our rhythm,  
the very fabric of our gait when we have  
overcome the night  
with caverns of laughter, it is in the way  
the sun captures our smile.



# Individuated Triumph

Uwayezu Sandra Nadege  
Rwanda

Drizzle on sidewalks  
Doubts daunting the heart  
Fear taunting the soul  
Sight unseen  
Faith soars.

Searing need  
Invisible battles  
Fought in silence  
Help unearned  
A path is paved.

Personal wars

Unknown to the world  
Decays zest for life  
Seeking peace in pieces  
Leads to renewed avidity.

Victory nigh  
Journey tiring still  
Joy mounts nevertheless  
A will gives a way  
One by one, demons are slayed.



# The Road to Victory

Andrea B. Matambo  
Zambia

Seventy-two hours after their bitter defeat,  
Their loved and feared commader rose to  
his feet;  
He had just lost an eye and many a close  
friend in that great fall.  
Threw he his remaining eye on his  
remaining soldiers and spoke so:

"Yeah. 'It will be ease as a smile' -did you  
think?  
Walk in, grab it, return with glory in a wink?  
'It will be ease as a Sunday' -did you  
suppose?  
Chains of heartaches and loses; is victory  
any close?

"And so, here we plant our loved kins

down deep, alas.  
Please borne their dreams and many  
memories in your hearts;  
For until the day our many-fold freedom  
we gain  
Tonight we're going to spring in that  
warzone again."

Seventy-two hours after their bitter  
defeat,  
Their loved and feared commander rose  
to his feet;  
Knew he well -the path to glory is not  
always sunny and flowery.  
"Sorry!" Said he to his troops "Gory! The  
road to victory."



# Warmth (Finally)

Steve Otieno  
Kenya

I remember what happened  
When I took my hand out of my pocket  
To reach for the sun,

I remember staring at my palms,  
Caught off guard by my nail's edges,  
After all those days of lurking in my  
shadow,

And I remember  
How my heart looked,  
Prancing on my sleeve,

From then on,

I've been talking about suns,  
More than I have of silhouettes,

From then on,  
I've been talking about  
Nothing but its floodlight,

Though sometimes,  
Rain drips from my fingers,  
Sending me into another curve,

But the dance,  
Isn't for the rain,  
As much as it's for the sun's return.





**Genre: Short Story**

**Title: May 20th**

**Writer: Kingsley Aaron Onuigbo, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Bildad Makori, Kenya**

**T**he narrative on Africa's Leadership structure is one that has faced numerous challenges.

Since the time immemorial, men have always been occupying the top leadership positions.

But thanks to the "May 20th", a short story by Kingsley Aaron Onuigbo; this cliché narrative is seen to have changed, all thanks to a revolution!

The persona is a female president of the Republic of Nigeria. The better part of the short story sees her preparing and reading a speech as the president.

I really love how the writer has structured and arranged the short story. That is, the key highlight being the manner in which it has been written and how the setting is being presented to us. The whole story is from detailed accounts that were written in the persona's diary's event that took place on May 20th.

Nevertheless, had the lengthy account that happened in between 9.17AM to 12.06PM being shorter, it would have prevented a reader to easily lose track of the knowledge: that what we are reading, are diary accounts that occurred on that day.

But in general, May 20th is a well-structured and enjoyable short story that I urge especially ladies to read.



**Genre: Article**

**Title: Trends of Colonialism in Africa; A call for Mental Revolution**

**Writer: Comfort Nyati SDB, Zimbabwe**

**Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana**

**O**blivious we were of the fact that independence from an authoritarian foreign rule would accelerate the emancipation of the African dream. Where self-reliance and cohesion thrived for all seasons. We woke from this illusion as freedom from one colonial rule was a plunge into the perils of tribalism and mental slavery.

This, being the core around which the author revolves this article in.

The author is describing colonialism with evidential historical precedence and refers to it as a practice of dominance and subjugation of a feeble group to another. This inculcates the paradigms where ethnic groups engulf neighbouring groups and establish dominance over them while encrypting in them novel ideals and beliefs which are peculiar to that of the conqueror.

At the climax of a keenly led path to deciphering the various perspectives which we can view colonialism from, he adds that colonialism (dominance) is a natural trait of both rational and irrational beings. This implies that the zeal to establish dominance over the feeble and be feared is an intrinsic mental craving of all individuals. This attribute, if not controlled, is highly detrimental.

I could not agree less with the article since we have not adequately evolved from the animosity attributed to establishing dominance to fuel our social prestige and satisfy our ego. The refusal of a number of African leaders to retire from political offices affirms the claim of colonialism/dominance being an intrinsic trait of humans.

The author calls for revolution. An armless revolution that will seek to alter the integral or core aspect of colonialism; a mental revolution whose threshold is our educational system. Our freedom from mental slavery is not proportional to academic excellence but an informed, gallant and daring mind. A zeal for freedom from mental slavery; a revolution which can only be birthed in the classroom.

The author unravels to our consciousness the roots of the declination in growth of Africa emancipating herself from the chains of neocolonialism. He does so by making compelling and undebatable analyses and backs them with tangible paradigms which has proven to be a very effective method of sparking a sense of awareness.

**Genre: Children's Literature (Wakini Kuria First Runner up)**

**Title: Sophie, What Did you Say?**

**Writer: Blessing Tarfa, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Thuto Vanessa Seabe, Botswana**

**S**ophie, what did you say? As the title suggests is an interactive read for children, it centers on teaching them manners, how to carry themselves, how to interact with adults as well as boundaries and discipline.

Sophie is a bright and intelligent child who just needs to be taught some things as she grows, her parents are patient with her which is how children should be taught. By repetitively teaching her what and how to ask for things she wants and also show thanks, Sophie soon catches on and assumes the behaviour taught to her by her parents, this speaks to the influence that parents have in molding their children and ultimately the people they send out into the world. Sophie's teachings from home are shown when she visits her friends for a sleepover and is able to carry herself well.

The author has managed to not only teach children a few lessons in the story but has also taught parents how to interact with their children and be a positive influence.



Genre: Poetry

Title: The Revolution

Writer: Adegboro Samuel, Nigeria

Reviewer: Omadang Yowasi, Uganda

**F**or any revolution whether political, social or economical to be fruitful, time MUST be ripe, everyone or almost everyone must be disgruntled and the only option left with is a revolution!

Adegboro writes THE REVOLUTION creating a persona calling and reminding the masses that "the time is now," to change the status quo, to crucify the "hawk" which can mean the grand oppressor. There's urgency in this line to morale boost whoever is ready to take part in the revolution.

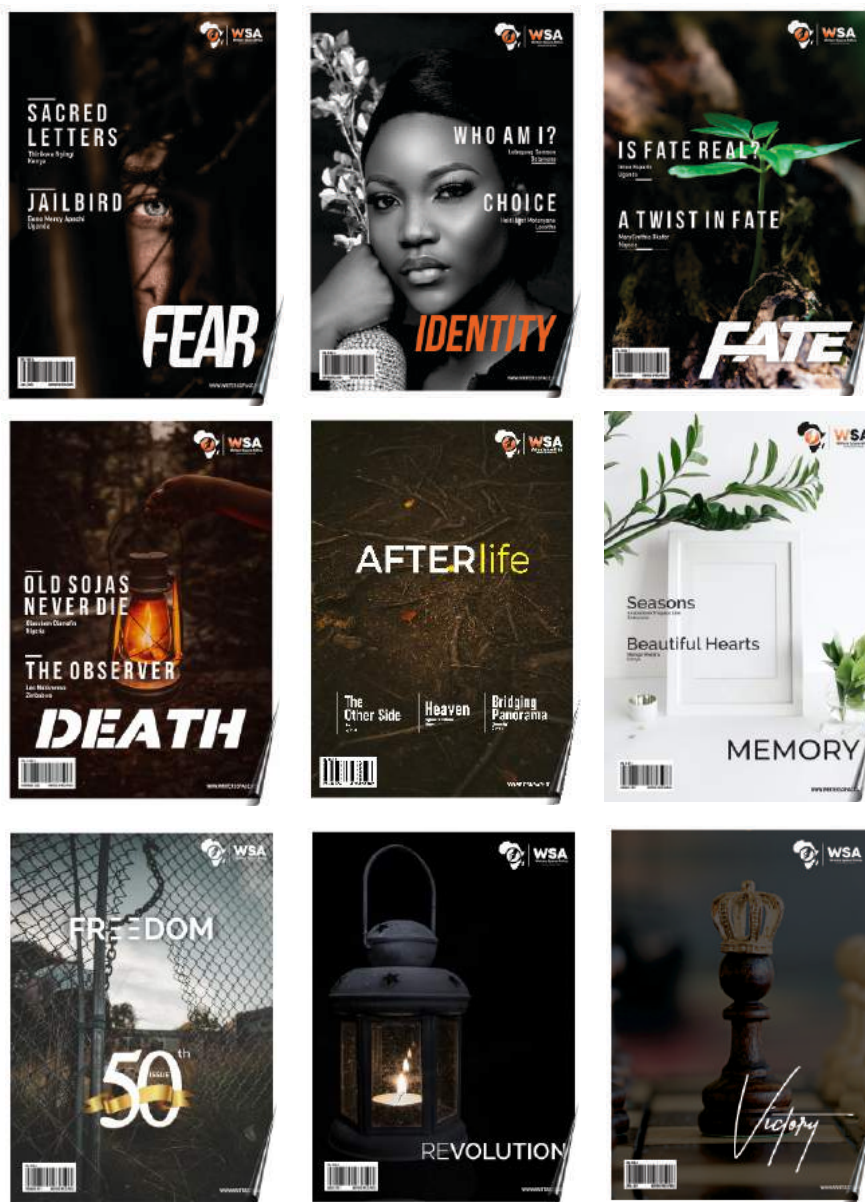
The poem implores those in solidarity with the revolutionaries to pray for those killed and those suffering and crying, which vices are castigated by those in power. There's hope in the poem that with time, the revolutionaries will crucify their tormentors on the cross, an act of ending all badness meted out on them. The fall of the "king of Persia" is figurative. The poem is written in short and neat lines with a refrain reminding the people of their pending obligations.

Biblical allusion to the king of Persia foreshadows the downfall of the state whom the people have risen against. There's good use of imagery, auditory and visual.





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*AN INTERVIEW WITH MAAZA MENGISTE*

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VOL. 5 NO. 4



APRIL 2021

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

“Adversity is inevitable; misery is optional.” This is how my friend Marita Banda, a poet and author, puts it. The bad, the terrible and the worst things one can think of happen to all of us at one time or another in this life. How we react to them is entirely up to us.

Our contributors have run the gamut of this month's theme: Misery. Explored in these pages are physical pain, mental health, self-reflection, parental expectations of children, secret love, depression, suicide, rape, unrequited love, social stigma and much more.

Gracing the cover of our May issue is Maaza Mengiste, author of the critically acclaimed and Booker Prize shortlisted novel “The Shadow King”. I sat down with her for an interview that quickly felt like a conversation with a friend. That's a credit to her warm and welcoming nature. We hope you gain some useful insight into what she revealed.

Just before publication, we got some wonderful news that Writers Space Africa has been awarded 'Best African Writer Promotion Platform 2021' in Acquisition International Magazine's Business Excellence Awards 2021! We are raising a glass and celebrating this award with you all!

Happy reading!

Namwanja,

Chief Editor.

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# A BEAUTIFUL THING NEVER DIES

SYLAS JEHU  
NIGERIA

If the people living in the neighbourhood were to speak of the woman who lived in the veranda of the old uncompleted building down the street, they would call her mad. It was not that she was always dirty and ragged like other mad people touring the streets of Uyo, or that she occasionally attacked passers-by or spat on them like Ito, or that she came out every morning to dance at the bus stop to the amusement of school children who sang and clapped while she danced passionately to their music with a gracious smile on her face. It wasn't any of that. This woman was neat, her long hair always combed and held back with a rubber band. She wasn't wild either, but for the single fact that she lived with a scarecrow in her home, she had to be mad.

There was a time when Mary used to speak and smile and laugh, when she used to call

me Mummy, but that was a long time ago.

Mary had come into our life seven years after Charles and I got married. Before she came, I had known the feeling of a child inside my womb, children actually. Children who probably saw how terrible the world was through my eyes and disappeared back into inexistence. When they disappeared, I would be in anguish for months until another one formed inside me, giving me hope that I would be a mother, only to crush it by disappearing. Finally, Mary had seen the world and liked it, or maybe she had seen how scarred I was from the series of miscarriages and pitied me, deciding to stay on even while knowing the world was a terrible place.

When Mary came into our life, she revived the joy that was dying in our marriage. She filled the void, the emptiness eating

us up, and Charles and I loved her more than any parent could ever love their child.

Mary was beautiful, with a round face and bold eyes, just like Mami, my mother. Mami had taken me to several churches and herbalists, and given me all kinds of concoctions to drink when I was searching for a child. When all her attempts failed, she gave up, saying that God knows best. And that was when Mary had showed up; when we weren't expecting her, and stayed.

It all started that cold windy day in January, a day that held fate by its reins and turned it against me. Mary had gone to school neatly dressed in her school uniform – a white shirt to go with a navy-blue pinafore and white stockings – with her usual smile gracing her face, a smile that always warmed my heart.

She always looked good in that pinafore, and she always liked going to school. "Bye bye, Mummy." That was the last thing she said just before she waved and entered the school bus. And that was the last time she spoke, or smiled. I never saw her again until recently.

I had waited impatiently for Mary to return that day, looking out of the window through the blinds for the school bus every time my heart skipped in worry, but she didn't return. The school bus never came. When I dialed the school's line, it kept ringing, sending waves of worry and fear into my heart, but nobody answered.

When I had exhausted all the patience I could muster, I decided to go to the school myself and see what was keeping my child. I was approaching the door when Charles returned home with a look I had never seen on his face before, a look that said something terrible had happened. There was shock and fear and sadness hanging on his face, and my eyes froze, and my heart dropped to the floor. I knew. A mother would

always know when something bad has happened to her child; but it was too bad to be true, so I asked, hoping I was wrong and praying that the universe would not condemn me in such a devastating way. But I was right.

"Honey, you need to sit down," Charles said, his voice dry and breaking. But I didn't sit down; I couldn't, not with my heart burning away.

"What happened? Where is Mary?" I asked, and he broke down in tears and led me to the couch.

"There's been an accident... the school bus. Mary is gone." The words rolled out of his lips like he was a character in a sad movie. I didn't cry at first; the shock threw me up into air and Charles couldn't hold me. When I started crying, I didn't stop. For days I cried and cried, and then days turned into months until crying lost its meaning for me, and that was when I stopped recognizing myself.

Two years later, Charles told me one morning over

breakfast that he wanted a divorce. I wasn't angry or surprised – our marriage was dead, dry like an orange that had been left on the ground to wither after all its juices had been sucked out. I didn't ask why either, I knew why. This man wanted a child and I couldn't give him that. Mary was the last life my womb could carry.

Charles and his new wife had a son a few months into their marriage, and it dawned on me that he had been cheating on me the whole time. I didn't blame him; nobody deserves a bitter wife, especially Charles. Before the divorce, I had stopped talking to him; all I did was cook and clean the house.

He had tried to make me happy, to bring me back, but my spirit was too dead to be resurrected.

It was four years later that I started to doubt if Mary was really gone. They said the accident was so terrible that it was better I didn't see her. Mami told me no parent deserves to bury their child, and I had agreed.

I didn't want to picture Mary in any tragic way. I couldn't imagine a different image besides her shiny olive skin, her bold mesmerizing eyes, and the warm smile she always offered. I couldn't imagine seeing her bloodied in her uniform, her pinafore that she always looked beautiful in. I couldn't imagine seeing her dead, and so I had agreed not to see her. I wanted to be able to console myself with fleeting thoughts that she may still be alive.

Soon, I began to believe that Mary hadn't died, that she had somehow survived the accident. How could such a beautiful thing die? I began to search for her. Every day, I would walk the streets around her school from morning till night hoping to find her. I would sneak into the school and search all the classrooms and every other place hoping to see my baby girl, but I never found her, and I never gave up. I took to the streets of Uyo, searching every corner. I kept telling myself, she has to be somewhere in this town. Sometimes I saw girls who really looked like her, walking

hand in hand with their parents and smiling the way Mary used to smile, and it strengthened my resolve.

Finally, I saw Mary one very hot afternoon in the market. She was lying helplessly on the ground in her pinafore which was now old and faded, with a bunch of old clothes around her. A woman stood behind her, ringing a bell and shouting: "Two hundred naira! Two hundred naira! After today, no more!" The woman was going to sell Mary, my baby girl, and I wasn't going to let that happen. I snatched Mary and fled, snaking my way through the crowd. She felt so light in my arms, so light like ... a piece of cloth. It has to be hunger, she must be starving, I said to myself as I ran.

When I brought her home she was very weak and could barely stand. I had to use sticks to support her.

Mary never eats anything I give her, and she never says anything to me either. I know it's because she is angry at me for abandoning her the whole time, for believing she was capable of dying; that she could leave me alone in this world after all we had been through, after all the promises we made to ourselves. I know she'll forgive me one day because she still smiles knowing I could never do without her smile, the smile never leaves her face. I know one day she will stop standing and run to me with open arms and call me Mummy. And we would be happy together once again.



# MISERY

EZELIORA NDIDIAMAKA  
Nigeria



I knew I had to leave this place; I could not take it anymore. I hurriedly packed the few things I had come with inside a yellow nylon, as I didn't want it to seem evident to the nosy neighbours that I was running away. The loud chiming sound of the clock startled me. I could feel my heart beat faster. I was running out of time, and I knew it would not be long before he arrived. I continued to pack my things when I stumbled upon the

picture of my aunt.

She was laughing in this picture, and I found myself smiling at the memory of that day. It felt like ages since I smiled; it felt very alien to me as I watched my eyes brighten a bit. I remember when I used to have a smiling face, my mother had told me it was what made me stand out from everyone. Things, however, changed when I moved in with my aunty. I was excited to move in with her as she had always been my favourite Aunt.

The day I had arrived at my Aunt's house, I had been very shocked at her appearance. She looked nothing like the picture I had tucked inside my suitcase. She had dark circles under her eyes and looked lean as she tried to smile at me. I was tempted to run away until spoke to me in her sweet

angelic voice and then hugged me. My Aunt welcomed me with a lovely dish of jollof rice and chicken. She lived in a duplex, was unable to have children, and always treated me like her daughter. I had settled in nicely in her house for two days before her husband, Uncle Sam, came back. The day Uncle Sam arrived, I had gone to plait my hair. I came back into the house laughing with my Aunt as we ate roasted plantain. I saw my Aunt's countenance change the moment she locked eyes with Uncle Sam.

"This is Ada, my niece," Aunty said with her eyes downcast as she urged me to come forward with a slight push.

"Good afternoon, Uncle." I said, smiling.





I was surprised at the cold face that had stared right back at me; Uncle Sam looked at me like I had seen my mother do in the market when she wanted to select the fattest goat to buy for Christmas. He had looked at Aunt, then back at me one last time before disappearing to his room. That was the last day I saw my Aunt smile while breathing. The next time I saw her smile was in her coffin; she had looked like she was at peace.

"You know how clumsy your Aunt is," Uncle Sam said as he broke the news of my aunt's death to me when I entered the house. He said she had slipped down the stairs and died instantly. He smiled like it was a joke to him. I cried so much that day, and I wondered how my sweet Aunt had ended up with a man like Uncle Sam.

The day after the burial, I had packed my bags intending to go back with my parents. Uncle Sam, however, insisted that I remain with

him. He was friends with most of the professors in the university I planned on attending. He told my parents he would meet with them to secure my admission. This overjoyed my parents, and my mother had even knelt in appreciation. I had cried myself to sleep that night as I wished my Aunt could come back to life.

A month after my Aunt's death, I was accepted to my dream school. I was so excited that I hurried to Uncle Sam's room to break the news to him, and that was the first time I saw him smile genuinely.

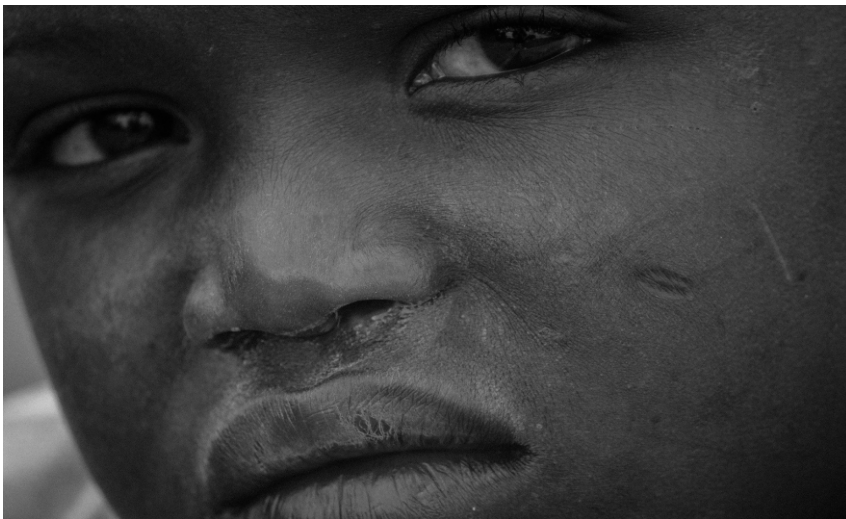
"I knew you would get in," he had said proudly as he squeezed my shoulders.

That night while I slept soundly, Uncle Sam had come into my room. He said he wanted to celebrate with me. I was surprised he had a key to my room; I had hugged my wrapper tighter to cover the transparent part of my gown. Uncle Sam had

smelt of beer that night; he put his hands on my chest and I saw him smile in my dimly-lit room. I had no words coming out of my mouth no matter how hard I tried to speak up. Inside I was screaming, I wanted to kick and push him away from me. Uncle Sam pushed me onto the bed and told me I was just like my Aunt. He called her a mute. I screamed so loudly that he hit me. He hit me repeatedly and forced himself on me.

I slipped in and out of consciousness that night and woke up at precisely 2PM the next day. The was the first thing I checked. I believed I had a very horrible dream until I saw the bloodstains on my bed. My whole body had been covered in bruises, and I my legs could no longer carry the weight of my body.

I saw a white paper lying on the bed, and I picked it up to read inquisitively: SHUT UP OR LOSE YOUR ADMISSION.



These words were written in bold on the paper. I looked around the room in fear before breaking down in tears wondering what I had done to deserve such wickedness. When evening time came, I had the strength to wash my stained bed sheet and take a hot shower. I scrubbed myself thoroughly, grateful that I could not remember anything that happened the previous night. However, I still felt dirty, and no matter how much I tried to scrub off the dirtiness from the previous night, it felt like I only made things worse. I also tried to eat, but my body refused the meal I had prepared, and I threw up. Afraid and feeling alone for the first time in my life, I decided to go into the room that my Aunt had always called her thinking room. It

was a spacious white room with piles of books on a shelf and a very long sofa. I had felt my aunt's presence as I settled on the sofa. I began to cry again as I realised that she was not coming back. I walked towards her bookshelf and ran my hands through her collection of books. As I did this, I noticed a book I was not familiar with and pulled it out. It was a brown book with no inscription on the cover.

I flipped through the first two pages and discovered it was my aunt's journal. I began to read each page as I digested how Uncle Sam had abused my Aunt ever since her first miscarriage. She was scared he would kill her, but she decided to remain in the marriage. She had written many nice things about me

and expressed how much she loved me. The last day she had written in her diary was the day she died. It was as if she had known she was going to die. She also wrote about her dreams and things she wished she had done differently.

I then heard the front door open. I quickly hurried to my room, hoping to block the door with a chair so Uncle Sam would not be able to come in. He, however, beat me to it and barged inside my room like a bull. He beat me until I lost consciousness and kept repeating that I needed to be punished. My only relief was that I hid my Aunt's journal before I blacked out.

This was why I planned on jumping out of the house through the window; it was my only means of escape. I knew I had to leave this house filled with sadness, and as I jumped, I thought of my Aunt once more and how I wished she could jump with me. I ran out of the compound as fast as my legs could carry me and never once looked back.

# RAIN

OSEMUDIAMEN OMONDIAGBE  
Nigeria



I've always loved the rain. My mother says it rained heavily on the day I was born, thunderclaps eclipsing the sounds of her agonising wails as she pushed me into the cruel reality I've come to know as the world. I guess it makes sense that the sounds and smells that accompany the weeping skies have always made me feel comfortable.

I've always been angry at the world, discontent by the state of it, and unable to fully accept my place in existence. I often feel like my head is in the clouds, unable to settle and focus on anything. That all changes when the clouds decide to bare their watery contents upon the earth. Rain clouds are a welcome sight and thunderstorms are when I'm at my sharpest, almost as though the chaos that accompanies heavy rainfall is in sync with my tumultuous soul. Joy in buckets.

It was raining that day. I woke up to the pattering sounds of the raindrops hitting the rooftops. The weather was perfect and my mood, buoyant. I left for work that morning with a spring in my step, raincoat on, ready to take on the world. I was in my element, and it felt great.

I walked down to the bus stop and barely waited a minute before a Danfo bus stopped in front of me. "CMS" the conductor yelled, announcing their destination. "How much?" I asked. "200 Naira," he responded, his breath tinged with the smell of ogogoro "I hold 500 Naira, you get change?" "Enter," he said, so I got in.

The bus was sparsely populated, janky, and had a leaky roof. It made several suspect noises as we sped through the streets of Lagos. The cold wind rushed in through the windows, accompanied occasionally by

tiny droplets of water that felt like a million little needle pricks on my face. There were six of us on the bus in total, eight if you counted the driver and conductor. The heavy rainfall probably discouraged most people from leaving their homes early, their loss.

We made good time, the usual morning traffic was non-existent, and soon we were ascending the Third-mainland bridge, the giant concrete monstrosity which was responsible for bridging the gap between the Lagos mainland, where I lived, and the Island, where I worked.

This dynamic was commonplace amongst Lagosians. Many of us have to wake up at unholy hours in preparation for this daily commute to and from our places of employment. In Lagos, if you had a 9 to 5 job then it wasn't really a 9 to 5, it was a 5 to 9.

Our ascent was rapid, the driver seemingly in a hurry to complete his first trip of the day. The other passengers did not appreciate this. "Driver slow down, be careful," they interjected, their words bouncing off the walls of the old bus and producing an effect akin to that of an echo chamber.

The driver did not take kindly to the criticism of his driving. "Who dey shout for there? You want make God punish you this morning?" he yelled, displeased. "It is you God will punish, idiot!" a female voice behind me shrieked in reply. I found the exchange slightly humorous, able to see the lighter side of what I felt was an unnecessary exchange of words. The driver, however, did not.

Incensed by this response, he turned around with a mouthful of curses aimed at the lady who was bold enough to defy him. What followed was, for all intents and purposes, a series of unfortunate events. The driver, lost in the heat of the moment, seemed to forget that he was behind the steering

wheel. The passengers, myself included, screamed at him to focus on getting us safely to our destination.

The bus veered out of control, and by the time the driver realised he was supposed to have his hands on the wheel and eyes on the road, it was too late. We were headed towards



railing at high speed, the weathered bus tires made extra slippery by the rain-soaked turf, and then, we fell off the bridge. It all happened so fast, yet slow. Time seemed to stop in that moment as I braced for impact, the waves of the Atlantic waiting to swallow us in its cold depths.

"Is this it? Am I going to die?"

We hit the water hard, hard enough to kill the driver on impact. Fitting that he died first, the current situation was both

his doing and undoing. The bus filled up with water fast, sinking deeper and deeper. It took a while for me to realise that I was drowning. I'd read about it, but experiencing the stabbing pain in my eyes and ears and the fire in my chest as my lungs oh so desperately sought for air, was surreal.

I willed myself to move, willed myself to find a way out of the bus that seemed destined to become my final resting place. All I could manage was a pathetic struggle against the current, as we sank further into the depths of the Atlantic.

"Move, MOVE! MOVE!!"

This wasn't supposed to happen. I was supposed to be in my element, at my best, unstoppable, ALIVE. At some point, after what felt like forever, I stopped struggling, and it felt as though the chaos of the raging currents were finally in sync with the raging of my tumultuous soul.

It was raining on the day I was born.

It was raining on the day I died.





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# MISERY, THE SILENT KILLER

RAWAT LUQMAAN  
SOUTH AFRICA



The word Misery is thrown around so often these days, one can argue that it has lost all meaning. Misery is basically defined as a state or feeling of great physical or mental distress or discomfort. Which is worse though: being miserable because of physical pain or mental pain? Someone who suffers from physical pain can be treated. There are pain medications and other remedies that can be administered to alleviate the pain one experiences. Meanwhile, it is easy for others to see the pain people go through. The sounds of discomfort, bruises and scars make it even easier for people around to see and hence sympathise with them, and to offer help if they can.

Misery born out of physical pain can be treated quite easily; however, the same

cannot be said about misery born out of mental pain. The brain is one of the most important, if not the most important, organ in the human body. Not only does it control our every movement, it also houses our thoughts and emotions. How then can something so vital to our survival also be something that can be detrimental to it? Our minds are extremely malleable. We are the ones that shape it and it in turn shapes our values, emotions, and personality, which explain who we are.

We can attribute the changes our minds go through to the experiences we get. The better the experiences we acquire in life, the better our minds become. The worse experiences we go through, the more broken our minds become, which further causes mental pain. This

kind of pain cannot be described or expressed, neither can it be seen, and is the main reason why people who suffer from mental pain/illness do not always get the help they need.

In those rare moments we hear people lament over their mental misery, they are usually shut up with harsh words like 'Just get on with your life', 'everyone has bigger problems' and other inhumane utterances. Statements like these can be extremely detrimental to a person who is already on the edge; who is not looking for someone to compare problems with, but may only be looking for someone to vent to. No need to have a problem Olympics. As members of society, we need to come together and help one another. We can no longer blame our ignorance for our inability to understand one's mental pain.



A person engulfed by misery no longer sees the happiness and beauty in this world; neither do they see the wonders that you and I see. Instead, his or her mind focuses on the negativity and the bad in this world and in their life. Being in such a state for a long period can be fatal. Misery leads to depression which could, and often leads to suicide. To best explain it, misery can be likened to an ocean that you step foot into. First, you feel the coldness of the waves dulling the heat of your feet but still walk in, thinking you can handle it. Deeper and deeper you go, firmly believing that you can handle it on your own, till you eventually realise you may have gone too far. It becomes too late however to turn back, since the crashing waves overpower you. At this juncture, you start fighting against this overpowering strength, fighting just to keep your head above the cold, crushing water.

People we lose to this battle



against misery simply give up. They give in to it and let it take them to the depths of the ocean, which becomes the end of the battle for them. Some would say they are cowards but when you have been fighting a battle all your life and cannot see victory in sight, giving up becomes your only choice.

Different situations bring misery into our lives, and we all may have encountered someone who lost the battle to it. We need to try as much as possible to find ways to pull ourselves out of misery should we find our strength waning in our battle against it. The easiest way is to find someone you trust, or find a therapist to talk to. Otherwise, journaling is also a very good option. Grab a

book and write down all your emotions. Let it all out; let your emotions run through the pen onto the page. Understand that the only way to get through this is to let it out. Let it all out and ease the burden that you have placed on your shoulders.

Whenever things become too hard for you, when you think you cannot carry on anymore, remember the many times that you fell and got back up on your feet. The many times that you overcame the trials and obstacles that stood in front of you. You had the strength to defeat them, and you still have that strength in you. If you defeated those, you can defeat this. Believe in yourself and never give up.

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# FLORA'S PET

PRISCAH MWANGI  
KENYA

Flora was a young, intelligent and obedient girl who lived with her mother in a house in the mountains. She worked hard to get good grades and was happy because her mum promised to get her a gift for performing so well in school. One day, Flora arrived at home from school and entered the kitchen ready to tell her mother about how her day was at school. She was eager to tell her mother about her new friend, Lisa. However, Flora's mother was not in the house, but on the table was a slightly big box wrapped up with a beautiful red bow.

Flora got curious and wanted to know what was in the box. She carefully untied the bow and opened up the box. Inside, was a brown puppy with smooth fur, fluffy ears and round white eyes. She was a beautiful

dog and Flora was very happy. She could not believe her mother had bought her a pet as a gift. Flora ran outside to the kitchen garden behind their house where her mother was busy picking tomatoes.

"Mum! Mum! Is that dog mine? The one in the box?" Flora asked her mum excitedly.

"Yes Flora, she is your pet now. You should give her a name," Flora's mother told her as she finished up harvesting tomatoes.

"Thank you so much Mum. I know what to call her..." Flora said as she ran back into the house.

Flora named her new pet Rosa just like her grandmother's dog who lived in another village away from theirs. Rosa became Flora's new best friend. They

played together, went to the shop together and sometimes even ate together. Rosa would walk with Flora to school in the morning and back home in the evening. Flora made sure that Rosa ate every day and that her kennel was clean throughout. Flora's mother was happy to see how much she cared for her pet. At school, all of Flora's friends and teachers knew of her pet and how much Flora loved her.

For many days Flora and her dog, Rosa played a lot, until one day, Rosa did not want to anymore. All she wanted to do was lie on her mat and sleep the whole day. Flora could not understand why Rosa did not want to play anymore or even walk to school with her. She was sad and begged her mother to tell her what was wrong with Rosa.

One afternoon, Flora's mum decided to take Rosa to the vet to find out whether she was sick. After a few hours of doing some tests, the vet told Flora's mum that Rosa had a serious disease that could not be cured. This made her very sad. When she got home, Flora was waiting to be told what was wrong.

"Mum, what did the dog doctor say? Is Rosa sick?" Flora asked.

"Yes Flo, the vet said that Rosa is very sick..." Flora's mother tried to explain

"...but will she be okay? We will give her medicine and she will be healed..." Flora

interrupted.

"No baby, I'm sorry but Rosa cannot be healed. Her disease is very serious," her mother continued to explain.

"Is... she going to...to...to die?" Flora asked crying.

"I'm really sorry baby. But don't worry, Rosa is going to be in a better place with God.

She will be able to play again without pain. She will even watch you from up there," her mother tried to comfort her.

"So she will be happy again when she goes to God?" Flora asked.

"Yes baby, Rosa will be

okay," her mum added.

After a few weeks, Rosa died which made Flora very sad. She cried so much that her head hurt. She did not eat for two days. Flora did not want to play. She missed Rosa so much. Her mother told her that Rosa was with God and that she was fine. This made flora somehow happy.

Days later, Flora started to play again. She was happy that Rosa was happy with God in heaven. Every night before sleeping, she would pray to God and ask Him to take good care of Rosa because they were best friends.



# WHEN I GROW UP

TEMANI NKALOLANG  
BOTSWANA



In a copper-nickel mining town, where black smoke from the mines greeted the mornings and the blast of dynamites shook the town to sleep every evening, Ujeura stayed with his grandmother.

Uje's mum was never around, she stayed at Jubilee Mental Hospital and people treated him differently because of that. They whispered, some pitied him but others said it to his face, that he is the son of a 'mad' woman and they stopped their kids from playing with him. Although this always sent him home in tears, he never allowed his grandmother to see him cry because she was already worried about his mum.

But at school when other students said bad things about his mother or sang 'mad Jeta, mad Jeta' when he passed by, he punched

their faces. As a result, he was always at the principal's office being punished for hitting other students. Uje couldn't understand why he was called a bully and not those students who sang 'mad Jeta, mad Jeta' when they saw him. This made him hate school and he performed poorly in school work.

One day, the teacher gave them homework to write a composition about what they wanted to be when they grow up. A boy seated behind him whispered loud enough for Uje to hear, that he is the reason his mother stayed at Jubilee. Uje wanted to punch him, but what he said scared him so much because he wondered if it was really true that it was his fault his mother was sick.

Uje could not ask his granny whether he was the reason

for his mother's sickness because she never really told him what was wrong with his mother except that his mother was not well but she would get better soon. So, he went to his aunt who worked at the hospital to ask for the truth. He wondered whether he was a bad child. Was that the reason his mother never seemed to recognise him even when they visited her at Jubilee?

At the hospital, his aunt explained to him that he was not the cause of his mum's sickness and that his mother was not 'mad' but she had post-natal depression. He could not pronounce the name so she wrote it for him on a piece of paper. But what confused him was that if he was not the reason his mother was sick then how come she only became sick after he was born? He felt like a bad child who made his mother sick.



The piece of paper in his hand, he read the name again and knew then what he wanted to be when he grew up.

In class, the teacher asked some students to read their compositions to the class and Uje stood up.

"Uje? You want to read your composition?" The teacher asked surprised.

"Yes mam." He answered in a low voice.

She looked at him for a moment then said, "Ok, go ahead Uje."

The whole class started whispering and he felt embarrassed. His hands

were sweating and shaking so, he grabbed his exercise book tight so it wouldn't slip from his hands.

"Whe...when I grow up." He stammered

"When I grow up, I want to be a doctor and, and heal..." the whole class laughed at him, even the teacher looked at me with shock

"Shhh!" The teacher silenced the class

"I want to be a doctor and heal my mum, so that she will smile, play with me, take me shopping to buy new clothes, a lot of toys and cook nice food for me and granny." Uje continued

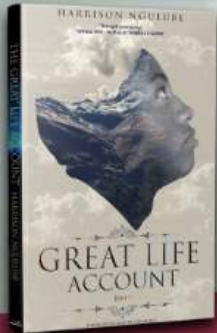
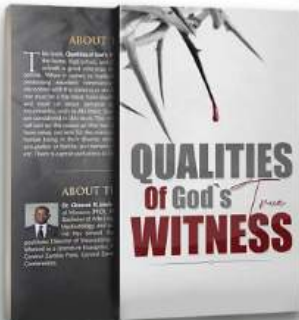
reading.

No one believed a grade C student like Uje could become a doctor but his granny believed him, so he stopped punching their faces even when they sang 'mad Jeta', instead he took his aunt's advice and thought about good things, like what he would do when he becomes a doctor. So, he would write at the back of his exercise book, in capital letters, over and over again until he felt angry no more; DOCTOR UJEURA, SON OF JETARERA.



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# MISERY

CHRISTIANA AGBONI  
NIGERIA



You watch Richard drape his hand across Ajuma's shoulder, his fingertips playing with the flayed sleeve of her Ankara blouse, it's the casual way of one who is familiar with her body. He nudges you with his other hand and smiles. Your eyes tingle, like you have dust in them.

"Mary, isn't this wonderful?" Ajuma trills. She lifts her left hand again, a silver engagement ring glitters. Ajuma looks so innocent, so beautiful she practically glows. You open your mouth and twist

it into what you hope will pass for a smile.

Richard reaches out with his other hand drags you close to his side. Your heart skips, your body tightens. You listen to the beating of his heart, absorbing the warmth of his body. You have a mind not to let go, but you fight the losing battle. You stay glued to his side like you have been surgically attached.

Richard is your best friend. It does not matter that whenever he smiles, you want it to be for only you, that you spend precious time thinking of things a girl shouldn't about her best

friend. You know he does not see you as anything but his pal, one of his buddies. You are the one that introduced Ajuma to him, you get to witness the falling in love of your best friend and your girlfriend, and watch your soul grey up, sliced by pain that streaks across your inside. You should be happy, even if your heart feels like a dart board, pricked by invisible pins.

"I'm so happy for you guys." You manage to form the words from your scorched throat. You excuse yourself and go home to wallow. Alone.



# THE COLOURS OF MY SKIN

KEGBU MGBE  
NIGERIA



**T**he privilege of normalcy, to be among the larger group humanity acknowledges. To be heterosexual, to be intelligent, to be pretty. My flesh will never enjoy the warmth of this light, I will forever endure the darkness, waltzing through life under the shadows. It was difficult searching for some sort of endorsement that would never come, not from my family or my non-existent friends, at least I now lived in my own skin. It was harder at first seeing

through eyes that weren't mine, expressing a love I didn't feel, learning a course that was of no interest to me. Everything changed when I found refuge in his lips. The first time I felt my own skin was when he touched it, playfully running his fingers over my arms. I rebuked myself at first; what sort of man loved another? But when I felt my skin, I became addicted to me and the wholeness that accompanied existing in my own flesh. The dark skin stranger; the man that claimed to love me and I

believed him enough to love myself, the man that held my hand as we walked down the streets to buy packs of tomatoes paste for rice that he made with too much pepper and salt, the one that bought the course transfer form for me. He was never ashamed of who he was, and I was like a baby just learning to love me. He danced with me through the darkness and showed me little rays of the light.

I attended his big church wedding, the person he vowed to in a flowing white dress rather than a silver suit like he had always claimed it would be and I watched the lips that made me feel mine be given off for eternity.



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# INTERVIEW WITH MAAZA MENGISTE

BY NAMWANJA MARGARET CHIKWABI  
CHIEF EDITOR

Maaza Mengiste is an Ethiopian-American author of two critically acclaimed novels, *Beneath The Lion's Gaze* (2010) which tells the story of a family struggling to survive the tumultuous years of the Ethiopian Revolution and *The Shadow King* (2019) which is set during Mussolini's 1935 attempted invasion of Ethiopia. She also edited an anthology called *Addis Ababa Noir* (2020). *The Shadow King* was shortlisted for the 2020 Booker Prize (United Kingdom). I sat down with Maaza to get into her creative mind and learn a thing or two about her experiences as a writer.

**Welcome Maaza Mengiste! Thank you for acceding us, as Writers Space Africa Magazine, this time to converse with you.**

Thank you. I'm really happy to be here.

**My first question is how did you feel when you were nominated for the Booker Prize for *The Shadow King*?**

I was really excited obviously, but I was really shocked to get the phone call. I had worked for so many years alone on this book that it was hard for me to imagine what would happen when it was published. I was writing and listening to my own instincts, so the idea that people were responding positively and that a group of people that were judges for this big prize responded well was a wonderful shock. It was really an honour, very grateful and you know, it happened in 2020. So, it was nice to get some good news in such a dark year.

**Congratulations and yes, it was a difficult year for a lot of people the world over. You've said you wrote it over many years, how long did it take you?**

From the very beginning until publication, it was nine years, almost ten years. Year by year, you lose track of how many years it's been. But, looking back, I realise how long that was. When you're in the middle of it, you're just trying to get through to the next chapter, to the next scene. So, it took a while, a lot longer than I expected when I started it.

**In that time, what was happening? Where you doing your research, putting it aside, then going back to it?**

I work full-time. I can't support myself as I write. So, I was working full-time, then I'd write at night and do research. On weekends, I would be writing. I travelled to Ethiopia and Italy several times using my own funds to carry out research. Sometimes, I had a fellowship that would come in handy.

It was always a balancing act between the real world and employment, and the writing and research that this work required.

**I think it also speaks to the passion and determination you had about the work-saving up and doing the research when you could, that's incredible.**

I was really inspired by this history and by all the stories of anti-colonial rebellion. Stories from all across the continent helped feed my motivation to write this story.

**When did you first realise that you wanted to write? Do you remember?**

It was not a natural thought to want to write nor was it an assumption when I was



growing up that a writer is something I could be. I had no connection with the writing world. I didn't know any writers. My parents wanted me to be a doctor or an engineer, something reasonable and dependable, something solid. So, this wasn't part of my understanding of who I could be. I was a literature major in college, but only because I liked to read, not thinking about writing. So, it took many, many years of working and eventually, I started thinking about the possibility of writing a story that was in my head. I didn't know how to do it, so I applied for summer workshops and graduate programmes and that's when I started thinking I could become a writer. It was a decade between college and that thought of possibly becoming a writer.

**Tell me, what was specific about the story of *The Shadow King* that made you want to write it? You mentioned earlier that anti-colonial movements**

**in Africa inspired you.**

The odds were stacked against those people who were fighting for liberation. They were working against a system that was bigger and stronger than them, and they were working against an entire philosophy. They were fighting that physically as much as they were fighting in military terms. I find it inspiring to think about the fact that we've had these liberation movements that have succeeded. In one way or another, they toppled a powerful entity. In Ethiopia, hearing stories about how other African countries had fought and that we had also fought against a colonising force was inspiring. That we ousted them when they were better equipped with bombs, tanks and artillery was even more inspiring. Logically, we should not have won and yet we did. That was really my motivation. As a little kid, it's something that was always in my mind.

**That's some motivation indeed. What an important piece of literature you have put out, a proudly African story, with well-rounded characters, and one that does not dehumanise us as Africans or minimise the contributions of women.**

Thank you very much.

**What was the first book that made you laugh or cry or made you think differently about the world?**

I think one of the very first books I read as a child that terrified me was the story of Hansel and Gretel. I was living in Kenya then, in the British education system. I was just starting to learn English and was learning to read as well. I remember reading that book and thinking, all these white people eat children! Why are they eating children? I don't want to be anywhere around them. I was terrified of Europeans after that, for a long time. It was my introduction to reading and also to how your imagination could be captured by a story and change the way you see

the world. I really thought that we were all in danger. So, I laugh at it now, but I've been moved by books since I was a child, and always felt that they were as real as anything that existed in my world.

**That's amazing. Who are your literary influences now or in the past?**

The novel *Our Sister Killjoy* by Ama Ata Aidoo. It changed my sense of what literature could do and reflects a particular experience. It's the story of an immigrant, Black African woman who goes to another country but is not understood and doesn't really resonate with me. Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* was another influence. These writers were instrumental to me in realising that Africans have a claim to literature also. We are in books and we've been writing ourselves for a very long time and it is really good, brilliant work regardless of whether people recognise it or not. What makes this even more

inspirational for me is that it is women producing this work.

**What is your ultimate dream as a writer and what does success look like to you? Is it the Nobel Prize for Literature or ten million copies sold of your works?**

You know it has nothing really to do with prizes. It is the ability to continue to grow as a writer, to challenge myself in the way I write and in the way I can develop a narrative. How can I grow as a thinker and as a creative artist from book to book? In the second book, *The Shadow King*, I challenged myself to do something I had not done before with structure and voice. I wanted to see if I could really push it and not be afraid to take risks. As for the third book, I've set myself that challenge again and I count those as the successes; when I take those leaps.

**You're working on your third novel right now?**

It's very new, so I can't say very much about it but yes, I am working on it.

**That's an exclusive for us, I do believe. Looking forward to reading it.**

Thank you.

**You have a schedule for it, as far as publication date?**

Not yet.

**Alright. That's exciting and all the best with that.**

Thank you.

**That actually brings me to this question. How many unpublished works do you have that are just sitting there, waiting to be completed?**

I have parts of stories lying somewhere. I do have a story that I need to revise and complete. Working on *The Shadow King* took all my energy. So, I had ideas written down that I told myself when I'm finished with this book, I'll come back to. Slowly, I'm beginning to come back to it.

**I've always wanted to know, what is the one thing you found out or you're finding out that's challenging in your writing?**

What happens often in writing is that we get

frustrated with ourselves and the biggest challenge is to continue, to just keep going, to know that you're not writing for anyone but yourself. Write what you want to read and that'll help you in those moments of frustration. It happens to all of us no matter how many books you've written or how comfortable you think you are with literature. Those moments will come and the biggest challenge is to sit down and just write, even if it's one sentence.

**Have you ever experienced writer's block?**

I think writer's block is when you just don't put anything on paper even though you have it in your head because you feel like it's not good enough. So, you erase it before you put it down. I have learnt to just put something down on paper. Even when I don't know what I'm going to be saying, I say anything. When I look back at my writing, there's an idea even in those moments. I have to trust the process. So, I haven't had writer's block, but I've had bad

writing and that's fine. It's still writing.

**How you've explained this is really important for our writing enthusiasts who send in their works to our magazine, Writers Space Africa. It's good for them to know that no matter what and no matter how you're feeling, you still have to plod along.**

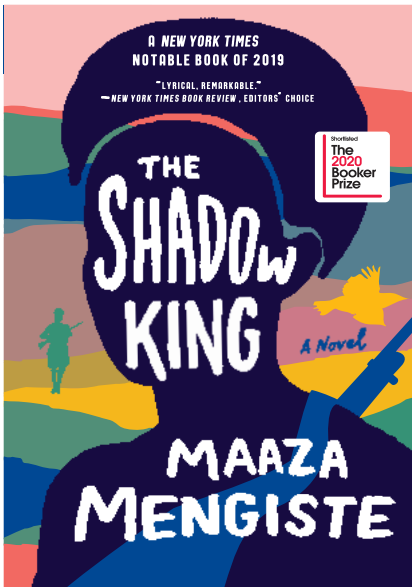
Yes. Absolutely.

**Have you ever considered writing under a pseudonym?**

Ooh, sometimes. I think it would be so much fun! I've thought about it, like could I write a series like the Jason Bourne one. So, who knows! But, that would be an exciting project.

**I can imagine it would be fun! Let me take you back to *The Shadow King*. What surprised you as you were working on it or once you were done and you looked back on it? Was there something you came across in your characters or your research that really**





It took a lot of revisions, a lot of drawings on a board of how each scene would pan out and looking back, I was wonderfully surprised at how each step was necessary to create the final book that it became. I was surprised at that process.

**That's amazing. I'm curious as to how you spend your time when you're not working or writing. I read somewhere that you're teaching at a university in New York.**

I am. I teach and it takes up a lot of my time when I'm not writing. So, between that and writing and reading, that's my day literally and lockdown. We've been on lockdown for so long. I keep

in touch with friends. I like photography, I have a camera and I like to walk outside with it. I read a lot too, both as part of my work and as a hobby.

**Take us through the experience of that period from the nominations for the Booker Prize to the final announcement of the winner. What did all that feel like for you, including doing interviews and getting to know your fellow nominees?**

My goodness, if you can imagine! Everything was happening on Zoom. At any other time, I would have been going from one office to another for interviews. This time around, everything was happening here at my desk. In some ways, it was a strange experience, to have the world on the other side of my screen. I could see one person, but I knew hundreds were watching and listening. It made me realise how interconnected we are. I thought about all the readers that have come to this book because of technology. It was a

wonderful experience to have gone through, all the conversations and interviews I was a part of. But, Zoom can be exhausting. So, there were days when I would want to go outside and not look at my TV screen. But, when we had the Booker Prize ceremony on Zoom, it was surprising how festive it still felt, like something special and having people from everywhere watching was really wonderful.

**I'm curious, what are you reading right now?**

Let me hold up this book my nephew wrote and he's seven!

**Oh wow! You're a family of writers!**

Oh, yes. It's all about his travels and where he wants to go. He's playing football on this page here. The plot is very interesting and often surprising.

**Of course! That's just wonderful, a young author! Look what you've inspired!**

I tell you! I was talking to him the other day to say thank you for sending me this book and he said, "I'm done. I'm not writing another book!"

**At seven, he's giving up after one book! It really must have taken a lot out of him!**

He's like "I'm finished! I'm done!" He's so funny. As for me, I like reading several books at the same time.

So, I'm also reading Lemm Sissay's incredibly powerful memoir *My Name is Why*. It's a beautiful book about a young Ethiopian boy who was adopted in the UK foster system by a white family and when he was twelve, that family didn't want him anymore and they gave him back. I would recommend it to anyone. I would also recommend another book by Namibian Remy Ngamije called *The Eternal Audience of One*. A Ghanaian friend of mine Bisi Adjapon has a book coming out called *Of Women and Frogs*, and I'm reading that one too right now. I would

recommend looking at those ones.

**Of Women and Frogs. That's quite an intriguing title.**

Oh, yes it is.

**We love readers as Writers Space Africa Magazine and so we are glad for those recommendations.**

You're most welcome.

**Our WSA Magazine is an international platform that showcases poetry, flash fiction, essays and articles, children's literature and short stories.**

That's wonderful.

**Thank you indeed. Every month, we send out calls for submission and people respond incredibly well.**

That's fantastic.

**Thanks. I wonder what advice would you have for writing enthusiasts who do send their works to us? A lot of them are not published yet, but they're passionate about the their art. Any word to encourage**

**them and for them to improve their art?**

The most important part of writing is revising. It takes a while sometimes for a piece of work to be finished. So, when you have that first draft and you love it and you think that you're done with it, set it aside and come back to it in one week or two. Read it then and have somebody else read it, and then revise it.

I would say that part of the writing process is revising. That's really when the magic happens. That's really where the writing is. And also, don't be afraid of the process, just keep going.

**That's really sound advice. I'd like you to talk a little bit about the importance of Africans telling our own stories as you have in your works.**

Our stories have been told by other people for so long that it is absolutely important that we tell and share those stories, whether they are told through song,

dance, literature or through visual arts. To tell those narratives in your own way is significant because it is a way to rewrite history by writing in the present moment.

We can reshape how

people have talked about Africa in this way.

**Well-put. You know what, I'm done with my questions!**

Oh, this has been a wonderful conversation! Thankyou.

**I've really enjoyed it and I'd like to just express our gratitude as Writers Space Africa Magazine for your time and engagement with us. We really appreciate it.**

It's been lovely. Thank you so much and you take care.



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A Novel

MAAZA  
MENGISTE



# HESSY AND THE LOST TOOTH

HALIEO MOTANYANE  
LESOTHO

Hessy was seven years old and had not lost any tooth yet. His mother said it was because he was special and had beautiful teeth. However, Hessy had one extra tooth on his lower jaw. This made his incisors five. No one else had an extra tooth in his family. So he usually bugged his father to remove that tooth.

"Why don't you like this tooth, Hessy?" his father asked him one day.

"They always make fun of me when we're playing," Hessy looked at his father with teary eyes.

His father took him and sat him on his lap.

"But you know you were born like that. We can't remove what God has given

you."

"But why did He give me something I did not inherit from you or mom or grandparents?"

Seeing that Hessy was emotional, his father embraced him.

"Oh, my son! I should have told you that I used to have that tooth, too."

"Really, Dad?" Hessy's eyes glowed with excitement and hope. "So how did you get rid of it?"

His father sighed. He had thought that Hessy would be relieved that he too once had the tooth.

"I didn't get rid of it. There came a time when the other teeth pushed until it got out. When that time comes, you

take the tooth and throw it on the roof. When you throw the tooth, you have to tell the lizard on the roof to take its ugly tooth and never return it. That way, the tooth will never grow again."

Hessy seemed satisfied and never talked about the tooth again.

One day his tooth started feeling loose. Hessy was very happy. He started practising the song of the lizard every day. However, many days passed and the tooth still hang on in his mouth. His father told him many times to leave it alone, but Hessy would keep pestering the tooth until he bled. Then he would be smouldered by his mother, who made him promise never to pester the tooth again.

One day, while playing with his friends, Hessay accidentally collided with his friend and they both fell. When he stood up, he felt a rusty taste in his mouth and spat the blood.

"Look, Hessay's tooth is out." One of the friends cried out happily.

But the tooth was nowhere to be found. The games stopped and everybody started looking for Hessay's tooth. He was determined not to go home until he found the tooth. The search extended to dusk. His friends were being called to go home one by one. When he was left all alone to continue the search; he began to cry. His father called him to come home, but he didn't answer. He

wanted his tooth. His father came to get him and found him fighting hysteric hiccups.

"What is wrong Hessay? What happened?" his father asked him.

Hessay sat down and started crying again.

"I... I have... I...lost...my tooth," he said in between the cries.

His father raised him from the ground and hugged him tightly.

"It is okay son. Don't cry," he said, patting him softly.

Hessay tried to calm down in his father's embrace.

"What is going to happen to my teeth now, Dad?" he asked in a faint voice.

"It is lost now. Even the lizard will not find it. So, it will not grow back because lizard doesn't know that it is lost. Does that make you happy?"

Hessay nodded happily and hugged his father tightly.



Halieo Motanyane is a Mosotho girl born and raised in the mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. She's a writer by passion and a filmmaker by profession. She is an independent video editor and screenwriter. She spends most free time reading and writing stories, both in Sesotho and English.

Hessay and the Lost Tooth emerged the 2nd runner up in the [2020 Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature](#)

# Call for Submissions

The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature was established in 2019 to honour the memory and legacy of Wakini Kuria who served on the Advisory board of the African Writers Development Trust and as the Chief Editor of the monthly Writers Space Africa magazine. The previous winners are Marjorie Moono Simuyuni (Zambia), Madeha Ezekial Malecela (Tanzania), Blessing Aliyu Tarfa (Nigeria) and Halieo Motanyane (Lesotho).

For the third edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize, the 1st place winner will receive a cash prize of \$150 and a certificate. The second place will receive \$100 while the third place will receive \$75. We are calling for submissions in the Children's literature genre and it is open ONLY to writers of African descent from 15th February until 1st June, 2021.

Please note that there is no theme for this call. The entry should not exceed 1,200 words and must not have been previously published anywhere including personal blogs. The entry should be sent in MS Word format only to [wakiniaward@writerstrust.org](mailto:wakiniaward@writerstrust.org). Please include your name, country, a short bio and your social media handles - if any.

If you have any questions about the award, please send an email to [info@writerstrust.org](mailto:info@writerstrust.org).

## The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature.



# ORBITING FLAMES

SUSAN GAZA  
ZIMBABWE



Strolling on the margins of orbiting  
flames

Helplessly with hands too short for a  
hand

The petals are drying off in excess  
sorrow

And tears are dripping irresistibly

Blown is the joy, sinking beyond our  
reach

For the dilemma is flowing in our inner  
vessels

A burden press, a source of grief  
emanation

If only the flames could illuminate the  
horrible night

# COME TAKE ME QUICK

NICKSON O. MAGAK  
KENYA



Come take me quick  
From these jumbled jungle jaws  
Of hypo-critic ferret in the burrow  
A bestial barbarian.

I saw her quaff a hunk  
Imparting intoxicating amalgam  
In the candle lit galarious table  
At the petunia exotic tourist hotel.

At home, she had no motherliness  
For a local breed!

She fried the weed vegetable  
Plucked from the un-weeded path  
And served it with a turd of thumb  
Ugali.

There are beds,  
I spread on goatskin  
A liced spurted floor.  
There is a feast,  
I scramble for the aftermaths-  
The remnants with the pets  
Under the vastry table.

Come take me quick  
From this woman,  
This woman, my aunty!  
My uncle's wife.



# BEYOND

SAMANTHA LIONESS MOLEFHE  
BOTSWANA



I dream of a new age;  
A new era  
Where misery is not embraced.  
An age of happiness  
Where love reigns-

Where man understands true strength;  
Where "pinning" a woman is not  
"An achievement"

For misery is;  
pinning down a woman "to show  
strength".  
Misery is robbing a little girl  
"of her honour".  
Misery is teaching boys  
"meash ideas".  
Misery is taking a life because of colour.

An age where there's no  
"black nor white"  
I dream of an age not full of "despair"  
An era free from misery  
An age of difference  
An age of burst full happiness,  
not busting bombs-  
Love not hate.

# MISERY

HUBAIDAT ISHOLA  
NIGERIA

There was a period of tide,  
When the vast ocean,  
With its sparkling cyan,  
Used to be a sheer comfort.

The waves,  
As it swayed,  
back and then forth,  
Swooshed my current pain,  
Very far away.

And it makes me, wonder -  
Wonder how it all changed.  
Just how this ocean of bliss  
Somehow formed in me,  
A dark sea of misery.

For my sailing mind,  
once driven,  
by the sparkling cyan,  
Is no longer adrift.

Now, it drowns,  
Oh no, it sinks,  
like a deflated ship,  
into a deep, deep sea,  
of salt-drenched misery.

# WOE IS ME

**BISMARK KIMBI**  
CAMEROON

With streaming eyes, my kith and kin  
are woe,  
Death and penury are bold, me they  
woo,  
My kindred, these vile thugs have set  
ablaze,  
The cattle I envy, they're better graze,  
I wail, groan and whine, yet there is no  
grace.

My people are trapped in an atrocious  
strife  
In which the men of peace pieced them  
up,  
Freedom fighters feed fat; they on us  
thrive,  
They with men in uniform will not stop,  
For they make merry from this callous  
strife.

Half a decade, eyes and roofs set  
ablaze  
Yet sycophants, their master, they raise,  
For fear, hunger, girls fill towns as  
whores  
Some are abused or flogged for not  
doing chores,  
Some are lodged in town buildings  
without doors.

Alas! Vultures have devoured our  
granny,  
They're still arguing on the corpse  
guiltlessly,  
The statesmen pointing accusing  
fingers  
At those who called themselves  
freedom fighters.

Woe is me! We're ensnared in a  
fratricide,  
Elephants are fighting, the grasses  
sobbing,  
The world is silent to this genocide  
The ancestors are mute in this  
butchering...

# SILENT CRY

RUTENDO S MATURURE  
ZIMBABWE

I stepped over the line;  
 And I will have to die another day.  
 Submitting to the claws of a blunt razor  
 Cutting pieces of myself  
 In a dark corner, I moan to the pain.  
 The numbing reality, not my pain,  
 I suffocate in the weed, lie to my mama  
 about it.  
 I make love to the miracle I hope will  
 save my buried soul.  
 I allow the kisses from the red wine to  
 embrace me,  
 Till I call her home.  
 Silent I let out her cry.  
 Not for the people to gather;  
 But for my Creator to step in and pull  
 my skin up.  
 Though I continue to crumble at his  
 every touch,  
 He guards me against the dogs that  
 feel deserving to nibble on my disgust.  
 I pop up bible verses in search of this  
 healing and answers.  
 I can't stay too long, for instead this  
 book torments and directs my burning  
 soul to hell.  
 Each touch from these sons creates  
 desires on my gripped heel  
 To open my smoking chest and give a  
 test to the wrath of Eve's rebellion.

I am not a metaphor;  
 But the whispers of death cuddles, into  
 my mind  
 Leave me gasping for something salty  
 and ashy.  
 Like I said my silent cries are not for  
 people to gather;  
 May you please forgive me for the sins I  
 am about to commit on my body (sighs)  
 ... And the mistakes that will tuck me to  
 bed and kiss my depression.

# HOW TO WAKE A BUTTERFLY



Loic Ekinga

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# TELL IT TO MOTHER

ADETOYESE ODEKUNBI  
NIGERIA

Tell it to mother  
I may never be the man  
she wants me to be  
for I am my father's son.  
I tried to be a fisherman  
but bad luck followed me to the river,  
I tried to be a hunter  
but I can swear the hyenas  
laughed at my clumsiness.

Fortune lies faraway  
and I have spent all in pursuit,  
all I found  
was more agony and misery  
I would have returned home.  
but I have nothing left but her love-

Tell it to mother  
I'll never be the village chief  
or a wealthy farmer  
I'll never be anything but her son  
I hope that will be enough.

# A SEARCH FOR A BETTER LIFE

SUKURAM AVI-NASH  
SOUTH AFRICA

She did not choose this life,  
Pregnant at 15 – a statistic of rape  
Destined to raise her child, alone.  
Hers was a rocky start,  
Though her eyes, well with sorrow  
Still, her commitment is steadfast  
For a better life, she deserves.

The corner of Musgrave road, she  
stands  
In her hands, a handwritten placard:  
Qualified with Degree - Seeking  
Employment  
Lights turn red, an analogy to her life  
Which has stopped moving forward  
Still, she detests the red-light district  
Where morals trade for comfort.

Even as her 7-year-old is now in school  
Even as her unwell mother needs  
chemo  
Even as she's wary of whoonga  
addicts...  
She never loses hope.

At grueling days end,  
They return to their candle-lit shack, in  
Mayville.  
Scrambling for scraps from scattered  
morsels.  
All three retire body and soul on the  
unforgiving concrete,  
Survive. Eat. Rest. Repeat.  
Different day. Same misery.

# I WANT TO SMILE

CHIPO CHAMA  
ZAMBIA

The storm is coming  
The tides are rising  
The walls of my heart are closing  
My throat is drying.

The more I peddle  
The more I drown  
The more I breathe  
The more I suffocate.

I try to look closely  
I go blind  
I try to listen carefully  
I become deaf.

Is this the end?  
Have I reached the edge?  
I see no meaning  
The end of the tunnel is quite different.

From the edge  
Will I fly like an eagle?  
If I fall and die  
Will I rise like a Phoenix?

Someone, hold my hand  
Pull me to the shore  
Loosen the rope tightening my throat  
I too want to smile again.

# JOY AND PAIN FOND

BOL DENG  
SOUTH SUDAN

I know there will be no time  
When I will forever wipe away my tears,  
Precedes of my worst fears  
To stop crying-It is still early  
Or perhaps, the pain's so haily  
Hails that rain down my heart  
Threatening to break it apart  
I know there will be no time  
I will forever wipe away my tears  
But I know I will be happy once in a  
while  
And cry so many times in a short while  
Like a knot in a knot.  
Joy and pain will tangle  
Agony will shoot  
Joy will trot  
I wear both like a bangle,  
So today, I embrace the beauty of this  
pain  
And unlearn to gain  
From this misery forest  
And pain stymied redemption jungle,  
And seek where to just rest  
Before my mind gets fungal  
For one can't hide or run in a fond  
Where pain and joy bond.

# DEVOURER

MASEGO OLEFILE  
BOTSWANA

Misery takes and blames fate.

Like a swelling sea of sadness  
Heaving with waves of distress  
She drags you into utter madness,

Your peace, seven days a week  
She feeds on, till you're weak  
Hope in your heart starts to leak...

A trickle, a trickle till you're dry.  
Hallucinating like you're high  
You bid your dear life goodbye?

Take a stand and fight harder.  
Grab her heart, pull till you feel her  
shudder  
Killing misery is no murder.

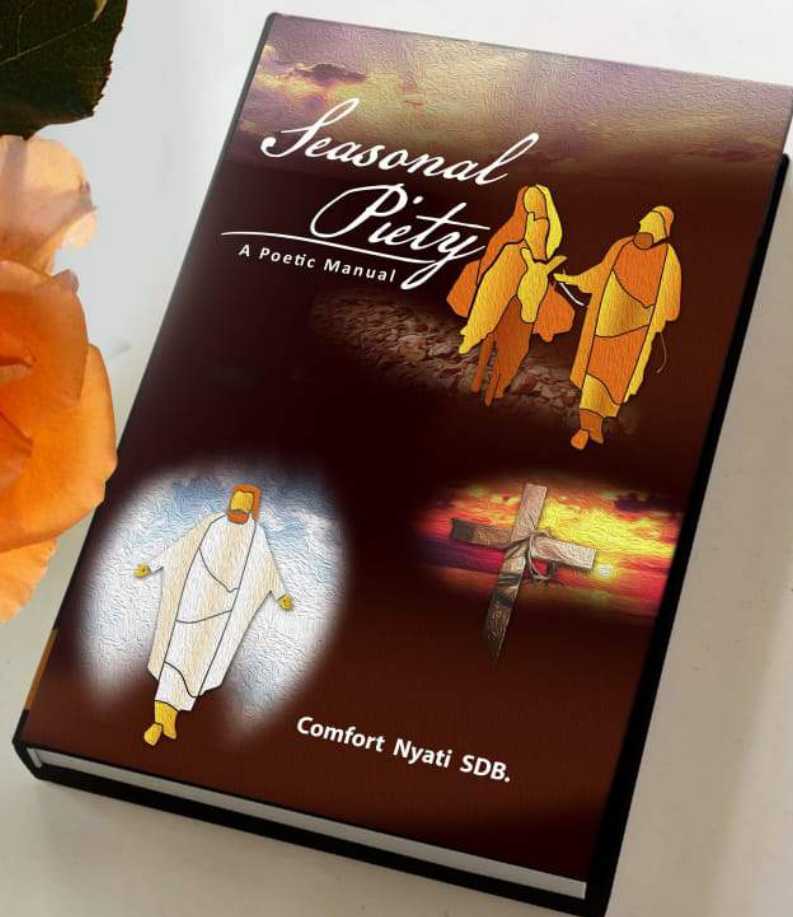
Brace yourself for the fight will be long  
Give misery no place to belong.

# MISERY

PATRICIA TRISHA EJANG  
UGANDA

Like a shadow;  
Not one that brings cool breeze  
But one like a plague,  
Bringing shiver to the spine  
Congestion to the heart,  
Tears to the eyes  
Death to the soul.

It quashes water and life,  
A relentless fire  
Consuming all and some more,  
Leaving in its wake  
Stones and ashes.  
Death and a coldness,  
Misery.



# **SEASONAL PIETY**

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**GENRE: SHORT STORY**

**TITLE: IN MY NAME LIES THE ANSWERS**

**WRITER: PEARL MOKGATLANE, BOTSWANA**

**REVIEWER: YOLANDA KUEI P. MACUEI, SOUTH SUDAN**

■ ■ They say a good name is better than riches." In most African societies, a naming ceremony is a cultural ritual held in honor of and for generational values of true identity; according to distinct origins and ethnicity. That's to say, living up to the standards of our names could lead us to extraordinary directions in life but without proper guidance to embrace a name, can either make you or destroy you.

"They say we belong. They say we have freedom, yet we are continually chastised by the limitations of boundaries."

In my Name Lies the Answers speaks of a girl who from childhood had to deal with identity crisis and low self-esteem in the part of the country where her complexion made her inferior amongst her peers. She then resulted to solitude to avoid the stigma she was subjected to whenever she sought for closure. Little did she know it was a path to her breakthrough to victory.

Uatara, in her quest to sublime into the societal recognised traits of beauty, stood unperturbed by the conundrums she faced. Rising up to the tower of glory, she channeled her energy into pursuance of academic excellence. In most obvious scenarios, people succumb to these influences and cause an alteration in their identity. They end going through stress of surgeries and suppressing their skin to harsh conditions just to be accepted into society's standards.

Life couldn't last being unfair as she gifted her with a man, who valued her for who she was and made her comfortable in her discomfort. Such soothing to her soul outweighed the stigma she was brought up with. She couldn't be more thankful with her job of saving lives and a beloved partner. Indeed she was victorious. She conquered her flaws, societal stigma. Not with armors and spears but with undisturbed academic excellence and unpriced virtues.

With imagery and symbolism as stylistic devices, the persona has vividly portrayed the African setting thus revealing the main themes of Culture, Love and Victory throughout her life journey of Rural-Urban migration, in line of growth. "They say if you know where you're coming from, you will know where you're going and you will not get lost in return; who you are, what you are and where you're from is all answered by a name. Thus, "In My Name Lies The Answers."



GENRE: ARTICLE

TITLE: WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?

WRITER: OJO-IBUKUN TIM, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: JOSEPH ODURO, GHANA

**M**an's insatiable thirst for wealth has sieved the goodness gifted us by the present. In this frame rests the author's argument, which refers to the famous biblical quote by Jesus in the Holy Bible (i.e., what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?) With no intent of buttressing the essence of the present with the "rhetorical question," he seeks to refer to the brevity of man's soul and how we are oblivious or unconscious of this truth in our course to achieve wealth and victory.

Meanwhile, the act of risking one's life in pursuit of victory could be traced to the very nature of the stakeholders of socialization. These sects are wired with a radical sense of making wealth which subjects all other values to inferiority. Such saturation of life purpose with the acquisition of wealth and victory by any other means possible impedes the growth of human relations and living the present to its acme.

The search for victory and wealth has given birth to a partitioned society, and has created a viable society for the growth of self-centeredness and individualism. This reminds me of the fascist Nazis who saw themselves superior to all other countries and those who failed to submit to their beliefs. The former Soviet Union holding communitarian beliefs in high-esteem led to the loss of lives of millions. The segregationist and racists Southerners of the United States deemed it right to preserve cultural ideals and identity to perpetuate the execution of blacks who dwell on their lands. Thus how far we have grown partitioned as a society giving much repute to race and other bigotry values whereas the larger human society is disregarded.

It behooves on us as individuals and as society at large, to review our perceptions of victory and to understand, that the end does not justify the means; in the same vein, our pursuit for wealth should not alter our human relations.

GENRE: FLASH FICTION

TITLE: THE WIN WITH A PRICE

WRITER: MARYCYNTHIA CHINWE OKAFOR, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: MARJORIE MOONO SIMUYUNI, ZAMBIA

**T**he Win with a Price, just like its title is a tale of competition. The contest is between two football teams, which eventually entails a contest between father and son.

One team hires Kaluana, a sorcerer, to gather odds of victory in their favour, and on realising this, the other team hires his father, another sorcerer, Eleanya.

Here we find that blood is thicker than water, and therefore the competition between father and son becomes of more importance than that of the teams. Will they go against each other? Eleanya dares his son to drop the challenge, citing that an Ikuku, a strong wind will carry him, marking his end. To Kaluana, it's a laughing matter because the offer is too handsome to be passed on. That means father and son actually go head on.

Kaluana's team carries the day, and celebrates their victory. That, however was far from being the end of the story. The father-son rivalry still stood, and true to his word, Eleanya saw to it that Kaluana pays for his defiance.

Questions that linger are; is Eleanya victorious for getting rid of his son? Was Kaluana victorious by defying his father? Is it still victory if for it we have to harm our family? Footballing ought to be a talent, but are those who win through sorcery also worthy of being celebrated? Maybe or maybe not. But Okafor, through her well-thought out flash fiction, suggests that some victories are not worth it!



**GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

**TITLE: AMAGA AND THE FOOTBALL MATCH**

**WRITER: PATRICIA PEACE EJANG, UGANDA**

**REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA**

**A** maga and the football match tells a story of a young boy who is smart, playful and in some ways troublesome. It is written in a quest narrative form that teaches children the values of hardwork and discipline.

Amaga young, as any other playful and lively child plays pranks on peers and falls into a lot of mischief. Of course this leads to him being "excommunicated" from his peers because their parents don't want his influence on their children.

However, the tides change when his future is foreshadowed through his dream. In my view, this is where the story really begins.

Didactic lessons flow from here and we see how with a focus in mind — being the best football player in the world, he is able to turn a new leaf, challenge himself to be more responsible and go on to receiving prizes from the village chief at the end.

Funnily enough, the narrative technique employed in the story reminds me of Hua Mulan, the legendary folk heroine's story that's been adapted into the Mulan animation and film. It especially reminds me of the soundtrack in the movie "I'll make a man out of you".

Amaga's story like Mulan's is a story that can be told to one young generation and another under the moonlight, just before bedtime, in classes or wherever. It's a simple story that reminds children that success is first in their mind before anything else and once they make the choice. They can throw in determination and wise counsel which is what Ocuku's place in the story symbolises, then, they can take action to achieve their dreams.

The pitfall here is that not all dreams come through, and while this is beautiful, innocent and hopeful, it does pose the question of what Amaga would have done if his dream hadn't come true?





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Since 2018, Writers Space Africa in partnership with the African Writers Development Trust, has held the annual African Writers Awards as the highpoint of the African Writers Conference. Previous winners include Manu Herbstein (Ghana), Andrea B Matambo (Zambia), Priscillar Matara (Botswana), Asoloko Gloria Akayi (Nigeria), and Benson Mugo (Kenya).

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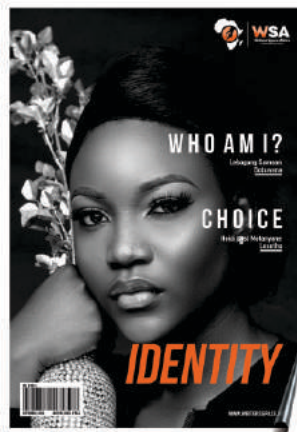
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# PROGRESSES

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## A History of Writing

Mimi Machakaire  
Zimbabwe

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## The Road

Joseph Katsala  
Malawi

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VOL. 5 NO. 6



JUNE 2021

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# Editor's Note

To want to progress is innate for us as human beings. It's uncommon to want to stay in the same place/condition/environment, unless you've reached the top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Progress can be motivated by ambition, unrealised dreams, love or even fear. What it takes to progress, though, is a whole other story. Progress requires you to get out of your comfort zone, to be in a space that is sometimes uncertain and how many people are willing to do that?

Late Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote, "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." Therein lies the secret to progress. Our array of articles, poetry and the children's story unearth this theme of Progress even further.

Please, enjoy!

Namwanja,

Chief Editor.

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# The World Within

Mercy Juma  
Kenya

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Progress sometimes comes disguised as misery; the unwanted balm of the soul that gives off a stench of unworthiness, pain and emotions that may make us want to end it all and go to this place that Christians call heaven. It casts upon us a pit of darkness which we are thrown into. It is a pit that is bottomless and we keep falling deeper and deeper. The more we try to grope at the sides and clutch onto something, misery's walls become slimy and we slide off. Some of us give up and resign to our fate but a few of us, see life testing us through this illusion and thus transcend this bleak appearance. The question now becomes, whom do you choose to be? It is the latter person's attitude that fuels progress.

From birth, your spirit (a perpetual light that never

goes off) is cast upon darkness with the candle torch given to the soul as its guide. The soul has the blueprint. It has the map to the maze upon which you have found yourself and you have a choice to refer to it or not. When we shut this guiding torch from our realm, then the illusion (voiced as ego) becomes our reality and as a result, misery, which is ego's close ally, comes holding its hand. The torment then begins.

Why are we cast into darkness you may ask? Why not be born knowing everything? Why not be

born knowing that we are the light? Why does it have to disguise itself or only announce its presence to the soul, the part of us that many scoffs at mostly because religion has left a bad taste in our mouths? The soul is your highest self and it is the guiding spirit. We are here to evolve into our highest beings. We are here to experience what we can only conceptualize in spirit form. Confused? Let me explain. We are born with light. We are born whole but it is hidden from view because we are to evolve. This evolution is otherwise known as progress.



At the spirit level, we are perfect. At the physical level, we seem imperfect just as we were designed to be. One of life's purpose is to evolve or progress so that the physical realises itself as the perfection of the spirit or in other words, life's purpose is for the physical self to match the perfection of the spirit self. Psychology's term for this is self-actualisation. The spirit self knows how this is done but most of us have shut out this part of ourselves and resigned to believe that progress in the human aspect is in acquiring riches or gaining power. This view is dipped in the ocean of ego's realm which I have already described as an illusion and with it comes matching misery, ready to dip its fangs on whatever victims ego holds as captive. As with anything in life, progress begins with a series of tests, but they are tests bathed in love and acceptance that keep cheering you on. When you pass the test at one level, you progress to the next set of experience. When you keep going through a similar

set of experiences, again and again, it is mostly an indication that you have not passed that test yet and life is trying to help you remember something. Something that will elevate you to the next level. Something else, there is no end to how high you can go. The development is sort of circular. Think of your life as you drawing a circle and that once the circle is complete, then you have realised your highest self physically. There will be no beginning and no end. There will only be phases and a continuation of what is as life supposed to be.

How do we evolve or progress? First, you need to realise that you are a three-part being made up of the mind, body and soul. Some might call this the physical, the non-physical and the metaphysical self. Some might call it the "Id", the ego and the superego or the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious. Some might call it, ether, matter and energy. In the African

sense, we have known it as God, the spirit world of the ancestors who have died and now live in another dimension which we honour through practices such as libation, and the present world in which we live.

There is a dance of existence within this three-part being with the spirit being the lead dancer. When we are led by the soul then we are introduced to the world of infinite intelligence from which wisdom and knowledge transcend all knowledge as we know it presently. From it have come insight, sparks of inspiration whose fruits we eat today through the wheels of world invention and civilization that we now enjoy. These fruits were once idea seeds that took root in the minds of the brilliant minds that bore them through desire, which then took root as dominant thoughts. The thoughts were given a plan through the power of imagination and acted upon with the spirit of persistence up until they became realized in humanity's world.

Progress comes when we are in tune with this realm of the spirit where infinite intellect resides. It comes from knowing who we are at our core. By this, I do not mean what we are, and whatever labels we have been given from birth starting with our names. By knowing who we are, we are once again in touch with our wholeness at birth, and we are introduced to the world of the spirit, which is way deeper than most of us are able to comprehend in our physical states. When I ask myself, "Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose?" then I begin to retrace my steps and gain access to the

torch that is to guide me through this life maze. I gain access to the map. I start becoming the original self I was to become, and bless the world with the original gifts that only I can give it! This is the core of progress and evolution.

In this space, misery simply becomes a friend whom I sit with and ask, "I can see that you have knocked on my doors again. What are you here to teach me dear one?" From then I open myself to my soul's voice and listen to what it is it has to say. In this space, I realize that essentially life is for me and never against me. I realize

that each moment is a blessing, for the soul is here to guide and help me through my evolution. The experiences that present themselves in my life are not good or bad. They simply are. I am the one who gives them meaning through perception, liking some and deciding to call them good, while disliking others because they are unpleasant and deciding to call it misery.

We are one energy. Within each is a torch and inside that realm is infinite intelligence. Access to this world is what entails the process of evolution.





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# In the State of Impasse; A Panorama of Development

Comfort Nyati SDB  
Zimbabwe



During my first week in high school, the word photosynthesis sounded very foreign and too complex for me to grasp. It was a vocabulary that perplexed students from school to home and vice versa, and I was not an exception until later when I learnt to appreciate the entire process of photosynthesis. The Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. states that during photosynthesis, light energy is captured and used to convert water, carbon dioxide, and minerals into oxygen. From this process the unwritten theme is change, transformation and growth. The presence of these conditions enhances the growth of a plant. Should one of these fail, the ultimate result will be stunted growth.

In Psychology, discussing the subject of human

development addresses these issues by understanding constancy and change of experiences from conception through adulthood. Hence, in defining progress we are faced with a habitual dilemma; this is because the very word does not refer to one particular perspective on social, emotional and physical betterment. Instead, as accorded by the distinguished scholar (Pearson, 1992) Progress is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socio-economic and environmental transformation.

Without hesitation, let us navigate to Zimbabwe, a country whose objectives in gaining independence was to start afresh and move ahead with one focal point, development. This implied nurturing our own land which was retained through

ancestral perseverance, and most of all, enjoy the aftermath of independence. Economic development stood as the principal objective right after the liberation struggle. Thus, to boost the construction of infrastructure, road networks, education, health facilities, and create employment opportunities, to mention a few; consequently, to exhibit a holistic epitome of progress.

In his article Development in Zimbabwe: Strategy and Tactics, Michael Bratton pointed that soon after independence, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (known as ZANU PF) government of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe committed itself to redressing the severe social inequalities of the past, at least at the outset to reach its goals through a prudent rather than doctrinal approach.

It is an irony to realise imperialism as the only known development era per se. Those we thought of as our oppressors were the ones who were the liberators in the then Southern Rhodesia, whereas the acclaimed liberators degenerated progress and became the oppressors of their own. The development of the nation is recognised in the low-class citizens being able to acquire and access all basic necessities like food, health services and education. Unfortunately, today people are scrabbling like becks in search of these basic necessities.

In simple terms, there is an arrested development. The term 'arrested development' has had multiple meanings for over 200 years. In the field of medicine, the term was first used, circa 1835–1836, to mean a stoppage of physical development; the term continues to flourish in the same way in many disciplines including literature. However, in the

parameters of this article, it entails the static and detained economic development of the country in question. It has been exactly forty years from 1980 to 2020 and this period echoes the Old Testament tale of the exodus of the Israelites, who journeyed for forty years to the Promised Land. Despite the unfriendly circumstances encountered on the way, they eventually triumphed. Could this be equated to the case of Zimbabwe, with its four decades under one tyrannical rule? It is despotic because the supposed development was confiscated and detained.

It can be argued, that there is a particular amount of growth that every being

experiences. The problem is picked when growth ceases to be at the expense of a declining growth; this we term as retrogressive progress. We may not deny the fact that development is constantly at play in Zimbabwe, but we can deny the assertion that it is progressive. It is a development clouded by drawbacks; hence considered as retrogressive-progress. A development where we see the expansion of crises. Interestingly, in March 2020, BBC reported a youth of Kadoma who illustrated a sarcastic demonstration by planting banana trees and bathing in potholes as a protest for bad roads and appeal to the government for good road networks.





Zimbabwe, as a landlocked nation, is one of those that hold an inspiring history in Africa due to a highly reputable education system, a gracious tourism industry and a bounty mineral treasure. It is undeniable that African archives rate the country as one of those blessed with phenomenal wonders that can hinder a foreign sightseer from turning back home. However, it is mesmerising to postulate one of its tragic growing wonders – the economical regression. In such a republic, progressive progress can blossom if only the country undergoes the process of civil photosynthesis. Thus, the duties of legitimate leaders should assume necessary conditions for transformation while citizens play the role of a plant that is ready to be photosynthesized.







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# A History of Writing

Mimi Machakaire  
Zimbabwe

## INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the history of writing, dating as far back as 3400 BC. We all have questions about our ability to write, and so easily. Meanwhile, it was taught to us the same way we were taught to speak, walk, and eat among others, as functional human beings. But, how did it all begin? Who were the first writers and what was the first piece of literature? There are of course many theories to this and I will try to uncover some of the mysteries and documented examples of the first known evidence of the art of writing.

The Urban Dictionary defines writing as 'a medium of human communication which involves the representation of a language with symbols.' Writing systems are not exactly human languages (with the debatable exception of computer languages); rather, they are a means of rendering a language into a form that can be reconstructed by other

humans separated by time or space. Let's begin with discussing the first pieces of Literature.

## THE FIRST PIECES OF LITERATURE

We all have read a lot of literature and have deciphered overtime, different types of literature including their structure and various themes, but what was the first known piece of writing documented in history?

As with the wheel, cities and law codes, the earliest examples of written literature appear to have originated from ancient Mesopotamia. According to The Sumerian civilisation, writing was first developed around 3400 B.C. which began as markings on clay tablets in a script known as Cuneiform. It was recorded that their texts usually consisted of economic and administrative documents, but only till the third millennium B.C. Cuneiform can further be

described as a system of writing used in the ancient Middle East. The name, a coinage from Latin and Middle French roots meaning 'wedge-shaped,' has been the modern designation from the early 18th century onward. Cuneiform was the most widespread and historically significant writing system in the ancient Middle East.

Furthermore, the Sumerian scribes were also known to copy down essays, hymns, poetry and myths. Two of their oldest known literary works are the Kesh Temple Hymn and the Instructions of Shuruppak, both of which exist in written versions dating to around 2500 B.C. The former is an ancient ode to the Kesh temple and the deities that inhabited it, while the latter is a piece of 'wisdom literature' that takes the form of sagely advice supposedly handed down from the Sumerian king Shuruppak to his son, Ziusudra.

One of Shuruppak's proverbs warns the boy not to "pass judgment when you drink beer." Another counsels that "a loving heart maintains a family; a hateful heart destroys a family."

While Shuruppak's fatherly wisdom is one of the most ancient examples of written literature, history's oldest known fictional story is probably the Epic of Gilgamesh, which is a mythic poem that first appeared as early as the third millennium B.C. The adventure-filled tale centers on a Sumerian king named Gilgamesh who is described as being one-third man and two-thirds god. Over the course of twelve clay tablets' worth of text, he goes on a classic hero's journey that sees him slay monsters, rub elbows with the gods and search for the key to immortality—all with predictably tragic results.

The Epic of Gilgamesh started out as a series of Sumerian poems and tales dating back to 2100 B.C., but the most complete version was written around the 12th century B.C. by the Babylonians. The story was

later lost to history after 600 B.C., until the mid-19th century when archaeologists finally unearthed a copy near the Iraqi city of Mosul. Since then, scholars have hailed the 4,000-year-old epic as a foundational text in world literature. There's probably more history that can be detailed but for now let us ask ourselves what the original purpose of writing was.

### WRITING AND ITS PURPOSE

Initially, writing was the physical manifestation of a spoken language. It is thought that human beings developed language circa 35,000 BCE as evidenced by cave paintings from the period of the Cro-Magnon Man (circa 50,000-30,000 BCE) which appear to express concepts concerning daily life. These images suggest a language because, in some instances, they seem to tell a story (say, of a hunting expedition in which specific events occurred) rather than being simply pictures of animals and people.

Written language, however, does not emerge until its invention in Sumer, southern Mesopotamia, circa 3500 -

3000 BCE. This early writing was called cuneiform and consisted of making specific marks in wet clay with a reed implement. The writing system of the Egyptians was already in use before the rise of the Early Dynastic Period (circa 3150 BCE) and is thought to have developed from Mesopotamian cuneiform (though this theory is disputed) and came to be known as hieroglyphics.

The phoenetic writing systems of the Greeks ('phoenetic' from the Greek phonein - 'to speak clearly'), and later the Romans, came from Phoenicia.

The Phoenician writing system, though quite different from that of Mesopotamia, still owes its development to the Sumerians and their advances in the written word. Independent of the Near East or Europe, writing was developed in Mesoamerica by the Maya c. 250 CE with some evidence suggesting a date as early as 500 BCE and, also independently, by the Chinese. We'll now consider who the first known writers were.





### THE FIRST KNOWN WRITERS

With the rise of the cities in Mesopotamia and the need for resources which were lacking in the region, long-distance trade developed and, with it, the need to be able to communicate across the expanses between cities or regions. Some history also describe that the earliest form of writing was pictographs – symbols which represented objects – and served to aid in remembering such things as which parcels of grain had gone to which destination or how many sheep were needed for events like sacrifices in the temples.

These pictographs were impressed onto wet clay which was then dried, and these became official records of commerce. As beer was a very

popular beverage in ancient Mesopotamia, many of the earliest records extant have to do with the sale of beer. For example, with pictographs, one could tell how many jars or vats of beer were involved in a transaction but not necessarily what that transaction meant.

In order to express concepts more complex than financial transactions or lists of items, a more elaborate writing system was required, and this was developed in the Sumerian city of Uruk circa 3200 BCE. Pictograms, though still in use, gave way to phonograms – symbols which represented sounds – and those sounds were the spoken language of the people of Sumer. Additionally, one had only static images in pictographs showing objects like sheep and temples. With the

development of phonograms, one had a dynamic means of conveying motion to or from a location. Furthermore, whereas in earlier writing (known as proto-cuneiform) one was restricted to lists of things, a writer could now indicate what the significance of those things might be.

### CONCLUSION


Since its inception, writing has served to communicate the thoughts and feelings of individuals, their culture, collective history, and experiences with the human condition; and to preserve those experiences for future generations. We may not know the levels writing systems could develop into, but it will continue to serve its purpose and allow for societies to grow in different and creative ways.






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**Space-Poet**

# Hoof for Hoof, Paw for Paw

**Benita Magopane**  
Botswana



Once upon a time, animals of every kind from the beasts of the land to the critters and all the creepy crawlies, were gathered together from every corner of the earth for the very first time in one place, the great ark (Noah's ark). The great flood sent by God had destroyed every living thing except a male and female of each species and Noah and his family. It was their temporary home while they waited for the great waters of the flood to dry up, but one day a commotion broke out.

Listen up!" said a cat to all the animals, "From now on, the captain of this Ark is me! What I say goes, and hey Hilda," he eyed the dairy cow, "If I want milk, you must give me...." His voice trailed away into a nervous whisper as a gorilla walked towards him and started laughing. "I like you little kitty," the gorilla said with a laugh-ridden voice, "but this Ark and all of you," he

turned round to look at all the animals with a sharp glare, "belong to me, Big G." Suddenly a hoof poked him, it was Martha the donkey and she said, "Over my carcass!"

"Well, well, would you look at that?" said Hilda the cow to the donkey, "I simply can't believe God saved a stubborn old donkey like you Martha?" "Well best believe it Hilda. It is she that stands before you now. So, how did a wicked creature such as yourself find favour in God's eyes?"

"You took the words right out of my mouth Martha," snorted a pig, "How were two wicked creatures such as yourselves not wiped out of existence? Surely, if donkeys and cows got saved, the pigs ought to finally fly?" "If it were up to me!" A voice boomed, and all animals turned to an elephant standing at the far back grooming himself, "All of you should have been wiped out, ka-boom! This world belongs to elephants. The rest of you are useless."



"I am the only true king here!" big lion roared and every animal except the elephant went silent with fear.

"The king who will eat all of us you mean," Zebra shouted hiding behind the elephant. And so it was, that animals

hoof, paw for paw and hoof for hoof.

"Everyone quiet!" hooted Ruphas the owl perched on top of the giraffe, "You know how we will live happily ever after, after this flood?" He smirked, "When we have killed our worst

As soon as Ruphas saw that the crowd was getting even more violent, he spoke once more saying, "Peace citizens!"

The crowd went silent and he continued, "Look at yourselves. If you can be united to do bad, can't you be united to do good



argued bitterly between each other, insisting that God had made a mistake to have saved those that they did not like. They were almost at war, ready to wipe each other out of existence themselves, paw against paw and hoof against

enemy, the snakes!" At once everyone paid attention and resembled a united front.

"He's right," said Tooth the goat, and everyone shouted in agreement, some in the crowd chanting, "Where are they? Kill them!"

also? Did God save us only for us to kill each other? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

All the animals murmured against themselves in shame. They agreed the way forward is not by killing each other. God saved them for a purpose.



---

# The Road

Joseph Katsala  
Malawi

---

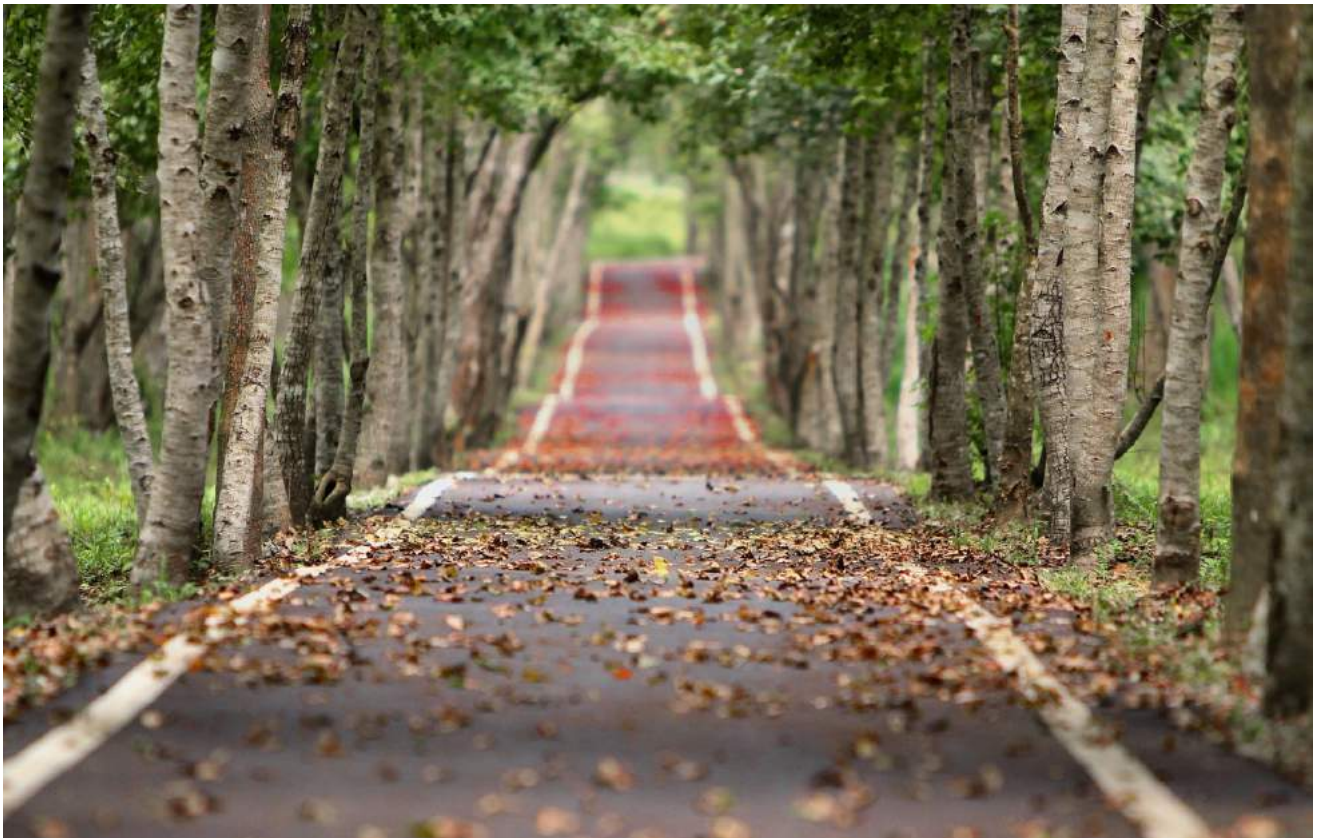


Sometimes I feel like stopping  
In the middle of the road  
Disturb traffic and make a scene  
But am the only person on this road  
And this road is nothing but a footpath.

I've walked on years  
Everyone I met was travelling alone  
No one seems to know where the path  
leads  
But I keep walking and hoping  
That I arrive at a familiar place  
I've never been before  
And find myself.

I take every step-in faith  
Though I can't see the cut line  
I know I've come so far  
Surely the vision I hold  
Will one day be reality.

Sometimes I fear for my arrival  
That the destination I crave might just be  
Strange than the fiction I escaped from  
Even so, this gruesome road  
Has been worth the travel.





---

# Care Not

Oyoo Jack  
Kenya

---



Cut down all the trees  
Don't plant more, we need no forests,  
Don't use bins, bin your dirt anywhere  
Poach the parks, we need not white rhinos.

Loot all the resources,  
I know you don't care of the next vocals  
Bribe them courts,  
Officers offer them a royal pardon.

Lead the fuel  
Let's kill the ozone layer and scorch to  
death!  
Dump all wastes in the rivers and lakes  
They can barely do a thing.

Puff your weed, do more of tobaccos; it is  
your lungs!  
Drink and drive, no life matters, not even  
yours

Kill us, kill all of us!

Ravish all the ladies and young girls of  
earth  
Tell them to abort, it's healthy  
Take more pills; you got a metallic womb.

Plunder the public funds, only your  
welfare matters  
Let's preserve disunity, racism and terror  
attacks...  
Maybe you will enjoy hell.

It's true that you know the truth; then do  
the most Right.  
Unity, best welfare and ecosystem we all  
need  
Gender equality, love and we must  
uphold.

---

# As a Girl, You Can

Owoeye Olajumoke  
Nigeria

---



... only make your dreams into apparition  
by scribbling them on kitchen utensils  
or painting them on an apron with a brush  
dipped into oil spilled from a cooking pot

with voice sewn on the hem of your dress  
you whisper your ideas to walls  
render numbers to children,  
then sit and watch the world wade  
through

\*\*\*\*\*

the high feathered crown of Dr. Ngozi

Okonjo Iweala  
and oath of office of President Samia  
Suluhu Hassan  
has illuminated a girl's kismet  
setting a new definition of a girl child  
in the dictionary of gender and ability.

building up the dreams of girls  
beyond the door of their eyes  
and now as a girl, you can  
metamorphize your dreams from cocoon  
into butterfly  
flap your beautiful wings and attain any  
height on the world's ladder.

---

# Tomorrow

Neemah Komba  
Tanzania

---

You are always looking back,  
retracing the steps of your mother looking  
for traps,  
still in fight or flight,  
waging the same war as your father.

You carry their sins on your back  
like scarred tissue,  
you gut yourself with a machete,  
dig into your flesh,  
searching for healing beneath the pus,  
you think tomorrow lies there.

Stop looking for yourself inside scars,  
you were planted long before the decay;  
you sprout from the darkness  
to carry their buried light,  
you are free.

Unlade their burden on your back,  
stretch your hands into the unknown,

Taste what lies beyond.



---

# A Rising Nation

Magak Nickson  
Kenya

---



At the hill foot, walking on the thorns as if  
not to be heard

I hear most hate songs swallowing tranquil  
voices of peace

I love to see a nation at ease, ceased  
from endless politics

I dream of a rising nation cured from its  
abraded bruises.

I cheer this long walk of running days  
edited by prevailing peace

Arranged by nationalist ceasefire, wiping  
cries of yesterday

Resiliently strong in adversaries of disease,  
poverty and hunger.

Sounds of hope bellowed Kenya's sky,

ringing great aspirations.

I love to see tables turn, my people shake  
shackles of despair

Nobody should cry again because of  
selfish displacement

To birth reconciliation, from bare feet to  
silver shoes,

Cow dung floors tilled, mud walls piped,  
water and electricity.



---

# Step by Step

Masego Olefile  
Botswana

---

Like a web stuck between walls-  
Walls I built over the years.  
Like a bird needing its nest  
I thought it's what's best.  
With every blade of grass  
Weaving a trap for myself.  
I wanted to win so bad  
Every fail made me mad  
In the end I was sad.

To be better than everyone  
And outshine my peers  
I fermented pressure  
Till I was full with regret

Broken and empty.  
A fall too many then....

Step by step  
I broke the walls  
Like a chick hatching.  
I embraced freedom  
Married contention  
Gave birth to patience  
I still fall but....  
I see progress.



# The Ridge We Mount

Fanwell Ndhlovu  
Zambia



There is power within us all;  
To solemnly author the new chapter.  
Love becomes our greatest call,  
Bordering life through joy and laughter.

The bright sun rays specks from the east;  
Underneath the shade does not fade.  
Slowly we brave the whole belly of the  
beast;  
The future, today we have made.

This is the creation of just redemption.  
We feared at its inception.  
Our lives shall blossom like a flower,  
History is made with every clocking hour..

We are less or not perfect,  
But if we can truly work together;  
Paramour and tranquility we select.  
To aid our conduct no matter the weather!

The ridge we mount,  
If only we dare to handle our moves with  
care.  
Progress in every count so paramount;  
With harmony dwelling everywhere.

United we ought to be tied,  
Through love, the common goals abide.  
So we remain undefeated and victorious;  
Our hymn of remarkable pride; glorious.

---

# Hope

Obongofon Etuk  
Nigeria

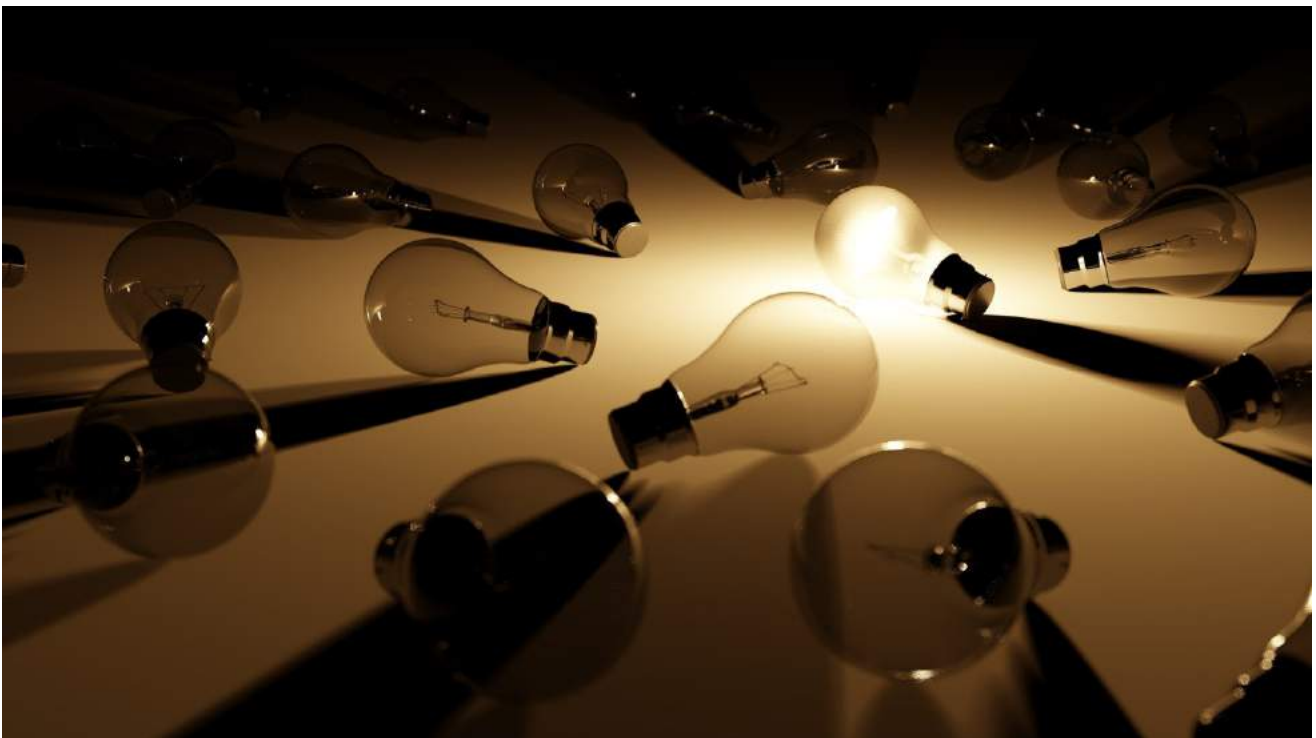
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On the sea of progress,  
let me sail ashore,  
to the bank where success was birthed.

Thou wind of goodwill,  
toss me o'er abroad,  
plant me in the garden of laughter.

By the morn, come dear sunshine,  
Light my path and glitter my heart,  
make me thy own reflection.

Lead me on, lead me on,  
Day to day and night to night,  
to my own Canaan where milk and honey shall  
flow.





Download Here  
<https://www.writersspace.net/poeticafrica/>



**Genre: Short Story**

**Title: Misery**

**Writer: Ezeliora Ndidiamaka, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Yolanda Kuei P. Macuei, South Sudan**

■ ■ Not even a divine sin deserves to be served through a brutal partner in life, let alone human immorality or none at all." In other words, settling down in marriage for life is a genuine choice informed by happiness, both mental and physical; not an obligation to whatsoever there is as manly or womanly in holiness to owe it. You either stay in while it works or call it a day when it fails. Otherwise, the repercussions will be a full package of "Misery" with red flowing streams of bloody shades.

To all readers, pay attention! Whether single, searching, married or not even thinking about it. As you read through this striking and educative narrative titled 'Misery' by Ezeliora Ndidiamaka, you will be compelled to a habit of creating and focusing on entry and exit doors always. It is a smoothly written, melancholic short story with reality-check lessons and survival tactics for when danger has reached the alarming emergency point or too late in the intensive care unit (ICU); hence, leading to the mortuary and straight to the grave. Yes, that's exactly where your imaginations will lead you as a reader and a reflective person.

With no hesitation, one feels sympathetic towards the main victims, 'Ada' and her innocent Aunt; the most affected ones until death. The persona will mentally bring you to terms and reach the quickest decision with your current life situations when you picture the image of uncle Sam (husband to Ada's Aunt); the villain character as the abusive husband, drunk, sexual exploiter, rapist, child abuser, heartless murderer and a devil's incarnate.

'Misery' is the true definition of a miserable life under the hell roof of Uncle Sam as the befitting representative of Gender Based Violence (GBV) which resulted to the painful death of his silent and naive wife, whose only solace witness was a journal safely in the hands of her niece, who in turn at last narrowly escaped through a mini window to survive death after being sexually abused and beaten till she lost consciousness. Surely, one would miss a lifetime lesson for not reading 'Misery' and if you're lucky enough to read, you will accept that absolutely nothing is worth dying for.

Genre: Article

Title: Misery, The Silent Killer

Writer: Rawat Luqmaan, South Africa

Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana

The unpleasant attribute of misery, leaves individuals subscribing to trauma and discomfort. The afflicted is bequeathed with luck if their misery is that of physical displeasure since it is subject to fade away with time. It is quite the opposite when an individual is countenanced with discomfort that threatens their psychological and emotional health.

The writer unveils the concepts and ideologies of psychology that succumb to the malleability of the human mind. These differing shapes of our minds' form, result from our experiences both consciously and unconsciously. The intense impact of these experiences on our lives request a long and demanding healing process. Unlike physical pain whose diagnosis and prescriptions are straight forward, emotional and psychological distress are relative and need a comprehensive approach in eliminating them. Therefore, the writer advises that comparison as an approach to mental healing, is a wrong turn and may have adverse consequences on the individual.

Optimism has always served as the substrate for the growth of disappointments and trauma that threaten our mental health. Hopes built on the fulcrums of comparison is hazardous and detrimental. We should approach the world from our own perceptions, subject them to reality and set simple achievable goals for ourselves. It is then only, can we alleviate ourselves from lack of self-esteem that leads to mental distress, emotional displeasure, and hence misery.

**Genre: Flash Fiction**

**Title: The Colours of My Skin**

**Writer: Kegbu Mgbe, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Marjorie Moono Simuyuni, Zambia**

**M**gbe's work, 'Colours of my Skin', is not the easiest piece of fiction to interpret. It becomes even less easy to one who lives in a place where homosexuality is a vice. "The privilege of normalcy, to be among the larger group humanity acknowledges. To be heterosexual, to be intelligent, to be pretty. My flesh will never enjoy the warmth of this light." This should give the story away right away, but what follows gets the reader thrown off their pedestal for a while. The opening lines impress on the reader that the narrator is female. It is the word pretty that especially leads one to think so. But when the narrator speaks of the man she's in a supposed romantic affair with, the narrator says, 'I rebuked myself at first; what sort of man loves another?' Now the reader begins to wonder; is the narrator really female? Why is there a man loving another man here when 'she' has already implied she is female, and is involved with a male?

The storyteller adds, 'But when I felt my skin, I became addicted to me and the wholeness that accompanied existing in my own flesh.' That makes the reader ask; is their masturbation taking place here? But we go on to find this affair is still on, and the two go to the market together. What does the market symbolise? It being a public place, where whoever does whatever, are they going there together just for the benefit of onlookers? This man is said to not be ashamed of himself. Is he supposed to be ashamed? Of what? 'She', the narrator, says he danced with her through the darkness and showed her little rays of light. What does that mean?

Just when the reader thinks their love will be a happily-ever-after, the reader finds that the story closes with the narrator attending a church wedding of her man, with another woman. 'She' explains, '... the person he vowed to in a flowing white dress rather than a silver suit like he had always claimed it would be.' While being romantically involved with the narrator, did the man admit it was for show? That who he really wanted was a fellow man? But why has he married a woman? These questions take one back to the opening sentences of the story to confirm what they may be assuming.

What's the thrust of this flash fiction? Clearly, it's been cleverly written. Is the writer depicting the misery of homosexuals who live where homosexuality is forbidden? Are they (characters of the story) with the opposite sex just to be accepted by their families and society? The narrator has made it clear they will never enjoy the light of heterosexuality. Seeing as they had an opportunity, which they did not seem to want to see through, have they resigned themselves to misery? Never to be with the gender they want but never to please society by being with the gender they don't want? Either way, one is left wondering how many people in real life are married to the gender they don't really desire, like the man in the story. Are they as unashamed about their double standards as he? Or like the protagonist, have they chosen a different strand of misery? This story is an eye-opener, a glimpse into the world we may never live in and the misery we will never feel, which may be the ultimate reality of someone out there.

**Genre: Children's Literature**

**Title: When I Grow Up**

**Writer: Temani Nkalolang, Botswana**

**Reviewer: Funmi Richards, Nigeria**

■ ■ According to global estimates, roughly 10% of pregnant women and 13% of new mothers suffer from mental disorders mainly depression, with developing countries being affected even to a greater extent with up to 15.6% and 19.8% respectively." — World Health Organisation

My thought when I realised I had gotten through to the last word of this piece was, 'Why did it end?' This piece should have a place in UN Women or UNICEF's archives. It tells a personal story of Ujeura and gives a sample of the impact of postpartum disorder on children.

The character development is rich and takes the reader through the misery inflicted though unintended on Ujeura because of his mom's condition. It also takes us through how this affects the child while revealing the need for knowledge among families and communities in order to help people adjust or overcome postpartum conditions or support them through the challenges. Unsurprisingly, the character development also underscores how a child's aspirations can sometimes be a reflection of the challenges they face.

The story underlies the sample workings of a child's mind and how they understand a problem, think of a solution and believe they can solve it. So straight and narrow! It is often difficult to talk about authentic issues or challenges with children because we always want to protect that childlike spirit. So, I think the author, did brilliantly putting together an issue of this magnitude to children in the form of literature. I do hope this masterpiece is told again in varying forms and possibly extended into full length book.



**Genre: Poetry**

**Title: A Search for a Betterlife**

**Writer: Sukuram Avi-Nash, South Africa**

**Reviewer: Comfort Nyati, Zimbabwe**

**T**he vibe in the poem "A Search for a Better Life" is too vibrant to pass without turning stones. It is that kind of a poem that has the prowess to arouse tears in the eyes of the reader. It is too vocal to go unnoticed its ambient of suffering and dire poverty or affliction. The audience is taken through a circumstance seasoned with displeasure, great unhappiness and emotional distress. Hence, the persona is in a state of want, yearning for brighter days. The principal theme of misery evolves in the entire poem, although in L1- "She did not choose this life , L4- "Hers was a rocky start" and the last stanza culminates with a miserable big bang.

The piece brings into awareness the predicament of a girlchild, typically from an African ancestry who inherits a miserable life as justified by the squatter camp which she called home. It was a home that denied her any possible comfort one would love to enjoy when at home, on the contrary, it provided uncondusive conditions of hunger, malnutrition and sleeping on a bedless floor.

This life's flaws have entangled the personae to find herself coiled with the tragedy of losing her virginity as an adolescent after being raped and this denied her the youthful bliss, instead it resulted to a baby giving birth to a baby. Actually, one would conclude that suffering and the personae were alike, for instance she suffered moral decadence in the society as desperation led her into the business of prostitution. Curtailed with the agonies of life, one learns that misery lodges where bad omen strikes. As demonstrated in the entire piece that exposes the repercussions of unemployment, sickness and starvation. Thereby the end result is to submit to the wretchedness of life. In such instance, it is doubtless to entertain thoughts of a cursed destiny with such kind of a dysfunctional life purpose.

Atmosphere: cold, unbearable, tormenting.

Attitude: Awe, contemplative

Overriding Themes: melancholy, mourning, heroism, depression

Tone: Bitter, gloomy, grim

Diction: detailed, narrative, simple to grasp.



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**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

VOL. 5 NO. 7



JULY 2021

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

*in loving  
memory*

**NAMWANJA MARGARET CHIKWABI**

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# CALL FOR **SUBMISSIONS** THEME: LUST

Writers Space Africa (WSA), An international online literary magazine, will from 1st to 14th July accept submissions for the September 2021 Edition in these categories:

- ❖ Flash Fiction
- ❖ Essays/ Articles
- ❖ Poetry
- ❖ Short Stories
- ❖ Children's Literature

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



# Editor's Note

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing away of Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi who worked hard to promote literature not only in Zambia but in Africa as well. Namwanja served in various voluntary roles such as the Director of the Department of Programmes, Publications, and Events, the Vice Country Coordinator of Writers Space Africa – Zambia (WSA-Zm) and the Chief Editor of WSA Monthly Literary Magazine.

Namwanja was passionate, dedicated and committed to her work. She brought a lot of new ideas to WSA and has – in the few months she spent – mentored several writers across the continent. She reviewed several books which were published in the papers and also on her blog.

As Chief Editor, she continued to grow the magazine and introducing more variety of ideas that expressed the creativity of literary arts. One would say she had a balance of both IQ and EQ because as a brilliant innovator, she did not rule with an iron fist but a compassionate heart. She interacted with everyone in the editorial team, ensuring everyone worked in harmony.

Namwanja has left a very big mark - she was yet to do more. We, the WSA Editorial team, will ensure that her legacy is carried on for generations to come. She will be dearly missed but her memory will always be in our hearts and on our paper.

Rest on, dear Namwanja. We miss you greatly.

**From all of us at the WSA Editorial Team**

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Anthony Onugba

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Fomutar Stanislaus - Cameroon

## **PUBLICITY**

Namse Udosen - Nigeria

Bildad Makori - Kenya





*Tributes*

# The Amazing Namwanja

**Anthony Onugba**

**Founder and President, Writers Space Africa**

Friendship is a relationship. It presents us with a bond which connects us in harmony. This relationship is lubricated by shared interests, beliefs and goals. We choose our friends but sometimes, it is our friends that choose us. Irrespective, what we do with this friendship determines how fast and far the relationship will sail.

Namwanja is my friend. We have been friends for just about seven months since we first physically met, days before the 2020 African Writers Conference, at a fast-food place in Centro Mall in Lusaka-Zambia. She radiated joy and passion for everything literature. It was a pleasant meeting and this was when our friendship began. She attended all four sessions of the African Writers Conference and even agreed to be the secretary of the AWC – something she was new to. She took notes which is currently available online.

Since the conference, Namwanja and me met on several occasions even when I was diagnosed with COVID-19 and was unable to leave Zambia as planned. She was there always ready to help with anything needed. Conspicuously, she was not this way to me alone. She was this way to everyone around her as much - as I observed. She was simply good natured and nurtured the virtue of goodness. She is a good person.

Until her death, Namwanja served as the Director of the Department of Programmes, Publications, and Events at Writers Space Africa. Additionally, she was the Chief Editor of the WSA monthly magazine and the Deputy Country Co-ordinator of the Zambian Chapter of Writers Space Africa. All these were voluntary positions. These positions were demanding but she combined them with running her company. Yet, innovation, passion and creativity were never to be questioned as far as Namwanja is concerned. She is simply amazing. Whenever I send her a message, I often say, 'Dear Amazing Chief Editor'. This made her smile a lot and made me glad too.

Namwanja's death came as a shock and some of us still live-in denial. It is difficult to accept a loss that hits your soul. Her loss came just two years after we lost Wakini Charity Kuria from Kenya who was the WSA Chief Editor at the time and founder of the Kenyan Chapter of Writers Space Africa.



Similarly, Wakini sacrificed a lot for WSA. She was passionate and did all that she could to ensure that WSA grows. Although their demise hurts, we are still grateful for a life well lived even though Heaven has gained yet another angel.

Going forward, we shall immortalise Namwanja but this will be announced in the coming months. In the short time here, she has tutored and helped a lot of us shape our vision. We will forever remain indebted. As painful as accepting her loss is, we shall continue to do what she always wanted us to do – to write, to read, and to learn. Namwanja is a Christian and one of the things that Christianity teaches is the hereafter. This is why we refer to a person as 'passed on' and not 'passed away'. Namwanja has passed on to greater glory. Though we remain heartbroken, we will console ourselves with the impact and legacies she left for us.

Namwanja is a good person... Namwanja is a great person. Let's be like Namwanja... let's be great!



# Found & Felt

**Jkanzobya**  
**Zambia**

I see you  
in the darkness filled night,  
You lie there as though,  
You are not.  
I hear you too,  
In the silence filled the night.

Sometimes  
You tell me,  
Listen for silence,  
For lost presence  
Is found and felt.  
This is not the language  
For those with tongues,  
But for the dumb and deaf at heart.

Now you speak,  
Sometimes your words.  
Peacefully haunt this silence.  
You seem to embrace,  
This vast silence  
Which ensues way past  
Time, light and Space.  
Who does that?

This silence is greater,  
But your words are louder.  
I guess that's the weirdest  
Thought  
One would think.  
Speak  
I'm listening to you.  
Though your words  
Can't be heard  
By none but me, Namwanja.





# A Tear for the Rose

**Yolanda Kuei**  
South Sudan

Namwanja Rosebud  
Our red flower  
WSA Chief Editor  
Thy angelic bird,  
The rare beauty  
With smiles of love  
And energetic power.

Death robbed us so bad  
It took her lower,  
Our beloved did her part  
Sweetest memories,  
To always remember.

Mama Africa, Rosebud!  
May your pure Soul  
Be blessed with peace  
Now and forever.

# Farewell

**Jainaba Danso**  
Gambia

You snatched our angel  
Before we appreciated her,  
Not a chance for a goodbye  
Wished you were in our shoes.

We've lost, we mourn  
For letting our guards down,  
Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi  
Please answer our calls.

Our chief editor, best mentor,  
Mother, sister and friend  
We've been calling,  
Yet you are unreachable.

Your words still echo  
As you smile at ease,  
Sleep well good angel



# Calling Heaven

**Mimi Machakaire**

**Coordinator, WSA-Zimbabwe**

Namwanja my Chief Editor, at Writers Space Africa, she was a very friendly person even though we never met officially or physically. She encouraged me a lot and pushed for my article "A History of Writing" to get edited and published in the June edition for the magazine. We spoke often since then and she even congratulated me on my engagement and I was inviting her to my wedding, hoping one day I would get the chance to meet her if not at the writer's conference but she passed on soon after that conversation. Deep down I know it's okay, I know she's at peace in the afterlife and maybe we will meet there. When I heard of her passing, I couldn't believe it and I tried to call her number on WhatsApp hoping maybe she would answer but sadly there was none. Nevertheless, I will forever keep our chats in my phone in memory of her.

Rest well Chief Editor, you are and forever will be a great mother, writer, editor, mentor and friend. Thank you for everything.

Your Friend Always

## R.I.P

**Fomutar Stanislaus**

**Cameroon**

**Short Stories Editor, WSA**

There are moments we are called upon by the circumstances around us to wonder if life has been emptied of meaning. There are other moments we are pulled by our emotions to want that life should be what we desire it to be, rather than what it is. We desire that our loved ones lost to death should regain life and smile back at us. Nevertheless, life stares back at us with a swollen face: naked unto death you are!!! Rest well Chief. We do not know if the better life is here or over there. Good for you, now that you know it as it is.

# A Bowl of Energy

**Akinrinade Funminiyi Isaac**  
Nigeria

A bowl of energy, you were  
Creative, cheerful and caring.

Your thirst for knowledge was unmatchable  
Your zeal to impact was incomparable  
If I could plant this tree of words on your grave  
I would show passers-by that you were brave  
Because even in death, you smiled  
A mild smile like a child.

Rest in power, magnanimous Margaret  
Your deeds and words, we shall never forget.



# Love Takes Flight

Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi

We are but children in Your sight  
Be with us, Lord, as we take this flight  
Embarking on this as lovers and friends  
Where we go wrong, help us make amends

This journey, Jehovah, is nothing without you  
Your light and truth, let them see us through  
May we live the fruit of the Spirit  
Your character, Lord, let it inhabit

May we show one to another kindness everyday  
That we may reflect that one bright ray  
In our moments of doubt and pain,  
Help us stand firm, not giving up in vain

Hold us both in Thy hand  
Keeping strong the three-cord strand  
Teach us gratitude for this love's depth  
For this relationship, in its glorious birth

I love him, he loves me, we both love You  
Guide us to more than say it; yea, to do  
Be with us always on this flight of gladness  
As we grow and share, in total faithfulness.





# For Namwanja

**WSA - Ghana**

Unfinished conversations, unread messages  
Sigh  
Laughter cut short, deafening silence

Emotionally Catastrophic,  
Our serene hearts' metronome now a monsoon-like ballad  
Sigh  
Laughter cut short, deafening silence

So much to say when we meet again  
Love.

# Still Here

**Omadang Yowasi**  
**Uganda**

When the stars go dim  
And a cold wind blow,  
We'll wait for the sun.

When we search closely  
And don't get you,  
You'll be right there.

When we grossly ask  
Where have you gone?  
You'll say, I'm still here.

When you can't turn  
And nothing's undone,



# Thank You Namwanja

**Lubacha Deus**  
Tanzania

Thank you Namwanja, for everything. You lived. You enjoyed. You impacted. Your smile and the urge to help others will forever be in our hearts. I personally won't forget that you wished to visit my country particularly Zanzibar during the fourth African Writers Conference in October. I hoped we would finally meet but nothing we knew of God's will. Rest easy dear. You are a Good Person.

# Rest on Namwanja

**Blessing Peter Titus (PPBlessing)**  
Nigeria

To cry or to laugh?  
Like thunderbolts on a stormy night  
Your demise sent shock waves  
Long faces and sighs abound  
If only it were a prank  
Alas! it's not  
You've journeyed on  
To the great beyond  
With wet eyes and broken hearts  
We say Adieu.



# Forever While

**Mufaro Munashe**  
Zimbabwe

Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi,  
The smiling beacon.  
For greatness you were meant to be,  
Sadly, you passed on!

I fancy the most,  
Where you are!  
They've got the best,  
to me so far.

"I'm still learning,"  
So, you would say.  
Yet you were teaching,  
Me everyday.

I haven't had enough,  
Her mentoring, teaching and humility  
Death did me tough,  
Won't be well for, forever while.

Your courage to try,  
new things, was it?  
Why you choose to die?  
Leaving me hurt.

Hopes to learn,  
to live without you.  
If possible, return!  
Alone I can't construe.

It's still a fallacy,  
You're absent without leave.  
You're legacy,  
will live!



# Shine Namwanja

Comfort Nyati SDB  
Zimbabwe

Y  
es  
you lived  
colorful a life,  
With a heart trans  
lucent like a diamond,  
For it had no reservations,  
Unlimited to love every human  
Race, unreserved to the fiddles of  
the earth. Unswerving to the hurdles  
of the world. So gentle in tone and giant in  
stature. The innovative plans in the WSA editorial  
room, an archive has become in the marrow of our minds.  
That jovial facial expression, angels have harvested. At the death  
of a literary titan, only words remain deathless. Your writing prowess  
exhibited an extraordinary trait, so exceptional like a precious stone  
of crystallized carbon. Your tender touch to African prose, poetry,  
a monument to celebrate its immortality. Once you were sunrise  
now you shall rise from the earthly sunset to the heavenly sun  
rise. An offshoot vision of spur ecstasy. May you find light  
in the beautiful habitat of eternal joy. As of now, your  
register has ticked in the stunning garden of eter-  
nity. Like a school child who has closed  
schools and gone for long holiday.  
We wail thy absence, while rely  
at thy heavenly intercession.  
No more earthly sorrow,  
No more a fleshy  
Torment, forever  
In perpetual  
Ligh  
t.





# Tribute to CE

**Namse Udosem**  
Coordinator, WSA Nigeria

Namwanja came, ran the race and bowed out. Her legacy lives on and we have the burden of carrying on with her baton.

Working with you was a pleasure. Not too long ago we were discussing book reviews and writers to be interviewed for the Magazine. Sadly, I didn't follow up until you took off.

I hope you are in a better place. A heavenly literary space. One day we will all with you share the grace.

Adieu

# To Wanji

**Halileo**  
Lesotho

I remember the first day we met, you approached me and asked to interview me for your article. I kept saying I do not really have anything worthy of being written about but you said I don't know, you sure will find something. Fast forward, you sent me an article and the story was nothing I had thought it would be. The excitement in your voice though, it is something I can always remember you with. Your ability to give words life and make one fall into the hearts of them, we surely lost big time for that. For the friendship we created for this short time, I will always cherish the moments we talked, laughed and even advised the other. I am forever grateful to have met you. Until we meet again, rest well. May the Almighty protect your soul even in your next life.

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# Unquenchable Appetite; Politics of Power

Comfort Nyati  
Zimbabwe



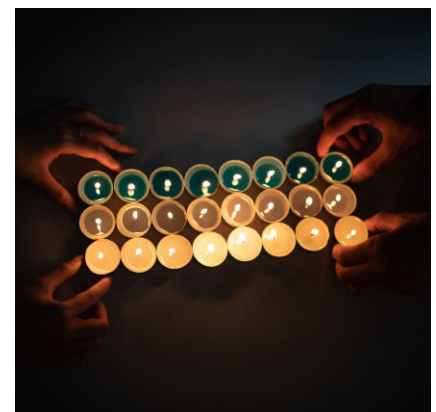
It is an organic truth that living organisms are constantly striving to be that which shapes their desire to be influential and powerful. Power is an intrinsic will to be or to become recognized, felt and dominating. Meanwhile, at the threshold of power lies a curtain, and to reveal what lies behind that curtain is to venture into the politics of power. The intricate reality embedded within the phenomenon of power is key to the promptings of this article.

Over the millennia, different definitions and treatments of notable concepts have won the attention of distinguished scholars. Power is one such concept laden with multifarious definitions and interpretations because it is too liquefied to be subjected to dogmatism. Relying on the Oxford dictionary, we

learn that the concept at hand suggests the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way. Meanwhile in social sciences and politics, power is the ability to direct or influence the behaviours of others or the course of events. For instance, 'a political process that offers people power over their own lives.' With or without these perspectives of the term in question, the bottom line is that every organism has the legitimacy to define its extent and legality of power.

Man is rationally a willful animal. In the Genealogy of Morals, Fredrich Nietzsche depicts man as someone who would rather will nothing, than not will at all. Therefore, the will in mankind is triggered by the impulse of the conatus essendi. Conatus is a central theme in the philosophy of

Benedict Spinoza derived from Latin to mean the struggle of living and an innate inclination of a thing to continue to exist and enhance itself. It is an instinctive 'will to live' found in every living organism. On the other hand, the pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer – a German philosopher best known for his 1818; *The World as Will and Representation* – surfaced by depicting the will as 'striving and blind impulse' with no end in view. The illusion of this pessimism was later rejected by Nietzsche following his ideology of the will to power.



The exercise of power is historically endemic to humans and can be exerted in various forms; can be seen as good or evil or as just or unjust. However, as social beings, our capacity to appease the will to power in us should be taken as something inherited as well as a threshold exercising humanistic objectives that will help, move, and empower others as well. Consequently, this establishes an opportune intellectual exposure to review part of Africa's politics of power which is at the brink of erosion.

Africa has her way of defining and describing power because it is equaled to age, wealth, gender and academic credentials. It is believed that the older one grows, the powerful he becomes. More so, most ethnic groups embrace a hierarchical and patriarchal system, meaning men by default are more powerful than females. Also, the extensive accumulation of wealth amounts to being more influential in the society.

To realize progress in every endeavour, an establishment of a hierarchical order needs to take precedence primarily for good governance. The case of Africa's civil leadership is one among sectors which has manifested a peculiar will to power which I refer to as hyper-will-to-power. Hyper is analogously employed to emphasize the magnitude of the desire to be more and more powerful while subjugating the less powerful. The hyper-will-to-power is the root of the politics of power in Africa. It permeates different dimensions including the social, economic and political spheres.

Speaking of the current political systems in Africa, mostly subscribing to democracy, it is compelling to mention that the higher civil leaders appear to be investing in their civil powers and securing their political ambitions. Zimbabwe is an ideal case study. Any constitutional activism carried by civilians whether virtual or physical is interpreted as treason or a

fabricated crime. This has resulted to having prisons full of individuals challenging the hyper-will-to-power exhibited by the political elite. So, this has resulted in an arrested social and economical progress. It is a disheartening reality because political power should be a fountain that fosters human solidarity, typically in this continent to render the momentum for the emancipation of the African heritage.

Should one not conclude that the hyper thirst for power has proven to be an enemy of progress in the beloved continent as illustrated by a culture of having leaders who are overdue to exercise their roles? Uganda is no exception. Talking about this, I don't seem to agree with the legend which says absolute power corrupts absolutely. Instead, in these unprecedented times of the present generation, it is no longer simultaneous to equivocate power and corruption, but now we talk of power as the worst corruption in African leadership.



The will to power describes what Nietzsche may have believed to be the main driving force in humans. It is an essential quality of humanity. The difference only comes in the manner in which it is actualized in a given context. Africa, no doubt, is what it is today because the leadership structures of many countries rotate within the circle of politics of power in order to recharge the pleasure for power and the hunger to overpower.

One of the hidden secrets is that the thirst for power is an ovary where seeds of underdevelopment have been fertilized in Africa. It resides in none other than wombs of tyrants, puppets and long-standing dictators. Leadership is identified not as duty to serve but rather a perpetual quench of the appetites of power. This has proven that the possible politics to curb the problems of power centralization in Africa is the politics of a coup d'etat like those that happened in Zimbabwe, Mali, Gabon, Sudan, to mention a few. Thus, Africa is at the suffrage of power



crisis, a pandemic that has hijacked the fibre of good governance.

Conclusively, we may become exhausted while seeking possible answers to the puzzle of power politics. One thing to note however, is that in the struggle to become more powerful, power becomes a vice when it assumes a role of disempowering the less powerful, but a virtue when it becomes an avenue of

exalting the less powerful into powerful individuals. At its best it becomes the medicine to heal Africa, yet at its worst it becomes a venom to poison the good in Africa. Hence, the power to love is slowly dwindling, because it is being battered by the nonstandard love for power. To diagnose and heal Africa's politics of power it is imperative to invoke a new epiphany of power to come to the aid of Africa's ailing power politics.

# The Question of Power in Africa Regarding Leadership

Uwanuakwa Isidore  
Algeria

One can mistakenly think that Power in Africa refers to, a new five-year American presidential initiative launched by President Barack Obama in Tanzania during his Africa Tour in July 2013. The initiative aims at supporting economic growth and development by increasing access to reliable, affordable, and sustainable power in Africa. Yes, it can be what we have stated above from Mr. Obama, but our bone of contention here is far beyond the aspect seen above as well as the dimension we will explore.

In order for power to exist, it must be allowed to exist. For example, a dictator cannot have absolute power unless his followers have given up their power. In order to exert power, a leader must have resources and motivation. Resources include such things as

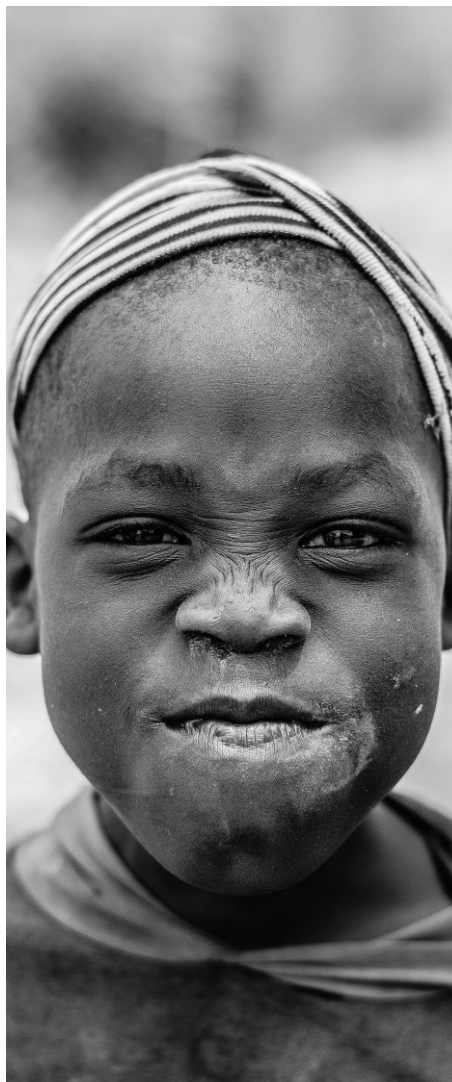
money, skills and/or intelligence. One may have the resources to lose weight, for example, but if they lack motivation, they will not have the power to accomplish the goal of weight loss. On the other

hand, one may be motivated to become a supermodel but if one lacks resources like beauty and talent, the motivation means absolutely nothing. It is only when resources and motivation fit well together that leaders can develop and utilize power.

There are five ways through which leaders can influence others: coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, reward power and referent power.

Mind you, Power has definitions of all sort; medical definition, scientific, mechanical, among others.

However, we shall employ our working definition of Power as the ability to do or act; thus the capability of doing or accomplishing something.



## POWER AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

We shall use five concrete types to justify that:

Great leaders have these things in common: they have a vision to achieve large-scale ideas that they dream of accomplishing, and they have the personal power to enact them. So, how do they do it? In order to understand this, we must understand what it means to have power.

Many people believe that power and influence are the same thing. On the contrary, Power is the capacity to cause change, produce effects on others or potentially influence others. It is the function of a relationship because it belongs not only to the leader, but also to the followers and the situation. Meanwhile, influence is the degree of actual change in a target's attitudes, values, beliefs or behaviours.

**Coercive power** is based on fear. Fear of being hurt, poorly treated, or dismissed,

helps people with coercive power rule over the fearful. A leader with high coercive power gets others to follow by communicating that failure to comply will lead to punishment. An example of a person who used coercive power was Hitler. In the African context, the question of coercive power is rampant since some African leader are dictators. The fact is that, this form of power is necessary at times.

**Legitimate power** is acquired based on the position, office, or title held by the leader. Normally, the higher the position or status, the more compliance the leader is able to get from the followers. The president, dean, director, or chief executive officer can theoretically 'call the shots' in an organization and be fairly certain his or her instructions will be carried out. A leader with legitimate power gets the compliance of others because they feel that he or she has the right, by virtue of position, to expect that their instructions will be followed. We can all agree that we know a leader who has legitimate power. In

the question of power in Africa, if the role of leadership on the continent was to maintain this aspect, it would have been very *profiting and developmental*. Nevertheless, some African countries have it.

**Expert power** is power based on the knowledge, talent and/or skills of the leader. For expert power to exist, it must be coupled with respect for that knowledge, talent and/or skill, along with the assumption that this expertise is valuable to followers. A leader with expert power is seen as having the expertise to facilitate the work of others. This respect leads to compliance with the leader's wishes. A neurosurgeon, for example, is someone who has expert power. It is important to remember that there are times that followers actually have more expert power than leaders. Most of those we deem to have expert powers are spontaneous leaders who are born to lead and are charismatic in nature.

But, the fact is that most Africans rather find ways to get rid of them, instead of giving them the leading baton or making them heads or even assistants.

**Reward power** is power based on the leader's ability to provide rewards for other people. People who follow a leader with reward power believe that obeying the leader's instructions will lead to positive incentives such as pay, promotion, or recognition. This type of power is needed in all aspects of leadership. It is founded in Africa and is wonderful when utilized well.

**Referent power** is based on the leader's personal traits and the need others have to be referred to or associated

with people of influence. Traits such as charm, charisma, and creativity are all intangible but very real characteristics of most leaders. They can command awe, respect, and loyalty. A leader with referent power is generally liked and admired by others because of personality. This admiration and identification with the leader influences others to act on the leader's instructions. This aspect of leadership is also very profound in Africa.

One would ask, which is the best type of power to have? Well, powerful leaders use as many of the five bases of power as possible. In fact, effective leaders are able to use all five power bases to some degree. Followers who are aware of these can

also use them to limit or control the leader's power. In the quest for power in Africa, the rise and fall of leaders has always been because there's not enough knowledge of the different types of power and sometimes how to respond to existential stimulus in the cause of leading the people. Even though not entirely, Africa has got deep rooted leaders who are doing their possible best to stand out in development matters regarding their respective nations. It is wonderful to have a good leader, one who does not only have power but also knows how to use it for the good of the subordinates. For without it we will not attain our objective.

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# Power Imbalances in Black Heterosexual Relationships

Mahlatsana Sinoxol  
South Africa

Merriam Webster defines power as, 'the ability to control others, events, or resources; to make happen what one wants to happen in spite of obstacles, resistance or opposition.' The concept of power and the fact that certain people have more of it than others is a visible fact in our lived realities (Dahl, 1957). Power can thus be applied to understand multiple polarising factors such as the political discourse, the workplace, cultural contexts, religious contexts and even within relationships. This article will therefore address the concept of power within the context of the triple oppression of black women who are at a disadvantage of men exerting their power on them because of their race, class and gender.

Heterosexual relationships have been identified as key sites for reproducing power imbalances and ensuring male dominance. Feminist work has further identified significant factors that are a result of these gender imbalances and these include the suppression of women's sexual agency and their lack of negotiating power in their relationships (Shefer and Foster, 2010). There are prevalent structures in society that have been identified as the

sites where power imbalances emanate from. These are patriarchy, culture and masculinity. Stanistreet, Bambra and Scott-Samuel (2005: 873) define patriarchy as, "a relationship of dominance and subordination, sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring and simply as the systemic domination of women by men and domination of men by other men."



Patriarchy is thus the root of male privilege and supremacy and as such, the root of women's subordination in society and it has succeeded in establishing power systems through lines of masculinity and femininity (Edstrom, Das and Dolan, 2014). By writing on the South African ideology of patriarchy, Coetzee (2001: 300) states that, patriarchy is not a 'western culture' that was brought and introduced into Africa, rather, both Afrocentric and Eurocentric cultures in South Africa acknowledge and appreciate the fact that men hold superiority within the family and the society. It is this system that ultimately results in the existence of power within heterosexual relationships, which basically refers to the ability of a partner to act independently and without consultation, and to ensure that their views dominate the other partner's wishes. It is these inequalities that establish double standards where men have a sense of entitlement to women and their sexual freedom which makes women vulnerable to

violence (Langen, 2005). Power imbalance has been made dominant and reinforced within culture and through traditional gender roles which have predisposed women to physical and sexual abuse from their male partners. Shefer et al. (2008: 165) postulate that, "the notion that such practices are endorsed by culture and tradition again highlights the prevalence of cultural discourse in the reproduction of gender inequality" because of a power imbalance. Culture has been used as a reference to rationalise the power imbalances that exist within heterosexual relationships and their ultimate resultants, which include gender-based violence. Particularly in the context of South Africa, the role of women who were situated in the rural areas was simply domestic. Their sole responsibility was to satisfy the sexual needs of their husbands, practice household chores and bear them children.

Power imbalances are further linked to the 'sub-

factors' of the patriarchal system, where not only have the role of men and women been deliberately demarcated, but also certain behavioural characteristics, which further this demarcation. Where gender and male dominance is concerned, masculinity has played a major role in separating behavioural traits of men and women and has played an even bigger role in condoning male power over women, ultimately leading to women's subordination (Sathiparsad, Taylor and Dlamini, 2011). In her research on sexual negotiation amongst the youth in KwaZulu-Natal, Varga (1997: 58) identifies that the socio-cultural context of Zulu-speaking young people prevented them from being open to sexual decision-making and negotiation. She further notes that, although there has been some 'rapid urbanization' in South Africa where people are more conscious of gender roles, sexual constructions have not completely changed because of power-imbalance in relationships.

When addressing power in heterosexual relationships, it is important to note hegemonic masculinity, a concept that involves power being used to accept certain beliefs, values and ideas to be true and thus normalised in society. Gqola (2015: 156) shows us a practical example of hegemonic masculinity when she draws us back to the frequent claims made by black men who have been part of various liberation movements in Africa, and who often say that they have been 'emasculated' for so long and therefore ought to assert their power over women and that women should be accepting and accommodating of this masculinity. Gqola (2015: 156) says that, "While this emasculation discourse challenges the infantilisation that black men suffer in racist white regimes, this claim to recover from emasculation very often requires the performance of overpowering, that women are expected to support as part of enabling these men to attain manhood."



In conclusion, heterosexual relationships cannot be viewed or analysed outside of the multiple social structures that exist, nor can they be viewed without taking into cognisance the country's historical implications which have largely contributed to the difference in identity politics between men and women and which, in their nature have been embedded in power systems, but especially how these continue to contribute to the use of power by men to ultimately result in the subordination and suppression of black women (Crenshaw, 1991).



# Power: My Fountain of Strength

Rotheli Mamello Stephen  
Lesotho

If life was a wish-granting factory, I wouldn't even for once complain about any state of affairs in my life, instead, I'd just shut my lids, make a wish and then open them to behold with utter bliss, the realization of my wildest fantasies. I'd put myself in almost all places of power in accordance with all the undesirable aspects of the world in order to remedy its ills. But that's just a naive wish I always had in my earliest years of growing up and I'm still holding on to it as I mature, except I'm not holding onto it out of some naivety that it'll one day be granted, but as one of the many fantasies that I had which defined my youngest self. Since that can only remain a figment of my imagination, I'll resort to both reading and writing. At least with the power of words, I can get to experience all my possible and impossible wishes.

I'm not exactly a fan of growing up. That's why anyone would hardly ever see on my face a cheer birthed by a birth date at every year's end. Growing up is like walking in the dark of a stormy night, not knowing what may hit you. That's what I fancy to think of it. I'd put a hold on aging if I had the power to, because growing old is simply a terrible ordeal.

Was it well within the borders of possibility to remain a kid, I'd go to just about any lengths to secure such a state and wouldn't trade it for anything. There's one more thing about that phase of life that sucks in my opinion; and that is, a kid has little to zero power over a lot of things. There's even none over their own life.

I'm a fresh graduate who is currently unemployed. And,

as of now, I have little power over that because in my country, more than talent, more than intelligence, and yes more than education, how you shake a leg to political music at rallies, and how you lend an ear to these two-timing old countrymen with their hoodwinking cajolery is a sure-fire ticket to acquiring thankless, short lived jobs while they live like maggots in bacon for the rest of their lives. I can mention plenty of things that I lack power over, but I shan't. I have a feeling my grievances have had a fair share of my ink.





Everything in this fateful life is a matter of time and place. One person can't be supreme at everything. Where another has dominion, the other doesn't. Where a policeman is concerned, a property security officer is a nobody. In the same vein, at the gate of the property the security officer is tasked to guard, while the policeman becomes just a man. Every man is a king of his own house and so is every woman a queen of theirs. A baby boy has supremacy over his toys, same way a baby girl plays goddess to her dolls. Just as I, for one, is vested with power over my pad and pen.

Writing is one of the few things that rev me up. It gives me power. It is definitely one of a select few things that I do with sheer unadulterated verve and vivacity. The thought of writing, and any thoughts on writing stir up tons of good feelings in me. Feelings that I imagine I'd barely get from any other thing in this world. It's as if writing is an anchor to my fragile sanity. Had this

anchor not been a part of my identity, my sanity would have crumbled down a long time ago. It's all that is stitching it together, and all that my tenacity is deeply indebted to. More so, it is all that pumps me up each time I run out of the will and zest to live. When all the chips are down, and all else fails to cheer me up, writing becomes my last resort.

If you'd take time to ask any man, you'd find that carrying a weapon makes them feel even more manly. For some unaccountable reason, it does something to alleviate their worst fears and nightmares. This is apparent in how, if provoked, a man with a weapon in hand, pocket, waist or wherever can hardly be the bigger person. It seems to give them a sense of power and dominion over just about anyone. A French proverb avers that where power reigns, there is no room for reason.

As for me, my pen is my sword. The only difference is, there's just too much sense and reason pouring

forth from one who wields a pen. Should I feel like I'm being trampled on, either by life or mankind, I reclaim my power by wielding it. Once I bury my face in my shield, which is my pad, not a thing can get to me.

Vibes are somewhat contagious. When I write, I feel in me a sense of power. In writing, we create worlds, with the letters acting as bricks. Letter by letter, we create worlds. Worlds that sometimes hadn't even been fathomed by any other wordsmith out there. We put together a world of our fantasies. A world that is far from one that had been created for us. We create people, we give them everything. We decide everything for them. We decide how their existence should pan out. We give them personas, phobias, things and people to love. We're creators. We play god to our creations. And without the power to imagine, none of that would be possible. Isn't it so beautiful how we possess so much power and strength as writers?

In grief, despair, discomfort, indignation, or all other undesirable moods, I shall incessantly find solace in words. Be it through writing, reading, or listening. Books and other literary things will always be the closest things to my heart. I'm still growing, and I sure am going to get vested with some powers and authority in the future, and all those shall fade away with the passage of time. They shall be stripped off of me, but not a single soul shall strip away my power to create, to write. Not a soul shall rob me of it. Not today, not anytime soon. Definitely not ever.





# Kachasu- The Spirit of Kantolomba

Moses Tololo  
Zambia

Have you tasted it? It's probably the most mouth-watering your taste buds will ever taste. It's the rarest taste you can ever get. It's not brewed elsewhere. It's only here in the heart of a community. It's brewed by a mother full of love. You feel a mother's love and care with just one sip of the brew. You feel it as it goes down the esophagus. In a minute, you will forget all what was weighing down on your mind. It soothes all your pains and eases your suffering. The effect of the brew could be seen as people took to the dance floor and singing on top of their voices. It's an ecstatic feeling. You only feel it here and when you are sipping to the rarest brew. Brewed with the love of a woman. The feeling you get when you sip on Kachasu – the spirit of Kantolomba. He could make out the dances at his mother's place

as he neared her home. He grew up here but now he was nauseated as he got ever closer. He was not proud of his mother's place. He blamed God for growing up in such an area. It was unfair that God raised him up in such a place and to such a woman. He had not seen nor spoken to her in ten years. He was so ashamed to introduce her to his world. "For us to move forward, we must cut off the past," so he thought all these years. He had never told her that he was not just a husband but a father to three beautiful girls. How could he introduce a woman who sell kachasu to his sophisticated, beautiful wife? He had spent so much to maintain her beauty.

'Nothing has changed,' he thought as he stood at a distance eyeing his mother's house. Could this be his mother or it is just the

woman who gave birth to him? He was not sure anymore. What was clear was that the woman was not changing. She was not moving forward as he had done. She would be proud of him. He thought. He was a better man now. He was actually a very successful man. One who had managed to marry a white woman. He thought of turning back and leaving the uncivilized woman with her backward people dancing aimlessly to archaic music.



"Chibuye, is that you?" asked a woman who emerged from a dark room carrying some kachasu for her customers. She spoke to the stranger who was almost half-way out of her compound, going to where he came from. Her puzzled face turned into joy when the stranger's face turned to face her. It was her long lost son. The one she had not seen in more than ten years. She dropped everything she had and ran to the man whom she had lost. She hugged the long-lost son. She was overjoyed. She temporarily let go of him, probably to see how good he was looking before she hugged him again.

"You wanted to leave without seeing your old woman?" she asked astoundingly.

"Well, mother ... I thought," he dropped his words midway. "Come my son," she said as she led him to a stool which was placed under a tree.

"How are you?" she asked once they sat down.

"I am fine mama," came his

words.

"Oh, I have missed you my son,"

"You are still here, still living in Kantolomba?"

"But where would I go my son?" came her response, "I am just a powerless old woman who can't do anything to change the world."

"You are still brewing this illicit drink?"

"Who said it is illicit? What makes it illicit? Isn't it brewed the same way as elsewhere?" she asked, "don't you people call it fractional distillation?"

"Yes, but this is not allowed," he said.

"The only difference is that they pack them in bottles," she added, "I will also start packing in bottles."

"Life is becoming better for your son," he continued, "I am now married to a white woman and we have three kids. I own a beautiful house which I bought in England."

"You are a powerful man," she said, "yet powerless."

"What do you mean, mama?"

"History has a way of repeating itself," she said, "so many Africans we perceive to be powerful have left the continent to go and get ideas. Most of them become confused with the white man's knowledge. They come back feeling that they are powerful. They feel they have influence. They feel that is success. They feel everyone would admire them. Instead, we pity them."

"I thought you would be proud of me?"

"How can I be proud of you who went there to get ideas so that you can improve this area," she said with so much annoyance.

"Mama, it's a beautiful place. You would love staying there," he said as he wondered what was wrong with his mother.

"So, my son, who made it to be so beautiful?" she asked, "if the people in Europe were leaving for other places, was it going to be as beautiful as you think it is?"

"well, no,"



"Exactly," she added, "Africa has the potential to be the most powerful place on the globe but we have leaders who think they have power yet they are powerless. Leaders who can't do anything except laugh at their fellow African man yet praise a buffoon from abroad."

"I thought you would be proud of me. Am I not the first from this community to go to London?"

"Ha, ha who lied to you, my son?" she said mockingly, "Your father left me to go and get ideas as you did. He became proud with falsified power he thought he had.

He married a light-skinned woman. He thought she was more beautiful than your dark-skinned mother. He bought a house for her. After so many years, she divorced him and got everything. The once proud powerful man was as harmless as a toothless lion. At the time of his death, your father couldn't even be accorded a simple grave. They simply cremated his body and scatted his ashes into the ocean. Your father's ashes were washed back to the continent where he belonged. Your father thought he was powerful yet he was powerless. Africans belong to Africa. Africa can only developed by powerful

Africans who have the power to change the continent."

As he stepped out of the aeroplane, his mother's scarring words kept on coming back to his mind. He was tormented by what she said. "She is nothing but an uneducated, backward African woman who knows nothing but brewing kachasu," he thought to himself. He thought of buying something before heading home. He went straight to the nearest supermarket. Something caught his eye. It was a bottle in the liquor section of the store.

### **Kachasu – The Spirit of Kantolomba**

*As powerful as the women who brew it*

He could not believe what was in front of his eyes. In a store in London was a bottle brewed by his own mother.

"This is the best spirit I have tasted in years," said the man who also got the bottle.

"I am told this is brewed by powerful women in Africa.

Women who have been abandoned by their male counterparts.

Women who have the power to change the world."

"Yes, I know one of them."





# MULHER FORTE

AWARDS

MFAAL 2022



"Mulher Forte!" means Strong woman! Our team of strong women recognize the importance of Literature, Our aim is to archive literature for the future generations, and create more history by continuing to support and award excellence in Literature.

**Disclaimer** it is free to participate, No money must be paid to anyone.

## Genres To Compete;

### Group A

1. Poetry books.
2. Short stories.
3. Children's books.
4. Novels.
5. folklore books.

### Group B

1. Orators
1. Poetry
2. folklore or fables
3. Music (traditional, contemporary).

### Group C

#### Other Categories

1. Publishers (Traditional and self publishing houses)
2. illustrators

**NB;** Create a video of 3-5 minutes of your stage performance! (you can produce video from home but ensure good audio quality! send to Mulher Forte African Literature Team, on WhatsApp

+00267 77458029-Botswana.

+263774090384-Zimbabwe.

+234 803 827 4377 Nigeria.

#### How To Enter

Be Above 18 years Of Age.

Be Ready To Provide Proof As The Owner Of The Craft Or Book, in Due Time.

By Entering To The Competition Of Mulher Forte African Literature Awards, you

Agree With The Terms And Conditions Of The Awards Competition.

Closing Date 31 July 2021.

Grande Finale-awards

Ceremony- 3 January 2022.

#### Miscellaneous Competition

(Someone who contributed immensely to Literature over the decades).

1. Legendary Story teller.

2. Legendary poet.

3. Author (Legend).

NB Duets, collaborations, allowed.

# Lizzy Abrahams

Carissa Marnce  
South Africa



Lizzy Abrahams arrived on Peterson Street at 6pm on a Sunday evening. She swung her legs out of her yellow 1960's VW bug and onto the rocky ground of Mama Jackie's Shebeen. The Eastern Cape's icy dew had already fallen this time of day. Lizzy's heels slowly sunk into the muddy ground. She drew her hand bag close to her breast. With deep sigh she lowered her head and whispered, 'Help me lieve Jesus'.

The shebeen was packed at this hour. Smoke came billowing out of the building like a chimney, while the methodicalness of drunken men caused them to collapse on the grass outside. Clutching onto their empty bottles they reminisce on mischief that Friday and Saturday night generated. The washout brick faced building was surrounded by darkness

except the overhanging light that shone over the plastic Castle Lager sign. Lizzy placed her hand reluctantly on the entrance door to push it open, fearing that one of the members of the Griqua congregational church might see her, especially nosy Sister Lousia who always seemed to be meddling in her business. She was no stranger to this worn out chestnut door, many Sunday evenings she would come to Mama Jackie's Shebeen in search of her Husband Hendrik. After a full week of hard labour he used the seventh day of the week to forget about his duties before starting the cycle again on Monday.

Hendrik was well past the age of retirement but he believed that death would come faster to those who agreed to rest for the remainder of their lives. Lizzy navigated her way

prestigiously past drunken men to Hendrik's favourite table. She found him resting the pillow of his body on the table and pitied him as one pitied a muzzled faced pug. 'Arme ding,' she sighed.

'Hendrik come, we are going home!' he could barely sit up straight let alone get up. Hendrik mumbled a command as she placed his brawny arm on her fragile shoulders. Once she had finally got him to stand up, Lizzy was suddenly enthralled by a story being told by rugged looking man on the next table. 'Beware of the mountains for they call you home.' The man spoke of adventures from different parts of the country and the thrill they brought. She stood bewitched for at least 20 minutes before she regained her wits and continued with the task of getting Hendrik into the car.



It was 8pm when Lizzy got Hendrik into the house. He managed to stumble across the stoep to their bedroom; she left him face down on his pillow and closed the door. In her mind she was still being haunted by the stories of the rugged man from the shebeen. Lizzy had no idea why these stories interested her, in her mind she was well past the age of adventure and had commitments to her husband, her church and her community. Nevertheless she longed to hear more of his stories about the Drakensburg caves or the free roaming penguins of boulders beach. With no hesitation she rushed to the kitchen to get some biltong and bread and put it into a lunch box. She jumped into her yellow bug and rode to Mama Jackie's shebeen for a second time. Her delicate knees clutched together as she swung her legs out onto the ground. This time the air was colder, she knew her legs would make her pay for all this excitement later on. She slammed the door and walked up the rocky

pathway as fast as she could. The building was still as she left it, full of smoke with drunken men parading outside. Lizzy walked strategically to the table she found the rugged man on and just as she hoped he was there. Feeling a bit uncertain she handed him the lunch box, he looked up at her. 'eet' she pleaded.

He ripped the lid off and began devouring the biltong and bread in front of her. Lizzy smiled nervously and sat down on the chair across from him. 'Tell me one of your stories asseblief.' The man chuckled and wiped his mouth with his sleeve and began one of many tales that would be shared between them.

Over the course of a few months the ritual between

Lizzy and the rugged man continued. Each Sunday evening at precisely 6pm she would arrive at Mama Jackie's shebeen, navigate her way to the table right at the back and place a lunchbox with biltong and bread in front of him as a sort of payment for his stories. On one particular evening the two were interrupted by the voice of Pastor Jan and Sister Louisa from the Griqua congregational church. 'I told you Pastor she comes here every Sunday, and she calls herself a Christian Sies!' sneered Sister Louisa. 'What am I seeing!' exclaimed Pastor Jan. 'Haai! Lizzy what is a good standing woman like you doing in the devil's playground?' questioned the Pastor.





The enchantment from Lizzy's face turned to sudden embarrassment.

She folded her hands neatly in her lap and faced the ground like a child receiving a scolding from their p a r e n t s . 'You are a hypocrite my sister, pretending to be an upstanding woman in our community while you keep the company of thieves and criminals. This is a great sin and you need to repent immediately or the lord will turn his back on you!' yelled Pastor Jan as if he was preaching to his congregation. 'You must leave immediately with me and we will prepare the reconciliation oils,' commanded the Pastor. Lizzy clutched onto her handbag and was getting up to leave with the Pastor when she had a sudden epiphany. Her entire life had been about pleasing someone else, when she was little it was being obedient to her father, when she got married it was being an obedient wife and now Pastor Jan was telling her to

repent of the one activity that has given her the most excitement in years.

'Hurry up Lizzy we must get to the church before the maintenance man locks up.' 'No.' mumbled Lizzy under her breath. 'What was that?' questioned the pastor. 'Aikona, I think she said she likes being a sinner!' barked Sister Louisa. Lizzy raised her head and fixed her eyes on the two of them. 'I may be a sinner but I am going to be a sinner that makes their own choices' declared Lizzy. 'Thanks for your concern Pastor Jan but I would rather have adventures than a reputation'. She turned to the rugged man 'And as for you my friend I thank you for all your stories but I think it's time I start living my own.' with that remark Lizzy Abrahams stormed out of the shabeen.

When the following Sunday evening came Lizzy Abrahams swung her legs out of her yellow 1960's VW bug but this time not onto

Mama Jackie's shabeen's rocky ground instead on lush green grass beside a lake in the Drakensburg.

#### Glossary of terms used

1. Liewe Jesus – Dear God
2. Griqua – A Subgroup of multiracial coloured people who have an early history in the Cape colony
3. Arme ding – Poor thing
4. Stoep- A veranda in front of the house
5. Eet- Eat
6. Asseblief- Please
7. Sies- A remark of disgust
8. Haai- A word to strongly protest something
9. Aikona- An emphatic word to say no



African Writers  
Conference '21  
Tanzania  
October

AFRICAN WRITERS CONFERENCE  
**TANZANIA**  
OCTOBER 2021





# Led on By The Shadow

Oluwabusayo Madariola  
Nigeria



I hobbled into the morning, clenching the only possession I took in and the only one I'm taking away. I was finding my way back home, even if I was going back the same way I came.

I had two goals in life in no particular order: having a family and earning my own money. I had always known I wasn't physically attractive. One leg was conspicuously shorter than the other, which means I don't walk like every other normal human being. My teeth were discolored

and unevenly distributed that I can't remember ever smiling in public. I only beam into the mirror in my closet wishing there exist a magical wand. However, what I lacked in physical appearance, I sufficiently compensated for in my culinary skills.

The sleepy, agrarian community I grew up in won't lead me into the future I held in my head but I knew the cosmopolitan city of Lagos would. With the reluctant support of my widowed mother, I left our

small community, with a worn out bag containing my clothes and journeyed to Lagos with only an address and a phone number to work as a cook for someone I met on social media. I was elated the first time I sent some money to my mother after I collected my first month's salary. One half of my lifelong dreams was being fulfilled.

I enjoyed serving the Alfreds—a nice, warm and elderly couple. They always complimented my food - always.

"Hello," he said to me as I opened the door that Wednesday afternoon. My heart stopped beating for some seconds. "Is Daddy Alfred in?" He spoke in an accent I only hear on television and my head whirled lightly. This man must have descended from heaven, I said to myself, he was perfect.

That evening, I served him as he had dinner with the Alfreds.

"So this is the 'sister' that made us the delicious dinner," he said, directing his words to me as I tottered consciously for the first time since I started living with the Alfreds. I managed to grin as I dropped the bowl of vegetable salad.

"Yes, that's Demilade. She has been taking care of us..." Daddy Alfred squinted. "Yes, for four months now."

"E se o," he said to me in Yoruba language. Thank you for taking care of us.

I broke my own rule - I smiled widely in public and couldn't control it. Daddy Alfred was busy dipping into his ofada rice, while 'Mummy' was helping herself to some salad.

The next day, Tony came in the morning when my employers had gone to work and it all began.

It started with him complimenting my cooking

to buying me a new phone and then to text exchanges between us. Never for once did he mention my 'deformities.' With him, I felt perfect.

"I'm getting fond of you," he said to me four weeks after our initial meeting. "How much are you paid?" I mentioned it.

"Why don't you come and live with me?" he said as I basked in the magnificence of his arousing intonation. My head was imagining all sorts of unprintable things.

"Why should I come and live with you? Are you my husband?" I asked playfully, smiling over the phone.

"Am I not good enough? He asked, and I held my breath. Did he just say he wants to marry me?"

"I don't know why you're not seeing all my signals. At twenty-three, you should be on your own, especially with your unique cooking skills. If you're okay with it, you can come and live with me: let's see how it goes from there."

"What would I say to Mummy?" I asked, not knowing how I would break the news to the woman who had been very nice to me. Besides, my 'now boyfriend'—as I changed his status in my head—was one of Daddy Alfred's partners.

"Just agree to what I have proposed and leave the rest to me."

From that moment on, I found fault with everything in the Alfreds' home while Tony's mesmerizing images kept blazing in my head. With each passing day, I felt trapped in their home and saw them as an obstacle to my only remaining desire. My attitude towards them changed so much so that I became obviously uncouth. Mummy she asked me to leave—I felt remorseful and...relieved.

I moved in with him at his lush apartment in Banana Island and my life changed dramatically. Instead of a monthly salary, I had a debit card that I could cash money with at any time.



A driver and a car were at my beck and call, and even a maid who did all the grocery shopping.

I went from wearing old clothes to designer wears, perfumes and custom-made shoes that evened out my leg length. Tony showered me with gifts and everything money could buy.

He never raised his voice nor laid his hands on me. In return, I took care of him and 'our home.' I cooked all kinds of delicacies as he liked and wanted it. I was a stay-at-home wife-to-be while he went to work.

I was finally living beyond what I had anticipated. I felt loved and wanted. I felt beautiful. I even got the magical wand—a dental makeover!

I saw my mother's call as I was getting my pedicure done in one of the posh salons where the fee was more than my old job's monthly salary. I returned her call as I was chauffeured home.

"Oluwademilade," she called out my full name. My mother never did that unless she needed to say something very important.

"This man that you're living with... don't you think it's proper for me to meet him?"

"Mum, he's always busy," I responded, checking the time and thinking of what to cook as his dinner must be ready before he gets home.

"Demilade," she sighed, "I don't like the kind of life you're living in Lagos. I don't support it at all. Living with a man, who hasn't met your family...hasn't paid your dowry, isn't dignifying. If you can't bring him to me this weekend, don't bother sending money to me. I can fend for myself." Before she dropped, she added, "And I thought I taught you well..."

"So what's the plan?" I gently asked as he enjoyed his dinner—watching the game of basketball just like he always did since I moved in three years ago.

Still glued to the screen, he responded, "What are you talking about?"

"Us."

"What do you mean?" He asked.

"You haven't met my family."

He took a sip of wine. "I know what you're saying and I would cut through the chase. We had an arrangement that didn't include marriage or relationship."

I was shocked. Did I hear him well?

"I don't get you?"

"Demilade, I never said I'd marry you. I never even said I wanted a relationship." His mouth moved with the deliciousness of the meal.

I was too distraught to think as I made for the door.

"Where are you going? It's dark, you should stay in your house."

"My house?!" I yelled. "What exactly am I to you?"

His voice stopped me, his mesmerizing voice, never raised, always controlled, "Let's talk this through. Have you ever lacked anything? Have I ever maltreated you?"

He never made a move from the dining table. "I never promised you marriage. I told you I'd take care of you and I've always done that. If you leave this house, our deal ends," he concluded.

My hand froze on the knob as it clearly dawned on me—this had been a business arrangement. Next, the implication: I had absolutely nothing of worth to my name. The debit cards, cars, chauffeurs and apartment were all his. The weekly body pampering appointments were on his

tab.

I turned back slowly and I thought I heard 'good girl' as he continued eating, turning his attention back to his game. That's Tony for you, never stressing, always in control.

I stayed on but my mind was no longer with him as I realized I was his 'kept' woman. Maybe he has a family somewhere that I didn't know about. How foolish I had been!

I changed, but he seemed

not to notice as everything was still going on as normal.

He was out for his morning jog when I called my mother and cried my heart out. I couldn't take it anymore.

"Oluwademilade, just find your way back home," she pleaded with me. "Please..."

I nodded, too burdened to speak. I didn't think about it.

I took my brown worn-out bag with my few old clothes and hobbled out of the apartment, led on by my shadow, illuminated by the early morning sunshine.





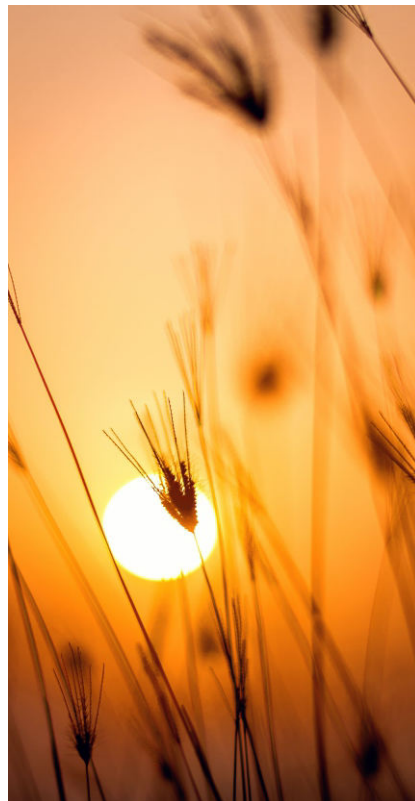
# Selfish Sun

Charity Modise  
Botswana

Many years ago in the Animal Kingdom, when the animals could speak, a great Sangoma called Sun came and lived among the animals. He was a skilled healer known in all corners of the kingdom and far. Sun never charged the animals for healing them and they loved him dearly as a result. Sun, however, was not the kind of man the animals thought him to be. He came to the Animal Kingdom with one mission in mind, to be a King. So, he healed them for free to gain their love with the hope that soon they will make him their king. But the animals already had a king whom they loved and respected, Elephant.

One night, Elephant died and as was custom, after burying their king the animals elected a new king. Sun was happy that his wish would come true but to his dismay they didn't choose

him, but rather they chose Tortoise since he was wise. This displeased Sun who then decided to kill Tortoise like he did with Elephant. King Tortoise was not one to be messed with. Being wise as he was, he decided to go



to the hills on the same night he was ordained king to talk to his ancestors. He asked for their protection from all dark forces, and they happily granted him beads

to put around his neck as protection. When dawn approached, King Tortoise awoke to footsteps approaching his hut. Before he knew it a knife sank into his chest and that was the end of him. The animals cried bitterly, buried him and Sun was chosen as king.

Three days after he became king, he started showing his true colors. He called all the animals to a meeting;

"I summoned you all here to tell you that from now on, this whole kingdom belongs to me. Every Well, food, land and everything in it belongs to me. I am your god and if I ever hear anyone praying and offering tribute to their ancestors then I'll take away their life." Sun boasted.

Great confusion befell the animals as they could not believe that the one whom they loved dearly was their enemy.





"That will never happen Sun," a voice was heard from the direction where King Tortoise was buried. Alas! It was Tortoise.

"So, you did not die?" Sun asked in shock.

The animals were happy to see their king.

"I did die after I was stabbed with a knife but because I had the beads of my ancestors around my neck, I got a chance to live again." King Tortoise narrated happily.

"But who killed you?" Chameleon asked on behalf of the curious animals.

"It's this man we trusted with our lives!" Tortoise said pointing towards Sun.

Angrily, without second thoughts, Chameleon and the other animals made a huge fire and burnt Sun till he became a yellow ball of fire, they then threw him far into the sky where he could never come back.

In the sky, Sun is very lonely, he has no friends. He can no longer experience the beauty of the wild as everything appears small from where he is. So, every morning he rises early and looks down on Animal Kingdom to try and see its beauty again and walks from East to West all day straining to see a glimpse of the animals who loved him until he gets tired and rest in the evening.

"If only I wasn't selfish for power..." The Sun regrets to this day.



# The Legend of Nogapotsane

**Kelebogile Keutsule**

**Botswana**

**N**ogapotsane was a gigantic snake who lived among the Xixau people in the Kalahari swamps. She was white with spectacular attractive dark browned spots on her entire body. On the very top of her head laid diamond-like crystals arranged like a crown. She was huge, approximately ten metres long and twinkled brightly as she swayed across the village at night. The two protruding goat-like horns on each side of her head as well as the fading cry like that of a goat's kid was what earned her the name "Nogapotsane."

The Kalahari swamps were known near and far for their beautiful flora and fauna. The great leader of the Xixau people together with his wife were the diviners who led with the guidance of Nogapotsane. They consulted the gigantic snake on every matter and followed her words. Nogapotsane

protected the Kalahari swamp and took care of the Xixau people. Peace thrived in the Kalahari swamps until one day when the Xixau saw black smoke and heard a rumbling sound approaching their village. Big trucks came to their village loaded with machines and people who told them they were sent by the government to build a game reserve next to their village. Concerned their leader consulted Nogapotsane who blankly refused.

When the leader of Xixau came back with a reply from Nogapotsane, the people who came with the trucks refused to listen to him. They told the Xixau that Nogapotsane was not real but just a story they were told in childhood. The Xixau continued to warn the people who came with trucks of the consequences of disobeying Nogapotsane but they told them the land they were

building on did not belong to them but to the government, so they started building. As they began working, the workers grew sick and died but more workers were brought in by big trucks to continue the work. Angry Nogapotsane spurt out a black mist that covered the whole Kalahari such that night and day could not be distinguished. Even the Xixau were afraid because they had never seen Nogapotsane that angry. The people with trucks became scared for their lives, packed their belongings and left the Kalahari never to return. The black mist cleared when the last truck disappeared and life returned back to normal in the Kalahari. The Xixau promised never to allow anyone to disobey Nogapotsane again.

Nogapotsane - a mystical snake-like creature  
Noga - snake  
Potsane - a goat kid

# I Am Power



Olatunji Zion  
Nigeria

Everyone loves my fragrance,  
The young and old; rich and poor.  
All craving for my presence.  
I breathe strength to the weak.

I am power,  
An unquenchable thirst to my host  
Highly admired, highly priced  
Never silenced!

Expensive in demand,  
Emitting flames of fiery force.  
Pride is the song of my soul.  
Hitching my body for greater magnitude.

Lacking in love,  
Authority, the pleasure of my desires.  
Feigning love; forgetting karma; yet  
blessed with admirations.

Never overwhelmed with compassion!  
Can I be purchased without gifting the  
demon I bear?  
A holy evil to behold!  
Guilt steals my rest.  
Do you still want me?

Who can deactivate my nature?  
No man! But the gracious Almighty!  
Coated in the supernatural denatures my  
pride.  
Breathing a powerful love, a miracle.



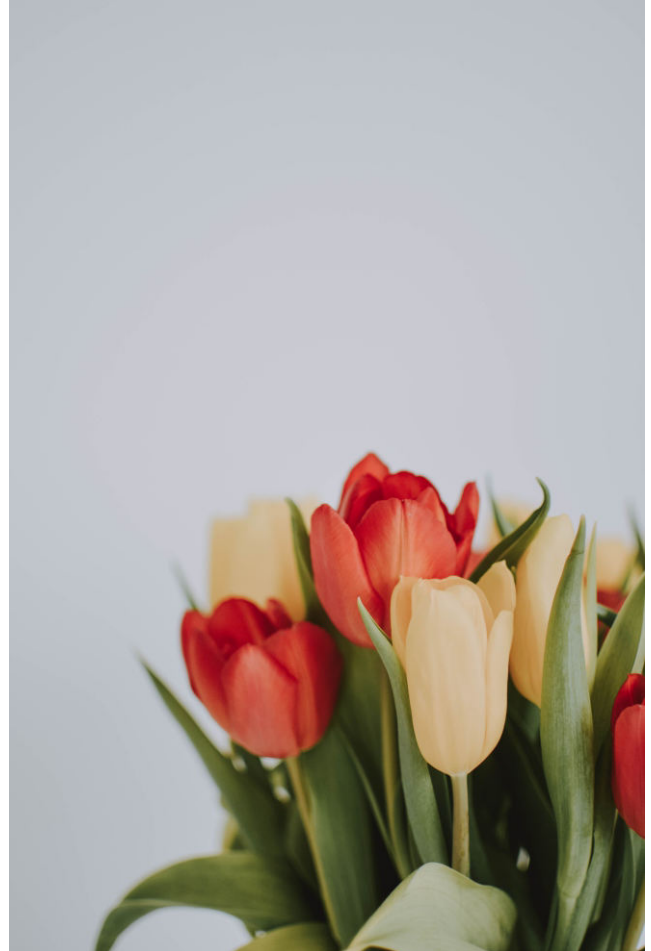
# Power is Power (Atandwa Naleli)

**Thato Rannana**  
**Lesotho**

Beauty from ashes  
Flowers sprouting from a desert  
Rivers out of rocks  
The tree that never dries.  
A house built on rocks.

The fire that is not meant to burn but bless  
Not meant to harm but keep  
The Lions we are thrown in  
But we laugh with  
The snakes we carry  
But never bite us.  
The poison we drink unknowingly  
But never kills us.

It is the power we believe in  
The power we rise in  
The power we are alive in  
We are strong because we have to  
We have power because it's a necessity  
In power we live  
Move and have our being  
The fuel we need  
The water to quench out thirst



# You Need to Pause (To Find Your Own Power)

**Steve Otieno**  
Kenya

I found a way  
for my fingers to navigate me through the  
blinds,  
where the dawn's sunrise,  
the dusk's sunset,  
and the full moon  
peeked through my drapes,  
spreading reflections and shadows at my  
feet,

"Be gentle with these", they seem to say,  
"Just a light touch would do",  
and I had to remove myself  
from the deafness of prescribed notes of  
rhythm,

What I did,  
was touch the shadows as gently as I  
could -  
where it gleamed,  
and I saw how I contrasted with the  
reflections,  
as much as I was immersed in the  
shadows,

"Be gentle with yourself", they seemed to  
say,  
"A light touch would do",  
so I removed myself completely,  
from the deafness of prescribed notes of  
rhythm.



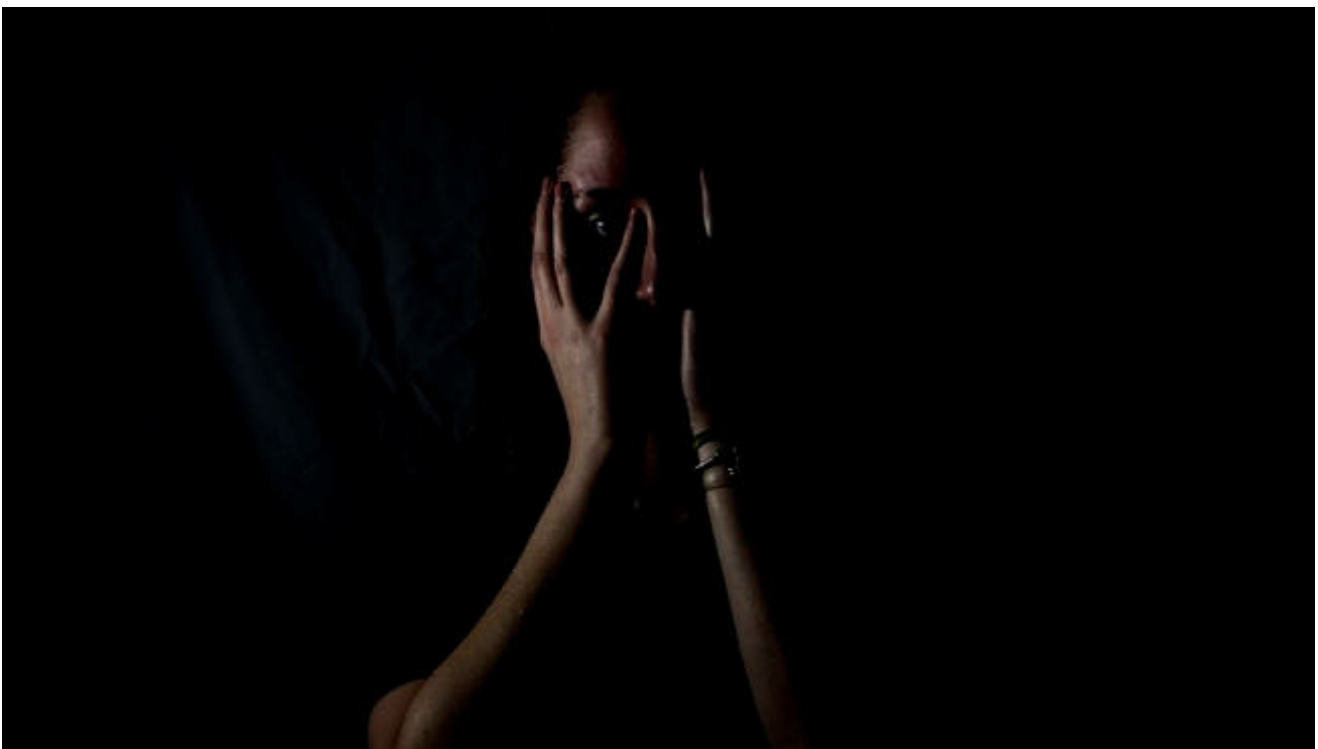


# Power

**Pelekani Lwenje**  
Zambia

She runs on the road, running from uninspired people,  
 What a mundane life they live, these soulless people,  
 She runs from them, the soul takers,  
 She runs and ponders her future  
 Why should they have power over her?  
 These slaves to society's expectations.  
 Like a Knight of folklore she bravely vows,  
 that she will vanquish  
 society's expectations.  
 As she runs she thinks of the girls with bellies full of  
 society's expectations.  
 So she runs and seeks out the horizon.  
 There lies her power, her true destination.

No more power will they hold over her.  
 These dragons that engulf her in their flames,  
 praying for her destruction like a dark twisted game.  
 She is a woman of Africa, that is her power.  
 She will dance the cosmic dance, blessed is her power.  
 Her worth, her body, her mind. That is her power  
 No more will she adhere to society's expectations.  
 She is a Queen, and that is her power.  
 She is the invisible ruler of the African sun.  
 That is her power.



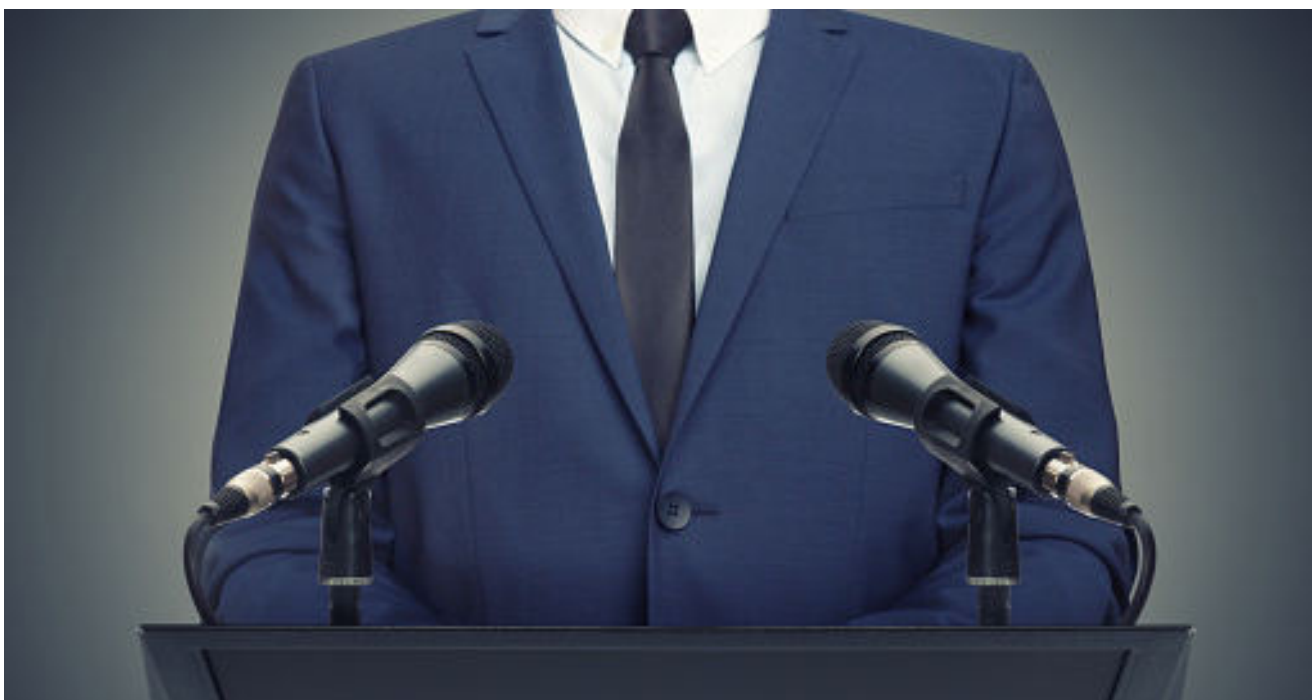
# Ode of Autocrates



Laurent Bwesigye  
Uganda

I'm here to rescue my people  
From servitude  
To provide and protect them from a  
sycophant  
Attitude  
For my people, I will fly to the highest  
Altitude.  
I believe in democracy!  
I believe in change!  
Let me tell you  
For our country to prosper we need  
change  
We need democracy like a bee needs its  
wings.

Flowers, flowers everywhere but not a  
petal to pick.



# When Ink Bleeds

Patricia Ejang  
Uganda



She is silent  
Sitting atop a hill  
Watching the others brag  
Strength, might  
Authority, even beauty  
She sighs again  
Knowing she can destroy them  
One at a time  
With one stroke  
When she bleeds.

# Crown

Neo Masetlane  
Botswana

Invisible diadem,  
From within  
Expresses itself,  
through character  
Neither force nor arrogance  
But...  
smile and laughter  
Yet dominating.





# To The People

David Amakye

Ghana

The chains that bound us were too expensive.  
 So, we did heed to a cry like a call too loud to be ignored.  
 We were called.  
 We were called by the tongue that thirsted hard after control.  
 We were called out into a place.  
 A land cursed with liberation.  
 So much that our new chains would be free.  
 We only needed to extend our hands to be convict.  
 If we only stretched to craft our hands into the most lethal weapon.  
 If we would only stretch to expose our thumbs, the caller said, then, we would be able to evict and instate.  
 With my power and my people's combined, we could make anyone god and captain.  
 Yes, anyone, loud enough.  
 Anyone thirsty enough to woo us for rule, to woo us with a promise of change.  
 When talk of our struggles may someday become comic relief.  
 When my people may someday scream to be free again, like being enslaved was their culture.  
 When in reality we were birth with songs whose lyrics knew no chains.  
 I watched and hoped that my people

never fall bait to the caller's enticement.  
 I hoped the children of this land could tell a twist in the tongue.  
 I hoped their heads knew truth.  
 Knew power lies in them only to be released by their kind of actions.  
 Actions that reflect their desire for right, their hope for a luminous tomorrow and their love for their land.  
 I hoped until I found a body for this hope in a line.  
 That we, the children are the power for change, if we can be change.  
 And, with this lifeline, it would never be too late to surge any back to life.



# Rod Us Off This Road

**Denk Bol Denk**  
South Sudan

With all the blood lost  
All the lives lost  
With all it cost us,  
To be a country.  
With the resources at our disposal  
I shake my head in refusal,  
It's hard to believe we are here today  
With gloomy eyes  
Gaspny breaths  
Choking ourselves  
Hating ourselves  
Embracing villainy  
Loving weaponry  
The political hawks,

Who steal in power exercise  
And political gawks,  
Who stare in truth exorcise,  
Got us here.  
Into this chaotic social sphere; Into this  
envelope of flames  
We are now a lost nation  
Being led like a cattle  
Love for power drove down this road  
But by hook or crook, we rod us off this  
road

For our martyrs deserve a nation worthy of  
their blood





# The Chief Deity

Uche Favour  
Nigeria



He spreads a tabernacle for the sun  
Just for the earth not to mourn  
He triggers the clouds to a run  
Just for the rains to fall.

His voice thunders  
And the ocean goes asunder:  
her kingdoms go yonder  
and her princes weep in deep ponders

His throne stays highest  
His light burns brightest  
His kingdom, forever is finest  
and His mercies are kindest

While His wrath burns,  
His enemies, He guns  
For in His wisdom He won  
Leaving them forever sawn

In mankind, He bestowed wonders,  
together with deep hungers  
That he should plunder  
All His creations under and yonder.

The Chief Deity  
Who can battle?  
No! They'd only rattle  
Rattle and rattle and rattle.

# Masters and Mistresses

Akin Ojo Oluwaseyi  
Nigeria

When they get there  
They'll forget what they promised  
But what they promised  
Was only scripted jargons

When they get there  
They'll say they are our friends  
But run for your life  
They are not here to protect us

When they get there  
They'll steal from us  
But in professional ways  
In ways that the devil learns from

When they get there,  
They'll lie and cry  
But those are crocodile tears  
Let the gullible ones sympathize

They are abusers of power  
They are liars, thieves, murderers  
They are scornful, mischievous, gluttonous  
They are... till they are no more





# Love's Loose Knots

Okwaput Israel  
Uganda

Pregnant silence in the room.  
She looks at me pointedly  
With a calculated stare  
Of ecstasy.  
The beauty  
And immaculate long neck  
Dampened my confidence  
Of romance.  
Was all left frail of body  
Betraying my legacy of boldness  
As I posed,  
Harmless as a saint.

The amputates of love  
Boast of unmatched blades.





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<https://www.writersspace.net/poeticafrica/>

**Genre: Article**

**Title: The World Within**

**Writer: Mercy Jum, Kenya**

**Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana**

**T**he World Within epitomizes the interdependent role of our make up, while making a relentless emphasis on how our efforts to achieve progress would be rendered futile should we disregard the essence of our three-dimensional make up (i.e body, spirit and soul). The path of progress is usually characterized by recurring trials which sometimes result in misery and undesirable circumstances. Nevertheless, our ceaseless efforts to realize the ultimate goal at the climax of our journey serves as beacon to cling on till the end.

The writer's in-depth appreciation of our constituents assist in deciphering the principles and concept of progress within and without. She defines progress to be an evolutionary process. A path one must trace without a guide. This subscribes the physical being to excruciating torments in an unending cycle. To break the unending cycle requires keen observance of the lessons those trials subject the individual to. The soul comes with a coded blueprint for the path of progress. It behoves on us to discover this concept to propel us towards the peak of our goals or discover our own path bewildered with trauma and uncertainty.

The writer embraces the theme from a religious perspective, that may have come into terms with the realities we find ourselves in. Thus in the religious paradigm of progress, the soul and the spirit being are primed over the physical being whereas in realist views the concept of three in one being is actually flawed due to the lack of empirical evidences. Men are woven with the idea that the flesh and its pursuits are temporary as such, the physical being is entreated to live according to the desires of the spirit and the soul, for that is eternal.

In modern science - neurosciences to be precise - there have been discoveries and research into the discovery of the neurobiology of the homo sapien in order to understand the deeds of the delicate yet powerful organ that resides in the cranium. Various studies have concluded on the influences of our physical environment on our anthropological, social and physical growth. A perfect analogy is the viable conditions needed for plants to grow. The same applies to the human mind. It adopts to the ecochambers it resides and the result is no different from where they find themselves within. Hence progress in the modernist world view is best achieved in a viable environment and not the biblical ideals of subjecting to the needs of the soul and spirit.

The writer presents aptly the views of religious centrists on the need to acknowledge the three beings of the homo sapien to achieve a 'nitro' propelled progressive life which works well for the custodians of this philosophy although archaic.

**Genre: Children's Literature**

**Title: Hoof For Hoof, Paw For Paw**

**Writer: Benita Magopane, Botswana**

**Reviewer: Anthony Nwagbaoso Onyeador, Nigeria**

**T**his thrilling story captures the scenario of the Noah account sighted in the Bible precisely from the book of Genesis 6:5 through 9:17. The story proper in Chapter 7. The writer dives in to narrate how the animals tolerate each other inside the ark as how it affects them describes for younger generations to assimilate and draw lessons from. It begins with an introductory theme of what the story is about and how it leads to animals being gathered together. Then like a fire about to be stoked, the cat, cow, gorilla, donkey, pig, lion and elephant take turn on who shall sit on the throne respectively only for the zebra to shake the remaining part of the table leaving all animals in heated arguments in shouts of their various voices. Thus, the story comes to an end as the owl presents a common enemy and uses it to form a unity bond.

The writer really did a great job by merging a strong theme of justice, descriptive animated background and choosing the audience to create a vivid plot, setting and language that have already been created by another work rather than culling it up. The fusion of these imprints a powerful image for the genre and for those outside it to stick to comfortably.



**Genre: Poetry**

**Title: Step By Step**

**Writer: Masego Olefile, Botswana**

**Reviewer: Felix Odhiambo, Kenya**

**S**tep by step is an encouraging poem for those who have failed many times in whatever they are doing to learn from the fall and gain the courage to stand up and continue with the same spirit. Life in itself is a step, where people move from one step to another slowly by slowly as they focus ahead of the road to success. This poem is a three-stanza poem with each stanza explaining a specific issue in the phases of the personae's life.

In the first stanza, a nine-line stanza, the writer gives a vivid description of how possessed he was with winning. The line, "like a web stuck between walls - like a bird needing its nest" demonstrates his thirst for winning in life. As it is, a bird needs its nest because it is its home. This is what winning was for him. Since the thirst for winning exposes human beings to a lot of failures first, in the end, every failure made him mad and sad.

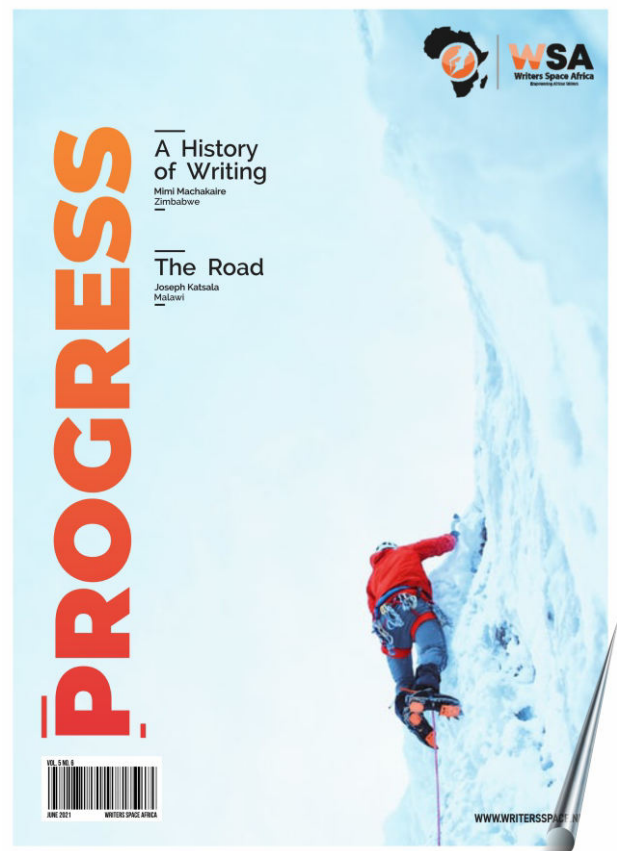
In the second stanza, a six-line stanza, he explains that for him to be better than his peers, to stand out from his peers, which certainly is the pressure that a lot of young people face, he had to put a lot of pressure on himself which at the end was regretful and many falls left him empty. This stanza is a good indication of what many young people go through on the road to success.

In the last stanza, an eight-line stanza, he shows that conceding to step by step way of climbing the success ladder, he "broke the walls" to mean he walked over the hindrances and "like a chick hatching" symbolising a new beginning, he embraced freedom. He chose to work with patience and even though there were still some falls, step by step, there was some progress.

Step by step by Masego Olefile is a poem written in an optimistic and serious tone. Giving a particular desire for success that will be achieved slowly by slowly. The poem takes a free-verse form with a reflective mood. Step by step is practically the way to work towards being a success.



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## My Moonlight

Kanyamale Lusajo  
Tanzania

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## Fragrance

Victoria Ojo  
Nigeria

---

## On The River I Found

Benedict Hangiriza  
Uganda

# REJUVENATION

VOL. 6 NO. 8



AUGUST 2021

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA



THIS  
EDITION IS  
SUPPORTED BY



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# Editor's Note

“Rejuvenation,” is a fresh start, a new beginning or restoration and this is a state that is rewarded by peace at mind-set. It does not matter the chaos that was taking place, it is a renewed atmosphere. Nature always excels in this concept, notice the aftermath of rainfall in a forest that was destroyed by wildfires, the entire veld that was covered in ashes turns to green. Mother-nature has her reset button to restore her beauty.

The whole world is facing a great pandemic; one would say maybe that is how human nature existence is going through the process of its self-renewal, whilst others are looking forward to the fresh start, the freedom stage without any threats, life restored to how we know it. Restoration plays a vital role in our lives, it is not a button we press any day anyhow, else life would cease to exist, but only considered when all other options have been exhausted and energy level is at low.

We turn to imitate nature sometimes and in this edition, you will be sync with the minds of the great African writers as they share their views on Rejuvenation. Be it at work, relationships, mindset, nature, family matters, all aspects of life expounded creatively. I believe you will have peace of mind after you have completed the very last masterpiece in this edition.

Neo Space-Poet Masetlane

Acting Chief Editor



# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

**THEME: ROOTS**

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international online literary magazine, will from 1st to 14th August accept submissions for the October 2021 Edition in these categories:

Flash Fiction  
Essays/ Articles  
Poetry  
Short Stories  
Children's Literature

To submit, please visit  
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# Worry About The Inside Not The Outside

Luqmaan Rawat  
South Africa



Rejuvenation – our lives revolve so much around this process, but what exactly is it? Rejuvenation is defined as “the action or process of giving new energy or vigor to something.” This process is undergone every day and in many ways. Things go through this process to make their interior and exterior look brand new again; however, not only materialistic things undergo rejuvenation. Humans go through the rejuvenation process as well, but unfortunately only on the outside and very seldom on the inside.

After an incredible amount of use, it is only natural that things begin to deteriorate. Once those that are extremely valuable to us become old and torn, they are sent to professionals who breathe new life into them. It is the same with

humans, whose beauty start to fade with time. As kids we were told to eat this or apply that to maintain our beauty for as long as possible. We listened and obeyed. Nobody wanted to be in their 20's and be mistaken for a 50-year-old just because their skin had wrinkled, and their forehead lines looked deeper. We were and still are so eager to keep our beauty intact for long, so much so that we even risk injecting our faces and different parts of our bodies with chemicals without knowledge of how they could damage us. So many procedures and skin care products exist with which we can rejuvenate our skin or our outer beauty, but have we ever tried to rejuvenate our soul and mind?

We live such a fast-paced life these days that we hardly ever think about how

much damage we are causing to our inside. To the part of ourselves that no doctor or machine can sort out. To our soul and mind. Everyone is in such a rush to make money, to be a part of this 'rat race' and come out first that we sacrifice every ounce of our souls just to do it. Every day we work long hours and burn ourselves out running from pillar to post to get a job done. I once read a very interesting post which said something to the effect that we give our whole life away, our body and soul, for someone who would not think about it for a second if we left the world today. It hit me how incredibly true that was.

We go for spa days and beauty days to rejuvenate our appearance but how often do we take a weekend off from our busy schedules to spend time with our families, our friends, and with ourselves?

When last did we go for a holiday to do nothing but relax, and not take any phone calls from work or fill out any forms or do anything related to our job? We give up our soul and mind for things of this world hoping that those material items can help give us the peace we need. It can never happen. We have traded our souls and minds just so we can be first in this 'rat race' that will not matter if we

drop dead today.

We work all day long and come home feeling exhausted and unfulfilled, and we wonder why that is. We work to afford all the luxuries in the world. We spend so much money trying to beautify and rejuvenate our outside but never the inside. Yes, we need to work, but do we really need to give our all to our jobs? Do we need to give so much that when we come

home, we are so upset, tired, mad, or stressed that we cannot have normal conversations with the ones we love? How often do we have proper meals with our families? Where we sit and talk about our day, where nobody rushes to finish their food. Gone are the days when laughter filled every house all the time. Nowadays there seems to be no light or laughter, just darkness and quiet.



The soul and mind work to keep us sane. Just like a car needs occasional servicing, our soul and mind need rejuvenation, even if occasionally. A healthy mind is a healthy body. Hence it is important that we take some time off our busy schedules, at least once a week to reconnect with our friends, our family, and ourselves. Let's not forget that the body is a shell that is controlled by our minds and souls, and if they were to deteriorate, what good would this shell be to us? Focusing solely on rejuvenating our body is like a person who only focuses on repairing the outside of his car while the engine falls apart. No matter how many coats of paint you spray the car with, no matter how beautiful it looks on the outside, if the engine is

broken that car will never move, and a car that is not functional benefits no one.

We work so hard every day to impress society that will not even remember us after we are six feet under. This is the curse of man. Others live their lives impressing others at the expense of their peace of mind and soul. They live a life that they cannot financially afford, and attract extra pressure and stress which they end up taking out on the ones they love. Sometimes we need to stop and ask ourselves, 'is what I am doing really for me or is it to impress society?'

It's about time we stopped focusing so much on what people can see and channel that energy to what people cannot see. We need to stop living for others and start

living and taking care of ourselves, for those we strive to please will not be bothered after we have 'fried' ourselves working for them. Someone once told me that we are all part of a machine, and every part of a machine can be replaced no matter how important it is. That stuck with me to this day, and helped me understand that no matter what we do, no matter how much we give, no matter how much of ourselves we sacrifice for our jobs, at the end of the day we all can be replaced by the ones we work for. So, it is time to put ourselves first. It is time to rejuvenate ourselves, for ourselves. We will worry about the world later, for if we do not sort out our spiritual and mental state, then our physical state will matter no more.





# Moving Forward

Oseremen Iwayemi  
Nigeria

Lillian did not know how to feel. She was not even sure if she felt anything these days. She read the message her best friend Lola sent to her again.

Tayo is here with another girl. I kid you not.

What followed was a somewhat blurry picture of Tayo holding a girl's waist.

Three question marks followed from Lola.

I will talk to him. Lillian replied to the question marks.

Tears welled up in her eyes as she stared at the picture again.

Why is Tayo doing this to me? She wondered.

In their timeline together she

had been nothing but faithful to him but for him that word probably did not exist in his dictionary. She stood up from the bed and went into the bathroom to pee. When she was done, she looked at herself in the mirror.

"Am I not pretty enough?" She said out loud.

"I guess I am too fat...that's why." She had always been on the plump side. She

walked out of the bathroom and plopped herself back on the bed. She took her phone and googled "How to lose weight" and started going through the links one by one.

After sometime, she decided to send a message to Tayo.

Hi hun how is it going...is the training over yet?

In less than a second he replied: Yes we just finished. Lillian could not believe two things. The way he replied very quickly and how it was so easy for him to lie.

Send me a picture please

Baby you know I don't really like pictures.

Ah ah just one for your baby.

Let me see how handsome you look.

Not looking very handsome right now Lilly but will definitely send you one later today.

Lillian did not bother replying the message. She turned her phone face down and cried.



He lied to her all the time but she always believed his lies. In her eyes he was perfect and could do no wrong.

\*\*\*

"How long are you going to keep this up Tayo?", Femi asked him.

"What do you mean?"

"I am talking of Lillian. Tayo, what are you still doing with her?"

"Well I just like having her in my corner."

"Just let her go T..."

"No! ..I mean she's like my well...to be honest I don't even know the word."

"Tayo!"

"She does everything I tell her to do, she believes everything I say to her."

"I am sure she knows you were not at any training," Femi said.

"Duhh...Lola would have told her, but Lillian won't say anything about it."

Tayo was confident that Lillian was not going to confront him about it like she

never confronted him about the other girls she had caught him with. He did not like her and love was farfetched. He knew he should let her go but he loved the fact that he was practically in control of her. She did every single thing he told her to do. No mind of her own. Cooked every time he asked her to even if she was tired, gave him money even if that was all she had. Literally stressed herself to make him happy and he loved it. Not everyone always had someone at their beck and call and he was not going to let her go that easily. He was going to see her sometime later in the week but decided he would not stress her out this time. He will go easy on her. Meanwhile his new catch was what he would focus his energy on.

Lillian was all dressed up. Tayo was coming over but she was nervous. Usually she would be super elated or rather pretend to be so the visit went smoothly and he would not get angry with her. Sometimes he still did and would give her a slap or two. She always accepted his apologies whenever he hit her.

However today was going to be different. She was going to do something she had never done before. Confront him. She had not been herself these past few days. Tayo completely ignored all her phone calls and texts. She had found out from his Femi that he was okay and nothing was wrong with him. Thank God for Lola. She had been there for her all the time she cried. She also encouraged her to

come to church with her for a programme. Lillian was not interested she just wanted to hear from Tayo but Lola encouraged her to so that it could take her mind off him. Being in church was strange to Lillian she did not even focus on what the pastor was saying but one thing he said struck her.

See yourself the way God sees you and not how others do.

That was all she needed to hear to get her thinking. She reflected on how her life was before Tayo came into it. She was more outgoing and had a few good friends. She had stopped talking to them because Tayo said they were jealous of her and she believed him. She had totally lost herself because of him. She was so happy when he had asked her out.

She rarely got asked out by guys so a handsome, tall man like Tayo was a big win for her. Things had started off fine between them but at some point he just started misbehaving. She was not much of church goer but she knew God did not want her to be sad or depressed. She knew He did not want her being slapped all the time by another person. She knew God loved her no matter how she looked. This was it. She was not going to let Tayo treat her like trash anymore. There was a knock at the door. She nervously opened it. Tayo came in and asked rather angrily, "Why didn't you reply my text on time?" Lillian tried to her best not get scared as she always did whenever he spoke to her like that. "I was busy."

"Busy doing what, are you saying my messages are no longer important?"

"No they are. I was just busy and did not see it on time." She said calmly.

"Whatever, I am hungry go and make me fried rice and

plantain. I don't have any money o...so go buy what you need yourself."

Lillian was scared. What if she spoke back to him and he hit her. She was about to

agree to his request but remembered how long she

had to prep herself for a moment like this.

"Lillian are you deaf...didn't you hear what I said?"

Lillian calmed herself and said, "I do not have money either."





Tayo looked at her as if she had just spoken Spanish. "Lillian you are getting me angry o, you know what I can do when I am angry." She was standing behind the chair he was sitting on so he could not see how hard she was trying to be calm. She remembered how her friends had told her he was not worth it but she had told them they were just jealous. She remembered all the times he had hit her, all the times he had taken money from her account without her consent. As she thought about these things, she felt something began to build up inside her. This guy was the devil.

"Lillian are you now deaf and dumb that you cannot answer me?', Tayo said and got up to face her. Lillian stared at him not saying anything. "Hmmm...Lillian you are tempting me o!" "If you know you came here to shout Tayo...just leave." Deep inside Lillian was still scared but she was happy with the progress she was making. Usually she would have started scouting for money to buy ingredients but not anymore. "Are you talking to me like that, Lillian?" "Yes Tayo and do not dare lay a hand on me this is my house". Tayo was surprised. Lillian was surprised as well. Never in her years did she think she could talk to Tayo like that. She was loving it. There was more she wanted to say. "I demand full respect from you Lillian, don't test me."

"Hmmm I demand full respect as well Tayo. If you cannot give me money for the ingredients forget about the food." "There must be something wrong with you. You are sick in the head Lillian". That was the last Lillian could take. She was angry now. "Get out of my house Tayo and do not even step in it again." She was still calm "You must be mad." "Get out!" Lillian shouted. Tayo was the one that was scared this time. "I am sorry Lillian, please.." She said nothing and just pointed to the door. Tayo left. Lillian collapsed on the floor and the tears of joy came gushing out of her eyes.

# My Moonlight

Kanyamale Lusajo

Tanzania



Elenja held her hoe firmly as she moved through the narrow path that led to the farm. It was five in the morning. She moved slowly hardly able to see what was ahead and totally relying on the moon and stars in the sky. The pregnancy was nine months old and past the due date. She thought of him. The man she loved, even in death. Daniel. She remembered the days they did spend together. The moments in the forest they both loved. A small smile appeared on her face.

The baby moved within her and brought her back to reality.

She arrived at the farm before the first light shone. She prayed for the safety of her son Chiko, her moonlight, as she used to call him some days. The gift of the love she had shared

with Daniel. She also prayed for her unborn baby.

She started working although she couldn't do much as she was weak. The sun was already high up in the sky. She was thinking of going back home to prepare the afternoon meal for her son and Bamako, her husband, when she saw a figure from a distance coming towards her. As the figure approached and became clear, she realized it was a woman and she was running towards her shouting words she could not hear or understand. When she was face to face with Elenja she could not speak for some seconds as she heavily panted with beads of sweat rolling down her face. Elenja recognized her.

'What is wrong?' questioned Elenja

'Let's go. Now' said the woman already turning back

to leave.

'No, wait.' Elenja tried to grab her hand but she was already few paces ahead of her. 'Tell me what is wrong, please'

'Something bad happened to Chiko' the woman said with no hint of mercy in her voice.

At the mention of Chiko's name she stopped abruptly. She stared at the moving body of the woman. She summoned the strength to lift her legs but she couldn't. A tear rolled down her cheek and when she looked up at the woman she was a small figure. Elenja lifted up her leg and started moving. The baby in her womb was moving so hard it made her vomit. She dreaded the thought of death. It was unbearable when David died to protect their love. She couldn't bear another death of a loved one.

She was twenty feet away from her hut and she saw many people around her hut as she was met by her husband who ushered her aside. 'What is happening?' asked Elenja while scanning the area hoping to get a glimpse of Chiko.

'Your son was bitten by a snake' Bamako answered shortly. There was no sign of remorse in his eyes.

Elenja stared at her husband for some seconds before she could muster the strength to whisper her next words.

'Where is my son'

'He is dead' with that he left her there to join the other men who had come to her home.

Elenja gawked at the leaving figure of her husband. Immediately she moved towards her husband.

'Bamako, please allow me to see him, she couldn't bring herself to see his body. She did not want to believe that he was dead.

'You know the customs Elenja. Women are not allowed to look at the body of a dead person. It is a taboo. Only men will look at

the body if need be.' Bamako finished tilting his head slightly to his left.

'Please Bamako I am begging you'.

'Do not embarrass me Elenja. Your bastard son is dead. Go inside and mourn him'

'He is my son Bamako. I will do anything for you, allow me to see him.' She said in between sobs.

'Woman I will make you regret the day you were born' he said his eyes flashing evil.

She was used to the beatings. She was used to the torment. It was not new to her. She took it all because she knew deep down her heart that it was because of the love she had for Daniel.

She knelt down and looked him in the eyes.

'I understand and respect

the customs Bamako, but Chiko is my son. I birthed him. Allow me to hold him and maybe my heart will accept the fate that has befallen him. Please do this one thing for me'. She said.

With that Bamako slapped her hard on her face. He looked around at the villagers who seemed to be satisfied with Bamako's action. A quiet joyful and triumphant mood lingered on their faces. Two women came and helped Elenja inside. It was a small hut and on the ground were tattered rugs that were brought by neighbors. Women were gathered inside the hut and were mourning. She was seated in the middle. Her mind wandered off to the day she was forced to marry Bamako because he had paid a handsome bride price.



Daniel was not considered as he was poor. But she loved him and her parents knew that but did not approve. She was three weeks pregnant when Bamako took her as his wife.

When the baby came Bamako immediately knew Chiko was not his son. Daniel was punished for adultery by the village council. Death. Elenja's marriage to Bamako was punishment enough for everyone knew who Bamako was, a ruthless man.

Two hours later Elenja felt a pain in her waist which rippled through her spine. She remembered her labour days when she was giving birth to Chiko. 'Not today, please' she thought to herself. She looked around and saw that some women had left and others were asleep. Elenja stood up and moved to her right where there was a tiny room. She knew Chiko was in there because she saw Bamako enter that room twice. She went inside. She saw him. Lying on the ground, alone.

Elenja stared at his fragile body. She felt an involuntary chill as she moved towards her son. She sat down next to him and held him in her arms. She held him so gently, so softly.

'My moonlight' she said and broke down in tears. The tears fell on Chiko's face.

Bamako entered the room and looked directly into Elenja's eyes. He moved towards her.

'Bamako, maybe he is alive. Let us take him to the Ude and he will give him some herbs that will cure him.

Bamako stared at her for a few seconds then he pulled her by her hair. She was screaming for her son and trying to free herself from Bamako's grip at the same time. He was too strong for her. He pulled her outside and threw her on the ground. Bamako was so angry that for the first time he didn't know what to do. He paced around her like a lion ready to bite. His eyes flashing red. He abruptly

stopped pacing. He stared at her and his mind knew what he was supposed to do to end this madness. He went inside and few seconds later he came out holding the almost lifeless body of Chiko. He moved towards the burial area. Elenja realized what he wanted to do and moved towards him mumbling phrases and begging him not to bury her child yet. She heard him yelling directives to the five men who were done digging to get ready to bury the boy. Elenja summoned all the energy left within her and tried to pull her husband yelling that Chiko should not be buried for he is alive. There were murmurs among the crowd. Bamako turned and ordered two men to hold on to her. She felt strong hands holding her and when she tried to release herself from them the grip became even stronger. She saw Bamako lowering Chiko in the grave. There were two men in the grave who took Chiko from Bamako's hands and laid him down.





She felt her water breaking. Her mother in law saw it and called other women who took her inside. She was weak.

She was taken into the hut. they laid her down on the floor and one of the women took off some of her clothes. She heard the women telling her to lie down still.

There was a crack on the wall of the hut and she barely saw what was going on outside. In between shouting of the men outside and the mid wife she could hear her sons voice almost like a whisper, telling her it will be okay. Through the crack she saw the men putting heaps of soil in the grave. She had stopped

screaming as she was now pushing for the new life about to enter the world. She mustered all the strength left in her body and pushed. She gave birth to a baby girl. She heard her mother in law saying it's a girl. My sunshine, she thought.

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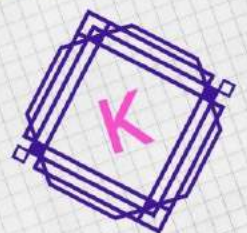
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# The Last Duel

Aliu Olabanji  
Nigeria

Eshou threw another cannonball at Agbara, it struck him greatly and he was burnt severely. Agbara knelt down and summon the spirits, it was his last card. It was now or never, all the beautiful times he had with Temi flashed across his mind. Her laughter, her voice, he felt them all. He spat a mouthful of blood and wiped his nose.

"Aaargh!" he shouted as he tried to stand up.

Eshou laughed boisterously and relaxed on his golden spear, "Why don't you just give up?"

"Are you tired already, is that all you've got?" Agbara replied smiling, showing his blood stained teeth.

Eshou yawned, "This fight has lost its spiciness, let's end this quickly."

"Yes, we finally agree on

something."

Eshou dashed at Agbara with a great speed, gripping his spear which he aimed at Agbara's heart, fiercely.

"Yaaaaaarrgh!" Agbara rushed at Eshou too, his eyes bloodshot, he could feel his blood rushing through his veins. He gave the earth a ferocious blow just a moment before the spear pierced through his heart.

The earth quaked and an intense flare punctured through the clouds and shone greatly on them.

Eshou fell to his knees as his skin peeled away, the light like a fluid diffused to every part of his body.

"Was thi-is your pl-an al-all along, to-die?" Eshou muttered as his left hand fell on the Agbara's shoulder.

"Yee-ss bro-ther, we are the di-disease we are trying to cure, this wor-world would be be-tter without us."

"You—foooooool!" Eshou cursed as he faded away and the light disappeared.

The clouds travelled away and the sky became bright, fully grown tress sprang up in an instant and rivers flowed, everything and everyone was restored moments before Agbara became a gigantic mountain on the spot he had died.





# Fleeting Agony

Oduogu Victor  
Nigeria



I was plunged into despair that words are powerless to describe, when my vagina flooded my laps with sticky water. The little mass of flesh budding within me had torn the membrane that caved it from the harshness of this dilapidating universe. It kicked, angrily. I was hurting.

I groaned in agony. My wrapper came undone. I did not mind baring my body to the elements of the universe. My legs could not carry my body. Eyes shut, fists squeezed and heart drumming, and I fell to the floor of my kitchen.

My eyes burned, tears flooded. How could the sun be feeding the universe with its radiant beauty, while I was battling for my dying life? Chinedu, my husband had gone hunting. A night of pleasure with my love is suffocating me with stabbing pain. How will I

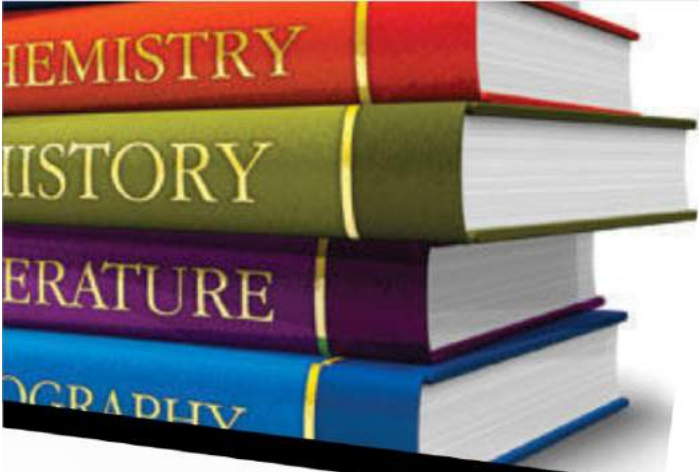
pass away in solitude? No one is home. The mass of flesh that pressed my inside was the first to travel the route it was traveling within me. Chimoooo!

Biting my lips, tasting my blood, I let my legs fall apart. I pulled my knees up, making an arc, grasping it with my hands as though it was about to take flight. Mhhhhhh! I contracted the inner walls of urinary tract, holding my breath and pushing. Another push and Ikem slipped off my body.

Staring at Ikem now, his tiny, toothless mouth plugged to my breast, I'm drowning in joy. I call him Ikem, my strength, for he is the first proof of my motherhood ability. He clings to me, his tender and innocent touch saturating my flesh with pure sweetness. His eyes sparkle like the stars in a blanket of darkness. They wink at me, eliciting deep strength from my within to face the next stage of motherhood.







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# Just A Bare Land

Diana Mwango  
Zambia

There was once a land  
Not an enchanted forest full of fairies  
Not a cursed valley filled with hollows and ghosts  
No, just a land, a bare land

And there on its plains were trees and grass  
Trees and grass dancing in the wind  
Not to unfathomable melodious tunes that the wind played  
Nothing like that, just trees and grass dancing in the wind

And the trees stood tall and mighty on the land  
And the grass lusciously lay a green tapestry underneath  
Nothing too majestic for the eye of course  
No, just mere old tall trees and thick grass

And there were little foragers about storing up for the seasons  
Storing up seed and fruit alike as they'd done a thousand times before  
Not magical creatures galloping about in fantastical splendor  
No, Just normal everyday foragers gathering what they could

And there was a stillness and silence about the land  
A silence defined by the noise of its inhabitants  
And a stillness by its movements and sways to the wind  
Of course, just any other normal land  
And then came footsteps in the leaves  
They weren't heavy stone cold thuds  
No, just easygoing familiar shoes of a stranger  
Coursing through the autumn piles that lay  
And then fell a tree, and another after that  
Perhaps the foragers of the field understood his need  
And none of the trees sighed on the axe he drew  
No, they gave a pardon for a friend he'd become indeed  
And then there was no seed, no fruit to gather  
And the foragers had to flee for there was no tree left  
In search of something better for this season change  
Not something enchanted or cursed  
Just a normal place to inhabit

And there was a stillness and silence about the land  
A silence defined by a loss of its essence  
And a stillness by the void that blew from the wind  
Of course, just like any other bare land

But then came new little foragers about storing seed for the season to come  
Storing up seed and fruit alike as they'd done in a thousand other lands before  
Not magical creatures galloping about in fantastical splendor



No, Just normal everyday  
foragers gathering where  
they could

And the ground gave way to  
the seed beneath them  
Trees and grass stood tall  
and mighty on the land  
Luscious green tapestries  
underneath the great blue  
sky  
Nothing too majestic for the

eye of course  
No, just mere old tall trees  
and thick grass

And there on its plains the  
trees and grass danced  
Trees and grass dancing to  
the sound of the wind  
Not to unfathomable  
melodious tunes that the  
wind played  
Nothing like that, just trees

and grass dancing in the  
wind

And finally, there, where  
once lay a land  
Lay an enchanted forest full  
of fairies  
Not a cursed valley, yet filled  
with hollows and ghosts  
Of course, just a land, a bare  
land.

# The Rains Will Return

Patricia Ejang  
Uganda



The ground is cracked,  
like my dry lips and my  
dirty feet. The sun  
shines bright and hot, and the  
few leaves left on the old  
guava tree slowly float to the  
ground, yellow and dry. Mama  
spreads the millet grains on the  
compound, singing a beautiful  
song.

The rains will come  
The ground will heal again  
The rains will come  
The birds will sing again  
The rains will come  
The hills will blossom again

I watch mama singing, and  
watch the dog sleeping. The  
sun shines bright and hot, and  
the few leaves on the old  
guava tree slowly float to the  
ground, yellow and dry. Papa  
fans himself with an old book,  
singing a beautiful song.

The rains will return  
The children will sing again  
The rains will return  
The rivers will flow again  
The rains will return



The hills will blossom again  
I lick my cracked lips, and  
smile. The rains will come, and  
the ground will heal again. I will  
fly a kite with my friends, and  
swim in the river. I will be happy  
again.



# Kondwani Learns A Lesson

**Pelekani Lwenje**  
Zambia

**K**ondwani woke up and was surprised to find himself underneath a mango tree. How did he get here? He felt a huge insect crawling on his left arm so he flicked it off. That was when he saw his arms, hands and his legs. He was wearing long trousers. His feet were big. What was going on? He got up and yawned. Then he yawned again. He stretched his body and felt a bit of pain. What was happening to him? A strange looking old woman with hair as white as snow and eyes that sparkled like diamonds was watching from a distance. She had a sinister grin that seemed stuck to her face. She was a witch. A witch who had seen many years. A witch who was very interested in him.

Kondwani was convinced that he was old? He felt old? How? He was twelve years old. The last thing he remembered was fighting

with his mother. He had responded by pouring water on her face. Then she had slapped him. He had run away after that and ignored her calls to return. That was all he remembered. As he walked he came across a parked car. He looked at his reflection in the window. He really had become an old man. It was too much for him so he ran. He ran as fast as his old legs would allow. People everywhere stared as he past them. That old man was not him. This was impossible. All he wanted was to go home. He had never felt more scared than he did just now. He stopped when he reached a football pitch. He saw a boy busy kicking a dirty ball on the dusty pitch. The boy was talking to himself as he dribbled and passed to invisible players. The goal posts were missing their nets. He slowly walked towards the boy. The boy stopped and faced him.

"Hi, old man," said the boy.

"Who are you calling old," snapped Kondwani.

Kondwani indicated that he wanted to play with the boy. He no longer wanted to go home. How was he going to explain to his mother about his situation? The boy shook his head in disapproval but reluctantly agreed. As they started to play the boy was surprised by his energy. He had never seen an old man move like that. They played until their bodies were exhausted. Then they collapsed on the dusty ground panting. As they lay on the ground Kondwani looked at the boy.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Benson," answered the boy. They shook hands and Benson helped Kondwani back on his feet.

"Why are you playing by yourself?" asked Kondwani

"I don't have friends. I hate my home," explained Benson.

Kondwani understood how Benson felt.

"Sometimes I hate my mom," continued Benson.

Kondwani was all too familiar with such feelings, but for the first time he also realised that it was wrong to have such feelings. No one should hate their mother. He placed his arm around Benson's shoulders.

"We shouldn't hate our mothers. I think I was cursed. I did something bad to my mother. I think I understand. When you get older things become harder. Our parents just want us to be happy. I'm twelve years old and now I'm an old man."

Benson was looking at him funny. Kondwani smiled.

"You should say sorry to your mother. I should also do the same," he concluded. They both heard laughing from behind them. They quickly turned to find themselves staring at an old woman. Kondwani observed that she was the

witch he had run away from earlier.

"Even when you're old on the outside, you're young inside. This is your rejuvenation. When the young respect their elders so that the elders can have new energy and be better teachers. You know what you must do," said the witch. Then she

snapped her fingers and everything became dark.

Kondwani woke up. He was once again under the mango tree. He looked at his body. He was a boy again. It had been a dream. It had felt so real. He got up and decided to apologise to his mother. As he walked back home he saw an old woman watching him.





## **Longlist - 2021 African Writers Awards (AWA) and the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature**

I would like to announce, on behalf of the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), Writers Space Africa Foundation, and Writers Space Africa – Tanzania (WSA-Tz), the longlist for both the 2021 African Writers Awards (AWA) and the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature. We received a lot more entries in all genres compared to last year. All entries had in their own way, an emblem of richness and morale. Several blended idealism with realism. Some conveyed creatively the bridge between the past and the future, while others dwelled only in the future. In all, every piece carried with it a spark of excellence, creativity and awe.

As is our tradition, all entries for the AWA were judged anonymously. Special thanks go to the panel of judges; Nahida Esmail (Tanzania), Gankhanani Moffat Moyo (Zambia), Sabah Carrim (Mauritius), Nabilah Usman (Nigeria), Comfort Nyati, SDB (Zimbabwe), Temani Nkalolang (Botswana), Halieo Motanyane (Lesotho) and Namse Udosen (Nigeria).

We are pleased to present the longlist in alphabetical order:

### **African Writers Awards**

#### **Creative Non-Fiction**

1. A Future Created by Africa for Africa by Ifem Chiemerie Bonaventure (Nigeria)
2. Adetutu by Adedoyin Adetutu (Nigeria)
3. Cultural Partnership for a Common African Future by Saliha Haddad (Algeria)
4. Is This Legacy by Oluchi B. Kolanisi (South Africa)
5. Long Live the Comrade by Peter Zowa (Zimbabwe)
6. Olugbon Lodge by Anuoluwapo John Adesina (Nigeria)
7. The Capital of God's Own State by Blessing O. Nwodo (Nigeria)
8. The Future Is Us by Oreoluwa Elujulo (Nigeria)
9. The Future of Africa by Jenrola David Anuoluwapo (Nigeria)
10. The Journey by Amatemeso Blessing Emmanuel (Nigeria)
11. The Shifting Horizon by Mukalo Lungile Musaluke (Zambia)



12. Today Can Be a Clean-up or Handover by Favour Iruoma Chukwuemeka (Nigeria)
13. What Makes Us African by Lee Ann Visagie (South Africa)
14. What Our Tales Entail by Jesse Bitrus Danjuma (Nigeria)
15. Whispers of the African Sun by Enoch Akinlabi (Nigeria)

### **Drama**

1. A Country Called Africa by Dancan Ouma Obuya (Kenya)
2. Eating With Chopsticks by Gordon, B. Away (Kenya)
3. Fostered from a Thought by Irene Melissa Ojoro (Kenya)
4. Khandasi by Elizabeth Nafula (Kenya)
5. Right in the Middle by Akinkunle Johnson (Nigeria)
6. Stones on this Side by Chibuenyim Babalola (Nigeria)
7. The Dark Snake by Jonas Zaithwa Chisi (Malawi)
8. The Seventh Child by Omotayo Olaoye (Nigeria)
9. The Twist by Bernard Diesuk Lucas (Nigeria)
10. Zige by Ebinabo Fortune Robert (Nigeria)

### **Poetry**

1. A Bright Morrow Looms by C. M. Okonkwo (Nigeria)
2. All You See, All You Don't See Poem by Joseph Olamide Babalola (Nigeria)
3. In the grave of the brave by Clara Wanjira Kariuki (Kenya)
4. Mother Africa is like a Highway in a Metropolitan City by Basethile Ngcubo (South Africa)
5. No Other Miracle by Abigail-Tydale Basseyy (Nigeria)
6. Ode To Our Birth by Esther Diepiriye (Nigeria)
7. On The Mountain Top by Faniyi Oluwatomiwa Elijah (Nigeria)
8. Pen Pain African by Mthobisi M. Ntjangase (Eswatini)
9. Tell The Child by Orji Peter Oluebube (Nigeria)
10. The Dining Table by Overcomer Ibiaduradara Ibiteye (Nigeria)
11. The Doomed House by Jamin Clement Manyasa (Kenya)
12. Not in the Tears of Yesteryear by Raphael Edookue Bariweremelloo (Nigeria)
13. The Stump Shall Grow Again by Olusola Adeboye (Nigeria)
14. Today, A Star Radiates Hope by Oduogu Victor Nkwachukwu (Nigeria)
15. Ubuntu by Ejang Patricia Peace (Uganda)

### **Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature**

1. Akaa and the Mango Tree by Chipalo Salimu (Zambia)
2. Ali and his Sidekicks by Olakunbi Olatunde (Nigeria)
3. Baba's Secret by Oluwaseyi Adebola (Nigeria)
4. Gold Material by Nyasili Atetwe (Kenya)
5. How the Ostrich Became a Bird by Charity Modise (Botswana)
6. Ireoluwa's Thunderstones by Aanuoluwapo Adesina (Nigeria)
7. Kodjo Braves a Hi by Temidayo Odutokun (Nigeria)

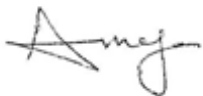


8. Tea time with Tito by Stephanie Chizoba Odili (Nigeria)
9. The Enchanted Pen by Nathaniel Z Mpofu (Zimbabwe)
10. The Millionaire Orphan by Makhago Peter (Uganda)
11. The Well of a Dog Owner by Halima Adam (Tanzania)
12. The Wisdom Gourd by Ishola Oyinkansola Hubaidat (Nigeria)
13. Tortoise and the Elephant by Chinua Ezenwa-Ohaeto (Nigeria)
14. What Does it mean to be Kind Anyway by Kendi Karimi (Kenya)
15. What Happened on Thursday by Ayo Oyeku (Nigeria)

Best wishes to the longlisted writers.

The shortlist will be released on the 1st of September, 2021 while the winners will be announced during the 4<sup>th</sup> African Writers Conference (AWC) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

The AWC is supported by the Department of Literature in the University of Dar, Alliance Française of Dar Es Salaam, Feza Schools, Africa in Dialogue, Brittle Paper, Southern Writers Bureau – SWB, Rosebud Editing & Proofreading, Self-Ish, Writers Guild Kenya (WGK), Kalulu Kreativez, The Roaring Writer, Colour Culture Arts, Authorship and Career Network, Nib Hub, SOTRANE Publishers, 23.35 Africa, African Tales and the International African Writers Association (IAWA).



*Anthony Onugba*  
Chief Judge,  
2021 African Writers Awards

# PoeticAfrica

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her November 2021 edition.

*When hope is lost, humans often resort to a means of escape from their hopeless state. What is hope to you? How do you cope when hope elopes? Write and submit your poem under the theme HOPE.*

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality, use of poetic devices and economy of words. Please present well-arranged poetry and note that the poem titles should not have the word "hope".

The submission window is from August 11th until September 10th 2021. The edition will be released on November 10th 2021.

To submit, please visit

**<https://writersspace.net/poeticafrica>.**

Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted but must be accompanied by equivalent translations in English.

CALL FOR SUBMISSION

# Fragrance

Victoria Ojo  
Nigeria

It's the time of the year,  
When the whirlwind sleeps in harmony  
And the atmosphere- our brother's keeper.

The dinner table is - as heavenly as grace  
can be.  
The ceramic enamel wears a sheepish  
smile-  
So sweet and cool that makes feet glued !

Lo, home is love and love is home,  
Listen to the racing heart-  
A mountain of happiness,  
Feel the feeble fingers  
A compound of bliss.

Gleefully, mama's baking-  
A call to home,  
An aroma that paves its way within the

soul  
And a delightful trap to stay-  
To stay in bond.

The trees doth whisper,  
The light doth sings,  
The warm blue linen cotton doth comforts  
a pale chamber.  
The chair is peace  
And peace is life.

This photograph shall not only review a  
story,  
But  
create a story  
If only one is in its present!





---

# The Afternoon I Had Cramps

**Anyuola Lena**  
Kenya

These clothes are swelling with memory,  
a packed suitcase never really fits on the  
trip back to Nairobi,  
which is a sort of home,  
for a forming memory of passing clouds.

The dark green pillows of Brahman,  
A soothing painkiller for my raging belly  
That is aching and convulsing,  
Cleaning and squeezing,  
from the windows the fragrant smell of  
fenesi,  
kama kinyesi, ila tunda.

Birdsong and fading crickets,  
I light a joint, on the 20th of May,  
My womb is flooding thunder  
and lightning in a scarlet flow

I bring into myself a deeper meditation,  
to ease my flooding moon,  
Thunder and lightning craving release,  
For two days the sky teases me with  
possibility of a calming storm.

Heavenly sights on a misty evening,  
A perfection of different shades of velvet  
green,  
fit for a convening of nightingales and  
weaver birds,  
A gathering of dark clouds from the river  
valley,  
and brilliant sequins of light to form  
a lining of silver, that is my jubilee,  
A farewell song as I journey on.





---

# Hello, Euphoria

**Chris Baah**  
Ghana

Negative thoughts-

Shooting darkness in avalanches  
Illuminating blood on branches  
Aided by love's mismatches,

New day came with  
A Psychedelic Auric  
To create a Euphoric

Rejuvenation by love's touch.



---

# When It Rains

Khan Abdurahman Mustafa  
Uganda

When it rains;  
The earth reshapes  
Dismantles  
Dislocates  
And relocates.  
When it rains;  
The earth is saved from her demons,  
And the earth rethinks her cruelty.



---

# Amina

**Kasoke Dacious**  
Zambia

Amina,  
Let me differentiate your polynomial  
Curvy thighs, and sink in your cave,  
Allow my shaft to dig in your sweet  
Cherry, and sip every tiny drop of  
Your nectar.

Amina,  
Let me feel the warm caress of your  
Skin, the ecstatic spark that is endless  
As you dance and moan in alluring sobs.

Amina,  
Let us play this mathematical game with  
its own rules, a one-to-one mapping,  
Blood and sweat, locks and keys, let us  
kiss,  
and bath in pride; to sail in eternal serenity.

Amina,  
Let us rejuvenate; and grow young again  
Allow me to write on your breasts  
Whose rhymes, rhythms and lyrics  
Are splashes of roses.





# From Wife To Mother

Nsaidzeka  
Cameroon

The beginning; sweet yet difficult  
Being a wife but not a mother.  
Her first months pensively joyous.  
Living alone, yearning for company.  
Two years gone, no exciting news to  
celebrate  
Aging, shrinking and wrinkling.  
As the sun shines bright, her home is in  
blackout  
Sorrow pouring down on her like August  
rain.

\*\*\*\*\*

Another year is here. Something has  
changed  
What is this awkwardness she feels?  
Has something truly changed?  
A complete woman, yet no periodic pain?

It's dawn, she is wailing and screaming.  
At noon, she is singing and praising.  
The prayers of a wife have been  
answered.  
She is soon to experience motherhood.

\*\*\*\*\*

The cry of her first has taken away that  
melancholy.  
Once a pensive wife, now a happy mother.  
A true transition from coldness to  
boldness.  
It was a long walk indeed  
From damsel, to wife and now mother.  
The end of every experience is the  
beginning of a new one.  
The walk to motherhood has just begun.





---

# Soldiers Of Time

Dheda Shiksha  
South Africa

When all is said and done  
when flesh becomes ash  
and years become memories,

When kin and enemy become alike  
when day and night become one  
and body becomes soul,

When pain ceases to punish  
when love ceases to please  
and the body becomes an empty vessel,

When eyes run dry  
when wounds lay barren

and the chest ceases heaving.

It is then that they rejuvenate:  
the soldiers of time  
from one life to yet another,

It is then that they experience  
The transcendence of gravity,  
from inertia to movement.

It is then that they realise,  
wisdom gathers of death,  
from knowledge to nothingness.



---

# On The River, I Found

Hangiriza Benedict  
Uganda

Reason with dry hills,  
blame them not;  
for loyalty thereof pricks the blue sky.

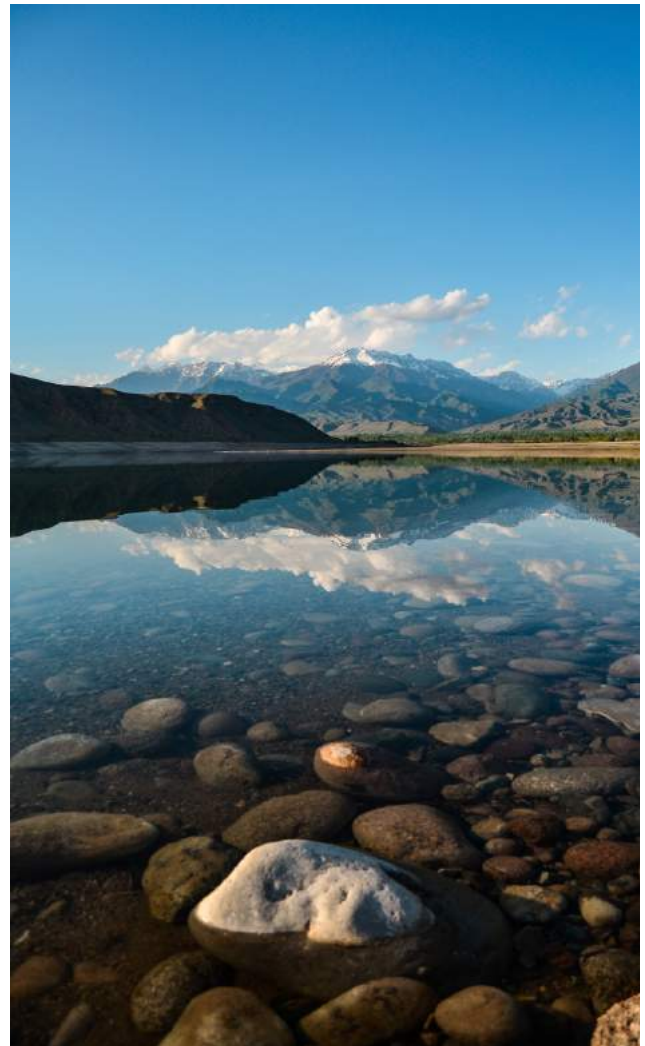
Waiting, thinking  
roots burrow their cry in my side;  
lichens too unwinding, in sight

Waiting,  
to run and not be colder,  
to the brim; and not be boulder.

Bravely open myself up;  
learn freedom's indifference to stony-  
eyed rain

suspending a crumb of my soul,  
sparkling, as what's left.  
For the sun stretches

arcs of green life  
everywhere I return.



---

# Sight

Noel Lema  
Tanzania

Slowly,  
The eyes partly closed,  
Years wheeled,  
Eyes went unnoticed,  
Dusted was the book shelf,  
Cloudy the world was,  
Beauty too, unnoticed.

I chose a wife,  
Half blue sky,  
Half cloud to marry,  
I underwent a surgery,  
Slowly,  
The eyes partly opened,  
Eyes began to notice,  
How beautiful  
My cloud wife and world was.



# How I Painted Colours

John Owen Adimike  
Nigeria



I  
From Grandpa,  
I learnt to give water to  
Thirsty hopes;  
These words are for the bruised soul  
Whose dreams are strangled in the wind,  
Astray in an aging petal.

II  
Mother showed me how to paint colours  
    on wrinkled flowers  
And I arrived to the silence of senile  
    autumn  
Harvesting lost vigour and life  
The vigour of our iron bodies that became  
    food  
For children like me,  
Or chaff mixed with prophecies of our  
    forefathers,  
To use in making bright colours  
For the souls that had forgotten  
What it means to breathe.

III  
From the mountain of Grandpa's  
memories,  
I steal aborted songs that were never sung  
Planted them in the throats of withered  
souls,  
Watering them with the taste of living...  
I watched them grow into  
A nation with the anthem we fed our  
tongues  
So that our voices may learn to sing.

IV  
For this nation wears the colour of souls  
that taught us to live;  
The children of this nation fulfil the  
prophecies of old  
Flora painted in the bouquet of spring  
Because grandpa taught us to paint  
colours,  
On the petals of our wrinkled flowers.





# Restoration

Olatunji Zion  
Nigeria

A moonless evening,  
the sky black like spilled ink,  
all covered me in sadness for futility  
tempest fell all night!

Oh my soul!  
I know thou art weary  
Enduring the long dark tunnel  
My bones cried! My heart seized in Apnea!

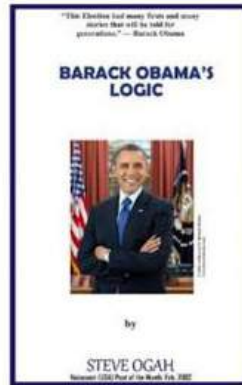
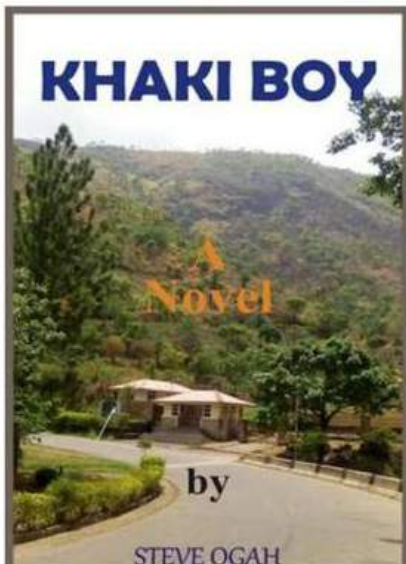
This cannot be! Oh my soul!  
Will thou continue to fearfully faint in  
failure?  
Remember thy sweet song of faith!  
Soar, for thou art strong...

Now in life, I bud again  
After so many pains, I gained.  
After tears of rain comes a sunshine smile  
I died to live! Failed to succeed!

Finally! The sun appeared in its full glory  
Brightened up my long face  
I smelled the dew and dawn  
Behold! It is morning.



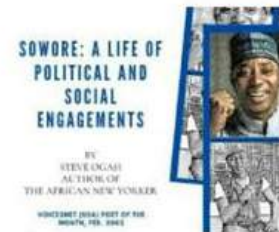
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Genre: Tribute

Title: A Review of the at (tributes) of Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi

Reviewer: Akinrinde Funminiyi Isaac, WSA Magazine Review Team Head

**S**hockingly, the cover design of July 2021 Edition of WSA Magazine wore a familiar but unexpected look. The cover featured a smiling woman with a dazzling diastema, but that wasn't all, "in loving memory NAMWANJA MARGARET CHIKWABI" was included!

Under the Editor's Note, WSA Editorial Team announced the passing away of their Chief Editor, Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi. In their words, Namwanja worked hard to promote literature not only in Zambia but in Africa at large. She served in various voluntary roles such as the Director of the Department of Programmes, Publications, and Events, the Vice Country Coordinator of Writers Space Africa – Zambia (WSA-Zm) and the Chief Editor of WSA Monthly Literary Magazine. She was passionate, dedicated, and committed to her work. She brought a lot of new ideas to WSA and had – in the few months she spent – mentored several writers across the continent. She reviewed several books which were published in the papers and also on her blog.

In the tribute of Mr. Anthony Onugba, Founder and President, Writers Space Africa, he said Namwanja is my friend. We have been friends for just about seven months since we first physically met, days before the 2020 African Writers Conference... She was simply good natured and nurtured the virtue of goodness. She is a good person. Namwanja's death came as a shock and some of us still live-in denial. It is difficult to accept a loss that hits your soul.

Sadly, no bucket of words can fill the drum of emptiness that her loss has caused. It's a cross we all have to bear. Mr. Anthony added that going forward, we shall immortalize Namwanja but this will be announced in the coming months. Namwanja is a good person. Namwanja is a great person. Let's be like Namwanja. Let's be great.

Perusing the sixteen tributes of Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi, six things stood out for me. These words perfectly describe her nature and I believe if we can demonstrate these attributes, not only would we be better individuals, but we shall make the world a better place and become immortalized like Namwanja would be. Namwanja was a **multitasker** with a vibrant spirit. She was **felt**. Her contribution, creativity, and innovation in the growth of African Literature can't be overemphasized. She was a **friend** not a distant leader. She was a mentor, teacher, mother, sister, and most importantly, a friend to all.



Namwanja was a **smiler**. A Chinese proverb said a person without a smile must never open a shop. Little wonder she succeeded in her business and voluntary roles. Her smile could hold anyone spellbound! Namwanja was a **student** but taught simultaneously; she never outgrew learning new things. She was keen on her growth! Namwanja was **appreciative**. Do one thing for Namwanja and she would appreciate you ten thousand times. No flattery, she was just good!

On a personal level, Namwanja was a bowl of energy! I call her CE, my personal motivator, my hype-woman. She calls me Isaac, my editor. She said I was going to edit her future book of poetry and flash fiction. Perhaps, I would fulfil that by writing books of poetry and flash fiction dedicated to her. Her exit was painful but who are we to question death? After all, we are all mourners awaiting death's invite.

Finally, like Mr. Anthony Onugba said, Namwanja is a good person. Namwanja is a great person. Let's be like Namwanja. Let's be great.



**Genre: Article**

**Title: Power Imbalances In Black Heterosexual Relationships**

**Writer: Mahlatsana Sinxol, South Africa**

**Reviewer: Comfort Nyati, Zimbabwe**

The writer provides the compass in which he departs his article from the definition of power as derived from the Webster school of thought. Heterosexual relationships have been an ideal threshold deemed apt to engage as the avenue to unearth the dark world behind the curtains of relationships in Africa. This article – dominantly from a feminist point of view – sends a message that paints a black image of black male Africans dictated by their hyper thirst of power and dominion over their female counterparts. While the female subject bears the yoke of a shuttered slave whose prime duty is to prepare and serve their male partners on the sexual tables. Thus, the article throws an attack as it questions this social and sexual imbalances happening in most parts of Africa fueled by irrational traditional norms.

Some further sites where this imbalance emanates are masculinity, culture and male dominance. It is a discriminatory system that results in gender disparities. A man in Africa is regarded as the superior agent both on the family and society level. Special emphasis was given to the Zulu kingdom of South Africa, typically in KwaZulu Natal.

One of the immediate things a reader can notice from the article's onset, is that it unveils the fluidity of the concept of power which cuts across multiple polarizing sectors stretching from political to religious contexts and not subjugating the most alarming problem of power decentralization, exercise and imbalances that occurs in heterosexual relationships on the continental level.

Scanning every bit of each word, it is doubtless that at the core of this masterpiece lies the heartbeat that intones tones of power issues that have resulted into chaotic male-female African relationships due to the patriarchal system. Among these problems, the writer is very careful to treat and address the concept of power within the context of the triple expression of black women who suffer from their African spouses by exerting the traditional beliefs of masculine approach in any human affair especially relationships.

Should African females remain docile, voiceless and powerless beings? Feminism emerges to challenge this sickness of equality in relationships. The feminists advocate for a balanced relationship that demolishes any idea of suppression of women's sexual agency, while promoting mutual understanding in negotiating power in their relationships. This gives certitude for a flourishing heterosexual relationship not only in Africa but the world at large.

**Genre: Short Story**

**Title: Kachasu- The Spirit Of Kantolomba**

**Writer: Moses Tololo, Zambia**

**Reviewer: Funmi Richards, Nigeria**

**W**e should all be truly African; a guide to being proudly African - the spirit of Kantolomba. "Have you tasted it? It's probably the most mouthwatering your taste buds will ever taste. It's the rarest taste you can ever get."

Kachasu - the spirit of Kantolomba is a reflective piece giving rich insight into the culture, innovation, living and breathing in Africa vis-à-vis the western dream that all things good and beautiful must come from 'the abroad'.

The characters draw a juxtaposition between the African who thinks he is now successful because he — Chibuye has gone abroad and 'managed' to marry a white woman. And Mama the illicit Kachasu brewer. The symbolism of both characters reflects the young idealist — Chibuye looking to pursue greener pastures and the old, crude — Mama who personifies the African proverb "what the elders see while sitting, the young ones standing on their toes won't see."

This piece is what my Nigerian friends would call a table shaker. It points fingers at everyone like the Ambassadors of poverty by P.O.C Umeh. It directs the responsibility of growth and development and calls for all Africans to look homewards for development. It calls for Pan-Africanist conversations. It does make me wonder though if the writer isn't at all wishing for this costly western dream? And if not, why?

When I first read this, I wondered if there is a Kachasu drink as strong a brew as Mama's, I didn't believe there was but after some research, I found that there is. Kachasu (or lituka) is a traditional brew brewed in parts of Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, DR Congo. I also found out that Kachasu was proposed to the Zambian government as an alternative to hand-sanitiser material for people that do not have access to clean water, soap, or any other factory tailored alcohol-based hand rub in the heat of the pandemic. All of which add substance to the power of the overall message of the piece which is the need for homeward solutions.

**Genre: Children's Literature**

**Title: Selfish Sun**

**Writer: Charity Modise, Botswana**

**Reviewer: Halieo Motanyane, Lesotho**

It is always very interesting to read stories that make a character out of nature or/and certain behaviour of non-living things. It helps children to think logically and relate creatively to their surroundings. Charity Modise's "Selfish Sun" story is a perfect fictional lesson about the sun. The story is about a selfish sun who wants the power even though he does not have good intentions for being the king. Selfish Sun teaches children a handful of lessons about life. It is quite clear that Modise took her time writing the story.

In the story, we see a complete fairness between the animals when they choose their kings. First was elephant and next was a tortoise, which shows that the choosing of kingship did not necessarily favour certain animals. However, sun felt that he should be the king as he was helping the animals. He felt that they owed it to him to be their king. And even after getting his wish, he misused his power to rule. This just shows a disadvantage of power.

With all this being said, I hope we can see that power is not just a bad thing, it is how it is being used that detects badness or goodness. Like the selfish sun, if we use power badly, we will reap bitter fruits. But if we become like the Tortoise and the Elephant, then our goodness will be extended to all that is around us.



**Genre: Poetry**

**Title: Rod Us Off This Road**

**Writer: Denk Bol Denk, South Sudan**

**Reviewer: Wambua Muindi, Kenya**

From oozing of blood, life is being lost, political impropriety, power drunkenness, to social unrest, this is the story that the persona is intimating to the readers. This is punctuated by the personal reflections of the dark reality that is marked by both political and social cruelty. This is the story by the persona in the poem Rod Us off This Road, which from a biographical sense intimates the writer's country.

This is a poem whose persona is disgruntled with their reality and it is as if they are almost ranting for the soul of a nation; they are hopeful and optimistic though. The political message of the poem is captivating and is reminiscent of protest poetry of the first generation poets in Africa. Contextually, the poem is written by a national of a young South Sudan who is trying to understand their country, which is relatively young, characterised by social malady, economic plunder, war and political instability. The persona ends by questioning the independence dream and trying to situate themselves with the ideals of the independence visionaries.

Artistically, there is visual imagery that highlights with stark images the pillage of human life through killings. Blood here is used as a symbol of freedom as well as killing drawing contrast between the martyr and the killer in the current temporal reality that the persona is stuck. There is also animal imagery used in the form of the cattle to show a sense of guided direction that is ironic because they seem headed in the wrong way since the line of poetry that precedes its mention indicates the sense of lost direction.

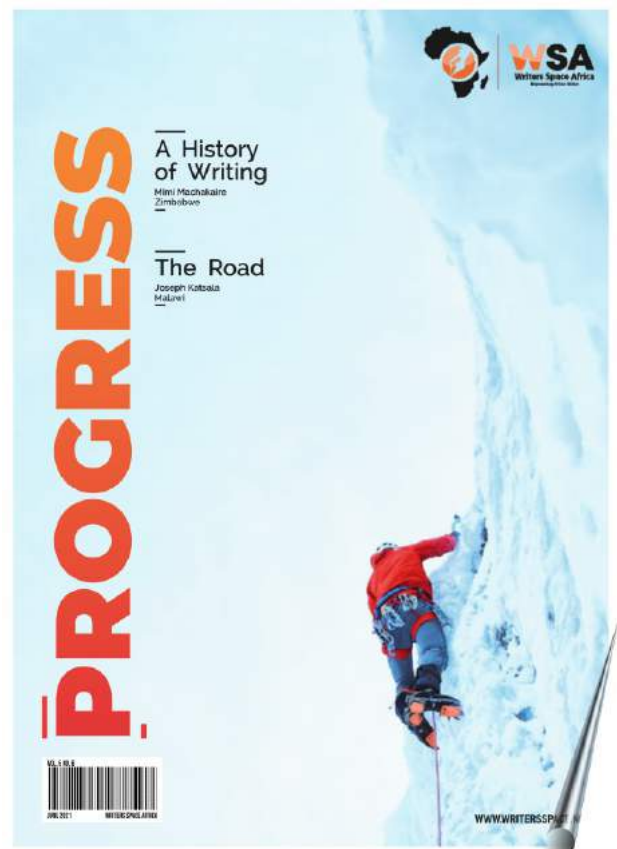
The tone indicates that the writer is tired of the current regime. It contradicts the expectations of a new nation. A nation that we expect to be budding with hope. This tone set up the mood of the poem.

Conclusively, the poem is political in the sense that it's reflective of the reality and the aspirational nature of the 'freedom fighters' and their idea for their nation. Thus, the poem mourns the independence of South Sudan.





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# LUST

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Nigeria

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Cameroon

VOL. 6 NO. 9



SEPTEMBER 2021

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

THIS EDITION  
IS SUPPORTED BY



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# ||| Editor's Note

Lust, unknown word to the underage, but very common to the teenagers. Whenever it is mentioned, we already know that disciplinary hearing is taking place. To adults, it means different other things. Our September edition will show you the different phases of Lust. From the biblical connotations to the political and nasty ones. One thing that seems to be common about it is that, the aftermath are never good, there's always chaos and pain.

One might ask, does lust always have to be bad? Is lusting for the latest WSA magazine editions a bad thing? Well, the only way to find out is for you to go through the edition.

Enjoy

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



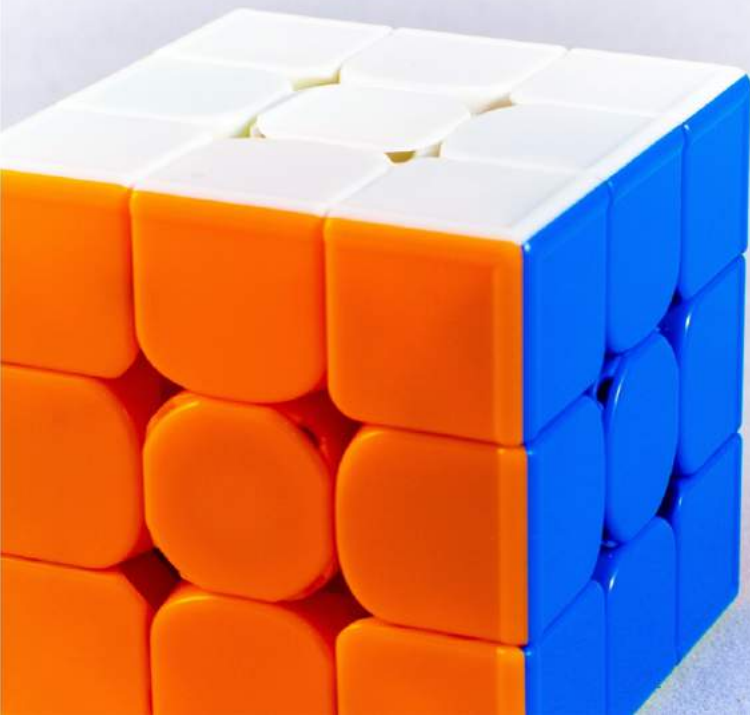
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Empowering African Writers

## **THEME: FULFILLMENT**

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international online literary magazine, will from 20th August to 15th September accept submissions for the November 2021 Edition in these categories:

Flash Fiction  
Essays/ Articles  
Poetry  
Short Stories  
Children's Literature

To submit, please visit  
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# ||| The Most Dangerous Emotion

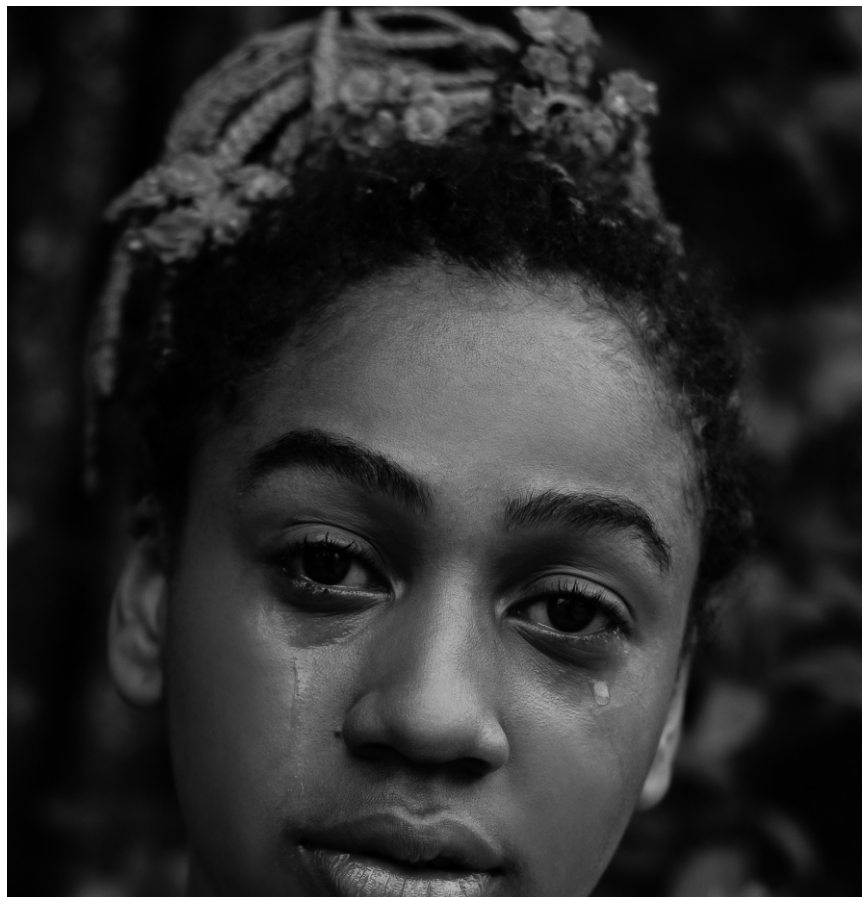
**Luqmaan Rawat**  
South Africa

**H**umans experience a wide range of emotions; happiness, sadness, love, anger, greed, among others, and each emotion impacts us in different ways since our very lives revolve around what we feel. Certain situations, however, depending on the emotions that we let overcome us, can either end in a good or bad way. Most people believe that anger is the most dangerous emotion, perhaps the dangerous and deadly one is lust.

What is lust, and why is it so dangerous? If you look it up, lust means an intense longing or craving. It can also mean – and this is what it is commonly known for – a strong sexual desire. Lust is something we all feel from time to time; either for your partner or a random person. Lust can come in many

different forms. One can have a strong desire for several things, and it can be channelled in the right or wrong way. Unfortunately, in today's society, we have channelled it the wrong way. We look all around us and see how well people are doing and we admire them for that. We wish to be like them, to be as wealthy as

they are, to have the materialistic things they have and so on. As such, a longing begins to grow in our hearts. We long for our lives to be just like theirs and so we try anything and everything to become like them. Sometimes this desire becomes so strong that it overrides our morals.



Perhaps we set out to do things perfectly. Perhaps we set out with noble intentions at the onset but as the lust for this wealth and status enters our hearts, our morals and beliefs exit. This is not a rare occurrence in society. I am sure there are people you know, who may not even be very rich but have changed or forgotten their morals in their pursuit to satisfy this intense desire that's built up in their hearts. It happens to all of us. We all wish to live better lives, but when we let our lust for wealth overtake us, we become different versions of ourselves. Versions that will stop at nothing to ensure our lust is satisfied. Unfortunately, once you give in to it, it can never be satisfied.

Several wealthy people find no shame in treating their employees unfairly by giving them unfair wages, bonuses that do not adequately appreciate their work, etc. All to cut costs and to make more money. This boils down to greed and an intense desire to have more and more. This kind of lust

cannot be quenched no matter how much one eventually gets and it explains why lust is so dangerous. It can make one do things they wouldn't normally do, and that is just one part of it.

Next and probably the type we all experience is the lust or strong sexual desire we have for someone. This can also be channelled in a right or wrong way. One can be head over heels in love with someone and so lust for them, so much that the feeling seemingly burns them, and the only way to soothe this burning sensation is to be able to recreate their thoughts and fantasies with them. This kind of lust does not just go away. A married man may feel this kind of intense desire for another woman and if he lets it overtake him, he will end up pursuing her. The same applies to a married woman who finds herself in such a situation. When the deed gets done after they give in to lust and it finally subsides, they will then realize their mistake, only it will be too late. The guilt begins to eat them up,

and if they get caught or decide to be honest about it to their spouse, you can be assured that that will be the end of the marriage. You can easily break the heart of the person you care about for a few hours of pleasure if you let an emotion like lust take control of you. We all know what happens when a marriage ends because of a spouse having an affair. It is a messy situation and becomes even worse if they have kids. Meanwhile, it all happened because one person could not keep their emotions intact.

Lust is an emotion that can destroy lives if left unchecked. It can make the lives of your workers horrible, and even those of your children and other people around you. It has been allowed to rule us for far too long, and it's about time we put an end to it. The time has come for us to get a grip on ourselves and keep this dangerous emotion in check.

# Why Leaders Forget to Lead and Start Following

Solomon A. Mutagaya  
Uganda

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines lust as some intense longing, craving or unbridled sexual desire. Barbra Kellerman and Todo L. Pittinsky, in their book **Leaders Who Lust**, broadly define lust as "a psychological drive that produces intense wanting, even desperately needing to obtain an object or to secure a circumstance such that, when the object has been obtained or the circumstance secured, there is a relief, but only briefly or temporarily." Their idea is that the circumstance poses an infinite longing and craving that cannot be satisfied. It is likely the nature of this ailment does not only make its victims lose pure sight of it but, also develop resistant mechanisms and methodologies for its justification.

It may be the reason why the notion of the term "I do it for my people" has been so epitomized on the lips of today's African leaders that it has become arduous to identify the right colours that paint the zeal that fuel such audacious utterances. Lustful leaders are in themselves atrocious or were once good leaders who got misguided by their undying drive and ambition to persist in pushing their agenda because they perceive that they are pursuing the right cause.

As to whether it is a rhetoric act of dainty self-motivation, gutty determination or gritty inclination, no one knows. The right answer to this paradox however lies behind the type of lust to which a leader is attracted. Ultimately, the best measure of a leader will always be a function of the

kind of lust they are most attracted to. Is it money; fueled with an unlimited desire to accrue great wealth? Is it sex; a lust-driven by the constant hunt and search for sexual gratification? Is it "success"; the unstoppable need to achieve? Is it legitimacy; piloted by the tireless identity and equity? Is it legacy; a lust that poses an endless quest to leave a permanent imprint of one's achievements, or is it power characterized by a ceaseless craving to control?

Lust-less power in its rightful autonomous dimensions should be a scalable but quenchable thirst. Kellerman and Pittinsky point out that "Power as autonomy has the virtue of being finite.

When the quest for power as autonomy is satisfied, so typically is the appetite for power. Power as autonomy is, in other words, a 'quenched thirst.' But the quest for power as influence 'paints a completely different picture.' Though most of the research on power is not conclusive, it is nevertheless suggestive. It suggests that people who tend to be autocratic tend also to be narcissistic. So, one way such leaders enhance themselves is by regularly enlisting recruits or followers, over whom they can exert power, and this is what is meant by 'an insatiable hunger for power.' This is what we mean by a lust for power."

Most African leaders known to stay longer than necessary in power have gotten so bound to their agenda that it has become the centre of their locomotion, and this sets into motion a decision of becoming followers of commotion, thus followers of their agenda which finally

translates into their lust. And that lust has or for that matter will be their undoing since they are no longer in control. They now answer to a force far bigger than who they are and subscribe to a cause which in itself is infinity-driven. They have won the battle but lost the war. They have become slaves of their orchestration. And they are bound to die by the very sword they wield. Because just like fire, lust is a good servant but a bad master. It is a virus that eats you up from the inside out.

Africa's biggest obstacle to its democratic and economic nourishment has always been her leaders' undying lust for power amongst other things. For us to be able to undo such forces of the universe working against us, we must first be willing as followers to understand and examine ourselves at a deeper level, lest we stumble into the same pothole.

Our zeal to fork out lustful leaders from our systems and

hence draft the next generation of better ones, however, can only be pure in its intentions if it commences from a point of looking within ourselves first. It is a battle that needs to be fought from the inside out by making sure we won't only be re-inventing the wheel should we pull the plug. It calls for the need to deal with the question of why lustful leaders stay longer in power when we could uninstall them in the first place. We ought to answer the question of why followers follow bad leaders, to begin with. Ironically, the answer most likely resonates around Dr Jean Lipman Blumen's suggestions from her book, **The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians and How We Can Survive Them**, that, consequently followers enable and assist bad leaders because it gives them a sense of power since bad followers are drawn to bad leaders because they can share power. The said answer can also resonate around the social psychological principle of "Escalation of Commitment"





which is a human behavioural pattern of the continued and deliberate pursuit of the path we've been on, even when there is finally convincing evidence that the former path was wrong. We instead abstain from altering the course.

Regardless of what the real cause of the problem might

be, once we find ourselves in the hole, we must stop digging and start filling because yes it is never too late to mend. African problems call for African solutions. So we do it the African way, face our fears and boldly challenge such lustful leaders with unwavering courage, embrace reality rather than fall for their illusional ideas,

make use of what is left of our democracies, and vote in good ones, first putting the needs of the next generation in place to foster continuity and long-term development coupled with the mentorship of a young selfless next generation of leaders who see leadership as a duty, not a privilege or a part-time engagement.

# Another Look at Lust

Joseph Olofinkua  
Nigeria



I believe that lust has received bad press in recent centuries; this is in sync with the highly sexualized character of our contemporary culture. Sex has lost its public shamefulness and, in the name of moral progressiveness, its social boundaries no longer exist, and overt sexuality now drives much of our entertainment, advertising, and cultural conservation. How is lust to be separated from all of these?

Let us go back in time to the ancient world. The compiling of the seven deadly sins was where lust faced its first opposition. Alongside lust, we have pride, greed, envy, gluttony, anger, and slot. These deadly sins, especially lust, met their pernicious opponent in Christendom; the seven heavenly virtues and temperance limits lust.

The Stoic philosophers fanned this flame of hurt for lust with the motto "nothing for pleasure sake." This directed moral scrutiny to sexual pleasure itself, not just to what might be considered excess. However, there are numerous thoughts on the subject of lust. The great Philosopher, Socrates, believed that sexual desire is the first step towards righteousness. In Plato's dialogue, the symposium, Socrates recalls the teaching of the priestess Diotima of Mantinea, who said the desire for one man's body is the first step towards true-body appreciation. Therefore it is a means to appreciating the abstract idea. The ideology is based on the notion that individuals follow a rational chain of thought. From admiring the physical beauty of the one you desire, you can appreciate the beauty in

others since humanity is composed of the same type of matter in different proportions. Then one can move to the beauty lying beyond appearances, the beauty in wisdom, knowledge, and beautiful minds, even if they happen to dwell in bodies that are not so attractive. The last step is to come to appreciate beauty itself. This form of beauty comes with the moral qualities of goodness. Hence from lust, one can come to the verifiable knowledge of beauty. Socrates makes us see that to advance the higher understanding of beauty, one must start from the basis, which is lust, hence the importance of lust. Catholicism, the oldest Christian religion, considers lust as a disordered desire for sexual pleasure, where sexual pleasure is "sought for itself, and isolated from



its procreative and unity purpose." It is quick to point out that sexual desire on its own is good and is considered part of God's plan for humanity. The Christian faith has a different view of the thought of lust. Sin is an act but proceeds from thought. Sexual desire, as thought, is necessary according to Christianity, but seeking sexual pleasure for its end is considered a sin. A modern philosopher, Blackburn from Oxford University, defines lust as "the enthusiastic desire that infuses the body, for sexual activity and its pleasure for their own sake." This definition considers several

terms like enthusiasm, desire, sexual activity, and pleasure but emphasizes sexual pleasure for its own sake. What is clear from both the Christian and Blackburn definitions is that, in our world today, lust has been represented as the elevation of sexual desire stripped of moral context and boundaries. At what point is the line drawn? Is it in lust itself that the problem lies or in humanity?

Scientific studies have been able to relate sexual desires to hormones in the body, although these studies are complicated because

hormones are involved with the interaction of psychological and social factors. These hormones, depending on their level, have been known to control the level of sexual desire. Estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone are high on this list of stimulants for sexual desire. If any varying factors affecting sexual desire, then it should vary from one person to another. That which is considered excess for one might not be for the other, but there is no doubt that there should be a limit. Augustine, a fourth-century bishop, has influenced Christian schools of thought for centuries on sexuality. Due to his personal experience, he denied that sexual pleasure was part of the Creator's design for human sexuality, but that is very difficult to know without a doubt since there is no knowledge of sexual activity before the fall. Thomas Aquinas, however, says sexuality is both in scripture and found in nature. The unnatural sexual desire is only evident in humans.





Sexual desire for its own sake is desire stripped of its natural purpose and stolen from its moral context. Lust surely needs to be discussed further, and the need to be elaborated to understand it in our contemporary world. Its poor name needs to be redeemed because there needs to be sexual desire to carry out the sexual act, but its excess is, to some extent, subjective. However, a redirection needs to be

done, to help us see sexual desire as a means to understand beauty itself. Seeking the pleasure of sex should be given a different name since it depends on individual intention. The proper understanding of lust, derived from a secular world where sexuality is commonplace, has become blurry. One thing noticeable is that lust has reckoned to take different meanings depending on an individual

point of view. Another is lust devoid of moral context human sexuality would be debased lower than that of the animal kingdom. History has made that very clear. In our modern world, there needs to be another look at lust to enhance understanding its place, possibly, a reversal to its meaning by the philosophers of old.





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# WRITERS' MINGLE 4

**8TH OCT** **16:30 EAT**

*Theme*  
AFRICAN LITERATURE AS A VEHICLE FOR CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

*Venue*  
ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE OF DAR ES SALAAM



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# ||| The Woman Called Tamaa

Linda Achiaa Awuah  
Ghana



Tendrils of tulle flailed around as the slender figure floated down the streets; dainty feet barely touching the ground. Thick afro hair glistened from the richness of coconut oil splashed into it and the tune she hummed danced in the soft breeze, echoing through the deserted walkways.

It had been a successful venture with the young man she just left. John Adams, he's called and currently, his name is splashed all over the news. You may have seen him if you've been paying attention.

I'm sure you're wondering who I am. My name is Tamaa, or as a lot of people like to call me, the spirit of lust. They refer to me with so much disgust and negativity, and refer to me as a "sinful and earthly thing" and honestly, I wonder why?

Haha.

I like to think about myself as the driving force behind people attaining the highest form of happiness, and so by all means, forget about all the negative references you have heard about me. I wish people would stop being so negative!

Sigh

Anyway, as I said, my latest venture was Adams. Or as the girls liked to coo into his ears, "Dam-dam"

What a loser!

Adams entered the university as a promising young lad. (The best of them are. Always)

His love for politics soon drew him to join one of the student unions of state political parties on his campus where he rose through the ranks quickly.

Needless to say, he ran for the highest office on

campus for his year group; the Student Representative Council presidency, and won massively against his opponents.

I had always been a permanent fixture in Adams's life, buried deep in his soul somewhere; lurking and biding my time.

My major problem with Adams had been that campus ministry he joined and all those prayers he indulged in. Hmph!

At that ministry, where I was unfortunate enough to be at as well no thanks to my host, all manner of teachings were thrown against me.

So engulfed was he with all the instructions about celibacy and prayers that, whenever I tried to turn his head to look at the young ladies with supple behinds and ample chests, he would resist and overpower me without effort.

He grounded me to my last nerve, but if it is one attribute I possess that makes me stand out among my peers, it is my perseverance... I never give up! I stay, I plot and I act, as many times as required.

I finally found an opening; o, sweet victory!

After school, the state political party had been eager to snatch him up and groom him in their ways.

Excel, he did. He was placed in high ranks where he had unlimited access to wealth, influence and naturally, women. Adams was suddenly amid powerful figures in places where he wouldn't have thought of even in his wildest dreams.

With the great positions and great wealth, Adams gradually lost his moral

strength. Prayers were reduced to a bare minimum. Beautiful damsels came in all shapes and sizes and boy, was I ready to play!

I seized the day and made sure to make up for the lost time.

It was like Adams had forgotten all they taught him in that ministry; "If your minds are ruled by your desires, you will die. But if your minds are ruled by the Spirit, you will have life and peace." And many others. Even I remembered those, tsk!

But I am not complaining, oh no.

Any woman that passed before Adams or as much as looked in his direction, I made sure to stir in his groins and his head.

I know people sometimes like to doubt my abilities but trust me, I worked hard on Adams. Good, old Bible-clutching, tongues-praying and stiff-necked Adams fell under my spell as easily as flies fall with a swift swat.

In the space of about a year, I had raged so badly through him like a wildfire that we had no less than 100 women to boast of.

We were on a roll!

Adams got married, naturally. I think the married ones are my favourite of them all, and so this new arrangement worked so well for me. I spurred him on to do more, all the sneaking around added to the thrill of it all. It is always easier to get my cousins to join in with the married ones. From sneaking around the first few years of marriage to blatantly flaunting his escapades, Adams did it all.

His reputation to butter the biscuits in exchange for favours and good deeds preceded him and it delighted me so much.







18

But all good things must come to an end, alas!

And the end came in the form of Alicia, my perfect conduit. Sweet Alicia with her caramel skin and petite body. Alicia with hair so good, even I was jealous.

Alicia had tricks up her sleeve. Borne out of a grudge, I believe. Something to do with Adams attempting to rape her best friend, or was it her sister? There had been so many of them, I honestly cannot even recall which one this could be!

Several clandestine meetings, and several

unflattering videos and photos later, Adams currently stands disgraced and stripped of everything he's amassed in his not-too-young life. His political dreams hang in limbo and if you ask me, I'll say it's unlikely he'll live down the shame.

Oh well, I have taken flight in search of my new home.

I have heard about the Reverend Agyei downtown at the Potent Jesus Revival Church International.

I have seen how he gestures to his church members with so much authority. I have seen how his eyes light up when the members bow

before him and kiss his feet, and I have seen how he craves to be the centre of attraction in his church.

My favourite, however, is the girls that run around him and how he makes no effort to discourage them or draw boundaries. The Bible he clutches so dearly is a mere accessory to him.

That's where I'm headed. I am excited about this new adventure.

I'd ground myself if I were you because, after the Reverend, you bet I will be in search of a new host!

The world truly is my oyster.



# || Saturday

**Luke Kasakya**  
Uganda

The city smelled of nothing, just eerie cleanliness in the air that unnerved. Even though Luke loved the stillness brought on by the absence of people, locked away in their homes by decree of the president, for him, the town felt abandoned. Felt empty not because it was empty but also because it was empty. Before the lockdown, he had liked watching the crowds pushing to get into everything; cars, buildings, taxis, the market, everything. He missed the hullabaloo that came with the crowded streets. At the same time, Ebenezer liked the emptiness, the stillness. The only thing to hate about the whole situation was that he had to come into the town to work instead of staying at home relaxing and getting fat like everyone else. What he did not like was the slow unending days, the uncertainty of the of time,

and the heaviness of the phone in his pocket demanding a reply to Tasha's text:

"What happened to Saturday?"

He had been subconsciously debating his reply to the text for a few hours now. He had been debating how best to reply to the text since last night when his phone had dinged, alerting him of the text.

"What happened to Saturday?"

The text seemed not to have the appropriate answer to it. So, the debate raged. Its complications growing by the minute but boiling down to the simple question of whether to tell Tasha the truth? Or to lie? To tell her Aminallah... To tell her the story that had begun nine months, six days, four hours,

and twenty-five minutes ago when he had gone to see Aminallah that night or not to? To tell her that that night Aminallah had looked particularly beautiful. Her face wrought in perfect stone-like stillness, even as slowly her lips parted and grew into a tantalizing smile.

To tell her that:

That night, he could not tear his gaze from the curve of her hips pushing against the thin fabric of the pink cotton dress as determined to rip it. Or from her legs, crisscrossed, and the length of her light chocolate brown thighs bathed in the warm yellow light, running miles from beneath the hem of her pink short, short dress and growing into her crisscrossed legs. He had rubbed his fingers against the palms of his hands, itching to reach out...! To touch...!!

He had felt the heat on his face, his lips growing into a silly grin, his countenance one of desperate illicit desire. His eyes had pulled off her short, short dress. An inch every millisecond, burning through the fabric, leaving the image of her naked body beneath the

like a colour called "nude."

That she had said this all the while maintaining a dejected but involved and cool warmth to her words; Her personality collected and simpatico. And in turn, he had giggled. One, because the colour "nude" was

with Wanja any day, as if the two were created in pairs, one always augmenting the other. Her lips, lips he had only ever kissed once before, had remained smiling. Tantalising... scintillating...! Her lips are the kind you forget once you have seen them. They are bold in their temptation, forward and explicit in their daring.



pink, short, short pink cotton dress.

"I like the dress." He had said. "It's becoming of you"

"Oh, thanks! It's my nightie"

"Oh, you sleep in pink?"

"No, it's nude"

She says things like that sometimes. The kind of things sophisticated suave grown women say. Things

amusing to him, and two, because of the irony of the word "nude" at the moment. He wished she were nude, naked...

"So, how have you been? Like, seriously?" He had asked, leaning ever so close to her face and biting his lower lip all in the same move. His eyes oscillating between her eyes and the lines of her lips. Her eyes are the kind that looks beautiful

"You have very kissable lips, you know"

"Really?" she had said. A slight dismissive laugh escaping her lips Her head tilting to her left and her face returning to the imitation of the inscrutable and impervious countenance of Nephrotiti's stone bust.

"BENEZERIIIIII...Benezeri..." she had teased as she always did. She had let the subtle musicality encasing his now Africanised name hang in the air as she stood up and cat-walked away with deliberation in her gait and shaking her head as if in disbelief. Yet she still smiled... Tantalising... scintillating...!

He had moved his hands from holding the iPad; they have been watching youtube videos of Ariana Grande mimicking other artists on over her shoulders and rested them on the back of the wick couch, his face close to hers. His lips, slightly grazing hers, her soft-warm hindered breath washing out onto his face as she bit her lip. The left side corner of her lower lip, still smiling. He could feel the bulge pushing against his jeans. It had been there since she opened the door for him, wearing that short, short "nude" cotton dress she called her nightie. Except now, the pushing bulge bordered on pain. As if his manhood would break. For a minute, he had wondered if it could.

"Yo! I need to prepare for tomorrow..." she had said, walking away into her bedroom.

He had sighed. A sigh of frustration wrapped in a broken promise. A sigh of demanding want. A demanding want to pull her to him, her behind on his groin, his hand running

down her flat tummy. Caressing her, her hourglass waist, hips... A demanding want for his left hand to push up the thin fabric of her short, short cotton dress and his right-hand curling beneath her firm, perfectly shaped breasts, her nipples pushing out against his palm.

It is the sigh of an unfulfilled want to kiss her neck, ears, eyes, nape, neck, lips... touching bits of her only her mirror ever sees as she dresses up. The sigh of exasperated desperate longing exacerbated by her scent, Bvlgari Omnia Crystalline, wafting into his nose and etching a permanent memory of her fragile, hourglass frame and imagined nakedness as she disappears into the bedroom onto his mind.

He had followed her into the bedroom. The walls had been bathed in warm light and covered with well-accented photographs of herself and her sisters. The room had a relaxed feel. As if it knew that she came in there to escape the world

and eyes like his that looked at her with thinly veiled desire.

"Do you have a charger I can borrow?"

"Iye (yes)" she had said, bending and fidgeting with cables and plugs.

As she stood up from placing his phone to charge he had moved in behind her. Reaching his hand around her, he had drawn her into him and slow, steady and in rhythm, he had run his fingers from her biceps to her arms.

"Benezeriiiiiii...!" she had let the musicality of his Africanised name hang about them as she pulled away from him and walked towards her bed, her steps measured and model-like, holding on to his hand and letting go as she gets further away from him and closer to her bed, turning her head ever so slightly and smiling.

He has always liked how 'put' together she is, how guarded she can be. How she is not inclined to give in to whims and how the superficial seems secondary to her.

At that moment though, these were the same things he had hated. Especially how inscrutable she was.

She had sat holding her left leg to her chest on her bed as he moved towards her. Her dress had diminished even further, revealing more of her. Outside, the world would have thought her sitting vulgar. Inside her bedroom, her illicit sitting exuded a confident sensuality to him. The elegance of her movements had made it all seem natural. As if all women should aspire to sit the way she sat. She had leaned her head back, smiling back at him as he stood over her. Not sure, if she was teasing, or ...

"I will be moving from this side you know"

"Yeah, you told me." "Where will you be moving to?"

"Kyanja." "I will be moving this Saturday actually"

"Am I allowed to visit?"

"Mhmm... not sure"

In turn he had giggled and sat on the bed next to her.

She had moved both her legs and was holding both of

them up against her chest, her calf pressed against her thighs.

He had reached for her hand and begins playing with it; caressing it, running his fingers in circles in her palm. She has the kind of hands you would expect from a western girl, except she is from Muganda. Her mother named her "Nakintu". Everyone calls her Aminallah, he calls her Nallah, reminiscent of the poem "Nahla~Muslima in High School" by Chief he had seen recited some time back. Somehow it captured her complexity even though it was not about her and never was about anything remotely close to her.

"I heard..."

"Mmm???"

"I heard you are seeing someone"

The spell that held everything in place within her room had dissipated into nothingness. In its place stood a heavy tension instead. The kind of tension that makes the air heavy and taste oily and vile as it flies past the tongue.

"Well, I also heard you were back with Julie..."

Silence...!

The tension had somehow grown even more malleable. He was sure that if the tension could be seen, it would have been seen fidgeting with its hands in the stillness, kicking at the empty spaces it permeated in her room and scared to let even decibel to break the stillness that had dawned on the room. But since tension, as is known, is invisible, he had not seen it fidgeting. Neither had she.

"No... we are not. You know that is just history and people talking."

"Mmm?"

"Yep...so...?"

"Well..."

"You know, you never really tell me these things; you know, Like, I just have to always guess and jump to conclusions, or find out from other people, then...."

"Okay..."



The vile oily taste in the air had seemed to be disappearing now.

"Yes, I am seeing someone. You know Kunta?!"—her words are clipped. The octave of her voice was higher, yet subdued. "He was at the Centre with us."

He had smiled, his face hidden in the shadow cast by her frame, his face bearing the countenance of a happy-sad man; Confused and at peace all at once. She had spoken looking away. As if not wanting to be confronted by whatever emotion would register on his face.

"Oohhh...! Okay!" "You are happy with him?"

He had asked playing with her hands still. Running his fingers through her palm and clasping his fingers through hers. Her hands are light and small. His hand next to her looks mammoth and dark. Sunbaked and leathery.

"Kunta?"

"Iye (yes), I think you know him, don't you?"

Once again, he had sighed. A

sigh of frustration wrapped in a broken promise. A sigh of abandoned want. As if the fact that she was seeing someone somehow negated all that he had felt since he walked through her door.

"By the way, I better get going. I have to head back to Mukono"—He had gone and sat at cafe Mocha for a late-night coffee that night

"Kaale, kasta ondabyeko... (okay, at least you checked in on me...)" She had said after a long pause.

"Iye (yes), it's getting late."—It was only nine something. "There is jam to Mukono you know"—He has never minded the jam.

"Bye Benezeri!" "See you around sometime."

She is standing at the door, and despite being a tall, well-framed girl, she had looked petit, frail and fragile opposite his bulk.

"Bye Nallah" "see you around." He had answered standing on the threshold, clutching his satchel ready to leave. The last words had been lost in a whisper as if

refusing to participate in the lie. As if they had known too well would not be seeing her again anytime soon if he has anything to do with it. She was another man's woman now!

She had hugged him good him. Except, she had lingered. She had not pulled away even as she felt the bulge at the front of his pants. His hands had slid over her shoulders, neck, back, spine, her hourglass waist to the curve of her hips and the top of her butt. He could feel that she had not been wearing anything beneath the thin fabric. He had smiled as he lets go, turning around to walk away. One step, two steps three steps...

"What happened to Saturday?"

The text still demands an answer. The debate remained unsettled... to tell the truth, or to lie?

To tell Tasha that on Friday before the Saturday she demanded answers for he had called Aminallah?

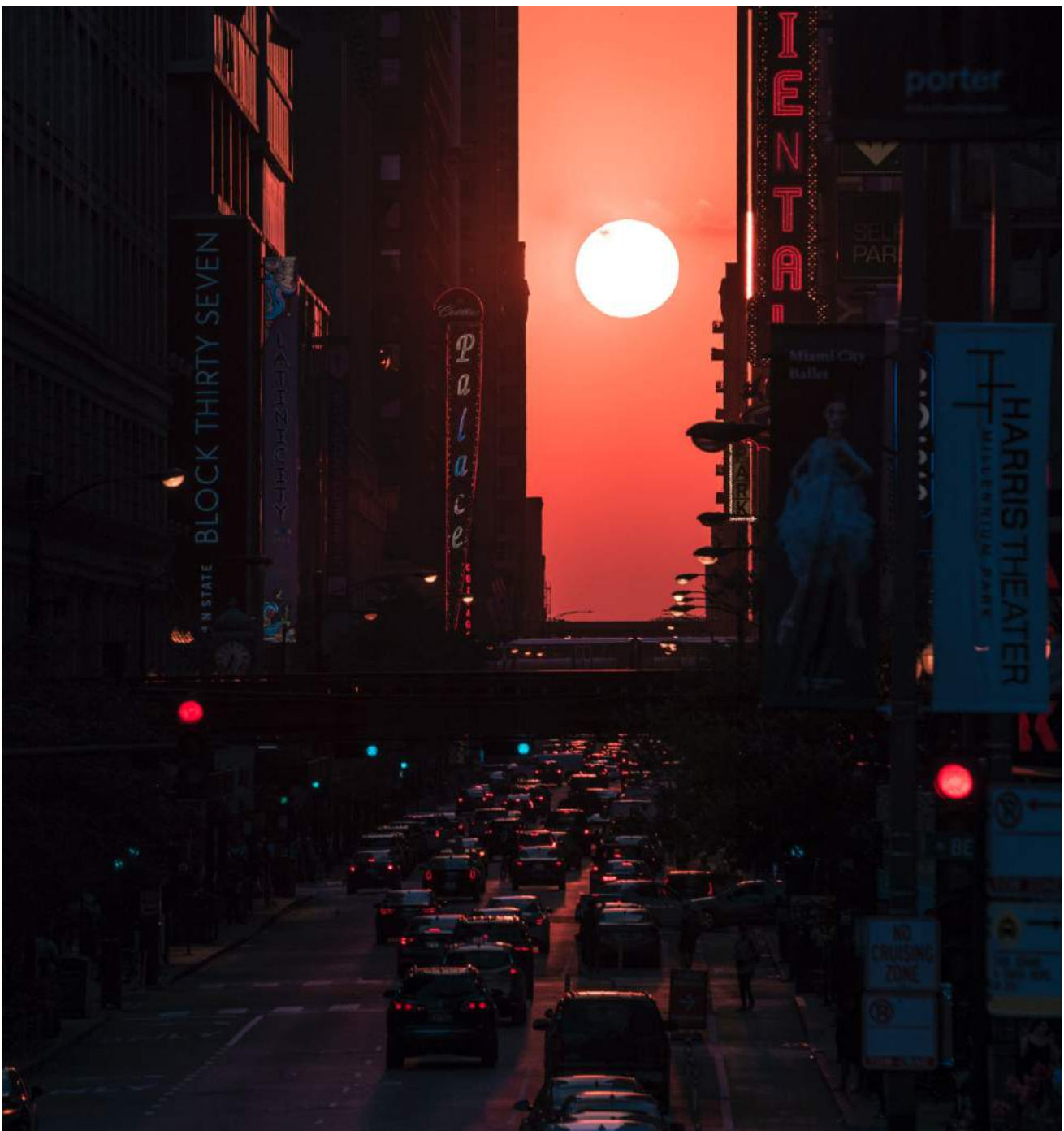
That she had picked up his call, not happy he is calling late, but happy he is calling anyway. That they for hours on end as old, old friends often do, reminisce the old times, and as she laughed at his jokes about how much he has prayed that she and

Kunta would break up soon. She had told him she felt his bulge that day. That she too had burnt with a desperate longing for him to touch her, kiss her slow, steady, smooth, tender, raw...That she had hoped he would stay the night. That she had

worn nothing underneath her short, short thin cotton dress hoping...

To tell Tasha he had gone to see Aminallah that Saturday? Or...

What happened to Saturday?



# || An Act of Worship

**Somtochukwu Okoroafor**  
Nigeria

He was a priest:

Every morning the boy would rise with the sun to worship at the altar of Eros.

Sole venerator in a temple of flesh; it was his hands that lifted, that reached below to soothe and stroke, to pull and tug, to stoke the glowing embers on that altar into a flame that would grow and grow until it consumed him. It was his mind that recalled, his body that sang and raged and roared.

He was altar:

A fire burned on that altar. Sometimes it smouldered, a bed of embers pulsing redly. Other times it raged, an inferno, sending waves of heat coursing through his veins. It was a muezzin's call--a throbbing, aching need that made his skin warm and his mouth dry.

He was sacrifice:

It was his body that was offered up--consumed. The priest would stroke, the fire would roar, and the flesh would throb as his heart raced in an ecstasy of worship that would end--always too soon--in a moment of utter, orgasmic bliss.

He fed the fire with memories:

The woman who jogged past his house every morning, breasts bouncing underneath her too-tight top; the much-savoured glance of her jiggling behind.

The young teacher at his school whose smile made his heart race; the memory of the time she touched his arm and let her hand linger for a few seconds.

The woman he glimpsed one afternoon with skin the

colour of coffee beans and eyes that pierced his soul, lips that parted to reveal even white teeth.

There was always fuel for the fire: fat and thin, short and tall, fair and dark.

He wanted them all, and in those brief, stolen moments before the light of the sun poured into his room and his mother came knocking, they were his; fuel for his fire, idols on his altar, salves to soothe the aching wound from the winged god's tainted shaft.

Later, in the wake of Onan's sin, when the fire had consumed itself and had sunk down again to embers; waves of shame flowed over him, rushing along the pathways left by the retreating flames and slowing his racing heart.





In his mind, a tiny, oft-ignored voice often cried out in protest, and on some level, he supposed it was wrong, this utter surrender

to the caprices of the flesh. But he was fifteen, and all women were beautiful, so in the end, he always went back to the altar; to feed the

flame that is desire incarnate, longing personified.



# Lights Out

**Chris Baah**  
Ghana

Like touching gob3 packaged in a polythene, her succulent breasts on mine, I felt like a character in Kamasutra as she hugged me.

Seated opposite each other in the restaurant ; her thighs, dark and enticing as chocolate, all I wanted was to eagerly but slowly move my toes down into the moisture of her thighs. As she ate ice cream, I could only see my lips being the spoon she licked at every scoop.

I didn't want to give those guys another chance to admire her assets ; so, we talked for hours into the night. I don't blame them ; I also loved what her behind said. Grippd by the skirt, you could imagine how lovely her ass would feel in its plump shape. It all had to be mine.

My balls were so hot and my little leg so hard ; we just wanted to play and score goals.

To get more private with her, fast ; I ordered a Bolt after our conversations. I could feel the warmth of her hands as we sat at the back seat with our hands coupled together. I coyly placed them on her thighs. It was so hot!

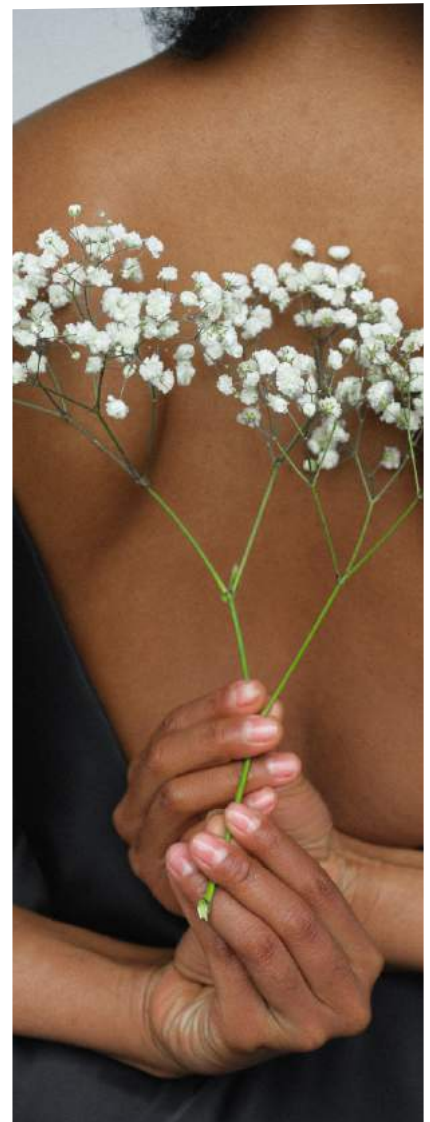
I couldn't wait to get to the house!

When we alighted from the car, I didn't hesitate when she offered me a glass of cold water.

I got into the house, in a split second, my imagination realised, she kissed me.

In my head, I played « Smooth Operator », for a Smooth Operator I was going to be. As our bodies

moved, suddenly, lights went out. Like a footballer playing in the field at night, my little leg got soft. The lights took my hardness with it, leaving my lust for her, all what it really was, a dream.



# Jackal and The Juicy Fat Meat

Oratile Mmeya  
Botswana



Jackal's tongue was out, drooling, imagining his teeth sinking into the juicy fat zebra meat. His friend Leopard was rolling on the ground with laughter. Leopard never got tired of teasing Jackal for his obsession over the meat in King Lion's storage. Likewise, Jackal never got tired of desiring the meat in Lion's storage. Leopard had tried several times to advise him to learn to be satisfied with the little they had but his friend never listened. He even dreamt of it and his mumblings always woke Leopard from sleep.

King Lion and his family hunted big fat game while Jackal and his friend Leopard could only catch small animals. Jackal was fed up with eating rabbits, reptiles and birds. As a result, he insisted they take a path that passed behind Lion's meat storage every time they finished hunting, just so he could admire the juicy fat meat there.



One morning Jackal insisted they take the path behind Lion's meat storage when they left for their hunting. Leopard refused knowing well that his friend would get lost in thought obsessing over Lion's meat and delay their hunting. But after much persuasion from his friend he agreed. That morning Jackal could not focus on their hunting as he was distracted thinking about the fresh juicy fat meat he saw in Lion's meat storage. The two friends could not catch anything and Leopard was so furious with

Jackal and he took a different path back home. Jackal was disappointed too but still, he could not resist taking the path that led to Lion's meat storage. Lion and his family were basking in the morning sun. Jackal knowing he could not steal the meat without getting caught, came with a better plan. He took sticks, leaves and threw them into the meat storage, ran home and pretended he was sad when he saw Leopard. Jackal told Leopard that he saw the King's meat storage in a bad condition as there was litter everywhere so it would be a good idea to ask the King for permission to clean it. Seeing Leopard hesitant, he went on telling him that the food storage room should be clean to avoid the King eating bad meat and falling ill. Finally, Leopard gave in and agreed. In front of Lion, Jackal showed concern for the King's wellbeing, this impressed Lion.

Lion allowed them to clean his meat storage in return for a bag of meat each. The two friends readily accepted the job and got to work. As they were cleaning, Jackal could not hold himself and told Leopard that they should eat the fat off the meat to satisfy their hunger for some time but Leopard refused knowing very well that they would be punished for stealing. Jackal pretended like he understood. They cleaned quickly and when they were done, they sat by the door of the storage room waiting for Lion. Leopard, aware of Jackal's tricks kept an eye on him lest he got them in trouble with the King. Jackal knew

Leopard's weakness so he started humming a sweet melody that lulled his friend to sleep. When Leopard started snoring, Jackal sneaked into the storage and started eating the fat off the meat bit by bit. When the fat was finished he took a small bite of the meat and he kept on eating and eating the delicious meat.

Jackal realised when his stomach complained that he not only ate the fat but half the meat in the storage. Panicking he saw his snoring friend and wiped his mouth with Leopard's tail and ran off. Leopard was still snoring when Lion's roar woke him from his

sleep. Leopard realising what his friend had done tried to explain but Lion could not believe him because his tail had all the proof. Leopard was chased from the king's compound without his pay. While Leopard was walking home, hurt by his friend's betrayal, he heard someone groaning behind a tree. He went over to see, and he saw his friend Jackal rolling on the ground, holding his stomach. He was in pain and needed help but Leopard still angry with him said, 'When you steal, you get punished. When you betray friends, you lose them.' and continued walking.





## **Shortlist - 2021 African Writers Awards (AWA) and the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature**

A month ago, I announced the longlist on behalf of the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), Writers Space Africa Foundation, and Writers Space Africa – Tanzania (WSA-Tz). Our panel of judges made up of Nahida Esmail (Tanzania), Gankhanani Moffat Moyo (Zambia), Sabah Carrim (Mauritius), Nabilah Usman (Nigeria), Comfort Nyati, SDB (Zimbabwe), Temani Nkalolang (Botswana), Halieo Motanyane (Lesotho) and Namse Udosen (Nigeria) have gone over the longlist and have selected six of the best entries per award category.

For this third edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature, there will be three winners. The first-place winner will receive a certificate along with \$150. The second place will receive \$100 while the third place will receive \$75. For the African Writers Awards, there will be only one winner per award category. Each winner will receive a certificate and \$100.

We are pleased to present the shortlist in alphabetical order:

### **African Writers Awards**

#### **Creative Non-Fiction**

1. Adetutu by Adedoyin Adetutu (Nigeria)
2. Cultural Partnership for a Common African Future by Saliha Haddad (Algeria)
3. Is This Legacy by Oluchi B. Kolanisi (South Africa)
4. Long Live the Comrade by Peter Zowa (Zimbabwe)
5. What Our Tales Entail by Jesse Bitrus Danjuma (Nigeria)
6. Whispers of the African Sun by Enoch Akinlabi (Nigeria)

#### **Drama**

1. A Country Called Africa by Dancan Ouma Obuya (Kenya)
2. Eating With Chopsticks by Gordon, B. Away (Kenya)
3. Fostered from a Thought by Irene Melissa Ojoro (Kenya)
4. Right in the Middle by Akinkunle Johnson (Nigeria)
5. The Twist by Bernard Diesuk Lucas (Nigeria)
6. Zige by Ebinabo Fortune Robert (Nigeria)

#### **Poetry**

1. All You See, All You Don't See Poem by Joseph Olamide Babalola (Nigeria)
2. In the grave of the brave by Clara Wanjira Kariuki (Kenya)
3. Mother Africa is like a Highway in a Metropolitan City by Basethile Ngcubo (South Africa)
4. Not in the Tears of Yesteryear by Raphael Edookue Bariweremeloo (Nigeria)
5. The Dining Table by Overcomer Ibiaduradara Ibiteye (Nigeria)
6. The Doomed House by Jamin Clement Manyasa (Kenya)



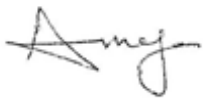
## **Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature**

1. Akaa and the Mango Tree by Chipalo Salimu (Zambia)
2. Kodjo Braves a Hi by Temidayo Odotokun (Nigeria)
3. Tea time with Tito by Stephanie Chizoba Odili (Nigeria)
4. The Enchanted Pen by Nathaniel Z Mpofu (Zimbabwe)
5. The Millionaire Orphan by Makhago Peter (Uganda)
6. What Does it mean to be Kind Anyway by Kendi Karimi (Kenya)

The winners will be announced on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October during the 4<sup>th</sup> African Writers Conference (AWC) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The conference will be livestreamed on our social media pages and uploaded to our website.

The AWC is hosted this year in partnership with the Department of Literature in the University of Dar, and Alliance Française of Dar Es Salaam, and African Tales. This is made possible thanks to the kind sponsorship of Feza Schools, Fintengo Schools, Our Son's Bakery and Writers Space Africa.

The conference is supported by Ijemo Gallery, Africa in Dialogue, Brittle Paper, Southern Writers Bureau – SWB, Rosebud Editing & Proofreading, Self-Ish, Writers Guild Kenya (W/GK), Kalulu Kreativez, The Roaring Writer, Colour Culture Arts, Authorship and Career Network, Nib Hub, SOTRANE Publishers, 23.35 Africa, the International African Writers Association (IAWA), and the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT).



Anthony Onugba  
Chief Judge,  
2021 African Writers Awards

For the web version, visit – [www.africanwritersconference.com](http://www.africanwritersconference.com)

# Lust is Loss

**Bismark Kimbi**  
Cameroon



Lust has fathered children, who are lost  
In nature, they infect the land like locust,  
They have assaulted this gorgeous grape  
And other fruits, without mercy, they rape.

It is because of insatiable lust for powers  
That mongers have silent flourishing  
flowers,  
This has nursed wrath like magma from  
crust  
And sows strife that has ended in a  
holocaust.

Because of lust, there are false prophets  
Who, from poor masses, amass profits,  
Because of lust, medics have missed  
surgery  
Because of lust, teachers embrace  
treachery.

Lusty leaders have sold nations' future  
Matured youths are not nurtured to  
feature  
So that the gerontocracies can reign still  
And the dreams of daring youths, they kill.

Lust, man has caused havoc because of  
you,  
Now, man is more nitwit than an ewe,  
For ewes are not Lesbos nor are  
adulterous  
Neither are they callous and monstrous.

Lust, you are cruel, you've murdered trust,  
You ravish more than locust and holocaust  
People who embrace you think you're  
gain,  
But to them and to humanity, you're pain.



# Longing

Paul Muindi  
Kenya

The aura of life pervades me with peculiar  
feelings,  
Longing grieves me  
Over idle time -hours of leisure  
Oblivious of reality;  
This aching in my bones, all joints...

My blood boiling,  
Boiling on this sight  
All for the malaise of my brain,  
With deep panting breaths  
With strength as if to draw any beauty and  
charm.

Helpless to control it, my heart's...  
Passion so intense with inner desires,  
Desires of weakness and passion  
Have absorbed me, overwhelmed me,  
I'm a mortal unable to abate passion.



# ||| Lust

**Ellen Boakye**  
Ghana

From my toes it seeps,  
Through my blood it lashes  
As it wills my being,  
The warmth spreads through my being.  
As it feeds on my wants;  
Opens my bottle of needs  
Tames my primal instinct  
Only to release it as it's time,  
It knows the passion within  
And the desire it withhold  
It gnaws at my core  
And melts my sanity  
It nibs away my stamina  
And the world fades as I surrender  
As I daze within and without  
It sobers me up, a lie as it latches upon me  
And I watch as it savages my civilization  
It threads in a wake as it seeks  
Daring me to undo myself  
And whilst I hold unto it  
My beloved gazes bewitch me  
In the depth of his eyes  
As I come undone  
And I know he undid me.





# ||| Porridge, Always

Hangiriza Benedict  
Uganda

Hot and honey-tinged danger  
Upon a wooden table by porcelain glued;  
And breath that tangs the air  
Remotely above a creamy crown.

Below the beat of my breast, a cultic need-  
Thickset, you lean towards the threshold  
Of drowning my tongue, and pain;  
Thickset- when the brittles of grips  
Goes back and forth.

In thin slurps you leap,  
Past chalk-white teeth you whip;  
And the softest of licks goes back and forth

As cherry-colored cheeks stay in grief,  
Dolloping down,  
Hearty absorber of trouble;  
As searchlights finger my room,  
Subject me to a staple feat  
Till the sands of corn run out.



# ||| Your Charm is a Sham

**Modester Chinonyelum Alo**  
Nigeria

Your eyes speak volume, of things;  
You would rather withhold—  
My body is the paradise you seek;  
Tucked between your legs are your needs.  
You pile them in your pipe  
Your eyes stray to my curved chest  
While you speak of friendship  
You assault your lips with your tongue  
Every time my mouth caves in a smile  
At your dry jokes, so when you hide  
Your intentions under the hood of love  
I scratch them off like dandruff  
And hug your offer with open arms  
Sucking your lies off your shaft  
My dreams of intimacy lie, buried  
In your fake emotions— you're  
Glass, too transparent for my spectacle  
Never drown me in your lies nor kiss  
The ground I walk— just worship me  
On your knees— this is a language  
My body understands  
Shame has no place here...



# Thirsting

Nicole E. Gandaho  
Benin Republic

Take a sip from me  
Sip from the depths of my wells.

Won't you drink from me?  
Drink me down like a man athirst.

Have a taste of me,  
Taste of my untempered delights.

Won't you explore me?  
Delve into the fountain which is my soul,  
So deep, my treasures you'll unfold.

Drink from my flaming waters,  
Burning yet satisfying.

Won't you sip from my raging currents?  
Drink tirelessly from my lips.







PoeticAfrica  
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# Journey

**Hearts on Fire**

Chikapa Bernadette  
Malawi

**À La Croisée Des Chemins**

Nelson Kamkuimo  
Cameroun

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Genre: Article

Title: Worry About The Inside Not The Outside

Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana

Fashion has become a great drive of rejuvenation in our lives. From changing our wardrobes to suit modern trends to undergoing medical procedures to meet millennial standards of beauty, we tie the heads of our soul to its knees in pursuit of splendour which will evoke a great transition of our physical lives. We disregard the consequences and move along with the flow while tattering our souls and minds on the bumpy roads of carnal pleasures. 'Worry about the inside and not the outside' reflects our negligence to the needs of our emotional and psychological wellbeing while we spend our lifetime bettering our physical self.

The article further espouses the carnage we submit our souls and minds to in our efforts to change our physical beings. We work tirelessly our whole lives and deprive our souls and minds of their needs. We are in a 'rat race' chasing that which glitters and spend less time granting our inner selves their desires and paying attention to those that surround us. The world now acknowledges those in a haste to acquire the wealth it possesses, so much so that it cares less of how much we fry ourselves in such ventures. The world is creating eco chambers viable for the growth of emotionless and soul worn-out beings. Our cravings for vanity remain our topmost desire. The desire to leave a formidable legacy blinds us from the very key aspects of our lives that deserve more attention. Relationships are broken, tension rises day in and out between couples and we continuously lose touch with our roots. We invest much time in staying in touch with modernity while our social and psychological lives deteriorate. Our physical state will matter less if we neglect our emotional and mental wellbeing.

Luqmaan Rawat approaches the theme from an introspective perspective which enables the reader to relate very well with this article. It's an approach that relates to contemporary issues in our immediate environment.

**Genre: Short Story**

**Title: My Moonlight**

**Writer: Kanyamale Lusajo, Tanzania**

**Reviewer: Anthony Nwagbaoso Onyeador**

The story tells about the struggles of a woman who is faced with challenges so difficult to overcome and from a defeatist point of view. The scenes of unbearable battering, loss of a child, marriage against her will and expectation of a new child simultaneously plays out on the character. Should there be a solution provided, it would be gunned for effortlessly. The other principal characters: Bamako her husband, the alarmed woman and midwives did not give her support as expected.

The story began with the central character, Elenja. She's about to expect a child and was heading for the farm as early as 5 am. She was between worlds of the baby she's heavy with and her former lover. Though she couldn't do much there, it was cut short as a woman raced with news about her son she already had, Chiko. This child is perceived to be Daniel's. Struggling to know what is on, she followed this woman to her house where it dawned on her eventually and without remorse for Chiko's death who'd been bitten by a snake.

Next, she battled for proof which was stopped by Bamako her husband, with the battering she has been used to, at first only to find her way later and was dragged out by him, pulling her hair. Then the water broke and the moment of delivery set in with midwives to cater. Thus as she was delivering her baby girl, Chiko was lowered to the earth.

The story creates a bittersweet of a woman's travails as described at the beginning with the resilience of hope with the new child. Elenja has found a moonlight with untold future of marital life with a strong-willed but ruthless husband, work at the farm and a chauvinistic community. Time will tell when she'll eventually ponder it through.



Genre: Children's Literature

Title: Kachasu- The Rains Will Return

Writer: Patricia Ejang, Uganda

Reviewer: Tamunomiebi Mildred Enoch, Nigeria

**T**he Rains will Return is a beautiful, brilliantly crafted story written by Patricia Ejang from Uganda.

At first glance, one would think that the structure is a poem and then on a second glance, you'll realise this is a story.

Like stories, there is a beginning, middle and end.

There is simplicity of words for children to understand the story better. I like the poem that comes as a rephrase after a little telling of the story just like tales by Moonlight when a story is being told and accompanied by a song so that children will remember and understand the stories better.

Children will learn that grounds heal, birds sing, hills blossom, children sing, Rivers flow when the rains return. It goes to show the importance of Rain for mankind and the need for us to protect our environment. I like the imagery used and the figures of speech.

This is a short sweet story for children and even adults.

**Genre:** Flash Fiction

**Title:** The Last Duel

**Writer:** Aliu Olabanji, Nigeria

**Reviewer:** Lebogang Faith Samson, Botswana

Let me start by highlighting that flash fiction is not a smooth genre. It has its hiccups unfriendly with some writers, but as for my dear Aliu, you did marvellous work with this form of writing. Most importantly, you showcased the theme 'Rejuvenation' mystically than one would have imagined. Who would have thought that you would take your readers through a twisting labyrinth of African Magic?

Rejuvenation on its own has that 'thing' that makes the phrase appear classy... But the term only communicates restoration, resurrection; according to my understanding - new life! Our author, Aliu Olabanji from Nigeria, composed 'The last Duel', a beautiful title choice! In the story, we stumble into a fight between two brothers, Eshou and Agbara. Whatever they are fighting for is only known by them and their gods. What petrifies me is that the duo is killing each other on their own. There are no cheerleaders nor anyone to at least break the fight. It looks like they are in their world only: a world without people, animals or a thing, just them, the living beings. But what suspends me is the mention of Temi; was she Agbara's lady? Or was she theirs? Could she be the reason behind this blood spilling?

Whatever the brothers were fighting for is prodigious. One gripping moment that got my attention more is when Agbara summoned the spirits; what sort of powers does he possess? Is this some voodooism? I hope you all apprehend the twist that Aliu created here. I'm even very much convinced that this is black magic we see in some Nollywood movies. Since Agbara sensed he is getting defeated before he relinquished the fight, he decided to reminisce on his great memories with Temi to be the last thing in his mind when he dies. That beautiful moment he recalled rejuvenated his thoughts.

"We are the disease we are trying to cure..." now, this is very deep, hence another twist in this flash fiction - what disease are they talking about here? Are they even real people? I mean, look at the way they die; they melted and faded away. 'Normal people don't die like that. Like I said, this has black magic all over it.

According to Olabanji, the existence of these brothers made every living thing suffer, and they needed to have this 'Last Duel' to end the misery for resurrection to take place; Now look; the moment they disappeared into nothingness, there was life - hence rejuvenation. This flash fiction served its purpose as the theme is well elaborated, distinctively and the author ensured brevity very well.



**Genre: Poetry**

**Title: Fragrance**

**Writer: Victoria Ojo, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Sesame Mookodi, Botswana**

**T**he human condition requires a form of fatigue management laced with heavy doses of nostalgia. It is said that the sense of smell is the one closest linked to our memories, which is why the title Fragrance is a fitting one for a poem describing a rejuvenation that can only come from a place of permanent dwelling.

This stanza relays a scenario that almost everyone is familiar with, a period which we carve out to go home and recharge. It ushers us in with a personification of the whirlwind to enhance the effect of the adjective. The verb applied in this personification simultaneously introduces the mood; relaxation. The atmosphere is also given human characteristics. The diction used to describe it is a tool utilized by the writer to simulate the feeling of unity between the reader and poet; "Our brother's keeper", (S1, L3). The theme of familiarity is here.

This theme is carried on into the second stanza by introducing elements well known to every home; the elements that make it intimate. Part of the tapestry that makes each home a welcoming environment.

To capture the warm essence of home, the writer begins stanza three by metaphorically referring to home as love. A reiteration put in vice versa which not only suggests but redefines love, monopolising its meaning to home (which in this case refers to the family unit), home is love and love is home, (S3, L1). The writer begins to tap into the reader's senses, a tool we see repeat itself throughout the rest of the poem the first of which is happiness feeling like a racing heart (S3, L3). The next stanza implores the use of a metaphor to depict a mother's cooking as a call to home. Its effectiveness pours into the rest of the stanza when the sense of smell is enticed. A fragrance sweet enough to pave the way to the soul and in a nectar-like manner lure one into a trap they wish to stay in. This could be perceived as an oxymoron seeing as a trap involves actions contrary to intention but delight suggests gratification; delightful trap (S4, L4).

Stanza five leans heavier on personification. Elements of nature are used to describe a state of harmony which the writer suggests comes as second nature. The conclusion of the poem emphasizes intimacy by depicting the emotions as first-hand accounts that are experienced in the present tense.



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# Fulfillment

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VOL. 5 NO. 11



NOV. 2021 WRITERS SPACE AFRICA



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# Editor's Note

The sudden feeling of accomplishment that overwhelms one after reading a rather satisfactory piece of art, the November edition is here to serve you that fulfillment feeling.

The 2021 African Writers Conference just came to an end, which was a success, all thanks to the founder, Anthony Onugba, WSA Tanzania, and all the participants. A big congratulations to the AWA winners, you all fulfilled your goals of writing for a purpose, for the African and international audience.

In this edition, you will be privileged to have a glimpse at the AWC, as well as the fine fulfilling African literature. Enjoy.

**Neo Space-Poet Masetlane**

Botswana

Acting Chief Editor





**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

WSA, a monthly literary magazine, is calling for its 61st Edition (January 2022 Edition)

We accept submissions in the following categories;

- **Articles/ Essays** - 1,200 words maximum
- **Flash Fiction** - 300 words maximum
- **Poetry** - 1 poem, a maximum of 24 lines
- **Children's Literature** - 700 words maximum (illustrations may be attached)
- **Short Stories** - 1,500 words maximum

For this Edition, writers can write on any theme. Submission opens from October 20 and closes November 15, 2021

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

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# Your Life, Your Canvas

**Gitari Nyawira**

Kenya

nyawirankinga@gmail.com

In a few months I shall be turning thirty. Dirty thirty. Third floor, as many call it. Looking back at the last couple of years (say post twenty-five), I realize that my perspective on so many things has changed. If you asked me what fulfillment in the work place/in my career looks like back then, I'd have probably painted a mental picture of me working at a certain company, in a certain role, and earning a very specific amount of money. Over time however, my idea of fulfillment in the workplace has grown into more than earnings and the entity. The nature of the work environment for example is a crucial aspect for me now. Is it healthy or is it one of those organizations that has great remuneration but will drive you to the verge of insanity with its toxic work culture? Don't get me wrong, I am not implying that I do not appreciate a healthy cheque. No sir mister! I mean, how else will I pay for the trip to go shake what my mama gave me on a yacht in Dubai in a you-know-what.

Another area of my life in which the visualization of fulfillment has morphed is relationships. A younger

version of me would probably imagine the ideal relationship to be one where I spend quality time with my person, gallivanting across the country, him spoiling me and I him, just good vibes, good times and all things rainbows and unicorns. My current self though, would choose peace, faithfulness, respect, and security over all other flowery, heart-melting deeds. Much as I was privy to the importance of these values back then, they did not carry the same weight they do now. We could probably attribute their rise in the ranks to the premium tears shed in the course of life's school of character development but that's a story for another day. Either way, at this point in my life, if the road trips, quality time, and love bombing are accompanied by disrespect, gas lighting, manipulation, and abuse of any form then give me zero ma'am because I am not the one!

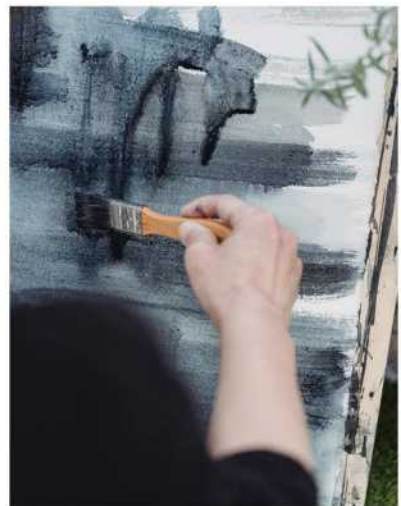
If you look at social media platforms, everybody seems to be living a very accomplished life. On Instagram for example, people are on vacations every weekend. Those not vacationing are either getting engaged, married or welcoming their bundles of

joy. Heck, there are some who are even getting engaged and going on vacations! Families are growing, friendships are thriving, partnerships are being forged and nobody is struggling. And that's just Instagram. We have not even gotten to LinkedIn, the Instagram for professionals where everyone is a boss and the owner of one company or another. In an age where there is so much visibility of other people's lives - even if just the highlights - it is very easy to get caught up in the rut of playing catch up, trying to emulate the seemingly perfect lives of others.

The Cambridge dictionary defines fulfillment as a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction because you are happy with your life. Question is, what does that look like for you? Is it living in a huge mansion built with your sweat and blood in the leafy suburbs of the city or in a decent, sizeable house with basic amenities, nothing lush or bourgeois? Is it a lifestyle of opulence, what many call the soft life, or one of simplicity and ease, not keeping up with the latest trends and scents? See, each person's concept of fulfillment is determined by a myriad of things - one's value system, their upbringing, past experiences and traumas, among others. Someone who comes from lack for example, may envisage a fulfilling life to be one in which they live in abundance, never being in lack. Someone who

comes from a background of abuse on the other hand, may imagine a fulfilling space to be one in which love, grace, and peace abound. Fulfillment looks different to different people.

As a society we need to understand that just because the other person's idea of fulfillment does not align with ours does not mean that they are wrong. Where one's idea of fulfillment may be based on their financial status, for others it may be defined by their quality of life, money or lack of it notwithstanding. We often hear stories of people looking down on others, mostly because of different financial status, those with less being deemed less ambitious or complacent. Truth is, there is a very thin line between fulfillment and complacency. It is easy for one to be comfortable





with being an under-achiever in the name of being fulfilled, which in my opinion, is a very sad way to live one's life. Sadly, at the end of the day, it's a personal call. Only you can introspect and honestly figure out whether you are fulfilled or being complacent.

In the same breath, only you can decide what fulfillment looks like for you. Once you do, you have to stand by your truth. You have to be willing and ready to live by it unapologetically, whether or not it makes sense to society. In today's society, people will constantly have unsolicited viewpoints on whatever decision you make. People who want riches will still be maligned by those who consider riches materialistic. Those who are pro simplicity will also be spurned by those who consider wealth essential. Despite the unwelcome voices in our lives, we have to be bold enough to live in our fulfillment and be at peace.

Also, virtual and physical society should extend grace to others, let people be. Maybe then it will be easier for social media influencers and those in the limelight to live life on their standards, within their budgets, and not bow down to societal pressure to put up facades of certain lifestyles. Maybe then more people will come home to themselves and embrace the reality and beauty of their lives, much as it may be different from what society paints as ideal.

As you go through life today, decide what fulfillment looks like for you, pursue it and live it out. Do not get caught up in the vicious cycle of comparison and competition lest yours be anything but a fulfilled stay on earth.



**Henry Ngeli**  
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# Fulfillment

According to St. Augustine, our hearts are restless until they rest in God. This implies that our hearts will only rest when they rest in God. Moreover, as long as one is alive, it is not possible to be in a complete restful situation. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word 'fulfill' as to do something that is expected, hoped for, or promised, or to cause it to happen. This definition does not in its entirety refer to the positive accomplishment of one's purpose or goals, instead it gives room for the ongoing process of striving to achieve those goals.

Since time immemorial, human beings have been striving to fulfill their life goals and missions. When people embark on specific tasks and their results match their expectations, they tend to be fulfilled. However, does that really define or equal the term fulfillment? If otherwise, can a person really be fulfilled or attain fulfillment? This article attempts to offer an explanation in a layman's way.

It is in every human's nature to fulfill his or her ambitions in life, but due to the different life situations we face,

things do not usually go our way. This has continued to be a struggle especially in today's cruel world. For many people, fulfillment simply means happiness; this implies that when one is happy, regardless of their experiences or situations, they are fulfilled. Having said this, it makes way for the question, what makes someone happy? This question is very important because we know how temporal happiness can be sometimes. However, it is good to be positive as there are a number of genuine reasons to be happy. When asked what fulfillment means to her, one of my social media friends simply said, 'being happily married and enjoying life.' For her, fulfillment means finding a good husband and the rest follows. This makes it all the more obvious how we all have relative approaches toward fulfillment.

In all that people go through, we all hope for better results and so it is very important to wish everyone you meet well because people go through a lot in life. You may never know how your good wishes can transform someone's life. Due to different life strata and the differences in

how we approach life, we cannot have one way towards fulfillment. It is also a sad reality to note that some people are rich and others poor and that is why when speaking of fulfillment it generates so many questions.

As kids, we looked up to completion of our high school studies as fulfillment of our life. Having reached there, we began another academic journey at institutions of higher learning and so here, graduation was seen as fulfillment. Well, what comes after graduation? I know a number of people who have been seeking for employment for many years while some have already given up; but, where they are now is what they once thought of as fulfillment. Another example is a woman who after getting married realizes that life is not all about having a husband or being married, her experiences wound her, she gets frustrated and decides to quit marriage. Meanwhile this same woman equated fulfillment to marriage. There are a number of practical examples that can be listed, however, it is important to note that we do not all the time see things as they are but as we see them. Our expectations do not always come out as we imagine and this frustrates our desired fulfillment plans.

Psychologists say that life is not a straight jacket, this means there are



ups and downs to be encountered as one moves along. Certain things cannot be avoided. No matter what approach one chooses, they will meet challenges, but this should not discourage anyone from attaining fulfillment. This calls for determination and a hardworking spirit to be able to strive for the better. There are a number of hidden things in life that are yet to be discovered and that is by hope because it is not guaranteed. It is important to realize that every day is an opportunity for us to go back to the drawing board and begin anew or modify our plans as we journey towards fulfillment. This is very important to note especially in this fast changing world where everything can change any day, any time. W

need to be more flexible and open minded to welcome new challenges that we may encounter along the way. Fulfillment can be in simple and small things in life, often times the things we overlook.

Fulfillment does not just happen anyhow, something must be done and hoped for. More effort must be put into attaining the desired results. One cannot just sleep all day and night and expect to fulfill his or her life goals, maybe if for that person, fulfillment means sleeping, then they have been fulfilled, but what about others? Will those who once said they were fulfilled in life still say the same today if we are to ask them the same question? We may not be sure of their responses but we hope they would be able to give a positive response because we delight in people's achievements and not in their failures.



If fulfillment has to do with something we expect, hope for, or wish to happen, then we all at some point have attained fulfillment in one way or the other. However, as human beings we should never be remiss in doing well. Our aim should always be of higher caliber. We need to enjoy the process as we move along, even as we work hard and put in our best in order to achieve fulfillment. Let us always remember that hard work pays.

# Unfulfilling Dream Jobs

**Masemola Rebone**

South Africa

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It's true what they say, not everything that glitters is gold. More often than not, it's just party glitter that's blurring your vision. This is usually the case for big international organizations with a 'cult-like' public brand image that lures us all into wanting to be associated with what from the outside looks like an amazing dream place to work. I believed I would find fulfilment in the role.

In my case, it wasn't even a place I had dreamed I'd work. It felt more like a detour along the way that even I knew I couldn't refuse. It offered the opportunity to travel, exclusivity and access to events I didn't even have an interest in, a chance to interact with celebrities and other important people, and an exciting possibility to work in a place I assumed would be an authentically creative work environment because it was full of young and black creatives. But, what they sold me in those final interviews was the chance to work in a place that is run predominantly by black directors and managers. This was a novelty for someone who's only ever worked in agencies and companies that were spearheaded by white founders

and creative directors, where black creatives had very limited room for growth within those hierarchies unless they were unicorns. So, I thought this place was going to be different because the people at the helm looked like me, and therefore understood the struggle of being young and black.

The best thing about it was also that the opportunity came at a time when I was feeling restless and looking for something disruptive to get me out of my comfort zone. And this was definitely going to do just that since I wasn't going to be confined to my desk all the time – but I should have guessed that if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. In my defense, the company has such an allure and glamour about it. It's a nostalgic and iconic brand that still reminds me of my childhood, but it also embodies the signs of a brand that has all the flash but none of the essence on the inside, including an attractive leader with a charismatic personality.

I was so excited to join them, even more so when I realized that during





my first week the team was going away for a weekend for the end of year function and team building – not a bad week to start. I love traveling so this got me excited about all the free work travels that were coming. Admittedly though, even on that first trip, the red flags were starting to rear their ugly heads but I dismissed them with, “what company doesn’t have its flaws” and “you can’t please everyone all the time.” This was because employees were asked to send their leadership questions anonymously so they can be addressed and issues around misogyny and a lack of gender diversity within the leadership team were raised. True to the cause, the charismatic leader gave answers that allayed my fears and promised that they have plans to make changes – as a feminist, I wouldn’t want to work in a place that doesn’t prioritize gender equality. In retrospect, I was blinded by the excitement of FINALLY getting to work in a company that was led by Black and Brown people (unfortunately, they were mostly men).

The first 5 months felt like a dream, I literally couldn’t believe I got paid to do the job I did. Until the exhaustion started to hit and I woke up to the reality that I worked a 9 to 5 job (sometimes did evening events after work), 5 days a week and was expected to attend events on weekends and still function at full capacity. I was doing a job that was meant for more than one person. Those parties and the allure of access and exclusivity wore off very quickly for me, with the realization that my weekends were not mine. Other stuff also started to creep up, being hit by the reality that I worked in a toxic work environment where colleagues couldn’t even trust the person next to them to not throw them under the bus. I even began to experience anxiety because I’d often wake to a million WhatsApp messages every morning because another “urgent” thing happened and everyone was in a panic at 11 pm while I slept. Having to constantly be on edge because now I might be in trouble for being asleep instead of being responsive at an ungodly hour. At some point, it felt like we had “urgent” meetings every day because another thing that could have been prevented with better leadership and planning wasn’t. All of the stress was compounded by the fact that our team had a manager who wasn’t managing. Under her leadership, the team was always in a crisis due to her poor planning and inability

lity to execute the work she was hired for. So to avert her failure, she treated her team of grown-ass adults like children that needed to be scolded because she was failing.

When did I know I needed to walk away?

Well 10 months in, I wasn't able to see my family for extended amounts of time. If I wasn't working on weekends, I would be too burned out to exist. At this point the mere thought of going to the office filled me with crippling anxiety. I was doubting my own capacity to deliver work, questioning everything I did and making mistakes I shouldn't have made.

The most sobering part of that experience was that my manager was both young, Black and a woman. It was difficult to understand how she could treat the team so dismissively with her autocratic style of leadership. Up to that point, I had always thought having someone who looked like me as the lead would be life-changing (for the better), but she turned out to be the worst manager I've ever had. Even just writing this brings back to the surface those awful feelings.

I was discouraged by a few people about leaving 10 months into a job, cautioning that it would look bad on my resume. They advised me to



finish the year at least but I didn't even care at that point. I resigned without a backup plan after exhausting other options like bringing up the issue with her, talking to HR and going over our manager to talk to our MD. I exhausted all the options that were available to me, to no avail. When we complained, we were asked to be patient with her while she found her feet since she was a few months into the job. This meant us doing her job in addition to ours while she treated us like we did nothing all day. In the end though, I chose my peace of mind. She did ask me to stay when I resigned and even offered to move me to a different department, but I knew she was a symptom of a much bigger cultural problem within the business. I couldn't be a part of a place that enabled and rewarded behaviors like hers, because in reality, she wasn't the only manager who treated her team with such little disregard.

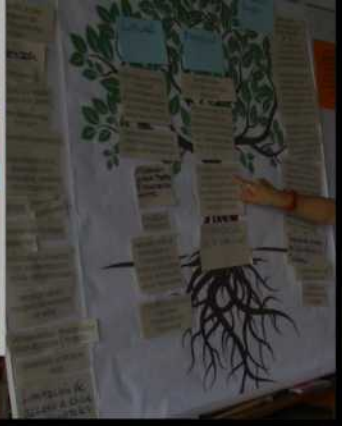
For a long time after I left, I didn't want to say out loud that my manager was actually a bully because I know how hard it is to find Black women in managerial roles in big companies like that. I cringed at the thought of describing another Black woman that way, but the reality was glaring. She was a BULLY.

I learnt from that experience that jobs will come and go, but my wellbeing should always be a priority. In the end, I was in a fortunate position to leave my job and take a few months to recover while doing freelance work for a while. Eventually, I was lucky enough to find a permanent place in another organization where I don't feel like work needs to be my whole life. I learnt a lot from that experience and kept it moving. Now I appreciate just how important it is to have a leader whose style of leadership fits with your needs as a person, as much as the job description.

Coming to terms with the fact that what I thought was a dream job, was just a job that haunted my dreams. Realizing that in reality, the idea of the job was more exciting than the job itself. There was such a big divide between what the job role promised, and the actual day-to-day experience of it. It wasn't my dream job, it was just the allure of a cult-like brand that got me. In the end, my perception of the place and the culture it promised

didn't materialize. I didn't feel any more empowered there than I did at those predominantly white agencies. What they promised was a marketing ploy – because although it ticked the right boxes as an organization that was Black and run with women managers, it wasn't that much different. It was a wolf in sheep's clothing. I didn't take the time to really interrogate whether what I was told about the organization was really representative, I wanted to believe, so I went in blindly. All the external glitter turned out to be broken glass shatters on the inside. Finally, I am at a place in my life where I found fulfilment. I now understand that I can't outsource my peace of mind and that no job can give me that. My feeling of fulfilment now comes from the inside.

neuroscience may yet cr  
neuroscientists Joshua Greene and Jo  
increasingly sophisticated  
neuroscience  
will that  
sense  
after all  
s you inherited  
gave you  
brains  
We will grow up  
is a thoroughly  
it is completely  
we may



El amor es lo  
el sexo, sólo ace



# Human Rights Defenders Poetry Challenge

## Why do you defend human rights?

- All levels of poetry experience welcome
- All styles of poetry accepted
- Multimedia submissions and creativity encouraged
- Poems accepted in English, Spanish, French, Swahili, Thai and Portuguese
- Top 3 poetry submissions win cash prizes



**Deadline for Submissions: 30th November 2021**





# Our Brief Heavenly Hour

**Kendi Karimi**

Kenya

kendik.biz@gmail.com

I am trying to love myself through your eyes because every time you call me sexy, it feels like a lie. This lie does not come from your lips but from my mind. You are like a wishing well, like a good dream on a bad day, so when I feel I am in pain, from your well I draw all thoughts that turn the remaining hours into a happy day.

My hand is on your chest, and so are the sun's rays. The gods are looking at us all perplexed for what we have seems like a play, but all our hearts are at rest on this morning of an April day. They can't predict what next we'll do but they know what is mine is yours too. They can't guess the words that will come running out of my mouth, but they know the words will come directly from my heart an

into yours.

Lying on this bed, you call me sexy again, and first I think about the stretch marks between my thighs before my mind reminds me of the extra fat flapping above my pelvic arch. You raise your head to kiss my neck as I sink in yours. My bed will smell like your body today, enough for me to sleep as if I'm in your arms. You ask me about my plan for the day but I'm still thinking about fat and stretch marks.

You meet and hold my gaze as we cherish our brief heavenly hour. You know about my insecurities but you don't point them out by name, instead, you show me how they hold no weight to you by kissing them over and over again. A cry from me is a call to you

that I should come collapse in your arms like the way a whale finds its mate when it sends its cries through the ocean waves.

I'm trying to love myself through the smile you paint when you look my way. When you call me sexy, I smile, say thank you, then look away. I am as happy as a bee in a giant flower field. Today it's my breast that's heaped upon your chest, six years after you first pressed your lips against them. And then it's seven, and then it's eight, and then it's ten years of you looking my way. What my lips can't say is that I'm still shy about my breasts weight. When you cup them in your palms as I press my skin closer to yours, I forget about their weight as my shyness fades away. But when



you release them from their happy day, they are met by the gravity of the earth, and the only way they can look is down at what's pulling them under.

My hand is on your chest where your hairs are now gray. I remember when I first feared to call you babe and now I do it every day. I remember my fat and my stretch marks, still present on me today in my winter days. When we were up and about like spring and her many colors, we were busy bees who still made time for each other. Now we lounge

on the couch with our eyes closed, my hip in pain, your lungs in strain, but we're young in the deep of our hearts. The children say, when asked by friends, 'we want a love like our parents'.

Strangers come and go when we're seated on a bench in the park and say, would you look at that! They want what we have but they don't know that it's your magic powers that have seen us through the seasons of our life. They don't know that you grew a field of flowers in my mind, and out of the dark, my shyness was dissolved like a candle in

the daylight. They should know that a good man is not the one who buys you flowers but one who comes with a water can to irrigate what seeds of flowers you already have growing in your heart. Love gives birth to love as pollen does to flower.

Lying in our bed, you call me sexy again, and first I think about how true that is and how silly yet lucky I have been to have a man like you with me. I think about the flat chested girl who wishes she had my heavy chest, then about the barren woman who wishes her



stretch marked hips had been where mine have been, then about the virgin girl who's too shy to let her stomach be seen as I'm pinned under the love of my life like a mattress is pinned under the sheets. I have loved myself through the smiles you have painted all along our days and though we have had our gray moments, we have never let the day sleep in the height of anger.

You meet and hold my gaze as we cherish our brief love making hour before my hip and your lungs launch a complaint.

You have known about my insecurities but you have never pointed them out by name, instead, you've shown me how they hold no weight to you by kissing them over and over again. A cry from me is a call to you that I should come collapse in your arms, like the way a whale finds its mate when it sends its cries through the ocean waves.

You meet and hold my gaze as we're lying on this bed. My hand is on your chest, and I have fallen in love with myself.

# African Writers Awards



With gratitude to Writers Space Africa Foundation, African Writers Development Trust, and Writers Space Africa (Tanzania Chapter), I present the winners of both the 2021 African Writers Awards (AWA) and the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature. This was announced on the 2nd and final day of the 2021 African Writers Conference held at the University of Dar es Salaam on the 9th of October, 2021.

Special thanks go to the panel of judges; Nahida Esmail (Tanzania), Gankhanani Moffat Moyo (Zambia), Sabah Carrim (Mauritius), Nabilah Usman (Nigeria), Comfort Nyati, SDB (Zimbabwe), Temani Nkalolang (Botswana), Halieo Motanyane (Lesotho) and Namshe Udosen (Nigeria).

Below are the winners.

**African Writers Awards for Creative Non-Fiction (\$100)**

Adetutu by Adedoyin Adetutu (Nigeria)

**African Writers Awards for Drama (\$100)**

Eating With Chopsticks by Gordon, B. Aywa Anjili (Kenya)

**African Writers Awards for Poetry (\$100)**

In The Grave Of The Brave by Clara Wanjira Kariuki (Kenya)

**Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature (1st place \$150, 2nd place \$100, and 3rd place \$75)**

The Millionaire Orphan by Makhago Peter (Uganda)

Tea time with Tito by Stephanie Chizoba Odili (Nigeria)

The Enchanted Pen by Nathaniel Z Mpofu (Zimbabwe)

Congratulations to all the winners. Please visit [www.africanwritersconference.com](http://www.africanwritersconference.com) to read the stories

**Anthony Onugba,**

Chief Judge,

African Writers Awards



# Call for Submission

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her February 2022 edition.

*An African country's anthem ends with "peace and unity". Can African countries boast of being peaceful and united? Have we (not) lost the humanity in us? Write and submit your poem under the theme **UBUNTU**.*

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality. Please note that the poem titles should not have the word "Ubuntu".

The submission window is from November 10th until December 10th 2021. The edition will be released on **February 10th 2022**. Only poets of selected entries will receive feedback due the huge volumes of submissions.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrica>. Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted but must be accompanied by equivalent translations in English.





# Wistful Wishes

Jewo Oghenetega  
Nigeria  
[oghenetegafaith59@gmail.com](mailto:oghenetegafaith59@gmail.com)

The labours of my past are seedlings I gave to the present  
To sow into my future; so as to reap a harvest of fulfilment

For years I have wandered the earth, searching for answers  
Whether or not destiny has anything in store for my life

Mother used to say "dawn is the colour of an inferno  
Called 'the future' who rages unchecked in heaven's chambers"

She'd say "dusk is the colour of wistful wishes birthed  
In the deepest crevices of mortal hearts", but even though

The sky takes on the colour of a fire long dead; yet these  
Tendrils of golden light still bear tales of hope & fulfilment

So, I'll exfoliate these ignorant idealisms that hold me bound  
In fetters of mediocrity and in the isolation of primitiveness

I choose to believe that my future was impregnated by my past  
And has now conceived all the outcomes that elude the present

So, one day, I'll stare through tomorrow's eyes and glimpse  
Sneak-peeks of today's elusive possibilities, getting fulfilled.

# Artistic Bubbles

Odirle Odirle  
Botswana.  
odirileaubreyj@gmail.com

A cloud of ideas hovering before your eyes  
Writing it with haste before it disappears  
Poets, novelists, playwrights must find fulfillment in ink and words, right?  
Or do they get envious when a painter holds a brush?

A silhouette memory glued to the back of your head  
Detailing it with a confetti of colors on your canvas;  
Drawers, painters, find their happiness in pencils and brushes, huh?  
I really doubt they ever wish it was them when a singer holds a mic.

An angelic voice that captures many hearts and souls;  
Eyes closed, mouth opened to let the melody hypnotize the audience  
Singers must find their joy in do re mi... I bet  
I don't think they desire to shake a leg the way dancers do.

Flowing to the beat of the drum is mesmerizing;  
Legs, hands, head, willingly bending to every note  
Dancers find satisfaction in moving to the beat, eh?  
No way they dream about holding a mallet to be a sculptor.

Carved fretwork, molded clay  
An adze in the right hand, a chisel in the left  
Sculptors probably feel whole when they play with clay and stone and metal  
They probably can't even imagine about being a writer; holding a pen.



# Small Steps

Hangiriza Benedict  
Uganda.

[hangithechampion@gmail.com](mailto:hangithechampion@gmail.com)

## Small Steps

Months thicken through  
the baby, with each dusk,  
limbs are frosted with dust.

From clay, bones seamed by  
practice climb out of a polar  
dream like meerkats, align

In a body rolling,  
arched over  
shadows.

Of walls and furniture  
with backbones,  
of stories the  
feet will tell,  
every step unlocks with  
tenderness,  
flint smiles slide  
with patience at  
the small animal's face.





# Saviour

At last, you came,  
Ropes you untied  
Undressed all the pain,  
Hope you fulfilled.

You took long,  
Then was May  
Your time was due,  
I held on all the way.

Lema Noel  
Tanzania  
[noelvalentino50@gmail.com](mailto:noelvalentino50@gmail.com)

# Yesterday's Tomorrow

Tumushabe Ritah,  
Uganda  
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Go back inside and open a book,  
You will play when the exam is done  
The Mother insists in her tenth year,  
The child obeys.

Stay away from boys,  
You will but tire of their advances...  
After you hold that prideful degree  
She tells her teenage daughter.

Get a job that pays the bills,  
Your dreams are not going anywhere  
At this point, it's not just the mother's  
But a society's song.

She's thirty, behind a paperwork filled desk  
And realization strikes her worn out mind,  
They were all wrong, dreams do not wait  
They get further with time.

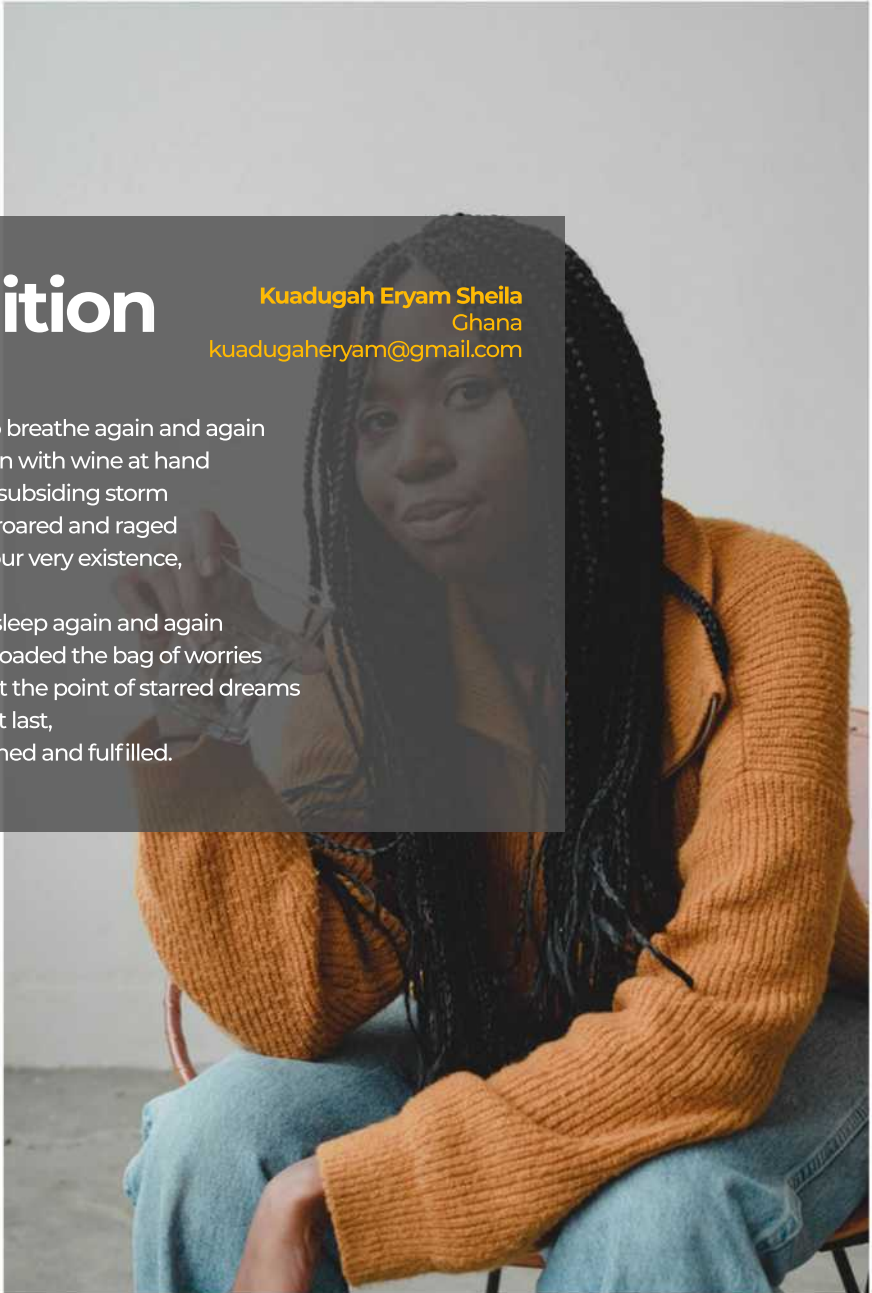
As a soft sigh leaves her lips, she vows  
To teach her daughter different,  
That a chance grabbed now  
Frees the heart from the pain of regret.

# Fruition

**Kuadugah Eryam Sheila**  
Ghana  
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A breath to breathe again and again  
In relaxation with wine at hand  
Sighting a subsiding storm  
That once roared and raged  
Shaking your very existence,

A sleep to sleep again and again  
Having unloaded the bag of worries  
Standing at the point of starred dreams  
Knowing at last,  
Accomplished and fulfilled.





# Midnight Rain

Lwanda Alex  
Kenya

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It is the pain  
we are yet to heal from  
which lingers,  
finding sanctuary in the chambers of our beating hearts.

It is the feelings  
we are yet to uproot  
which spread,  
piercing the emotional barrier beneath the armor  
Of our constricting chests.

It is the words  
we left unsaid,  
which build up,  
forming layers of silence on tongues  
bequeathed with salient words.

We now hate the way the warmth of our blanket reminds us  
of their hands wrapped around us,  
we hate the sound of a neighbor knocking to ask  
whether we need salt again.

We hate the way sunsets remind us  
of the memory of kisses planted on our lips,  
we switch off the radio whenever what used to be our song comes on.

So we let our tears escape the custody of our misty eyes,  
perhaps to find fulfillment in the pouring of the midnight rain.



# A million ways to the top

**Bokang Moshoeshoe**

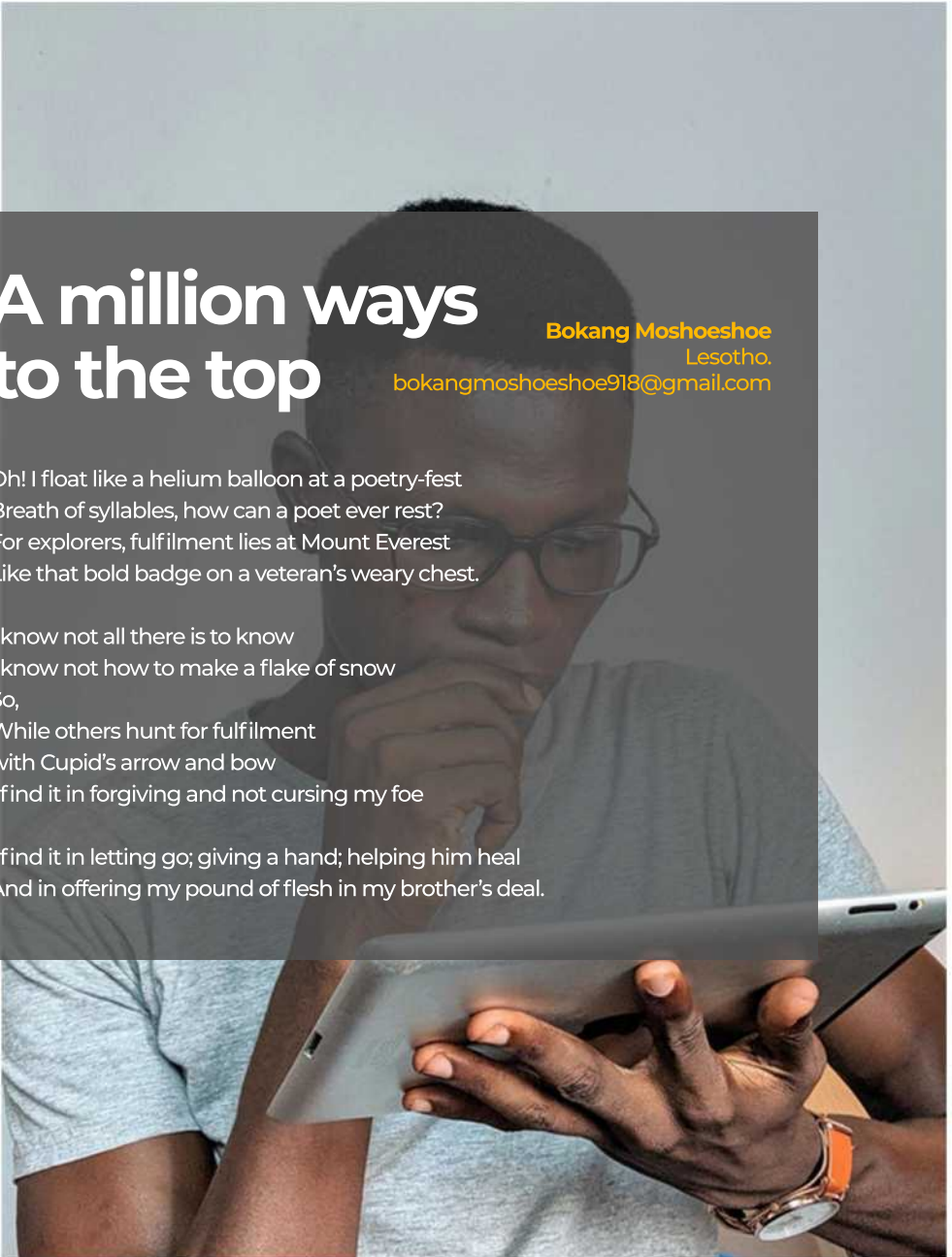
Lesotho.

[bokangmoshoeshoe918@gmail.com](mailto:bokangmoshoeshoe918@gmail.com)

Oh! I float like a helium balloon at a poetry-fest  
Breath of syllables, how can a poet ever rest?  
For explorers, fulfilment lies at Mount Everest  
Like that bold badge on a veteran's weary chest.

I know not all there is to know  
I know not how to make a flake of snow  
So,  
While others hunt for fulfilment  
with Cupid's arrow and bow  
I find it in forgiving and not cursing my foe

I find it in letting go; giving a hand; helping him heal  
And in offering my pound of flesh in my brother's deal.



**GENRE: SHORT STORY****TITLE: A COLD NIGHT IN AKRON****AUTHOR: OKWUASABA EBUBE; NIGERIA****REVIEWER: YOLANDA KUEI P. MACUEI; SOUTH SUDAN**

It's said that thinking about it and how is what kills; not the actual disease. A reflection of your image in the mirror is what you often believe to be the reality, not knowing that mirrors are manufactured distinctively to appeal to its sight. Similarly to the mindset, your thoughts, reflection, and perception of what the mind projects are the definition of your physical strength or weakness.

"Insomnia? Tobi asked. But what is the problem really? He further asked." Clinical depression- Dr Sam called it MDD; Major Depressive Disorder. As one starts to read through the epic short story "A Cold night in Akron" by Okwuasaba Ebube; "what is the root cause of all the problems to the point of MDD?" is the question that will pop up in one's mind as it relatively becomes answerable through deep thoughtful reflections of the past negative events that occurred in the life experience of the character 'You'.

The writer uses the second-person point of view "You". As a student at Ohio State University, through his life story of battling a mental health disease, MDD, which he got when he first lost his aunt and stress from academics. In this narrative, the writer applies simple language to help the readers explore the depths and explains the events in a realistic and relatable way.

The story relates to most African students' life, especially those studying overseas. The economic crisis back home is enough to traumatize a poor citizen. Academic stress that prevents one to keep their grades up. There's a devaluation of home currency, which ensures the need to spend huge sums of money for tuition. Tuition fees increase at times and can force one to drop out. On campus, a student might suffer from cultural shock and battle racism.

In addition, at some points, one might have no medical bill and so they have to self-medicate with painkillers or other pills.

All these contribute to Omo's mental trauma which later results in high blood pressure. In a nutshell, "A Cold Night in Akron" is a story that resonates with many struggling youths that are striving to make it in any phase of their life; within and across Africa. Without a choice left, they opt for thoughtful ignorance as a first-hand solution to the challenges until it's too late to be assisted accordingly. Major Depressive Disorder is real. It can be you, I or anyone.



**GENRE: ARTICLE****TITLE: TOO LATE TO REGRET****WRITER: TINASHE MUZONDO, ZIMBABWE****REVIEWER: JOSEPH ODURO, GHANA**

The glitters beyond this continent have lured many young Africans into great misfortunes in their search for greener pastures. Most end up in gang-related crimes while others depend on jobs that come with menial wages. "Too late to Regret," tells us the story of one of the many young Africans who sought for any means possible to leave the continent, only to be countenanced with series of misfortunate circumstances.

This narrative article reflects the contemporary phenomenon of our continent while signifying the deplorable conditions that young African men of today have to endure outside their homes. It kicks off with the most daunting question, which is why most Zimbabweans who travel abroad barely return home. Most of the time we are geared to believe this happening is mainly due to their refusal to return to the lives they longed to escape from. We only get to know in this article that it is a result of their inability to face the shame they would have to endure as they have nothing to show from their travels.

Greener pastures are said to be wherever we find ourselves and our chances of becoming better than we are today, are relative to our efforts and hard work. It is indisputable that the stakes are high elsewhere but without conscious strategic plans and relentless efforts, we are bound to fail and end up worse than before. Having had to endure hardships abroad and our refusal to return to our roots, push us into succumbing to any means that may fulfil our aspirations

No matter how far we may be from home and how worse our situation may be, resorting to crime and illegal activities would only accentuate and delay the shame we refuse to face today. It's not too late when we accept the reality of the stakes present to us. It's only late when we live on while ignoring reality in pursuing our goals.



**GENRE: POETRY****TITLE: TRUE DECORATION****WRITER: JAINABA DANSO, GAMBIA****REVIEWER: CHIDIEBERE UDEOKECHUKWU, NIGERIA**

The skin is a divine ornamental relic, and so nothing is left for wonderment at the title that Gambian poet, Jainaba Danso had picked for her beautiful poem. Her proclamations in the poem have not strayed from the notion that there is no better substitute for the God-given colour of one's skin. In her own words, it is a "True Decoration".

Think thus of the first 2 lines:

What could be older than time and even shine in the darkest?

The answer is much closer than you may have thought. If the October edition of WSA – ROOTS implies beginning, source of existence or life, then it is easy to understand that Jainaba's poem eulogises the black race—in the ensuing beautiful ways:

First and foremost, the poet appreciates the black identity from the literal perspective of Colouration. Begin to imagine the nature of the Black hue—how it is the absorption of all colours of light. Perhaps, to entertain this conception will inspire a bold realisation that speaks to the dominance of this peculiar colour. Black matches any other colour, without exceptions. Doesn't this imagination inspire the notion that "Black" is the mother of colours? If you have not laboured in understanding the points afore portrayed, you will thus find it seamless in appreciating the first 2 lines of Jainab's poem. What could be older than time? "Nothingness" perhaps—which glows even in the darkest. There is no better way to extol the immortality of the black race.

The understanding above gets better because this poem is an uncanny allusion to Yolanda Mabuto's "My Black is Beautiful". To boldly emphasise the points aimed here, the first stanza of this magical poem by the Zimbabwean poet is reproduced below:

Ebony haze shimmers over my body --- over my bones  
 Distant ancestors speak of\_\_past and future birthstones  
 My roots whisper through my veins, through my hair  
 My lips, my eyes, my hips -- secrets from my African heir

As a matter of corroboration, anthropologists generally agree that humans first evolved in Africa—and much of human evolution occurred there. Does this not speak highly of the truth that the "Root" of all races of humanity is the Negro? Maybe, these utterances above, form the core of Jainaba's contemplations as far as this poem is concerned.





Yet another way through which she has extolled the black race is through a trinity of dazzling metaphors.

Consider line 3: "Beauty is my signature"

Line 6: "Love is my Mother,"

And the very last line: "I'm her black muse".

There is a conscious attempt to make the reader aware of what being black ideally embodies. These beautiful metaphors have a compelling effect of proving the points that the poet persona portrays in these aforementioned instances. Is there a need for better analogies here?

In line 10, there is once more, a beautiful allusion to the age-old idea that the black race is humanity's origin.

Consider the line: for all men are born black

Meditate on line 8: "Don't measure my worth"

And line 9: "with mere colours"

Here the poet dissuades society's vice of prejudice based on colour — perhaps alluding subtly to a poem titled KALI by Heme G, published via Facebook on the 10th of April 2018. The poem x-rays the struggles of dark-skinned people (women) in the (Indian) society. The first stanza is particularly didactic:

It was my mother's fault that she birthed  
Me on the banks of Kaveri  
For try as they did they could not wash the black  
Alluvial soil off my skin

The poem above eventually ends on a high note, as it extolls the beauty and bravery of being dark-skinned.

Perhaps, lines 12 to 19 refers to the human race as a forest where there are trees of different kinds. These trees can only symbolise the different races that comprise humanity. Perhaps, the actual identity of the giantess whose reflections brighten the gloomy forest can be gleaned from this piece. The shadow of the behemoth shrub dulls the gloom in the forest. The poet persona makes a witty allusion again to the quality of "darkness" and proudly identifies with her race as being the true dark muse of the Negro.

Is there a better way of inspiring more contemplations on the African Heritage? This review draws to a close by surmising that there is probably no better way that exists other than this beautiful gospel that has been proclaimed by Jainaba Danso's True Decoration.





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Empowering African Writers

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VOL. 5 NO. 12



DEC. 2021 WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

## **The Allure of Promises**

Blessing Amatemeso  
Nigeria

## **Dreams that Fly**

Laurent Bwesigye  
Uganda

# Promises



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# Editor's Note

Every month a new edition is released, and a call of submission is out, it's a lifestyle we abide by.

For the festive season, we present to you the 60th edition of WSA magazine, as PROMISED. Promises articulated in different perspectives and ideologies, it is not just a Pinky Swear, it goes beyond that.

Enjoy.

**Neo Space-Poet Masetlane**

Botswana

Acting Chief Editor



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa

# Call for Submission

## Theme: Plans

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international online literary magazine, will from 20th of November to 14th December, 2021 accept submission for its 62nd Edition (**February 2022 Edition**)

We accept submissions in the following categories:

- **Articles/Esays - 1,200 words maximum**
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- **Short Stories - 700 words maximum**
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# The Devil in a Saviour's Garment

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It was a cool Eke market day in our peaceful but perplexed paradise, a day which every man and beast in our community anticipated its arrival. Birds sang their melodies across the garden, the anurans croaked harshly with wantonness, children saluted their mothers in rapturous faces as a means of reminding them to buy 'akara' at Eke market before nightfall. Less than one kilometer from my father's house was sited the Ezeoka town hall overflowing with hundreds of men and women both young and old. The surroundings of the town hall were colorfully decorated with over fifteen metal poles bearing a yellow-brown Party flag swirling in harmony with the gentle Eke morning breeze.

I sat at the back end of the hall but due to my economized height and the rowdiness of the hall, I could barely see or hear the man standing on the podium. So, I decided to humble myself and move quickly to the front to enable me see and hear him. I tried making my way through the crowd but just half way to the front stood this huge and tall man with six-packs and commando hands. He looked like a descendant of Goliath while I stood before him like a Lilliputian

trying to read his facial expressions. Suddenly, it dawned on me that if I didn't find my way back to my seat, people may likely leave the town hall meeting to tell their neighbors and children the heart touching story of a young stubborn boy who was slapped to death by a bouncer during a political rally that held at the town hall on Eke market day.

I was determined to see and hear what the man on the podium was saying, so I ran out of the hall through the back door where there was no bouncer to restrain my movement. I squeezed myself into the crowd that gathered at the front window of the hall opposite the podium. At last, I heard his closing



remarks as he said *"I will air condition your roads, build you good schools and equip your health centres with modern health facilities. I will alleviate your poverty and create jobs for your women and youths. Your young men will no longer be seen on the streets and corners of Ariaria, Alaba, and Onitsha main market hawking Gala and sachet water, I will empower them. I shall provide free education for primary and secondary school children as well as electricity for your whole community. You are my people, and your pain is my pain. Your sorrow my sorrow and in your joy shall I have my joy."*

Hmmm... that man spoke as if he was the messiah our community has been expecting for decades to liberate us from the shackles of poverty and ignorance. You needed to see him sweating profusely like a woman in labour. He was really pregnant with words! His jugular vein distended as words triggered out of his mouth like the rattling of a gun. His piquant face stretched like a bubble gum and his large appealing eyes bulged out as he read his manifesto with unprecedented passion and oratory. What would you expect of our sincere people who have been eagerly waiting for a change?

On that fateful day of the election, men, women and youths all trooped out in masses, leaving their homes and businesses behind to vote our supposed

"Redeemer-senator" into power. That man's tongue really appeared greenish from a distance, but on a closer look I saw that it was like crimson.

Two years have passed since he became our Senator. Our roads are still untarred let alone air conditioned. Our people still drink unclean water from the ponds and streams despite the rate at which *Loa loa* is damaging our young women's eyes. Both young and old are compelled to visit the bush at least five times a day, as a result of unavoidable stooling episodes emanating from the kind of food and water we consumed. My neighbour's son is almost as weightless as a dry paw-paw leaf due to frequent diarrhea flecked with mucus, pus, and blood stains. I wrote this work sitting beside an 18-year-old damsel, who was helplessly trying to press her hands into her stomach, groaning in excruciating pains. I paid attention to her plight and the war song of a battalion of whip worms in her tummy hollering in ecstasy was all I heard. Myself, I have gotten used to those sounds in my tummy, so whenever I heard them, I always lie flat in total surrender to the whip worm soldiers until the mortal combat was over. I fortunately discovered that tightly holding my pillow under my tommy helped reduce the pain of the gunshots released by the commandant whip worm.

What about the good schools and the

promise of a free education for our children? Emeka's mum was in my house yesterday night. She has been disturbing everyone in the neighborhood to assist her raise 33, 200 Naira as WAEC fee, to enable Emeka take his Senior School Certificate Examination in our own community secondary school. There are many other children in our community who are not in school currently as a result of financial bankruptcy. A typical example is Nkechi, from whom I buy 'pure' water whenever I passed through Eke market to the city.

Nkechi is a moderately tall and beautiful damsel. She is fair complexioned, with an admirable gait. I always love to make her smile because whenever she does, it reveals her dimple and that usually titillate me. Nkechi's smartness never cease to amaze me, her ingenuity in business is quite rare for a child of her age and background. That inspired me to nickname her 'Oprah Winfrey' because I am optimistic that her future is very bright and I know someday her destiny helper will locate her. Severally, I have asked her why she is not in school. Well, her answer is as good as your guess. She stopped schooling after her Junior Secondary School and started hawking sachet water to support her poor widowed mother who sells dry pepper and fried groundnut at Eke market in a bid to provide daily bread for her family.

Don't bother asking me of the modernized health centres because my uncle's



wife – Mama Ebuka was rushed to the city general hospital about 6am today. She was said to be experiencing labour complications and was even screaming at the top of her voice as if she was going to drop dead the next minute. Her husband had earlier rushed to the only dilapidated Health Centre in our community around 3am when parturition started, to see if there was any mid-wife on duty who could help save the life of his dear wife and unborn child. Alas, that antiquated God-forsaken rusted iron gate of the clinic was firmly locked with a very big pad lock. Only God knows if that woman was delivered safely of her baby or whether she kicked the bucket on their way to the city general hospital which is about 10 kilometers away from my village.

Every quarter of the year usually ends with a harvest of death in our community. At least four to five of our ebullient,





well-meaning young men return to us in carved-padded wooden boxes honored with the title “Late” and conveyed by a state hospital ambulance. A majority of these ambulances arrive at intervals of three market days to our village, mostly from Onitsha and sometimes from Lagos. The story is usually that most of these youngsters with enviable destinies and potentials, were crushed by a speeding trailer or an over speeding jeep while crossing to and fro the highway with a carton of gala on their head and for many others a mad-rush to sell off a bowl containing just ten to fifteen sachets of water was all that claimed their precious lives. Unfortunately, most of these young boys and girls hail from the same town with our supposed redeemer who promised to create jobs and empower youths in his senatorial district but at last found fulfillment in

passing his people through a hellish torture.

Now I understand the poem my literature teacher forced me to memorize in secondary school – “The Ambassadors of Poverty” by P.O.C Umeh. Our supposed redeemer is the true ambassador of poverty. He is the corrupt leader whose head is abroad and anus at home. He is the leader who faithfully kept all his electoral promises in the reverse order. He is the rancorous elite whose delight is in looting his own people. He is the devil that came to us in a saviour’s garment. Papa told me last week that he even owns mansions in Dubai, in addition to the houses he bought at Wuse in Abuja and at Lekki in Lagos. Indeed, that man is the most honest liar I have ever known. I will tell my children this tale.

# The Allure of Promises

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The Merriam Webster dictionary defines Promise as a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something. It is also a legal binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or to claim the performance or forbearance of a specified act. Promise, as a noun and a verb, has many synonyms such as covenant, pledge, swear, vow, oath, word, amongst others, all of which portray seriousness. Many make promises, from as simple as promising to meet a loved one for dinner, to promising to love someone for the rest of your life, or promising to take a country out of poverty. When a promise made is not kept, it has a great emotional impact on the recipient. In fact, breaking a promise is seen as betrayal.

When it comes to elections in Africa, the phrase 'promise and fail' seems to have come to stay. Politicians make lots of promises which they fail to keep. Not only do they fail to keep these promises, the economic, social, and democratic atmosphere worsen during their tenures. This is a betrayal of the trust the populace place in their hands. Because of this abysmal experience, a leader who

keeps a few of their promises, no matter how terrible they perform, is praised. Despite the recurrence of this cycle, the promises are so enticing that the populace always has a little hope that 'this time' will be different. Unfortunately, 'this time' has not been different in many cases.

The words pledge and promise appear in most traditional wedding vows. Despite making such vows solemnly and sometimes, I believe, with the purest of intentions, they are usually broken as is evident by the alarming rate of divorce and other 'unloving' acts such as domestic violence, 'ghosting,' etc. To those that have experienced it, heart break is not just emotional, it is also a very real and physical pain. The breakdown of a marriage affects not just the two parties involved but has a ripple effect, affecting all those connected especially children, if any were produced by the union. Even work or business is affected by the breakdown of a marriage. Many a song have been borne out of love, but much more have been borne out of heart break and betrayal.

Sometimes heartbreak comes even be-

fore the marriage. According to the Bible, love is patient, kind, steadfast, it suffers long, endures all things, and believes all things. Maybe it is this kind of love that drives people to give their all to someone they intend to marry, sometimes ignoring the voice of caution of kin and kith. Or is it the desire to 'secure' the partner? Meanwhile, when this promise of marriage is not fulfilled, the resulting emotional turmoil is so great that sometimes it drives one to insanity. When a person experiences this many times (for some even once or twice) they become skeptical about the existence of love and think that trusting another human will only bring regret. Brenda Fassie's song, Promise, says it aptly, '...What you telling me that for you don't mean it.'

Promises transcend not just the physical realm but the spiritual as well. I can't delve into what makes one a devotee of one religion and not another but in every religion or almost every religion, devotees follow doctrines because of a promise; maybe a promise of a better life in the hereafter, a promise of success and fulfilment in the now or not so distant future. Sometimes we hear of people who became atheists because their prayers to God were not answered for a long time, so they reached the conclusion that such a God does not exist.

What binds a person to a promise made? Is it the touching of pinky fingers, the spoken word, the strength of



the person's character, or the legality of a document signed?

We find addicts promising to stop their addiction, spouses and parents promising to do better, employers promising that they are on the matter, only for workers to be laid off weeks later. '...Your promises have never been anything you made them seem.' (Brenda Fassie's Promise)

In times past, when human settlement was in small groups, promises were made verbally with a few 'trusted' people as witnesses. As writing developed and societies expanded, it then became necessary for promises to be written. As human societies continued to expand and evolve, a simple writing could no longer suffice hence it became necessary to have legal systems to authenticate such written agreements. Despite such stringent measures, humans still look for loop holes in this binding contract to escape the promises or declarations made.



Can we prevent people from making promises they do not intend to keep?

In the public sector, promises are made to gain the favor of a position or an office. Their rights of office can be linked to the obligations they promise to fulfill. In simple terms accountability. Developing countries still have a long way to go regarding this. We still hear news of misappropriation of public funds and outright looting of money. Thomas Jefferson once said, "When the government fears the people there is liberty, when the people fear the government there is tyranny." The only way for accountability to be possible is for the people to come together and harness their power to keep their chosen leaders in check.

On a personal level, promises come with a degree of trust. It is for this reason that when someone is promised money, he

goes around with a level of confidence collecting goods on credit. When the promise is not fulfilled, the person finds himself in a fix with more debt than he can pay without trouble. He resorts to pleading with the person to deliver on his promise. Here, it is advisable that one does not spend money until he sees cash at hand. In cases that have to do with love and relationships, what does one advice? How does one protect one's self from the pain of intimate promises broken? What can one do to protect one's heart when the promises are so alluring? The only person everyone of us can control is our self. Others we simply influence or manipulate. So, we can only act in the way we desire and hope that others reciprocate. 'Do unto others what you want them to do unto you.' To love is to be vulnerable. We can love with a little wisdom and maybe a dash of caution.





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# Destination Charti

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My future instantaneously turned bleak the moment I found out I had been posted to Charti M/A Primary School. Accra was my home and the pursuit of my ambitions was a guaranteed smoother process with me in Accra. For that reason, I wanted nothing more than to be posted in a school in Accra to teach. But, in as much as I harboured a strong hope of being posted in Accra, I was also a realist enough to know the chances of that. So in efforts to manage expectations and avoid disappointments, I let go of my hopes of an Accra based posting and lowered my expectations to anywhere with network connectivity and electricity. It seemed a very low expectation and there was no way I would be disappointed. Or so I thought.

Charti M/A Primary School is located in a very remote village in the northern part of Ghana. Specifically the Oti region. The village goes by the same name as the school: Charti. It has no network reception, no electricity, no safe source of water, and the road leading to the place was horrendous. The whole thing seemed like a prank cooked up in hell. I couldn't think of a single thing I had

done in my life to deserve such a posting. My options were either to drop out of the teaching profession or take a difficult leap of faith and go to Charti.

*It is going to be temporary. You would apply for a transfer after a year. It is going to be an adventure. You will come out of this with great stories.* These were all promises I made to myself to ease swallowing my pride and going to Charti. The external promises from the government about teachers in rural communities receiving incentives also helped.

It was after I went to Charti that I learnt that promises are easier made than lived out. Externally, there was no extra incentives from the government. Not a dime. I was completely at the mercy of the villagers. They gave me a place to stay and although I am appreciative of that kindness, a view of the place made me question if the people really cared about my wellbeing as much as they claimed.

The house was arguably the most outdated in the entire village. It was a typical



Ghanaian compound house made of four flats of rooms arranged in a square-like manner. The centre of the house which was open to the sun was its kitchen. There was a smaller kitchen at the entrance which I figured was for the rainy season. The room I was given was right next to that kitchen. The roof above the room had turned black from smoke from the kitchen. There were holes all over the floor and the walls. The floor was geometrically uneven, and don't even get me started on the mice. The more I looked around the room the worst it got. All I could do was smile and say "Thank you."

I was brought to Charti to teach and although the circumstances weren't conducive, I still had to do my job. I probably would have done a decent job if not for the endless obstacles that made teach-

ing and learning next to impossible. The school building is the worst I have seen. It was so horrible, it had no business being a school. The mud classroom walls had broken off all over and its highest points were around three feet high. The thatched roofing was held up by a number of wooden pillars.

Inside the classrooms there were few desks which had been provided by the district office. In front of the class were boards made from worn out plywood smeared with carbon electrode from batteries. The chalk used were mostly broken which made writing on the boards tedious and very uncomfortable. The only text books in the school were very few books from UNIAID. And on top of it all, the entire teaching staff of the school was three; myself, the Headmaster, and one other teacher who had been there a year before me.

Of the three staff, only the headmaster spoke and understood the language of the locals which was Kokomba. The children didn't speak or understand English. The only bridge across the enormous language barrier was the Twi language. My twi was bad and theirs was worse. In between the bad and worse, we found a way to communicate.

I estimate only about thirty percent of the children in the village came to school. They came enthusiastically. I suppose a lot of them came to see me, the new teacher. The headmaster performing his head-masterly duties wasn't around most of the time so the running of the school fell to me and the other teacher. Being new, I taught two classes: classes five and six. The other more experienced teacher juggled the rest.

I was newly trained, inexperienced, and left unprepared for village life by the privileges of growing up in Accra. Most of the time during my early teaching days, it felt like I was talking to walls. The children had no idea what I was saying. I got frustrated trying to get through to them and that only made things worse for me.

Life outside the schools wasn't any better. Adapting to life in Charti was nothing short of hell. Every second was a pain. My efforts to endure stressed me to the bone. It was a psychological warfare I wasn't prepared for. The frustrating days turned to stressful weeks and

the stressful weeks grew to depressing months. Those first couple of months were the hardest of my life. The hardships reaffirmed my belief that the entire experience would make an amazing story I would get to tell one day with me at its centre. So I lowered my guard and allowed myself to get closer to the natives of Charti and that was when everything changed.

I got to learn that the people of Charti weren't any different from the people in Accra or any part of the world. They were mostly uneducated and steps back in civilisation, but at their core, they were humans who loved, laughed, cried, danced, and did every other thing humans across the world did. Most importantly, I realised the people of Charti have stories too. Stories that unfold day to day as their lives go on. Due to the unintentional isolation brought upon them by the settlement choices of their ancestors, their stories die with them.

As I adapted better to Charti and got to see its raw beauty, I felt compelled to make myself a promise to do my possible best to call attention from the outside world to Charti. It may be a long shot and may take an even longer while but this write-up is the first of many steps towards the fulfilment of that promise.



# Promises – Easy to Make But Hard To Keep

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Stephen Richards once said, “Promises are only as strong as the person who gives them.” By this, he didn’t mean physical strength. After all, a promise isn’t a dumbbell. A promise is, in its simplest term, a commitment. It is a person committing themselves to do something for someone or even to do something for themselves.



We have to understand what a promise is. It is you giving your word to a person that you will do something, or a particular thing will happen. But it is so much more than that. They are actions that affirm our love and connection with others. That connection may be through friends, family, or even strangers. A promise affirms that we want to pass our compassion to others. It lets the other person know that we will do whatever it takes to get that one thing done. To say you will do it is one thing but to promise that you will get it done is another. It is thus quite sad that the world we live in has forgotten what giving your word and making a promise is really about; we have forgotten the meaning behind it all.

A person can be the strongest in the

world or the weakest, but that does not matter when it comes to keeping a promise. You see, when Mr Richards spoke about strength, he was speaking about inner strength. He was speaking about a person with strong integrity and unfortunately, such people are rare to find these days.

Back in the past it didn’t matter what a person was. Whether poor or rich, good or bad, once they made a promise or gave their word, it was kept. Nowadays it seems promises are just made for lip service. Just for show, or to put someone at ease. A promise is hardly taken seriously anymore these days. In the past it was. A person who could keep his word was seen as one society could trust,

a person of honour, of integrity, and if we look around today it is evident that trust, honour, and integrity lie in but a few honourable people.

We make promises every single day. Some are major and others minor. The latter are the ones we tell people every day. Something like promising to buy bread or do the dishes or wash the clothes. These promises are easy to keep because they require little to no effort. At the same time, these little promises we make build trust amongst people. For example, maybe you promised your mother countless times that you would do the dishes, but you never did. After all those broken promises, what are the chances that she'll trust you to keep a major promise? It is very unlikely. She knows that if you cannot keep a minor promise, she will not be able to trust you to keep a major promise. That is life, that is how promises work. It builds trust between two people if it is kept and equally builds distrust if it is not.

We often make promises we know we can't keep. We make them simply because we feel we can always bring up an excuse later on to explain why we couldn't keep our promise. We believe that the other party will happily take that excuse because they would feel we tried our best. That is our hope. Although we should remember that the more important the promise is to a person, the more devastated they will feel when it is broken regardless of the

fake excuses we may give them. We may choose to break a promise, but it would be wise to remember that a broken promise leaves a hurtful memory for those we love. Memories are all they will have of us at some point in time, and it will be unfortunate if memories of broken promises are the only memories that linger in their mind long after we are gone.

In the end, the saying is right. It is easy for any man to make a promise, only those with character can keep a promise. Before we start making promises to others, we need to make sure we can keep the promises we make to ourselves. The little ones and big ones. We need to start with ourselves. That is the first step.

Here is one thing you should remember about making promises; never make a promise when you are excited, angry, or emotional. Let your emotions subside before making any utterances, for promises made during these moments are often those that lead to heartbreak.

# Where Do Broken Promises Go?

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Promises are concrete assurances that one gives as proof that one will definitely do something or that something will happen. It tends to be a commitment of following through on your word. A promise stands for affirmation of love, friendship, fervent human connection, a sign of eminent commitment, hard work, and a given level of intimacy. Promises by definition are supposed to stand the test of time.

It is impossible to dissociate promises from trust, the same way, it isn't possible to isolate breakage of a promise from disloyalty. The more you trust someone, the more their promises mean the world to you. It is as though trust lays down a stronger foundation over which the promise builds its house so firm.

So, at what point does one walk away from a promise or confess their failure to meet it? What is the ideal time for one to declare their inability to hold oneself to one's word? How does one take away the sensational anticipation and joy of expectation without risking a throbbing episode of emotional destruction and a sobbing manifestation on the face of the one looking forward to the fulfil-

ment of that promise? Furthermore, how does one deal with the news of a broken promise or a non-fulfilled pledge? How does one maintain their plight and move forward with the one going against their word without a possibility of resentment and mistrust? Or even more radically, does one get to blame the one who has broken their promise or gone against their own word? Perhaps, understanding if one should hold the other accountable in the first place is a great place to draw our verdict later in conclusion.

Well, perhaps the question is more philosophical than one may anticipate. For all we know, philosophy has a strange way of representation of facts. For starters, it is vital to question the state of affairs. Whether the same person who promised is the same person who is breaking the promise.

The thought experiment of the Ship of Theseus, a paradox from the field of identity metaphysics throws more light on the matter if not more complication. The ship of Theseus was an artifact in a museum, kept in memory and honor of the legendary king named Theseus

who supposedly founded the city of Athens. Over time, its planks that would rot were replaced with new planks of the same material and the same dimensions. When no original plank remains, is it still the ship of Theseus? Secondly, if those removed planks are stored and reassembled free of the rot is it still the ship of Theseus? This philosophical narrative becomes interesting when superimposed on human vs change perspective. We may not be the same person we were several years or days ago. Nevertheless, we are still considered the same person so that we are even held onto our promises.

Noson S. Yanofsky, in his article "The Ship of Theseus and the Question of Identity" contemplates that "We each have different bodies and can say that every person is identified with their body. By postulating that a human being is their body, we are subject to some insoluble questions that we face in the Ship of Theseus and other physical objects. Our bodies are in constant flux. Old cells die and new cells are constantly being born. In fact, most of the cells in our body are replaced every seven years." This in ideal sense points to a likelihood of one being a different person. In our case perhaps, even a different person from the one who made a promise in the first place. In fact, later in the same article, Yanofsky, poses a question "*Who is the real you? The one who is madly in love with someone or the one who is bored with the same person*



*two months later?"* Or more vividly in our situation, Who is the real you? The one who promised someone heaven and earth or the one who is bored with the same person hence promise, currently seeing no value for its fulfilment and deciding to break it two months later?

Regardless of what side one might be on, one ought to stand at a place of cutting another some slack, knowing well that as much as they need to hold the others by their word, there is room for withdrawal and non fulfilment, without triggering disloyalty sensations nor unleashing emotion debris over the one withdrawing it.



# Call for Submission

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her February 2022 edition.

*An African country's anthem ends with "peace and unity". Can African countries boast of being peaceful and united? Have we (not) lost the humanity in us? Write and submit your poem under the theme **UBUNTU**.*

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality. Please note that the poem titles should not have the word "Ubuntu".

The submission window is from November 10th until December 10th 2021. The edition will be released on **February 10th 2022**. Only poets of selected entries will receive feedback due the huge volumes of submissions.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrika>. Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted but must be accompanied by equivalent translations in English.



# Daydreamer

Kwasi Adi-Dako | Ghana | Idako90@gmail.com

Halim's knees were bleeding again. He touched a finger to the scratches as an angry voice filled the air. A scrap metal merchant was picking up rusted aluminum rods off the ground and cursing at the top of his lungs.

"The stupid child wasn't watching where he was going!"

Halim glared up at him but held his tongue. He hadn't been looking where he was going. Even now as he glanced up at the merchant's angry face, he could see the silhouettes of tens of hawks turning slow arcs in the Dakar sky behind him. Halim's eyes followed one bird that had broken off from the group and was locked in an aerial dance with a crow.

"Are you listening to me? Talibés are ruining this city."

The merchant had picked up one of his rods and was shaking it in the boy's direction. Halim shot up and gave the merchant a wide grin before turning and sprinting down an alley.

He was used to adults being angry at him. Sometimes it was because of his dirty clothes. Most of the times, it was because he was bumping into them

he craned his neck, looking up.

He didn't want to go back to the Daara tonight to give his coins to Serigne Moussa. He didn't want to sleep in the stuffy room with all the other boys, but what choice did he have? He had slept on the street enough to know all the dangers of being outside. Thieves and stray dogs were worse than the small room where twenty boys lay head to foot. Then again, Serigne Moussa wasn't on the street. Halim hadn't been pulled out in the middle of the night yet by the old man, but it was only a matter of time. Every night he went back could be the night he was chosen.

He would give anything to fly with the hawks and look down at Dakar from above for once. Every day at sunset, they filled the sky like silent sentinels of the city. The only thing they cared about was catching a mouse before they vanished to their nests on the roofs of the tallest buildings.

Tonight would be different. He wouldn't go back to the Daara, or find a street corner to sleep on. Tonight, he promised himself he would be a hawk.

Halim wandered the streets downtown, searching for a tower to climb, but any

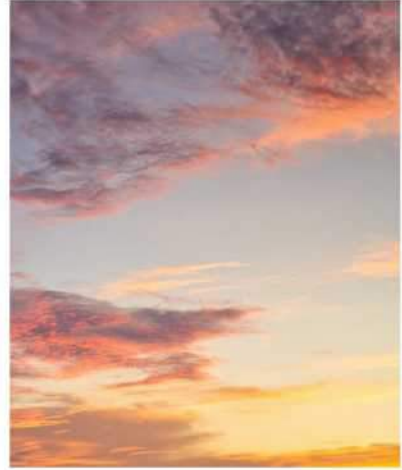
building that was tall enough had security guards who hurled abuse at him whenever he got too close. He almost snuck past one guard before he was caught and knocked on the head for his trouble.

As the day wore on, Halim became resigned to the fact that he would have to take a chance on the Daara and hope that he would make it through the night without Serigne's hungry eyes following him. He had reached the oldest section of the downtown area, with decrepit half-completed buildings scattered around like hollow stalagmites. He was about to give up his search when he saw it, the perfect building.

It was a burned-out concrete slab that rose twelve stories, with the doors and windows boarded up. There were no guards in sight because there was nothing to guard. It would have to do. The Imam's voice was floating through the city as people paused for Maghrib prayer.

Halim shot a furtive glance around to make sure no one was watching him, then darted to the side of the building to find a way in. He circled slowly and found a wall that had uneven cement blocks jutting out that could make a ladder up to a hole that never became a window. He scrambled up, putting a few more scrapes on his legs.

The sky had an orange tint as the sun



began to set, and Halim peered in by the glow. Empty paint cans and water sachets were strewn around. From the smell, someone had used this place as a toilet at some point; or something had died inside.

Halim tumbled in and checked his pockets to make sure he still had his things. One matchbox with three matches inside and the last few bites of a lamb sandwich he had been nibbling on since morning. His stomach rumbled as he looked at the sandwich but he stuffed it back into his pockets and looked for a way up.

He stepped through the room into the hallway and could see an elevator shaft, with thick cables that snaked up into darkness. He inspected it with apprehension and looked around for another way up. Further down the hall, a jagged cement staircase curved up out of sight.

The windowless stairwell had been built in the very center of the building and was so dark that he climbed as much by feeling as by sight. Loose rubble and trash nipped at his feet, trying to trip him up.

He stumbled a few times on his climb but went up the first five floors without issue. On the sixth, a feral cat hissed and darted into a room. It startled him and he almost fell back down, just catching himself.

By the eighth floor, the rubble was grabbing at his ankles and cackling every time he tripped. He stopped to strike a match and get a better look at the path. His heart sank. The staircase ended there. Whoever owned the building must have run out of money before they could finish the stairs, and now they stood like a haunted cliff in the center of this giant shell.

As he stood thinking about what to do next, the match burned down to his fingertips. He yelped and dropped it, watching it fall for a few floors before it vanished. He lit his second match and looked around the space. There was the elevator shaft, grinning at him.

He sighed and stepped toward it for another look. If the hanging cables were strong enough to hold him, he could probably shuffle up with his feet on the walls. The thought of entering the elevator shaft sent shivers down his spine and

he turned around, dejected. At the thought of heading back down, Serigne Moussa's face filled his mind and he stepped up to the hanging cables.

He cursed and reached in to grab a cable. A shower of dust rained down and he stepped back coughing, but it held. He mumbled a Fatiha and began to climb. After one floor, he felt confident.

Only three more to go.

By the tenth, his arms were starting to burn.

Two more.

At the eleventh, his whole body trembled from the effort and his foot slipped on the wall. He caught himself, chafing his hands on the wire, and made a final push up and out of the shaft before collapsing on the floor.

He looked up at the rusty blue door that led to the roof and dragged himself up, hoping it wasn't locked. It creaked open at his touch.

The sky was filled with hawks. He had never been this close to them before, and at this height, he could see each one clearly in the last of the day's light. A pair of them spun together in play, while another dove out of sight to catch something on the ground.

They all floated on the wind, heads snapping back and forth in search of





prey.

He heard the chirping of chicks nearby and crept slowly toward a dried-out water tank that was lying on its side. He saw a nest inside with three chicks, still blind. He took the sandwich from his pocket and crept toward them. He got as close as he dared and tossed the meat into the nest while he ate the last of the bread. The chirps grew louder as the chicks began pecking furiously at the gift. Your mother will help you with that when she comes back, he thought.

He walked over to the edge of the roof and looked down at the city for the first time. Taxis fought their way between cars and groups of men sat by the roadside, sipping on café touba. A sea of rooftops spread out before him, dotted with

sheep that were being prepared for Eid. Everything seemed so distant.

He didn't want to go back down. This rooftop would not solve his problems but he felt safer here than anywhere else he had been in a while. He stepped back from the edge as hawks began to land on the roof around him. He walked as quietly as he could back to the blue door and sat just inside it, watching them return home. He felt a pang in his chest as he watched the older hawks feed their young. They looked like real families. Halim leaned against the wall and watched the raptors until he drifted to sleep with a smile on his face and a tear in his eye.

# Between Friends

**Nkabinde Ntombifuthi** | South Africa | [futhi.nkabinde1@gmail.com](mailto:futhi.nkabinde1@gmail.com)

I listen as Katlego's footsteps pound the hallway coming toward the dormitory room I share with my best friend, Nomzamo. My heart starts beating like a thousand drums as his footsteps get closer. I say a silent prayer before slowly getting up from the couch I've been sitting on since I got his text this morning. He didn't explain the reason for the visit, but I instinctively knew.

I draw a shaky breath as I watch the door handle wiggle and give way. I can hardly hear myself think now. The speech I've been rehearsing in my head is all gone. His scent enters the room before he does, and I smell him before I can see him. I can feel his presence now, his aura. To say that Katlego is angry with me would be an understatement.

In a split second, he's standing right in front of me, fury written all over his face. Droplets of sweat trickle down his left temple as he looks me dead in the eye. His eyes are filled with rage – mine with fear and terror. Adrenalin is pulsating violently through my veins as I take a series of rapid breaths. My head is buzzing, and I can hardly feel my body.

He takes his jacket off and throws it on the floor, never taking his eyes off me.

"Start talking, Zinhle!" he barks.

I take a few steps back and he takes steps toward me then I freeze.

Katlego and I met at university and I remember being mesmerized the first time I laid my eyes on him. He was talking to his friend, BK, when I turned around to investigate who the dreamy scent from behind me belonged to. Our eyes met and I couldn't take mine off him. I remember asking myself what he was doing in the registration queue of a university when he had the face that belonged in the cover of GQ magazine.

"Kat, please!" I whimper, trying to sound as apologetic as I possibly can. "It was a mistake. We didn't mean for it to happen."

"You didn't mean for what to happen, huh? Tell me what you didn't mean to happen, Zinhle?"

"I...I" my bottom lips quivers and I shut down.

"You can't even say it, can you? It is so despicable even to you who did it." he says, tears brimming in his eyes.

I've known Katlego for five years straight and I've only ever seen him cry once - The day he buried his father after his battle with cancer. I remember the long night he cried on my lap when we got back from the cemetery. I held him very tight, making him remember that I would always be there for him when he needed a shoulder or lap to cry on.

Now, here he is in front of me. Crying. I can't make him feel better this time because I'm the one who's caused this pain.

"Katlego, I'm sorry."

"Stop saying that. You don't mean it."

"But, I do. I'm sorry, Katlego. I love you and I never meant for this to happen." I repeat, tears cascading down my face.

I haven't cried like this since I failed my first year of medical school. Katlego is my first boyfriend and I think I was just so smitten with him. I even forgot what I had come to school for. Coupled with being young and immature, I forgot that I wasn't the straight A student Katlego was. But, I quickly made the necessary changes that have got me to where I am right now. A fourth-year medical student.

With his index finger on his chin, he shakes his head slowly. "I think you're only sorry you got caught." And then, after a short pause, he says, "What I can't wrap my head around is, why him? Why BK?"

My heart skips a beat as soon as Bokang's name escapes Katlego's lips. The mere mention of his name sends shivers down my spine and sends my throat begging for some precious refreshment. The simple mention of Bokang's name shakes me to my core and I take a seat on the couch upon realisation that my knees might buckle under the pressure.

See, Bokang – affectionately called BK by all his friends has been haunting my very soul since about six months ago. The love I feel for him is different from the love I have for Katlego. His is the love that has taken me by surprise. It's the kind of love I never saw coming. The kind that has kept me up at night since, refusing to let me rest.

BK and I got trapped in the elevator one day six months ago. Yes, we had known each other for quite a long time before then and I would say that even though he was best friends with Kat, I considered him my friend too. He was always the clown in the group, the one with all the jokes and a thousand friends. Everywhere we went, there was always a bunch of people who knew BK.

The two hours him and I spent in the elevator changed my view of him completely. We connected on a deeper level, a soul level. Him and I felt each other in a way that we had never felt one another before. Mentally, emotionally and psychologically. I felt in tune to him. I felt like I had found my equal. That day, he reached for my hand, but touched my heart instead.

Though I love Katlego, I never felt we connected the way BK and I connected that day in the elevator.

Right before the maintenance people rescued us, BK and I looked into each other's eyes and I could read the words etched in his heart. I could feel that even though we both knew we couldn't stay in that confined space forever, we didn't want to leave. I felt like our souls had met before, a long time ago and had made an agreement to find one another once again in this lifetime.

"I knew from the first day I saw you, that you were the one my soul had been searching for." Bokang said, right before we stepped out of the elevator.

Since that day, I don't think I've slept peacefully through the night. His soul tortures mine in a way that I can't even express. I see his eyes every time I close mine trying to find sleep. I can hear his heartbeat every time I try to quiet mine especially around Katlego.



I can't and have not told this to Katlego because I know that first of all, he won't even understand what I'm talking about. He's intellectual – not spiritual.

I'm about to open my mouth to say something to him when I hear movement from outside my window.

My heart thuds in my chest as I look out the window and see Bokang come up in the direction of my room. I turn around to hear the sound of a gun being cocked right in front of my face. I didn't even realise Katlego had a gun with him.

"What are you planning to do with that?" I ask, my voice trembling from sheer panic.

"You'll find out when your boyfriend gets here."



“He’s not boyfriend, Kat. We haven’t done anything, I swear to you.”

There’s a knock on the door. Kat shouts for BK to come in.

“Sit down!” He shouts as soon as BK enters.

Bokang’s hands shoot up into the air as soon as he realizes what’s going on.

“Bro, what’s going on here? What are you doing?” Bokang asks.

“Shut up!” Yells Katlego, “I’m asking the questions.”

“Zinhle, are you hurt? Are you okay?” asks Bokang, trying to move closer to me.

I want to respond but I’ve turned into a statue as tears pour down my face.

“She’s fine. Don’t speak to her. Don’t even look at her.” Katlego shouts, also trying to move closer to me. “Does Zamo know about you two?”

My heart skips a beat.

“We can talk about this, bro. Put the gun away and let’s talk.” Bokang pleads. “Let Zinhle go so you and I can talk things through like men.” He continues.

Katlego chuckles. “Now you want to

talk.” He says, “If my real friends at campus hadn’t told me about you two, when where you going to talk to me?”

This is the moment that Nomzamo barges into the room not realizing what’s going on inside. BK reckons it’s the perfect opportunity to try and wrestle Katlego for the gun while we’re distracted by Nomzamo. They go at it as Nomzamo and I watch in terror.

“Guys, stop it!” I shout, but, they don’t.

The gun goes off almost deafening me. The wrestling on the floor comes to a halt and blood starts flowing from under the two guys.

I gasp for air. Nomzamo screams.

# Unbreakable Bonds

Tukupashya Ally Kasongo | Zambia | [tukupasyaally2004@gmail.com](mailto:tukupasyaally2004@gmail.com)

Mbawemi and Wanipa have been best friends since they were born. Sisters born two years apart making Mbawemi older. Wanipa wets her bed, this bothered her a lot, that at the age of 8, she still peed on her bed. She tried to stop, but then dreamt of water and peeing and found herself wet on the bed.

"I cannot stop peeing on the bed mum," Wanipa says, with tears almost dropping from her eyes. "I don't like it when I urinate on the bed. All my friends my age have stopped peeing on their beds."

Mum hugged Wanipa, with an assuring smile. "You will stop peeing eventually; everyone's time is different."

"But I want it to stop now Mum," Wanipa bursts

into tears.

"Oh, don't worry, Wanipa," Mbawemi reassures her, "I will help wake you up every day."

"You promise?" Wanipa asked her sister in excitement.

"Oh yes I promise, pink promise and kiss command my promise." The girls tangled their pinkie fingers together to seal the promise.

On the first, second and third day, Mbawemi was super excited to wake her sister up, "wake up! Wake up Wani!" She shook her sister frantically until she opened her little eyes. Grabbing hold of her hand, they exchange turns on the toilet and go back to sleep. This made Wanipa very proud that she did not wet her bed.

"Look Mum, I have stopped wetting my bed," Wanipa said as she hugged her Mum and Dad good morning. After breakfast the girls ran to get ready for their friend, Abigail's party.

They swam and jumped all day which made them so tired that they fell asleep right in their Dad's car before they even got home after the party. That Sunday morning, Wanipa peed on her bed. She was filled with tears and could not stop crying.

"You broke your promise Mbawemi, you did not wake me up," she sobbed. "Now I smell and have urine in my hair."

Mbawemi felt bad for her sister and tried to explain that she did not mean to break her promise, she was just tired. But Wanipa ignored her, she did not

sit with her when they went to Sunday school. After church, Mbawemi offered Wanipa a lolly pop.

"Look Wanipa I got you your favourite coloured Lolly pop, red. Here! you will love it," Mbawemi continued. But wanipa did not take it and looked away.

"Why won't you get the lollipop from your sister?" Mum asked Wanipa

"Because she broke her promise mum, she let me wet my bed today, she promised she would wake me up so we go pee together every day."

"What happened?" Mum asked Mbawemi

"I forgot to wake up yesterday too mum, I was tired from the party , so I could not wake up till morning."

"Oh Wanipa... Mbawemi didn't mean to break her promise; she was just too



tired as you were from the party. Promises are only broken when one intentionally breaks them."

"What do you mean Mum," asked a confused Wanipa

"What I mean is, if Mbawemi had woken up herself and purposefully did not wake you up, then she would have broken her promise, but in this case you were both tired and you did not wake up. So she did not break her promise."

All of the sudden a bright idea popped, "I know how

I can make it up to you?" Mbawemi interrupted her Mum.

"How?" Wanipa asked

"Mum, can you get us an alarm clock? An alarm clock never gets tired and always keeps its promise to wake us up."

"Heheheheh," the girls both giggled while hugging each other. "I'm sorry I ignored you Mbawemi."

"I'm sorry I overslept and did not help wake you up."

"But the alarm will now wake both of us up," Wanipa answered in excitement.

# The Golden Rule

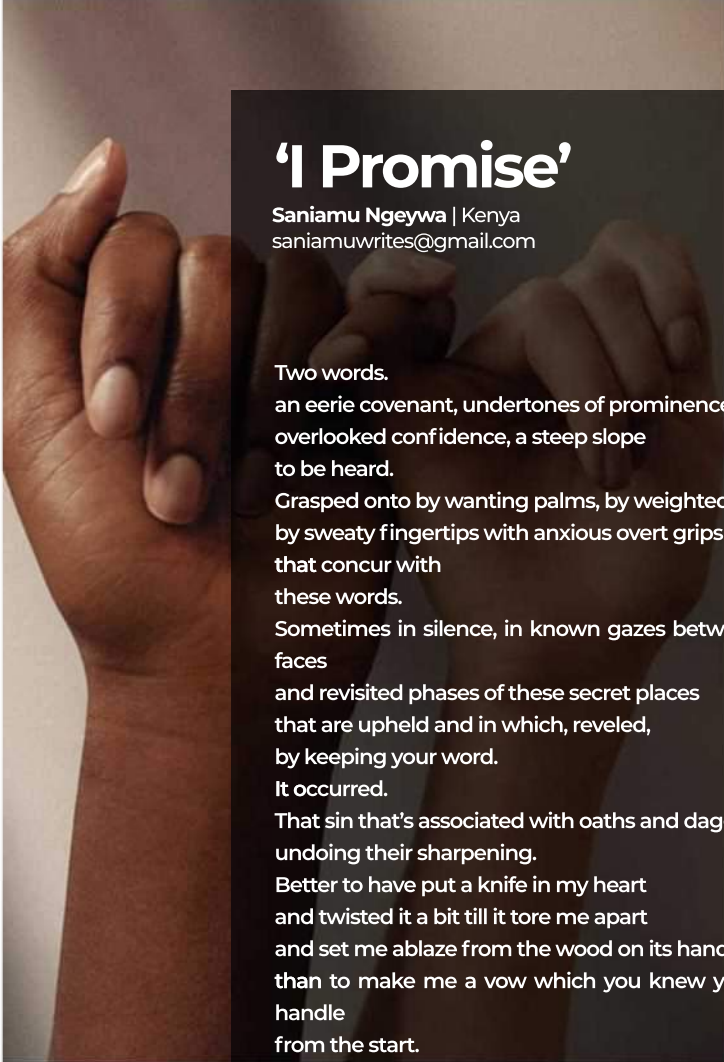
Patricia E Peace | Uganda | [triciaSpeace@gmail.com](mailto:triciaSpeace@gmail.com)



Little boys and little girls  
Pay attention to words of the old  
As you walk through this life  
There is but one golden rule  
That will keep your friends close  
And earn you respect  
Do as you say you will do  
Stick to the truth, always

Little boys and little girls  
Pay attention to words of the old  
As you walk through this life  
There is but one golden rule  
That will make your parents happy  
And earn you trust  
Do as you say you will do  
Every time you hold out your pinky.





## 'I Promise'

Saniamu Ngeywa | Kenya  
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Two words.

an eerie covenant, undertones of prominence,  
overlooked confidence, a steep slope  
to be heard.

Grasped onto by wanting palms, by weighted arms,  
by sweaty fingertips with anxious overt grips  
that concur with  
these words.

Sometimes in silence, in known gazes between known  
faces

and revisited phases of these secret places  
that are upheld and in which, revealed,  
by keeping your word.

It occurred.

That sin that's associated with oaths and daggers,  
undoing their sharpening.

Better to have put a knife in my heart  
and twisted it a bit till it tore me apart  
and set me ablaze from the wood on its handle  
than to make me a vow which you knew you couldn't  
handle  
from the start.

A promise, a debt, whose pay is due  
for the worthy, you have to do.



# If You still have me on your mind

Brook Abebe | Ethiopia | ethiobrook@gmail.com

There is a soft breath under this roof,  
Darling, it is not yours nor your kind.  
I alone wander the ground aloof,  
Wondering if you still have me on your mind.

Trapped I am between these tall white walls,  
Inside the shelter that once hid us from the world.  
They whisper how far you have moved  
Away, and how long I sat waiting by the hours.

By the fireside, I sit, and by the window, I lookout  
And I hope you would appear at the alley that lays  
narrow,  
Before the dark conceal and the fire goes out,  
Before the hours fade and the days become of sorrow.

Darling, today is but another day for me.  
A day made simple with the craft of your fingers,  
I have waited for a couple of stones to be.  
A heart, where you sit lifeless.

At the corners I see the droplets forming a puddle,  
The horse crossing the field without a saddle,  
The lilies of the vase moaned and died,  
I sit here and wonder if you still have me on your mind.

# A Place of Hope

Josh Pampam | Nigeria  
pampamjosh@gmail.com

In this place, I tarry.

In this place of shiny darkness,  
Of creepy crickets filling my ears  
Of sweating smells suffocating the air,  
Of geared snores setting lour on my face.

In this place, I tarry.

Where bones are smitten by sleep:  
Transportation to the other realm  
Where senses are softened by sleep,  
Scavenger of strengths, locker of eyes.

In this place, I tarry.

With my eyes not iced by the stygian sky,  
Rather like the summer-noon sun, open  
to dry the mud I sit in, the slick floor  
outside the door, and to thaw.

The frozen hope of feat the dawn brings  
to me, in this place I tarry.

# Second Hand Sentences

Lushaju Gervaz | Tanzania  
gervazlushaju@gmail.com

There is something untrue about your words,  
About how they feel.  
There is something that makes me feel foolish when I  
listen to them,  
As if all the wonderful things they are exist in the haze of  
a memory,  
As if they do not really exist, and i am merely dreaming  
them.

They leave a hint of pleasure in my ears  
Then quickly become ethereal and quietly disappear.  
They are words with soft edges and abstract meanings,  
Moist words that are intangible,  
Bittersweet nothings.  
Words that now seem empty, spent,  
Words made to be enjoyed from a distance,  
Not to be held, not be leaned against.

They sound like they have been said before,  
They are stale,  
They have been used many times,  
to spread falsehoods and spin tall tales.

And now however eloquently you put them,  
They cannot escape their past,  
They are rocks with smooth edges thrown very gently  
But I,  
I am still glass.





# Broken Oath

Edith Natacha Lamne | Cameroon  
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I vowed to love you,  
To make you my nutter butter  
Until darkness do us part.

Another sunrise, but you're turned to dust.  
Your soulful laughter reverberates my room;  
Tears brim as I reckon heated moments we harboured.

When heading off to war  
A smooch we shared, "sayonara," you said  
Promising me to come back safely.

You vowed to give me faith when I feel wobbly,  
To lend me your shoulder to snivel,  
A chilliad pledge you made.

When I glimpse at the speculum today,  
A wrinkled 60-year-old with wispy white hair peeps  
Who missed pass her jejune,  
Rejected suitors, waiting for you.

You made me grasp that nothing can last,  
Your absence makes me play  
As I close my eyes, I dim away  
Where just two of us exist.

The game must end,  
My eyes must open for reality, to see  
You have broken your promise darling  
I vow to love you, till I get wings for nirvana.

# Cellophane

Benedict Hangiriza | Uganda  
hangithechampion@gmail.com

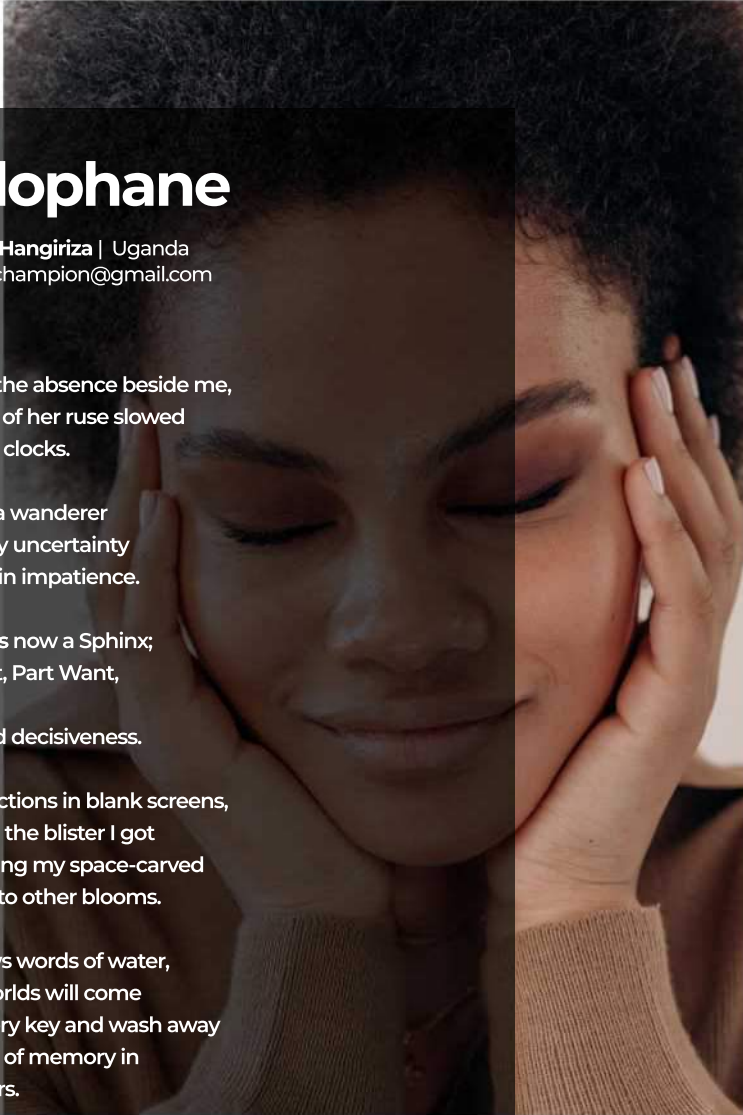
Once, by the absence beside me,  
Elements of her ruse slowed  
down the clocks.

My trust; a wanderer  
waylaid by uncertainty  
wrapped in impatience.

My body is now a Sphinx;  
Part heart, Part Want,  
Promised  
desire and decisiveness.

I see reflections in blank screens,  
Talking to the blister I got  
Announcing my space-carved  
Silence into other blooms.

She knows words of water,  
War of worlds will come  
out of every key and wash away  
The scent of memory in  
Her fingers.





# Will you be My Phone?

**Justin Nagundi** | Uganda  
jtnagundi7278@gmail.com

I'll wrap you in fine leather  
And glue you to my fingers.

I'll ditch food, friends, and water  
Each time your face shines brighter.

We'll travel my world together:  
Bedroom, kitchen, and shower.

I promise to spend sleepless nights  
So you can hum beside me.

I promise to panic every time  
Your heart runs out of battery.

I will sleep to songs you play me;  
I will laugh at the gifs you show me.

If ever you are drowning  
I'll bury you in rice to save thee.

I'll drop all things once dear to me  
at weddings, funerals, and meetings;

For all of me will cease to be  
The moment you start singing.

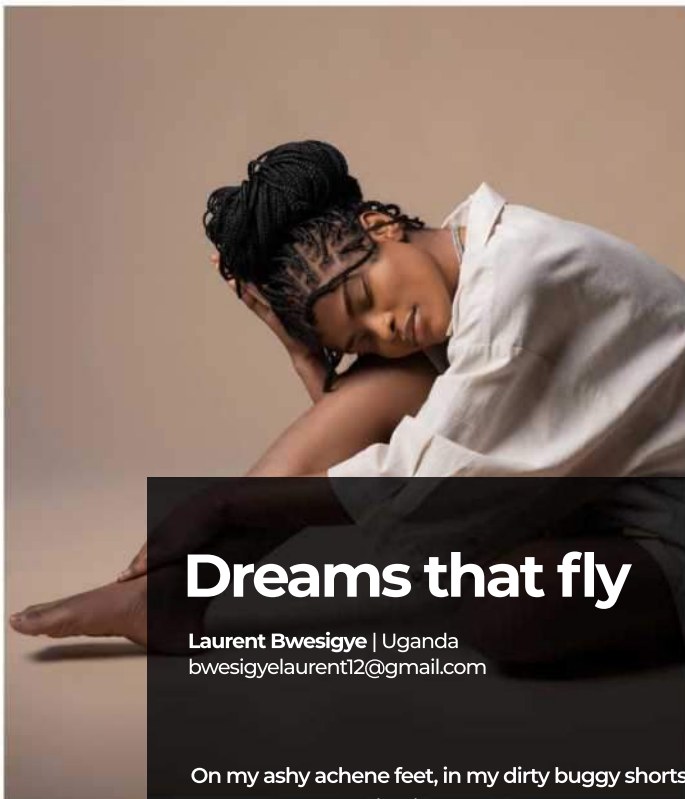
# My Wedding Vows

Ann Maina | Kenya | annahmaish98@gmail.com

I promise to hold you  
Like the sky does the moon  
Through its darkest times  
Allowing her  
To change and grow  
To reflect and glow  
Through the night  
To stand strong  
And be seen  
From horizon  
To horizon  
She follows different paths  
In her different phases  
From the new moon  
To the waning crescent  
Yet still every night  
The sky leads her home  
Till death do us part  
I promise to hold you  
Like the sky does the moon.







## Dreams that fly

Laurent Bwesigye | Uganda  
bwesigyelaurent12@gmail.com

On my ashy achene feet, in my dirty buggy shorts  
I see but seem to find incandescent dreams that  
Fly but never stop to perch

On this brown baked ground, with my witty wacky brains  
At the tactus of this day  
I vow to catch the dreams that fly  
In this hazy maze.

**GENRE: SHORT STORY****TITLE: OUR BRIEF HEAVENLY HOUR****WRITER: KENDI KARIMI, KENYA****REVIEWER: HALIEO MOTANYANE, LESOTHO**

Captivity is one of the biggest achievements that a writer should rejoice in whenever their story masters it. For a story to be a masterpiece, the reader should be captivated to the point of not wanting to stop reading while wishing the story should not end. This is what Kendi Karimi's story has done to me.

Rather than call 'Our Brief Heavenly Hour' a short story, it would fit perfectly as a 'Personal Letter'. This letter not only acknowledges the love and acceptance between two lovers, but it also portrays the life of these two from just when they started dating up until the day they are old and with kids.

This is a story of a woman who once was shy and lacked self-confidence; the woman who found fulfilment through love and acceptance. Throughout the story, Karimi uses metaphor and first-person speech to praise the one person who made her whole and beautiful.

It is from this story that we learn the power of love. Through love, we can believe even things that we thought were the ugliest scars on earth. And by believing in such, we reach a certain fulfilment that makes us be at ease.

**GENRE: ARTICLE**

**TITLE: YOUR LIFE, YOUR CANVAS**

**WRITER: GITARI NYAWIRA, KENYA**

**REVIEWER: JOSEPH ODURO, GHANA**

Age has always served as memorabilia to the things we hoped and dreamt of achieving at the budding stage of life. As a cockroach experiences ecdysis in its life cycle, so do our aspirations respond to the tides of time. "YOUR LIFE, YOUR CANVAS" highlights this phenomenon of life. Growing up with our wildest and limitless dreams, we become very oblivious to scepticisms of life. Society presents to us the beautiful stories of life and hinders the true eco-chambers that may deprive the seeds of our dreams of fructifying. It is only when age has subjected us to bumpy roads that we tend to become aware that the glitters of life conceal beneath them the drills of mines.

"YOUR LIFE, YOUR CANVAS" is an introspection into the writer's life after she realized the bus to her wildest dreams had left for its destination and it was becoming impossible to reach the impeccable aspirations of her youth. Fulfilment at this stage, she asserted, may transform to take different paradigms. We acknowledge the viciousness of our youthful aspirations and begin to reconcile the most important aspects of life and what true happiness and fulfilment mean. At this stage in our lives, we yearn for comfort over luxury and sanity over our ambitions. Nevertheless, the beach house dreams and vacation into the Maldives form part of the list but there is a shift in priority of these dreams which contrast with what we would have strived for in our youth.

Fulfilment has been defined in this age to be the pursuit of the flowery ventures of life with social media serving as a catalyst in changing the narrative. Fulfilment is relative and behoves every individual to dive deep into the innermost sense of their life to unravel what makes them fulfilled.

The writer reflects the theme with the contemporary happenings of our time. The age where the media sets the tone for how life is supposed to be lived and what gives it meaning. This creates a toxic environment and preempts us from gaining fulfilment. No matter how persuasive society defines the purpose of life, we can be only fulfilled if we reconcile to our deepest selves.

**GENRE: POETRY****TITLE: ARTISTIC BUBBLES****WRITER: ODIRILE ODIRILE, BOTSWANA****REVIEWER: CHIDIEBERE UDEOKECHUKWU, NIGERIA**

Odirile's "Artistic Bubble" is a seismic foray into a multiverse of creators; the world of art. The poem inspires a wholesome discovery of "gratification" as the reward that lies in any artistic venture. In fact, the 5 stanza poem is a testament to the aforementioned point.

Consider the first stanza and appreciate the creative power and potential of a poet, playwright, novelist or creative who creates by writing. It becomes easy to imagine how tasking it can be, to reduce (a) cloud(s) of ideas into words before they vanish. And when the cloud/clouds of ideas must have been captured on a sheet, gratification at such feat is sure to follow.

Similarly, the ensuing stanza portrays the world of an artist who creates by painting. A rhetorical poser demands to know whether drawers, painters and the like, find happiness in the use of their tools.

In the third stanza, the poem leads an exposé into a musician's world; or particularly the circumstances of a vocalist. Consider great singers of today and the past and realise how fulfilling it is for them to know how much their fans support and appreciate them. To make the picture even more vivid, think of Maria Carey who is famous for her five-octave vocal range, melismatic singing style, and signature use of the whistle register.

In the penultimate stanza, the world of the dancer is laid bare. The use of imagery in lines 1 and 2 of this stanza invokes a memory of (Columbian singer) Shakira's famous dance moves in the music (video) "Waka Waka" (This Time for Africa) which is the official soundtrack of the FIFA 2010 world cup. In the video, one can witness the mesmerizing side-to-side sway of the dancers' hips whilst hands are clasped in a praying posture. The dance steps are magical and fulfilling for both the performers and perhaps more especially for the over 2 billion viewers on YouTube. Art is truly magic.



In the last stanza, the artist as a sculptor gives a hint of how he/she finds fulfilment through the trade he plies. The devotion to the intricate details of the work being sculpted or moulded inspires profound gratification when the work is done. This, of course, is a wholesome feeling of fulfilment!

Notice how the last line of each stanza plays a forerunner to the subsequent stanza. This commentary will be unavoidably incomplete without a commendation of the skills employed by the poet here. These lines though on the level of superficial appreciation will (perhaps) indicate dread by one artist for the tools and trade of another who is of a different artistic walk, they serve a higher purpose of calling to consciousness, the wealth of variety that thrives in the world of art. Stanza one speaks of the writers, stanza two talks of painters and drawers, stanza three is an exposé about the musicians, stanza four introduces the mesmeric dancers, and the last stanza talks about the stone artists, sculptors and the like.

What better way is there to preach the beauty and wealth of artistic varieties and the watery promise of fulfilment that lies in wait?



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