



August 2018
Edition

Issue 20

A SMASHED ROSE

One Baliki
Botswana

**THE AIRPORT
ESCAPADE**

Eva Wambui Mwangi
Kenya

DEATH IS SILENCE

Adrian Matebesi
Zambia

THE COLOUR OF DEATH

Rongarashe Masuku
Zimbabwe

**OUR CREATIVITY:
MISSING OR STOLEN?**

Ibrahim Maijamaa
Nigeria

FRANGIPANIS

Ernestina Azah
Ghana

**OLOWO'S
FIRST DAY AT WORK**

Semakula Emmanuel
Uganda

SPARK TO FIRE

Nnane Ntube
Cameroon

**SHE WAS JUST
A GIRL**

Nasikiwa Susie
Tanzania

AIRPORT LANES

Houda Messoudi
Morocco

Nehemiah Omukhonya

Once Upon a Crime Sin

The Crew

President

Saka DBOSZ Junior
Nigeria

Vice President

Anthony Onugba
Nigeria

Chief Editor

Wakini Kuria
Kenya

Copy Editor

Nyashadzashe Chikumbu
Zimbabwe

Creative Editor

Houda Messoudi
Morocco

Editors

Shimbo Pastory William (Poetry)
Tanzania

Pressilla Nanyange (Short Stories)
Uganda

Edith Knight (Essays)
Kenya

Adah Bitiah Chembo (Flash Fiction)
Zambia

Interview

Sandra Oma Etubiebi
Nigeria

Columnist

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhie
Nigeria

Publicity

Meaza Aklilu Hadera
Ethiopia

Nichole Gandaho
Benin Republic

Nonhlanhla Radebe
South Africa

*This magazine is a publication of
African Writers Development Trust*



www.writerstrust.org

Designed by Acacia Publishing

www.publishwithacacia.com

For adverts, please send an email to:

wsa@writersspace.net

Featured Writers

Kolabomi Adeko, Nigeria

Gibonce Kabalika, Tanzania

Nnane Ntube, Cameroon.

One Baliki, Botswana

Nasikiwa Susie, Tanzania

Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania

Rongarashe Masuku, Zimbabwe

Adrain Matebesi, Zambia

Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia

Ernestina Azah, Ghana

Ibrahim Haruna MaiJamaa, Nigeria

Williams Olaide Oladele, Nigeria

Ayotunde Oyeniran, Nigeria

Eva Mwangi, Kenya

Houda Messoudi, Morocco

Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe

Semakula Emmanuel, Uganda

EDITORIAL

UNITED WE STAND. DIVIDED WE FALL

The sounds of beating drums, the smoke in the sky and the messengers running in the streets of the internet, all communicating the same message across Africa and beyond in lands far away.

“Africa is meeting at Abuja.”

One day a man had a dream. He dreamt of bringing Africa together. Where, through the pen and by the pen we became one big family. That man is Anthony Onugba, the WSA founder.

WSA has not only given the African writer the platform to share their work but has added to the growth of the writer by holding virtual writing classes, workshops, mentorships and awards.

And now the time has come for WSA under the umbrella of AWDT (African Writers Development Trust) to hold its first maiden ever physical conference on the 30th Nov to 2nd Dec 2018, in Abuja. For more on this, turn to our special feature by Edith Knight or refer to posters.

Unity is strength. We are living the dream!

**Wakini Kuria
Chief Editor,
WSA,
Kenya**

SPECIAL FEATURE



Re-imagining African Literature

by Edith Knight, Kenya

African literature receives a boost as African Writers Development Trust plans the first of its kind, in contemporary times, an African Writers Conference. This will hold this year, 2018, in Abuja, Nigeria from the 30th of November to the 2nd of December.

The theme for the conference is: Re-imagining African Literature: New Voices, New Narratives in the fight for the girl child. Now, you may want to read the theme again and carefully this time. This is not just a meeting where African Writers will gather and talk about the need to redefine the traditional gender roles that the African girl child has played and should play in literature, no. This is a unique, one of a kind conference that will explore and analyze what hasn't been written and what needs to be written and why new voices should write them.

Yes, you read that right- new voices. It's an amazing opportunity for emerging writers and even established ones to come and discuss the new narratives that will speak against the practices that continue to negate the growth of the girl child like sexual discrimination, forced marriages, wife inheritance, domestic violence, and even the contemporary ills like the glass ceiling at the work place, predefined career options, amongst many others. It's about the need to develop female characters whose roles go beyond cooking, reproducing and care giving.

In doing this, we will dignify the place of the woman, not only in African Literature but also in the society. So this conference is for all writers-new, old, emerging, established, black, white, male, female-all writers.

I should also point out that this conference is not meant to demean or undermine the impor-

tant role of the man/boy in the African narrative. Rather, it aims to find a point of convergence that will provide greater meaning to the interactions, and the ever changing complementary roles of both the male and female in the African society.

The discussions in the conference will go beyond writing about women's economic independence, their relationship with their husbands and children, their traditional beliefs and their status in the community as a whole; it will delve into the uncharted waters- It's mind-blowing to even try to imagine the different narratives, approaches and themes that the writers will want to pursue as concerning the girl child. The writing needs and important aspects of developing these narratives will also be discussed. This is a three day meeting that will redefine and determine the future of the girl child narrative in the literary terrain on the African continent- this conference is where the future will be written.

And there's fun too- Yes, we like to work and play too. There will be networking opportunities amidst refreshments, stories, games, sharing of personal journeys and lots of laughter. And since one of the objectives of AWDT is the sharing of creative ideas, thoughts and concepts, we believe that the networks formed at the conference will develop into long-term collaborations.

So see you there and let's redefine the girl child narrative. You can reserve a seat by visiting www.writerstrust.org/awc



**A F R I C A N
W R I T E R S
C O N F E R E N C E** 2018

— ■ **THEME** ■ —

**“Reimagining African Literature:
New Voices, New Narratives
in the Fight for the Girl Child”**

— ■ **DATE** ■ —

30th November - 2nd December, 2018

— ■ **VENUE** ■ —

Abuja, Nigeria



Powered by:
**AFRICAN WRITERS
DEVELOPMENT TRUST**
To Empower Writers Of African Descent

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



NAHIDA ESMAIL
Tanzania

DISCUSSANTS



SANDRA OMA ETUBIEBI
Nigeria



FAITH MUTHEU
Kenya

REGISTER AT
<http://www.writerstrust.org/awc>
TO RESERVE A SEAT

POETRY

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven; and as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name; such tricks hath strong imagination.

- William Shakespeare

AND THIS IS HOW IT IS

we go home
and we shut our doors
we don't sleep with them open
for fear the world sees in
really sees us
and our pain

and our mess
and the things we can't brush into place
we don't create we're too afraid to show the world
our broken hearts
we don't open our doors wide
turn the spotlight on
and say "I haven't done laundry in a week. My girlfriend
left me. I'm not sleeping."
we just shut the white door
with a blue handle
be in bed
and the ceiling all night

A Widow's God is Dead

Trying times?

Have you tried crying?

Have you cried trying?

Trying not to cry.

Do you sleep weeping?

Do you sleep?

Do you sweep weeping?

Are you sleep-sweeping?

Is he a thief?

Didn't he steal your grief?

Or did God steal He who stole your heart?

Do you still wear the wedding band

Of a dead husband?

Do you still remember your wedding band?

And the dance steps of a dead husband?

Trying times?

Have you cried trying?

Trying to say He's not a thief?

Didn't God steal He who stole your grief?

Did God try you?

Crying times.

Kolabomi Adeko,
Nigeria



Hope

A branch breaks assuredly a sprout will come,
When a man falls new spirit rises within,
Down from the ground he can reap a distance.
Walking knowing from experience
That thinking is not knowing;
And believing is courage of the heart
That the new sprout will bear new fruits.

Gibonce Kabalika,
Tanzania

SPARK TO FIRE

Songs sung in remnant notes
Cacophonous voices raining stones
On complaints that harnessed pleasure in lecherous gunshots
Complaints left lying low under fascist boots
If I were a woman, I would've let their toes
Penetrate the core of my roots with snootiness,
Infuse not in my mind scribbled fragments of hope!
My songs, snowballs to the flame that mirrors your face
Did you think I'll embrace your gaolers?
Sing your songs again!
Hang xylophones on snippy lips!
They're dirges you sing to idiotic, idle leaders
Who deposit faeces in idyllic states.

Nnane Ntube,
Cameroon.



A Smashed Rose

My eyes were drawn to her-a perfect blend of shades of brown
Draped with a floral sheet her skin looked smooth to the touch
A deep red covered her plump lips that looked somewhat swollen
At her feet was a smashed rose, its petals looking foreign on white floors

Her hands remained glued to her womb as her slumber deepened.
She stilled on the white floor as if thrust into an inescapable stream of thoughts
It had begun with lustful smiles; later his smile had worn a different scent
But she thought that her belly would make loud her unheard yet loud weeps

He'd been a good man but his smile had slowly transformed into rage
A gentle touch into scratches and bruises
Petals fell to the floor that bore witness to a familiar choreography-kicks and slaps
Her every petal willed a cry but she swallowed the pain

She wouldn't crumble like a rusk at its eater's first bite.
"Women are meant to be strong" she remembered lesson one
And her voice was once again reduced to silent whispers within
She remained the whisperer, whispering inaudible chunks beneath her breath


As her brain flicked through her pages of turmoil his eyes pricked her soul
Her bloody hands tightened round her womb
and she counted her breaths as she finally gave in
She had failed to fulfill her duty, she had failed her unborn creation

And her eyes blinked no more, she had left them hanging on the ceiling
Maybe she was projecting into the offals of heaven
The smashed rose had wilted and she remained as silent as a grave
She wouldn't wake up from her slumber, she would finally rest

One Baliki,
Botswana



She was just a Girl



She said no,
She said stop,
She used her words, she begged, she screamed,
She used her eyes, pleaded frantically,
She used her head,
turned left and right vigorously,
She scratched and clawed, she drew blood,
She bit flesh, dug deep,
the taste of iron on her tongue,
She pushed him off her, but he was too heavy,
She would kick him,
kick him out, but he'd pin her the more,
He parted her legs and took what was not his.

She said no,
She said stop,
He did not listen,
When he was done he kissed her softly
and whispered goodbye
Leaving a chill sitting on her spine.

She once heard him say,
he liked his women with some fight in them.
But she was just a girl.

**Nasikiwa Susie,
Tanzania**

FREE, BUT NOT

Dim
I see
Nothing any far
Mine world is breached
Loss, debts, deaths, blame, wretch-head
The past haunting, the hidden scaring
But, defeat thereof, is here, near, now
Light glows; the fog finds cover, and time
Counts its own, once more when dusk'd
Sleep and turn again all over!
Life's back when none'd seem
I see all ahead
But prickly unseen
My get-away
Is.

Shimbo Pastory,
Tanzania

THE COLOUR OF DEATH

I see people gathered at a funeral
all wearing black, and I wonder why.
Is the colour black, the colour of gloom?
Is the colour black the symbol of dirge?
I guess it is the colour of death and misery
the colour of no life and hopelessness.
They taught me that education is the light
to illuminate our lives with.
Learning institutions became symbols
of wisdom, the master key to life,
our hope and messiah to our misery.
What puzzles me most is the gross irony
for education is not the light but the blight!
Our governments are run by academics
our companies are chaired by graduates
everything is in the hands of the educated
but our societies are tormented by poverty
maladies are the norm of the day, people
sleep on empty stomachs, morality is a vice.
I wonder why all this gross let down by education
but the answer is not covert,
the learned are adorned in black gowns
the gowns of corruption, gowns of malice
gowns of self-centredness, of exploitation.
The cities are in constant lamentation
our people are cuddled with misery.
Our nation is a grave, the rest of us are the corpse.
Our educated elite - the singers of our misery dirge
sing vibrantly in their black graduation gowns
presiding over the funeral of the ruled layman.

Rongarashe Masuku
Zimbabwe



DEATH IS SILENCE

Feeble, very frail, sore, very sore.
Gasping for dear last breath.
Panting, truly breathless.
Lifeless, cold, motionless.
A warm heart has stopped beating.
He is dead. He is gone!

Death, are you angel?
Coming but to rob and deprive?
Reaping both soul and life!
Death, what are you?
Whole non-presence of me?

Death is not absence nor passivity.
To die is to do! act! worship!
Death, man's final act;
of submission, of surrender.

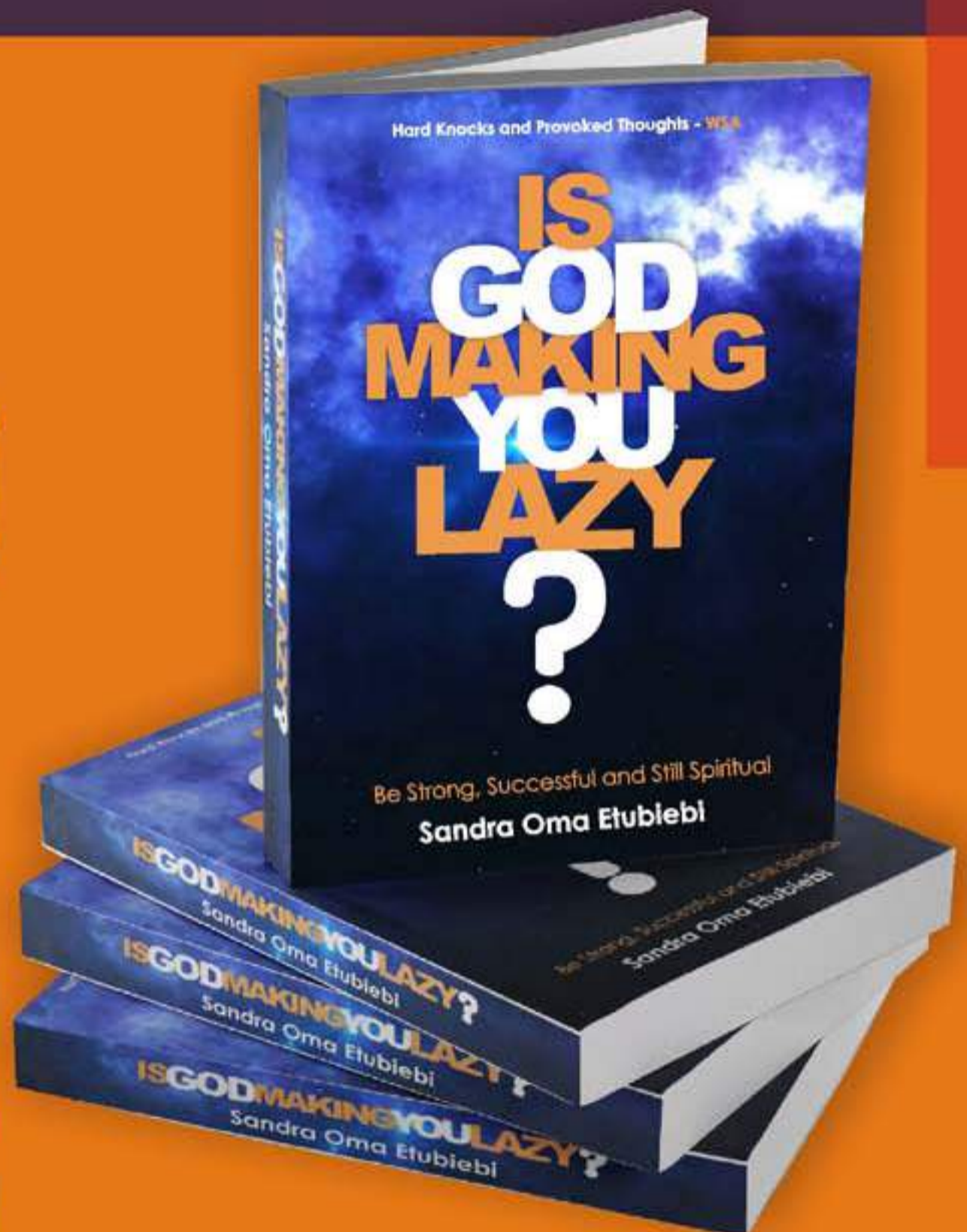
Not angel nor power nor force is death.
Neither departure nor exodus!
Death is man's silence and stillness;
Before God's immense mystery.
Death, everlasting silence before the divine.

Adrian Matebesi
Zambia

INTRODUCING...

"I have zero tolerance for unproductivity. I love the sweat of work, the adrenaline of producing content, the joy in developing concepts, the thrill in forming work teams, and the sweet monetary profits that follow a job well done."

-Sandra Oma Etubiebi



VISIT MY SOCIAL MEDIA
HANDLES FOR
FREE DOWNLOAD LINK



@billionairewriter

FLASH FICTION

The net of illusion can be cast only once. The voice of the writer brushes, so to say, against his flash of invention.

-Irving Howe



THE BIRTHDAY GIFT



Swinging her left arm, Hope struck her mother on the right cheek forcing her to her knees. Silence filled the living room as Hope bursts into tears.

Finding some balance to her feet, the mother walked towards her broken daughter, "I am so sorry" she extended her arms to embrace her. "I didn't know that it could lead to this."

"Don't touch me!" she exclaimed. "I get a day off from work to come and spend some time with you on my birthday and what do I get? You and this.... Cuddling each other?"

"Mother I'm not just hurt, I am disappointed that you degrade yourself in such a manner." She added.

"I am sorry my child" she said as she quickly buttoned her purple blouse.

"Happy birthday Hope!" a deep male voice from behind greeted. Dropping to the ground, Hope continued to weep.

"See, I always win" the voice continued "I always get what I want and you know why, because I am a man and you are not."

"It was nice knowing you ladies," he majestically dressed up, waved and walked out the house, jumped into his car and drove off.

"I'm sorry my child." The mother continued to beg for forgiveness. "I didn't know he was here to hurt you, he came acting all hurt and he said it's all because of what you said to him. We then started kis...."

"Stop it! I don't want to hear your story. Of all the people, it had to be James, my ex-boyfriend" she said as she grabbed her hand bag and headed for the door.

"Don't tell me you leaving already," the mother followed behind.

"Yes mother, I have some work to do to reach their level, men's level. He hasn't won, not today."

Wanangwa Mwale,
Zambia



**AFRICAN
WRITERS
CONFERENCE** 2018

30th November - 2nd December, 2018

Abuja, Nigeria

REGISTER AT
<http://www.writerstrust.org/awc>
TO RESERVE A SEAT



**AFRICAN
WRITERS
CONFERENCE** 2018

— ■ THEME ■ —

**"Reimagining African Literature:
New Voices, New Narratives
in the Fight for the Girl Child"**

— ■ DATE ■ —

30th November - 2nd December, 2018

— ■ VENUE ■ —

Abuja, Nigeria

REGISTER AT
<http://www.writerstrust.org/awc>
TO RESERVE A SEAT



Powered by:
**AFRICAN WRITERS
DEVELOPMENT TRUST**
To Empower Writers Of African Descent

A young man with short dark hair and a light beard is looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a blue and white horizontally striped button-down shirt. The background consists of a tall green hedge with some red flowers, and a lion sculpture is visible behind the hedge. The lighting is natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Interview with Nehemiah Omukhonya

by
Sandra Oma Etubiebi

It started once upon the crime sin when a young man from Kenya decided, for the first time, to put pen to paper. Let me introduce him to you:

“My name is Nehemiah Omukhonya, a young writer from Vihiga County, Kenya. I find myself using my pseudonym Mukonya Mukonya more often though. I wrote the original version of The Crime Sin in 2009 in my final year in high school. I kept the poem until the year 2015 when I stumbled on Kitche Magak’s poem The Last Monologue. I loved the style, and tweaked The Crime Sin to fit that style.

I discovered my love for poetry during my days in high school. There was this poem “Lapobo” (I can’t quite remember the author), that I found during my early days in high school. It really caught my attention. I memorized and would always recite. I then started looking for more poems, and actually thought of writing my own. I would always go trying to identify the mood, tone and theme of every poem I came across.

Back in high school, some friends would call me Nesh the Philosopher (Nesh for Nehemiah) because I always had an explanation whenever I found myself in trouble. After I showed The Crime Sin to them, they were like “now, this is Nesh the Philosopher we know.” It really propelled me to think of writing more.”

This young man, Mukonya Mukonya (I nicknamed him MM for short), succeeded in producing a poem rich in analogy creating a one sided conversation, which painted rich pictures that told a humorous yet pitiful tale. You are invited to examine the crime sin verse by verse as we simultaneously get to know this young writer from Vihiga –Kenya:

**(God, Kitche Magak spoke to you as Man to God
I plead to do the same
in this heartfelt prayer
And please God, let me finish, too, before you say a word
for, this could be the only time
I find courage to speak with you!)
You see God, my wife’s younger sister
My sister-in-law
Came visiting some months ago
And after a fortnight she went back upcountry.
I then heard she was pregnant
She has now delivered
Delivered a perfect replica...
Of me!**

MM: “The Crime Sin was my first ever poem. Writing The Crime Sin came after an

event occurred in my neighbourhood. Someone was said to have fled home because he had impregnated a teenage sister-in-law. I thought of writing a story about it, but a poem is what flowed easily. I showed it to my English teacher and he really liked it. He told me to keep it so that someday I'd improve on it and hit a publisher for publication. After I edited in 2015, I sent it to him again and he liked the new development. I showed it to some of my friends and they all liked it. It got posted on a blog.

I mainly write poems. I am yet to publish but I am working on my collection of poems, which bears the same title as my very first poem *The Crime Sin*. I have not written so much of other genres of literature. I only have one very short piece of children's literature, and one flash fiction and one short story. All these I wrote after my encounter with the free mentorship at WSA, this year 2018 to be precise."

God, you very well know my house out there in the urbans
It's not even a house; just a room
The very room we use as the bedroom, sitting room, dining room, kitchen
And at times...
The bathroom!
I'm sure God you know life out there in the urban slum.
You see God, when this girl came visiting
During those August holidays
You let a lot of things happen
And God, admit it, you have to take your share of the blame
I know my excuses might sound lame
But God you know
Even when a thief is caught red-handed
Will always try to prove their innocence.

MM: "Although I wrote the first poem in 2009, I wrote my second in 2014. I had lost motivation, and only went back to write after watching several spoken word poetry videos. This explains my soft spot for Spoken word, and why most of my poems have analogies.

I don't want to lose myself trying to write something that impresses a specific set of individual. I have always dreamt of just being me. What I want is to produce writings that have an impact - not to get lost in the need to get to certain heights such that I forget the main reason I started writing. I want to have writings that will have a way to restore faith in humanity. However small the impact might be, I want to make an impact."

Now God, when this girl came visiting
My wife came with the news
That she, my wife, would go to South Africa

For a seminar
That her boss organized a one-month seminar
And she was among the 'lucky ones'
And with only one month into marriage
I was to sleep on that bed alone
With my wife's teenage sister, my beautiful sister-in-law
Sleeping somewhere in the same room
On her own bedding
Just a meter or two from where I would sleep.
And God you know I'm only human.
How was I to keep away from temptation without your help, God?

MM: "I, also, hold a day job. I am part of the team at Cloud Factory Kenya, a job that gives me opportunities to learn lots of new things while transcribing video and audio recordings. Sometimes, the things I learn on my day job spur ideas in my mind, which end up in my writings."

I had never thought of cheating on my wife
But one evening, God
This little teen, my sister-in-law
Came looking for trouble
She came from the bathroom
And her towel fell off, right in front of me
Yes, God
The towel fell off, accidentally on purpose.
She hurriedly picked it up to cover back her body
But what I had seen, turned me on.
I took the challenge, God
And after a few minutes of persuasion
We were on the bed - by mutual consent
And within the moans and groans
The tissue of pride she had held on for 16 years
Was all gone!
And there after we would share the same bed
For the next few days.

MM: "Writing and reading in Africa is really developing. We have organizations like Africa Writers Development Trust (AWDT) and WSA who aim at telling the African story, and nurture upcoming writers. There are lots of competitions being organized for writers to participate in, acting as morale boosters for writers to write.

Also, other settings like The AMKA Literature Forum which takes place at the Goethe Institute Nairobi every last Saturday of every month (this is a place where writers come to share and critique each other's work). The writings of these Africans are also read here in Africa. So as I write, I am sure of a ready audience. This gives me more reason to write."

Now God, before I forget
My wife also gave birth a few weeks ago
And I have an issue with that baby.
The baby has Chinese eyes
God, and that hair, really?
Even in my wildest of imagination
I won't think of that short Chinese man my wife has for a boss
Having shot hot life into my wife.
Is this the reason my wife won't talk of her sister's baby?

MM: "A few years ago, there were cases of child rape in the Mukuru slums of Nairobi. I wrote a poem about it and shared with someone. He totally didn't like the theme. He questioned why my mind would create such a story. See, there are judgments by society about the things writers write. Someone once said "you are what you write" a notion that's totally wrong. This makes people write about things they feel society won't misjudge them about.

I'd say "let writers write, without any restrictions." Write on whatever topic. Confront every issue. Of course, the literary standards in Africa are rising higher and higher. Yet, it is unfortunate some stories are still considered taboos here in Africa. Someone can't discuss certain issues with their mothers or publicly talk about certain issues. This has limited the extent to which a person can stretch their creativity. I would prefer that writers are free-thinkers such that they don't limit their imagination to 'culturally accepted norms.'"

Now God, put yourself in my shoes
Your wife gives birth to a Chinese baby
The entire neighbourhood laughs at you
A minor has your baby
And you run away from home in fear of the law.
Poverty stares at you straight in the face like a hungry child.
I know they'll find me some day
So God before I go rot in jail
Just take me away.

There you have it! You have read it for yourselves. So, whether it's a crime scene or the crime sin, it's got Mukonya Mokonya written all over it!

ESSAYS

Words can be like X-rays if you use them properly -- they'll go through anything. You read and you're pierced."

- Aldous Huxley New World

The purpose of a writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself.

- Albert Camus



Frangipanis



Roses are red, violets are blue, and Frangipanis rule the world. Ever heard of that? Yes? No? Well, it doesn't go like that, but that's how it ought to. I love flowers and not only during Valentine's Day, I love them in sickness and in health, in good and bad times, I cherish and hold them, and only death will do us part. I love how pretty they are and how delicately they are woven, I love their smell and I love how they never fail to fill me with bubbles of pleasure from within whenever I come across them. I love how they grow all over the place in various shapes and sizes; wearing their colourful coats of honour and choosing to remain cheerful just to brighten up my days.

Frangipanis, as you may have guessed, are my favourite flowers. They are not as over-rated as the rose flower, even though they deserve all the glory and praise in the flower kingdom. They are delicate and pure looking, have beautiful waxy petals and sweet rich fragrance. They bloom with sheer beauty, making them look sensational on the trees. The centre of the Frangipani flower always has a different colour from the rest of the flower. The most common being the white, which has a yellow centre. Other colours include red and orange.

Commonly known as Plumeria, they first appeared in the mid 19th century in the southern forests of Mexico and were named after a 16th century Italian nobleman called Marquis Frangipani, a creator of perfumes that were used to scent gloves. Once people discovered the scent of the Plumeria, it reminded them of Marquis Perfumes and hence the flower was called Frangipani. You see just like humans, the Frangipanis have DNA that allows their origin and heritage to be traceable. The flowers yield no nectar, and simply trick their pollinators- the sphinx moths, to pollinate them. They do this by emitting a very strong

fragrance at night, hence seducing the months, which is very cunning of them.

Frangipanis have various meanings and uses amongst the different societies and cultural beliefs in the world. Some people believe it signifies love and fertility, others believe it represents a good status in society, to others, it symbolizes a lasting bond between a married couple, others see it as a sign of immortality, others say it is a refuge for the dead- a communication with the other world. And others use it as a healing wrap for bruises. Other People also consider it unlucky as they believe ghosts and other spirits live in its bushes.

I believe that humans are quite similar to the frangipani; we come in different shapes and sizes, just as the Frangipani comes in different colours. We also serve different purposes; in our parents home we are children, in our houses, we are parents or maybe just adults, to some we are friends, to others colleagues, students, mentors, and just like others believe Frangipanis have spirits and ghosts living in them, we also have our fair share of ghosts in our lives. Frangipanis are very tough flowers; they are able to survive neglect, heat and drought. In fact, they only burn in extreme heat of over 500 degrees. Just like Frangipanis, we too have struggles, rainy days, thunderstorms, hurricanes, earthquakes and a whole lot of other tragedies. And in the same way the Frangipani overcomes all and still fills the garden with a wonderful perfume, we also soldier on in this journey of life.

Despite their differences in colour and their struggles, they still bloom and turn towards the sun as soon as it comes up. And I believe when the rays of the sun shines on them, they smile taking in all the light they can, till they can take no more. They grow widely, boisterously and beautifully, despising the fact that we can pluck them off anytime and they will die.

I love the Frangipanis because of what they are on the outside, and what they are on the inside. I love the Frangipanis because I want to be like them; Tough on the inside but with a delicate look that gives me a symbol of grace, wealth and perfection. I want to be able to overcome all the storms in my life and still be able to turn my face towards the sun, basking, shining, cheerful in my pursuits, being useful and leaving all the shadows behind.

I want to be a Frangipani, because being delicate and beautiful, doesn't mean I am weak or incapable

by
Ernestina Azah,
Ghana



Our Creativity: Missing or Stolen?

The ability to make new things or come up with original ideas is what creativity is all about. And despite the fact that creativity is within all of us, most people only use less than 15% of their brain capacity. And unfortunately for us, whether we use our creativity or not; it will only live within us while we live and die with us when our time comes.

The “why” and “how” questions are the keys for unlocking our creative potentials. These questions trigger our subconscious and superconscious minds which enable us to fill-in the gap between the “imagination” and the “realities”. But most of the times, we choose to ask the “what” question which keeps us within our comfort zone.

Example: people like Einstein, Newton, Ghandi, Mandela, Gates, Zuckerberg and many others have used their persistence, tenacity and resources to ask “why” and “how” questions which has had a tremendous effect in turning their “imagination” into “realities”. And their convictions to pursue, and ponder over those questions has transformed the world in more ways than we could have ever imagined possible.

In comparison, we in turn focus our energies, concentrate our minds and spend our valuable time in answering the “what” questions; by relaying on existing theories in our school curricula, answering the answered questions, exploring and heightening the images of those before us. We bury our minds and talents beneath the pages of our books; which makes us experts in subconscious plagiarism. Very sad, we are unknowingly celebrating others victory!

Similarly in our communities, instead of looking to the future and living a creative life, we often choose to live a life of reading the history of successful people. We choose mediocrity instead of creativity, we choose to remain in our comfort zones; not knowing how many creative ideas, talents, dreams, gifts or abilities our comfort zone is robbing us.

To sum it all, whether our creativity is missing or stolen by ourselves or our systems, it's high time for we looked for it. If we are to stay competitive in this creative world of ours, we need to be creative.

by
Ibrahim Haruna MaiJamaa,
Nigeria



Two Steps towards Becoming a Better Writer

Do you want to become a bestselling author or a celebrated poet? Or do you want to get better at reaching people with your writing? Either way, to achieve your writing goals, you simply must get better at the art of writing. The reason, for which you write, after all, is to be heard – to share your message with a particular audience. This writeup will provide you with just two basic steps to become a better writer; insights that if acted upon accordingly can make your writing better.

You might have heard some people say that writing is a talent and you must have the talent to be a great writer. But Scott Fitzgerald, one of the finest American writers of the 20th century has this to say on the issue of talent: “You have talent – which is the equivalent of a soldier having the right physical qualifications for entering West Point.”

Fitzgerald’s words in essence are a reminder that talent in itself is meaningless. Even if you feel you have the talent, or you actually do, there’s still substantial work to be done.

Writing, as much as it’s an art, is also a skill. Having the knack for stringing words together is not a guarantee that you will be a great writer. On the flipside, even if you feel you don’t have the talent, writing – like any other skill – can be learnt and mastered.

Read

This is the first step

The importance of reading to a writer cannot be overemphasized. Reading is equivalent to going through the thought process of another writer. If you desire to get better as a writer, read extensively. Read in your genre and outside of it as well. Read anything you can lay your hands on. When you want to read, I advise that you take the advice of Francine Prose in her book *Reading Like a Writer*; where she suggests that you read slowly so that you can pay attention as to how the writer has carefully arrived at whatever it is you are reading. The writing process is a painstaking one and a good writer will tell you how hard it can be sometimes to arrive at something as minute as a singular word choice.

When you read other writers, either those you wish to emulate or those that are simply established and successful, you learn a lot of things. You learn how they write, their different styles, pacing, voice, structure, and so many other things, and you can always emulate them. Before writing courses became popular, old writers learnt by imitating their predecessors and modern writers still continue to do so. It’s nothing to feel ashamed of.

The other part of reading is to read on how to become a better writer. Many successful writers have now written books outlining their writing process. There are also tons of articles and essays you can read on how to get better as a writer. Although you might not exactly do as these materials suggest, you are sure to gain something from each one of them. You can't possibly exhaust all the writing resources out there these days but read as much as you can, nonetheless. It's equally important to read books on the basics of writing as well. This includes books on such things as punctuation, grammar, lexis, structure and even style. Learning the basics will go a long way in helping you lay a good foundation for your writing endeavour.

Write

"Write as often as possible, not with the idea at once of getting into print, but as if you were learning an instrument." – J. B. Priestley.

The truth is, to get better at anything takes practice, as cliché as it is, practice does make perfect. In actual fact, practice makes everything. The only way to become a better writer is to actually write. You can take a thousand courses on becoming a better writer but you still need to actually write with consistency to get better. The ultimate way to become better is to write and to continue to improve as you do so. Whatever genre you write – poetry or prose, fiction or nonfiction – if you don't write, you can't get better. It's as simple as that.

So, as you read and garner more knowledge and insights, you have to apply what you have learnt by actually writing. There is no way around it. Like Priestley said, forget that you want to get published for a moment and actually get into the process of writing first. Most writers advise that you have set aside time every day to write. They suggest that you should make it a morning ritual as this is the time that seems most perfect. Well, it might be in the evening or late at night for you, it doesn't matter, just make sure you write consistently.

Consistency breeds confidence and the more you write, the more you get better at it. It's just like learning an instrument-You get better by the day when you practise regularly. There are many writing resources and tools online these days that can help you keep a routine as a writer. Note that what you write at a particular point doesn't always have to make perfect sense. Just write, let the words flow. You can always make sense of it later. A renowned author once said that you can't edit a blank page. So, go ahead and write.

Bestselling author, Stephen King said: "it's the amateur writer that waits for inspiration, the rest of us just go to work". Picasso did put it this way: "Inspiration does exist, but it must find us working" he went on further to say "Action is the foundational key to all success" All the knowledge in the world without any action is naught. Stop giving yourself excuses and get to work already

One thing you must know, however, is that writing – like any other worthy endeavour – takes a great deal of effort and commitment. You can't become a great writer overnight! But with continuous reading and writing, you will get there.

Williams Olaide Oladele
Nigeria

Beneath Life's Sea



Life is full of life, but not many enter into the fullness of life's life. Ask the homeless on the streets; the ones who have just the sky as roof, the warmth of their bodies for cold nights and the chills of loneliness for hot days. Ask those who have a roof over their heads, but burning coals in the privacy of their shoes. Ask the wealthy that have all that money can buy, but lack those which money can't buy. Ask the wealth less who have what money can't buy, but lack the things that money can buy. It's as if life is saying, "You can't have your cake and eat it too", what really is this life then?

Allow me to briefly talk about the earth; it is said that about seventy-one percent of the earth's surface is covered in water. Taking into consideration the percentage that other features of the earth eat up; mountains, forests, buildings etcetera, I wonder how little the space man occupies is; the space where the nostrils of our activities breathe breaths of this thing called 'life'. If the sea is so vast, and life's depths so puzzlingly mysterious, maybe juxtaposing these two entities can clear the air of some things; maybe life's depths can be compared with the sea's volume.

Life is a sea, in which we all swim, though at different depths. Some float on the surface; they are the ones who derive pleasure from observing the way the winds toss the waves about. They ride the waves like a carousel; contented with what they see. They know all the whirlpool spots of the sea and go there to enjoy the swirling. They know only about the things on the surface, and the life in the depths remains shrouded from them. They know what happens to a fish when it is taken away from water, but they do not know that the waves may not always be their friend, and that beneath it lurks strength that can throw them off or teleport them far away from the shores of the sea.

Then, there are those who dwell in the depths. Those who decide to exist in the fullness of the sea life; "We will follow the rules and we're sure to survive in these depths" they say. Circumstances can then decide to favour them or throw them in adversity. There are the daredevils;

the ones who shine the torches of their eyes into nooks and crannies beneath the sea, purposefully or to just put out their fire of curiosity. Then there are a few who really want to discover who they really are, find their place under the waters, and go on journeys of caution and courage, storms and shipwrecks, to find their true selves.

A few years ago, I watched an animated movie titled 'Shark Tale'. It gave me a good peek of life inside the sea as compared with real life. Oscar was a fish, just another fish that wanted to matter. In his wanderings to find himself, he had a close shave with death; one that turned out to be a surreal closeness to the actualisation of his dream of 'becoming somebody'. A fish met a friendly shark, a shark without predator instincts. He decided to take advantage of that and falsely launched himself into spotlight. He faked it till he could fake it no more. The real Oscar only emerged after he became true to himself. Behind the curtains of being 'just another fish', a fish with a large heart was hidden. He had the perfect personality and charisma to change things. His real self, which he had little regard for, exuded way more than he what he dismissed as ordinariness. The power in that ordinariness only came out after he had wasted time living a lie.

Life can never make sense if we fail to extract meaning from its seeming meaninglessness. Imagine if Oscar, the jellyfish mistook its small stature for vulnerability and never knew its predatory capabilities. Imagine if sharks were the ones to scamper for safety if they spotted other species of fish. Anyone who wants to find purpose from life knows in themselves what they must do. But then, not everyone gets what they want. Not everyone comes out from life's refining fire as gold. Beneath the sea of our living, we have generalised our purpose into flapping fins to swim, and preserving our gills to breathe. We have lost ourselves in the race to survive. Survival has chased us into places where not only our bodies hide, but our purposes also do not find expression.

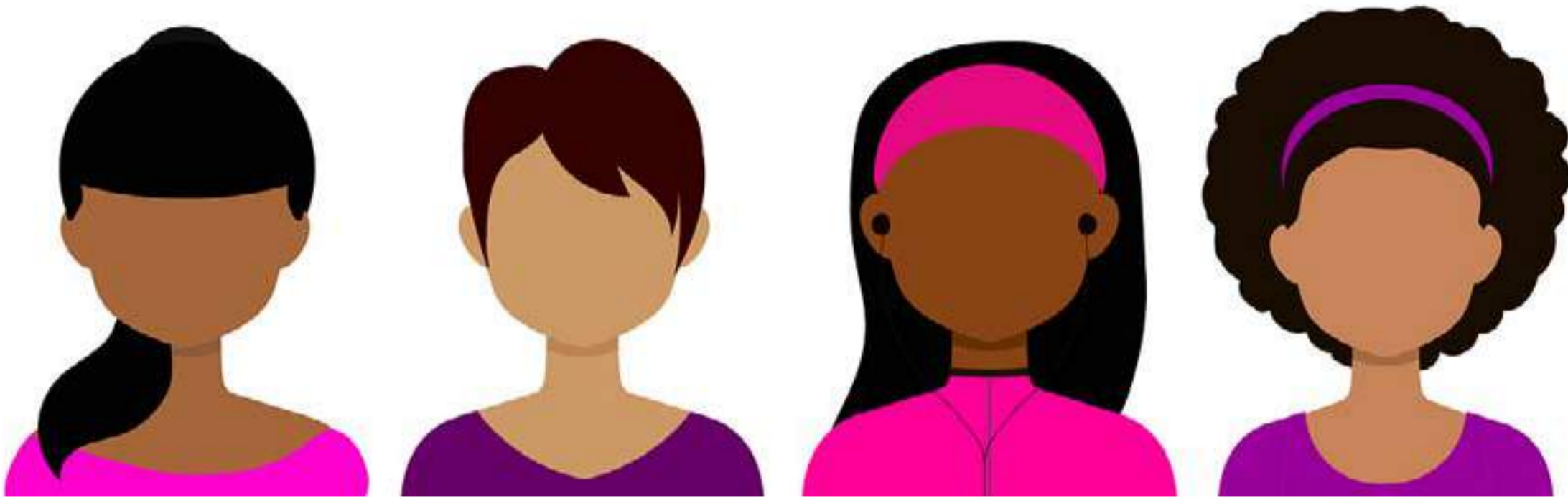
What really is this life then? It is the atmosphere where the Creator has put us to cultivate the fields of our unique purposes. It is the war we are meant to win. It is the interlocking pieces of a jigsaw puzzle we are meant to reconstruct. It is the mountain we're meant to surmount. It is the mystery we're meant to unravel. It is the variety of bombs in us waiting to explode.

Our purpose is to discover our purpose and chase it to the ends of the earth. In this, we can never go wrong. And all our ups and downs and various kinds of swimming strokes in life's sea would propel us further to the triumph of accomplishment. We can only shop in life's mall while pushing our trolleys of purpose. So, just as purposes are being fulfilled in thick forests and beneath the sea, even in cycles of both viciousness and clemency, a purposeful life is the key to the gates of the answers we seek. The meaning of life—in ups or downs, highs or lows, viciousness or clemency, good or bad—lies in finding purpose.

Ayotunde Oyeniran
Nigeria

BLUNTNESS IS BRUTAL

NOTHING WRONG WITH FEMINISM



Why do people, especially men, dread the word feminism and those who represent it? I find it hilarious that even some women shy away from it and when asked “What do you think about feminism?” totally dissociate themselves from it. Sincerely speaking, Feminism is nothing to be scared of. It’s just a word that represents an honest, clean and sincere intention.

I’m certain that very many do not know the dictionary meaning of ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’. Perhaps, they’ve only heard about it from the mouths of those who castigate it. Hearsay is not the best form of knowledge. So, I’ll help with some details on feminism and why it’s necessary. By the way, world renowned writer, Chimamanda Adichie, isn’t the founder of feminism as some people claim-She’s only a preacher of the propaganda.

Now, what’s feminism? Who is a feminist?

Feminism is all about women rights advocacy and gender equality. The goal is “...to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes” (Wikipedia). Hence, a feminist only propagates this agenda through creative measures. She or he is an advocate of the rights listed above as well as equality. It’s as simple as that. Okay, breathe in and take a second read through this paragraph. You’ll marvel at the simplicity. It’s the same as fighting for the rights of a man or anyone who has been unfairly discriminated and disregarded.

Personally, I believe that gender inequality stems from two perspectives: the religious perspective where there is the claim that women are under men because the man is the leader

of the home. It's true that a man is the leader of the home but if at all a woman is under any man, that's her husband only. Even at that, it doesn't rid the woman of her rights just because she's married to him. Leadership is about servanthood not dictatorship or abuse. The second perspective only addresses physical power; men are tougher physically than women, but in terms of intellect and psychology, they are equal.

Now, by equality, we mean same rights, privileges, and opportunities. No one is robbing the men of theirs. There's nothing wrong in all of us seeing each other from the same lens. Let me give you reasons why this propaganda or movement is necessary: women are given less employment opportunities; they are barely allowed political participation; they are usually married off early- and even the so-called educated families tend to pressurize their girls to marry once they are through with or while in the University; women are made to feel important only when they are married.

Many homes still don't send their girls to school, or deprive them of completing their education up to University level; women are made to believe that they are sex objects, cooks, baby making machines and launderers; women are constantly abused in the work place and every other environment, the church inclusive; many societies are yet to agree on severe penalties for men who are abusive to the female gender. I could go on but you can find out the rest yourself.

No doubt that some feminists are overbearing, but we should note that there are extremists in everything we do- religious, cultural and even social- so why should the criticism be different with feminists? There's no need jittering or fidgeting; it's a positive propaganda- or movement as some would call it- that speaks positive volumes in the lives of our daughters and women in the present and nearest future. Yes, 'our daughters' because it begins from childhood. I'm sure you would love to see your girl grow up strong and feel no less to anybody. The advancement that the world has so dreamed of would be easier achieved through women empowerment: equalizing her with the man and educating her. That's the best anyone can do for a woman. Let's change our perceptions about feminism. Let's embrace it- both man and woman- and make the world a better place.

Please disregard women who speak hate against men under the guise of feminism. They are not feminists; they are extremists.

About the Columnist:

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhie is a writer, editor, and broadcast journalist; a columnist with Writers Space Africa online magazine. She's a preacher of her propaganda and a believer in equality and truth. Her essay contents span various topics from child abuse, politics, to gender equality, racism, tribalism, and as many issues as can be touched. She is also a blogger on girl-child matters. She can be reached via the email addresses: theroaringwriter@gmail.com or gabrielina.gabriel@gmail.com

Holding hands is a sign of trust

*Let's hold your hands
through your publishing journey*



Acacia Publishing
Africa's Superior Publishing
Print & Web | Distribution | Author Services

www.publishwithacacia.com

info@publishwithacacia.com

 +234-805-213-6165



Acacia Bookstore is calling published African authors to sell their eBooks on the Acacia Bookstore.

We are searching for books written by African authors irrespective of genre.

The books will be made available to a global audience.

BUY NOW FROM

www.acaciabookstore.com

SHORT STORIES

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.

Maya Angelou





THE AIRPORT ESCAPE

Eva Mwangi, Kenya

I smiled when I saw him walk towards me. What a glorious day! I thought to myself. It had been months since we last saw each other and only God knew how much I missed him. The sexual starvation was driving me insane. Anytime he called me all I would imagine was his hands all over my body. My love was finally here and now I could let my inhibitions free. The temptation had been difficult but by God's grace, I overcame it. As he strode toward me with his suitcase, my heart beat so fast I thought it was going to break out of my chest.

I ran to him and jumped on his well-built body, my legs crossing his waist. He held me firmly and gently kissed me on the lips. Truth be told he was as happy to see me as I was to see him. His "little boy" could not hide his excitement as he pressed against me. If only I was so daring I would have ripped off his trousers right on the spot and quenched my thirst. We walked slowly towards the car as our minds imagined how glorious it would be to make love to each other after not being able to do so for so long.

It was around 2:00 am and the airport parking lot was empty. After we put his luggage in the car, the feelings of ecstasy could no longer be contained. My husband grabbed me by the waist and planted a soft kiss on my lips. He looked into my eyes and said, "Baby, I know we shouldn't do this here but I don't think I can wait until we get home before I can make love to you." He tore off my blouse and all I could hear were buttons falling on the ground. He quickly ripped my bra in half and the next thing I felt were his strong hands caressing my breasts. At this point, I was almost out of breath. He lifted up my skirt and carefully worked his way up the X spot. He removed my panties gently and then went in for a surprise kiss. His eyes lit up like those of a birthday boy who just got a bike as his present. He worked his magical tongue down my neck to my hard nipples then the "forbidden fruit." He made me so wet I could barely support myself against the car door. In fact, I accidentally honked the car at some point.

I offered to go down on him but he turned me down. All he wanted was to have my body and pleasure himself. He pulled me to him and I found comfort in his lap. I looked into his beautiful black eyes and unbuckled his belt then opened his trouser. My eyes fell on his hard on that was pleading to break free from his underwear. I begged him to go inside me but he kept teasing me and telling me to wait. At an unexpected turn of events, I felt “Geoffrey” like he called his big black rod push inside me. Let’s just say the thrill I felt as he went in and out of my sugary walls was magical. His skin on my skin and the soft lingering kisses on my body just threw me into a frenzy. I had totally forgotten that we were in a public place. I moaned softly over his lips. He grasped me harder so that he could push deeper inside me.

I could see him enjoy his work as he would pull back and look into my horny eyes and bubbly face. Needless to say, the time came for “Geoffrey” to rise to the occasion and he did. My husband held my neck and moments later I felt an explosion of possibly “our future babies.” He continued caressing my body as he kissed me and man oh man I let out a loud moan and that was the epitome of my climax. I lay on his broad shoulders for a while before we spotted security guards walking towards our car. We hastily scrambled for our clothes to cover our naked bodies.

We had only partially covered our bodies when the police tapped on the window of our vehicle and asked if everything was okay. We awkwardly replied “YES.” We had only lowered the window a little bit to prevent the cops from seeing our half-naked bodies. The biggest challenge with their Q & A was that my husband’s hand was gently placed on my thigh and my loins were beginning to fire up again. I could barely compose myself and give reasonable answers and he was enjoying every moment of it. He loved seeing me horny especially when in a position I could barely express how I felt.

The two policemen were looking at us suspiciously. They asked if we had heard a woman screaming weirdly and we responded with a very confident “NO”. At this point, I felt my husband’s hand playing with “Sasha” like I called my girly parts and man, oh man I was almost losing it. I barely had any control left and the policemen didn’t seem to be ending the non-essential questions. I seemed to be out of breath when one of the policemen asked if I was okay. My husband quickly interjected with a quick “YES” so as to wrap up the conversation quickly. He said I was just tired from the long flight.

Finally, the policemen left and I could enjoy the moment. Otieno, my husband, leaned in gently for a kiss then looked deeply into my eyes and said, “I cannot have enough of you, please can I have you one more time before we head home? I want to eat you like the last dessert I’ll ever have.” I was trembling with excitement because his hands were gently fondling my breasts as he spoke to me. This man knew how to turn on the fire and how to put it out. My thoughts were running wild and like the gentleman he was, he pushed the lever that held my car seat downwards and moved closer to me. His eyes were lustful and still loving at the same time. Finally, “Geoffrey” and “Sasha” met and the feeling of contentment could not even be described. I’m not sure if I was moaning loudly or quietly but what I’m sure of is that making love to Otieno gave me a reason to live. Despite the constricted space, my husband rocked my world then pulled out right before I could o****m. I was so turned on and he wouldn’t let me finish the long race unless I begged him to go inside me. Eventually, I caved and he



Airport lanes

Houda Messoudi, Morocco

Ghita loves traveling, she loves that small rush of adrenaline when she gets out of the plane, setting foot for the first time in a different country and knowing that all the possibilities are open, she loves the fact that the airport ultimately means new experiences. Today is a different day though; one she never imagined would ever come. Today, Ghita goes to the airport dreading it. She goes there even though she won't board any plane. Today, it's a spying mission; spying on Yassine, her boyfriend; well soon to be ex-boyfriend. He is traveling abroad, having no idea when to come back, leaving her alone, leaving her here while he goes and builds a new life elsewhere, far from her.

She stands between the busy crowds, there are smiling people, tired people, those in a hurry to catch their flights, those completely mesmerized by the magnitude of the place. She understands the excitement on their faces, she was one of them just a while ago, but today she is just an observer. She stares past them, trying to locate Yassine. She feels a small pinch in her heart when she thinks that maybe she missed him, maybe it is too late and that maybe he is already in the boarding hall. She looks at her watch and thinks that this is impossible. She hurries again through the lines and tries to spot him. Ghita doesn't want to attract much attention because she wants to see him without being spotted.

She decides to sit for a coffee; in one strategic place that allows her sight to cover all queues for the airline he is flying with, especially flights to Australia. She sips her coffee slowly and watches the unending wave of people coming and leaving. Finally, she spots him. He is with his parents. Apparently, his mum has been crying so he is hugging her strongly, as if saying "I am here, I will be fine." He smiles at her, that comforting smile that he used on Ghita on many occasions each time she faced hardships.

For twenty minutes, she keeps staring at him. Even from the distance separating them, she tries to look hard at his face. This is probably the last time that she will ever see him, so she wants to remember every detail, every small trait of his face. A lot of that time, he is smiling and comforting, he doesn't look annoyed when a young couple crosses the line and stands before him; he even lets an old man take a turn before him as well. This is the man she knows! The considerate man for the elderly and the forgiving one towards the impatient youth.

For a short while, her mind roams through old memories, when they were happy and when they could never imagine that anything would separate them. She also remembers the day he announced to her that he was accepted for a job overseas. She didn't even know that he had applied and there he was, in that damned coffee shop, telling her that he was accepted and that he completed all administrative work so that he can leave the following month. She was happy for him, excited and so proud of this achievement. She remembered how, when the moment of joy and celebration was passed, he started avoiding eye contact and gazing out the window. She knew then that he hadn't told the whole truth, that some part was left hidden and that he was afraid of her reaction or just delaying some unavoidable confrontation. She knew him well enough not to ask. Asking him wouldn't get her anywhere. Yassine was someone that loved to do things at his own pace. And that stupid man decided that the best moment was last week, over dinner; the last dinner they would ever have together as a couple.

He explained that he didn't have any chance of getting that job without sponsorship, so he had to improvise quickly. The friends that were already in Australia confirmed that the best way was to have immigration papers, and then look for a job. But he couldn't wait that long for the normal course of things... he decided to get married to an Australian girl in order to get the papers more quickly. At that moment, Ghita zoned out and didn't listen to anything he said afterward. Bribes of words came to her and she guessed he talked about how he managed to meet that other girl online, how much it cost him to negotiate that deal with her and all the struggles to convince his parents. As the reality sunk in, that it was not her boyfriend sitting across from her, but a married man instead, she stopped crying and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Since when?" She asked. He lowered his eyes, not wanting that confrontation but she didn't flinch. Her eyes were locked on his face, daring him to lie to her, obliging him to tell only the truth.

"Five months." Heavier tears started running down her face but she had one more question to ask.

Did you meet her, for real?"

He hesitated, then looked outside the window as if he was gathering his thoughts. His eyes were filled with tears but he struggled not to let them flow.

“Yes, remember when I had to go to Tangiers to see my grandparents? I was in Marrakech instead.”

That’s all the answer she needed to know. She just nodded, looked into his eyes more profoundly this time, her eyes communicating all the pain she was going through and all the emotions of betrayal, bitterness, sadness and rage that embraced her. She didn’t make a scene, she just picked her bag and left. He didn’t make any movement to retain her. He didn’t dare to do so, not after what he had done. Besides, no words could possibly change the facts, real tangible facts that he had betrayed her and lied to her for at least five months.

Now she is at the airport, watching him leave, maybe forever. She is mumbling farewell words, even though she knows that he doesn’t deserve any of them, not after what he had done to her. She feels that there was no closure for their story, so this “invisible” goodbye can make up for it. Ghita didn’t yell at his face, didn’t scream out of pain, didn’t hit him as hard as she could, didn’t call him names, didn’t even yell at the friends who probably knew and kept the show running ... She just cried and cried, until she had no more tears. Watching him leave was the ultimate proof that he is out of her life for good.

He finally checks in his luggage and hugs his parents for the last time before crossing the steps to where he would be alone and start that new chapter of his life. She can’t see his face clearly but she is sure he is sad but trying to keep a good composure for the sake of his parents.

At some point, he is facing her and for a second she thinks that he has seen her. His eyes are clearly directed to her but she is sitting so far away to be distinguished and recognized. In any case, that moment lasts for only a second before his eyes shift back, this time to his father. With a last hug, he walks towards the doors.

She stays at the coffee shop for twenty more minutes after he leaves. Knowing that they are in the same space, even if they can’t meet, even if he doesn’t even know that she is present, is somehow comforting; because that is how life will be for them onwards: complete strangers.

She wipes her face, these are tears she hadn’t realized were pouring. She adjusts her hair and tries to put a smile on her face. She leaves the airport, swearing that it will be the only time an airport is a sad place. This chapter of her life will now be closed. Next time she comes here, she will be looking for adventure.

More Than Magic

Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe



Sahara Mtembe had cast a spell on her boss. To be fair, Sahara did not believe in magic or the witchcraft that her family peddled in the French Quarter, but there was no other explanation for Jeremy's sudden interest in her. Two weeks ago Sahara finally gave in to her cousin Ada's cajoling to cast at least one spell. For the sake of peace, Sahara chose to cast a love spell because she figured that was the least harmful one out of her mother's book of shadows.

"Accept your heritage," her mother was always saying. Sahara would roll her eyes because accepting her heritage would mean becoming some fraud of a voodoo priestess like her mother and cousin. She had come to this country as a teenager escaping the tyranny of her African motherland but she still struggled with affection for the mother who had left her as an infant to go practice witchcraft with her cousins in America.

That fateful night two weeks ago, Ada had gathered a moonstone, salt water, dried schisandra chinensis, rose petals and cinnamon then Sahara had dutifully written Jeremy's name on a scrap of paper, set it on fire and added the ashes to the concoction. "This is ridiculous Ada. If there was a spell to make people fall in love wouldn't everyone be using it?" Sahara had asked even as she accepted the piece of paper with the chant written in beautiful calligraphy.

"It only works if someone with magic in their lineage performs it. Someone like you," with that Ada had looked at her expectantly.

"Okay then, let's bewitch Jeremy Moore," Sahara had agreed with a sigh. Refusing would have made her seem afraid and so Sahara had repeated the chant in a flat voice.

Sahara was convinced it was all fun and games but the following day at work, Jeremy kept

shadowing her as she waited on her tables. At first, she had thought her manager was checking up on her because someone had lodged a complaint against her but at the end of the day Jeremy flat out asked her out. Sahara had rushed home and been sick for hours. He had been persistently asking her out since then and following her around the restaurant with puppy dog eyes. She found it terribly ironic that the one man she wanted would finally realize she existed because of something she didn't even believe in. Sahara's aversion to magic was always because her mother had left her as a child and knowing magic wasn't even real had helped her justify her anger. Now her world was upside down and she had no idea what to do. She couldn't even ask Ada for help because her cousin would only see it as a chance to say I told you so.

Sahara had finally agreed to a date with Jeremy but her nerves were all over the place and she was quite sure she was thirty minutes late. Making her way up the stairs of the quaint café, she smoothed her dress and her long braids which she had let down for a change. Although she knew the date was wrong, Sahara had dressed up because her feelings for Jeremy were real and hopefully when his enchantment passed he would look at her kindly. Jeremy was waiting for her at a table on the patio. He looked especially handsome today and when he looked up, saw her and smiled, Sahara felt her heart quicken then leap into her throat. Jeremy stood as she approached him and rounded the table to pull out her chair. He was always the perfect gentleman with her hence her long standing crush on him. The man was also criminally handsome so Sahara's poor heart had never stood a chance.

"You look beautiful, Sahara," his rich baritone sent warm shivers along her spine. She winced, feeling immensely guilty. Surely, whatever he thought about her was an illusion induced by magic she had thought powerless.

"Thank you," she whispered, trying to infuse as much innocence as she could into her voice. Now she truly was a fraud. Her guilt was tying up her vocal chords and she could only sit there admiring the man across from her and silently cursing Ada. She should never have given in to her cousin's taunting. She had only performed the spell to prove to Ada once and for all that she didn't have magical powers no matter what her mother said.

She admired Jeremy's profile as he placed their order to the waiter. He was well built with broad shoulders that tapered to a lean body. His golden hair put Sahara in mind of an African summer sunset. Somehow she felt like the one who had been bewitched. After ordering lunch, Jeremy settled in and began telling her funny stories. She was grateful he was taking point of the date because she was afraid if she started talking she would confess that he was under a spell and that he didn't even really like her. She knew that she should just tell him she wasn't interested and cut whatever this was before it grew roots and decided to have a life of its own, but this was Jeremy. The man she had fallen for from the very first moment she met him.

Sahara knew from his sideways glances that he could tell she was uncomfortable. They had

worked together for two years now and not once had Jeremy shown any interest towards her beyond that of a colleague. It was such a shame that he was only reciprocating her feelings because she had cast a spell on him. How would she ever know if his feelings were real? She suddenly felt like she was being punished for all the years she had laughed in the face of magic. Apparently, her mother was right and she was some fabled voodoo priestess. Sahara sighed sadly at the thought.

“Am I boring you?” Jeremy asked her. Sahara looked across the table into his shockingly clear water blue eyes. She wanted to dive into those eyes and never surface again. Except for the little fact that when Jeremy found out what she had done, he would probably drown her. She took a deep breath.

“Why did you suddenly ask me out that day Jeremy? I mean, we’ve been working together for years and you never even looked at me twice,” she blurted out all at once. Jeremy’s eyebrows shot up in surprise.

“Sahara, I’ve always seen you. From the very first day we met. I’ve tried so many times to talk to you but you always seemed preoccupied,” he told her. “I finally decided to ask you out three weeks ago.”

“You mean two weeks ago,” she corrected him.

“No, it was three weeks ago. I came to work all prepared but then you were out the whole week so I had to wait. I had waited for two years so I figured one more week shouldn’t hurt.” Sahara stared at Jeremy nonplussed. Three weeks ago she had had to help out at her mother’s store because Ada had been away at some spiritual retreat. She felt a weight disappear from her shoulders and she gave Jeremy her first genuine smile. She wanted to laugh out loud: Jeremy’s feelings for her were real not an enchantment after all.

“So you didn’t suddenly get the urge to ask me out two weeks ago?” she verified.

“More like two years ago,” Jeremy said with a laugh.

“How about we start this date all over again?” she asked, smiling sweetly and putting her hand in his on the table.

She could tell from the surprised look in his eyes that he was curious about what had changed her mood but she knew Jeremy wasn’t about to look a gift horse in the mouth. She wasn’t about to tell him that she had briefly believed she was a voodoo priestess with the magical power to make men love her.

“I would like nothing better,” Jeremy assured her with a devastating smile. “I like you a lot Sahara. I’ve always felt like you were a little out of my league, to be honest. To be here with you like this is beyond my wildest dreams,” Jeremy confessed. Sahara was pretty sure there was no spell on earth that could make a man look at a woman the way Jeremy was looking at her. He caressed her hand and Sahara knew that the electricity that raced between their interlocked hands was a little more than magic.



Olowo's first day at work

Semakula Emmanuel
Uganda

Frustrated passengers asked the taxi conductors to open so that they could foot the rest of the distance. Boda boda riders who made up traffic rules as they rode out of frustration instructed their clients to jump off their motorcycles and join those trekking. The reliability of cars in a traffic jam was tested, some stopped working while drivers who suspected their engines would not be trusted parked on the roadside. The roadside grass was trampled over by a mixture of cars, boda boda riders and humans cursing with each step. Kids pitched camp at the top of mini sand heaps on the side of the road, each occupying space so extensive another line of cars would pass, but no one thought it wise to move them.

Olowo watched with disappointment, dust rising and falling on his shoes. He started to regret bringing office shoes to a construction site. He had spent the last three years parked behind a desk. He was a small lean man dressed in a safety jacket, but this traffic jam was crawling up his skin inch by inch. He had spent the bulk of the mid-morning watching vehicles queue up one after another. He walked towards one of the workers in a hard helmet, scribbled on it was the name Ojok in blue ink.

“Ojok,” he called to the man who was surprised that a new worker knew his name, but before he would answer Olowo instructed.

“Line up all the workers and tell them to follow me.” Ojok went back and shouted at his friends who followed along in excitement. Within minutes they formed a small circle around Olowo. He stood in the middle with authority, declaring that they must root out

the traffic jam. He pointed at each of the workers, telling them where to stand. One after another they took up their posts with a goal of stopping any car jumping the queue, insolent drivers would be turned back. "Patience pays," he said to himself as the taxis were forced back.

Watching all the workers in hard helmets abandon their posts and line along the road like they are waiting for a VIP was Orono the supervisor. He was lying on his big tummy under a makeshift tent pitched on the side of the road. He watched with curiosity then abruptly stood up in disgust and headed for the line of hard helmets. One after another he bypassed each of them and observed their eyes look at the ground out of respect.

"What is this spectacle?" Orono asked the workers.

"Traffic control," they mumbled.

"Lining the road is traffic control?"

"We have to do something," Olowo said, his eyes staring at the dusty ground.

Orono was not impressed and spat on the floor then watched his spit melt under the mid-day heat.

"How long have you been in this business?" he asked Olowo, unbuckling his belt then belting up again.

"One day!" Olowo replied.

"One day and you are concerned about the traffic jam caused by our work? We are breaking up the road for these fools." His eyes met a frustrated conductor who was resting his head on the window frame of the taxi behind him. Olowo was about to say something but he was cut off by Orono's hand.

"Road construction is an art," he declared. "One is born with some distinct marks. Do you know how long I have been in this business?"

"I do not know."

"38 years and each year has left a distinct mark on me." Orono adjusted his short-sleeved shirt to reveal a scar thick as a millipede. He then pulled up his old tattered jeans and showed a deep cut, now healed. "This was when I worked on Tirinyi road. When I say I am in charge, I know what I am talking about. Forget the cars, if they make noise we shall ask the communication department at the head office to pin up more signs reading, "we are sorry for our work inconveniencing your little lives." Orono then walked away and ordered everyone back to their posts.

Publicly embarrassed, Olowo's colleagues also started to view him with caution, staying far from him as he strolled in the opposite direction to the traffic. Olowo walked oblivious to what was happening but overheard taxi touts and conductors screaming insults his way. He did not want to push his luck with Orono, or he would end up back behind that dreaded desk while the likes of Orono ran wild out here in the field. Orono would not fire him, but you do not survive 38 years constructing roads without knowing people

upstairs who can remove leeches off your back.

He walked in the direction of the makeshift food lady at the end of the road. They were the heavy lifters of the construction industry, providing much-needed food. He approached and before he could say anything she unfurled the covers sending the rich aroma of matooke up his nose. Looking at the sauce, he saw thick golden soup dripping from the end of the pan.

“Beef with all food,” he said.

As the food lady picked through the plates, he noticed her fingers caress the bowl before placing it back, then she picked up a plate with a considerable edge around it. He watched her place rice at the centre followed by matooke, carefully staying clear of the sides.

“Why are you not evenly spreading the food?” he asked.

“The meat goes on the edges,” she said, using a spoon to sort through the meat.

“The edges!!” Olowo muttered to himself and looked at the traffic, all the cars squeezed in the middle.

“Should I bring your food over there?” Olowo did not answer, instead, he ran in the direction of the excavators at the temporary stockpile down the road.

He got into one and drove in the direction of the debris, as he approached he saw his colleagues cover their mouths in horror. Olowo had gone down this road too far, he was damned either way. The drivers out of instinct stopped and watched him flatten the mounds leaving behind a flat ground.

The police officer overwhelmed at the intersection watched the excavator approach and he stopped the traffic, which made the grid longer. Shirtless men in tracks from Congo jumped out cursing, wondering what the excavator was doing.

Orono in his temporary tent was woken up by the screams of Ojok calling to him. As Orono’s hands briskly searched for his hard helmet on the dusty ground, he strained his eyes to focus, noticing the cars were moving very fast.

Ojok, who was out of breath announced, “he has done it.”

“Who?” Orono asked.

“That new boy.”

Orono ignored Ojok because right where he sat he felt the ground shook furiously under him. The impact caused by a three-ton excavator that stopped a few inches from them.

“What do you think?” Ojok asked Orono.

Orono did not answer. Instead, he looked at the traffic. Two lines ran side by side with no stops or delays and the wild honking was no more. He turned to Olowo, who was patched on the tractor and declared.

“You have those distinct marks I talked about.”



AFRICAN WRITERS
DEVELOPMENT TRUST
To Empower Writers of African Descent



Empowering African Writers

CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Much of African history has been told in obscurity. Its culture and tradition has either been unknown, known and misinterpreted or known but grossly ignored. Writers Space Africa (**WSA**) an international literary magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust, is calling for submissions for its 21st edition under the theme "Retelling the African story". We're looking for words that break the fabric of myths, stereotypes, and gross misrepresentations to tell the colourful tales of the beauty that makes the African continent.

We're accepting literary works in the following categories:

Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words

Flash Fiction – 300 words

Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines

Short Stories – 1,500 words

Jokes – 1 joke per writer

Artworks – maximum 3 artworks in high resolution

Personalised quotation – 1 quotation and must be the original work of the author

Please note the following:

You're only entitled to submit for one category.

The Deadline for submission is August 12, 2018.

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

Author retains copyright.

Your work must be thoroughly edited before being uploaded. We will in turn edit selected entries to suit the publication.

The magazine will be released on the 1st of September, 2018 on our website

To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net/submissions to upload your work through our submission portal.

We ONLY accept MS word documents.

Artworks can be sent in either JPEG or PNG formats.

Entries can also be mailed to wsa@writersspace.net as an attachment.