

May
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Issue 29

WWSA



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Nigeria

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Cameroon

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The Geometry of a Thought

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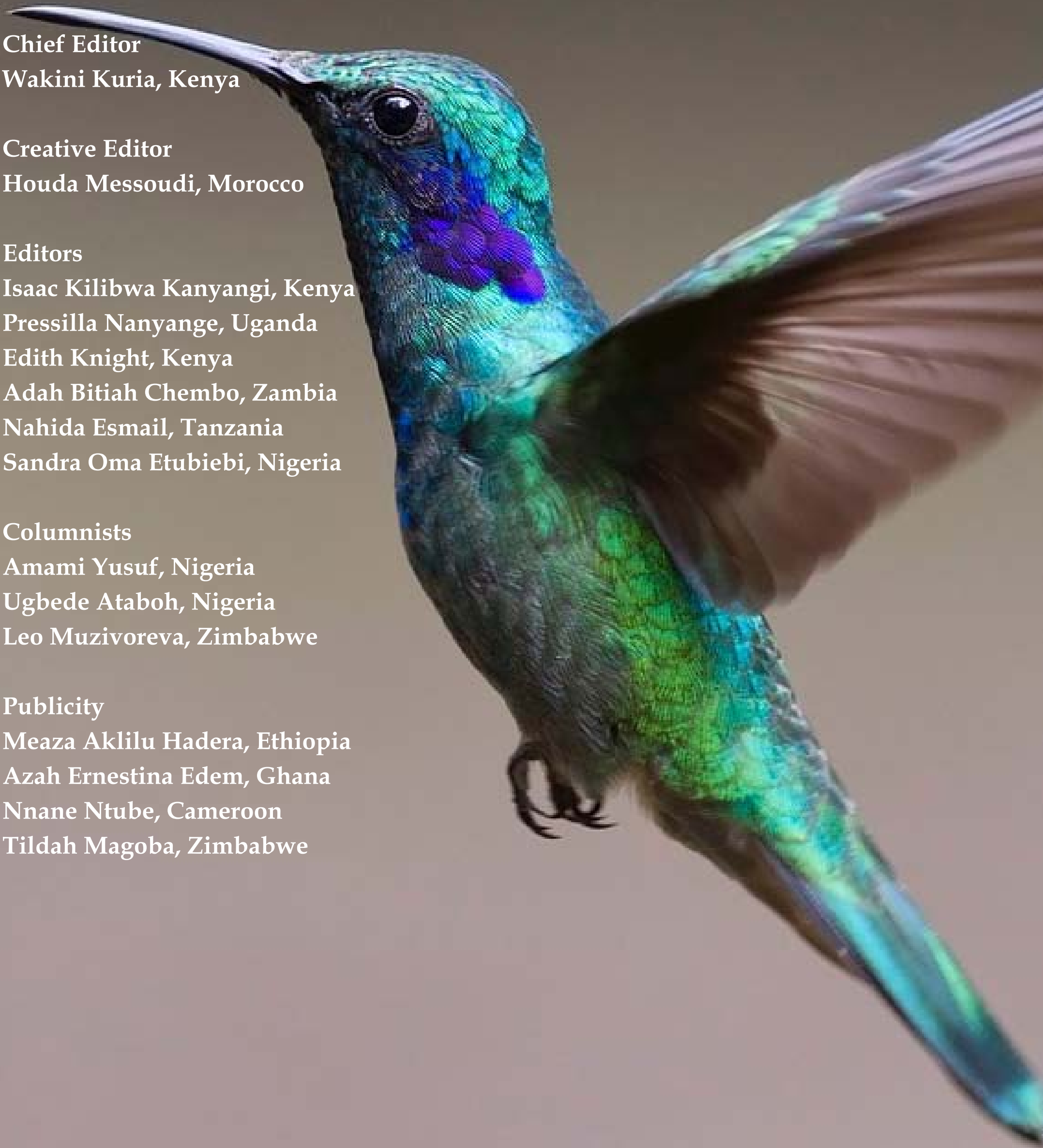
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Featured Writers

Egwuatu Ogechukwu Peace - Nigeria -
Adejuwon Gbalajobi - Nigeria -
Nelson Kamkuimo - Cameroon
Bliss Boma - Nigeria
Charlotte Akello - Uganda
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Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe
Amami Yusuf - Nigeria
Ugbede Ataboh - Nigeria
Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



EDITORIAL

Imagine a world without colours. The horror! Colours spice up our world for us, adding flavours and scents to life.

Lovers are fond of using the 'you bring colour to my life' phrase during their courtship. Let's see what Africa says about colours.

On the interview section, we cover one interesting fellow, Gavin Mndawe, a lover of owls and a South African citizen who is currently studying law at the kingdom of eSwatini - Swaziland. Flip the pages to discover more colours about him. He radiates of pure energy.

In this issue, we are introducing WSA reviews. This means that the poems, short stories, and more from the April edition have been reviewed in this edition. Flip over and enjoy.

Keep it WSA!

Wakini Kuria,
Chief Editor,
Kenya



FLASH FICTION



MISS RAINBOW

Egwuatu Ogechukwu Peace - Nigeria

I eyed the lady in front of me from head to toe. She was a peculiar looking person. Like some rainbow fairy. Truly, I believe she had fit all the colours of the rainbow into the ensemble that covered her petite form. Perhaps I should confirm. What was that mnemonic we were taught again? Ah, yes! ROYGBIV. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. Ah! Primary school days! I had never seen a rainbow that had all seven colours though nor one arched in the sky the way they appear in books but I suppose I just have to believe them. Now to the confirmation right?

The first thing one noticed about her was her shouty red lipstick. They accentuated thick full lips and were the only exception to her otherwise neutral makeup. Her striped off shoulder silk blouse sported orange and yellow colours and were paired with a green straight cut skirt that ended just above her knees. A navy blue shoe with indigo straps graced her slender legs and slender fingers clutched a violet purse. Voilà! Miss rainbow! “Can I help you?” a haughty voice interrupted my musings. “No, thank you”, I replied smiling sheepishly and scurried away.



ENVYING RAINBOWS

Adejuwon Gbalajobi - Nigeria

I am the strand of black hair amidst white ones. I stand out here, and standing out is never a good thing.

So I've learnt the art of survival: walking without breathing, retreating myself in class, keeping my hands on my table even when I have the answer to Mrs Thatcher's question, for answering means I am stepping out of my place. Stepping out of your place may attract what you wouldn't like. Mrs Thatcher may even choose to ignore your raised hand; for, how can knowledge live in a coloured brain?

There is a way being here can make you read the language on people's face. There are three languages: fear, hate and indifference.

When it is fear, like the old lady who will clutch her bag tighter when you meet on the subway, fix your eyes to the ground and walk swiftly pass her. Don't greet. You may freak her out. If it is hate, like the one on Mrs Thatcher's face whenever you top the class, just pretend you didn't hear it. Hate hates to be neglected.

If it is indifference, speak to the face with an assuring smile. Greet. The frowned face may split into a smile. That is one of the few days you feel human.

Hate is the language I have heard most of my life. It began from home where I left what CNN called genocide. I was too young to know what it meant then. All I knew was that my people were being killed because they are a shade lighter than a black man should be; and that pointed nose!

I envy rainbows, a potpourri of colours yet one, strikingly beautiful in their different shades. I wish we can be rainbows. There is so much beauty we are missing.



POETRY

COLOURFUL WORLD

I dreamt about some good deals of God
who made the brightest book of children literature
the world full of people and colours

He made black fall from the sky
and covered the earth surface with night
he made red spring up from the blood at the cross
to empower the fire burning in hell

He made the sun yellow like the little eye of the egg
to colour the dream of those who are afflicted
and lighten the burden of the slaves

Green leaves were made to flourish in the rainy season
and give life to plants, and give birth to life
and pink - Oh my God!
pink was made to deceive men that true love exists

Nelson Kamkuimo,
Cameroon



THE IDEA OF A THING BELIEVED

Rainbow splatters painting pictures like artists
A reflection of creation,
Colour is the idea of a thing believed

It is the ink on your skin, pure as unrefined gold
Black, thick, mixed
White, pale, peach

It is the greenness of our smile
scattering the earth like the scent of mint tea
Hearts purple with love,
warm like the blueness of the sea

Colour is my identity
A race, a people
It is a struggle
deep, intense, true

Colour is you
Colour is me
Colour is us, humans

The idea of a thing believed.

Bliss Boma,
Nigeria

BLUE

The thing about blue is
It comes in many hues - Like men
Some come calm and meek
Others like a tornado, reckless...

If you asked me what my favourite color is,
I'd say blue, still - the sky, the sea, baby boys
The color of his favourite shirt
But again blue holds memories of him mingled into a snow ball
Hitting my forehead - reminding me of broken promises.

I know of boys and broken promises
I know of bar lights changing to blue at midnight
I know of many shades of blue
But he's still my favourite shade.

But his absence is fading with him
I'm fighting to hold onto the little tint of blue
And I'm drowning into him
Hoping that I may retain some blue and survive

I'm lost in all the hues
Navy, royal, baby
All blues
I'm hoping that one of them will replace my night
And become him.

Charlotte Akello,
Uganda

PURPLE

Last night, I fell out of the sky.

I shattered the clouds

I broke the moon in half

I ripped the stars apart

The crash tore us from our sleep,

found petals in our palms and seeds on our pillows.

You saw red, like you always do

Your hands on my neck

Me on my back

Moaning

Or maybe screaming

I can never tell.

The sun rose

I felt blue.

Running to the bathroom sink

Spewed pink chunks of whatever we had for dinner last night.

I opened the drawer and pulled out the stick

and poured yellow onto the white.

We made purple.

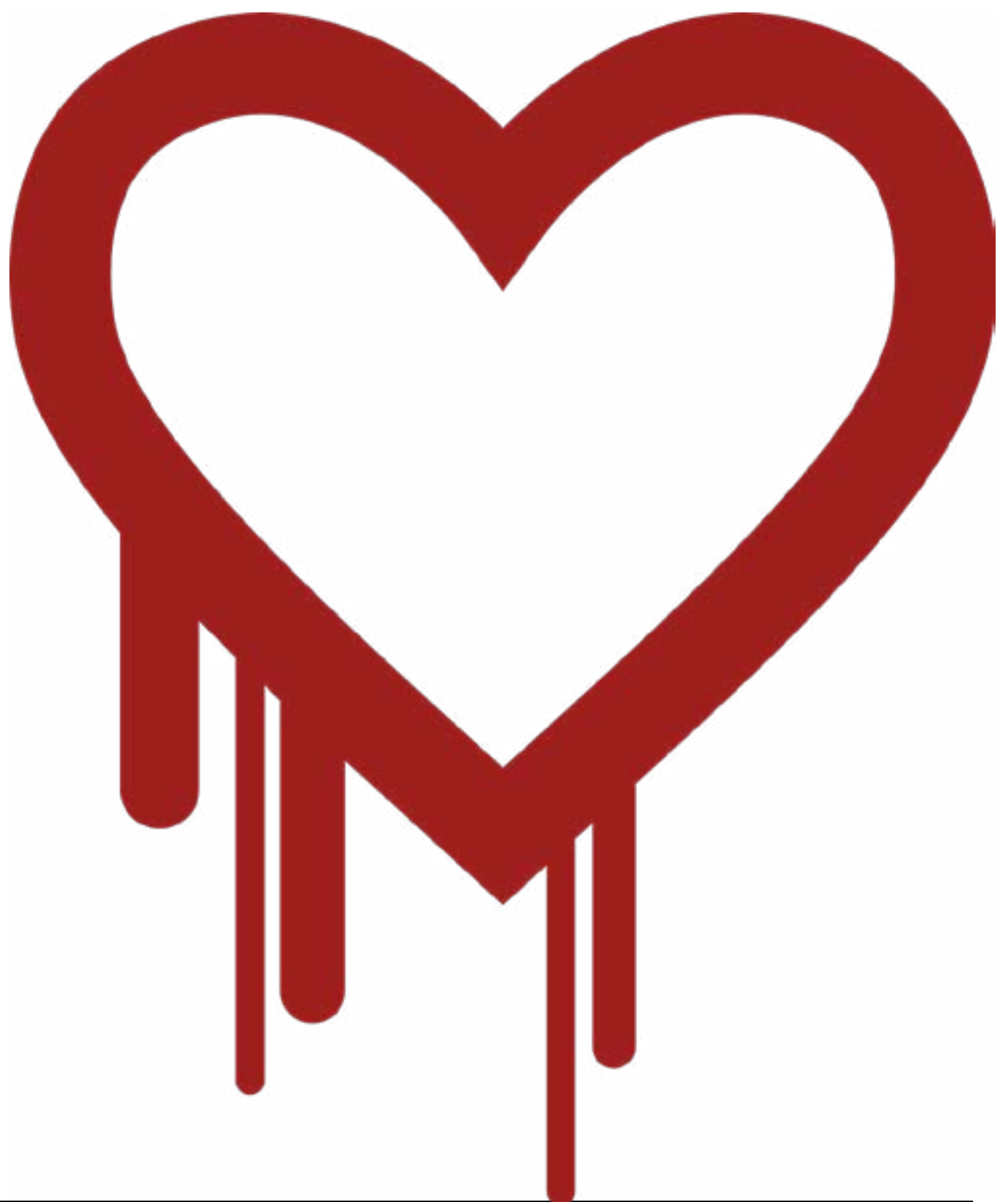
Wendy Hara,

Malawi

BLEEDING

Adrenaline glues my knees to the floor,
As you betray me one more time.
I do not fight it,
Instead, I take a trip down the memory lane,
To our first date, under a beautiful red sunset,
And I, a beautiful girl,
In a beautiful red dress and a beautiful red lipstick.
You gave me a beautiful red rose,
And told me I was perfect.
I guess, I should have roughly translated that to; red is your favorite color.
Because, why else,
Would the site of my bleeding heart please you so much?

Christina H Lwendo,
Tanzania



COAT OF MANY COLOURS

In this coat we are the ones with many colours
Weaving ourselves a tight knit fabric

Fray resistant even between our borders
Even where our borders stand on water

Are they our brothers who return home without us?
Insatiable with a bloody desire to have fight among ourselves

Because the tongues belonging to these pouches we call our bodies
Lift different languages

We are but a coat of many colours
Thrown like a prayer shawl around

The shoulders of every derogatory tongue
Declaring holy our being here

So when they say people of color
Meaning incense rising from African soil

A thunderous thud is heard
Knees of racial prejudice bowing

Phodiso Modirwa,
Botswana

BLACK LIPS

Woman, I love your sharp black lips
They remind me of the taste of Africa
They remind me of my traditional home
How I used to swim in young and old rivers
How I used to fetch firewood from noisy forests
And how we used to catch fireflies for fun.

I can tell you a story from one soft night
When my friends and I were singing songs
From the heart of love for our dearest ones
Where, in the middle of strong attractions
Feelings of true love were easily awakened.
Before we started our eyes flew around
Like mechanized drones
Searching for our hearts' desire
Smiles sparking like gas light.

Woman, your lips are unique
Fresh as the morning breeze.
On your bright black lips, I see a reflection
An image of darkest perfection
Pride in the firm fullness
Of your shining black skin.
Protect that shining black skin
Nurture it like a child
Don't mix it up, just let it be natural.

Ibrahim Sorie Bangura,
Sierra Leone

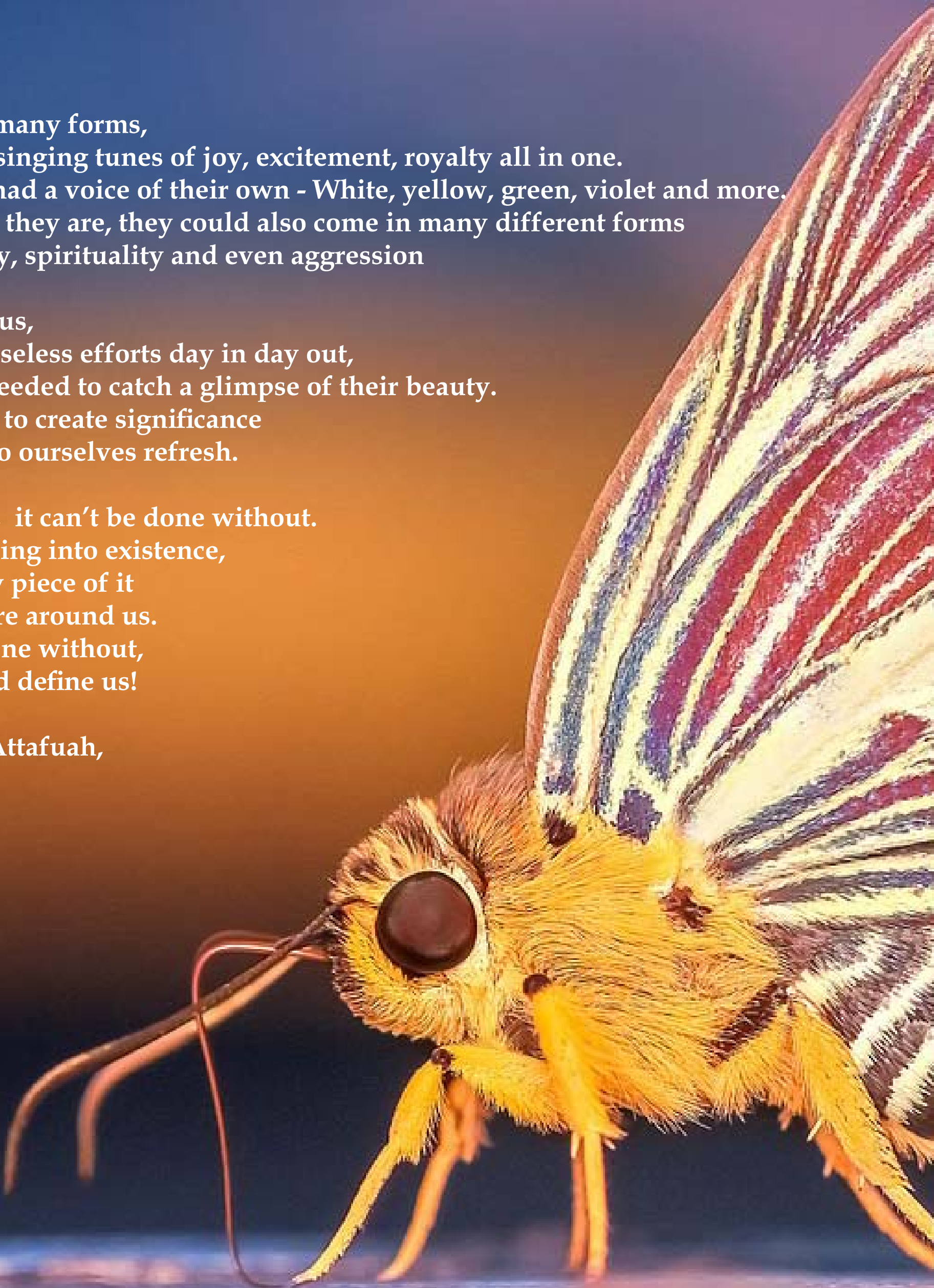
THE TUNES OF COLOURS

Appearing in many forms,
They stick in, singing tunes of joy, excitement, royalty all in one.
Just like they had a voice of their own - White, yellow, green, violet and more.
As dynamic as they are, they could also come in many different forms
Sadness, purity, spirituality and even aggression

They are with us,
Flowing in ceaseless efforts day in day out,
Effort is less needed to catch a glimpse of their beauty.
We need them to create significance
Lest we need to ourselves refresh.

Like life itself, it can't be done without.
It brings meaning into existence,
Defining every piece of it
It is everywhere around us.
Never to be done without,
Colours indeed define us!

Josephine O. Attafuah,
Ghana



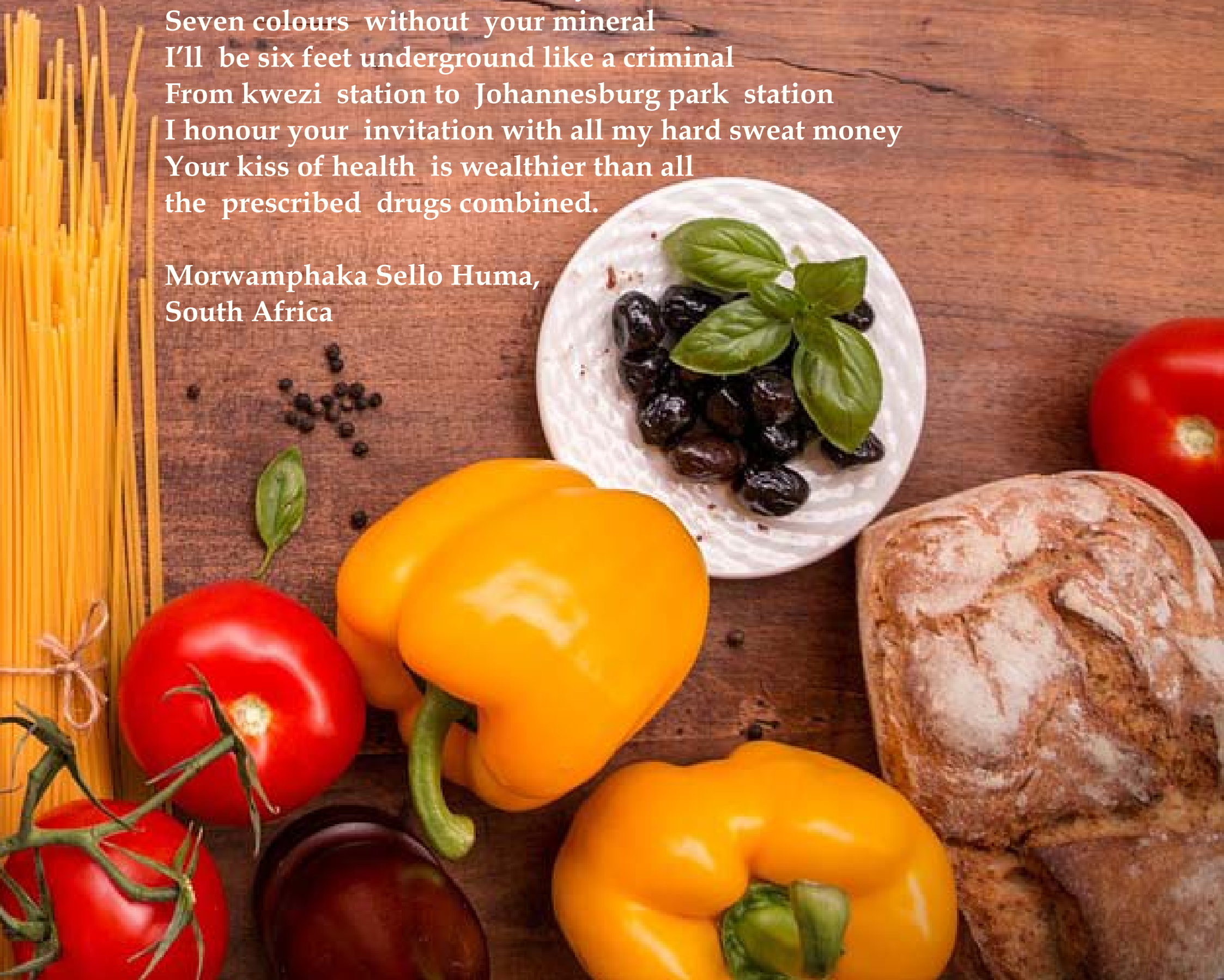
SEVEN COLOURS

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
Mama's sweet cream mashed potato served with spinach
And pumpkin to wash down my throat
Special tomato-pepper soup fried with onion
to purify my soul

Body repair food for therapy to invigorate my energy
licking my finger beetroot good to cleanse my blood
from all toxic diseases and coslow salad as my side chick
keeping my eyes green with peace of mind and kindred spirit

I'm always sharing peas and beans with my colourful neighbours
Most times I crush parties, weddings and funerals skipping
lines and robots in search of your vitamins
Seven colours without your mineral
I'll be six feet underground like a criminal
From kwezi station to Johannesburg park station
I honour your invitation with all my hard sweat money
Your kiss of health is wealthier than all
the prescribed drugs combined.

Morwamphaka Sello Huma,
South Africa



THE COLOUR OF LOVE

Deeply looking in her eyes, I saw blue
From then, it became my colour of love
In her, I saw a dove
Surely, love was blue

Time passed;
We played in every field,
Fields which looked with a lovely green;
Autumn fields with a dazzlingly grey.
Times when the sky was blue,
Our love grew.

Just when I was getting deep in love with her;
Times changed.
Colours changed.
I saw her rage.
And the burning anger turning her heart black.

From then, my heart was filled with pain.
Bleeding in deep blood.
My soul turned red.
And the colour of love changed.

I was left dismayed; disdained
Wondering and searching for the real colour of love
Does it have a colour?
Am yet to find out.

Phiri Kapondeni Manasseh,
Zambia

COLOUR IT

What colours anger
Is it pleasant, disgusting
Does anger bring darkness, light
When the eyes light with fury
Conflicts over cattle-rustling; banditry
What colours the conflicts
On race, religion, politics

If a revolution paints the country red
Will the grass remain green
Will it seek to conform; to fit in
Would you colour yourself with pride; rigidity
Or embrace change as it comes

What colour is victory
Are they celebrating their win, or our loss
How do we colour our loss
Are we sad we lost, or we are sad they won
Frequently asked; must someone lose
For the other to win

Let's colour unity
Faces clean with happiness
Everyone proud of the other, no spots of envy
A people with hunger to achieve; to be more
Working together; ants, bees
This is a people coloured with greatness

Nehemiah Omukhonya,
Kenya

SPOILED CANVAS

Thick reds splashed across the greys of the
Spoiled canvas, in tinctures spread was it.
A pale scarlet petal from the nethermost
Forge, a shade of absurd blending, and too
Brittle brushes shrouded fine details of the
Portrait, behind was this cursed horizon ink

How the greys cut blue, in paint suited was
A caricature of a being in black boot, helmet
And a bayonet, the street left bloodshed, red
Pogrom, torture, detention, genocide being
The portrayed elements in colourful phantasm,
An absolute artistry, so clearly painted in black

And the wall from where it was hanged had
An achromatic color of intense lightless, with
No hue owing to reflection of the fine artistry
Of the damned paranomic view wooden boxed
I glared sideways, failing to comprehend that
Picture in Nhamodzenyika's gallery, Spoiled.

Wilson Waison Tinotenda,
Zimbabwe





COLORLESS TIMES

I loved you in black and white,
When the sunrise and sunset
looked exactly alike.
When we used just one crayon
to draw our emotions with,
I loved you when grey was
the closest thing to color,
When a smirk was
the closest thing to laughter,
When all you wore was anger,
And pain,
And no matter how insane,
I stuck with you
through the darkest of days.
But you,
You left just when
we started to see color,
When we finally found our break,
When we finally stopped the ach
between our chests.
You left when we realized that
our purple hearts were healing,
That our red lips were will willing,
And our brown eyes were sparkling
with the possibility of a future,
You left when we could have finally
fallen in love in color.

Tsion Fisseha Terefe,
Ethiopia

AFRICAN LITERARY JOURNAL

Call for submission of academic abstracts under
the theme: ***Cultural Stereotypes in African
Literature: Rewriting the Narratives***

The African Writers Development Trust in collaboration with
the Kenyan Writers Guild will host the 2019 African Writers
Conference this September in Nairobi, Kenya.

Academics, literary enthusiasts and the general public are
invited to submit academic abstracts for compilation.
Those whose abstracts are accepted will be contacted to
send in their papers.

- Abstracts should not be longer than 300 words.
- When accepted, papers should be typed double in Times
New Roman, double spaced, font size 12.
- Papers should not exceed 12 pages including references.
- All references should conform to latest APA referencing
style.
- Deadline for submission of abstracts is May 14.
- Entries should be sent to alj@writerstrust.org
- For more, please contact Kelvin: +254 790 026060 or
Namse: +234 706 574 1425

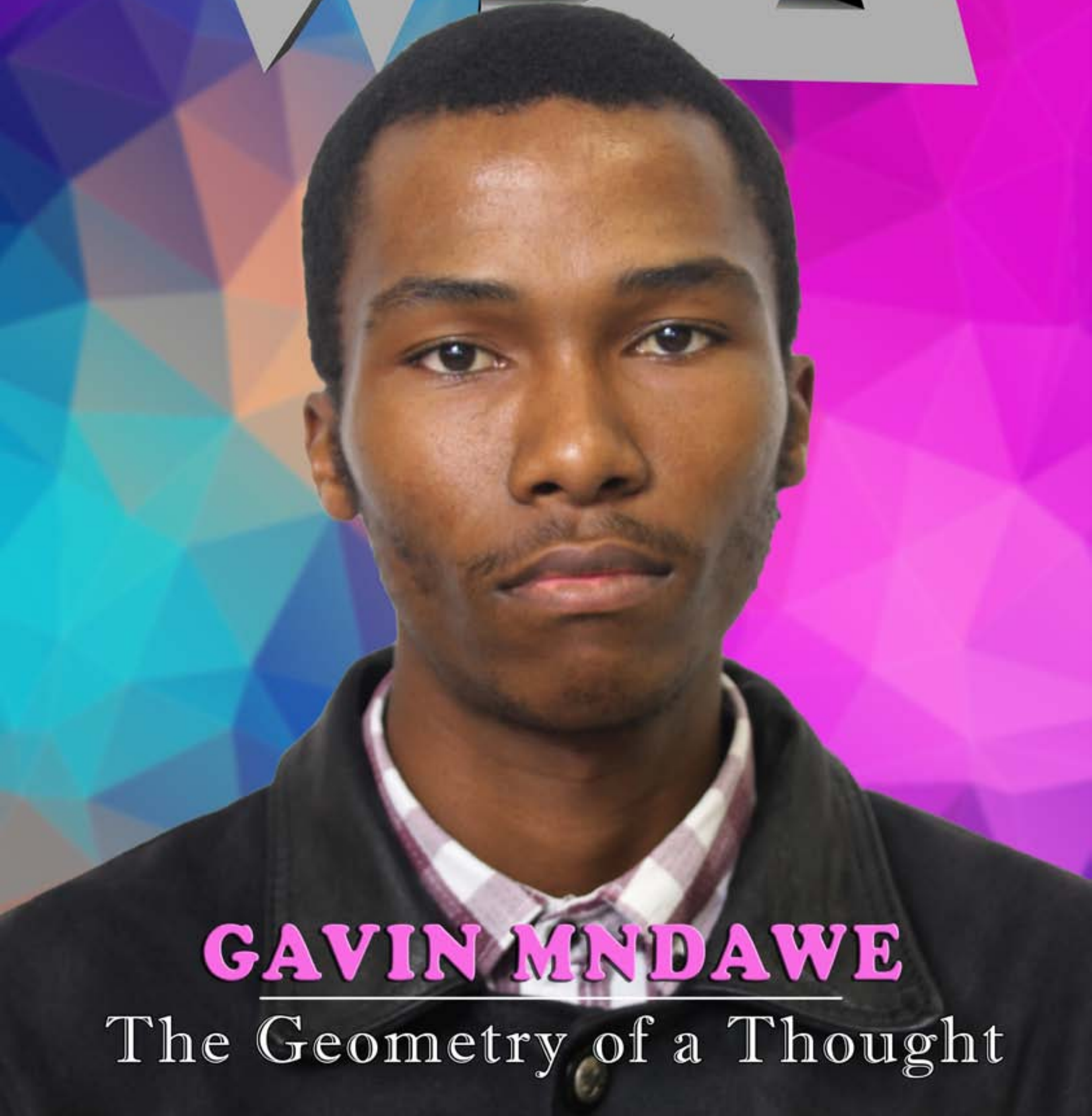
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Empowering African Writers

May
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GAVIN MNDawe

The Geometry of a Thought

Published by the African Writers Development Trust

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Writers are weird. We view the world behind the scenes of the ordinary and profoundly mundane. We see the world not as it is, but as it could be. We romance with thoughts and fondle with words. We create from nothing, and live in our heads. Writers can be weird –in a good way. And, I met one today. His name? Gavin Mndawe...

Who is Gavin Mndawe?

My name is Gavin Mndawe and I'm both a subject of the last absolute monarch in Africa and a citizen of the Republic of South Africa. I am currently based in the Kingdom of eSwatini (Swaziland) where I study Law at the national university

How does Gavin describe himself?

Mental health activist. GMO whistleblower. Rhythmic breather. Awareness investigator. Essene. Sufi. Qabalist. Evangelist of the epiphysis. Lover of owls. All are but vestigial organs of my true identity; pure energy.

What's Up with Gavin and Owls?

Owls represent death. Death is a metaphor for transformation, as Apostle Paul is believed to have said "we die daily". Death doesn't discriminate, it takes all, and so I absorb everything, even that which I disagree with. It reflects in my work and my personality. Birds are generally poster children for spiritualisation. From the input (absorption) to the process and all the way to the output, mysticism is involved. Whether it's maintaining a particular inhalation-retention-exhalation ratio or dry fasting for three days, some aspect of inner alchemy is involved.

What it's like to live as a subject in the last absolute monarch in Africa?

When a fellow university student is raped by a prince who later offers her a scholarship for her silence and petitions are signed, marches are carried out but justice is still jettisoned, it is not endearing. When a measly twelve million rand was allocated for loans to the youth in a year and nine million vaporized before parliament, it did not inspire patriotism. When South African billionaire Patrice Motsepe donated ten million rand to the Law department of the university where law students don't get scholarships and nothing changed, it was unsettling. And when nobility continues to exercise a policy of nepotism, it castrates the confidence we have in what many consider a 'voodoocracy'. But it is worth noting that we live a royal life vicariously through 'the mouth that never lies' and it's interesting watching this cataclysmic existence unfold since every situation is beneficial (to those who have vision though).

What does Gavin want?

I want to live a life of minimalistic, meaningful engagement with body consciousness, but of even greater affinity to metaphysics. I want to see the rampant ancestral worship and 'sorcery' either merge officially or separate officially in this queen of the coast and landlocked country. I wish I could exhale Suicide, wrongful diagnoses from pseudoscientific Psychiatry and beyond, corruption, injustice, senseless spending and greed away from eSwatini, Africa and the world at large. I want to see more youth and women in parliament. I want to raise a think tank that will tackle the consciousness colonization that prevails throughout this fountainhead of civilization we call Africa.

If Gavin could create the perfect Africa?

The utopian Africa is one where travelling between states isn't a hassle (kudos to Ethiopia). It is a place of sustainability; a place of biofuels and roads made of recycled plastic. It is a shining example of making the most of what you have. This Africa does not use aid as a crutch. It doesn't go begging for fish, it gets a fishing tutor. If I could create this utopia, it would be facilitated by selfless leaders who are detached and not so body conscious.

Gavin's universe of writing:

Writing is how I explore the different dispensations of attention and intention. It is a matter of calling for me. I write film, music, fiction, poetry, essays and so on but for now I'm known for my poetry. Creation usually begins in imitation, the more 'original' and personal my work became, the more I felt this way. The aesthetics behind writing have always enamoured me. I would watch old movies as a child and be swept away by the depiction of writers; punching away at the typewriter with cigarette in mouth and scotch on desk (the cigarette and scotch were invisible to me, haha!). The misery of this lone wolf and the glory that awaited him upon completion of his goal portrayed a situation that presented itself as very rewarding, fulfilling and downright epic. The very fact that something you can create while sitting on your chair or even in bed can inspire people around world made it easy to consider writing a noble profession (not to mention the royalties, pun intended).

Gavin speaks on one of his poems:

The Geometry of a Thought takes its title from one of the poems in the collection. The poem is a philosophical inquiry dealing with words, the realities and ideas that words

represent and describe and how much bearing those words have on what they refer to. It is an attempt to strip abstractions of their mystique. The poem also concerns itself with the boundaries of human knowledge and perception and how words distract us from our limitations. The collection at large is a concretion of abstractions that I associate myself with (ideas, beliefs, desires etc.) There's two pieces on death, one on birth, one on darkness, one on water and one on local politics, among others. Upon engaging with this collection, the reader should realise that death means growth, they should see darkness in a different light and something as simple as water should inspire the greatest wonderment and reverence. They ought to see everything as if with new eyes. The collection is available on Amazon's Kindle as an ebook for \$3. The hardcopy is to be purchased on my publisher's website (www.icoe.com.au/2018003.html) for \$15 regardless of your location and for \$10 if you're in Australia. One can also borrow the book from the National Library and Victoria State library in Australia.

Gavin and his short story, Marina:

Marina is about the journey of a young woman as she heeds the call of her ancestors, following the path of a healer while trying to save her village. She must appease the rain goddess Aleeneh so the rains may return and she must enlist the help of the ancestors, that they may prevent mercenaries from invading. She fears her own power because her best friend's mom died after she willed for it to happen. We are introduced to a subtle realm that exists in the sea and a host of amphibious humans who pledge allegiance to an underwater kingdom. Marina was dedicated to this realm at birth, she was taught the ways of the shaman and now she must use her knowledge, experience and rank to bring salvation to her people. The only problem is, she might have been born on the wrong side. Marina will be published as part of *Maintenant 13* in America this June, 2019.

Gavin to other African writers:

My advice for African writers, don't limit yourself. Don't adhere to genres, categories and conventions. African poetry is mostly free verse, we don't conform to form, but it's important to study a system before you infiltrate it. Read ancient literature, modern literature, mythological, factual, scientific, philosophical literature etc. Read about writing. Get a 'Submittable' account, share your work, even it isn't finished, at least you'll get a review or you'll be accountable to someone eager for the finished work. Share your writing goals with others to be answerable to your work. Set an achievable daily writing goal to keep the momentum going. Don't edit until you're done. Take yourself seriously. Get a writing space, time and target (word count goals y'all!). Watch TV as a writer,

think like you're writing, get a memo book and write anything that interests you, even if it's a word or sentence (it all starts with a word). Prime yourself with psychological triggers like drinking tea during writing time, this way your mind associates tea with writing. Hemingway said "write drunk, edit sober" but I would translate that as saying write without judgment and edit with prudence. Write your favourite part first, you're not forced to start from the beginning. Don't try to please anyone, never betray your true self.

Gavin loves WSA:

WSA is the ultimate writer's boot camp. It isn't just an ongoing workshop or a community of people with common interests; it is a family of kindred spirits that is invested in promoting the African writer's interests. WSA is home to me, never have I come across a more helpful folk.

Yes, writers are weird. But, when you meet Gavin, you are left in awe at the brilliance of his thoughts and the word "weird" just becomes another word for significant and remarkable!





CALL FOR SUBMISSION
FOR THE
**2019 AFRICAN
WRITERS AWARDS**


We are accepting submissions for the
2019 African Writers Awards
in the following categories:


Flash Fiction, Short Stories
Poetry and Children's Literature.

Theme:

**CULTURAL STEREOTYPES IN
AFRICAN LITERATURE:
REWRITING THE NARRATIVE FOR THE
21ST CENTURY READER**

The awards will be presented at the
**2019 African Writers Conference
Dinner and Awards Night**

 **28 | Sept; 2019**

 **Sarit Centre, Westlands,
Nairobi, Kenya**

 **5PM**

Deadline for Submission is
May 31, 2019

Please visit <http://www.africanwritersconference.com/awards/>
for submission guidelines and to upload your work.
Queries should be sent to info@africanwritersconference.com

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE





RAINBOW THE MAGICAL FLOWER

by

Sima Mittal - India/Tanzania

In the mystical forests of Africa, there was a magical garden called Flowerland. The uniqueness of Flowerland was that the flowers here walked and talked.

“I lost my best friends, Daisy and Sunny,” mourned Rainbow the flower.

“I know! It’s shocking to see so many flowers dying,” said her bird friend, Robin.

Rainbow slumped against the well wall in the garden. She stared at her white petals as they drooped like the rest of the flowers in Flowerland. The smell of sadness washed away the sweet fragrances of rose and jasmine.

“I miss Daisy’s tickling laughter and Sunny’s silly games. I wish the Flower Fairy Queen would do something about this misery,” said Rainbow.

“But she’s requested the flowers to help drive this sadness out,” reminded Robin.

“Singing and joking doesn’t seem to work. What else can I do to help my friends be happy?” Rainbow asked Robin.

“I don’t know,” replied Robin.

“You’re not much help,” moaned Rainbow.

Robin jumped about on the well wall, fluttering her wings and ruffling her feathers.

“I got it! I got it! Thank you, Robin, for giving me the greatest idea!” yelled Rainbow.

Rainbow sprang up and raced home, waving her petals in joy, leaving Robin startled and confused.

At home, Rainbow whirled as fast as she could but fell down from the dizziness. She jumped as high as she could but bumped her head against the wall. She rolled onto the

floor but bruised her back.

“I’m horrible. Perhaps I should give it up,” said Rainbow.

Her body was sore and her feet ached from all the toiling throughout the night. But the saddened faces of her flower mates helped her gather herself, to practice again.

The next day, Rainbow called, “Come everyone and see me dance.”

“A dance, why?” asked Rosy the Rose.

Rainbow swung and swayed. She skipped and hopped. She performed an arabesque and a pirouette. But as Rainbow curtsied, she couldn’t hear clapping or cheering.

“Oh no, I have failed!” sighed Rainbow, wiping the tears from the corners of her eyes.

Her heart sank when some of the flowers moved away in silence.

Rainbow called out, “Wait, come back, watch this!”

She spun round and round as fast as she could. She spun faster than a pinwheel in a strong breeze. She spun faster than the speed of light. As she spun, she churned her milky, white petals into a bright RED. Sparks of rainbow light flowed from her glistening petals.

Rosy the Rose’s eyes bubbled and astonishment plastered her face. Peachy the Petunia and a small group of flowers rushed back.

“WAAOOOOOW! Amazing!” screamed the flowers.

“She CAN change her color!” shouted Crazy the Carnation.

“And she’s the only one who can do this!” sang Robin.

“Again! Again!” shouted Rosy and all the other flowers, rocking with delight.

Rainbow’s heart soared. Magic flowed through her body and into her feet as she spun with fervor.

From RED, Rainbow transformed her petals into ORANGE, then YELLOW, then GREEN, then BLUE, then INDIGO and finally VIOLET!

Excitement and wonder replaced the smell of sadness.

“Splendid! Fantastic!” the Flower Fairy Queen glowed with pride at Rainbow’s determination. She knew Rainbow had discovered her magical power.

So whenever sadness fell over Flowerland, flowers knocked at Rainbow’s door singing,

“Ringi Rangi Rainbow
Come on put on your show.
Bring out that gorgeous glow
And away sadness will blow.
To you, a bow,
Of appreciation we will throw.
Ringi Rangi Rainbow
Come on put on your show”.

Rainbow’s colorful magic cheered Flowerland.

****THE END****



ESSAYS



EARTHS COLOURFUL SMILE – THE EVOLUTION OF FLOWERS

by

by Ojji, Chinazaekpere Joy – Nigeria

The last difficult problem posed to plants by terrestrial living was resolved in angiosperms (seed plants that reproduce via flowers). Plants had previously been limited by a conflict between the need to obtain water and nutrients (by their roots) and the need to find mates (solved by male gametes that can be carried to other plants). This problem was never completely solved in gymnosperms (seed plants that do not develop fruits); whose lightweight pollen grains are carried passively by wind. Large numbers of pollen grains are therefore needed to improve the chances of a lucky encounter with a female cone – a very inefficient system. The pollen of many angiosperms, however, is delivered directly from one individual of a species to another. How? Insects/animals carry the pollen for them! The innovation that made this great advantage possible is the FLOWER.

Flower is the colored part of a plant from which the seed or fruit develops. It possesses wide range of colorful petals depending on the plant species. Flower may be seen as colorful, however, it is color itself because through it virtually all food types comes directly or indirectly from the angiosperms; which help to nourish the human figure. In fact, more than half of the calories that humans consume come from just three species of angiosperms: Rice, Corn and Wheat; all flowering plants.

One of the reasons for earth's colorful smile is the evolution of flowers. The evolution of flowers is the sole reason for the establishment and development of diverse plant species, leading to various food types, dyes for clothing/textiles, animal co-evolution, nutrient supply to life forms on earth and lots more. Flowers are first identified by their colors; however, its basic structure consists of four concentric whorls of appendages which are most times distinct in colors as well as play different roles.

The question remains, what would have been the state of life forms (humans and other living organisms) on earth without the evolution of something colorful as much to be called a FLOWER? Why aren't flowers green as leaves or just black in colour? Why do they come in colourful forms? Why are they the reproductive organs of angiosperms? This dawned on me that colours are attractants. The beautiful colours or designs of a dress attracts you to buy one. Insects are attracted by the beautiful colours of a flower. The appetising colour of a prepared meal most times entices you to eat. Colours are fascinating. They pop up a spark and gives you an extra. Who knows, plant-flower evolution needed to take that shape for a transformation! For you to be colourful, you should be ready to be reproductive just as the flower. Look at how colourful the world is with different fabric designs, food types, ornamental plant species, insect/animal species, skin types, cultures, traditions, rivers, land forms, heights, body shapes and sizes, and voice tunes. Colour is diversity tuned for the progress of all.

If you were to watch insects visiting flowers, you would quickly discover that the insects are not random. Instead, certain insects are attracted by particular colour patterns and nectar odour of flowers. The shade of your colour determines whom or what you would attract. A dull, fading colour or personality will not attract a profitable pollinator. It may remain dormant without any trace of procreation. Of all insect pollinators, the most numerous are bees.

Bees evolved approximately 100million years ago, about the time that flowering plants began to diversify greatly. Today, there are over 20,000 species of bees.

The co-existence of mostly plants with yellow or blue flowers and bees was rather enhanced by the colour of the flower - an attractant. The bee benefits pollen, which is a rich source of protein that they feed to their larvae while the plant in turn is able to produce its offspring through the transfer of its pollen by the bee to another plant of the same species. They are both beneficiaries to growth geared by the rising of a colourful flower. Flowers are of different colours yet, they are all aimed at producing one basic need for mankind - "FOOD". The skins of Africans may take different colourful shades, not withstanding, our colours are to beautify us and energize us with pollinators as strength, passion, vision and focus to build one Africa, One universe, in peace and love.



SELF RACIST

by

Haruna Dahiru Alhassan – Nigeria

Growing up as a girl in this harsh society of mine, you constantly have to watch what you do because you never can tell who is watching. People talk about everything you do and use their words to talk you down to your barest, even your built up walls will come crumbling down from harsh comments. You have to wear your hair right, your makeup should be in sync, you have to walk right, you have to do this right, you have to do that right. I mean what else would you possibly want a girl to be? A semi-goddess or something? The worst of them all is your skin color. You can be a black, but you can't and dare not be black.

I have always watched many girls change their skin colors from being black to a complete new glowing being. Am not talking glowing black, I mean a total white being with all the melanin washed away from their skin. I knew all of these but I never really bothered about them because I believed I could be different. I made my hair right, not too much of a fashion person but I could still be counted as a fashionable being. And

my skin, oh lord! I believed it was the perfect gift from God! I had a beautiful black skin that came so alive under the sun. There was nothing I cherished more than my skin. I'll always take my time after my bath to apply lotion on every area on my skin.

We had a lady who was called Diana who lived in the same compound with us but my mum preferred calling her "madam sunshine" . She was naturally a black woman but she wanted to be haughty so she revolutionized herself into a white Disney cartoon princess. Men trooped in at early and odd hours of the day to see her. She believed men only paid attention to ladies with fair and shiny skin.

"When I was black, I hardly got stopped by men but right now, look at me" she would always tell her friends who cared to listen.

"I can't wait for the day her skin will come off completely" my mum told me one evening. She hated Diana for what she had done to her skin and it was a CURSE to be on my mum's bad side.

I maintained my gospel of being a decent girl from a noble home who wanted to remain so and not let society affect my wisdom - so I thought - until I clocked eighteen, the perfect girly age. I had just gotten admission into the university at that time and nothing could have been better. We all know a university is a place where you mix up with a lot of people from all sides, but I had no time to seek attention from anyone. Some days into the university, I became friends with a girl called Remi. She was a beautiful girl with a soft voice when she spoke and knew exactly how to draw attention to herself with her sophisticated fashion ways. I loved everything about her but the thing about her that made me jealous was her flawless fair skin. Yes, I said it. I know I said I wouldn't let it get into my head but I just couldn't resist it.

Walking around campus with Remi, I observed a lot of things. Every guy always wanted to have a chat with her. Any random guy would wave at her and she will do nothing but wave back. I had once waved back at a girl thinking he was waving at me, not until he told me

"I was waving at your friend not you".

"What the hell is wrong with you Sandra, get a hold of yourself" I thought to myself one night. I couldn't get the thought of not being noticed out of my head when I was reading the new edition of POWERFUL WOMEN IN DIASPORA. The women all looked beautiful but they had a thing a common, a whole lot of them had beautiful

skin color, I mean fair and white skins not black. I could find only three if not four black women which made me conclude it was a Racist Edition. It occurred to me that if you really wanted a bagel young man or attention In general, you had to have a skin color that showed your presence. The magazine had proven that point to me and now I really needed the FINESSE skin!

I found myself in a cosmetics shop asking for the best creams and emollients to sort out my dark skin. I got into the habit of hating my dark skin and wanting to see myself in a new skin. No wonder fair skin color was the new sexy and people craved for it. I guess you probably thought I got the fair skin I wanted and It felt good, well you're wrong. I made the worst mistake of my life.

Few months into my skin therapy - as I called it - the wrong thing happened to me. My beautiful black I hated was half gone and the fair skin I needed never arrived fully. I suddenly developed skin blemishes all over my lap, my face had awful looking acnes and my skin color was something else, I had become a monster to myself. My skin had gone from a fine black skin to a mixture of what I don't know. I suddenly missed my black skin, I wanted it back. I didn't feel comfortable and confident in my new skin, I missed the black color that made me feel so confident. No color can ever make you feel bold like black. I wanted to feel like madam sunshine and Remi, but I ended up looking like someone from a different planet. I had successfully become my own self racist, a person who hated my color and wanted to be someone else. I miss my beautiful black skin.





THE TIMES COLORS MIXED ME INTO A COLOR

by

Kelvin J. Shachile – Kenya

When I was young, mama loved to see me draw with the colored pencils or they call them crayons? I don't know. The thing is, every time I drew a small boy playing soccer, she would look at it, smile and say "That is so beautiful." And so I grew up knowing everything with color was beautiful. It went on like that until when I got the real sense in me and I happened to encounter situations I would never forget however much amnesia strikes my head.

I have lived hearing people sing that part in Rihanna's song going "...the reason why the sky is blue." I have followed the song but I have never got exactly the reason why the sky is blue, however I haven't given up, I am still trying to understand why water is represented with blue while it is clear in a glass. I also used to say blue with some

white was my favorite color until when I was asked why I loved blue and I said, “It is just beautiful.” Then I realized the drawings I did while still young had so less of blue and still mama called them beautiful, so blue wasn’t beautiful, to me blue is confusion, this will remain until when I learn the reason why the sky is blue and water in the lakes and oceans on our maps is blue yet when we move close they never give not even a tiny shade of blue. Yesterday was Sunday and everyone was talking about the weekend ending and so Monday would come with its blues, I was mixed even more. And so I have been blue-confused-about the color blue.

There was a day back in high school when our teacher came to class to punish us because we didn’t collect our books on time. Our class prefect said he had taken the books to his office even before the time he had said we should have them taken. Everyone looked at him with a bad eye and he frowned, “why are you making me brown?” he said. And everyone laughed. Personally I thought he was about to turn brown from his dark complexion and I smiled waiting for the metamorphosis. “No, you are mixing me up. Things have just to be white or black not brown.” he said and left the class and later came back with the books. He smiled and realization lit on his face before he said, “You people are playing me brown!” we laughed and nicknamed him Mr. Brown. I later came to understand the browning process he was talking about, It was about mixing black-the lies and white-the truth, to make someone get mixed in between-brown. I smiled. I had been browned too.

Roses are red, red the color of February, the month of love. I have been wondering why the same red that represents love do represent danger and warning until when I opened my eyes to see and ears to hear many people sharing stories about love. How it is beautiful and hurting. I thought about the red roses too, they are beautiful yet they have those spikes that hurt when you touch them accidentally. I therefore came to realize how red, the color of blood is very delicate, how it stands in between two different and opposite meanings but still makes sense to people. I have often been red, when I live my life smiling and caring about people while deep inside I was in pain and lonely. That time went when I healed the trauma that came with assault but still red lives within me, deep inside my veins, it flows in my body and makes me live. Sometimes I talk and people say they don’t get me, how can you get someone who carries love, beauty, hurt and pain at the same time, why can’t people

see the warning sign and understand it is dangerous?

When mama told me about our neighbor's daughter being yellow, the color of a ripe mango, I laughed. I thought it was an insult but later I understood it was an advice. Some women had been gossiping in the village that I was in love with the girl. I laughed at that when mama said it before she finished. "Yellow is a very deceptive. You see how yellow mangoes are? It is the same way this girl is. Ask around they will tell you. She is ripe, beautiful and seems juicy. But deep inside, she is rotten and she has worms and maggots in her." I didn't laugh, I quickly denied the allegations and the story ended. I thought of yellow a month ago when I was sick and someone asked me how I was feeling. I said I felt yellow, I might have looked nice outside but deep inside I had pain keeping me in my bed for like three days. My friend laughed asked me if I was having cerebral malaria. I called him a yellow mango. I don't know why, may be because I was yellow.

Years after I changed my favorite color from blue to purple, someone asked me why I always used a purple background for my WhatsApp status. Before I responded, he asked if I was queer. Why? I asked. His response came like purple is the color of queerness, a mixture of pink with some dullness, makes purple. Pink for femininity and dullness for masculinity, a mixture gives queer, people who love anybody, this is from his explanations. I thought that was rude but I didn't say, asked about the rainbow. He grinned and asked how I knew that the rainbow was the flag for the LGBTQ group, before I responded, he asked for the second time if indeed I wasn't queer. I couldn't take it anymore, I stopped thinking about colors until today as I write about them here. I thought I would ask mama if the colors are still beautiful, she said they are.

And so in the grand scheme of encounters, something as innocent as a shade of a paint or ink carries meaning beyond its beauty and intended meaning. The only urge I have, is to grow and learn how to present our understandings and perspectives without really caging others to feel a mistake or making your version the only version. To know is to listen, to listen to your heart, to the little children and to every other being.

Short Stories



COLOURS

By Esther Musembi - Kenya



'Hi'

'Hi'

'I'm Josephine.'

'Josephine?'

'Yes, Josephine, like Bonaparte's wife.'

'I see..'

'I don't look like a Josephine?'

'Josephines are not so bold.' He literally bared his teeth or it could have been the bad lighting.

'Then you haven't met this Josephine.'

'Mark,' he stretched his arm, 'not my real name.' The man called Mark seized her palm as if weighing the options the night was going to give and she did not mind. She did not mind at all.

Josephine removed her pins and watched Mark appreciate the full mane tumbling softly across her fair bare shoulders. She crossed her legs at the knee not at the ankles as her mother had taught her. Jos, her mother would say, men appreciate ladylike women and ladylike women don't cross their legs at the knee. That's too bold, she would go on, you'll seem like you want to scissor their egos right between your legs. She smiled as she pictured her mother's face and Mark smiled right back sharing a secret joke he had no idea about. He signaled the waiter not taking her eyes off hers, a kind of brown meeting her pale ones. She really wanted to ask what she saw in her pale pools but that would be too intrusive. They were not lovers under a blue moon basking in the whispered promises of a lifetime together. So she smiled and sipped her beer and hoped Mark's ego was not too big to be scissorred between her legs. Our Josephine, Josie, was conceived on a hot December afternoon when the mango trees were pregnant with so much yellow they seemed to compete with the sun. Josephine was also born each month, whichever day she chose. She could be a Gemini this night, fiery and bold, or maybe a Virgo, relentless and smooth. She smiled, Gemini it is.

'So...Josie, may I call you that?'

She touched his cheek, feeling the wonderful stubble of this stranger and shook her head.

'No, Mark. Let's call me Josephine.'

Mark stood and she stood with him, a hand balancing lightly on his chest. He tucked a hair behind her right ear and she didn't like it. But she did like it so much that's why she didn't like it. Mark looked like the guy who'd dance with her all night, tuck errant hairs behind her ear and she'd lay her heart like a banquet before him. This was a night of acceptance, no, not for her. She did accept herself every day; it was now Mark's turn to do that. She was not so lucky before.

'You are very fair.'

'Yes I am.'

'You could almost pass for a mzungu.'

'I suppose I could.'

'And your eyes...they dance so much they make me dizzy.' Josephine stepped back and took a good look at him with her dancing pale eyes.

Then let's dance and be dizzy together. And Mark twirled her around which

actually made her dizzy and did not complain when her hair got into his open laughing mouth.

A ray of soft sunshine on her right foot woke her. Her mother loved to say that that was her lucky foot. That if she stepped out of bed on that foot, everything would bow to her. She would be a goddess to her fates. None of it made sense but her mother was a wise woman and she knew what she was talking about most times.

‘I am actually Mark,’ Mark spoke from the open doorway.

‘Morning actual Mark.’ Josie smiled and shifted because the sun was now hurting her eyes as she looked up at him. Her sunglasses were right there on the table but she did not pick them up. Wow, he was really dark. The kind her sister called good black. The kind, she claimed, God walked all over His earth just looking for the right clay. Actual Mark was holding out a cup of coffee.

‘I knew of a woman back home. Maybe she’s still alive but maybe her hatred killed her. Made her heart so black she couldn’t breathe and killed her dead. This woman hated people like you, sorry, I don’t mean to offend you...called them breathing curses. Claimed they brought on bad luck.’

‘None taken,’ she offered. ‘And I knew that kind of woman. She gave birth to a light skinned baby with dancing pupils and threw her right into the forest. She was told it was a curse but for all her education and sophistication she still did this despicable thing. You see this very sunburnt right foot? Yeah, that was how my other mother found me. She just saw a small foot sticking out of a baby basket on a hot December afternoon and called me Josie.’ He touched that foot and Josie suddenly sprung out of bed her throat tightly parched. Her jeans suddenly seemed too tight. They were not getting past her ankles and her throat was now throbbing so badly. And that’s when it happened, a dam broke. Mark just started laughing. His shoulders shook so hard the coffee joined him. She joined in with her half-worn jeans and laughed along with him. The misplaced mirror at the far corner reflected just two people caught in mirthful laughter. One very dark, the good black, the other one, very light with dancing pupils.

**Mzungu- white person*

HARVESTING RAINBOWS

By Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe



I've always seen love in colour, perhaps it's the old adage; roses are red, violets are blue, you're my love and I am yours that inspired this. Today I am crushed emerald green happy. If I could see my own aura, I think today I might resemble the rainbows that I so love. All this is possible because I took a walk in the park one day after the rain. The first time I saw Kayonde there was a rainbow in full bloom in the sky and for a moment his soul and the sky were one. I had never seen a soul shine so bright before that I did something I almost never do. I approached another person. I had no intention of talking to this beautiful boy whose soul shone cobalt blue, magenta, pumpkin orange and glossy obsidian all at the same time. I just had to get close to such purity and joy. Fortunately for me, he caught me staring.

When Kayonde stares at you, it feels like his eyes are stripping you down to the ashy ivory of your bare bones, which is ironic because I'm the one with the gift of seeing into people's past and futures. So there I was on the other side of a stare I had no doubt levelled on countless others, when Kayonde's mood changed. "Come to

stare at the town freak, have you?" his words were cayenne pepper red hot and he aimed them like missiles at me. "Well, look your fill. This town freak doesn't perform tricks though," he spread out his arms and I laughed. I kept laughing even as I felt him grow angrier. This boy was calling himself town freak which had been my title ever since my father dropped me off in this small town because I embarrassed him in the big city.

Kayonde had put his arms around me to stop me laughing and perhaps shake some sense into me, which is when he saw it. He held my gaze and my laughter died in a cloud of African-sky blue anxiety. "You have two different coloured eyes," he whispered as if it were a secret we were both just uncovering. "One is blue." I nodded mutely because there was something in his voice I had never heard in relation to my eyes. Reverence. Usually I got poked, threatened or begged not to cast a spell. "Well, three colours actually. The left one is a mix of brown and green. Some days it's even just brown but mostly it's both," I told Kayonde calmly, as if we were best friends. He leaned in close. "You're right. Why were you laughing at me?" he asked abruptly.

Generally, black girls don't have blue eyes, let alone green ones. Especially not the daughters of men prominent in the political sector. My father had been afraid I would tarnish the family name with rumours of witchcraft and ruin his chances of being in office. He left me with my dead mother's sister in this small town where everyone knows everyone's aunt and never looked back. I was eight. That was twelve years ago. I had been the town freak for twelve years. It would be better if it was just the eyes, but fate likes playing with me too much. Turns out weird eyes were not enough I had to have the uncanny ability to see a person's past and future too. By the time I figured out it wasn't wise to tell people these things, it was too late: the whole town knew.

"I was laughing because usually the town freak is me. I saw your aura and it was like you had merged with the rainbow," again my big mouth had gone off and said too much. "Sorry for staring," I mumbled and had started to turn away but Kayonde's next words froze me. "I thought you were just looking at the albino

boy," he said. I noticed then that the hand on my shoulder was almost translucent as though untouched by the sun. I hadn't seen the colour of his skin, only that of his soul. He seemed to be waiting for me to pass judgment. I waved at my eyes. "I have heterochromia iridis. You have albinism. We are both children of myth. I know what it's like when people are so hung up on colour. I'd probably be standing next to you on the stake, not lighting your matchstick."

Kayonde threw his head back and laughed. 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 colour of expression. His soul swirled with a kaleidoscope of rose-lilacs saturated with joy, ambers of sunshine and the wondrous greens of a tree budding after months of winter. Kayonde sat down on the stone bench and patted the empty space besides him. "You saw my aura?" he asked as I sat down. "Yes but I only see the colours of your soul not your past or future. You're different. I usually come to this park to escape seeing people's secrets and to watch rainbows. Rainbows are pure. Their colours are not tied to human emotion. It's a break for me," I confided in him. Somehow I knew Kayonde was safe to tell secrets that weren't so secret to.

"I have been in town two weeks. They told me there was a prophetess here. Others say a witch and others, a seer," he looked at me pointedly. Most people never look me in the eye. Heterochromia iridis is a disease but Africa can still be a place of myths and lore. It doesn't help that my ability seems to enforce the legends. "You look me in the eye," I said, baffled. He had glanced away then. "You are beautiful. Your eyes are beautiful. The green and brown is like a golden fire, flickering to the tempo of your emotions," he stopped abruptly as if afraid he had offended. "Beautiful, not weird," I whispered in wonder. That was how it started. Every day that it rained or promised to rain, I would find Kayonde at our stone bench, waiting to watch rainbows with me.

Today two years later, I stand before a mirror looking at the girl who I never thought I could become. "It's time, Safara," Tari, my best friend says. After Kayonde came into my life, the townspeople had tried to make fun and mock us, but

when love is just blooming it has the tremendous power to grow even in harsh conditions. Kayonde and I bloomed red like roses and people began to talk to us as if we were more than just the sum of our colours. That's how Tari and I met and began to form a tentative friendship. We too soon bloomed marigold strong like the sunflower. Today she stands with me on my wedding day as my maid of honour. "How do I look?" I ask, turning away from the mirror.

My aunt snuffles as she looks me over. She is grateful someone is willing to marry me even though she thinks I'm settling. I don't mind because I didn't choose Kayonde so that we could be oddities together. I chose him because his soul is beyond beautiful and when he looks at me; he sees all that I am, heterochromia and all. He doesn't avoid it or tell me it doesn't matter. He loves all my colours. At the end of the day I think that's what we are all looking for. "You look beautiful, Safara," Tari beams at me, shaking her head in wonder. My wedding dress has a royal blue mermaid full skirt and long sleeved sheer lace top studded with gold motifs outlined in a faint green so that they look like licks of golden fire. The only person who will get the subtle message is Kayonde but I don't mind that either.

My father is not in attendance. He is glad I will be leaving his name behind, so I walk myself down the aisle. Auras flick bright around me but I only have eyes for one man. Kayonde makes a striking figure in an obsidian Indian style sherwani so black it's as if someone trapped the night sky and weaved garments out of it. As I come closer I notice that there are faint paintbrush traces of gold in the jacket and there is a blue rose attached to the lapel. I smile at him and his soul bursts into rainbows. I never get used to it. He is iridescent no matter the angle I tilt my head in.

Finally I slip my deep mahogany hand into his much lighter one and watch the dance the colours in his soul are performing. His light is transcendent; there are colours in him I cannot name. The world might never fully understand people like us but it doesn't matter because we know in this moment that we are so much more than the sum of our colours.

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 3

The walk back to the mill seemed like ages. Somehow, she managed to stop the tears, but she couldn't stop the limp. Her genitals were too small to accommodate such a man, and not with that much force. She could still feel the burning between her legs, and the stinging at her eyes. As they approached the mill, she walked slower and tried to smile. She tried to conceal everything, and act normally. She wanted everything to look the same. But nothing was the same anymore. Her body shook. Her lips quivered. Her mind kept replaying the scene, and the tears dropped. Thank God for little mercies like the darkness-. It hid everything she wouldn't have been able to hide. She stifled her sniffing, and those she couldn't stifle, she let it flow with a cough. A forced cough to make it seem she had a cold. If Imran noticed anything queer, he said nothing about it. Zarah was relieved and glad when shortly after, her father announced it was time to leave.

It had been three days since and each night, Zarah woke with a start. A loud frightened start. For the past 3 days, she had been having nightmares of a man, a monster. He was half man and half beast. The right side of him was the beast and the left side a man. He was ugly and so dreadful on one side, and quite presentable on the other. But his beastly features outweighed the man in him. Both his hands however, were those of a beast, and he had no feet. Yet he walked towards her always. Whenever he got close enough to her, he carried her in his rough, very hairy, beastly hands and everything else around her disappeared. Save for the rocks on the site. He would throw her harshly behind one of the rocks, and make to eat her whole.

Zarah was frightened. She had cried, looking frantically round her to be sure she wasn't back on the site, and that there was no beast about to devour her. She heard the door to her little room come open. She sat up and looked, wide eyed. She was sweating and shaking. Cold and hot. In the darkness, she could pick out Mohammed's features. How did he get here? Did no one see him? He had started lighting the cigarette and was walking towards her, and smiling when her eyes came fully open. She sat up and was sweating for real. It was yet another dream. Had she slept back or did she have a dream in a dream? She couldn't tell. She was panting hard and crying. She heard feet hurrying towards her door, and feared it was another dream, or she'd indeed see Mohammed coming in. She clutched the old blanket she used, and hugged dearly at her knees. Immediately the door came open, she screamed again but soon stopped. The reflection of the moon outside illuminated her father's features through the open door. She was relieved, but obviously still petrified.

“Gimbiya, I heard you scream, twice. Me ya faru?” Somehow, the concern in her father’s voice as he called her princess, and asked what happened was soothing. But she only felt soothed for half a second, for soon, she began to cry.

“Baba... Baba...” Those were the only words she could muster out. He knew better not to make her tell her dream at such time. He only held her, trying to calm her as she cried. And soon, the sun was up.

“Imran, something is surely wrong with that girl. She has changed in the past 3 days. She walks funny, she has been quiet and withdrawn. And besides the screaming at night, I have seen her scratching and scratching her vagina. You had better ask her.” Halima had said to her husband that evening as he returned from the site. He mistook Halima telling him all this as a hidden concern she had for Zarah. But when he voiced that she should call and talk to her in a motherly way, she flared up.

“Is she my child? Eh, tell me. Isn’t she yours? God forbid for me to have a child like that.” Imran reached points of provocation. He wanted to hit her so bad, if only that would shut her bad talk about Zarah, his Zarah. His little Gimbiya. But at that moment, his concern for his little princess surpassed every other thing. Especially Halima.

Imran called out to Zarah. He was sitting at the back of the house, on a chair under the pawpaw tree. That was usually where he sat to listen to the news in Hausa on radio, or sometimes, tell Zarah stories. The two pawpaw trees, tall and slender at the trunk with narrow branches and few fruits which all met together at the top, provided a decent shade beneath. Imran had a bowl of fura da nono beside him, which was almost empty by the time Zarah came. Halima was an expert at molding the millet into fist-sized balls, as well as getting the fermented milk in the right consistency – not too thick like yoghurt, nor watery either.

She had brought her little stool with her. The stool she otherwise used in place of the large mat, whenever she wanted to sit out. She looked solemn as she set the stool quietly and sat on it. She reminded him of her mother then –her submissive, quiet, beautiful mother.

“Should I narrate your favorite story?” He asked with a smile, trying to lighten the mood before he fully dived into their discussion. She said nothing but rather stared at him blankly. She wore an expressionless look. The only visible movements were her occasional blinking eyes, and her hands trying desperately to avoid scratching at her vagina.

He spent about an hour trying to get her to say a word. But all she did was stare and

scratch. Scratch, and stare, and blink. If only he could read her mind. She wished he could, so she wouldn't have to recount the experience on the site in words. Imran unfortunately, was no mind reader. He decided to allow her go, but not after resolving within himself to take her to the hospital the following day.

"Maybe she is unwell," he thought.

The doctor at the General hospital was warm and friendly. She was a short, chubby, pleasant British woman with a shoulder-length brunette. She wore rounded spectacles above her pale blue eyes. She was a specialized gynecologist and Dr. 'Lazeez, from Sima hospital had referred Imran to pay her a visit at the General hospital. While she put Zarah in a room, she came out after 30minutes to speak with him. She had said a lot of things, and it was difficult hearing past her accent.

Imran had gone numb after his conversation with her. Dr. Sherlock informed him Zarah had vaginitis, and thus the constant scratching. She also went on to tell him that several things could cause vaginitis ranging from bacterial vaginosis (BV), to vaginal yeast infection... Intercourse. She had paused then, her emphasis on intercourse, making Baba look at her sternly, demanding what she implied.

"Are you saying, Madam, that my daughter has been having intercourse? Unbelievable!" He exclaimed, his anger rising as he slapped his palm on her little wooden desk. The sound made her give a little jump. She adjusted herself in her seat, and began in a very calm voice.

"No sir, I'm not implying that..."

"Then what are you implying?" He cut her off as he rose.

"Your daughter is a victim of rape." She said, with urgency in her voice. Imran sat back slowly. Had this woman just said what he thinks he heard her say? Probably not. It was probably the accent.

She went on to explain how during the examination process, she had found several injuries just at the entrance of the girl's vagina. He was dumbfounded as he left the tiny office slowly. He thought about her, and how scared she must be. He began connecting the dots- her silence, the screams at night, the day on the site. He thought about when he sent Mohammed to accompany his young child, and how they had stayed a little longer than usual. He thought he had noticed her wiping her tears in the darkness after they returned, and how fidgety Mohammed became also after they returned. She was happy and normal before then.

"Mohammed!"

He let the gasp escape as the realization hit him. He clenched his fists and teeth. What had he done? He would have time to kill Mohammed later, but first, he had to get to his frightened little girl.

Zarah was lying on her side, with her knees bent outwards when he came in. He looked at her and wondered where to begin. She turned over to face him then, and noticed he had been crying. She frowned a little, wondering what could have made her father cry. But still, she said nothing. She tried not to make eye contacts. She intended to pretend she had not seen the tears at the corner of his eyes. She didn't want him to feel embarrassed that she had noticed them. He feigned a smile, but she could tell it wasn't genuine.

He didn't want to have to confront her with such an ugly scene, but he had to. He needed to. She turned and faced the white painted wall again which had most of its paint peeled off. The ceiling looked like large white square boxes fitted together. Some of the boxes though, had openings in them, some were missing completely, and others had brown patches from the leak in the roof. There was an old chair. It had to be rested against the wall for support as one of the legs was bad. The bed creaked each time she moved or adjusted her body. The tears rolled uncontrollably now from her eyes, to the bridge of her nose, to her other eye, and down to her elbow, which was folded, with her palm beneath her head.

“Yes, Baba. It was Mohammed.” She managed to say amidst tears. Imran felt the stab of the betrayal by his coworker and friend.

On Zarah's discharge later that evening, Dr. Sherlock tried to persuade Imran to let Zarah see a therapist. “She needs therapy to rehabilitate from this trauma.” She had insisted, trying to get him to reason with her. He only thanked her and said that was not his decision alone to make. “Africans don't believe a child's parents are the only ones who own the child. But other family members, as well as the community had a say. The parents may have the final word, but they definitely didn't have the only say.” He would have gone on to tell her more – of how any elderly person could scold or punish your child for wrongs done. Or how people outside could teach morals to a child, or send her on errands... But he didn't feel like it, nor did he have the time, and so he left without saying anymore.

Imran had no idea how to handle the situation. What was he to do? The shame. The humiliation. The fingers that would be pointing at his house from then on. The stories they would tell behind their backs. But beyond all these, he thought about Zarah. Halima had

only made everything worse when he confided in her. She had jeered, and sneered, and snorted. She made remarks, and spoke proverbs. She had said it all along, hadn't she? The girl and her mother are simply cursed. She sang mocking songs and walked out of the room, dragging her slippers in the hard concrete and adjusting her wrapper at her side. Just as she got out of Imran's room, she saw Zarah heading towards the kitchen. Halima walked past her, but not before she whispered to her, "you had better convince your father to marry you out to your rapist. It's better for everyone anyway." If Zarah had tried forgetting it, she had Halima on standby; constantly ready to remind her.

Alhaji Imran's compound was packed full that evening. His extended family members had come from far and near; within Katsina and without to attend the meeting, as custom demanded. His seven sons were present at the meeting as well. Only the males were allowed to sit at the meeting. Their women were either left at home, or assisted in the kitchen. None of the other children were allowed to attend either, but Kamal was, being that he was the last male in Imran's family, and a direct relative of Zarah. The oldest man in the family was close to ninety. The older men called him *yaya*, while the younger ones called him *kaka*. They called him that though he was neither the men's big brother, nor the children's grandfather. He was rather their granduncle – an elder brother to Kamal's grandfather. He was frail and very old. His sight had dimmed so much, but he wasn't completely blind. He walked very slowly, cane in one hand, human support by the other. He wasn't just the oldest man in the family, but also the second oldest man in Dutsin-ma community. The community chief was also invited to the meeting, as well as Mohammed and his male family members. Two elderly men from the community were also invited to serve as witnesses.

The men all sat on mats, despite their large number. Imran had initially told Halima that he wanted the meal served before the meeting began. "It's going to be long. And the heat of it later would not allow us room to break and eat," he explained.

After all the men had arrived and were all seated, the women came in carrying trays, wash-hand basins with water in them, plates, drinking water and cups, as well as flasks of *nyiiri* and *haako*. The men were excited and dug in immediately, praising the women for their wonderful cooking as they swallowed. They ate with their hands, and licked their fingers as they made merry. Although Mohammed's family enjoyed the feast, they also wondered why they had been summoned. "Maybe Imran wanted to give out his daughter in marriage, but that wasn't the custom," they thought. Loud sounds of belching filled the compound. It was always a sign the women looked forward to. Somehow, to them, it signified that the men were satisfied and pleased with the food. With the woman who had cooked it. And in fact at such times, the woman could ask almost any-

thing of her husband, and he almost wouldn't refuse.

Yaya Mustapha, the oldest man in Imran's family, and the second oldest in the community was the first to rise to open the meeting. All the men respected him, and immediately fell silent as he rose to speak. There had been loud chatters during, and even after the meal. He was slow in speech, picking his words one after the other, but he definitely knew what he was saying.

Uncle Boro, Imran's immediate elder brother, had taken over from Yaya Mustapha. When Imran leveled the accusation against Mohammed, he jumped to his feet and vehemently denied. Imran was raged at his audacity to deny. He swore heaven and hell that he hadn't touched the girl. He swore he had only accompanied her upon Imran's request. The more he denied, the more he swore, the more outraged Imran got. While the whole compound was in disarray, Imran snuck to the side of the house and fetched his machete. He headed straight for Mohammed. He had murder in his eyes. He was ready to behead the man if he wasn't going to own up to his crime. He didn't mind the consequences. It would at least be justice on behalf of his daughter.

In the flash of light, Imran was holding Mohammed by the throat, with his machete raised in the air. It was his time to swear. He swore he would strike Mohammed if he didn't own up. If he didn't confess. Everyone shouted to Imran and pleaded with him from a distance, but no one dared go close. Those who never had been victims of his dangerous wrath had at least heard tales. Mohammed shook with fear, probably seeing his entire life flash in seconds, and seeing just how close he was to the afterlife. It took Yaya Mustapha's shaky, calm voice to make Imran lower the machete and loosen his grip. It was a voice he very much respected. Imran left him completely, but continued to eye him dangerously.

Mohammed choked and coughed after Imran had let go of him. And without being asked again, he confessed what he had done to Zarah by the rocks on the site. His family stood in disbelief staring at him like they had no idea who he was. Maybe they really didn't know who this man-beast was. Mohammed was the youngest male in his family, and also the most quiet and reserved. To think that he was capable of such an act shook them all. They would have expected such from his wild elder brother, but not him.

"You are going to get married to the girl, and bring a sum of 300,000 naira to her family to compensate for damages and all." Uncle Boro announced the verdict to the hearing of everyone in the compound.

Mohammed was about to protest, but one look at Imran silenced him. He nodded slowly,

shifting uncomfortably on the spot he sat on the mat. He already had a wife and 3 boys to take care of. He barely had enough to feed them, and here was an added responsibility.

Kamal sat, itching to speak. Itching to defend his sister, even if it were the last time. "Zarah wouldn't want that." He thought, the words almost rolling off his tongue. But he said nothing. Imran's oldest son, Farouk, was the only one asked and permitted to speak.

"She'd be more honourable as wife," he said simply and conclusively.

Kamal looked at him, at his father, at everyone else in the compound. He looked at his father again, and their eyes met. "Please do something Baba. Don't let Zarah be taken away. She won't live through it. She won't forgive us. She won't forgive me." Kamal pleaded with his eyes. They held so much at that time. Beyond pleas, his eyes held water. They held tears ready to drop for his sister. Imran looked away, and the meeting came to a close. He didn't want to have to see his guilt through his son's eyes. He had failed Zarah as a protector and as a father. Zarah had made Kamal promise that he wouldn't let them decide to take her away. That he wouldn't let her be married out to Mohammed, at least, not while she was still only ten. But he had failed her. He had broken his promise with his silence...

... Zarah looked away from the camera. The tears clouded her vision, and the sobs choked her. She didn't think she could go on telling her sad, sad tale, but she knew that wasn't an option. The audience seemed to be held spell bound, staring on at her, almost feeling her pain. She gratefully collected the handkerchief which Lola handed out to her. She dabbed at her eyes and inhaled deeply, smiling through the tears.

"I'm sorry" she began.

"I might have not fought physical wars like Queen Amina but my own kind of battles began at this point." Zarah broke off in another sob.

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



COLOURS

If we pay very close attention, we will realize more often than not that certain occurrences and emotions stir up different colors and hues in our mind's eye. Recently I phased out of a very challenging period in my life when I yearned for wealth, success and Power and transitioned into another disturbing phase anchored by depression; a state of inferiority complex due to unrequited love. My environment took up a sad blue hue unlike the usual happy bright yellow hue I used to see in my mind's eye; how this happened under my watch is not really a mystery.

After staying for a whole month avoiding my friends and not returning their calls, they storm into my house unannounced as I lie-down on my bed staring at the ceiling in the abnormal way I recently got accustomed to.

"Hey you! Why are you just there like a widow?" Blessing asks rather rudely.

"She even left her door open, this is serious oh. Ugbede what is wrong with you? How can you just shut us out and not even have the decency to return our calls or even respond to our messages?" Chichi scolds. "Answer me!"

“Chi it’s not like that, I’ve been...”

“Hello stranger!” Lydia cuts in as she walks in with a tray of cupcakes and finally shuts the door behind her. “A lot of shit has been going down in my absence and attention has to be paid” Lydia beams. Suddenly, my mind’s eye catches a brief spark of sunflower yellow.

“So tell us...is it because of that guy you have a ridiculous crush on?” Blessing asks playfully as she pulls me up into a sitting position. They all join me on my bed.

“I have been dating and falling in and out of love since my teenage years. I’m approaching thirty and love still hasn’t found me. I’m so exhausted! The truth is that I’m love sick! In fact, I am sick of love itself! I feel so blue!” I wail rather dramatically.

This is the first time I have ever tried to shoot my shot at a guy and I missed. I spent almost three months shamelessly declaring my feelings to him and he eventually linked up with me only to have a roll in the hay and disappear.

“You also changed his name from Dan to Candycrush on your phone,” Chichi chips in. “...and painted an erotic artwork of both of you” Blessing adds.

“All this has been happening and I’m just finding out?” Lydia jokingly complains as she hands each of us a cupcake. As I bite into the deep brown chocolate cupcake .

I cannot help but appreciate my absentee friend for putting so much effort into baking a cake with the sole aim of putting a smile on my face and awakening my taste buds.

“My dear Lydia, between your depressing bank job and your baking classes you barely have time to brush your teeth let alone babysit a lovesick puppy” Chichi states waving her arms and rolling her eyes dramatically.

“Will I ever find love?” I lament like a lonely voice in the wilderness.

“Enough of this madness abeg! What is it sef? Baby girl, you needed to scratch an itch and you did. My never ending problem with you is that you always throw your emotions into everything. Abeg get over it and let us hear word” Blessing scolds.

“Blessing you don’t get it, the short time we spent together was like a pink dream” I respond sadly.

“Look at this one oh! Biko how did pink enter the picture?... this unnecessary grammar you are blowing is not helping matters oh.” Chichi mocks.

“You really can’t understand. He has this boyish charm, animated smile and sure gait. The childlike blend of his personality and features lent the room a pinkish hue.” I respond feeling rather silly.

“I think the actual colour or “hue” you saw was the wild red of Eros” Lydia jokes.

“You are not helping Lydia, let me and Blessing tackle this girl. If we leave her she will

end up falling for a painter for changing the paint on her wall from purple to “pink”.” With her last words we all burst out laughing and the deep blue hue around me transitions to sky blue; I feel lighter.

“But seriously babe, what has come over you? Lately you have been settling for everything and anything and I really don’t get it at all. You are an amazing person and anyone who can’t see it should go to hell! How can you be pining over a man who does not even regard you enough to check up on you after a “roll in the hay” like you put it? I think you also need to leave that crappy job because I think it is causing a decline in your self esteem” Chichi rants as she rubs my back.

“Forget him and move on dear, there are many fishes in the ocean” Blessing adds.

“Gbam!” Chichi slams down.

“Come on! It is not that bad. You didn’t have to avoid us because you got your heart broken by a stranger. Just work on developing yourself and improving your worth financially and emotionally; love will find you when you least expect it.

Chichi pulls me into a bear hug as she rubs my back in a manner that has become a habit.

“Group hug!” Lydia yells happily as she joins in

“Abeg you people should stop being dramatic abeg, she didn’t return from fighting a bloody war. She toasted a good looking guy via a social media platform and tumbled into bed with him. After indulging in such a steamy encounter she still expects me to hug her and...”

“Come here jor! Always forming hard babe when you are actually the mushy one” Lydia teases as she pulls Blessing into our group hug.

Encased in the embrace of my three friends, I feel warm, happy and loved. The sky blue hue of my environment fades out and in comes the bright sunflower yellow of Lydia’s calm but happy soul, The electric purple of Blessing’s tough but permeable spirit and the warm orange of Chichi’s motherly presence. The collision of all three colours sends a burst of fireworks into the sky, which cascade all around us.

True friends are like warm and happy colours. They seep their essence into you and restore lost bright colours into your life when all around you seems blue. So what if I didn’t succeed in captivating and keeping my “Candycrush”? It doesn’t mean my beauty is inferior or that I am not good enough as a person; some things are not just meant to be... but God knows I still hope against hope deep down that our stars will cross again and align properly. In the meantime, I still have my dear friends who make me feel blessed and always make it a point of duty to splash happy colours on my treacherous and restless heart.

THE OBSERVER

With Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



THE MISSING TEETH DEBACLE

In Southern Africa, Cape Coloureds (Afrikaans: Kaapse Kleurling) is the name given to an ethnic group composed primarily of persons of mixed race. Although Cape Coloureds form a minority group within Southern Africa, they are the predominant population group in the Western Cape province of South Africa. They are generally bilingual, though some speak only Afrikaans and others primarily speak English. Some Cape Coloureds may “code switch”, speaking a patois of Afrikaans and English called Kaapse Afrikaans also known as Cape Slang (Capy) or “Kombuis Afrikaans”, meaning Kitchen Afrikaans. Cape Coloureds were defined under the apartheid regime as a subset of the larger Coloured race group. These people are known for dental modification. They remove their top incisor teeth for reasons best known to them. Explanations put forth range from sensible to ridiculous. Apparently, the teeth removal tradition has been in existence for the past 1500 years- the Cape Flats smile, as it is affectionately known.

The origin of the Cape Flats smile, more commonly known as a passion gap, has long been regarded as one of Cape Town’s biggest mysteries. This form of dental mutilation, which involves a person removing their front incisors to leave a small mouth chasm, has

become as synonymous with the Mother City as Table Mountain, gatsby sandwiches and the Kaapse Klopse; yet, like I alluded to previously, very little concrete information about the motivation behind this so-called craze exists.

Some claim that a Cape Flats smile is a distinguishable feature of all coloured Capetonians. Others insist that it's a form of fashion, and then there are those that say it's the result of medical reasons. I wanted to know the truth though: can this act of tooth extraction be pinned down as a rite of passage, ancient ritual, social trend or consequence of poor dental hygiene?

What the numbers say...

Over the course of my day long research, the first thing I realised is that though the evolution of this practice hasn't been so well documented, a few academics have conducted relevant studies. Most recently, two Cape Town-based academics compiled an in-depth report that assessed popular ideas and theories surrounding this fad and that addressed anthropological studies and archaeological findings that could shed some light on the phenomenon.

University of Cape Town (UCT) lecturers, Dr Jacqui Friedling and Professor Alan Morris polled 2167 Cape Town residents between the ages of 15 and 83 from eight neighbouring areas in the Cape's Northern Suburbs. They found that 41% of the group had extracted their teeth, and of those who had, 42.6% did so due to peer pressure, 36.3% did so to be fashionable, 11% did so because of medical or accidental reasons and 10.1% did so because of gang influence.

What history says...

The second interesting point that I came across is that passion gaps may have much more of a historical background than originally thought. In fact, archaeologists and anthropologists have documented several instances of African tooth alteration throughout the centuries, some dating back as far as prehistoric eras. These modifications varied according to tribe, area and culture, and skeletal remains have been found with filed, chipped, stained and even jewel-encrusted teeth. The first evidence of dental modification in South Africa was found in the Broederstroom area (close to Pretoria) in skeletons that date back to the late Iron Age (approximately 1500 years ago or 500AD). Other tales even claim that Cape Malay slaves would purposefully extract their teeth to take back control of their bodies, and then there are theories that assert that slave masters removed their slaves' teeth to prevent the captives from biting through their ropes when they were tied up at night. I even came across some rumours that state that the Bushmen were relieved of their pearly whites to stop them from being able to 'click' in their mother tongue.

What the grapevine says...

Of course though, I couldn't delve into the 123s of passion gaps without talking about

the origin of the nickname. One of the most widely purported myths about the Cape Flats smile asserts that coloured Capetonians extract their top four incisors for sexual reasons, which, incidentally, is where the term 'passion gaps' comes from. While some gap-wearers have confessed that kissing without front teeth is better, it stands to be determined whether those with a Cape Flats smile are truly better lovers.

Fishermen, on the other hand, insist that their people started extracting their anterior teeth so that they could whistle louder and better, a skill needed on the rough and rowdy seas. Interestingly enough, it has been said that older fishermen in Canada also removed their teeth to communicate while out on the open waters.

What the catwalk says...

Throughout my research, the one constant that seemed to surface and resurface is the fact that passion gaps are fashionable. And even though you won't see runway models – anywhere – sporting major gaps in their front teeth, the general consensus is that the toothless grin is as much of an accessory as jewellery and that having dentures (especially decorated ones) is cool and very stylish.

That said, it is not clear how this particular look came to be en vogue. According to a 16-year-old learner from Delft (a high density suburb in Cape Town), very few actually have their choppers removed to emulate rappers who sport grills. He claims, rather, that many people have their teeth extracted for aesthetic reasons, removing infected or ugly-looking (not-so) pearly whites.

Gang influence

There is a growing belief that the trend of dental modification has strong ties to gang initiations and prison life, but there is very little concrete evidence to support this theory. A "member" (authentication not verified) of one of the biggest crews in the Cape revealed that the actual act of tooth extraction has, to his knowledge, very little to do with gang initiations. On the contrary, he reports that getting decorated dentures and grills is a trend amongst the upper echelons of criminal organisations. It seems that dental fixtures become symbols of status, with some inlaid with diamonds, gold, platinum and other jewels; these sets can cost USD1,000 or more. Oftentimes, gang members will have symbols embedded in their false teeth to show their affiliation with a particular group.

Food for thought

In the end, while it seems like pinning down the root of this dental craze is about as easy as growing a new molar, one thing is for sure: it doesn't seem as though passion gaps will be going out of fashion any time soon... At least for this class of the people of COLOUR.

WSA REVIEWS

A Review of the April Edition of WSA

Reviewers:

Adejuwon Gbalajobi (Nigeria)

Nehemiah Omukhonya (Kenya)

Funminiyi Akinrinade (Nigeria)

Himi Asulu (Nigeria)

Esther Musembi (Kenya)

Tega Greats (Nigeria)

Aniyom Obo Dien (Nigeria)

Samuel Otokpa (Nigeria)





In the words of the Chief Editor's Mum, Food is likened to a compulsory subject. A prerequisite for living. A sine qua non to the existence of human beings.

In the poetry category, there are 20 beautifully cooked meals for humans' eyes consumption. In fact, it turns out to be the bulkiest submissions and compilations thus far in the history of WSA's literary magazine. Who doesn't adore food? Certainly no one.

POETRY REVIEW

In Markham Marcus Kafui's poem: "FOOL'S FOOD", the poem is a satirical work, that speaks against the ills of the fool's food (the preachers who don't do what they preach, the leaders who act contrary to what they say).

A spoken words poet once said: "don't preach decency if you really lack the senses".

It's evident in the 7th verse:

"But one thing we don't not know

Why those who lead us

Should also be led.

In order words, the food (rules, norms, polices, doctrines...) they accepted to lead them made them fools, because they've deviated from their true nature – what they're known for.

It's a well versed poem, even though it exceeded (29 lines) the maximum number of lines (24).

Onwuegbuna Nneka Liza in her poem: “FOOD” (22 lines with uneven lines per verse),” gives a clear similarity between human beings and food. Since both human beings and food items have their place beneath/on the surface of the earth. She brought to our consciousness that food shares the same experiences, nature, seasons, phases, death, and afterlife with humans.

This is evident in the images she wonderfully drew: in verse one, the heartache, pain, true/lost love...

In verse two, the sun, the heat, the rain, the harmattan...

In verse three, the season, the growth, the maturity, and the consumption.

In verse four, the old age, and the death.

In the last verse: the afterlife.

It's a beautiful poem that glorifies FOOD in its entirety.

In Nonhlanhla Lisa Mtema's poem: “UGLY BIRTHDAY DINNER”. It is quite ironical that the beauty of this poem opposes the ugliness of the birthday dinner. The persona carefully carves out words in a prose-poetry form. Her choice of words is enticing to one's mind, mouth, and eyes, as her use of simile still speaks of food. E.g: ...relaxed as couch potatoes. Like peppers, so was it attitude (in different forms and colors)...

The persona illustrates the lifestyle of a man that's unappreciative of her wife's good deeds. His birthday isn't an exemption. Despite, the sumptuous meal prepared by his wife to celebrate his birthday, it eventually turns out to be ugly. Because ugliness is the man's nature. Both in words and in deeds. The poem ends in a beautifully ugly way: the persona employs oxymoron (bitter sweet) — for after eating the sweet and delicious food, he still abuses his wife (bitter).

It's indeed a brilliantly penned poem.

Rehema kasanga's poem: “CHICKENED”. In 27 lines (above the maximum number of lines), the persona describes the glorious death that behoves the chicken — death by knife.

It's popularly said, that there are many ways to kill a chicken, same way a single road doesn't lead to the market entry.

The persona poetically explains how breath can be extracted from a chicken till it becomes a served meal. This is obvious in the diction used: killing (by knife), feather's pulled out (after soaked in boiled water), browning smooth skin...

The lesson to be learnt from the life and death of a chicken: a time will come when the chicken will no longer cock-a-doodle-doo or quack. It shows the nothingness of life.

Vanity upon vanity. A time when no one will be there for you, just your body being fed to the worms in the soil. It's an amazing write and read.

In Daniel Ajayi's poem: "FLUSOUP". The persona speaks little of the soup. I yearn to see the ingredients used in cooking the soup, how it's cooked, and what makes it enjoyable. Instead, the persona speaks greatly of other meals in Africa: the likes of Egusi dancing with a plate of Semolina, Amagwinya' Vetkoek that groove(s) the shaft of mouth, the famous Ugali and Skuma wiki that attract the spirit man to forget what time is it, Githeri that makes the intestine(s) smile all in one accord, Kitfo that makes granny look sixteen, and likewise gives long life.

Indeed, the richness of black lies in our unique and special meals.

It's a wonderfully written poem.

Tonight - by Cynthia K Matala is a one-stanza poem with 8 lines. It is amazing how such a short piece can speak about so much. The optimistic mood of the poem is well brought out in a cheerful tone. The persona paints the picture of a cafeteria where they shall be meeting someone (if not several people). The persona is so hopeful that there will be delicious food - referred to in the poem as stars. This shows that it is a special type of food, and the meeting is well-planned (also evident by the persona showing us that the chandelier is well wiped, and will produce clear light). Bellies are referred to as firmaments (what would make someone refer to their stomach as heaven?) This is a special occasion. The mention of decanters shows that the persona intends for there to be wine or generally, liquor.

This is a tale of love and someone who values time with the people they are meeting (goes ahead to plan everything so that the occasion will be perfect).

This is a great poem.

Foodgasm by Kalkidan Getnet reads prosaic. It is a tale well told; of two lovebirds who enjoy a delicious meal - creamy carbonara spaghetti (this name alone makes me salivate). The mood of the poem can be said to be a romantic one.

The writer relies on the use of imagery, and the two lovebirds are holding dialogue all through the poem. "... I feel the warmth down my throat" - strong imagery, right?

Apart from the poem being a bit too wordy, making it prosaic, and one wonders if it can be modified into a flash fiction, it is well written.

But still, would cutting on the wordiness of the poem to make it more poetic really paint the romantic picture the writer intended?

Overall, a great poem it is.

Dinner - by Christina H Lwendi is a poem that speaks of poverty, infidelity, disappointment and regret. The sad tone of the poem creates a sorrowful mood as one reads through.

The persona paints the picture of a broken home; broken because of the disappointment in both parties. Both the wife and husband use the words "it's all we have, it's

all we can feed on". This shows that they have given up, and have accepted their poor state.

The imagery in this piece makes it so fascinating. The wife is said to see a 'bowl full of disappointments'. She remembers the (empty) promises she was given; probably what lured her into this marriage. The wife is also shown as an unlucky individual because even her previous lover turned out to disappoint her.

It could also be said that the husband never came to realize his dreams because of the many mistresses he had. He could have spent most of his time and resources that were available to him on the mistresses and never built his future; a future where he has come to feed on porridge dinner. A lesson can be picked here, that one should focus on the wife he marries and avoid having mistresses. They can build a great future together.

The wife wishes she could abandon the marriage. Great word-play comes in here as there is the use of "It's time to leave, It's time to live".

This is a sad poem that shows the state of many people in marriage. The poem, however, is made of 31 lines (WSA Magazine requires not more than 24 lines for every poem).

All in all, this is a well written poem.

Food is like Fire by Ignatius Bambaiha is a poem with 4 stanzas making 19 lines. It is a free verse. The persona wonders how food, an essential, is the source of the problems he/she faces, and has to avoid it. Isn't this the case in our society? Haven't we had cases where those who are so important to us end up hurting us over and over again? Haven't we thought of staying away from them but we find it so difficult? Ironic, right?

In the fifth line of the first stanza, I feel the writer used one too many adjectives to describe the brain disorder. This, however, doesn't deprive the poem of its great touch.

Food for Thought by Kamau Ngumbu, A one-stanza poem consisting of 16 lines. This poem paints the picture of a small boy who is thinking of running away from home; running away from his abusive father. The father's abusive nature forced the boy's mother to run away, leaving the boy behind.

This is a sad tale and the persona feels sorry for this little boy, who has to endure beatings and staying hungry for days - he had thoughts for food .

The use of imagery is great, and the writer throws in a few rhymes here and there.

The poem is well-written.

In the Home of Agriculture and Tradition , Olaseni Precious talked about the richness of the African forest; the diverse good the trees, fibres and herbs do to the body. The diction of the poem is plain and it lacks figurative expression, but still, the poet did

well in telling of the riches inside the forest.

Nehemiah Omukhonya's *The Last Supper* is a tragic poem of a supper gone wrong, a supper that led to the death of three kids. However, the poet left the cause of the death our imagination, maybe it was a deliberate poisoning by their stepmother or unhealthy hygiene or a mistake in the ingredients used.

The poem raised a lot of question because of its undefined setting. Perhaps it is a village that's why they couldn't see medical attention. Like most of the poems in this issue, the poem's language is very literal. There is hardly any figure of speech there but it still manages to provoke a mood in the reader.

The War Zone by Israel Winlad is one of the best poem in this edition. One prevailing element used all through the poem is oxymoron. The first line reads:

"A war zone is an arena of peace invaded by hatred."

The poem talked about the inhumanity of man in the war zone (earth). How that man is "a god commanding life out of others."

The diction of the poet is perfect. The use of metaphor and imagery gave the poem an excellent delivery, especially in the very last verse.

For Maria by Joy Ng'ethe is beautiful love poem. Here, the poet likens his lover to food.

In Verse 1, his lover is his

"Warm bowl of pumpkin soup."

The sweet smell of cinnamon in my morning tea..."

This is used to describe the sweetness of his lover.

The diction of this poem is rich and carefully selected. The poet has a way of using similes to describe things, his lover's shape. In verse 2 we read:

"With a body shaped as the gourds in grandmother's farm,
Hands as soft as the mashed potatoes with skimmed milk..."

Although the poem has no form structure, it is very rich in poetic elements.

Omadang Yowasi's *Kill Your Anxiety* is a didactic poem that talked about balancing. The poet used food to mirror life in a way. The persona spoke like the wise Hebrew King Solomon in giving advice to his son. To him, appetite should be satiated but his son must desist from gluttony- contentment.

I found lots of wisdom hiding behind each line, though they read just like an advice for good eating. In line 9, we read:

"Kill your anxiety (though I felt anxiety should be replaced with desire, or longing) for spiced food; food like fire(,) burns." This is the persona telling his son to resist excessive desire for the flashy things of life, which are the "lust of the eyes" that imperils the soul.

The poem also delves into the good in giving to unknown people and the role of providence (the Divine). This poem is rich thematically with a beautiful use of language.

FLASH FICTION REVIEW

At the flash fiction session we have Linamarin by Kilibwa Kanyangi from Kenya and the award winning flash fiction piece by Maryhilda Ibe, Fragments.

Maryhilda Ibe's Fragments is a heartrending story of survival and abuse. It is a story about the world's cruelty on a girl. Tho the character wasn't named, one could feel the burdens she carried at just twelve years of age.

The story exposed the vulnerability of the girl-child, and with her penchant for vivid imagery, the writer showed us how the world and men can be cruel on vulnerable girls.

Githeri, traditional meal of maize and legumes, mostly beans of any type mixed and boiled together, is a mean meal. A jumble of personalities; an unhealthy relationship at best. And Bibi should have known, she should have eaten it in moderation, had she done so, she wouldn't have need to wake her boyfriend in the middle of the night unable to talk with a belly as hard as stone.

There is nothing really striking in this story (or maybe I missed it) so I couldn't say much on it.

SHORT STORIES REVIEW

The little brown bean who wanted to become a hotdog by Ogbu Eme

To be honest, this was the most awaited edition, at least on my part. I couldn't wait to see what people would come up with having discarded piece after piece. I wasn't disappointed. Seems food has a rich content, no pun intended.

The above title is a story in the children's literature. Writing for children seems easy but it's not that straightforward sometimes. I most especially loved that the author delved right in. From the title to the first line, the story started on a high note which is good because as much as kids love a good story, they can get bored easily with too much detail.

The writer used simple language that is most definitely suitable for a young audience. In addition, the adjectives chosen were spot on. The audience can relate the little brown bean. Everyone has eaten brown beans. It's not a foreign concept for us. The little description also serves to bring this bean character into life. He's little but he wants to become 'big', in the sense that he wants to be just as important as a hotdog.

The use of simple names for the pig and cow makes the characters more relatable. The kids will definitely relate to a cow called Moo Cow and a pig called Porky Pig, right?

Also, not to forget the tortoise who has always been the epitome of wisdom in African traditional, and this time, modern, stories

Sticking to the theme of food, the writer painted a good picture of kids who love hot-

dogs, one of favourite fast foods in this generation. Subtly, we are brought to the idea that people are choosing to have fast foods more than they will conventional healthy foods. This is nicely tied to the dilemma the little bean finds himself in. He wants to be chosen, to be eaten, to feel important, that he still matters.

Apart from being a wonderful story about a little bean, it serves to teach us that self-acceptance is important. No matter how small the role we play is, it's still a role. A great lesson for both adults and kids.

This was a well-written story that could be read by both African and non-African kids.

A Recipe's Soul by Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe

The Story "A Recipe's Soul" by Kimberly Chirodzero is quite descriptive and narrative. In this story, Tafadzwa also called Taffy though nervous always believed in herself and her abilities as a chef.

She was determined to achieve her goal, despite the obstacles and crisis she had on her marriage. Furthermore, a core aspect of this story is that food is a cultural phenomenon. Taffy's recipes go beyond just the taste of the food, but it's cultural characteristics and values.

Taffy's ability to adapt to all those cultures gave her the room to go in depth in describing the recipes and ingredients she used, in making the recipes. That gave her the ability to connect more with the judges in a more conventional and familiar manner.

Finally her pursuit to achieve her dream was second to none.

The Author's purpose in this story was to showcase the fact that a recipe is not just based on the taste or the making, but the cultural phenomenon that comes with it and that makes it an existing being that has a soul. I believe the author should have provided a basis for Taffy's interest in making different recipes and the reason behind her love for different recipes and the love for different cultures.

The story line is great and very interactive.

ESSAYS

Food! Food!! Food!!! We all love it. Is there anyone who does not? I think not. The April 2019 edition of the magazine is the largest ever – this shows that all humans have and can speak a food language.

The first essay by Meaza Akilu is the shortest among the five entries. The Writer shares her fascination of a local delicacy Tihlo. As I read, I was able to take in this special dough ball served with meat stew and chilli peppers. Seeing the picture of some locals devouring the dish made me salivate and hungry. Notwithstanding, any reader would be confused about the preparation of Tihlo:

Is the dough made from barley flour which is gotten by moistening and roasting barely grain?

If not, which “barley flour” is made by pouring room temperature water into a container bit by bit?

Aside the little confusion about the preparation of the meat balls, the accidental usage of “rolls” instead of “roll” and the societal norm which disallows whoever makes a dish of Tihlo from eating of it, the essay is a fine one. Could this be Tihlo?

By the time I got around to reading Adeyemi’s *Food: Substance for a Healthy Life*, I had eaten a sumptuous meal of Okro soup and garri with a bottle of coke.

While there is a lot to glean from the essay (the use of a rich vocabulary, education about the role of nutrients in body health and the importance of foods to having a productive life), the Author leaves readers desiring more.

Firstly, what connection is there between “eat what you wish and let the food fight it out inside” and leading a healthy life? For instance, I have had quite a number of carbonated drinks to the extent that my teeth now aches after tasting the tiniest bit of sugar content. Should I listen to the signs and desist from abusing sugar or do I continue endlessly with my romance of bottles with the hope that my choice of food (drink) will fight it out inside?

Secondly, the Writer was inconsistent in the discussion of the nutrients. In paragraph two, he talks about five major nutrients (although only four are listed) needed to remain healthy and productive. Moving onto paragraph three, “Protein” a nutrient which was obviously omitted as vital in the last paragraph is introduced first. By the end of that paragraph, the Writer forgets to list foods rich in Vitamins/Minerals and makes no mention at all of Fibre and Water – ain’t a balanced diet without the Fantastic Seven!

The choice of tenses and punctuations renders paragraph three and four difficult to read. Therein lies the descent to the summit of the article – one has to carefully climb down to avoid slipping.

In conclusion, being Africans, the Author does not point out what “contemporary foods” are. Since we can’t go back to being babies (who could have thought breast milk is the cure to longevity), I will advise everyone to “eat what they wish; the food will fight it out inside to stay us going sturdy”.

INSIDE AFRICA by Tega Greats. Though an article, I love how it began. The first 3 lines got my attention and made me desire for more. Speaking about Food, the persona began by taking the reader on a saga into the Continent of Africa to explore the various delicacies that she is blessed with. First off was into North Africa, where she gave insight on the people who are from there as predominantly Muslims and why they eat what they eat (this shows that, the food we eat varies based on our traditions

and religions). I think justice was done to this, as one seldom talk about North African meals, without mentioning spices like turmeric, ginger, etc. Diving into a different part of Africa – Eastern Africa. The writer succinctly describes the various popular delicacies served, and how best they are served. Her use of well-detailed descriptions of the meals is just good, (created beautiful images in my mind that makes me salivate).

The persona went further onto exposing to the reader popular meals served in the southern parts of Africa(I've never known S/ Africans with “pap”) pap described as a stiff fluffy porridge maize meal with flavourful stewed meat gravy(still constructing images in my mind of what/how this looks). Then the writer concludes by taking the reader to West Africa where she described the various meals that resonate within people of this region, which includes Eba, Fufu, Egusi soup, groundnut soup etc. And how ‘alike’ people from the West African region could be.

The writer began in a story-like manner, as though taking the reader on a saga. With the use of imageries and how detailed the descriptions are, the writer painted a clear and concise image of what meals round Africa looks like.

FOOD AND EVERYTHING RELATED By Haruna Dahiru Alhassan.

First off, I must commend Haruna’s sense of humour- this piece is hilarious! but on second thought I’m wondering if the story narrated was an actual story or a fictional one. The persona narrates his love for food and through his illustrations even though not clearly stated, the effect of too much of it.

The writer made use of simple and concise diction to convey his thought on food, the application of humour made reading the piece fun, and how he used local Nigerian pidgin eg. “See this fat boy”, “see orobo”, “nawao, na this boy be obesity”

I think it’s a good work, and well written.

ONCE UPON UGALI By Edith Osiro Adhiambo - Kenya. Oh how I love maize!□ The writer’s description of the maize from the beginning of the article brought a reminiscence of the taste of soft, not too salty, white maize.

Once upon Ugali, is a well written article that describes the main delicacy served in Kenya – Ugali the writer was so keen on ensuring that the meal Ugali, be referred to and be prepared as Ugali, nothing more, nothing less. The persona’s love for Ugali was plainly expressed. The writer describes the Ugali meal as maize, ground into flour then worked into paste under heat.

The smart use of metaphor to speak of how best Ugali can be made is apt “the heavenly blend between cassava and maize flour made the most nutritious ugali our ancestors ever tasted”. I think it’s a good piece.

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THEME:

Places

We accept submissions for the JUNE edition in the following categories:
Articles | Essays | Flash Fiction | Poetry | Children's Literature
Short Stories | Jokes | Artworks | Personalised quotation.

Deadline - May 10, 2019

Visit - www.writerspace.net/submissions for word limits
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