

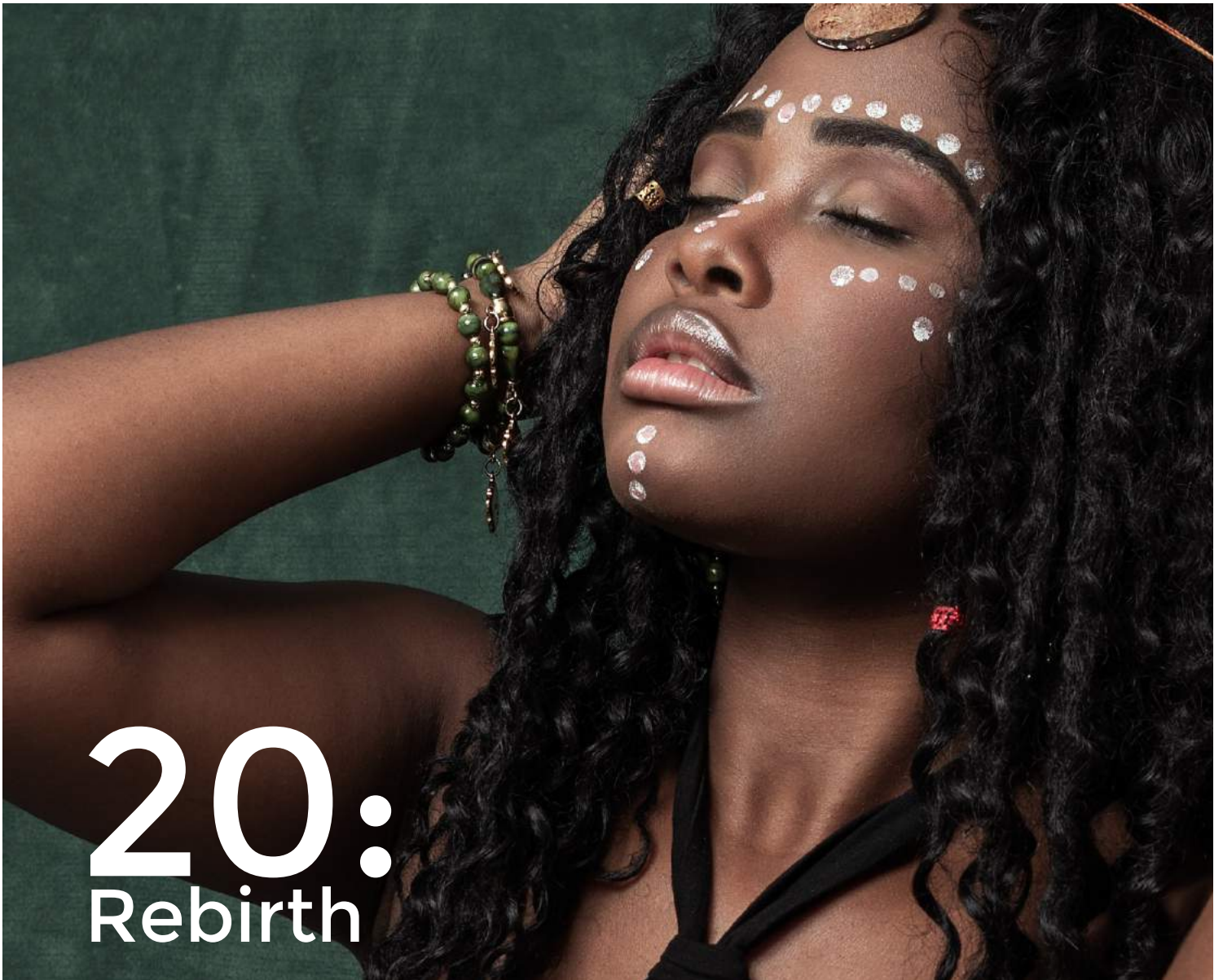
WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

WSA



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20:
Rebirth

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

VOL. 4 NO. 1



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



Short story



Flash fiction



Poetry



Essays



Children's Literature

The theme for submission is **Sacrifice**

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

We look forward to receiving your best work!

To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net/submissions

Editor's Note

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Always remember, ubuntu.

Warm regards,

Nabilah.

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SHORT STORY

An unusual Friendship

Fatima Damagum
Nigeria



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

I digress.

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

We exchanged the customary pleasantries.

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

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

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

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

I looked at Jummai and asked

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

She nodded ever so slightly, I almost missed it.

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

That was when I saw it.

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

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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





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

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

FLASH FICTION

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

Reborn

Ogechukwu Egwuatu
Nigeria



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

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

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



CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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

The Baboon and the Giant Banana Tree

Mosekiemang Kealeboga
Botswana



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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




Oh, what should I do?"

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

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



COLUMNISTS



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

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



Life as we Know it Rebirth 2.0

Ugbede Ataboh

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





The Rebirth of Africa and Religion

Leo Muzivoreva- THE OBSERVER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



A person wearing a bright yellow raincoat and a grey beanie stands on a dark, pebbly beach, looking out towards the ocean. The background shows a dark, rocky coastline under a grey, overcast sky.

At a Cost!

EPISODE ELEVEN...

Amami Yusuf
Nigeria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"My name is Lucy."

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

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





POETRY

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

Resurgence

Comfort Nyati sdb
Zimbabwe

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Leaf

Mukonya Mukonya
Kenya

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

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

I am a child of Time

Titilope Monsure
Nigeria

I AM A CHILD OF TIME

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

Alas!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The Dawning

Edo-Omoregie Praise
Nigeria

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

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

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

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

When I Slumber

Adeyemo David
Ghana

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

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

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

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

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

A warm is but a Butterfly

Temani Nkalolang
Botswana

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Rebirth

Ogunsuyi Adekunbi
Nigeria

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

It is Time

Petronella Nyirenda
Zambia

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

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





A Love, Reborn

Grace Tendo Katana
Uganda

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

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

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

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

Born Again

Maruatona Tshepo
Botswana

Born again

Love again

Live again

I found myself, finding myself in me

Only to relive a past I could not conquer

Whilst yearning for a future I could not touch

This led me to be stuck

Stuck in the present

Waiting for what my imagination should present

And yet, I still find myself yearning to

Be Born again

Loved again

Living again

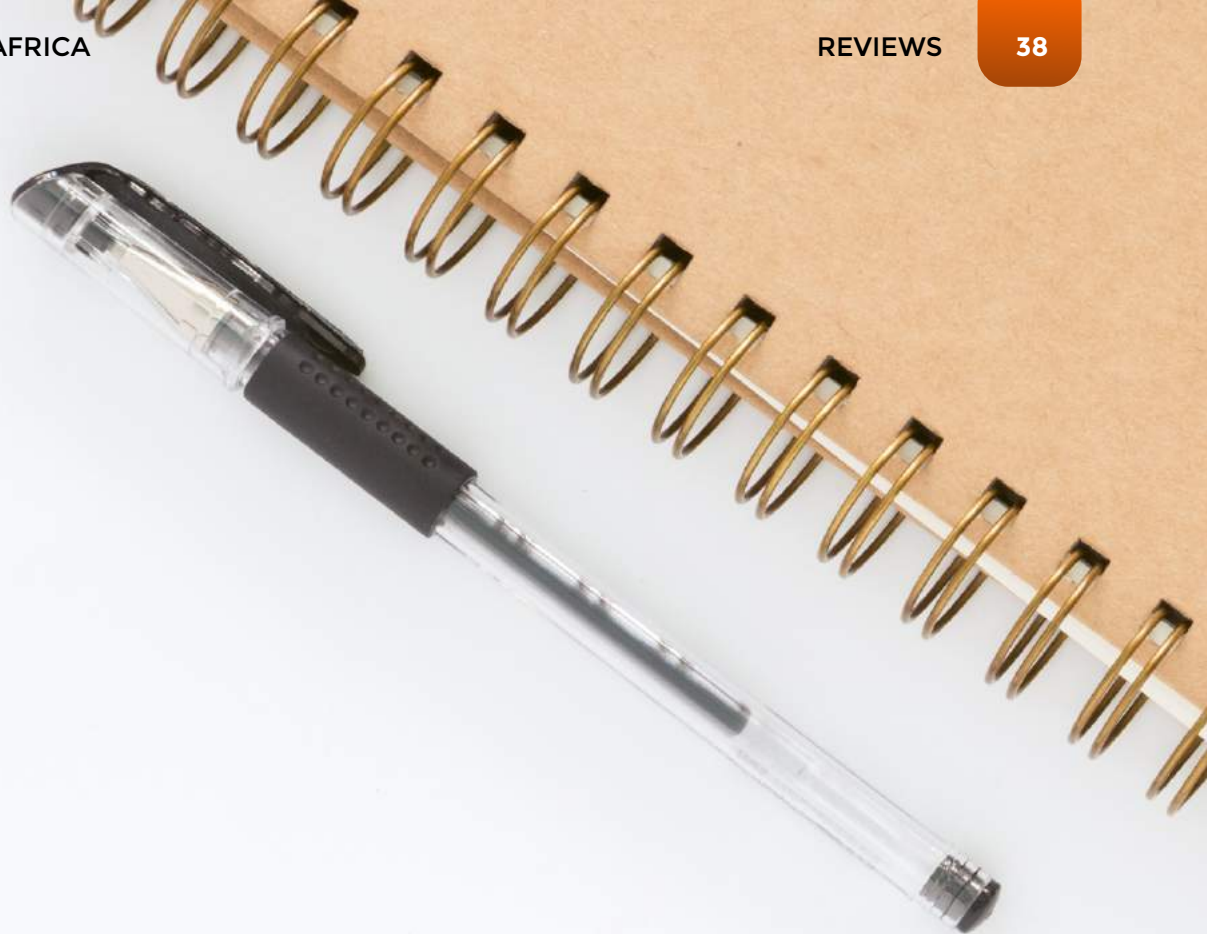


New Coats

Omadang Yowasi
Uganda

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

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



REVIEWS

GENRE: FLASH FICTION.

WRITER: TOCHUKWU PRECIOUS EZE, NIGERIA.

TITLE: BE ANYI, OUR HOME.

REVIEWER: AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC, NIGERIA.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20: REBIRTH



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

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

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

GENRE: CHILDREN LITERATURE

WRITER: PRINCESSIA MREMA, TANZANIA

TITLE: GIRLS

REVIEWER: NGALIM JUSLINE VEEYEENYU, CAMEROON

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

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

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

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

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



GENRE: ESSAY

WRITER: MUYAMBO MWENDA, ZAMBIA.

TITLE: THANKSGIVING IN AFRICA.

REVIEWER: OGALO ODUOR BERNARD, KENYA



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

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

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

GENRE: SHORT STORY

WRITER: CHRISTINA H LWENDO, TANZANIA

TITLE: BEFORE FOREVER BEGINS

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

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

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

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

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

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



GENRE: COLUMNS

WRITER: AMAMI YUSUF, NIGERIA

TITLE: AT A COST

REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI (THE_POWERHOUSE), KENYA.



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

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