

EMPOWERING AFRICAN WRITERS

# WSPA



JUNE  
2019  
EDITION  
Issue 30

*A monthly Digital Literary Publication*

*Remembering* ▶  
Wakini Kuria



*In this issue*

- The Observer
- Life as we know it
- Essay/ Articles
- Poems
- Flash Fiction
- Short Stories  
and many more

# Mnane Mtuwe

Chapters of a Socio-Political Poet



In Loving Memory of  
Charity Wakini Kuria  
1991-2019

*She loved, even when it hurt*

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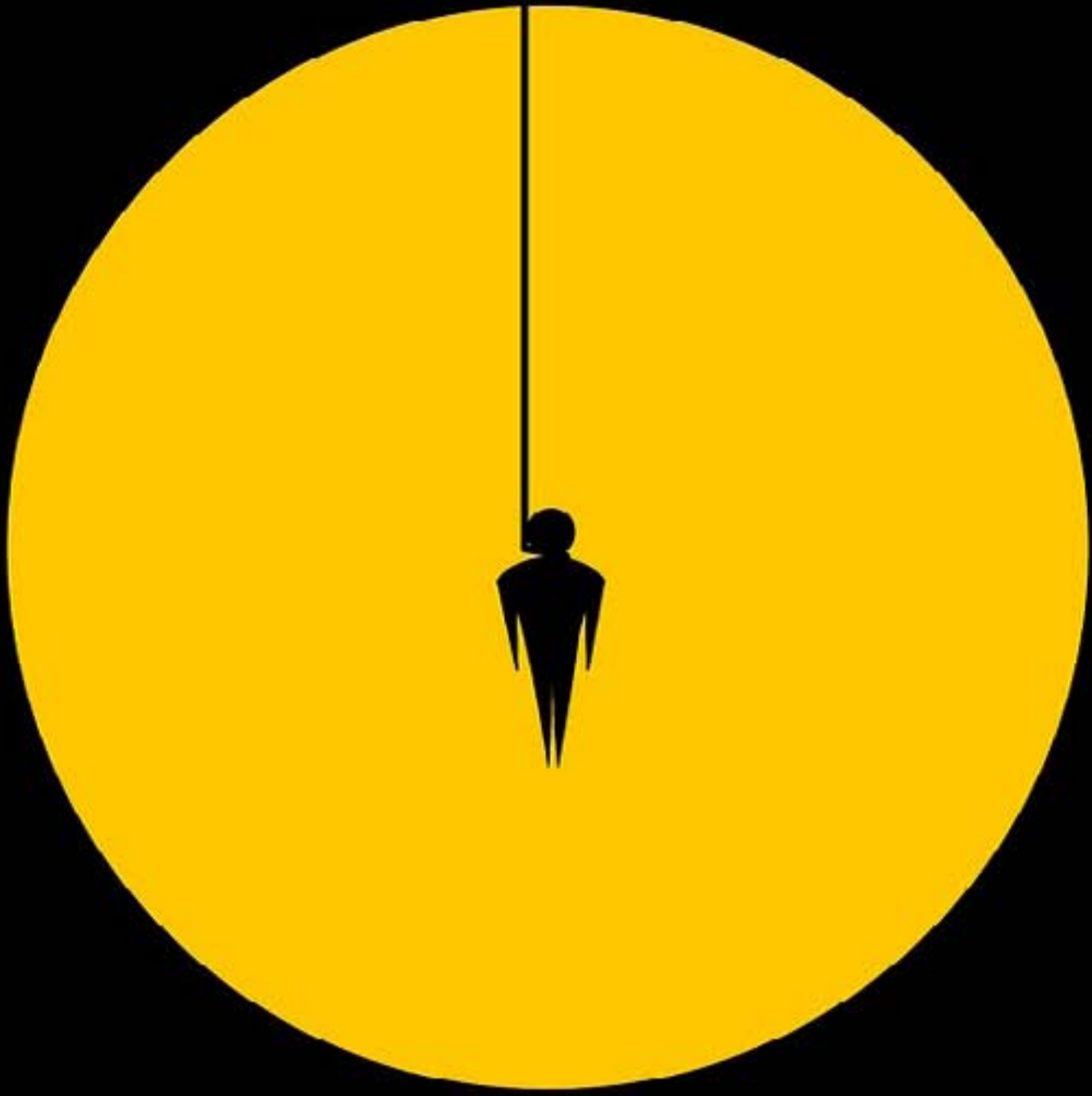
**It is with deep sadness that I announce the death of one of us, Wr. Waki Kuria, from Kenya. Until her death, she served as a member of the advisory board of the African Writers Development Trust. She was also the Chief Editor of Writers Space Africa.**

**Waki Kuria was a pillar of support towards the successful hosting of the 2018 African Writers Conference in Nigeria and the forthcoming 2019 African Writers Conference this September in Nairobi. She was a recipient of the African Writers Award of merit in 2018 as well as numerous accolades from across Africa.**

**Although struggling with her health, Waki Kuria remained resilient in her effort towards developing the African literary space and has inspired several writers across the African continent with her work. She was a talented writer, kind-hearted, highly spirited and joyful.**

**Rest in peace, my dear Wr. Waki Kuria. We all miss you.**

**Anthony Onugba,  
Founder,  
AWDT/WSA**



Never let life beat you into submission  
- Wakini Kuria



# FLASH FICTION



# JUST ANOTHER PLACE

## Egwuatu Ogechukwu Peace - Nigeria

I looked out the window admiring the city of Nairobi which I had arrived in less than an hour ago. “You’re not from here, are you? The taxi driver asked with a cheery voice. I wasn’t in the mood for another “foreigner” conversation but I replied with a polite “no”. “So where are you from?” He asked again. “Nigeria”, my curt voice replied. “Is this your first time in Kenya?” He continued unfazed. I cursed myself for my courteousness as I replied “no”. It was my what? 5th or 6th? I had lost count. “Your luggage was really big oh! Are you staying for long this time?” He pressed on. Nosy guy! He had struck a chord though. I didn’t know what it meant to stay anywhere. Last week it was Germany and the week before Ethiopia. Two weeks before it was Ghana and the list goes on and on. Did I even remember what home looked like? Did I even know what home was anymore? I had been to places. And each place took me further away. I fingered the diamond shining on my ring finger. “Beautiful and pure just like you”, the words he had spoken as I continued to slide the ring on. Was I still all that? Or had I lost myself in transit? I sighed. I wasn’t sure I would survive this new onslaught of melancholy. I shut my eyes fully aware of the fact that I had ignored the taxi driver against my principles. I was too tired to care. “Madam! We’re here!” The still cheery voice forced my eyes open. I looked at the magnificent structure of the hotel. Once it would have awed me and filled me with excitement. Now, it was just another place to me.





# SOMEWHERE NEW

Josephine O. Attafuah - Ghana

Head up, eyes dilated and mind certainly wondering, he scoured the city as he looked through the glass window of the taxi in which he sat. The buildings were tall and very beautiful. Very neat. There were no leaves on the surroundings since that space had no trees. Unlike his hometown, where trees filled everywhere and their leaves caused a beautiful commotion with the soil. Where their fathers and grand-fathers would sit under the shade to eat and chatter in the afternoons, after their women had pounded cassava and plantain into fufu and converted vegetables and water into an irresistible aroma. Here, everyone could speak this language and very hastily too. In his hometown, only those who went to school could speak this language. He gained the scholarship when he won the English and Science contest. Even as the best from his hometown, he had to be very attentive to be able to understand what one was saying. Arriving at the school, he saw people in very intimate positions. He opened his mouth, shocked, when he saw one boy plant a kiss on a girl's lips and nobody cared. Where he came from, one dared not try this! Not even in hiding! It was a sacrilege. He was told the city was different from his village but this seemed too new to him. They did not eat under trees, they had beautifully designed tables and chairs and he doubted if the best carpenter in his hometown could make ones like them. Everything seemed so different from what he was used to. He threw himself onto the bed after being shown his room and thought. He was so confused yet ready for this adventurous place. He knew he had a lot to do to fit in.



# The Book\*

## Wakini Kuria- Kenya

By now, the driver is rally racing taking corners and bends at a professional speed but nobody seems to mind. Actually, it is as if they are urging him on, probably to get to their place of work on time at least.

The book holds her attention like a magnet and soon she has lost touch with the physical world up until the sudden sounds of screeching tyres and the deafening bang.

Being forcefully thrust forward and tossed out of her seat knocking heads with another disoriented passenger but not before catching glimpse of the infant's surprised look and the mother holding tightly onto him.

The vehicle rolls several times spitting out blood stained bodies on its wake downhill before finally coming to an abrupt stop below a tree escaping the cliff by inches. It all comes in flashes, the force followed by distant painful moans and groans, the blood and smell of death before she slips into a black still world. The book surprisingly still held open on her hands.

\* Published in the June 2017 Edition of Writers Space Africa (WSA)

A landscape photograph of a forested hillside. The foreground is filled with dense green foliage, including bushes and trees. In the middle ground, a dark, forested ridge stretches across the frame. The background features a bright, clear blue sky with a large, glowing sun in the upper left quadrant and scattered white clouds. The overall scene is bright and natural.

# POETRY

# NO OTHER KENDU BAY

Nickson O. Magak, Kenya

Stocked in chores of history, a place bigger than its name  
Amalgamated EnglishLuo - Kindu (A place in the between)  
Arab Muslims localised Kanyasoro (Nasoor's Place)  
Trends for its leisure and pleasure, a place of my origin.  
Cradle of Benga, echoes painted liveliest bravura  
Drifting eternally, sweetly living, homey forever.

Mud-less cliffs ascending ashore Lake Victoria,  
Indigenously canopied trees spread arms solemnly embraces  
Beckoning all open doors of tranquil harmony  
Reflecting the golden wellness of generations.

Citadel a top Ogango hill, bellows Christian hymns  
Heavenly tolerance, rhythmically coexists Kanyasoro's Mosques  
Harmony of religious and life's conglomeration.

Laughter filled market; free people  
Pearl of the Lake, prettiest women apple  
Champion children chants like a dove  
Immortal peace of depth less love.

Book milked and honeyed all day  
Road, air, water brings me to Kendu Bay;  
Lands in place of quite Sun -  
Kendu, Land of birthed Son  
No other like you.



# LAST NIGHT

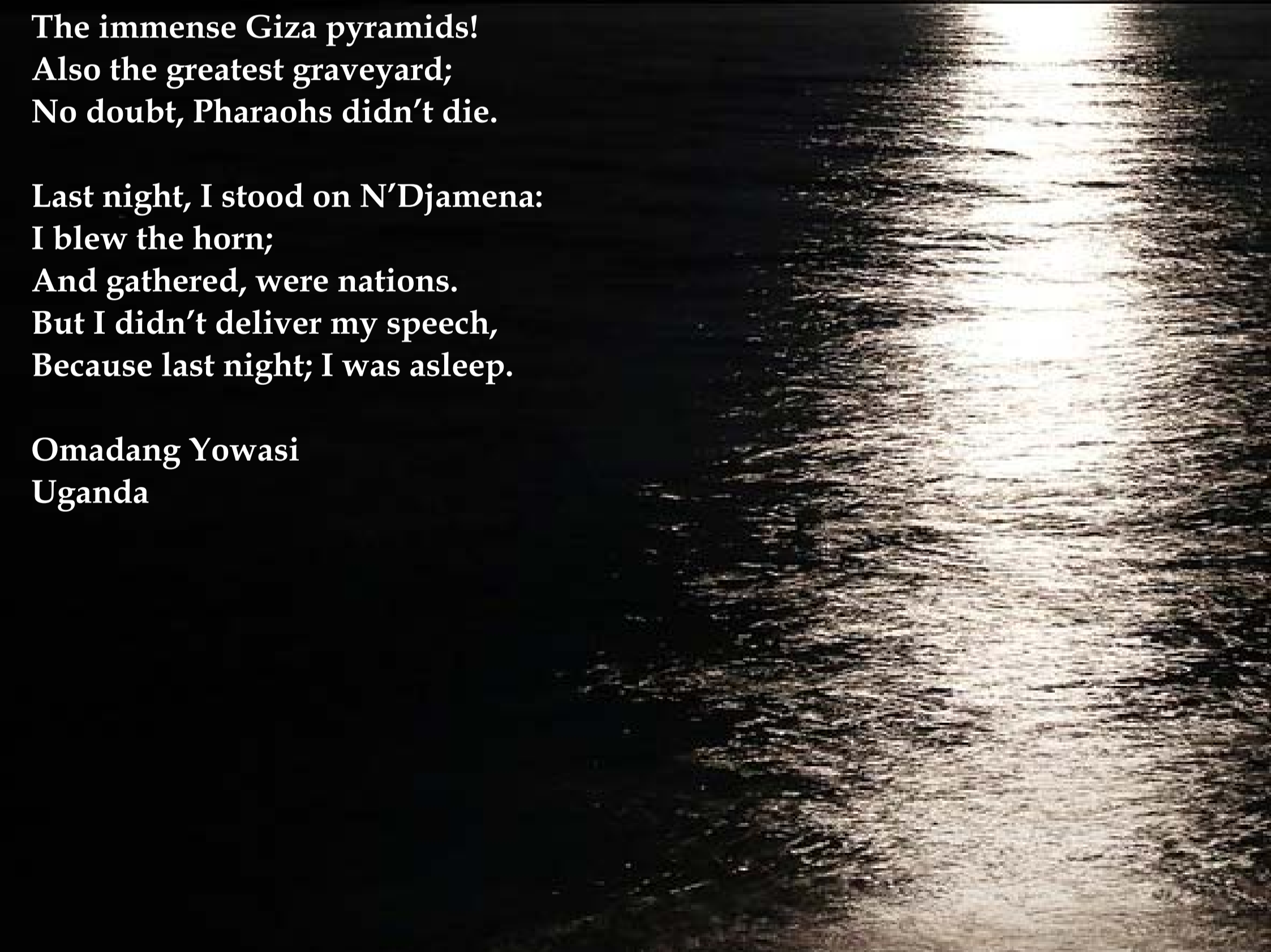
Last night, I went to paradise;  
O joy! O peace!  
Serenity absorbed me;  
By the youthful brook,  
And a meadow undefiled.

My mind wandered off  
To collect a basket of citrus;  
Yellow like the falling sun.  
But these didn't satisfy me;  
The spirit kept on longing!

Last night, I went to Misr;  
What a wonder!  
The immense Giza pyramids!  
Also the greatest graveyard;  
No doubt, Pharaohs didn't die.

Last night, I stood on N'Djamena:  
I blew the horn;  
And gathered, were nations.  
But I didn't deliver my speech,  
Because last night; I was asleep.

Omadang Yowasi  
Uganda



# LOVE IS NOT SOLD AT BALOGUN MARKET

i  
what you will find:  
ankara  
ground nuts  
keke-napep  
boyfriend jeans  
blue mannequins

ii  
what will find you:  
heat (of all kinds)  
'fine girl, how far?'  
hands clutching  
at everything

iii  
questionnaire:  
are all the girls  
from the bottom  
of the barrel,  
i mean continent,  
just like you?  
are you all  
grasping at every

akin  
kunle  
emeka  
nduka  
amaechi  
just to say you  
touched the north?

iv  
tourism tip:  
love isn't for sale  
at a market,  
abi?

v  
closing questions:  
where is home? or  
did you escape hell  
only to find  
a different heat here?

Nkateko Masinga  
South Africa



Image source: <https://www.konbini.com/ng>

# PLACES

We sat watching the yellow golden sunset on the rooftop  
With pockets full of nothing but dry dreams and old hope.  
Nomsa said, "If you or I make some money honey  
We should buy our roofless jeep and take a life time journey.

Surely somewhere somehow stands better days.  
We could slowly glide down south the Zambezi.  
I hear you can touch the rainbow on the Victoria Falls,  
We follow the knife bridge, take pics in case our memory goes.

Sip some hot tea in 'Zimba Ze Mabwe' and then see  
Those stunning stone birds hand-made by our ancestry.  
We can then drive up for days via the Congo to the Nile.  
Pyramids yes -I hear our forefathers made them so they make a man go 'wow!'

And someday we may step on the serene Germany soils -finally meet power.  
From there we can connect by train to the 'city of love', see the Eiffel tower.  
And if we go to the States, it's only to pay our respects and see  
Benjamin Franklin's tombstone -the man I hear set the World free."

I coughed, I said "Castles in the air again, damn right."  
But Nomsa squeezed my hand, her face sunflower bright  
"Babe, oh babe, just because we were born and bred in this devastating gutter  
It doesn't mean we can't go places, meet new faces; see, do, and feel something greater!"

Matambo Andrea B,  
Zambia

# BE WARY

There is no place for us here  
There has never been  
We are the disposables of this world  
So beware not to be born woman

There are vultures feeding off our bodies here  
Our lovers accuse us of loving them  
Stalkers accuse us of not  
Our rapists accuse us of the  
nothing between our legs  
Murderers accuse us of having  
the audacity to breathe  
The society blames us for not being proper,  
grateful, quiet kept women  
We have become an endangered species here

Our crime?  
We are woman  
We are too much woman for these oblivious  
self-made men we mothered  
We are too much woman  
for these bigoted cowards claiming to know us  
We are too much woman  
for these entitled misogynists  
We are taking up too much space here  
for this insecure patriarchy

So beware not to be born woman  
Beware not to birth daughters

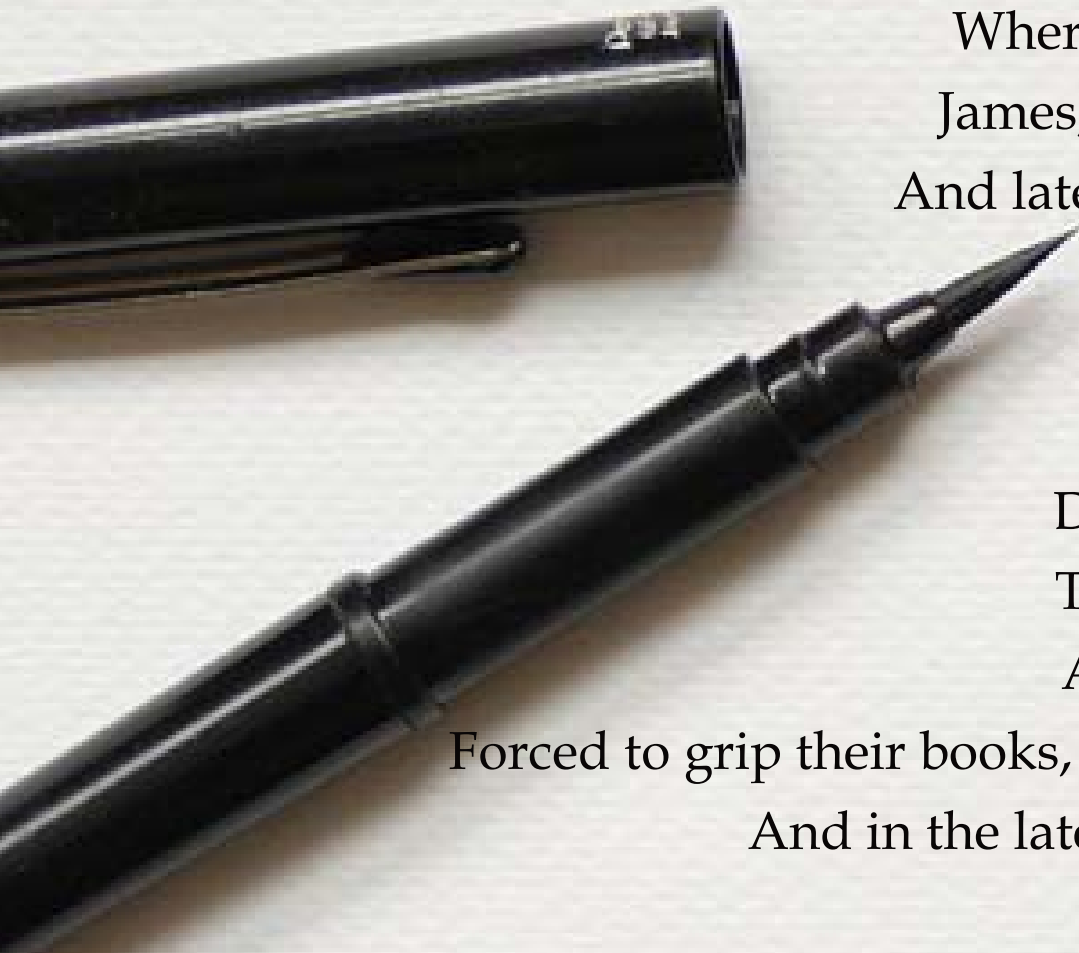
And when The Creator asks you  
who you want to be  
Beware to say  
'Not Woman!'  
For there is no place for us here

Catherine L. Moraa Nyabuti,  
Kenya





# PLACES; THE MIND AND THE PEN



Breathe in, she said, feel it  
Think of all the places you could be  
The commercial city, Onitsha and its messy streets  
Kids wearing makeup of dirt to unofficial gatherings  
Bikes and trikes, to and fro, dust and mud, here and there  
Till late evenings when laughter floats from barbershops  
The renowned controversial Enugu-Ezike, your hometown  
Where the sun never sets; it's only joined by the stars  
James, Obi and the masquerade eating from one plate  
And late nights when the scary beings come out to play  
Lagos state, the land of opportunities  
Where horror meets beauty on the map  
Various levels of sanity in buses and bus stops  
Day and night means nothing when traffic stalks  
The University of Nigeria campus; the lion's den  
A dish made of ingredients from thirty six states  
Forced to grip their books, lab coats or sports shoes under the burning sun  
And in the late hours, are found in twos and fives with smiles  
Breathe in, she said, feel it  
The sensation of ink and fresh sheets  
You can be anywhere and everywhere with your mind  
But with your pen, you're always at home.

Eze Tochukwu Precious  
Nigeria

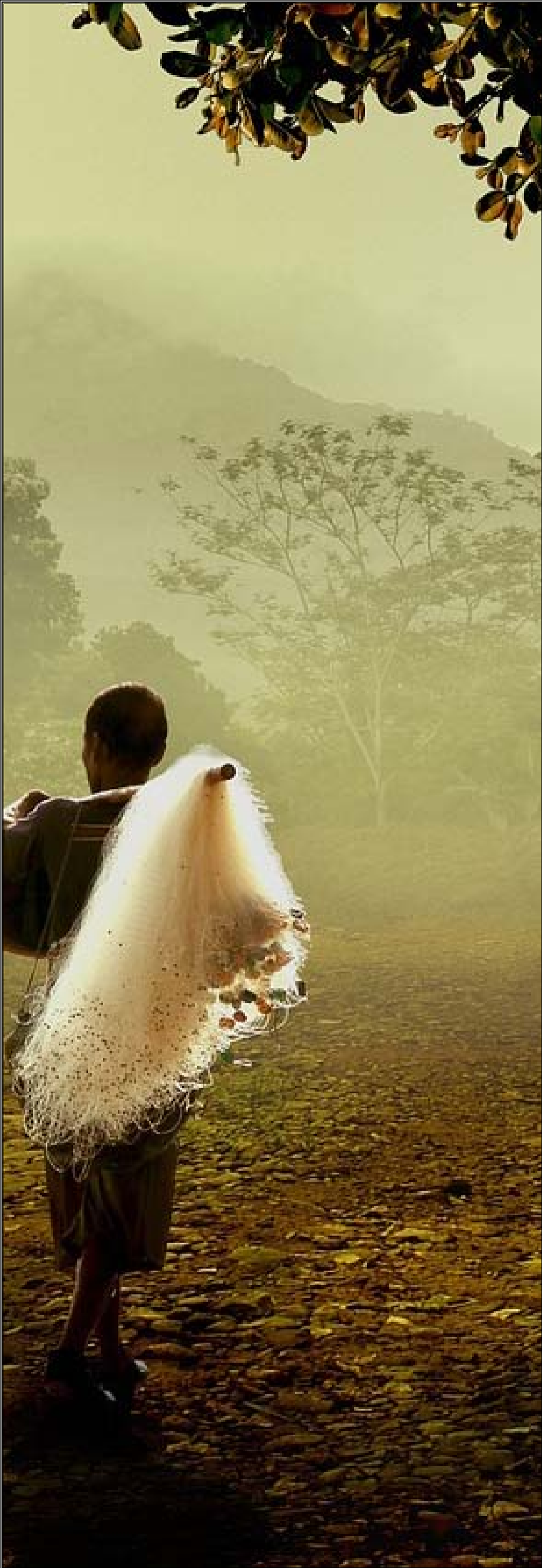
# THE VILLAGE

Dilapidated thatched dwellings,  
Leaking roofs,  
Discoloured zincs,  
Tattered dresses,  
Food in abundance,  
Abundant fruits in their autumn.

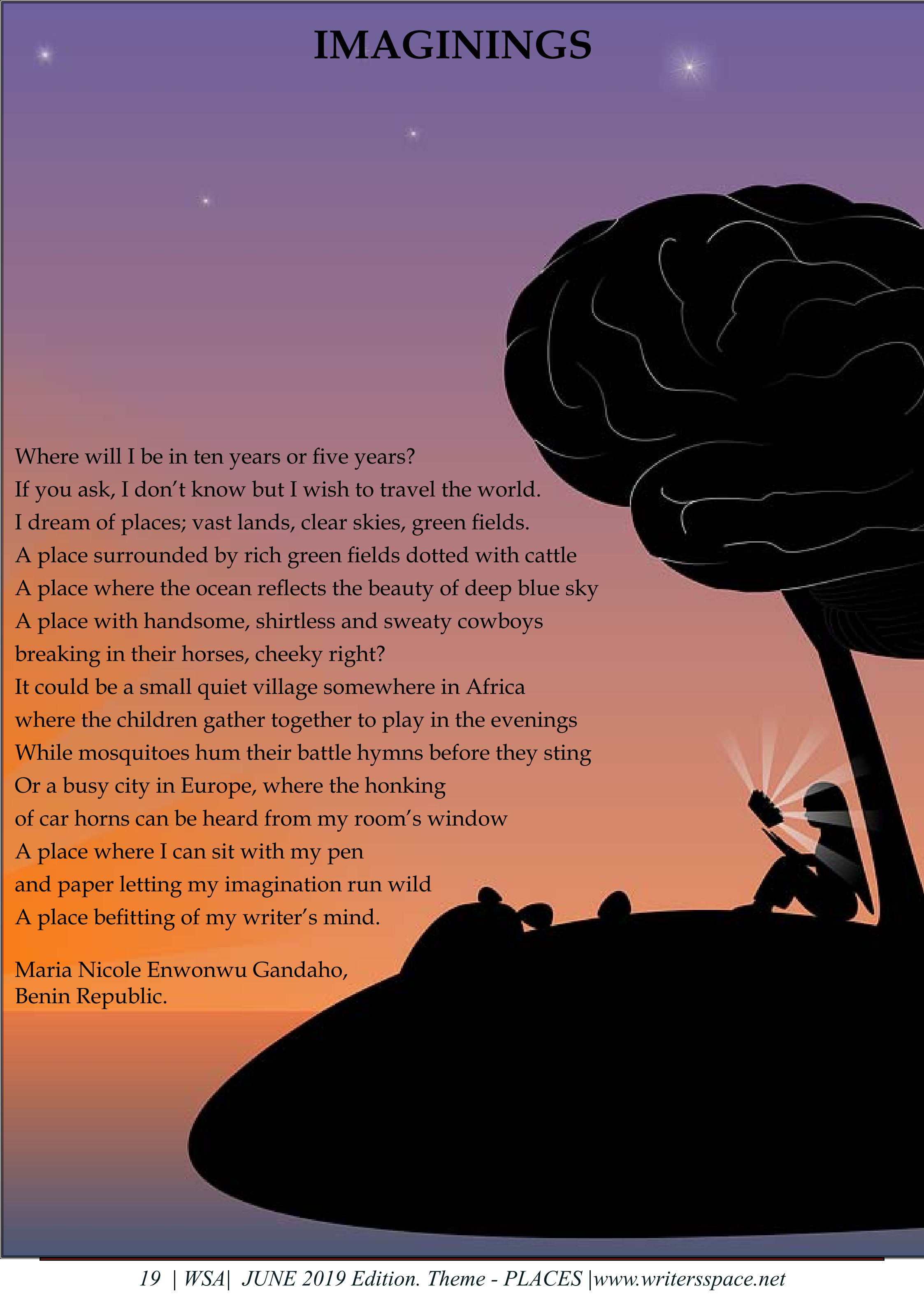
Dreaded bushes,  
Birds chirruping,  
Bees buzzing,  
Cats mewing,  
Chickens clucking,  
Crickets chirping,  
Dogs barking,  
Ducks quacking  
Guinea pigs squeaking,  
Goats bleating,  
Sheep baaing,  
Mosquitoes buzzing,  
Pigs grunting,  
Rats squeaking,  
Rivers, streams meandering

The village is nature, and nature is the village.  
The village is a life server, a place to be.  
No village, no town.

Ngalim Jusline Veeyenyuy  
Cameroon



# IMAGININGS



Where will I be in ten years or five years?  
If you ask, I don't know but I wish to travel the world.  
I dream of places; vast lands, clear skies, green fields.  
A place surrounded by rich green fields dotted with cattle  
A place where the ocean reflects the beauty of deep blue sky  
A place with handsome, shirtless and sweaty cowboys  
breaking in their horses, cheeky right?  
It could be a small quiet village somewhere in Africa  
where the children gather together to play in the evenings  
While mosquitoes hum their battle hymns before they sting  
Or a busy city in Europe, where the honking  
of car horns can be heard from my room's window  
A place where I can sit with my pen  
and paper letting my imagination run wild  
A place befitting of my writer's mind.

Maria Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho,  
Benin Republic.

# THESE PLACES, I CALL HOME

These places are where I call my own  
To be and live the day in care  
Where faces I know love till it hurts  
And I can find my place of rest

These places are where I defy fear  
Seizing its hold from my jaded chest  
Where tears are unconditionally welcomed  
And smiles are free to always blossom

These places are where I faced the shame  
Bringing forth the blackened past  
Where our strengths together fought them  
That me they'll have no will to condemn

These places are where I found my peace  
Some very new and quiet peace  
For when I lived alone in a dome  
These places gave me something to call my home

Linda Mensah  
Ghana

# CAUGHT ON THE RUNWAY

The morn charm broke into the glass windows,  
For the rays reflected well refined panes and seals,  
Sneaking glances left, back, right and down,  
Were bustling movements of pointed heels and loafers.  
Creepily drawing bunch notes; off the night safe,  
Into my air-filled pocketed palazzo pair, but still,  
The bank seats unruffled, the right borrowers unshaken,  
No one knew my 'stolen' plan, was outdone.

Danger out, off the closet.  
Without the know-how, out, about I was.  
Landing on the city of demolished iron sheeted towers.  
The arena of heaped litter, the flow; smelly coloured water,  
Grumbles and gambles of the young blood, shadowed gun-stars and cold blood,  
Freakishly faking the free me, gingerly hidden in slum bars.  
Hidden from behind bars, since 'the money'; I drunken.  
But for 'LUCK!' a man with lure; assured a place better to be, just for me?

Together we, toward the place, out, hiding with honey the money.  
At the edge of ocean, the dim of day, the sand beach settled.  
The sun over the waters waving goodbye, drowning afar,  
The hot air breeding chills, the sea ripples come to go.  
The palm trees swaying back forth to the breezy song of the wind.  
A romantic eatery, under the limelight, sent me forth smiles of Victor,  
Maliciously enjoying feeds off sea, but hush! a burning sock lands off the bulb!  
Held at the gunpoint; the man was my hush-hush BOBBY?!

Joy Rita Ekumba  
Kenya



# A TALE OF A MIGHTY BLACK NATION

Here, before you slap a corporal with your rights,  
ensure that your buttock is bigger than his  
You are not supposed to cover your behind;  
it is your path way to exceeding greatness here

Once, a friend of mine crashed against a law van,  
and when prosecution came for her, she ran back into her bag  
and dialled her late great grandfather's name  
who growled his name into the speaker  
He didn't have to show up. He was her big, generous behind

We these peasants can't shake behinds like Cindy's wand  
paving favour for her.  
We borrow a famous behind sometimes, but can't wear it beyond  
two sunsets.

Yesterday, a Policeman peeped into my bicycle  
and shouted 'Where is your inner light, fire extinguisher  
and seat belt,' I simply squeezed a sizeable note into  
his expectant palms.  
I left in pain and shame,  
hoping that one great day  
when I become a huge accountable behind, there would be no need  
for behinds in this place.

Joy Abraham .  
Nigeria

# TWO ORANGE HILLS

On the northern side of the old village market,  
On the left turn, where blue lilies grow,  
A road the natives say, changes with grasses on its edges,  
It is walked by hunters, heading away from home,  
And bicycles and feet have built its years,  
Easing far away journeys with dances on the toes,  
Sleeping still between Two Orange Hills.

You can see it meander over the thatched fence  
That secures my papa's central hut;  
So, like hailstorm on a Christmas Eve, stormy and violent;  
There is a clash of voices mixed with gossips and panting  
From the peak of papa's hut,  
That hovers towards the sitting room.

But on this same road, is a path of our own;  
A place we call 'Two Orange Hills', a hue in the fog.

While I dangle in the wind, with my peeled leather trap,  
"Etim", my friends would shout;  
I would rest my head on the Orange Hills;  
With my friends, we would climb to its closest peak  
And watch the villagers hurry past,  
And my papa's palm wine smoke dance across their heads,  
While we would just laugh on top of the Two Orange Hills.

Tydale Abigail  
Nigeria

# HE SAID

He held my hand,  
Like he always did in every town we visited,  
He made me feel like a wayward child,  
A troublesome pet that needed to be kept in check.

In Lagos, he almost tied a rope around my wrist,  
Linked it to his own so that I wouldn't get lost,  
He said they would carry me away and take me to the port,  
Sell me away to the great ships that docked.

In Nairobi, he carried me on his back  
Like a sack of potatoes on their way to the market,  
He said I would get mugged,  
I was such a great target.

He spoke a language I did not understand,  
He said it was love because we were in Paris,  
In Italy he made me wear a turban and a hideous skirt,  
He said they would lust after me, such a taboo.

In Morocco, I had had just enough of his antics,  
He was suffocating me and I might have snapped at him,  
Said that I wanted to go home,  
Back to the breeze that kept me sane.

In Egypt he was sulky, even when I did the dance he loved,  
He did not clap or cheer,  
He said I did not understand,  
He loved me in the way he knew best,  
He said I was the best thing he had.

Joy Wanjiku Ng'ethe,  
Kenya





# A PLACE TO BE

The body of my lover is a place to be  
I remember the day I wandered in her fairy eyes  
land of mysteries that made me wonder!

the night was quiet and exhausted  
I shut my eyes, went on a trip to a region called bosom  
calm and soft with two mountains and a cool valley

my drunken mouth flew on the paths of her lips  
damp sand at the side of Limbe beach  
and stoppped over in her hair, the exotic forest

I didn't cross the bridge to the celestial city  
I stood at the gate and stared! I caressed the vulva  
and stoppped my journey at the break of day

Nelson Kamkuimo  
Cameroon

# A PLACE CALLED HOME

Home, they say,  
Is a feeling, not a place.  
One of warmth and peace,  
One of joy and a settled mind.

Home, they say,  
Is a person, not a place.  
One who you wrap yourself around for warmth,  
And discuss your worries with.

Home, they say,  
Is not your father's house, or your husband's.  
Think not that it is your concubine's either.

Home, I hope,  
Will reside in myself,  
For one who you call home,  
Might not see you as such.

Aisha Shittu  
Nigeria



# PLACES

I have been there before, at that place of being a child  
Full of dreams, hope... a bright future  
A really gleaming place and everything was colourful

Then a teenager, I have been there too  
A place where dreams start to slowly crushing, as reality sinks in  
When life no longer seems to be as it was

I have been to a place of depression  
Where every light fades into the darkness  
As pain and fear takes charge

I have been to a place limitation  
Where my success was determined  
by the fact that I'm a woman  
And not by my abilities

Fighting and conquering, believing a  
nd trusting, forging ahead

I have now reached a place where I dream again  
And achieving every dream one at a time  
Every day, I piece every broken part  
of my past together  
And this place is home, because this place  
is the bright future I hoped for

Wanangwa Mwale,  
Zambia



# Wicked She\*

Nobody suspects  
But somewhere a bird sings  
Knows no boundaries  
Cant help but wish ill  
From without she protects  
From within she destroys  
I wait to Confess!

Nobody suspects  
But somewhere a bird sings  
Like a hurricane, she angers  
Her aim, to sow discord  
Not to benefit, to waste  
Competition, jealousy, hatred she harbours  
I wait to Confess!

Nobody suspects  
But somewhere a bird sings  
She will smile, coax, bribe  
Strings attached, you get caught  
Strung out, you are tested  
Defeated, you sire loathe  
I wait to Confess!

Nobody suspects  
But somewhere a bird sang  
From her cup, You sip pain  
Albeit hazy, slurred, blurred  
Fever, promised, delivered  
Hope, care, peace  
I wait to Confess!

Wakini Kuria,  
Kenya

\*Published in the July 2017 Edition of  
Writers Space Africa (WSA)



*Success is no surprise to hard work; growth is no surprise to good management and waste is no surprise to mismanagement and slothfulness*  
- M. Kingsley Tekum, Cameroon



# An Interview with Nnane Ntube

by

Sandra Oma Etubiebi



*If she was a book, Nnane Ntube would be a page turning bestseller! From her opening lines of conviction, fast-paced activism to the voracious singsong passion of a poet's love for justice; Nnane Ntube is a good read.*

*Hers is a life in chapters, each a work in progress, filling up richly and meaningfully...Now, let me take you a quick browse through the chapters of a Socio-Political Poet born in Kumba commonly known as K-Town (A Green Land), in the South West region of Cameroon. Born Nnane Anna Ntube, the last in a family of four, this is her story...*

## *Chapter One: Of many beginnings*

My knack for writing started as far back as my secondary school days. I had a strong power of observation and imagination. Maybe because I was always alone or because I was an introvert, I began by sketching people I see doing awful things. Then, I proceeded to give them words by imagining what could be their most devilish thoughts. I found myself interested in the “devil” in man. I would write short stories on pieces of papers about wicked people struggling to destroy me, but the scattered papers all found themselves in the dust bin.

Back then there was a friend, a science student (a girl), who was very intelligent and beautiful. I wanted to be her friend but didn't know how to get close to her so I wrote her a poem, “A Walking Moon”, which she loved so much. That marked the beginning of our friendship.

In 2006, I joined the College poetry club. While in the club, I usually staged poems from Wole Soyinka's Poems of Black Africa. My activism in this club made me fall in love with poetry. It was then I began to embrace poetry as my favourite genre.

In 2007 with the influence of our class head, I began presenting a programme on Ocean City Radio Kumba meant for secondary school students called “Generation X”. During the programme, I read poems from established authors and my own poems and helped students with guidelines on how to interpret and answer questions related to literature during the GCE (General Education Board) examination.

In 2016, I published my first poem online.

## *Chapter Two: Of Exodus from Paper to Board*

Teaching is my passion, my everyday activity. I started teaching at the age of 12 while helping my sister's kids and children in my neighbourhood. Today, I teach French and English languages and literature in high school. Teaching widens our scope of reading and understanding.

The teaching of literature opens teachers to the world of imagination, beauty and worries. The worries identified in most of the novels, poetry and drama texts shaped my writing.

Teaching has got a great influence on my poetry. I'll tell you a story; When I started writing, I didn't have any idea on what theme to write on. I was writing based on any theme and on things my friends requested for. I had no specific objective. I didn't know my writing could be used for something positive. I wrote poems for the pleasure of writing.

It was in 2013 that I understood why I should write for something. This happened in one of my lectures with my lower sixth students while we were studying Aimé Césaire's *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*.

In discussing the real problem faced by Africans in the development of the African continent, I realised that maybe I should scribe something on that since the topic embraced divergent views. I wrote the poem "Grow up Africa" while sitting in the staff room during lunch hour which was edited and retitled "My Africa".

It was the writing of this poem coupled with the art of teaching Francophone Literature that gave a new vision to my poems. I started writing to evaluate the state of affairs in Africa and in my country, to question certain actions, to call for a change of mindsets.

The teaching of French and English Languages play a lot in my writings. At times I make use of words in French while expressing myself. Also, the fact that many of my students had difficulties mastering grammar rules gave me another opportunity to play with grammatical norms or any standard way of writing...

### *Chapters Three: Of Living and Giving Meaning*

I am a volunteer for Sustainable Development Goals. Aside from teaching, I am into community development activities, advocacy, acting and performing for a cause.

The advocacy programme I am involved with consists of being the mouthpiece of the deprived, of those whose voice has been seized, of the society that has been dampened



with evil deeds, hatred etc.

My activism in advocacy started in 2017 during my training as Youths Advocate for Peace and Democracy by NewSETA (Network For Solidarity, Empowerment and Transformation for All) under the supportive eyes of the government.

It was then I understood that the world needs people ready to speak the wrongs of the society, for the sake of change. The world needs people to put on the leadership garment of Nelson Mandela for the good of the society, the environment etc. Thus, my advocacy programme falls under the Civic leadership and Public Management categories.

On Public Management, these advocacy programmes look at policy implementations in public sectors. It may involve policy implementations in the teaching sector, government sector and other sectors for the growth of the society.

With Civic Leadership, I am engaged in action and words that shape society positively. I put into practice the skills of a good citizen and being a servant leader. Civic leadership goes by the slogan, “if you want change in your society, be the change: Be the change you want to see”.

That’s why you will see me cleaning gutters, picking dirt in my community, calling for dialogue, pleading for peace to reign, fighting to defy hate speech online or offline, calling for gender equality etc. These are the things I want to change in my society. That’s why I am raising my voice.

I started a campaign together with my fellow Youth advocate for peace and democracy, termed “U & I 4 Peace” campaign. This was to call for inclusive dialogue for the resolution of the conflict in my country; the socio-political crisis that has been ongoing in my country for 3 years.

As UNESCO Defy Hate Now ambassador, we advocate for a friendly way of talking to others or addressing situations without hurting or creating division...

## ***Chapter Four: Of Counting and Courting words for Causes***

When I got to Form two, I had a literature teacher, Mr Oben Michael, who inspired

me. He often used the statement, "Literature is life". That's how I started giving life to my writings but in a more critical view. To me, writing is all about questioning certain actions of individuals and the world around me. That's how I labelled myself a socio-political poet.

I started writing to evaluate the state of affairs in Africa and in my country, to question certain actions, to call for a change of mindsets.

I write to right the wrongs of society. I write to question man. I write to seek for solutions, to give an account of what is going on, to bring man to reasoning, to advocate etc. This is why I write. I believe that writing should not caress the harsh realities of society and make readers fall in love with the words without being pricked by the message in their consciences.

The themes in my writings are geared towards advocacy. Therefore, you'll have the impression that I am saying; Stop the killing! Stop the discrimination! No to hatred! etc. These are what lurks in my mind before I pick up a pen to write. My writings are motivated by real-life incidents and the fact that I wish to add my voice as an activist to the voices of other activities to effectuate change. Reasons why I mostly depict notions such as culture clash, man's inhumanity to man, marginalisation, police brutality, corruption, the question of identity, quest of attention, sufferings, the notion of the "other", dictatorship, equal rights, love, peace, reconciliation, dialogue etc.

I write mostly about the common man and his experiences, his aspirations, his disappointments, his disgust, his alienation, etc. Why do I write about these?

I have a penchant for the well-being of people in their environment. I give a keen eye to how people behave, be it in the virtual world or in real life, I'm fond of applying Freud's concepts of the analysis of the human mind to understand behavioural traits either with the way you write what you write, or the way you speak, the way you walk, etc., all in the means of understanding human being and of knowing how to advocate for his rights. Therefore, my activism in civil society, teaching and writing highlight my utmost desire to have more youth engage in changing the narratives in their communities through action.

If tomorrow Africa is no more called a "Third World continent", "Poor continent", "Continent with nasty streets and gutters" etc., I would be very happy.

If some African men can drop their pride and start giving women and young girls fair

treatment, I will be very happy. My desire for the future is as vast as the Ocean. I look forward to a beautiful Africa with highly educated Africans...

## *Chapter Five: Of love and wishes for Mother Africa*

What I love the most is to be at peace with my environment. There is nothing worse than having the feeling of regret living in this socio-cultural, economic and political environment.

My environment is You and me, the land, the waters, the trees, the animals. My desire is to have this perfect harmony that enhances the harmony of the mind, body and soul; fostering true happiness.

I wish the future to be promising, with no wars, no gender, racial, class discrimination. I have a strong love for Africa and I pray to see Africans truly dedicated to constructing their various countries at individual levels first, before looking up to the government...

## *Chapter Six: Of Numbers and much more*

So far, I have written about 200 poems, published about 60 in anthologies, magazines, journals etc., three short stories and a novel, all unpublished.

I can't tell for sure the impact I have created with my writings. I think my readers are best placed to say that. All I know is that some people like my writings and want to see me out there going places with my published collections...

## *Chapter Seven: Of definitions and inscriptions*

Socio-political poets are what we call "committed poet" "engaged poets"; those committed in righting socio-political wrongs. As a socio-political poet, I yearn for the knowledge of things happening in my society, so that I can educate others using verses.

I look at being a Socio-Political Poet as being able to address issues in the society as a citizen who yearns for a better society, reclaiming the rights of its values, its identity, to think of the socio-cultural conditions, political influences and status of humans in their societies, to eradicate the violence that reigns, and to build a new socio-political relationship and to develop self awareness used as a tool to reclaim rights; socially and politically.

So many African citizens need the liberating power of knowledge to be good actors in their societies.

I believe that as far as nationhood is concerned, poets like myself have a say to the construction of the society with the sole weapon of a pen or keyboard...

## *Chapters Eight: Of Poetry changing the World*

Kerry Kiefer once wrote that; “Poetry cannot change the world... Poetry might change one life, but not the world.”

I go contrary to this view.

First, who is the world? The world is you and I. The world is an assembly of living beings and non=living things. Humans make up the world and their actions define the said world.

Therefore I look at poetry of being a reflection of the things in the world. Poetry touches in a special way the core issues of the world and stimulates change in behaviour and action.

Through poetry, humans get to know themselves better as they face, in brevity of words, the true nature of their being. Poetry motivates them to have a change of heart. And, any little change in the behaviour or action of an individual is a step towards world change. Changing one person is celebrated as changing the world for it takes one to make two.

Poetry plays a much better role than psychotherapy. Poetry is therapy. It is emotion put together to touch the very core of human emotions. It cuts across the body, the mind, and the soul. It has a liberating power on those suffering from traumatic experiences. Poetry is a writer’s gun used to eradicate societal ills. It is water used to quench the emo-

tional flame. Poetry gives reason to the common saying, “the pen is mightier than the sword”. Aye! Poetry is the very bone that gives support to human flesh...

## *Chapters Nine: Of Poetry, it's death and resurrection*

Unfortunately, poetry is dying because of the culture of reading. From reports or complaints I get from my students and other people, people shy away from reading poetry because of lack of understanding. Others do not like poetry because poets employ high terms that frighten them from attempting reading.

In an environment where the reading culture is fast dying like Cameroon, it deeply has an impact on the reception, acceptance and growth of poetry. People just need to satisfy you by saying “wow!!! Awesome write!” without reading your piece nor giving a critical view of it.

I think that the growing concept of spoken word has come to boost the growth of poetry. I've seen how enthusiastic the audience is while listening to spoken word artists. People hate straining their eyes to read but they love to listen.

It is important for poets to write, publish, and then bring the world to hear them out by reading their pieces to an audience or doing a declamation of them. The spoken word is obviously a very good development for poetry...

## *Chapter Ten: Of Heartfelt advice and love for African Writers*

Read, read and read. Poets should be avid readers. You can't write what you don't know. You can't write based on rumours. Give credence to your art by writing about what is authentic and can be verifiable. Pull people towards your art by captivating their interests. Put the power of observation into practice. It triggers imagination and helps in shaping your art. Write, write and write. Poets refine their arts by writing. Write for a purpose.

This will make the world see how serious you are. Write and grow your writing by accepting criticisms...

## ***Chapter Eleven: Of Expectations and African Writers Conference (AWC) 2019***

At the AWC 2019, you should anticipate my active participation as a panellist, discussing the development of thematic concerns from the main theme of the conference, which is Cultural Stereotypes in African literature: Rewriting the Narratives.

I think we need to get rid of colonial and neocolonial ideologies that keep bringing Africa backward. I expect that at the end of the conference, new writing policies should be made to be used to guide both young and old African writers in the process of rewriting. Such that, a new wind of writing will blow across Africa where modern African literature will be a literature of change.

## ***Chapters Twelve: Untitled***

I think the writing space in Africa has witnessed tremendous growth with the active participation of Writers Space Africa (WSA).

WSA is a space for African writers who wish to grow their arts; poetry, short stories, flash fiction, script writing etc. It is a friendly space with much to learn. WSA gives hope to aspiring writers.

Writers Space Africa is a place to be for any African writer who seeks visibility, growth, network with writers from different regions on Africa.

Being a member of WSA has helped shape my art positively through critical views from more experienced poets. It is because of WSA that I tried writing flash fiction for the first time.

WSA has gone steps ahead in the development of the writing space in Africa and it is still going further. It is a literary space to look out for...

***What a read!***

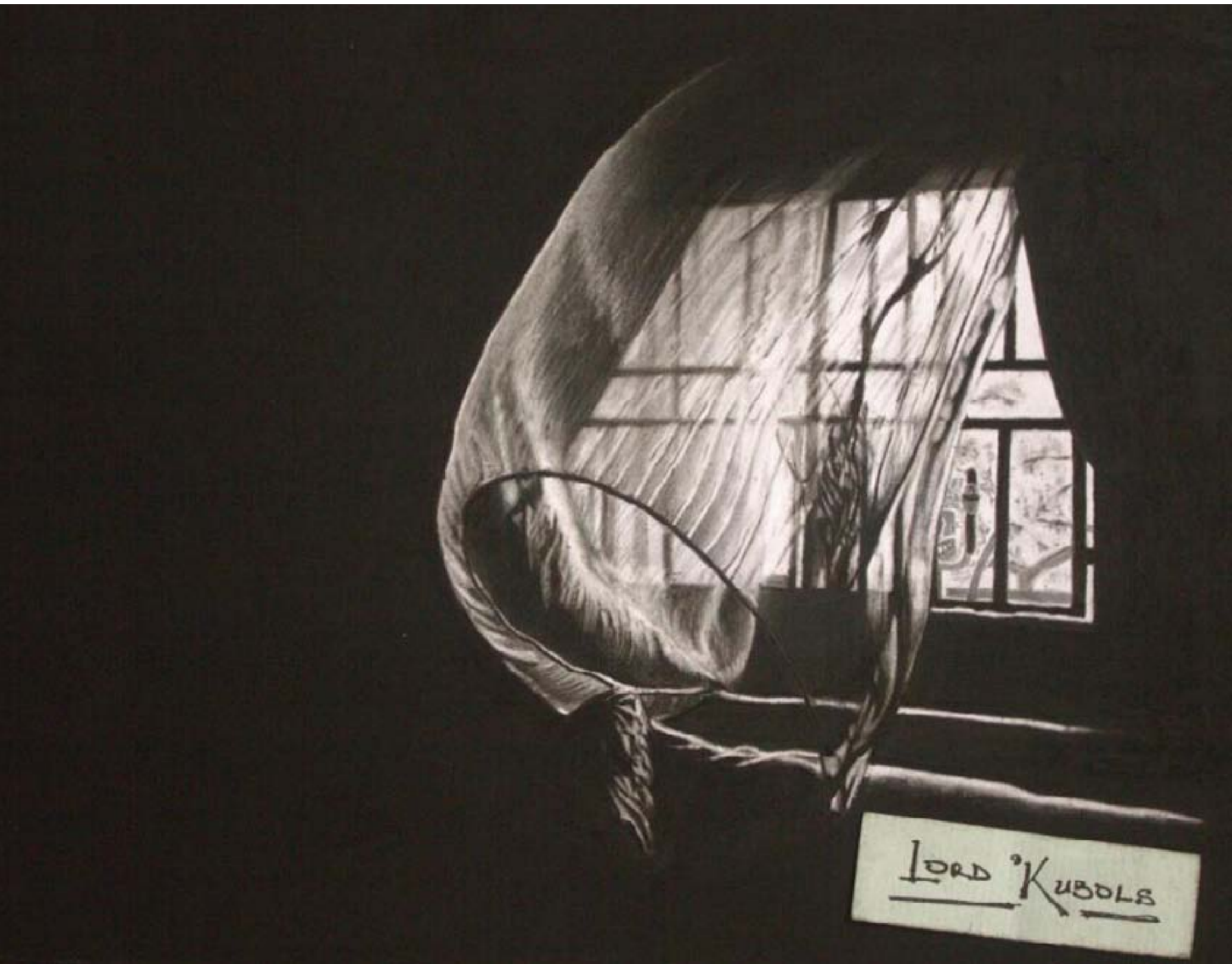
***With many chapters unfinished, and many more yet unwritten; this is not the end.***

***Written by Sandra Oma Etubiebi***

# Whispers in the dark

by

Bolu Ezra Ikuemonisan, Nigeria



Due to his love for art all his life, Bolu Ikuemonisan decided in 2014 to start telling stories with his drawings \*by\* using Lead and refined charcoal. He won TANA art competition in 2017 and the maiden season of Ibadan Got Talent (art category) in 2018.

Based in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, Bolu Ikuemonisan owns Lord Kubols Studio where he creates his drawings to tell more stories.

*Writing makes Writers Immortal*  
*Wakini Kuria, Kenya*







CALL FOR SUBMISSION  
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We are accepting submissions for the  
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AFRICAN LITERATURE:**

REWRITING THE NARRATIVE FOR THE  
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 **Sarit Centre, Westlands,  
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 **5PM**

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Please visit <http://www.africanwritersconference.com/awards/>  
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Queries should be sent to [info@africanwritersconference.com](mailto:info@africanwritersconference.com)

**You will get to nowhere if you don't start from somewhere**

- *Kweku Sarkwa (The Romantic Writer), Ghana*



# ESSAYS





## DEAR DARK CONTINENT

by

Haruna Dahiru Alhassan – Nigeria

Going places and seeing the whole world obviously is what every person wants. From an early age, we always told ourselves about how we'd go to England and America - the most popular countries in the world- and how we'd take our parents with us and never come back to Nigeria. We allowed foreign-themed movies to caress our desires and dreams of "Going Abroad". Little did we know that we were belittling our dear beautiful continent.

As I grew up, I was exposed to the outside world, through my phone, and I went through a lot of fascinating places I would love to visit - though not forgetting about my America. I wanted to see how the "oyibo" (White men) lived their life and what made them so prominent. As far as I was concerned, they had the perfect life and everything came very easy for them. I even thought maybe my Continent was cursed; no wonder the Europeans coined the term "Dark Continent" for Africa. Some of my friends whose parents had an upper hand in the society left for their higher education in various countries abroad and I was left behind sulking. My dad couldn't afford to take my brother and me, so I had to let him go - he was the eldest by the way - hoping to have my turn come around someday.

Two years passed by and my dad told me to go visit my brother in America and I leaped at the opportunity like a free ticket to heaven. I couldn't stop talking about it to everyone. Before anyone finished a sentence, I'd quickly say "maybe I will tell you about it when I get back from America". I just couldn't wait for that "American Boy" title, I felt like it was meant for me. My mum kept packing up things and stuff for me to take to my brother, including grounded crayfish, ogbono and egusi - can you imagine?! Walking into America with stuffs smelling from my box? But I dared not to complain about it or else my mum would've taken away my ticket in just a snap.

Let me skip the whole drama and get to the main part. I arrived at the airport and found my brother standing behind a bunch of people holding up signboards of different inscriptions: "Welcome Home Honey" "Mrs Smith Allen" and a whole lot more. I felt it was awkward but as long as I could spot my brother in the crowd of unfamiliar faces, I was good. He took me to his house where he was staying and it was quite nice. He immediately brought out the items I had brought so as to prevent them from getting spoilt and kept them in his refrigerator. I paid him less attention as I kept staring at the wonderful city through his window, waiting for nightfall so it would come alive - like the popular quote. Then the horrible things started.

My brother didn't know how to prepare his favorite soup anymore, in fact he left the egusi, crayfish and ogbono in his refrigerator for days without going close to them. When I asked him why he hadn't prepared any food for himself, his awkward response was

"I don't have time for that, I can just order pizza and some drinks or go out for dinner. I can't go through that stress"

Oh my God! My beloved brother had turned into a lazy man. America had infused laziness into him. The one my mother always praised for his hard work and commitment, where she to see what he was had become. That was just a tip of it. I went into a bar and wanted to take a little bit of alcohol just to clear my mind off things, you can't believe what the waitress told me.

"Sorry but I need to see an ID before I can offer any alcoholic drink to you"

At first, her long pointy white nose distracted me and I could barely hear what she was saying, everything she said was nasal. I didn't know that taking alcohol required you showing your birth certificate. I tried telling her that I was new in America and I really needed a little bit of it but she threatened to call the police if I didn't leave the bar. Me?! Police?! Because I wanted to have a drink?! Something I was going to pay for?! I jejeely stood up and left before anyone would charge me with rape.

I experienced a lot of things being there. The rude manner at which children spoke with their elderly - I almost slapped one at a mall but my brother held me back -, the way their food tasted, how they kept animals in their zoo, arrest for every little thing you did and their exaggerated tourist sites that didn't really fascinate. I wanted to go back home. I felt like I would never be comfortable where I was, it was a new kind of slavery. They called Africa a Dark Continent of single culture, Yes! At least we live freely. I came back to Nigeria and took a breath of fresh air. I felt like I was reborn all over again and I narrated the whole ordeal to my parents and friends.

Dear Dark Continent, I love you and nothing can take that away. People leave everyday in search for greener pastures but never make it through the hardship they encounter there. The western culture has been over hyped and it's truly not what you think. You're a Continent of diverse people, culture and places.

What can compare to the beautiful fogs crowning mountain kilimanjaro in Tanzania? Or the home of free moving mountain gorillas in the Virunga Mountains of the Republic Of Congo? I bet no place does. How about the uncommon beauty of Cape Town? Or the never aging captivating sight of the pyramids of Giza and the great sphinx of Egypt? I still marvel at Lagos - the New York of Africa - and it's beautiful landscape, the amazing wildlife of the Yankari Games Reserve in Bauchi. I couldn't get a drink there but here, I had a whole keg of Nnukwu's freshly tapped palm wine and assorted bush meat and he didn't threaten to call the vigilante or police on me.

But I will be sure to stamp my age to my forehead when next I visit my brother.



# **BITS OF MY OLD HOME**

**by**

**Akunna James-Ibe – Nigeria**

I remember Lagos with a mental sigh because she was like this huge pizza lying uncovered on the dining table, yet my siblings and I only got to nibble at it because mummy would not let us eat the whole thing. She did it for good reasons though. Too much junk would have given us a stomach ache. So it lay on the table till we finally left for our hometown in Imo state in 2012. It was no Lagos. Although the area of Lagos where I resided was calm, like a well-fed dog trotting about, my hometown was like a cat dozing away at a corner, only fluttering its eyelids when hit by a sound.

Our bits of Lagos were Home, School and Church. Home was a rented flat at 8, Kamoru Adeyemi street, Ire-Akari estate. I lived there for over a decade and although mummy often mentioned Yaba and some other place we once lived; I have no recollection of those places. But I remember our side of Ire-Akari estate to an extent, and when I was old enough to have pride, I was proud of that place. I considered it some form of centre of excellence because it was close to many necessary places.

If our street was a “T”, then our compound was at the junction between the vertical and horizontal arms of the T, both arms being roads. Along the right arm of the T, were the mouths of small shops whose bellies led right into the compound. First was Brother Bisi’s photography shop, small and white and proud. It was there we stood with our neighbors, to wait for the school bus every morning. Brother Bisi was not my brother; “Brother,” was simply what we called every young man around us. There was Brother Jide whose tailoring shop was just outside my mummy’s bedroom window, Brother Kamoru whose own tailoring shop was also outside the window of our dining room, and many other “Brothers” whose names are now foggy in my head.

Next to brother Bisi’s shop was Florence shop, a pastry shop. I christened it Florence after the kindly salesgirl who used to work there, and the name stuck amongst my siblings and I even after she left. I don’t remember if there was another shop after Florence shop, but somewhere in my head there’s a misplaced boutique and barber’s shop. After the misplacement in my head was the second smaller gate to our compound. A building harboring tailors stood erect beyond the gate. Our landlord was a tailor and he worked there with a couple of young men. From the gate onwards, there was a mechanic garage, a salon, and farther down Iya J’s shop. My neighbors’ were averse to buying things from Iya J because they were unsure of her. There was once a rumor that she occasionally sprinkled water of unknown origin around her premises. Apparently, my mummy didn’t care about that as she often sent us to get bags of pure water from her shop. She made me uncomfortable sometimes. I mostly met her sitting, wearing her church’s characteristic long white gown. Her husband, an old artist usually worked quietly in a shop next to hers. Then there was Abu’s kiosk, a small retail outlet where all manners of important things were sold.

Along the left arm of the T was a gate leading to another compound just beside ours. The building behind that gate stood tall, colorless and stupid like a great cement troll. We had friends in there, like Agozie who taught me to how to make skipping rope out of drinking straws, but I could count the number of times I’d been behind those gates. There was another compound beside it, hugged by a crippled gate. I cannot remember what the building looked like, perhaps because I never really entered the compound. But I remember the grasping aroma of the “ewa goyin” Iya Bukky sold there, the “ewa” I never got to taste because since mummy always cooked, we had no reason to eat out. Beside that compound was Iya Chinasa’s large frying pan. We called her “Akara wom-



an.” We used to buy Akara from her on Saturdays before we discovered a new “Akara woman” in the market across the road. Iya Chinasa’s frying pan sat beside the chemist shop and another large white compound whose gates I’d never seen open before, the gates Kamoru Adeyemi, the owner of our street. Across the road, there was a Mobil filling station; a large compound that looked like its inhabitants had been eaten by flowers, then Ire-Akari Market beside the road that was the long arm of the “T”.

Ire-Akari market was mellow. It didn’t scream at you or tug at your clothes like some of the markets I’ve come to know did. There was an expanse of land just behind the market gate that led into the main parts. That ground was usually covered by a flock of pigeons feasting on grains of garri and rice. I remember Iya Dada, the nice woman whom my mother bought tomatoes from and the meat man opposite her stall who my mother patronized too. Ire-Akari market mostly served as our emergency market, a place for buying small things and grinding tomato or the ingredients mummy used to make “kunu”. Usually, mummy went to Isolo market for her actual shopping as things were cheaper there. Our market had four differently sized gates and one of these gates opened into somewhere my mummy called Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah was like an eclipse, a neighbourhood that was so close to yet looked different from mine. It was a short street we sometimes used as a shortcut when we were in a hurry to get to church. The single road running through it was a black messy porridge that got messier when it rained. On its left was a small fence separating the street from the market and on the right was a tall sickly green building whose walls were mottled and gray in some areas. We called it Sodom and Gomorrah because at night it became some sort of an open bar where people smoked and drank while downing bowls of pepper soup. That was the much I knew about why mummy had given it that name. All the same, I once made a friend there, a girl whose name or face I can no longer recall as we didn’t get to hang out much. Sodom and Gomorrah made Ire-Akari memorable too.

Over the years, Ire-Akari morphed; shops faded, some persisted, and new ones sprung. Some of my neighbours whom I grew up with even moved out. At the end of the day, it wasn’t just the place in itself that truly made my old home beautiful to me, but the people there too. I mean, what would Ire-Akari have been without a Brother Jide to share coca cola to us in his empty kai-kai bottles? the neighboring children to play with? the landlady to shout the compound down, Or my family to laugh with?



# **RIVERS ARE NOT JUST WATERS**

**by**

**Okafor Marycynthia Chinwe – Nigeria**

I never really thought of rivers as places until I was old enough to think for myself, old enough to know a word can have many meanings, old enough to read whatever I could get my hands on and it was on one of those hunts for knowledge that I came across a place called Rivers. I loved waters, I loved looking at them, I enjoyed being on them as much as I enjoyed being in them.

Up until the time I came to realize that Rivers do not just mean the waters I loved so much - but really also places; a state in Nigeria, a town in Manitoba, Canada, I had only thought of them as the beautiful silvery or colourless sometimes muddy liquids that are either stagnant or flowing. I saw them as sources of many lives, sources of energy, I saw them as many things - never places - but most of all I saw them as bodies that hold not just lives but also so much mysteries. Mysteries that not even science could begin to explain- Unsolved mysteries.

Unsolved mysteries; like why the chief water source of my village had never drowned any native, instead, it would throw natives that venture deep unto the banks or carry them to its shallow part; like why the two very popular rivers in Imo state, Onummiri - clear and bright like morning - and Nwoye - muddy and blurry like a rainy day - do not mix even though they have a meeting point; like why the river - Dad told me about - goes up in the morning and down in the evening, he told me he didn't believe it when he was told until he plucked fresh leaves and discovered the river carried the leaves up in the morning and in the evening when he tried again, he realized the leaves were carried down; like why the two rivers in Ogun state, Nigeria - one boiling hot and the other bone-chilling - mythologized to be the two quarrelling wives of a king, have a common meeting cocoon where the water that continuously flows in and out is pleasantly warm.

But they are not only fascinating mysteries, they are also habitats, and not just to water creatures but also to humans.

In primary school, when we were taught about the Mississippi, the longest river in the world, I went home and told Dad about it and he told me that Mississippi is not just a river but also a state located in the South-eastern region of the United States. I later came to learn that the word "Mississippi" itself comes from the Ojibwa word "Misizipi" which means "Great River". There are many places named for rivers, places like; the Chippewa County in Minnesota named after the Clearwater River and the Clearwater Lake, both located within the County; the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly known as Zaire, named for the Congo River formerly known as Zaire River; the Benue state in Nigeria named for the Benue River; the Rivers State bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean and named after the many rivers that surrounds it.

Where there are places named directly for rivers, there also are places named indirectly for rivers, like; the Aroostook County, Maine which is named for a Native American word meaning "beautiful river"; Moscow, the beautiful state capital of Russia, which literally means "the city by the Moskva River"; the Coös County, New Hampshire, with Coös being a Native American word meaning "crooked", a reference to a bend in the Connecticut River.



## **CALABAR: THE ANCIENT CITY COMES ALIVE!**

**by**

**Namse Peter Udosen – Nigeria**

Calabar is a beautiful coastal city in the South- South region of Nigeria and the Capital of Cross River State. It is a city with rich, socio-cultural and political antecedents. Inhabitants say that Calabar means “Come and live and be at Rest!” Historically, the original name of the town was “Akwa Akpa”, it had a thriving commercial life as early as the 15th century. Calabar has been known to European sailors as far back as the 15th century. It has an international sea port known to the world from the 16th century. It was a major hub during the slave trade from the late 17th to 19th century as about thirty percent of the estimated 2.5 million slaves from Africa to the new world, passed through the Calabar sea port.

The serene coastal city was named “Calabar” by the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao. The reason for choosing this name is unknown, since it was not used by the Efik people. In 1884 when the chiefs of Duke Town accepted British protection, the town, served as capital of the Oil Rivers Protectorate (1885–93), the Niger Coast Protectorate (1893–1900), and Southern Nigeria (1900–06) and was called Old Calabar until 1904 when the British administrative headquarters were moved to Lagos and the “old” was dropped.

As a social centre the city boasts of the first social club in Nigeria, The Africa Club, and hosted the first competitive football, cricket and field hockey games in Nigeria. This explains the groove that goes down in Calabar. It is a city that was made for fun and merriment.

The glory of Calabar has been restored in the Modern era by Mr. Donald Duke, when he kicked off the tourism revolution in the year 2000. Every December, all roads lead to the beautiful city of Calabar, for the Calabar Festival, the biggest and longest multi-faceted entertainment programme in West Africa. For thirty two days, the serene, tree-lined streets of Calabar come alive with visitors from all over the world, in an exhilarating celebration of culture, dance, music and theatre. Nigeria's strongest tourism brand, the Festival features the HIV/AIDS walk, musical concerts featuring top national and international artistes, a colorful cultural parade, traditional boat regatta, Christmas village, and Christmas camp for children, Fashion fairs and lots of excitement.

The lush greenery, clean streets and adorned roundabouts greet the eyes as you drive into the paradise city.

It begins with the lighting of the Christmas tree by the state Governor on the eve of the first of December and the Calabar festival lasts for a whole month.

Calabar is a town that thrives on fun and merriment, from the palm grooves of Atimbo to the plush lounges and bars on Marian/state Housing and other spots scattered all over the sprawling city, there is a place for everyone. But this in December, a new dimension is added, the Calabar festival! Let me share my experience.

Not wanting to be caught sleeping on a bicycle, I jumped into the occasion. First point of call: Pointe (no pun intended!). It is an outdoor bar, with Jams blaring and guys and girls reveling. It also has provisions for indoor entertainment. The fish pepper soup was really on point (still no pun intended) Fish pepper soup is a major delicacy in Calabar, local species such as Mud fish and giant cat Fish are well spiced and steamed with herbs such as Ntong and Utazi. It is tongue stimulating experience.

Next stop, the Xmas village! The Xmas Village is a wide expanse of land on the grounds of the Calabar Municipal Council headquarters that is converted to a multipurpose Xmas theme park in December. There is something fascinating about the Xmas Village; it is a village of two lives. During the day, the crafts, gifts, electronic and other sundry product bustle with activities. I found the arts and craft shops quite interesting. Efik and other cultures in the region are brought to life in vibrant colours and curves. Gold and other precious metal dealers of northern Nigeria extraction are not left out of the day time trade at the village. But

all these pale into insignificance when the sun sets. The Xmas Village changes face, it puts on an unrecognizable garb from day time in the evening. Wafts of smoke from the grilling of fish and assorted meats in a coating of spices fills the air as we walk in. Girls in bum shorts, miniskirts and other sexy attires buzz around the grounds but don't get carried away, they aren't hookers, that's just how young ladies roll in December in Calabar. The atmosphere is like an open air club, with a mix of live music, djs and sound systems. In the Xmas village the most absurd can happen at any time of the night. On one of such evenings, a lady hopped on our table and did some serious booty shaking to the admiration of the guys!

On nights when there is a major concert, at about 10pm the crowds at the Xmas village begins to thin out as a mass exodus to the stadium begins.

On such concert nights, the U.J Esuene stadium is a ball of colourfull lights, glitz and fun. The big boys pay a fee to sit in the VIP box while the masses and the true fun seekers like us gather on the football pitch of the main bowl. The likes of P square, Tu face, D'banj and other international artistes such as Lucky Dube (of blessed memory), Joe, Alpha Blondy, Hugh Masekela, Oliver Mtukudzi, Akon, Kirk Franklin, Donnie McClurkin, Chevelle Franklyn, Fat Joe, NeYo, Asa light up the stage, while young ladies and guys light up the grass. Sometimes comic characters pop up from among the crowd and give a side show. It is usually a great spectacle down there, with all sorts of characters standing around me and when an artiste give a below par performance cries of "away" rents the air. After the concerts in the wee hours of the morning, my friends and I head back to the xmas village for one for the road. It's a holiday after all!

On days when I want to switch things up, the Marina resort provides the need gateway. Its serene sea-side ambiance is a sight to behold. It also gave me a variety to suit cerebral and mundane passions. The slave museum gave me new insights to the whole slave trade thing. The 3d, live sized wax images of the journey to slavery evoked strong emotions. The film house cinema adds another dimension to fun and chilling on a different level from clubbing and hanging out in xmas village. On one of those days while, watching hobbit in the 3d cinema, I was told of the boat cruise on the Marina.

The speed boat ride was a thrill. A ride on a speed boat through the creeks is not for the faint hearted. As the boat meandered through the bumpy waters the sea breeze sprayed saline drops of water on us. The mangroves provided a perfect back drop as we sped past the Eastern Naval command, N.P.A, Addax petroleum and landed at the fisherman's village in Tinapa. I recommend the boat trip for anyone visiting Calabar.

The high point of the Calabar festival is the carnival. Known as Africa's largest street party, the Carnival Calabar is a breathtaking explosion of color and rhythm, crazy fun! From my strategic location at Atekong junction, I watched with eye popping amazement as band after band waltzed past us. The costumes were exotic, the ladies were gorgeous, the guys macho and the dances exhilarating! The orange of Masta Blasta, the green of passion 4, the shiny yellow of freedom band and the glowing red of sea gull added to the blue of bayside; a pot-pourri of exquisite cultural styles in a contemporary bowl is created. While the parade is on, we on the sidelines indulge in photo sessions with the cute ladies, mascots and other celebrities on the parade. It's one hell of a street party! The party finds its melting point in the U.J. Esuene , where all the bands battle for final points to make or mar the challenge for the carnival crown. At the end of it all, the party continues at various bars and lounges in fun city. Each band and sub sections of them usually have carnival after parties with big celebrities in attendance.

The Masta Blasta band has taken the podium in the last two editions after initial dominance by Passion 4 and Bayside bands. Behind the scenes a lot goes into the making of a band parade. Initially the costumes were imported from the Caribbean but in recent times the colorful costumes are manufactured locally. The design and production of the costumes and props begin about six months before the main event. Lots of locals are employed to craft out the various props used during the event. Besides the costumes, a lot also goes into the actual performances, rehearsals begins as early as June or July in most bands. The choreography and calisthenics take a lot of energy, time and patience. I have attended some of the practice sessions and it's quite hectic. Some of the trainers are invited from neighboring towns like Port Harcourt and Enugu, while others come in from as far as Lagos and Abuja. After seeing what they go through from practice till main event day, one understands the after party!

The Carnival after parties has a life of their own. It is a mix of celebrities, drinks, mad music all dipped in fun. I was at the Mayfair Lounge where Passion 4 had their party, it was crazy. The Duo of P-square was in attendance and the whole place was alive with party rockers from near and far. The ambiance was different from every normal club day; you could almost touch the vibe.

The Carnival was the climax of the whole festival, everything after that was an anti-climax. In fact after the carnival on the 27th of December, I and my boys began balancing our finances in preparation for checking out. After much flexing, my pocket was in the red, but it was all worth it. I had fun.

I hope you are planning to join me and my crew this year, let's go there!

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



The **Nalubaale Review Literary magazine** seeks your submissions on the theme of TRAVEL. Submissions can be poems, short stories, essays, photos, haikus, articles, legends, local folktales (original language and translations are both welcome), tales about places, travel experiences or blogs and many others.

The call is open to Africans living here and abroad. Submit a maximum of three poems, two short stories of 2000+ words, and 10 photos.

Submissions can be sent to; [nalubaalereview@gmail.com](mailto:nalubaalereview@gmail.com)

Deadline 15th June 2019.

We will be happy to receive your story. You can read more details here: <https://tinyurl.com/y3ksyy2z>



# REMEMBERING WAKINI



*In Memory of the one who touched lives she never met.*

# Wakini

Let her be light,  
And let her be bright,  
Let her shine,  
Like a string of stars in the sky,

And when she smiles,  
With that twinkle in her eyes,  
Let it be like confetti,  
Or fireworks painting the sky.

Let her be persistent,  
Let her be resilient,  
Because there is something poetic,  
about finding hope wedged between the two,

Let her be magic,  
Let her be stoic,  
Let her hands fish out the  
Silver lining in her clouds, always.

And let her be magnetic,  
As she is majestic,  
Let her rise, always,  
From the shackles of this thing called arthritis,

Let her be nothing short of inspiring,  
And when she unclenches her fists to string  
Words together for those living,  
Let them be nothing less than uplifting.

Let there be light,  
Let it be bright,  
Let it shine,  
Let it be her, Wakini.

*Nasikiwa Susie,  
Tanzania*



# I Love You Too

The ghost from the foot of Kirinyaga  
Has taken flight to meet Mwene Nyaga!  
She's gone with a declaration of love,  
Emphatic, the lord of life she did serve!  
Her last words to me were, 'I love you too,  
Let the spirits hate but know that I do!'  
Why did I shy from the spirits' teasing,  
It burns, ah, this ache, now that you're missing!  
Hey young soul, in love with the hymns of old,  
Do I whisper this warm breath to the cold?  
Argh, you've driven a tether through my art  
And pulled it out: the gaping in my heart!  
But sleep well, sweet soul as free from all want  
In the ghost that frees where meagre words can't!

For Wakini Kuria  
by Isaac Kilibwa  
Kenya



# LOOSE STRINGS

Eagles didn't carry the burden,  
But death bestowed it upon us.

In grief, David played the harp,  
But our strings're unpluckably loose.

Today Wakini's walking the lane  
On the stairway to heaven.

Smiles seem so sharp on her lips  
As she's free from a life so hoarse.

The angelic realm's saddened  
Seeing a mortal depart so abruptly.

The sparks of joy you ignited  
Will glow in us to eternity  
Till we grasp the Doves' flap tune.

*Omadang Yowasi,  
Uganda*



# Holding your hand as I wave goodbye

They say Charity begins at home,  
And a home is where you find hope,  
Hope is kept at heart.  
Basically Charity is at heart.  
You remain in My heart, Charity Wakini.

Our story will start from the end. Or rather the  
end before the beginning.

I do not know why its so easy to talk to strangers,  
People who won't judge,  
People who will just listen and just share same  
amount of energy.  
That was you for me,  
It all started from group chat interactions,  
From DM's to growing fond of each other.

I won't say you left too soon,  
Well you did,  
Before we even met,  
Before I placed a name to the face,  
Before I felt the hands to that lady who gave  
me strength,  
That lady who lifted my soul like Helium.

My heart is warm but my hands are cold right  
now,  
Cold since I have no one to hold them any-  
more.

What did you mean when you said we need to  
write our story..?

Were we not meant to write it together.?

I am a photographer,  
But I didn't picture doing it alone.

I'm alone,  
Scared,  
Lonely,  
Broken,

Its a war that doesn't need weapons,  
I'm so fighting for Peace.

They say time heals everything but it doesn't.  
It only makes things worse,  
Its a day after I received your news but it hurts  
more than the first time.

Time and again reality will slap me in the face,  
Sending messages without response,  
Calling a phone which won't be picked up.  
I'm trying but I keep falling down,  
Cry out but nothing comes back,  
I want to play deaf but it all comes back to a  
reality check .

I was stronger because you used to lift me up.  
I don't know if It is possible to do it on my  
own.

Mrs Wanjohi.

First of all where the hell did we get that name  
from Lol.

Secondly the Mùgoma thingie was how I used  
to chokoza you,

Thirdly harusituli fanya,

Pete sitapoteza.

Amongst our last chats.

I asked you how you have been. I also asked  
where you have been,

Your precise response was

"Thie Ku kungi jue? Guku ukanyejera na theci"

I will rest you in my heart with that theci you  
mentioned because it seems we are stuck to-  
gether...

\_\*~From Kitow to You :)\*\_

James Gitonga,

Kenya

# WHEN SWEET SOULS SLEEP

When sweet souls sleep  
(For they don't die,  
they become colorful lights  
glowing in Paradise.

We know this,  
but goodbyes are sour fruits--  
they are hard to swallow.

It is hard for the heart to take  
that these will be no more:  
witty words that preludes a crackle of laughter  
(and reflections); & the hope in their words while they're in the thick of the battle.  
Sweet souls are just that, sweet,  
& when they leave, it's to a better place.  
& though, we (will) miss them,  
this thought gives us joy.

IN MEMORY OF WAKINI CHARITY KURIA

*Adejuwon Gbalajobi,  
Nigeria*



# OUR WAKINI!!!

All has been said  
About your endless love  
That which you share  
And, that we have for you

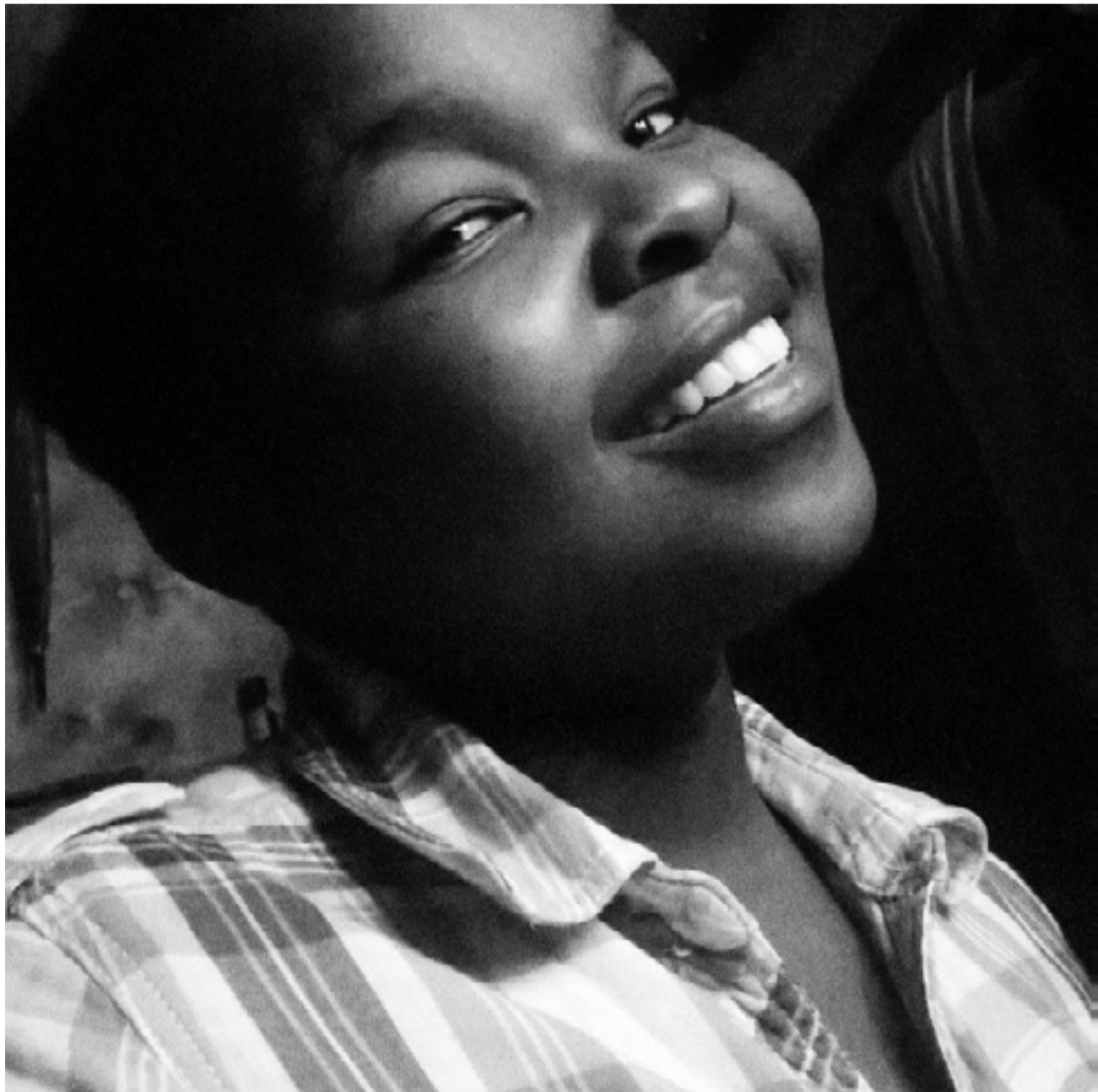
All has been said  
About your watery ink  
That which creatively you write  
Accordingly, from which we learn

Let's let go of your worthy behavior  
Let's let go of your teaching pen  
Let's let go of your the love you share  
Your beautiful smiles alone, can't be let go of

Wakini, though your pen lives  
Though, your name always will be remembered  
Though, dead cat don't meow  
Prayerfully, we shall always remember you.....

Ilyas bid you adieu

*Elias Adam,  
Nigeria*



# Moment of Silence

(In memory of Wakini Kuria)

A tale is told of your heart, its warmth and tenderness  
That touched lives in ways nobody can properly express  
Those who saw you, sing of your beauty, sharpness of mind  
and the undying spirit you demonstrated in writing this land  
But, they lack courage to face emptiness & silence you've left.

I only tasted the magic of your pen, beauty of thought & grammar  
and the dreams you painted and nurtured at Writers Space Africa  
If pain could be conquered, I admit you wrapped it behind your lovely smile well  
How herbs and loud prayers couldn't keep death at bay, I really can't tell  
Tears hurt most, when a loved one falls at inopportune time!

I wish your laughter could have lasted to keep us warm  
I wish your smile could have lasted to cheer us through every tide  
I wish you could have grown older to witness fate of our dreams  
You were to stay, dance to our anthem of sorrow, and create a home with us  
But the ship disembarked fast, you tightened your lips & left without a word  
to keep us alive, as emptiness digs its claws down our throats!  
//Go well, our beloved!//

*Wafula p'Khisa,  
Kenya*





# Sudden Departure

Out of sight we were,  
Yet through your pen I saw your face  
Through your ink I heard your voice  
You were indeed a choice  
I kept hoping to see your face  
And embrace you, to gain some skills  
But, like a hawk, you it stole and you became still.

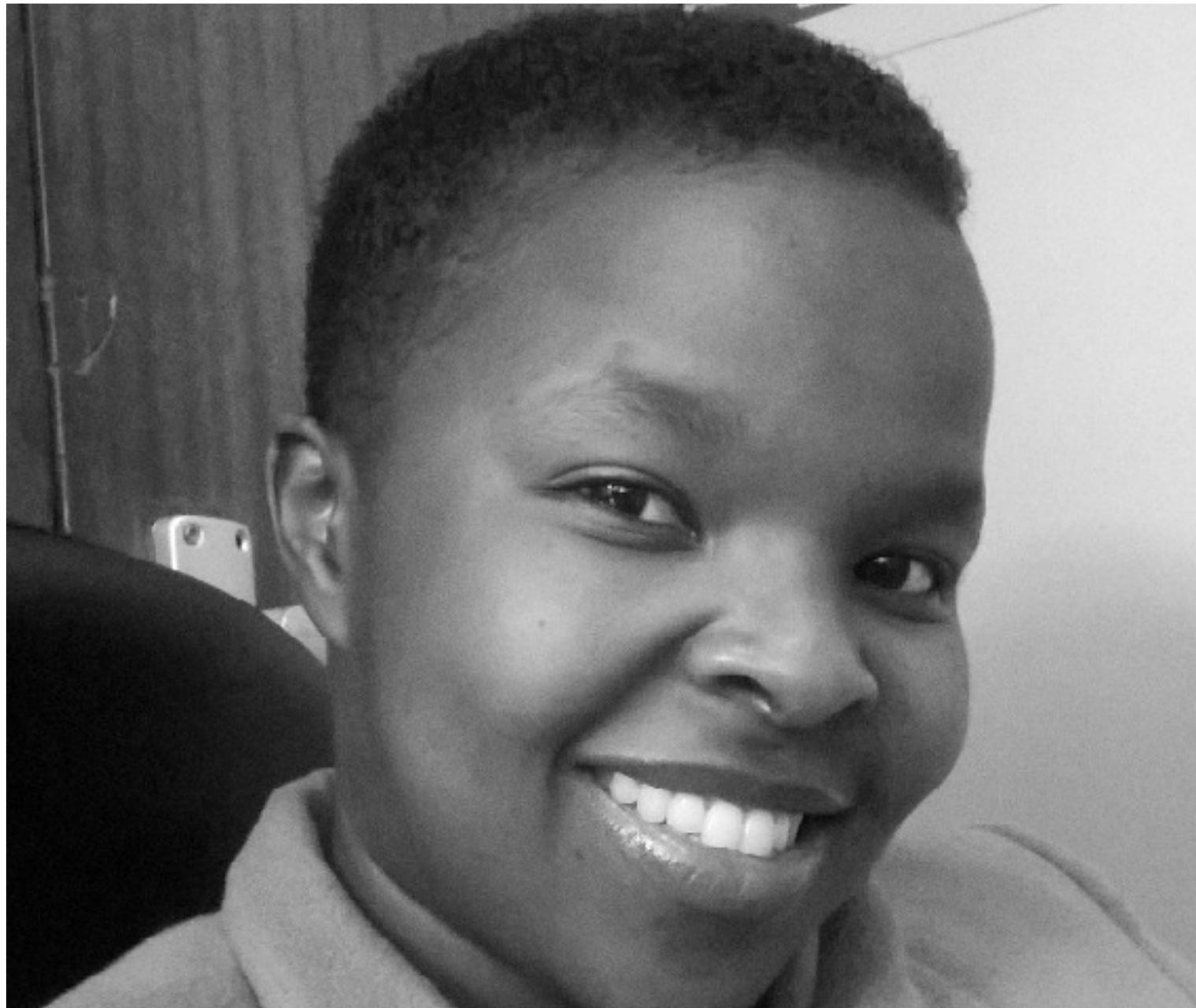
When the nightingale was held by traffic  
As she flew to sing your morning favourite  
Yet a mourning sight so terrific  
We all beheld, and we imagined your fights  
But it could only be a memory

And for the excellence of your pen, you remain a memory  
A genuine genius, marked in the sands of time.  
Bon voyage Wakini is the only word worth uttering.

Dedicated to Wakini Kuria WSA's gem just travelled (May 16th 2019).

\*Safe journey

*Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy,  
Cameroon*



# SHORT OF A FRIEND

When I think about your demise  
Empty is what I feel  
I wonder who will fill me  
With the love and humour you always poured

We laughed and sneered about life together  
You were so strong and full of life  
I loved your resilience and determination  
To keep going despite the gnawing wounds of pain

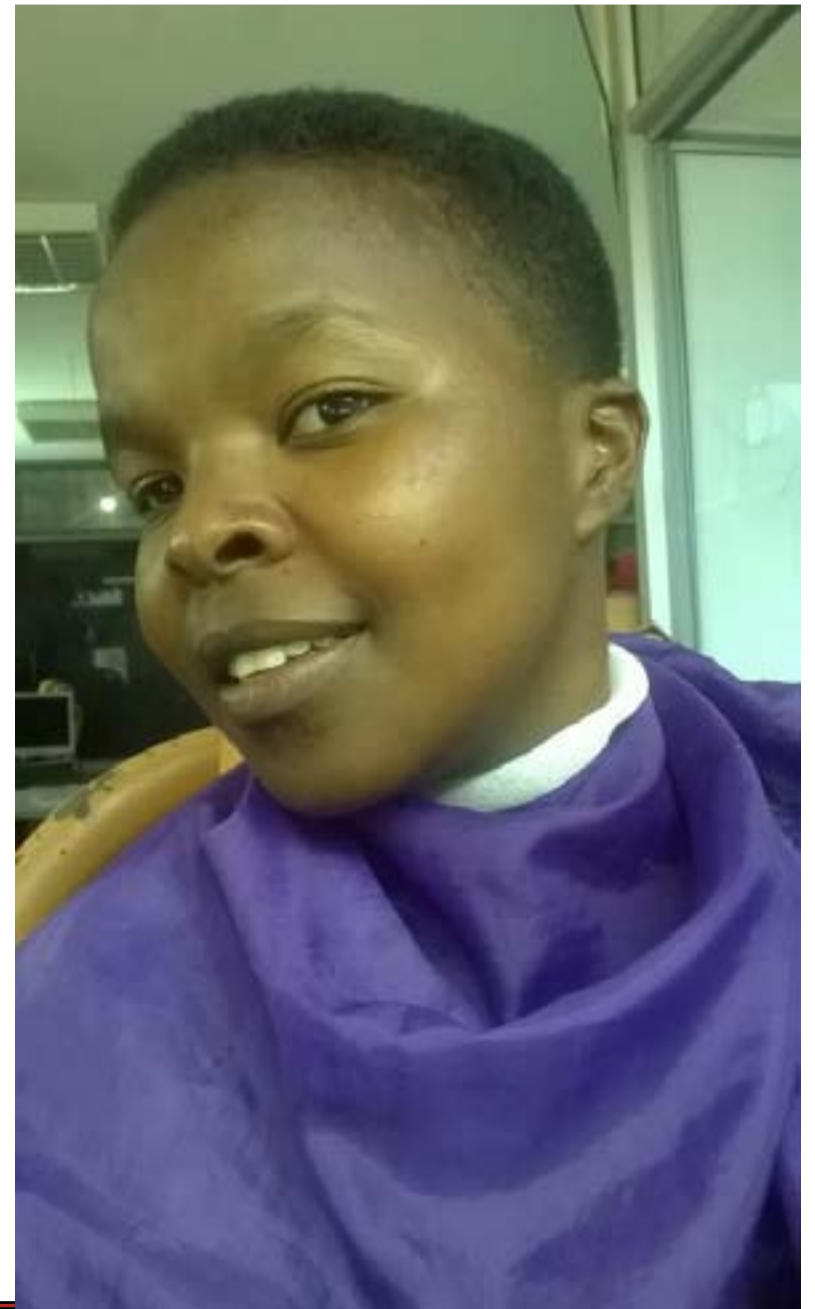
You passed through glaring fires and kept smiling despite your burns  
I yearn to have a spirit like yours  
To walk through fire and ignore the burns  
Because that's what strong people do

I'm torn between celebrating your demise and crying out for your departure  
I'll practice the former though hard  
Your battle with Arthritis has made me know real strength  
When I think about strong people, I count you twice

Surely, I'm short of a friend in you Wakini.  
I'll cherish our memories together.

Forever broken  
Love and Light

*Koey Ngunyi,  
Kenya*



# WAKINI

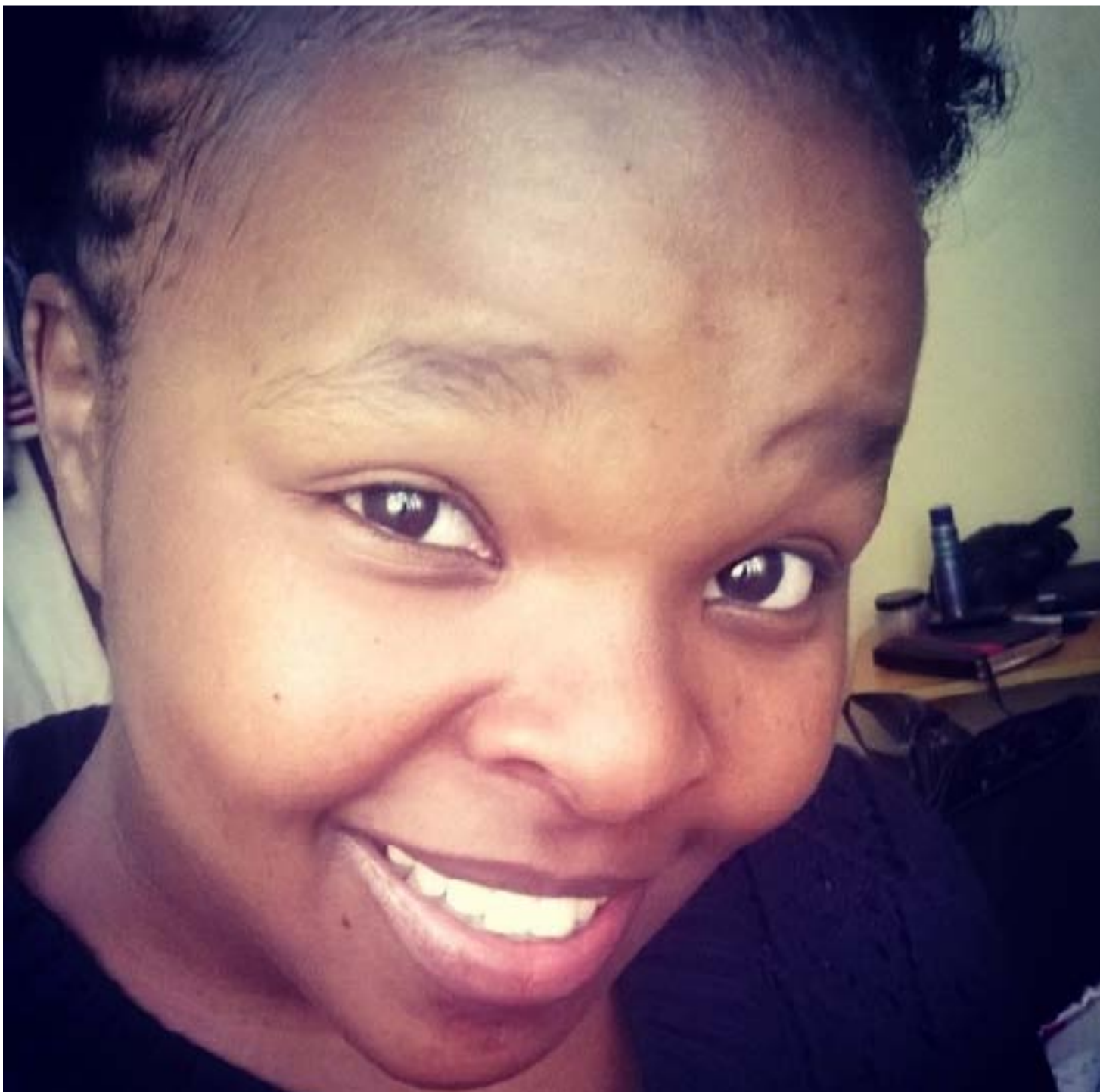
Oh Wakini!

The tomorrow you promised yesterday,  
Is now the day I meet those smiling face sour, Those beautiful eyes locked forever.  
Oh! it seem like I am in an unending dream.

Wake me or wake her,  
Someone is asleep.  
I wish those tears that fall on her  
Could be quenched by her smiles.  
How will the lady yesterday  
Become an angel today?  
So soon?

Wakini,  
Thank you for those words that shaped me, Thank you for those smiles that held back my tears,  
Thank you for those arms you stretched when we were in need, The sun set so soon, Till we see  
again when we shall soon solo songs In glittering skins death won't conquer.  
Rest on.

*Joseph Jasef,  
Nigeria*



# In loving Memory of Wakini Kuria (The Inspirer left the scene)

“Hello beautiful!”

“Hi sweetest heart”

Was the intro to an enchanting conversation with you,

A conversation we didn't get to finish

Because life grew jealous,

Jealous of your joy,

Jealous of your liveliness,

Jealous of your positive energy,

Jealous of the bright future ahead of you,

Life... Oh, life! Why?

On that faithful Thursday a dark cloud descended

As I opened my WhatsApp chat

Oh, the news was shocking!

My heart stopped beating for a while...

Wakini...Wakini...You were gone

You left the scene of creativity and I couldn't say goodbye

With the ink you use in painting your joy, love, agonies...,

I bid you farewell

Adieu Wakini!

Adieu Comrade!

Fare thee well!

By

*Nnane Ntube,*

*Cameroon.*



# OUR KINI...

Wakini,  
Oh Wakini!  
Known by many,  
Loved by all.

Wakini,  
Oh Wakini!  
A pure delight,  
Lighting up the world.

Wakini,  
Oh Wakini!  
A beacon of hope,  
For all who lacked hope.

Wakini,  
Oh Wakini!  
You taught many how to hold a pen,  
But encouraged me to use a camera.

Wakini!  
Oh Wakini!  
While the Earth your body receives,  
You'll live on still through each camera flick.

*Aniyom Dien (Karuiki Karis),  
Nigeria*



# FOR KINI

Kini Wakini  
Kurua Wakini  
Wakini my Kini  
How many times did I Kini?

Not enough.  
No, not enough.  
No, not nearly enough.

How many were the times of Kini?  
Times you ruled as our queen bee  
Oh Kurua Kini Wakini  
How many times did I Kini?

Enough is forever  
Enough is together  
Many more times with Kini.

Dear, Kurua Kini Wakini  
Live forever in us, our Kini  
Kurua Wakini.

*Sandra Unlimited,  
Nigeria*



# HER PEN

Her pen found the lost  
The distracted was attracted  
Ever busy was available  
Eyes was glued  
Eyes were cleared  
Sleep became reading  
Peace was restored  
Happiness flows  
Tiredness turns strength

Reading becomes a passion  
Your poems become the book  
Motivation to write sets in  
And I became the reader  
Learning to write  
Wakini Pen made it all.  
RIP wakini

*Paul Bernard,  
Nigeria*



Please accept my sincere condolences on the passing of your chief editor, the writer and member of our grand literary 'tribe' Wakini Kuria.

I extend special sympathies to all her loved ones and her friends.

At times like these, we humans profoundly experience the limits of words. Yet it also means that we can offer space to our hearts to speak.

You have my heart.

May Wakini Kuria's soul rest in perfect peace.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor,

Kenya



The pain of losing a loved one is unbearable and most times leads to depression. When the news of the sudden death demise of Charity Wakini Kuria came to my attention, a strong pain pierced my heart. It made me uncomfortable and changed my moods. I asked myself, "Why sister Charity?" This question reminded me of someone who said that God takes home the best rose flower from the farm. A aah! Sister Charity. I might not have met her personally and physically but from tributes and testimonials, i can tell that she was the kind of person whose arms were always open.

Rheumatoid Arthritis might have taken her away from us but where she is now is more important than anything else. Sister Charity's life is one that is worth of emulation. Hers was a stress-free life which she enjoyed till the last minute. She might not be here with us but all i know is that she is watching over us. What made me to get to know more about her is the passion and zeal for writing which she did without being pushed. On her calendar, the year 2019 was a year that was to shed more light into her life as she had a goal of writing and publishing a book. She is now gone but the goal is within us. I will make sure that i personally do something about it.

Sister Charity was a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a niece and a friend to many but the most important thing is that she was and Still is a child of God. Sixteenth day of May will always remain marked on my calendar as the day a legend, a heroine and a warrior was born into Heaven. Fare Thee Well my dear Sister and Friend.

By

*Samuel Nicholas Mwangi,*

*Kenya*

*Member*

*Mwangaza Magazine Whatsapp Group*





Dear Wakini the much you taught us was the best we ever known, you're gone but you live within us always, may you show us the way from above may you guide us below. As heaven sing and rejoice for welcoming you, we keep you in our hearts despite not seeing your presence with our eyes. Mungu akulaze vyema Wakini (May God let you rest in peace)

Sandra Mwang'ombe,  
Kenya



Wakini was a special friend. It is hard to believe that we have not met physically. We was so full of life and energy, you would never know she was in severe pains.


She was the first person in the WSA group to reach out to me privately and we had several intriguing conversations.

When Anthony Onugba asked us to do more children's Literature, she reached out to me and we formed a team with Nahida Esmail.

For the past one year we have both working on the story and she was an active contributor to the project. She did the final edit and we were waiting for the designer to conclude before she departed from us. It's so sad to see her go and not see the product of her labour.


We had plans to meet in Kenya sometime in September. She complained that she didn't want to be a burden, but I wouldn't mind keeping her company. Anyway death had other plans. I weep not, for you have only go ahead of us on a road we all must travel.

*Adieu Wakini*  
*Namse (Teddy Bear),*  
*Nigeria*



I reminisce with a broken heart about the time we spent together, your beauty inside out and the stories we shared. Forever you remain an epitome of courage and strength Wakini.

*Elizabeth Opiyo,*  
*Kenya*



She came, did her thing, left. Wakini, you were a friend and a teacher to me. You are gone, and we have to accept, albeit with difficulty. You were strong. You fought. And fought. You

played fair, death used underhand methods. I'm not going to hear your voice again; you are not going to correct me and give me your views anymore. Sounds like a bad dream; the worst nightmare to ever cross my mind. As we have always believed, God's plans are always good; the best. You are in a better place. May you rest well dear Kinnie. I hope some day we will meet and celebrate.

*Nehemiah Omukhonya,  
Kenya*



## WAKINI OUR KINI

In life we meet different people but there are some that we meet and our lives never remain the same again. Such one person is Wakini Kuria. As an upcoming writer, I met Wakini when I was just about to publish my second collection of poetry. My poems had also been featured severally on the Writers Space Magazine. She reached out to me via Facebook urging me to join WSA. Gradually, we became friends and we chatted quite often. At one point I needed some information about publishing. Once I enquired from a common Whatsapp group she went all the way to send me a guide on self-publishing through my email. That was her, going lengthy strides in her deeds of kindness.

Wakini was very accommodative. She tolerated those we didn't. On Saturday she told me that she was still trusting God to be better in her health, on Tuesday my heart was broken on receiving news that she had left. I would have wanted her to stay longer but I am encouraged that, as she now sleeps, she is free from pain. I dedicate the following poem in memory of her and in honour of the friendship that God gave us for that short period.

Wakini our Kini  
Always full of love  
And cool like a dove  
You're resting far above

Wakini our Kini  
The light of your pen  
Will always illuminate  
The paths of our writing

Wakini our Kini  
We feel so empty  
But we shan't let life

Beat us into submission

Wakini our Kini  
We so miss you

*Regards,  
Benny Wanjohi  
Nairobi, Kenya*



“`You’re our star!  
-Wakini always repeated this everyday we had a chat!

Although you’re not here to see this,I appreciate you for always being more than a friend. Even when you were bedridden, you seemed to care. It will never be the same again for the gap you have left.

My heart is even broken more to know I will never see you here again, on earth!

I miss you,my Wakini.

Shine your way,girl, till that beautiful morning!”

*Faith Mutheu,  
Kenya.*



The night Wakini died, a Nigerian poet committed suicide and I was yet to recover from the pain of loosing one of those I call “healers” for they heal others by their words. On getting to work the next morning, I heard Wakini was gone. It has to be a joke and if it was, I was going to sternly warn them to never repeat such. Before I could reach Anthony Onugba (WSA Founder) I saw a public message on facebook and there my dam of tears busted.

Wakini was gone. The lady in red. Wakini is the easy going person who made arthritis sound like it was just malaria. How can an active writer have arthritis? But, Wakini did and she thrived. After my tears Wakini, these are my last words

I will not write an ode.

I will recount the seasons of bliss and bask in the beauty we looked upon.

I will hope for Africa in words like we always do and spell my dreams with imagery and

rhythm.

Wakini, in this pain I will find joy and be content in the knowledge that we thrive regardless.

Africa thrives Wakini

Shine on us through the words you've left behind

We will remember you always!

Adieu Sunshine

*Liza Express,*

*Nigeria*



“Never you let Life nor Death beat you into submission” Wakini Kuria Charity

I was asked, or maybe the whirly wind whispered the question to me from a world beyond, I do not know. The question I had known the answer for ages, possibly right from when I was in my mother's womb. “Death, where is thy sting?” I knew the response, and I believed it was right. Yet, there was this uneasiness I feel each time I gave my answer, I tried to revalue my reply. I repeat each word silently with my silent voice, “The poison of Death, the venom of Death is breeding itself in the lifeless body of those it has taken away. For it has deprived them of this luxurious life”

Last month, I stumbled on the answer, no life taught me the answer. Even though it did taught me the hardest of all ways, I'm glad I'm ignorant no more, I'm happy I'm naïve to the ways of Death no more. Life taught me about Death through death, Death took away my jugular vein, it made my head felt empty; it took away the rhythm of my life, there was no more melody to dance to; it flooded my face with tears, and wiped off laughter; it took away Wakini, our Kini.

Not until then did I understand the question, each time the whispering wind brings its whispery question “Death, where is thy sting?” I responded with all certainty, “Thy sting has been embedded in us, the living, the ones you deemed worthless of your holiness. The pains, the hurts, the worrisome heart, the loneliness, the cries, we the living suffer every ounce of your venom.”

I tricked Death and found a way to defy its mortifying venom, I will live on the memories of my fallen beloved, I will carry on her wishes and take on her hopes, I will engrave her words to the walls of my heart “Never you let Life beat you into submission” rather I won't let Death nor Life beat me into submission.

Goodnight Kini, till we meet again

*Khalid Lukman*

*(Kharlyda)*

*Nigeria*

It is setting. The memories are setting. The mind knows there'll be no new ones, the trees on our lovely street will no longer hear us chuckle, they will miss the chills you gave each time you breezed past in your red dress. I'll miss the Lady who never showed up without her spark, not once Kini, did you surprise us with a cold you. I'm glad you lived. I'm glad I met you. Thanks for being Wakini. Your time was worth it all

We'll write in that diary of yours when we meet, but till then, enjoy the smiles you gave me. So long, my lady in the sky

*Blessing Benson (Breezy),*

*Nigeria*



Wakini ( I know you'd not see this) as you're laid to rest, I know you'd continue to be a light shining on us, I know you did not cower to death, no! you fought till the end! you are a hero, a knight. We'd always remember your words, your strength, your golden heart, your beauty, your contagious smile. Rest in power kini. Till we meet again.\*

*Winifred Felix,*

*Nigeria*



Dear Wakini,

Like the footprints in the sand, you'll forever be etched in our hearts

Like a sweet, sweet lovesong, you'll always play fondly in our hearts

You were like a sudden box of goodies that dropped from above. So much goodness and sweetness in one person it couldn't be all mine alone. Because of you, I managed to write a complete children's short story. You were that person that could always come through for a total stranger and not expect anything in return. It's been hard, your absence, but everything happens for a reason even when we don't see it yet. Sleep well dear Kini. Words can never be enough for someone who's already residing in our hearts.

Esther Musembi

(Muss♥)

Kenya



A day in 2017 April I joined Writers Guild Kenya. There I met Wakini Kuria and earned her friendship. She showed me no little kindness peppered with smiles as we devoured chunks of literary buffet.

In the group she shared words which sung peans of encouragement and wisdom.

Worthy of her calling as a holder of pen, Wakini wrote hope in many a soul. Her cool fresh smile straight from her soul announced friendship.

In 2017 September one of my stories 'the lonely, elderly woman' appeared on Writers Space Africa. The story had passed through her hands, she did a fantastic editing. Charity had been a Chief Editor at Writer's Space Africa. A duty she executed with much affection.

Time went by, on March 2019 -one of my stories 'the hostage' again passed through her hands.

Charity accounts for a great deal of my development as a writer. When I asked her for a recommendation letter for Michael Elliot Award, she asked me in such a rosy soft voice to provide more detail. That I did and she penned a beautiful workmanship so graciously and warmly. I never thanked her enough.

Scarcely was this done than a green message popped up on WhatsApp. That was on 3 March 2019. The message said.

'Hi there. in thought that this might interest you'

She sent 'Am I Blue, by Alice Walker'.

Alice Walker is an African-American author, activist and vegan.

'Am I blue' is a short-story written in 1986. It tells the tale of Walker's relationship with a horse named Blue, and through the unfolding of this relationship, Walker examines wider issues on the themes of social justice and how humans treat animals and each other.

Hi Wakini, I replied. Thank you for thinking of me. 'Am I blue' will be literary delicacy this evening.

'Poa. Enjoy the read'

The last we talked.

March 14, she posted on Facebook, 'ask me about fifty shades of pain'.

The pain that stole huge portion of her energy, but never her courage. She fought Arthritis like a hundred warriors, rocking on as it pierced her like a thousand needles.

Such a firm determination to ride over waves searing pain, enduring her miseries with patience and a permanent smile.

The news of cold March 16 bewildered and threw me slumping on my chair. I could not believe what I had heard. Wakini was leading to the heights of her literary pursuits when death in scythe reaped a bloom so abundant of virtuous fruits.

I had hoped in my secret heart to meet her this year but when her duty on earth was done she left in a hurry.

Wakini now is now forever gone home across star freckled galaxies. I imagine of a wispy, crystalline soul floating over meadows of violets and forget-me-nots. Wakini melting out of sight like a glow of twilight, her face like vintage photograph, but her noble deeds are as vivid as daylight, and my memories of her are covered with honours.

We shall hear more pleasant things she did in the dawn of resurrection. The blessed dawn death meets its death, and saints arrive at the gates of glory.

I shall be mindful of her selflessness in my tenure here on earth, as scenes of life as we know wind up.

Go well golden heart

*Tom Mwiraria,  
Kenya*



### **In Honour of A Resolute Soul**

Inasmuch as Nature is our mother, we are apportioned accountability to the same in different ways and spans of time. Nature provides us a plain chalkboard which she places atop thorny mountains. Perseverance and hope take us there. Determination sees us through to the fulfillment of the desires and motives of the will despite the agonies we pass through. Rising above the way we discover our being from childhood has never been any easy task. Many lose hope. With a dim light of hope, the reality of the self is forced to hide. It is repainted to patch and cover the empty spaces, those bodily weaknesses, which of course every person

has, just for the opposite of their foreseen disrepute.

A contented soul endowed with the due powers from on high, does not reject the reality of one's being, but accepts it, and seeks to rise above it to reach the goal grasped and loved in the light of our reason, that talent which God did endow to strengthen our being. Wakini was an example of such a determined soul not confined from reaching where she wanted by the frailty of the mortal frame. I worked as an editor under her lead of Writers Space Africa. Despite her pains she ever nurtured her talent, finished her work, and expressed joy. She was a friend I promised to visit when I come to Nairobi. I was to hand her our new issue of The Fountain Magazine in which her review of the previous edition was published. A week before my coming I learn of the saddening news. My heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and well-wishers, let us take heart. We offer all our sorrows and joys to the glory of the Most High who gives and who takes away. May her tender soul rest in perfect peace. Amen.

*Shimbo Pastory William,  
Tanzania.*



If it weren't for the shape of her hands, you would never have imagined that Wakini Kuria was battling a chronic medical condition. She was so lively and upbeat. She never once used her condition as an excuse not to live her life to the maximum. What a fun person she was to be around! She loved literature and enjoyed discussing it. She interacted with many writers and literary groups in Kenya, which was how we first met. 'My niece', I always called her, due to our age difference. When her condition drastically limited her physical mobility, she remained active online and on mobile, especially on Social Media. I commended her work at WSA magazine, telling her that each issue was better than the previous one. Our last exchange on Whatsapp concerned the 2019 African Writers Conference in Nairobi. She wanted to make sure that I would attend. I told her I would. 'I hope the Babylon arthritis disease won't prevent you from fully participating in this event, after all the work you're doing behind the scenes,' I texted her. 'Babylon arthritis,' she texted back, followed by three laughing emojis, 'I am also praying for good health.' A couple of weeks after that,



*Alexander Nderitu with Wakini Kuria*



I woke up to the news that she was no more. I was too shocked to believe it. And then her mother called me using her phone to confirm the news, and I burst into tears.

Rest among the angels, my wonderful literary niece.

*Alexander Nderitu,  
Kenya*



Dear Wakini,  
Though you're a world away,  
We thank you for your life.  
You lived to impact,  
Devotion. Diligence. Integrity.  
I know you you're somewhere in a crowd,  
Watching us from a foreign place.  
Smiling.  
Hope you're happy seeing us cherishing your lovely memories.  
See you again dear!

*Lubacha Deus Lubacha Abdul.  
Tanzania*



There are certain things in life which we have control over while there are others which we have no control over. Control in this context is choice. This means there are things we have a choice over and thus, have relative control over the outcome. Chasing my dream to start up Writers Space Africa in December 2016 was a choice. But what I had no choice over are those that would join me in the realisation of this dream or offer some friendly support. Wakini, coming into my life, was not a choice. It was a necessity.

Wakini sent in a flash fiction titled, *The Book*, to be published in the June 2017 edition of Writers Space Africa. At that time, Writers Space Africa was just 6 months old and I was the Chief Editor. When I read her piece, coupled with her bio, we began communicating. It was as we got talking that I realised that she was better than me in creative arts and was fueled with so much passion and so I stepped down as Chief Editor and handed her the job. From the July 2017 edition, Wakini became the Chief Editor of Writers Space Africa.

In 2017, I had another dream to convene an African Writers Conference and also an African Writers Awards. I set up a team but we failed. We were unable to realise the dream. But Wakini was always there, encouraging and inspiring. When we started out again in 2018, Wakini set up a group she named Writers Space Kenya (WSK) to offer financial support this time just to ensure that the conference would hold successfully. She did not inform me about this but went on to seek financial contributions from others. All these she did while in pains. She was suffering and at the same time carrying the burden of others. She had a kind heart.

We were successful in holding the conference in 2018 in Nigeria and with plans to hold it in Kenya in 2019, Wakini was at it again, helping and supporting. She was happy that we would come to her country and planned along with us regarding the logistics. I looked forward to seeing Wakini, to give her a warm but long hug. To have a discussion with her over a cup or two or three of chai. But that will never happen anymore.

There are things that I do not have control over. The choice is not in my hands. I never got the chance to take a photograph with Wakini. I never got a chance to give her a hug or to drink chai with her. I never got a chance to kiss her on the cheek. I never got to hold her hand or to sit beside her. Although I had no choice over her life, there is a choice that I have. The choice is to never forget Wakini and to be like her to others; to bear the crosses of others while suffering, even in silence. To bring smiles to others while crying in the rain. And to offer friendly support even with a heart so heavy.

Rest in peace, Wakini.  
You are now a Heavenly Angel.  
I miss you.

- Anthony Onugba



## WAKINSTAR; FOR THE LAST TIME (TRIBUTE TO WAKINI)

According to Tupac; the good die young. However, this talented and unforgettable good lady lives on in our hearts.

Wakinstar; that's what I called her and with her passage to meet her maker there will certainly not be another Wakinstar. Though I never met her in person; her warmth, smiles and passionate nature could be felt in every word she typed or said on the phone.

We met on the Writers' Space Africa platform and her talent for words and editing was felt instantly. Though we are still building up the WSA Magazine, there have never been an issue with the editing and that is because of the star called Wakini. Like most of us in the WSA community I never knew of her pains until I visited Kenya in February, 2018. I informed her I was in Nairobi and would like to meet her as well as our other members. Later that evening she called to express her joy that I was in her country then informed me that she was in pain and cannot make the trip. I told her that I will come to where she is with Faith. She told me no that she will explain at another time.

That explanation came a few months later with some photographs. I was so sad and called our Executive Director Anthony Onugba to ask if he is aware. He said yes but never knew it was that much. We started talking about how to reach her but unable to conclude until the sad news reached us.

Our tears cannot change anything but we pray that her passage will afford her the peace that pain took from her. Wakini was the most popular and loved across the WSA community; our task is to ensure that sweet memory of our Wakini lives.

To the family I say thank you for all you did for her and I pray that the good Lord keep you in happiness.

May God bless us all.

*HRL Prince Saka DBOSZ Junior (Nigeria)  
President, African Writers Development Trust.*



# Short Stories



# DRAMA AT THE VILLAGE KOLANUT FOREST

By Fomutar Stanislaus – Cameroon



One afternoon, I and Lemfon went to the Baam kola nut forest to pick kola nuts. Picking kola nuts was always fun, and when we meant real kola nut business, we carried our bags along, and if we noticed that someone had picked every eye of kola nut well ahead of us, we would peep around to be sure no one was coming, before climbing to the tree that had good bunches to fill our bags. When there was the fear that someone could appear from nowhere unnoticed, we climbed the kola nut trees with stones or logs of wet banana suckers swaddled tightly on our backs as one would swathe a baby on one's back. Whenever we heard approaching footsteps, we threw either the stone or banana sucker to one direction and skipped from the tree to the other direction to confuse the person in question on which direction we took.

However, if we noticed it was Lanjo approaching, we took extreme care on the strategies to employ. Lanjo could follow one to any direction, and could cancel his programs for the day merely to trap someone to pounce on, and whenever he succeeded to grab a victim, it felt as if one were in the hands of an evil spirit. Just his firm griped on one could force one to go to stool instantly, talk less of the shafts of insults he poured out from all directions. As such, whenever we noticed Lanjo approaching when we were illicitly harvesting kola nuts from our lineage's forest, we would stay

glued to the tree and hide as much as possible, making sure the tree was not wavering unnecessarily at such moments. The worst nightmare to have was to feel as to sneeze or cough when Lanjo was approaching.

On that blessed day of me and Lemfon, we decided to harvest a few bunches of kola nuts for ourselves since we did not pick as many bunches as we would have loved to. Lemfon stayed under the tree to monitor the environment, and since I knew how to climb trees more than him, I did what I knew best. Each time I climbed on pear or kola nut trees, I wondered to desperation the reason as to why God always kept the healthiest fruits on the riskiest branches. I was harvesting the kola nut and throwing it down, while Lemfon was gathering until I realized that he was no longer responding to our conversation. I giggled and whistle in our usual coded ways of sending out sensitive information, and only calm greeted my nervousness. I stopped to be sure he was still there, but he was nowhere to be found. I could not believe my eyes that it was Lanjo under the tree staring daringly at me as a cat would do to a rat it had captured. Lemfon had escaped quietly without a word!! He had sneaked away as smartly as a green snake in green grass.

“Konglim.” Lanjo called and I did not answer. Would answering make any difference? The vibration of his voice, and the shock of his sudden appearance instantly weakened my bones to the marrow and I slid from the tree to the ground like an empty bag. If Lemfon had notified me before escaping, I could have feigned checking a bird nest to see if the bird had laid some eggs, but he left without notification, and Lanjo caught me red handed.

Before I could reach the ground drops of urine had drizzled on my trouser even before the waiting hands of Lanjo could fall on me. The natural respond to my accident would have been an alarming cry, but where could I take the effrontery to raise an alarm in such a situation? If I were able to get up and flatter myself that I was escaping, or at least, to postpone the feeling of being in Lanjo’s firm grip, I would have taken on my heels, but my eyes had not stopped rotating my whole body around when Lanjo grabbed me from my trousers and started pouncing on me mercilessly. Since I was already in his hands, I only prayed one prayer. My prayer was that he should set me free after the beatings and never tell Papa any bit of thing about the issue. But Lanjo also was a very naughty fellow. He could not stay quiet. “Your Father must hear this.” He shouted, and that statement alone, expressing the one thing I never wanted to hear froze my blood and my body felt frozen, and as cold as a bundle of ice. I consoled myself that what Lanjo had said, had only accidentally fallen out of his mouth, and that he did not mean it. But how could Lanjo’s words lose weight so easily? Was it the Lanjo that I knew?

I struggled to free myself from his grip but there was no way for me. Lanjo’s hold on my trouser was so firm that I could not help myself no matter how hard I tried. He dragged me hardheartedly towards our house, and I followed him closely at his pace like a criminal and any silly trick I tried to liberate myself earned a heavy knock on my head. I realized I just had to walk calmly to my death. I knew Papa was going to kill me that day. Heavy knocks

continued to hit my head till we reached home. Lanjo told Papa that I was fast becoming a popular kola nut thief in the quarter. Before he could round up his report, Papa had grabbed me to continue the beatings from where he had stopped.

Stealing kola nuts in our community was not a serious crime, but Papa took it as a mortal sin. Kola nuts theft was always regarded as a light offence especially when it was from the Lineage's or village forest. It was said that since the forest belonged to everybody, it belonged to no one, and harvesting ten or twenty bunches from a tree could not affect the lineage's income because an entire forest could not be emptied even half-way by such actions.

"You will roast a fowl and hide it in somebody's handbag one day." Papa shouted as I felt a half-dry coffee branch breaking on me.

A story was told of a woman whose theft had become a part of her life that she went for a death celebration, stole a roasted fowl and had to steal a friend's hand bag to hide it inside. Papa was then, prophesying, that I would become like her if he did not cane the hell out of me. There were times he said when he looked at my tiny structure, he did not know where to beat, but when his throat was glowing with wrath, he found every part of my body beatable. "Who taught you theft in this house?" he shouted again. That day I cried until spittle was drawing from my mouth in shifts like okro soup. Lemfon could not return home until it was evening, and he returned with a heavy bundle of firewood making it look like he was a good child, and I, the black sheep of the entire neighbourhood. Papa appreciated him and asked me to go and bath with cold water. Bathing with cold water was always a terrible experience to us and a great punishment also. Whenever papa asked us to bath with cold water we knew he was not joking. He could decide to cross check if his order was fulfilled, and that could be a great threat to us having supper. If he discovered some funny maneuvers, he simply asked one to go and sleep with an empty stomach.

I went to the bath and took my time to have a clean bath, but as I entered the kitchen, papa got up as if he wanted to beat me again.

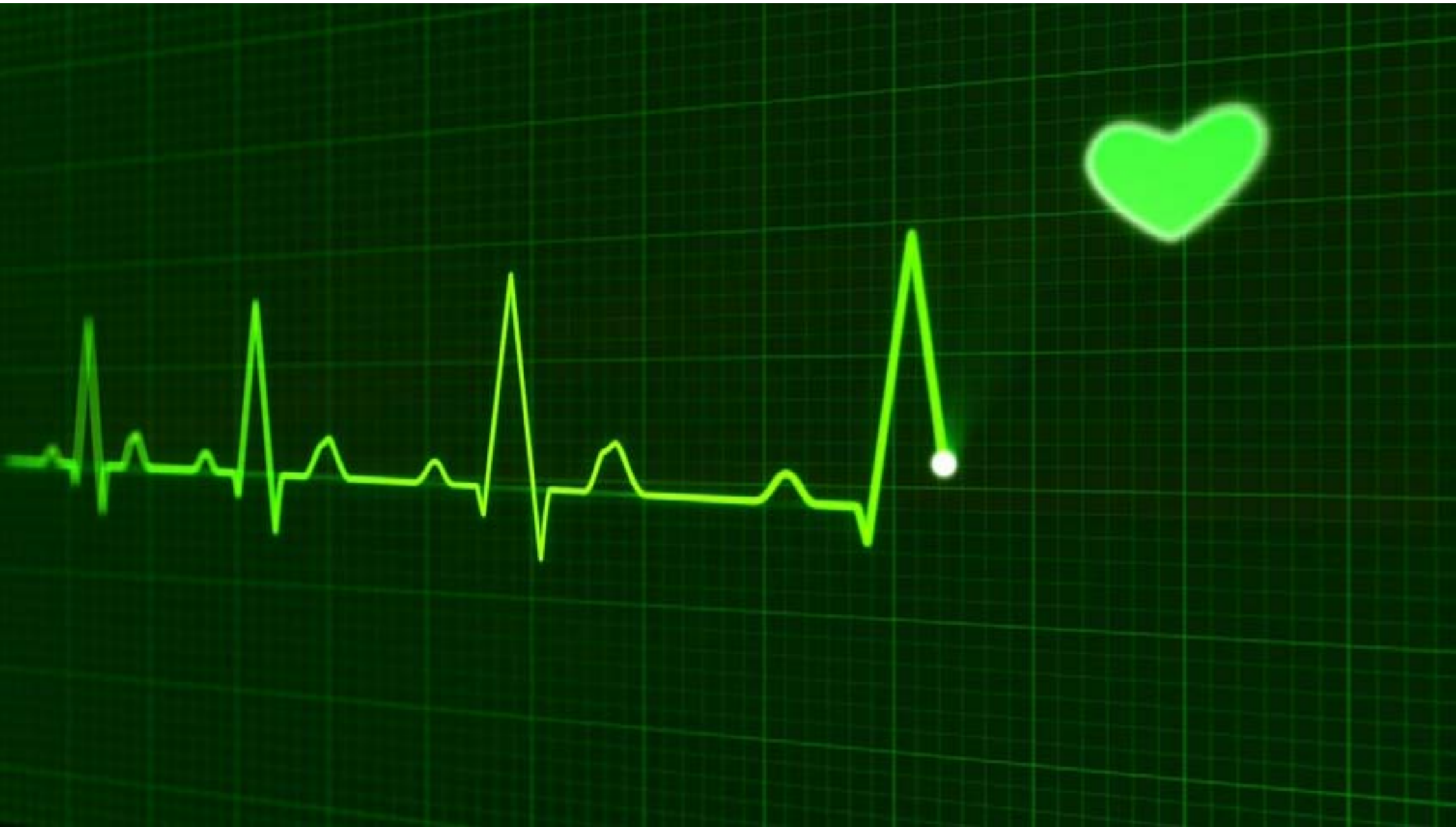
"Who has asked you to come to the kitchen? Or do you think there is food in this house for a thief? If you don't leave this place I will kill you before you die, son of the devil." Papa barked at me.

Hunger was ravaging my intestines and now I had to go and gaze the walls of our room till morning.

"You can grow round like a balloon, swollen eyes!! I will see where you get the strength to go stealing again tomorrow." Papa flushed me out forcefully as I left with hesitation, hoping that an angel would fall from heaven to change his mind and rescue me from the ugly hands of hunger that were going to strangle me to death that night, but nothing happened. Mama could not do anything to help me. When papa was really mad about someone, no one could moderate his verdict. I had nothing to do than walk to my lonely bed like Judas Iscariot.

# THE HEART IS A PLACE TOO

By Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe



Mara frowned at her father, wondering why she had agreed to let him chauffeur her across the country without putting up a fight. She knew he felt guilty for Tami's death. Not that Brian was directly responsible, but in Mara's book any father who left his kids at age ten and only came back to bury one of them certainly deserved the cold treatment. "I don't see why we need to go to all these places," she said grumpily. "Because that's what you do with a bucket list," her father replied good naturedly. "It's not our bucket list. It's Tami's. Is there a reason we couldn't fly there instead?" Mara let all her frustration into her voice. "Because it says road trip at the very top of the list. In red ink. Underlined twice," Brian told her calmly. She almost smiled before she remembered her default setting with him should always be: annoyed.

Mara had been in the car for four hours straight. Her father had woken her up at the break of dawn demanding she bath and check her luggage. The only reason she had gone with it was because in his last days Tami had held on to the fantasy that their father would come back and they would visit all the places he had written down. Tami was no longer here but Mara was going to visit all those places anyway, maybe she would feel his spirit walking there with her. "I don't know why you are bothering. It's not as if you loved him," the words were out before Mara could bite them down. She saw her father wince and look abjectly miserable. "I know you haven't forgiven me, Mara but Tami and I were rebuilding our relationship. He would want me here. He said so



himself," Brian said. "Face timing and sending pictures over the phone is your definition of a relationship? Would you have even come if he hadn't died?" Mara demanded.

Her father didn't answer; instead he concentrated on taking a turn slowly into a park. Mara retreated into herself as he paid the entrance fee and they drove in. Their first destination was Nyanga National Park. "How do you feel about a little early morning hiking?" Brian asked as they got out of the car. She shrugged, breathing in sharp clean air. On the hike up the mountain, Mara tuned out the tourist guide as he began talking about rivers and plateaus. The view was breathtaking and the air truly refreshing but Mara kept trying to picture Tami on the trail with her and failing. "Did you hear that, Mara? This is the highest mountain in Zimbabwe at 8,504 feet and some people think it's haunted," her father was saying. "Sacred ground. People vanish on this mountain. Some say there is a vindictive spirit living here," the guide chipped in.

"I don't want to do this anymore," Mara announced abruptly and stopped. "You're not afraid of urban myths, are you?" her father chided. Mara looked up and let him see the anger and bitterness in her eyes. "My twin brother isn't here. This is his dream. I can't do it without him. I won't," she turned around. The guide nodded at her father and took the lead. "Tami can't be gone. He had all these things left to do. All the places to see," Mara knew she sounded crazy but she couldn't help the mumbling. Maybe her twin brother wasn't really dead after all. How could such a bright light be extinguished just like that? It wasn't possible. A memory from a week ago rose unbidden, Tami lying still as death in his coffin. A sob caught in her throat and tore itself out as a half smothered wail. Her father took her hand and she let him. They got in the car and continued on their road trip silently. Mara almost felt sorry for the stranger who was her father. He clearly had no idea how to deal with a heartbroken grieving daughter. They stopped twice for refreshments. Mara fell asleep somewhere along the way. She woke up at a safari lodge with her father nudging her from sleep. "Come on, kid," Brian said half pulling, half carrying her out of the car. "Not a kid. I'm eighteen," she complained sleepily. She let him drag her to her room though. "Here you go then, little miss. We are in Bulawayo now. Tomorrow we are going to Matobos National Park so get some sleep and charge your phone. I'll be in the next room if you need me," her father told her. "Okay, daddy," Mara mumbled, unaware she had called him by a title she hadn't used in eight years. Mara found Matobo National Park spectacular and incredible. For a few minutes she took advantage of the incredible views and used them as backdrops to her selfies. She even let her father feature in a few photos. They arrived early enough to see some of the wildlife. Mara smiled as she posed with the rhinos in the background. It felt like her first smile in weeks. Her father was more interested in the granite formations, which made Mara's heart twist because Tami would have preferred those too. After viewing the cave painting, they walked over to Rhodes' grave. The view from there was amazing and it was the last straw for Mara. She

turned to her father. "Why did you leave us?" her anger was a live and wild thing. "Mara, I did the best I could. I sent money home to your grandmother," her father shrank in shame even as he defended himself. "Your son had leukaemia. Money wasn't enough. He needed his father," she lashed out.

"I had to find a job overseas," Brian said lamely. "And for eight years you never took a holiday? Maybe if you had been here or taken him with you Tami would still be alive. Look at us now; you don't think Tami would have loved seeing the white rhino cave? He is the one who loved geology and he is dead because of you," Mara was aware her accusation wasn't fair but she needed to say it. For Tami's sake. Tami had been the good twin, the one who forgave their father and tried to create a makeshift relationship with him. Mara had never bought in to the whole submissive African girl image and she wasn't about to start now for a deadbeat father. "I'm trying to do right by you now, Mara," her father spread his hands plaintively. This time when they got back on the road there was no tentative conversation. Mara turned the car radio up and her father quietly watched her but she didn't smile at him or encourage conversation. They arrived at another lodge sometime during the middle of the night. In the morning, Mara woke to find they had arrived at their third destination. By mid morning they were at Lake Kariba, bird watching in a relatively large houseboat. "What do you think?" Brian asked glancing at her sideways. "The mountains in the backdrop are very beautiful. They make me feel like it's just us and the water," Mara answering him honestly. He smiled at her and in that moment he was the spitting image of Tami. "Did you leave us because we did something wrong?" the question was out before she realized she was talking.

Brian looked like she had punched him in the gut. "You are perfect. You and Tami both. I was your age when your mom got pregnant, then eight years later she died and I was alone with you guys. I was young and scared and I couldn't get a decent job. When I left you with your grandmother I was panicking. It had nothing to do with the two of you. I love you both and I am sorry. You believe me, don't you?" he implored her with his eyes. Mara was surprised to find that she did believe him. "I want to forgive you," she told him. "Good, so shall we give this road trip a real try and take the ferry across the lake to Victoria Falls?" he asked. "I thought it said road trip in red ink, underlined twice? A ferry seems like cheating but I think maybe Tami would approve," Mara laughed.

As Mara and her father stood on the railing of a ferry making small talk and trying to find a way to be a family again Mara couldn't help but feel Tami had duped her somehow. He had sent her on a road trip with her father under the guise of a dying boy's bucket list of places he wanted his family to see together but he must have known it would repair their relationship too. Tami had been an opportunist. In all the places they had visited, all he had wanted was for Mara to go into her own heart instead and try to mend her love for their father. She was sure of it and she loved Tami all the more for it.



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Sept. 28, 2019

# AFRICAN

WRITERS CONFERENCE '19

THEME:

## Cultural stereotypes

In African Literature:

Rewriting the narrative for the 21st century reader

- SPEAKERS -



Sabah Carrim  
Mauritius  
Lead Speaker



Nabilah Usman  
Nigeria  
Panelist



Alex Nderitu  
Kenya  
Panelist



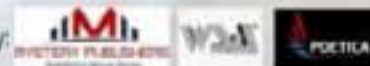
Nnane Ntube  
Cameroon  
Panelist



Tom Odhiambo  
Kenya  
Moderator

- SPEAKERS -

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# **COLUMNS**

# AT A COST

What happens when tradition decides the fate of Zarah? A pretty damsel living somewhere in northern Nigeria, Zarah loses her place as princess of her father's heart to traditional principles, sojourning and scavenging until she finds her identity, but at a cost....

by  
AMAMI YUSUF



# EPISODE 4

Kamal couldn't face Zarah. Not after he had failed her. He had seen the lost look and despair in her eyes, as she read his silence. He didn't know how to tell her that her fate had already been decided. He didn't know how to say she had just a month left in the house, and dowry payments and procedures were already underway. But with each second he remained silent, avoiding her eyes, reality had hit her. She had figured it out, and he knew she did. He expected her to cry. To wail. To scream. To sob loudly or at least have some reaction, but she did none. She turned, left quietly as salty, stinging mist filled her eyes.

It had been a week. Zarah had not said a word to anyone in the house. She kept to herself most of the time. Imran had given some money to Halima to buy her some things, besides the few things Mohammed's family were to bring. The compound seemed quieter lately. It was a very hard time for them all. Zarah intensified her prayers – not skipping any, praying more and with much vigour. “Oh Allah, please let them change their minds. Please” she prayed.

Finally, her wedding ceremonial week arrived, and she was all the more depressed. Imran, despite Halima's protests, held the ceremonial marriage week for Zarah. He felt he at least owed her that. “She should have a real ceremony like it was actually her choice to be wed, or as though the situation was different. Maybe it'd lessen the hurt she feels.” He often said to himself in false comfort. Maybe, he also wanted to lessen the guilt he felt.

Zarah cried every single night, soaking her pillow with her tears, and turning over the other side when one side got soaked. Alhaji Imran came into her room on one of those nights after the ceremony. But she wouldn't look at him, nor could he look at her.

“Gimbiya...” He began, so slowly, so calmly, so quietly that she almost had not heard him, but she did. She instantly fell to her knees, hugging both his legs as she cried into them.

“Baba, Dan Allah... Please, Baba don't let me go.”

“I'd stop going to the site. I'd never go out so that no man will touch me again. I'm sorry Baba, please” she said between sobs and finally her words broke off as the sobs overwhelmed her. It broke Imran's heart to be helpless to his little princess, and more so, to realize she thought she being married out was some grave punishment of the sort. His hands shook, and he couldn't stop himself from touching her head. His eyes filled with tears, and his mind got clouded as well.

He remembered her mother again – his second wife who had been young and so beautiful, and had been married out to him. He and her father were friends. He loved her and spoke to her father about it, despite Halima's protests, rants and swears. She was 17 then, and so ambitious, always bubbly and full of life. Just like Zarah. She had wanted to become a lawyer or an activist for women and children, but her father would have none of that. Imran had promised to send her to school, and so she agreed, and promised she wouldn't run away like she had threatened. She grew to love him greatly within the first few months she had spent

in his house, and he adored her even more. But he knew then, that Zarah would never learn to love Mohammed nor acknowledge him as her husband. Worse, his little girl may never forgive him, and that thought pierced to his very soul.

He stood abruptly, pulled her away gently from his feet and left without a word, intentionally refusing to look back at her. He couldn't bear it, and he knew. His little girl's heart was broken, and so was his. He stood outside her door; his head leaning against the door, his hands to his eyes and wept. He wept like a child, for his child. He wept for her lost innocence and child-like joys. He wept for her already decided fate. And after long years of dry eyes, he wept for Ummi, his late wife. Her name was Samira, but he always called her Ummi, which translates 'mother'. She had been so young, yet had a strong motherly aura about her. He remembered her last words, the last time he had seen her alive and held her hands, feeling her warmth.

"Please. take care. of Zarah. I've. always fantasised. about naming. my child. Zarah. She'd be a star. Promise me. you won't. marry. her out. early. promise me. Imran." She managed to say in slow gasping breaths and amidst pauses. Tears had already filled his eyes. "Ummi, please don't talk like this. I can't raise her on my own. Ummi, I'm not as strong as you are. Please stay alive and let's raise the child together..." She squeezed his palm gently then, shutting him up. She smiled with eyes, in the way which melted his heart always. And then she smiled with her lips- a very warm, peaceful smile, she averted his eyes, whilst he looked into hers, and that was it.

"I have failed you, Ummi" was all he kept saying as he wept in front of Zarah's door. He felt heaviness, so profound, so shallow, and knew then it was one he'd never recover from.

The day of Zarah's nikah to Mohammed had finally come. And she would always remember it as the saddest day of her life. She had cried all night, and into the early hours of the morning. She denied herself all food and human company. She heard when Kamal came knocking, pleading for her to open the door, and apologizing to her for breaking his promise. But she sat still on the floor, suppressing the sobs. She kept her eyes on the door as she cried – a part of her wanting to let him in to console her and give false hope, and yet another part not wanting at all to be consoled. He stayed a while before finally deciding to leave, and she wished then that she had let him give her that false hope she wanted to hear.

Aunty Zeenat, her late mother's sister, whom she heard is a direct replica of her late mother, came into her room. When the women knocked, she knew then that there was no more running. It was time for the dressing of the bride, and though she didn't have to make an appearance, she was to be dressed anyway.

There was a petite lady in a black veil applying henna decoratively to her feet, another adorning her head and hands with expensive-looking jewelry. And the makeup artist with some

other older women stood by. The little fan was blowing on highest degree, yet Zarah felt like she was choking. Earlier, deejah, the artist, had started working the powders onto Zarah's smooth, silk-like face, but her uncontrollable tears had ruined it. Aunty Halima, impatient and irritated, let her hand stray to Zarah's cheek with a loud resounding 'twack'. None of the other women supported her action, and soon made her leave the room. Zarah held her breath and refused to let herself cry anymore. She finally stopped fighting fate, but was rather ready to let it have its full course.

The ceremony was not anything too grand or fancy, but people showed up in quite a number. It held in Imran's large and spacious compound. All through the process, from the signing of the marriage contract before witnesses, to the mahr – the giving of gifts to the bride by the groom, to even when she was to be taken away, Zarah remained veiled and silent with a bleeding heart. A procession of mostly older women accompanied her to Mohammed's compound, and even to the little room she was to occupy as the newly wedded and youngest bride. As the procession got to Mohammed's compound, Zarah stopped and refused to go further. She looked at the women through the veil, and through her teary eyes. She for the last time prayed a miracle would happen and snatch her away from the ugly road her life was taking. She didn't know for how long she stood rooted, but suddenly there was a harsh nudge behind her. It was Aunty Halima for sure.

That night, neither Kamal nor Imran could sleep. They thought endlessly about Zarah and how she was finding her new home. Kamal almost spat out as the thought of Zarah calling Mohammed's house a home came to him. A great deal of the guilt he felt transformed into anger and resentment towards his father and mother. He couldn't decide who his anger was more directed at – whether his mother, who had never hidden her hatred for Zarah. Or his father, who was too weak-willed and couldn't even stand up for his daughter. With this realization, came a new anger. But this time, it was directed at himself. He, just like his father, had not stood up for nor defended Zarah. He had not stopped, or at least tried in any way to stop Zarah from being married out. He hated, and he feared, that he was just like his father. "Baba", Kamal said in an authoritative and angry voice as he stepped out of his room and found his father sitting alone in the almost dark compound. Imran had been sitting cross-legged on his mat, with his head in his hands under the pawpaw trees, where he loved to sit with Zarah. He looked up and turned round slowly, and then he turned again, away from Kamal. Kamal walked briskly, as if going to challenge one to a fight.

"We need to bring Gimbiya back" he said in an angry, yet quieter and calmer voice. And soon, his bravado gave way as he broke down, went on all fours and cried.

"Please Baba, do something. Bring her back, please."

Imran couldn't pretend not to be pained as well, but there was nothing he could do. All rights had been duly observed. He couldn't come between man and wife, now. He didn't have that authority to meddle anymore, not after giving his consent. That was what he told Kamal



in response, but Kamal flared up, saying he was not worthy to be a father, especially not of Zarah, and then he left. Without any further confrontations, Imran knew he had not just lost a child, but two. All his past achievements could not make up for how much of a failure he felt. His wrong decision had indeed come at a cost, and he had only just begun paying the price.

That night, the very night she arrived Mohammed's house, he stole into her room, despite everyone cajoling that he let her be for at least a week. She had been sitting up in bed when he came in. With the way she sat, one would think she had been expecting an arrival or awaiting the encounter, but that wasn't the case, for she was in deep tears. She felt alone, all alone in a little room. All alone in the world. All alone to face her fate. She was still fully dressed in her wedding apparel- a bright colored, furiously flowered atampa. The ankara material was sewn to a close fitting, and heavily embroidered and stoned. The neatly designed henna on her hands and feet were still looking fresh, and just as beautiful. As he drew closer, she sat still and stared at him unblinking.

"Can you not see me here? Why are you still sitting, rather than taking off your clothes?"  
"Are you now deaf?" He said again with an irritated hiss, when she didn't reply nor did she act as though she had heard him. He walked towards the bed, pulling off his shirt as he did, but his angry eyes, full of lust and desire never for once leaving her. He looked like a predator about to pounce on its prey. And then she remembered her dream - the half-man half-beast, who attempted to eat her, and her tears intensified. She shook her head vigorously as she cried, avoiding to look up at him. He stopped a foot inch from the bed, looking all the more annoyed. His forehead creating uneven creases as his face transformed into a frown. He stood bare chested, staring at her for a few seconds - the frown never leaving his face. He hissed and jumped on the bed, which was really just a mattress on a flat wooden surface, with no supporting walls. Zarah moved to the edge and tried fighting him off with her hands. He ignored her protests and headed for her wrapper.

"Ka bar ni" she screamed in defiant protest, and then, his short temper reached a climax. The first slap he gave her threw her off the bed, to the ground. He pounced on her and hit her energetically and severely. She wailed loudly at first, but as the beating got more intense, her voice dimmed.

At the other side of the door, Mama, the first of Mohammed's two wives was knocking vigorously. Everyone in the compound called her Mama as a sign of respect. She was a chubby, chocolate colored short woman, with carrot-thick fingers. Despite her physique, she was a sweet beautiful woman. Mohammed, though he had two wives and 12 children, enjoyed a rather peaceful home. Or maybe they were all very quiet when he was around, for he had a very violent nature towards his wives, and even children sometimes.

Mama's knocking intensified, "Dan Allah, maigida, ka yi hankuri, ka bar ta." She was hysterically pleading for him to leave the child alone. The door wasn't bolted from within, but she dared not barge in. All the while, Mama's loud protracted knocking never ceasing. Shortly after, Mohammed came out of the little room, walking angrily past Mama. He barely looked at her, but walked briskly in clenched fists and jaw. Mama rushed in with a bowl of hot water and a small neat towel. Zarah was crouched in a corner, sobbing silently, and her body shaking violently. She jerked up suddenly, from Mama's tender touch, but wished she hadn't. Because, she hurt all over, and every slight movement worsened her plight.

Mama lifted Zarah to the bed. The steam from the hot water bowl rose like incense, which soon vanished. The dark blue, rectangular shaped towel with frayed edges lay lifelessly on Mama's shoulders. She walked carefully with the bowl and headed towards the bed. She dipped half the towel in the water, and used the other dry half to squeeze out the water. As soon as the hot towel touched Zarah's bruised and beaten body, she winced and cried out. Mama tried to hush her calmly, understanding fully the pain she must have been feeling. She herself had come under Mohammed's cruel punching sometimes.

The door came ajar and a head popped in, followed by another. Mama turned to face them, and soon they scurried off. Most times, all it took was for Mama to glance at the children in the house, and they would get composed and behave.

Sadiya came in a while later, holding a tray of local herbs and medicine. She was the younger of Mohammed's two wives, before Zarah. Mama had sent one of the children with a message to Sadiya because Zarah had already developed a burning fever which was getting worse by the minute. Sadiya was a woman with the model body; she was barely 22, and rarely smiled. She didn't like Zarah much. The envy of a new wife in the house was eating her whole. But unknown to Zarah and Sadiya, they would grow to be the sisters they both never had.

To be Continued...

#### **AUTHOR'S BIO:**

*In the beautiful city of Zaria, Kaduna State, Amami Yusuf, a writer, student, hairdresser and makeup artist, writes prose-fiction and poetry when she's not busy with school work or attending to clients' hair and faces.*

*Her love for Literature influenced her decision in undertaking a course at the department of English and Literary Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, for a Bachelors Degree.*

*As an upcoming young writer, she believes strongly in the power of the pen, addressing issues eating deep into the society and truths left untold through prose-fiction and sometimes, poetry.*

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# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

With Ugbede Ataboh, Nigeria



## PLACES

I have always struggled to enjoy my own company in the absence of family, friends and acquaintances. This terrible weakness has led me to very dangerous places inhabited by the not-so-good, the bad and the ugly. After a recent heartbreak that I survived, I decided to do a little soul searching and discovered the real enemy of my peace and happiness was no one but my very self.

I have treaded different paths in pursuit of happiness, in pursuit of love, in pursuit of a faithful companion and in pursuit of a fairytale family, but instead I have felt sadness in its deepest form, hate in the company of friendly foes, betrayal in the embrace of several lovers and what could have been a child, flushed out by the unpreparedness of immaturity. I spent the whole of last week bitter at God for being so partial; how can some people be born into homes filled with warmth and love and then proceed to finding fulfillment without having to pass through any gory path or visit the most unpleasant places known to man? And then, why do a select few run away from their cold and rigid families only to meet disappointment in various forms at every curve of their expectations. I was not only bitter at God, but at myself also for always having something to complain about and never being truly grateful.

This morning, during the usual chatter before workflow picked up, a colleague made a de-

rogatory remark that cut me to the core...

“Wow! So you mean that white chick refused the naija boy’s marriage proposal?” Afiz asks incredulously.

“My guy leave matter jare, you think they are like Nigerian girls whose lives revolve around men and can comb through the length and breadth of the world just to find lasting romantic relationships and marriage proposals?” Justus responds, with all the pomp he can muster.

“Are you serious Justus? How can you make such a derogatory statement?” I chide.

“Babe it’s the fact, most of our ladies live through their formative years preparing for nothing but romance and marriage. It is sickening because there is so much more to life than romance and marriage. Take me for example, I’m married but my wife still complains of loneliness. Every time she tries to play that pathetic card, I always tell her to get a life and stop trying to build her life around mine.” Justus explains and walks off immediately to avoid any further questions.

As I’m pulled back to the present by the sound of my colleagues’ idle chatter, I can’t help but begrudge Justus for being so egoistic and annoying, but sadly, what he said is so true. There is so much more to life...so much can bring happiness, love, inner-peace, fulfillment and solitary contentment with or without a “significant other”; and if the “Significant other” never shows up, I am pretty sure there are other ways one can waltz through life without having to live off the attention of a lover or spouse. The mere thought of having to reinvent one’s self regularly to keep the attention of a lover or spouse drains me mentally. All of a sudden, I feel overwhelmed with a feeling of regret for not realizing the importance of enjoying my own company and discovering my true self in the process. I cringe as I remember some unpleasant places I have been to and the inappropriate company I have kept in a bid to avoid being alone with myself.

I remember going clubbing regularly during my university days just so I could be in the midst of people. At that point in my life, any company but mine was more than enough. There was this particular group of girls I moved with who always gossiped about me behind my back and spread false gist about me being cheap and slutty but ate from the same plate with me. I found that out at some point but still kept moving with them because I felt I wasn’t interesting or smart enough to attract good friends. I even remember doing favors for them constantly just so they could see me as a valuable and loving friend, unknowing to me that the more favors I did for them, the more they despised me. Eventually, I got into a very nasty fight with one of them which put an end to the fake friendship between us.

Looking back at that time and comparing it to now, I am grateful to God for helping me refine my thought pattern through His word which states that I am fearfully and wonderfully made. This means I am beautiful and creative enough to attract decent and kind people if I

dedicate more time to building my character and developing good social skills. Overtime, I have met Chichi, Blessing and Lydia at different points in time and our journey along the path of friendship has been nothing but real and rewarding.

I remember a rough guy I agreed to date in college so I could have someone to check on me regularly and profess undying love for me. I remember leaving school and journeying to the slums of Gbagada, Lagos just to spend time with him. My body was the sacrificial lamb and I ignorantly thought it was a small price I had to pay in exchange for a warm embrace and lengthy stimulating conversation. Sadly, my expectations were not met and my virtue was lost to one who knew nothing about commitment and lacked basic communication skills. The relationship ended abruptly after a demoralizing D and C procedure I paid for. I can never forget the long queue I had to stand in until it got to my turn and the promise I made to myself to never return to that place or any other place like it again.

No need to ask why I was so emotionally needy, I'll tell you; I was raised by absentee parents who cared less about bonding and provided only my material needs. This sowed a seed of longing in my heart for the day I'd eventually leave the confines of home and set out into the world to find the human connection and warmth I lacked as a child and build a beautiful home with a "worthy partner".

I remember another man I met who did not meet my expectations in any way but had to suffice because I got tired of waiting for my fairytale family and decided to settle for what I got. He proposed marriage and I eagerly moved in with him. After months of both verbal and physical abuse, I fled for my life and blocked all channels of communication between us. Sitting at work now and staring absently at my computer screen, I remember the heartbreak I suffered last month because of Dan aka "Candycrush". I'm done with this bad habit of being emotionally needy. I will be happy because I will make myself happy from today! Immediately, I log on to an online store and purchase a gaming console with specifications that appeal to me. I open several fashion sites to feed my eyes on beautiful outfits and laugh at the latest absurd fashion trends

"From today, I will have fun with or without anyone. I deserve to be happy and I will be happy" I whisper sheepishly to myself.

I have spent what was supposed to have served as quality time visiting different places and doing my best to beautify them only to be scorned by the inhabitants of these places because of my simple mindedness and the little or no value I place on myself and the qualities I possess. Overtime, I have grown to see people as places; they can either serve as routes, dead-ends or destinations depending on the roles they choose to play in your life. The sanctuary of self is a place that should be guarded jealously, enjoyed with childlike abandon and groomed with expert care in anticipation of the arrival of the "future self".

# THE OBSERVER

With Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



## The PLACE of Africa in the BREXIT puzzle

Possibly, by the end of the year, the United Kingdom will cease to be a member of the most successful trade bloc in the world, the European Union. It will no longer be a voice to reckon with within the European Commission in Brussels. A new leaf in the history of the United Kingdom and her relationship with continental Europe will be turned. It is this long and confusing process that has been dubbed “Brexit”. It is funny sometimes, to outsiders, to hear people in the UK refer to continental Europe as if it belongs in another place. They are constantly making reference to “us and them”, “UK and Europe” as if to underline the assumption that the UK is not actually in Europe.

If the EU is such a successful trade bloc, which it is, and countries in and around European mainland are queuing up for membership, why would any existing member want out? The answer to the main question lies in the understanding of a unique British attitude and its identity in the modern world. Allow me to give you yet another History

lecture.

The EU, formerly known as the EEC (European Economic Community), was established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 as an “economic” community, but was renamed the European Union, in 1993, its initial object having evolved from an economic entity into socio-political, economic, quasi European government over the decades through the wishes of its now 28 members. It will be reduced to 27 upon Britain’s exit next month.

It is important to note that the UK was not part of its foundation members. She applied to become a member in 1961, but the then French President, Charles de Gaulle, applied the French veto on the UK’s membership, suspicious of her ulterior motive. The “special relationship” between Britain and the USA was thought to pose a threat to the “European project” of an independent, counter influence on world affairs envisioned by the founding members. It was feared then that the UK would be in the club as a stooge for the Americans, therefore bringing along negative influence on the organization. But, after prolonged political maneuverings and changes in world affairs, the UK was finally admitted in 1974, following a bitterly divisive referendum. Your next question would probably be, Why was it such a big deal?

Well, opposition to the EU membership in the UK cuts across the ‘Left’ and ‘Right’ divide. Politicians on the Left of the political spectrum were deeply suspicious of the EU becoming a club for the rich and business elite across Europe, while politicians on the Right of the political spectrum feared that the EU was a fundamental threat to Britain’s Parliamentary democracy, as more and more powers were being ceded to the EU, whose decisions were becoming increasingly binding and non-negotiable. It has been left to politicians in the middle, the so-called “moderates”, in the UK’s main political parties, to steer the debate along a consensus. The ‘consensus’ was that the EU is more of a force for good than bad. Opposition to the EU grew increasingly vocal amongst the politicians on the political Right in the 1980s because of two things: The rise and influence of Germany as the dominant economic force in Europe, and the increasingly “social” or “socialistic” dimension of the Union in terms of employment and social services provisions. What is more galling for “Right-wing” politicians in the UK was the relics of history, which had witnessed how the UK under Winston Churchill stood up to and defeated “Nazi” Germany in World War II. Germany had indeed been defeated and its economy in ruins. It was rebuilt through help from America and the UK, which had banished Germany from ever rising to the status of military power again. It worked. Are you following??

What then happened, though, was that Germany’s focus on economics and technology saw it rise to the status of global economic power, surpassing the UK and most, if not

all European countries. The Right-wing now feared the prospect of Germany achieving in peace time, what it had failed to achieve through war, that is, European domination. The campaign to take Britain out of the EU had taken almost three decades to achieve, it was dominated by nationalist fervor on the Right, and on the Left, it was welcomed as a relief from the “shackles of Brussels”.

Politics, rather than economics, had won the day. The UK may well rue the day they left the EU, and to forestall a calamitous outcome to Brexit, Africa has now become the new darling to be wooed and embraced as the UK’s newest trading partners. Too ironic for a country that colonized much of the land in Africa, then, neglected it in pursuit of European influence, then, saw China become Africa’s biggest foreign investors and trading partner if you ask me. The UK is now rushing back to Africa to recover lost grounds.

It is in this context that the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May’s recent tour of three African states (Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria) must be understood. The trip last August, 2018, was billed by the Prime Minister (who had never been to sub-Saharan Africa before), as a “unique opportunity at a unique time for the UK”. The UK wants “to deepen and strengthen its global partnerships as it leaves the EU. It was the first time a British Prime Minister would visit Africa since 2013.

It is very important to note that, the UK’s visibility on the continent has been clearly in decline at the same time as that of France, Turkey, Japan and most especially China have been on the rise. The Prime Minister was accompanied by a bevy of trade negotiators on a chartered RAF (Royal Air Force) “voyager” transport plane to try and sign as many deals as they could possibly muster. The UK had earlier hosted the Somalia Conference in London in 2017; the minister of finance, Phillip Hammond, international trade secretary, Liam Fox, and foreign secretary Boris Johnson, had been criss-crossing Africa, frantically building or should I say rebuilding friendship in the last couple of years.

Nigeria and South Africa, however, remain the main targets of their efforts for obvious reasons. They are the UK’s largest trading partners, worth approximately \$3.3 billion and \$8.7 billion respectively, all of which in favor of British export into the countries, of course. The Kenyan president said when challenged about the growing Chinese influence in his country: “We are not looking to China, China is looking to us”. - The same could be said of the UK’s renewed interest in Nigeria and Africa in general.

The question is, are we going to be wise enough to dictate the terms of the UK’s engagement with us this time around??



# **WSA REVIEWS**

## **A Review of the May Edition of WSA**

**Reviewers:**

**Adejuwon Gbalajobi (Nigeria)**

**Nehemiah Omukhonya (Kenya)**

**Funminiyi Akinrinade (Nigeria)**

**Esther Musembi (Kenya)**

**Tega Greats (Nigeria)**

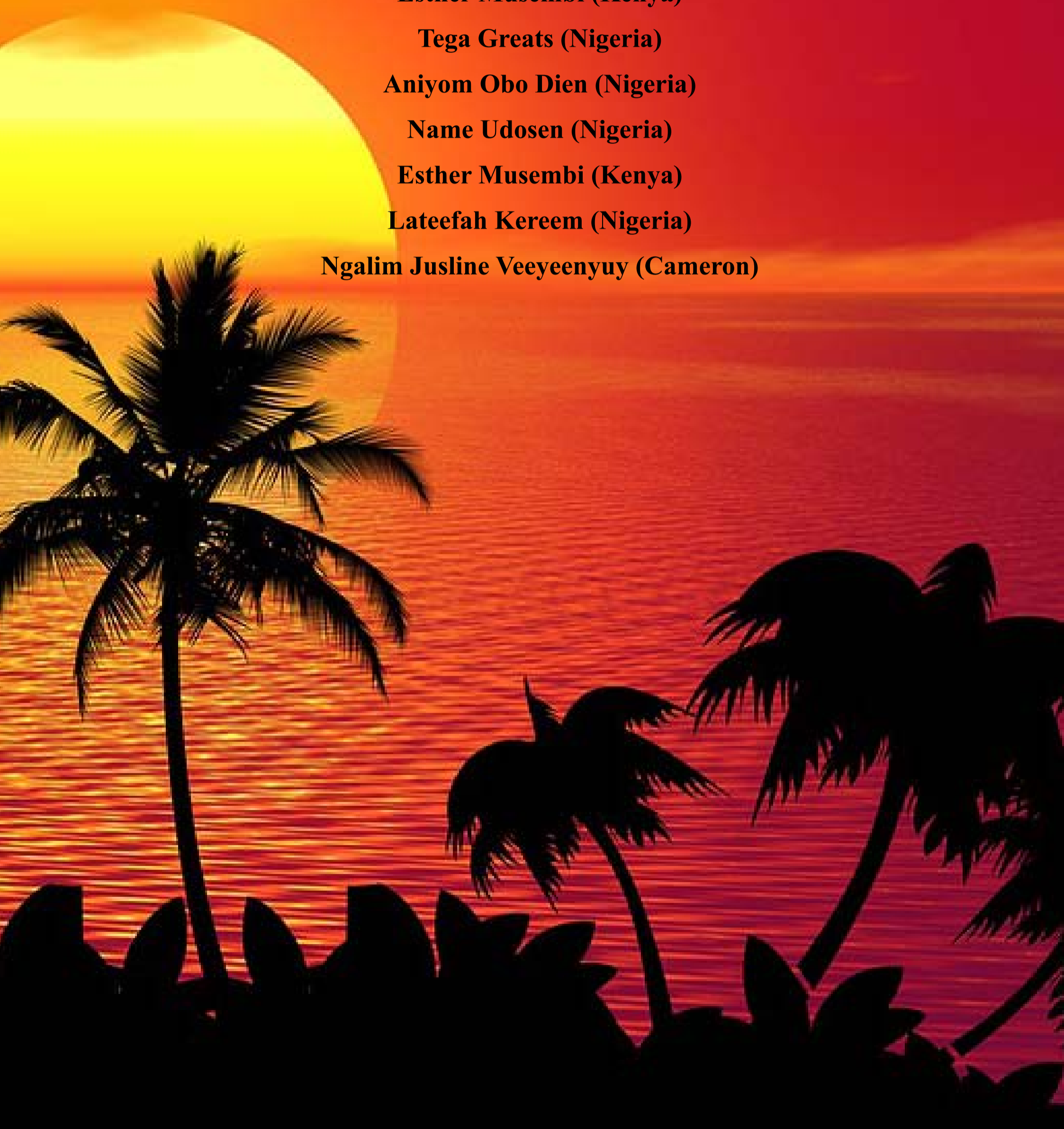
**Aniyom Obo Dien (Nigeria)**

**Name Udosen (Nigeria)**

**Esther Musembi (Kenya)**

**Lateefah Kereem (Nigeria)**

**Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy (Cameron)**



# WSA MAY EDITION REVIEW

## POETRY REVIEW

Colourful World is a poem written by a Cameroonian poet – Nelson Kamkuimo.

It is a poem of 14 lines written with no specific metrical feet, lines per verse, and rhyming scheme. The colourfulness of this poem starts from the title that's painted in blue, red, green, and black. The colours are used intentionally as they can be found in the choice of words of the persona. The persona drives home his point through the use of biblical allusions.

In verse 1, the persona starts as a dreamer who sees vision of SOME GOOD DEALS OF GOD. A philosopher can be forced to ask if there are some bad deals of God. These good deals are evident in the BRIGHTEST book He made (no

image as regards the brightness of the book. Is it black? Is it white...?) The good deals are also evident in our world full of people and colours. Isn't this world just a colourful world? Have you ever wondered what the world will look like without colours? Even humans are made of colours.

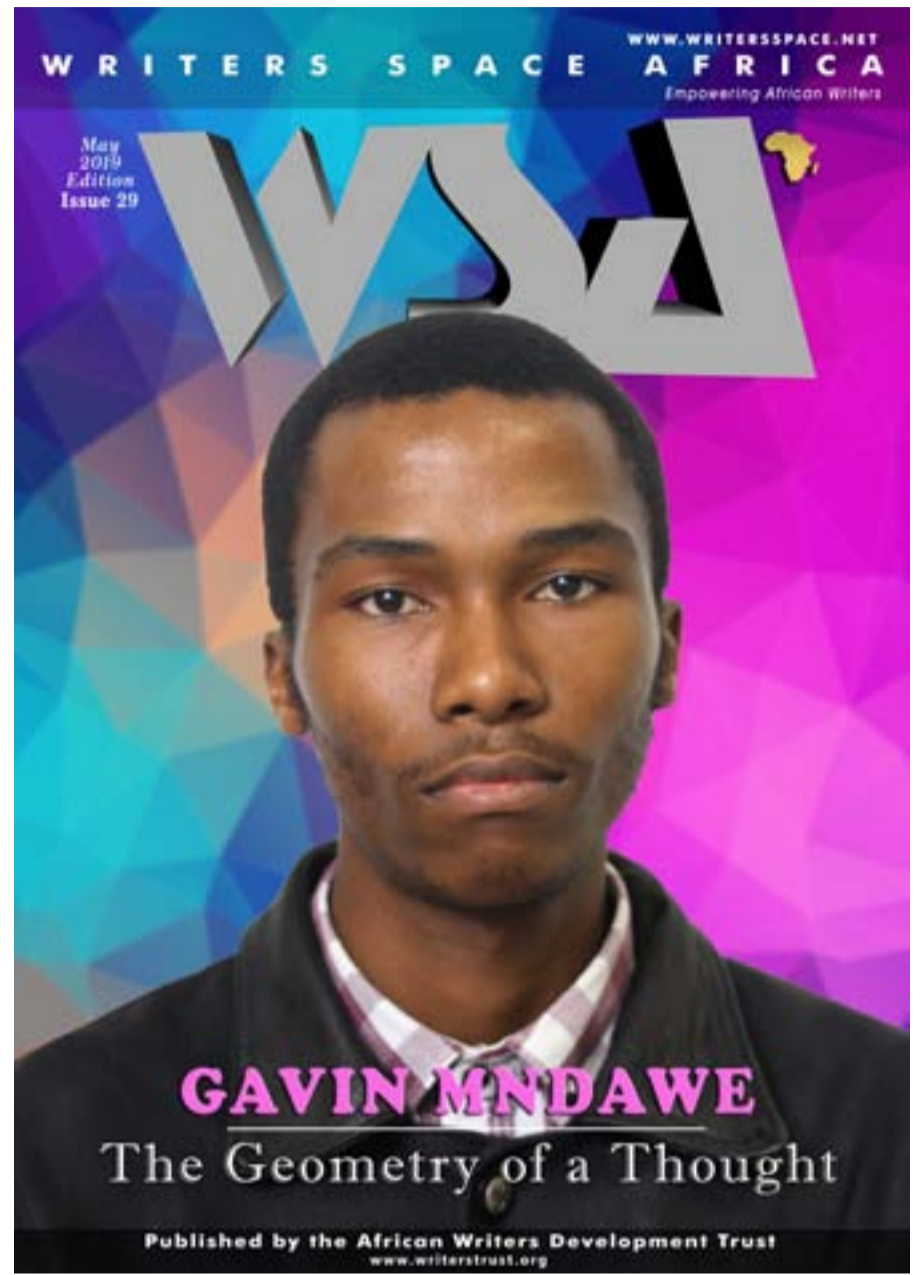
In verse two, the persona continues in sharing with us what the Maker made in this colourful world. Where He made night (BLACK) fall from the sky (BLUE). The persona also shows the significance of Christ's death on the cross of Calvary, where the blood (RED) He shed empowered the fire burning in Hell.

In verse three, the persona writes of how the creative Creator made the sun (YELLOW) which gives hope to the hopeless and brightens the dream of the dreamless.

In the last verse, the persona talks about the leaves (GREEN) that blossom in the rainy season and gives life to plants, animals, and humans.

In the last line, the persona sees PINK as a deceptive colour that deceives men that true love exists.

Isn't the world indeed colourful? A world of colour black, blue, red, yellow, green, pink...



The persona uses figure of speech like hyperbole, simile, alliteration, biblical allusion, imagery...

The poem is a brilliant piece of art!

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The Idea of a Thing Believed is a poem written by a Nigerian poet – Bliss Boma. It is an 18 line poem with uneven lines per verse. The title alone speaks volume. Before delving into the depth of the poem, one would firstly wonder what an idea of a thing believed is... Is the idea of a thing a play on words of the number of lines – 18? The persona's choice of words clarifies the idea of a thing believed. This idea can be seen in V1L3: colour is the idea of a thing believed.

In verse 1, the persona states the reflection of creation – Rainbow; which splatters painting pictures. Isn't the maker of creation the greatest Artist of all time?

Verse two gives a clear picture of humans' identities (colours) – BLACK and WHITE.

Verse three talks about distinctive symbols attached to colours in humans. That is, the Greenness in their smile, their hearts PURPLE with love, and warm like the Blueness of the sea.

In verse four, the persona reiterates that colour is her identity. That's what makes her to be known for who she is. Not only her but for the races and people that exist. She tells of how it's a struggle to have the ink on her skin. Indeed colour is deep, intense, and true. In verse five, the persona concludes that colour is you and I, colour is herself (her identity – African), us (both white and black).

She finally repeats the title to validate her point – the idea of a thing believed. Colour.

It's a well written poem that speaks of humans' identities (colour) in various dimensions.

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Blue is a poem written by an Uganda writer – Charlotte Akello.

It's a poem written in 22 lines.

The first four lines speak of the true nature of BLUE and the different shades of blue in likeness to men's personalities – some calm and meek. Others like a tornado, reckless... Can we say men are blue? That is, they come in Navy, Royal, Sky, Baby... Depending on the personalities they intend to exhibit. The ellipsis in the last line shows the persona has a lot to say but few to share about the other side of men she's seen and witnessed.

In the next five lines, the persona gives an answer to the question she feels we may ask her. This is quite common everywhere. People ask you what your favourite colour is.

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Some say: black, red, pink, yellow, purple... But in the persona's case: her favourite colour is BLUE (even though it comes in different shades) – the sky, the sea, baby boys, colour of his favourite shirt... These are memories the persona dearly hold unto. She cares less about the colour of the sea, sky... But she's concerned about the colour of his favourite shirt. Because it reminds her of her lover's broken promises.

In the next four lines, the persona talks about how the boys she knows are synonymous with broken promises. This must have been from her past experiences with them. In the last line of the verse, it can be seen that upon the different shades of blue, he's her favourite shade. Isn't that quite touching?

In the next four lines, the persona writes of how she's drowning into him because of the distance/gap that exists between them. His absence makes her heart grow fonder. The more she thinks of him, the more the memories keep haunting her.

In the last verse, the persona is lost in all shades of blue, and her only wish is for one of the shades to replace her night with him. If wishes were horses, wouldn't beggars ride with pride?

It's a poem I enjoy reading because a lot is being said about colour BLUE.

The Poem Tunes of Colours by Josephine O. Attafuah is a free verse poem that talks about the fluidity of colours in everyday life. To the persona, colours are everything; they represent the emotions we feel, the object we hold in reverence.

Looking at it from a philosophical angle, it is amazing how colours can be used to give expression, tangibility to abstract things. Like anger. Red could be said to be the colour of anger; because red projects a feeling to the mind through the eyes. Some may even argue that red is the colour of love, of sacrifice, because red is the colour of blood and the highest expression of love is the sacrifice of one's self.

I believe this poem was written with that philosophical framework: that colours give expression to abstract things.

In Morwamphaka Sello Huma's Seven Colours, we see the poet romanticising food with colours. The first line reads:

“When Sunday comes it will be like a soul food dream  
Cooked from the heart with seven colours of art  
Mixed vegetable rice on a full platter colouring my taste buds...”

The persona takes the voice of a food lover who appreciates food in their various co-

lours, the colour they add to life.

The strength of this poem is the poet's lavish of words. Merging two concepts together, yet fitting them to make sense.

From the surface, the persona sounds like a glutton, especially when you see the way he deities food, but when you absolve his words, you'll see that s/he is an enthusiast who knows the good that good food does to the body. This can be seen in the last verse when after he has written about how he can go miles for good for, ends it thus:

"I honour your invitation with all my hard sweat money  
Your kiss of health (good food) is wealthier than all  
the prescribed drugs combined."

Apart from the rich diction, I also salute the poet's ability to sustain thoughts through runover lines.

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It is typical of humans to use colour to give expression to their feelings. This is seen in Phiri Kapondeni Manasseh's *The Colour of Love* where, the persona seeing blue in his lover's eye, concludes that blue is his colour of love. However, this poem is not much about colour as it is about the flexibility of human feelings; how feelings easily wash away like colour from a pauper's only shirt.

Now back to using colour to define abstract things, the persona, after he'd seen the rage of his lover concludes that her heart has become black, black the colour of everything evil.

In verse four, the persona uses red to express the hurt he felt:

"From then, my soul was filled with pain.

Bleeding in deep blood.

My soul turned red.

And the colour of love changed."

True to the nature of human feelings, flexible, unsure, the persona assumed an unsure tone in the last verse of the poem, wandering and searching for the real colour of love, asking if love even have a colour, and he betrayed the assurance he felt at the beginning by saying he is yet to find out if love really have a colour.

## COLOUR IT BY MUKONYA MUKONYA

The persona starts with a question, a kind of rhetoric. Universally, we understand anger as a negative emotion, but could it be that sometimes it can bring light, pleasantness? What colour is anger anyway? In other words, can anger bring about good results? In times of war, do we change or still remain the same in some way? It's a huge question

he poses to the audience to solve on our own.

The persona goes on to wonder if we can ever be on the same page. War is senseless, at most, so why go to all that trouble. Why is it so important for others to lose so that we may win? In the last stanza he urges the audience to unite, to work together despite all our differences. Despite all our many colours. This poem brought to the attention the many wars going on in Africa triggered by race, politics and religion amongst others. He wonders if all of these triggers are of different colours and if we are angry enough to bring about the positive change we want to see.

The use of powerful imagery involving an array of colours and the background canvas helps to pass the message across successfully. It helps the audience associate the different delicate transformations with colour. The pauses also create the much needed emphasis to drive the message home. It's a well written poem. A lot of effort was put into this. Point to note, in the third stanza line 4, it would read better as 'are we sad they won' to maintain the questioning nature of the poem. Well done Mukonya!

#### SPOILED CANVAS BY WILSON TINOTENDA

What comes to mind when you think of a spoiled canvas? What happens when the colours do not just coordinate? The result is messy. The artist becomes angry, frustrated that his work is not just coming together. It becomes a kaleidoscope of colours albeit not a pleasant one.

This poem is laced with heavy tones. The sombre mood has already been set from the title itself. The audience is not expecting a happy poem. It uses heavily meaningful words; phantasm, a ghost, a figment of the imagination, clearly something the persona can't grasp or fully understand. The tone is angry, from the use of words such as glared. The persona embraces his allusion to the artist very well. Like an artist, he's bathing his canvas in senseless coloring because the image just won't cooperate. The brushes are brittle, a clear sign that they will not do the job well enough as he intended no matter how much he tries.

The imagery of colours clashing; the grey cutting into blue (a color associated with calmness), achromatic colour of intense lightless, hints at his frustration. It portrays struggle, war in this case, a kind of war (pogrom) is going on around him. Everything is chaos. In the end, the artist is done with the portrait. The result is bizarre and doesn't make sense. The persona cannot comprehend it in huge part due to his inner turmoil and the physical war going around him.

The use of imagery is well done; an artist working on a portrait that just won't come together. It attunes the audience to the turmoil of the persona similar to that of a frustrated creating artist. The use of contrast, the damned panoramic view, emphasizes the feeling

of senselessness prominent in the poem. However, the 2nd line should be reworked. 'it was' and lightlessness sound grammatically correct. Also the panorama was misspelt. Overall, the poem is very deep, poignant and beautiful.

## COLOURLESS TIMES BY FISSEHA TEREFE

The title is an attention grabber. There's a way time connotes Infinity, a kind of endlessness. And from the title, these times were long and arduous. It's a sombre poem. Full of pain, sadness, loneliness and a love that was soon lost even before it began. The persona describes these colourless times as full of grey which portrays gloom and sadness.

In the first two lines, the persona informs the audience he loved his subject in whichever form he'd get. Be it black or white or whether the sun was rising or setting. He had accepted her just the way she was. He was even willing to immerse himself in her gloom (draw with one crayon) just to show her beloved that he was there for her, it didn't matter if she smirked instead of laughing. Then this soon to be love story is abruptly cut short. She leaves just when their love is about to blossom. It's debilitating for the persona as he has been carrying her sadness and now has become part of him. The probability is implied that he'd soon be carrying his own kind of grey, gloom and sadness.

The persona makes good use of colour to show the different emotions felt throughout the poem. The gradual change from grey, almost like the skies clearing, to purple, a colour that signifies positivity and new beginnings. The black and white background is apt in supporting the well placed title.

### Side note

These poets did justice to their pieces by staying true to the theme which was Colours. They are diverse, well written, captivating and manage to speak on different relevant issues. Kudos poets!

## FLASH FICTION REVIEW

### Miss Rainbow by Egwuatu Ogechukwu Peace

The flash fiction piece paints us two vivid imageries while comparing both. It talks about a lady dressed in all colors of the rainbow, as the persona gives descriptions of everything she had on.

I personally think the persona here admired the lady and was quite shy when she spoke at the last scene. As the lady seemed to have gotten him to relive a lot of memories far back to primary school.

## REVIEW OF ART WORK

Nigeria is the most populous black nation. With a population of 195 million, roughly 1 in 6 Africans are Nigerians. Given their large population (with most of them hard being working people), and their fair attempt at harnessing natural resources, Nigeria has been able to build a relatively strong economy.

Although she has the largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, limitations in the power sector have continually restrained her growth. Nigeria is endowed with large oil, gas, hydro and solar resource, and she already has the potential to generate 12,522 megawatts of electric power from existing plants, she is only able to generate 4,000MW on most days, which is insufficient for the teeming population.

It therefore comes as no surprise that this artist portrays Nigeria in a negative sense as regards adequate power supply. Rather than look forward to a nation where electricity supply is in abundance, the artist imagines a country in which kerosene lamps, battery-powered torchlights, and rechargeable lamps are still widely used in the year 2020.

Shameful? Maybe! Colourful? Definitely!

## CHILDREN LITERATURE

TITTLE - RAINBOW THE MAGICAL FLOWER by Sima Mittal-India/Tanzania

For the love of all things pure, small and beautiful. Children's literature is ever green and always captivating, there is just something about a little naïve mind that gets excited about little things like "a talking flower". Children's literature bring to life our creativity and inner child to think about the most absurd yet wonderful things that could exist. The story "Rainbow, the magical flower" brings to life children wild imagination and how very pure those little minds can be, both in attitude and intentions. The story is about a magical flower who lived in a magical garden called "Flowerland" and named rainbow. Rainbow was trying to revive happiness in Flowerland for the flowers were dying and they had lost their beautiful scent and now Flowerland reeked of sadness.

Now, children are very innocent and so are their books, with pure intentions and just a purpose to make everyone happy, Rainbow sort for a solution, and she decided to dance but then that was not of any help. Trying to captivate everyone's attention she unveils a magical power of her's, she had the power to change colours. So while you have red



roses and purple lavender this flower has no specific colour. This was so fascinating that the flowers had a mood change. This story was a very creative story that brought to life my imaginations as well as my inner child. We had lost contact recently. It is everything children books is supposed to be from: simplicity, innocence, short, magical and putting the imaginations to use easily.

But ...

As awesome a story line it was for a children literature, it did not quite capture its real essence, the use of imagery was poorly developed for example: the story begins with

“In the mystical forests of Africa, there was a magical garden called Flowerland. The uniqueness of Flowerland was the flowers here walked and talked” nice but could have been nicer and more envisioned by a child If you put as thus:

“in the mystical forests of Africa , where greener grasses and flowers bloom all year, with beautiful colours and captivating scent was a garden called “Flowerland”. Home to all magical flowers. Magical for they can walk, talk, sing and dance.”

Children’s literature does not really need too much character development but then there needs to still be a form of image in their heads when they read. Like: what the colour of the queen’s Flower was. And her own colours too was only mentioned when she was blooming into varying colours. Now while trying to make everything concise and short you also have to keep in mind that children are fragile minds, naïve but very clever, everything must merge in and be in unison. For example the story circulated about sad flowers, a smart child would ask “why were those flowers sad?”

But then it was a lovely story, perfectly suited for its category.

## SHORT STORY

### A REVIEW OF HARVESTING RAINBOWS WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY CHIRODZERO FROM ZIMBABWE

“Harvesting Rainbows” written by a Zimbabwean writer, Kimberly Chirodzero, was published in the May issue of the Writers’ Space Africa magazine. In “Harvesting Rainbows,” Kimberly tells the love story between Safara and her lover Kayonde. The story starts in medias res, Safara tells this story on their wedding day but first of all she enlightens the readers on how it started. She had the habit of going to the park to watch rainbows, as a means of escaping from seeing and telling peoples secrets. On this fateful day she met Kayonde whose soul is an embodiment of beauty, in fact a rainbow. These lovebirds have one thing in common; they are both children of a myth: Safara is a victim of heterochromia iridis which is a health situation where multiple colours occur in the eyes, skin or hair. By this, she is considered weird, a witch and even dejected by her father who fears she will tarnish the family image and renders his office at stake. Kayonde

on his part is a victim of albinism which is a lack of melanin pigmentation in the eyes, skin and hairs.

Others see Kayonde just as an albino but Safara sees something else; "...this beautiful boy whose soul shone cobalt blue, margenta, pumpkin orange and glossy obsidian all at the same time," (p46). His laughter equally transforms into a myriad of beautiful colours; "when Kayonde laughs it's like the rainbow in his soul bursts into different colours of cherry blossom petals, his joy so profound it's unable to settle on just one expression of colour," (p48). In fact he is a rainbow to Safara. Kayonde equally sees Safara's eyes as a bundle of beauty and not weird as others do. To him the green and brown in her eyes which scare people is like a golden fire. She is an epitome of beauty to him.

Immediately they meet each other, they feel different, fall in love, and grow in love and despite the distractions from the society, their love bloom red like roses till they finally marry. Tari, Safara's best friend and maid of honour equally meet and bloom marigold. Their wedding garments are extremely colourful, in fact everything about them is rainbowlike.

Safara concludes that, she has not chosen her rainbow-Kayonde, because of their oddballs but because of his stunning soul and above all she is grateful as he equally loves her with her heterochromic eyes and all her colours. Safara succeeds in harvesting her rainbow - Kayonde from the park.

Like an experienced weaver, Kimberly tactically weaves the plot of this story from beginning to end with no stain. The story is full of vivid description which makes the story appear real. She describes the lovers with vivid details such that the reader sees and touches them. Above all, the reader lives in the world of the story. Imagery is equally embedded in the entire story which put the readers' senses of touch, smell, taste, sight and sound into work. Her wonderful blend of colours is in a way that every reader must picture the rainbow's scintillating beauty, "...emerald green happy, ...his soul and the sky were one," (p46) "Kayonde and I bloomed like red roses...", (49), "his soul swirled with a kaleidoscope of rose-lilacs..., ambers of sunshine" (48), "Kayonde makes a striking figure in an obsidian Indian style sheriwani.." and many other images place this work beyond beauty. Imagery has been excellently used such that it delimits love from abstract to concrete.

Symbols have equally been used to greater effect, the title "Harvesting Rainbows" is a metaphorical and thus symbolic of finding the right life partner. Safara and Kayonde harvest the colours in each other which are equivalent to a rainbow. Kayonde is presented as a rainbow which symbolises the excess and distinct beauty of his soul, "...for a moment his soul and the sky were one," (p46). To express the bliss of being in genuine and reciprocal love, the writer uses multitudinous colours to symbolise this happiness. Kayonde is a symbol of rebirth, a new and blissful life, "...the wondrous green of a tree

budding after months of winter,” (48). Colours are indeed presented as a symbol of love, “I’ve always seen love in colour...” (p46). Stylistic devices abound in this story and cannot all be discussed in this review. Others are: personifications, metaphors, similes, irony, flashback, pathos and suspense, just to name these, which culminate and render the story adorable.

The major theme is love, though love is universal, Kimberly treats it in a special way- a kind of love I’ve not read before. A mutual love that is rendered concrete, reading of love in this story brings all the senses to action. Perfection is of this love, everything about it is rainbow, a stainless and colourful affection between two clean souls who share the same fate. This is a flavourful spice to this story. Other themes are dejection, superstition, exclusion and many others.

The writer uses the flashback technique to bring forth the events of this story. The story starts with events that happened two years ago before and the D-day brought forth towards the epilogue- their rainbow like wedding day. This spices the whole story and gives it a fine texture. The story was narrated from an omniscient point of view which makes the readers feel live at every event that occurs in the story.

The language is fairly simple. It takes a prismatic reader to understand the mélange of colours, thus a colour blind reader can find it extremely difficult to assimilate the message in this crafty narrative. The diction is carefully selected to suit the subject matter. In fact Kimberly plays and dribbles colours excellently. “Harvesting Rainbows” is a most read.

#### A REVIEW OF “COLOURS” WRITTEN BY ESTHER MUSEMBI FROM KENYA

“Colours” is a short story by Kenyan Esther Musembi published on the May edition of the Writers’ Space Africa. Using the dream technique, Musembi narrates the encounter between two juxtaposed beings- Josephine also called Jos or Josie and Mark. The story opens in a dialogue between Josephine and Mark, Josie is seated in an unladylike manner which is contrary to her mother’s teaching. In a kaleidoscopic view, Musembi presents the contradiction between the colour black and white through the complexions of Mark and Josephine. Mark has beautiful dark, the kind of dark some call good dark. “Wow, he was really dark. The kind her sister called good black,” (p45). Josie on the other hand is extremely fair with dancing pupils. “You are very fair. You could almost pass for an Mzungu,” (a white person) (p44). Josie’s description reveals she is an albino. Mark tells the story of a woman who hated people like Jose-albinos and believe that they are curses and a source of bad luck. This hatred results to her heart turning black till it kills her.

The writer therefore presents the story of Josie who is a victim of abandonment, racism and was discarded like rubbish by the very woman who gave birth to her. Fortunately

she was picked up on a hot December afternoon in a basket in the forest. She picked her up and named her Josie. Despite all, Jose and Mark are fond of each other.

Musembi uses a wonderful style to bring this story to the limelight. First, it is a satire on racism among the black people. Africans practise segregation among themselves by considering albinos as curses and bad luck. The writer is bitter especially with the educated and sophisticated people like Josie's biological mother who still believe in such myths that albinism is a curse and a source of bad luck to the extent that she discards her child in the forest for good.

Also, the writer uses euphemism to present the case of Josie; never anywhere in the story does she use the word albino. Her intention is to comfort such people and limit the pain already inflicted on them by society's perception of just that word. She therefore uses words like; "you are very fair," (p44), "the woman hated people like you...", (p45), each time she is talking about them. She further proves her support for them by presenting Josie as a symbol of luck contrary to society, "Josie was conceived on a hot December afternoon when the mango trees were pregnant with so much yellow," (p44). This highlights her beauty and luck for she was born during the season of plenty, when fruits were at their autumn. Hence, Josephine to Musembi is an epitome of beauty, abundance and luck.

There is also the use of coincidence and dramatic irony. Mark tells of a woman in his town who detests people like Josie more than death but he does not know that Josie has suffered the fate. The readers are aware through Josie's narration. There is also the skillful use of flashback, contrast, suspense, epigram, imagery, metaphor, simile, personification, pathos and vivid description which abound in the story.

Musembi treats topical issues in her narrative like, love between Josie and Mark. They enjoy each other's company and Mark also loves Jos' dancing pupils. Cultural practices also a major theme. Jose's mother says "men appreciate ladylike women and ladylike women don't cross their legs at the knee... you'll seem like you want to scissor their egos right between your legs," (p44). This is a cultural belief in most parts of Africa which is meant to encourage decency. Superstition is also a glaring theme; Josie's mother tells her that if she wakes up on her right foot it is a lucky day as everything will bow to her. She believes this recalling the day she picked Josie in a baby basket as she first saw her right foot. It is also a superstitious belief that albinos are a curse and bad luck. These easily justify the setting- African. The theme of racism is also alarming, this time around black on black racism no longer the famous black and white race type centuries ago. Other themes are dejection, abandonment, ignorance just to name these.

The writer's tone is satirical, disapproval on society's attitude towards albinos. She seeks to teach that these beautiful creatures should be treated like any other with love and care.

The writer predominantly narrates the story from a third person perspective, using the dream technique. This lends credibility to the piece.

Finally, the language is simple and can be read and digested by all and sundry without major difficulties. "Colours," I must say is indeed a thrilling and dazzling story.

## ESSAY

Colours bring everything into proper perspective. The three essays in this month's edition do exactly that. The three essays address colours from biological, moral and philosophical positions. They all combine to show what lies behind the colours we see every day but do not take note of.

The first essay- "Earth's Colourful Smile- The Evolution of Flowers" is a master piece of agricultural and biological science. I enjoyed reading every bit of it. The writer uses colourful narratives to explore the concept of plant evolution. The author presents scientific concepts about plant physiology in very easy and flowery language. The piece evoked memories of my days of taking AGC 2101 in the faculty of Agriculture. I particularly loved the way he weaved the concept of Flower colours, bees evolution and food production.

It was a pleasant read.

The Self Racist- this is an essay written as a personal reflection. It is written in the voice of a woman who experiences a skin colour epiphany that leads to bleaching and ends in blemishes. I like the way the moral message is passed without sounding preachy.

It has a nice flow with doses of humour; however, there are points where the male voice of the author interferes with the female narrator's voice. There are also some glitches in the use of pronouns, for example; "I had once waved back at a girl, thinking he was waving at me".

Apart from the minor editing issues, it's a great read.

The Times Colours mixed me Into a Colour" by Kelvin Sachile is a way, humorous but philosophical writing. It addresses the confusion ascribed to colours by different strata of society. While you may be just enjoying the beauty of your pink shirt, others are drawing strange inferences from it.

It is well written in an anecdotal style and it flows nicely. It explores the various interpretations of the colours blue, brown, red, yellow, purple and pink. You can't just wear a colour without people reading meaning into them.

The conclusion is a call on all to be open and not subject everyone to our whims. However, I didn't get how the mixture of black and white ended up as brown.

# WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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THEME:

# GHOST

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