



WSA
Writers Space Africa
Empowering African Writers

The Saviour
Itohan Osadiaye
Nigeria

**The Sacrifice
of Dreams**
Grace Mashingaidze
Zimbabwe

Sacrifice

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Call for Submissions



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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 May 2020 Edition in the following categories:



Short story



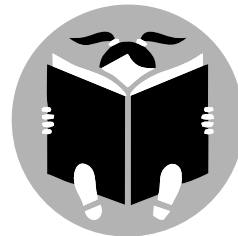
Flash fiction



Poetry



Essays



Children's Literature

The theme for submission is Solitude

The submission window is open from 1st of March to 14th March.

Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best work!

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Editor's Note

The first time I heard the words 'alternative foregone', I was in secondary school sitting in my Economics class; the subject was Opportunity Cost. The simplest way I could hold onto the definition back then was to think of it as the price of what could have been and this definition has roamed the halls of my subconscious since then. The most basic way to put this concept into one word is to call it 'Sacrifice'.

If you think of this strictly in Economic terms, you may be tempted to think that it is an easy and thoughtless action. However, a Sacrifice is always a conscious act; a willing decision. In African climes, a majority of us more readily attribute this act (of virtue) to our mothers and the women in our lives, but as a virtue, Sacrifice is human nature. How, when and why we do it can be one of the most important decisions of our lives.

In this month's edition, the team has taken its time to go through all the works that came through. From entries like The Dance Competition in the Children's Literature section that showed how sacrificial acts go beyond familial ties, to The Seamstress in the Flash Fiction section that touched on enduring pain for the happiness of one's child and the poetry entries that speak of the sacrifices of our fathers; I can assure you that this month's read will be well worth your time.

On a last note, I would like to point out how inevitably the concept of Ubuntu found its way into the stories of Sacrifice. All of life is at its best when it happens for the greater good of another. It is my hope that when you read the works of these writers, you will find a common thread drawn across Africa; one that reiterates how the act of Sacrifice is human nature and when we do it, we do it for the sake of better days ahead.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,
Nabilah.

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A Part of Me

Yaqub Abdullahi
Nigeria



Funsho hummed his favorite song, Never Say Never, by Justin Bieber as he bathed.

The golden rays of the Monday morning emerging sun cascaded into the bathroom through the small window. Birds chirped from a nearby tree. Funsho stopped, listening to the birds before he continued to hum the rest of the song lyrics.

The water streamed down his body and he shut his eyes. My life is going to change soon. His lips stretched in a smile. Things are about to get better for me.

Funsho's thoughts were interrupted by a bang on the

bathroom door.

"Are you planning on spending a century just to bathe?" A tiny voice that could be mistaken for a female's, said. "Stop singing and hurry up, Funsho. God, I hate sharing a bathroom with you."

Funsho chuckled. "I'll be out in a minute." He heard the footsteps withdraw from the door.

Funsho and Gbenga had lived together since they finished university. The two had been friends for ages, and despite their contrasting characters, they got along well. Working as graphics designers at Global Wiz-Tech, they had agreed to live together in a rented apartment. But everything was going to change soon.

I won't have to share an apartment with Gbenga anymore, Funsho said to himself as he washed his hair. Very soon, I'll move out from here. I'll get a penthouse at Ikoyi, the classy neighborhood. He smiled.

Funsho hurried out of the bathroom. Gbenga was standing before the door, arms crossed. He was shirtless, displaying the hair on his chest. A towel was tied to his waist, covering his thighs. Gbenga was a light-skinned guy, a little taller than Funsho.

"We should reorganize our bathing arrangement." Gbenga's forehead creased. "It's a bad idea to have you use the bathroom first."

Funsho stifled his laughter as Gbenga went into the bathroom. "Be fast, we're late for work."

"Courtesy of a guy who loves to daydream in the shower," Gbenga shouted back.

In his room, Funsho spent another extra minute trying to find the perfect outfit. He settled for a white shirt and green suit. As

he stood before the mirror, he wondered if he was properly dressed for the event. Was the outfit formal enough? Would it make the panel think he was better than his rivals?

Gbenga's voice drew him out of his thoughts. "Are you ready?" He was by the door, dressed in a simple blue coat and jeans.

"Sure. I'm done." Funsho stole a glance at his reflection in the mirror. "The suit is great, right? I'm nervous."

Gbenga walked into the room, smiling. "You're looking gorgeous for someone who is going to become a partner soon."

"Stop teasing me." Funsho said. "The final starts today, and this nervousness is overwhelming my happiness. What if I don't get the partnership? What if the judges think someone else deserves it?"

Being a partner at Global Wiz-Tech was every employee's wish. Every three years, the company would create a list of five experts from each department who had a significant impact on the company. These five would go through a series of tests and interviews. Whoever came top was made the company's equity partner. The partnership came with a promotion in rank, increased salary, and many other advantages. Funsho had made it to the list of five.

Gbenga waved a hand in dismissal. "Frodd said you're the first on the judges' list so far. No need to overthink something we both know you'll get." He chuckled.

Funsho laughed. "That's good."

"Now let's get going." Gbenga turned to leave. "I am not running for the partnership and I can get fired for being late."

By eight a.m., Global Wiz-Tech was already buzzing with activity. People breezed in and out of doors, carrying papers from one office to another. In each cubicle, computer geeks

were busy creating new webpages, designing and completing sites for clients.

When Funsho got to work, he went straight into Frodd's office. Frodd Ekere was the head of Funsho's department. He was a burly man in his late fifties.

"Are you ready for your big day?" Frodd said the moment Funsho stepped into his office. "It's the final week."

"I'm quite prepared, sir." Funsho bowed.

Frodd nodded. "I trust you. Your presentation should be topnotch, you know the decision will be made on Friday."

"Got it," he answered.

Frodd shuffled to his feet. "I'll see you in the conference room by ten."

The day was almost over when Funsho exited the conference room. The interview was stressful. The panelists had shot him question after question, digging through his entire career at the company. At one point, he thought he had lost the partnership. But when he finished his presentation, he saw smiles on most of faces on the panel. He couldn't wait to share the news with Gbenga.

His phone buzzed in his pocket, making him stop. Funsho's eye lit as he saw the caller ID. It was Iya Agba, his aged grandma who raised him after the death of his parents twenty years ago. Iya Agba saw him through hisThe caller continued. "No medicine is working for her, and she thinks she's in her last days. All she calls is your through her sale of farm produces.

Funsho smiled as he answered the phone. "Hello, maami."

"Hello. Is this Funsho?" The voice wasn't his grandma's. "I'm Iya Agba's neighbour." Funsho noticed the urgency in the tone.

"Y-yes."

"Iya Agba is very sick. She has been like that for a few weeks now."

Funsho's chest tightened. Why was he just hearing about this?

The caller continued. "No medicine is working for her, and she thinks she's in her last days. All she calls is your name. She wants to see you, one last time."

Water pooled in his eyes.

"How soon can you get here? Tomorrow?"

Tomorrow? Funsho's eyes widened. He couldn't miss a day in the final week. It was an automatic way to lose the partnership. He couldn't travel all the way from Lagos to Osun where Iya Agba lived, and be back in a day.

As if reading his thoughts, the caller said, "Mama Agba is dying, but her last wish is to see her grandson. You have to be with her in her last days. We'll be expecting you."

Funsho stood in the middle of the hallway, too dazed to speak. The news that Iya Agba was ill was a blow, then her request to see him. The mere thought of not going stung his heart. Should he ignore the woman who sacrificed a lot to ensure he was raised well? Should he abandon the partnership he worked hard for?

He turned back and went into Frodd's office to explain the situation.

"You can't leave," Frodd flared. "You'll lose the partnership. You can't! Our department can't! You have to postpone that leave."

Funsho left, torn between the choice he had to make.

"You've been moody all day," Gbenga said as they drove home that night. "I heard your presentation went well, so what's the matter?"

Funsho slumped his shoulders. "Iya Agba is sick. I got called today that she might be in her last moments."

Gbenga's eyes widened. Funsho had talked about his grandmother countless times.

"She wants to see me before she dies, and that could happen at any moment." He sighed.

His friend's eyes grew wider. "I'm so sorry to hear that. What will you do? What about the presentations?"

Funsho dropped his head. "What do I do? I don't know, I can't lose it now, but I can't ignore Iya Agba, either."

They reached a traffic light and Gbenga pulled the car to a halt. "Look, God knows you've worked for this. The partnership will be available forever, your grandma won't. If she dies now, without you seeing her, the grief might haunt you for the rest of your life. Do you want that? In three years' time, there will be another partnership election, you can get selected again." He shrugged. "That's my two cents on the matter, but don't do something you'd regret." The traffic light turned green, and Gbenga resumed driving.

"Thanks." Funsho nodded. "I think I know what to do."

As painful as it was to leave, Funsho knew he had to. It was time to sacrifice something for the woman who made him who he was. He could repay her with thousands of gold bars, but it was nothing compared to her spending her last moments with him. If seeing him would make her happy—or even live a bit longer—he was willing to sacrifice the partnership.

Nonexistent Picket

Haruna Dahiru
Nigeria



Nothing prepares you for a life of challenges like fatherhood. You might think you're doing the right thing always, trying to put yourself out there for your family to have a happy life but you'll always find yourself at the tail end of appreciation.

My life has generally not been easy. I was raised in a family of six where my parents both did the best they could to provide for me and my siblings. I never got what I asked for and anytime I persisted, my parents would put these words to my face: "You're growing, learn not to always ask for things." These exact words forced me to accept maturity at an early age. I always saw my siblings as competition in getting my parents' attention.

My mother was a big-time hustler who did three things in a day in order to get money for her children's upkeep. She was out very early in the morning to sweep the community center, which was a job of chance because if you were late, there would be nothing left for you to sweep. At noon she roasted corn by the road side and at night, she was caught in the

many crowds of road side banana sellers. She hustled relentlessly every day and still had a way of maintaining her home.

My father was a security guard at a table water company. He was never around during weekdays, but was at home for weekends. He didn't talk much with us. His ear was always on the distorting way noise from the radio which made the presenters sound like they were fighting for their voices to be heard. My mother always called his radio the Freedom Fighters FM. Whenever I was alone with him, he would always ask how my mother was doing and what we needed in the house. I would say she is fine and try to use the opportunity to ask for something, but he would always say "put your family first before your own needs". This made me see him as a man who never liked me and made me question if I was his son. Little did I know, he was preparing me for a task ahead.

I spent little time with my peers. I was always in a hurry to go back home to my siblings or always running an errand. I wasn't a person to attend any gathering of my peers or be found at a

social event. This earned me a few nicknames like ajebo, boy-girl, woman wrapper - popular names given to anyone who lives a careful life.

One time, my little sister fell sick and I was left home to take care of her. Her constant vomiting, restlessness, cries and nagging, I took them all. My efforts were not always crowned because I always ended up getting a scold for any little thing I missed.

Sundays were the only days I was allowed to have anything I asked for. It was always a full house because my mother would prepare a big pot of rice with lots of fish and meat and invite people over. Sunday was a day we all waited for every week.

My parents didn't have much but yet they still had their ways of making us feel content and loved. We never asked how they did it. My mother was everyone's favorite because she was always around us and her way of handling things was perfect. She knew when her children were hungry, sad, or in need of something. She was the definition of love and support.

Watching them live their life the way they did and still taking time out to make us feel happy was something I really admired. I wanted to be like them and leave a good example for my own children if I was ever to have any.

But I guess I didn't know it all, I wasn't prepared. I haven't learnt.

I got married to my wife some years later and in ten years' time, I was a proud father of three. My wife of a replica of my mother. She always cared for our children when I was away and I would watch them say they loved her, but all I would get were demands for something new, after which a denial would send them crying to their mother's arms.

I was home one day when my son came home and asked me a question.

"Dad, I have an assignment question for you. It was given to us in school"

"What is it son?" I asked him, enthusiastic over having a father and son conversation with him.

"My teacher asked me in school to choose a debate topic on who is a better parent; a father or a mother" he said in his sweet little teenage voice.

"Which one did you pick?" I asked him

"I picked mum of course" he said smiling. I was not surprised by his answer, but I was a bit disappointed.

"Why did you pick your mum?"

"I picked her for a lot of reasons. She is smart, she helps me with my homework, she makes the best food, she even allows me visit my friends too." He said making me feel inferior. I gave a deep sigh for his answers created a void in me. I felt invisible.

"Why didn't you pick me?" I asked him in a friendly voice.

"You're not always around to play with us. You come back late from work and you don't speak much to us." He replied holding nothing back.

I turned away sharply in disappointed. I had a flashback to my father who was always sitting alone and looking at us while we played or had a discussion at home. I felt like him in that moment. How he was away at work and my mother would fill in for him. Little did I know that I would be in his position someday.

I looked at my son and thought about how best to explain to him about life and fatherhood. There he was making it look like I was not contributing to his life, I was completely nonexistent in their little world. Who would tell him that I was always the shoulder their mother cried on whenever she was tired and ready this give up? Who would tell him that I was the one who made him smile on his birthdays dressed as his clown? Or that I was always away working to keep them



going? I've had sleepless nights thinking about how to make their lives better than mine?

How would I explain it to him?

I then saw it crystal clear, fatherhood is underestimated, a nonexistent picket. My wife's little moments with the kids was what their growing minds were made up of. All the laughter and joy. I wished there and then that I could go back in time and hug my father, sit with him during his loneliness and listen to his distorted Freedom Fighters FM with him. I realized he was always proud of us but had a stern way of showing it. He was always looking at us and feeling proud of what he

making us become - better than he was.

Those happy Sundays were his most memorable days because those were the days he saw us all smiling at what he got us and he loved the smile on our faces when we bit into the spiced meat in our food. Those moments, those little moments he had with us were the ones he cherished more than anything else and that is the joy I want for myself.

All I want my children to learn is appreciation and nothing more. I will always be there to support them and build a wall of appreciation around them, even though I'll still exist as the nonexistent picket. After all, I've lived a life of sacrifice.

The Seamstress

J.T.NAGUNDI
Uganda



The sequins are sharp and brutal for such dainty things. Mary dips her bleeding fingers in ointment and resumes her toil. She blinks once, twice, thrice. When did she last take the drugs? She flicks the thought away. At daybreak, it might be too late.

All that remains is the bodice. She rests her head against the toilet seat. Her skin itches like a cheap blanket. "The sequins are in place," she mutters holding the dress up. An owl hoots outside her door.

"My Dorothy is beautiful, sequins or not," she snorts

reveling in the image of her baby floating down the aisle.

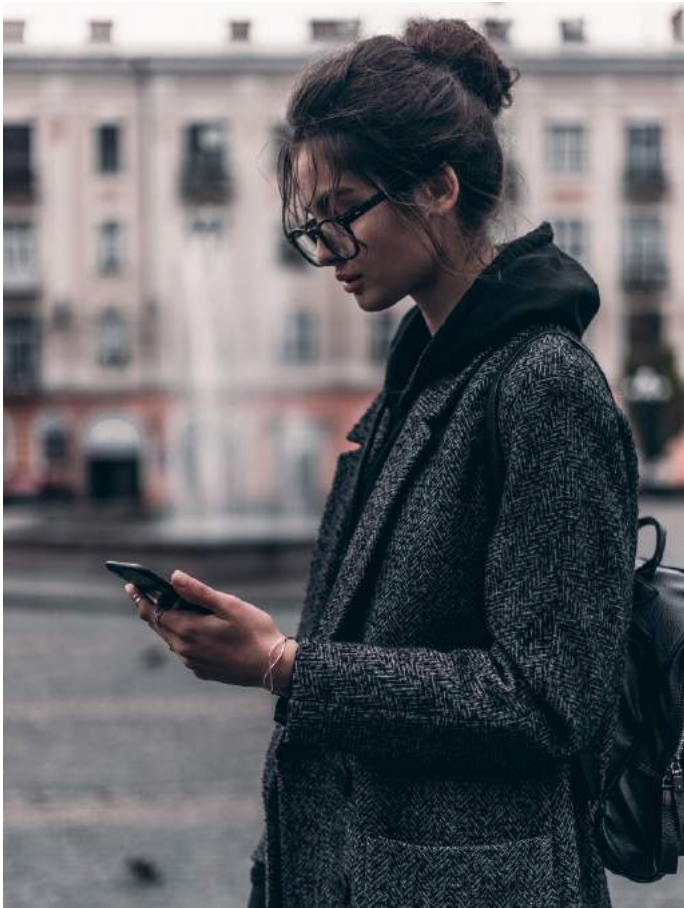
Nausea rolls up her throat. She hurls the dress aside. Her life shines red in the sparkling bowl.

"One month to live," the doctor told her three weeks ago.

"One hour to dawn," She wipes her mouth and flushes the blood. "Now for the changing gown."

At the Junction

Mary France Ibanda
Uganda



Across the road from where I stood, a taxi tout called out to travellers in a vigorous sing-song manner. The distinct names of the destinations were one long gibberish word, because the sharp harshness of their consonants had long been run over by tongues too much in a hurry to say them right. Weekend traffic was lazy. Little children took their time crossing the usually busy road and bodaboda riders stopped for passengers in the middle of the junction.

From the sidewalk new life lay ahead of me. All I had to do was cross the road to the other side and find the

consonants of my destination. My lips quivered, my hands shook, my vision blurred.

'Just one step,' I thought.

The touch on my shoulder was light. I barely felt it. Softly tipping my head backward, I turned around to face her - my mother!

With the back of my hand, I wiped away the tears to see her better.

'How did you find out?'

'You cannot runaway. It is only a recipe for more problems!'

'It is too much mother and it's too late. I am fed up!'

'This time he was in our bed with the house help! My bed!' I wailed.

'Go back home my child.'

'You call that a home! Mother!'

'It is the only home your children know!'

'Children! What about me mother?'

'Do you know why I'm here?'

Silence. Her rheumy eyes started tearing.

'It is because I'm being a mother. Return home and be a mother to your children.'

I turned in time to see the last passenger get into the taxi and watched as freedom drove away. With the back of my hand I wiped the tears away then hailed down a Bodaboda to take me back to hell.

Beasts of Valour

Timi Sanni
Nigeria



It is a sad thing that we have to die—a multitude of us, each day. Our guts are spilled in the open spaces of filthy abattoirs. We watch our brethren die, wondering if tomorrow comes with our own bells ringing. We are beasts of valour but we die like slaves. It was only yesterday I discovered that our dead brothers are wheeled off, grilled, peppered and salted to make something humans call “suya”.

It is indeed heart-wrenching that we face the menacing-looking butcher's knife, brave even in the face of death like martyrs, slowly shedding our life with each spurt of blood only to become food for these humans. Ask Black-horns he won't even lie to you. Remembering my days on the farm, only the two of us

with our horns nailed together and that metal 'thing' tied on our backs, we would till the land till it became one vast earthly bed. I remember old Baba Agbo would smile and pat our backs.

But the problem is not with the sacrifice, after all our distant cousins—rams, were sacrificed in the time of Abraham. It's with the way they treat us, these shit-for-brains idiots who call themselves humans. Sometimes I get so angry that I see red flashes and want to do nothing but trod over them, stuff my hoof into their mouths and shove my horns up their butts. But we are children of nature and she tells me no to repaying evil with evil, she says it is a privilege to die in her way. I believe.

The Saviour

Itohan Osadiaye
Nigeria



The race to a land safe from the pangs of slavery had left him and fifteen others between the devil and the red sea. No one had ever made it across the river Ayetoro alive.

Remembering how he had fought the fierce slave masters, he was more than determined to save these ones; he had come too far to give up.

"I would rather die in this river than be a shackled slave" Adesusu, a woman heavy with child, said.

"You won't die neither will your baby. No one here will die" came the reply of Dayo, their leader.

"But I've heard tales of how nobody has ever made it across this river. I heard it always takes the lives of those who dare enter. Now I know why the slave masters stopped pursuing after us. They knew we had met our water loo" said a frightened Seyi.

"Would you rather go back to being slaves? Fear not. We will pass through this river even if it's the last thing I do". Dayo, said. He knew something about the river that no one knew. It was best he kept it to himself. He couldn't risk these people changing their minds and going back to being slaves.

The journey across the river Ayetoro began.

As they made their way, the wind became violent. It came with thunder and lightning. The tides increased and came with great turbulence. They tried to keep the boat steady but it boat capsized. This came with cries and shouts for help.

Against all odds, Dayo managed to get all to safety but his life was the ransom.

Offerings, Sacrifices and Scapegoats: A rant

Leo Muzivoreva - THE OBSERVER
Zimbabwe



Ever stopped to wonder what and why we make sacrifices and are oftentimes sacrificed by our fellows?? Or perhaps wondered how the idea of sacrifice came to be?

Whereas an offering is a bloodless sacrifice of food or something physical and a libation is an offering of liquid, a sacrifice carries with it the idea of a ritual killing of an animal or human. We can locate the concept of the sacrifice in numerous mythic traditions. What they all have in common is that they are either an attempt at appeasement or a

tradeoff of something now for something greater later (like regeneration or an increase in power). In some cultures, a king or a representation thereof is sacrificed to guarantee the continuation and livelihood of the kingdom or tribe. The Aztecs engaged in human sacrifice both on a daily basis (to aid the sun in rising) and on a widespread scale (they regularly sacrificed thousands for events like the dedication of a new temple). In the classical era, we have examples such as Iphigenia. Her father Agamemnon must sacrifice her in order to satisfy Artemis. He has killed

a deer in one of the sacred groves of Artemis and in retaliation she blocks the winds necessary to travel to Troy. In some accounts, she is sacrificed, in some she is saved, and in others a deer or goat is substituted for her. During the Roman Empire there existed a set of practices known as the taurobolium in which a bull was sacrificed above a pit containing the initiates who were then baptized in a rain of bull blood and body.

Although globally and chronologically there is no linear movement away from human to animal to symbolic sacrifices, we can

see a lessening of — thought not end of it — this practice to a large degree. There is a very practical reason in that humans and animals are resources and widespread sacrifice is counterproductive to building, maintaining, and expanding a strong nation. Also, rulers were not always thrilled at the inevitability of being killed at the end of their reign, and although some commoners bought into the idea of sacrificing themselves and were even treated as celebrities, for many the prospect of being thrown off a cliff, burned, entombed alive, or eaten did not always bring elation. And if, according to one theory, one of the points of festivities and rituals surrounding sacrifice is to alleviate guilt on the part of the participants in the killing, such guilt is lessened if one sacrifices a lamb or better yet offers a bowl of honey instead of killing a human being.

Now we arrive at the concept of the sacrificial lamb and the scapegoat. A scapegoat is someone who dies for the benefit of a society, who takes on society's collected sins. Outcasts were often used as scapegoats, presumably because no one cared about them. Kept on hand as

offerings at yearly festivals or for when a drought, plagues, or other difficulty afflicted the city, they were then exiled or stoned. More recent times have seen plenty of examples of scapegoating. The Holocaust or Shoah was an example of mass scapegoating leading to genocide and extermination. The us versus them mentality exists in our own moment with its talk of walls and wars and travel bans. In addition to scapegoating of entire nations or peoples or ethnicities, there exists examples of micro-scapegoating that occur, for example, in the home environment or the workplace. Scapegoat theory in social psychology explains that we use others as scapegoats and blame them for our own problems. Unfortunately, this process often leads to feelings of prejudice toward the person or group that is being blamed. Remember that scapegoating involves an unfair system of reward and punishment practiced by one group or person with power over another group or person. Punishment can include exile, ostracism, relocation, taking away resources, and other such injustices on a global or even an individual scale. Scapegoating can





occur for a number of reasons: as learned behavior, as a response to a misperception of a threat to power, jealousy, as an ineffective and improper attempt to regulate a dysfunctional environment, as a misguided method to cop out of and avoid addressing a different problem, the feeling that someone must be made to "pay" for some act, and as a transference of blame. In short, micro or individualized scapegoating involves isolating a small group or one person as way to avoid examining the larger, dysfunctional pattern or system—the bigger sickness that then goes untreated.

A closely related version of the scapegoat in psychology is the identified patient. This someone has been selected to represent the difficulties of the group, often a family. While the identified patient often manifests the negative behaviors of the group, he or she is often the first to seek help, speak out about what is going on, and, consequently, punished by the group or head of the group for doing so. The identified patient, then becomes a way for the group to project its inadequacies, its failings,

its problems onto the identified patient and away from itself. Doing so is a reactive, rather than proactive, maneuver and strategy by which the group hopes to avoid addressing, claiming, and then changing its own behavior.

So, we must always ask ourselves several questions. When we condemn another person or group, are we doing so because they are actually in the wrong or it is a way to make them carry the burden of our own issues and mistakes and make us feel better about ourselves? When judgment comes down against us, do we actually deserve it, or are we victims, forced to absorb and answer for the flaws of some other entity? Is there a better way?

The Dance Competition

Immaculate S. Ajiambo
Kenya

Once upon a time, in the animal kingdom, there was a bountiful harvest and the king called for a dance competition to celebrate. All animals were to organise themselves according to their families. They would then get food prizes that they could store in their granaries.

One day, the trumpets sounded. Then two drum beats followed and the parrot was heard in his sharp clear voice.

"Greetings to all of you. It is the pleasure of the King to remind you that our dance competition will take place in two days' time. All the best in your preparations and may the best family win. See you then!"

The Elephant's family and the Hare's family shared a dancing ground during their rehearsals. On the last day of practice, Hare's family was not in action.

"I have not seen any of Hare's family member today at the ground?" said baby Elephant.

"Me too. I thought they would come later into the day but there was no sign of them." Said Mrs. Elephant.

The Elephant's family talked about their friends and wished that nothing terrible had happened to them. Mr. Elephant decided to go to the Hares' and find out what happened.

It was dark outside. Most animals had gone to rest early as they waited for the big day. Mr. Elephant did not meet anyone on the way. On arrival at the Hares' house, the youngest Hare was sited under the tree singing. When he saw Mr. Elephant he jumped up to meet him on the way.

"Good evening Mr. Elephant."

"Good evening to you." Replied the elephant.

Gesturing him to their house. "You are welcome home. What brings you at this hour of the night?"

"Aha! I came to check up on my friends. Aren't you my friends?"

"Yes, we are friends." Assuring him with a smile.

"Good. Where is everyone?"

"Oh. It is sad. We did not come for the dance practice today because our father got ill last night."

"Indeed, that is sad!"

Mr. Hare had a terrible fever. He complained of pain all over his body and joints. His family decided to take him to Mr. Zebra, the healer who lived in the next jungle. They had hoped that he would feel better soon and be in for the contest.

"When did they leave?" asked Mr. Elephant.

"Not so long ago, this evening."

"I will be after them now. I know they have not gone far."

The decision to follow them came as a surprise to the young Hare. He could not believe it, that Mr. Elephant was going to miss being at the dance competition because he wanted to help in carrying his father to the healer.

"But...the rule is that all family members must dance. Are you willing to disappoint your family on this?"

"Don't worry, friends are precious. True friendship has no room for loneliness and pain. We are together in this."

As Mr. Elephant rushed towards the route to the next jungle the young Hare was left smiling at himself. He said, "Sacrifice is an ingredient to genuine friendship. Thank you, Mr. Elephant."

My Grandpa's Farm

Rachael Twinomugisha
Uganda

My grandpa lives in the village, away from my home in town. He lives on a farm. There are many cattle on the farm and some of them are fierce. They chase after people and hit them to the ground but they don't chase after grandpa. There are also many chickens, goats and sheep on grandpa's farm. Many people come to buy chickens, milk and eggs on the farm.

One time many chickens on grandpa's farm died so fast. A man dressed in a white coat and white boots, on a motorcycle with a box said that they had suffered from a strange disease but grandpa didn't notice early enough. If he had taken time, he should have noticed blood in the chickens' poop and known they were ill. Grandpa said this man was the animal doctor.

A short time after the chickens had died, the cattle followed. They had very big feet and mouths. Grandpa said they were swollen, and that they had a disease. The animal doctor said they had the foot and mouth disease but grandpa didn't have enough money to buy the needed drugs.



Before long, famine struck the village. Grandpa managed to save only one cow – Ichuri – and no matter the famine, he refused to sell it. He sold all his goats and sheep and the chickens too, leaving just one chicken whose name is Chickie. He and all the people on the farm suffered from hunger day in, day out but he kept Chickie and Ichuri, the cow.

A month later, Chickie started laying eggs. Grandpa immediately brought a male chicken from his neighbor's house. It mounted Chickie, and she started hatching her eggs. After that,

Grandpa had so many chickens on his farm again. About a year later, Ichuri also had a baby. Grandpa said her baby was called a calf. Because grandpa sacrificed, his farm now has many chickens and cows. Grandpa is very happy once again. He has managed to buy goats and sheep from the money he gets from selling milk, eggs and chickens.

There is enough food on the farm and everyone is happy. I love visiting grandpa's farm now. I love working on the farm and listening to grandpa's stories.

The Sacrifice of Dreams

Grace Mashingaidze
Zimbabwe



One day, last year, I was scrolling down my Twitter feed, as one usually does when they want to be abreast with the latest news. If you are familiar with Twitter you know there is a plethora of news, views and interesting -very interesting randomness- statements that are meant to raise the eyebrows of whoever is reading; and sometimes you (deliberately) fall into the Twitter rabbit hole by reading the comments on a tweet, the comments on the comments on a

tweet, threads upon threads and so on. However, on this particular day, I came across a tweet that I will never forget. It was a cry for help which accurately summed up what many Zimbabwean millennials go through daily. In it a young woman expressed how she disliked going to work to the point of depression and physical illness, but for the sake of her financial stability wouldn't leave her job.

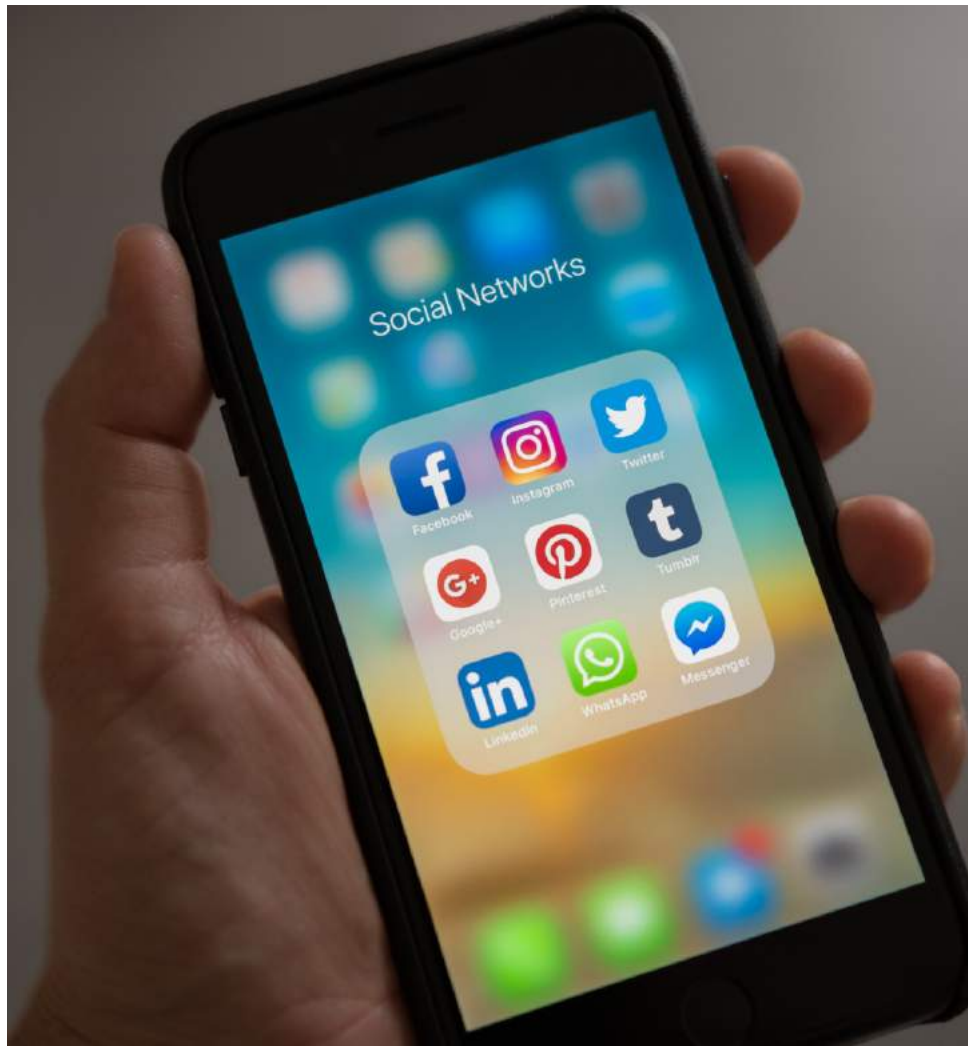
Many Zimbabwean millennials have grown up listening two messages:

that of their parents or guardians who insist that they live better lives and achieve more than previous generations, and that of the mostly Western media which highlights that living out your dreams is the ultimate key to happiness, success and fulfillment. In and of themselves, neither of these messages is wrong. As the generation born in post-independence Africa, we are supposed to represent the realization of the dreams of those who came for before us- black people who can be on equal footing

with their white counterparts and hold their own in an increasingly globalized world. The encouragement to do better than our parents is the encouragement to surpass the limitations which were placed on our people in previous generations. On the other hand, following our dreams is indeed a noble but sometimes impractical pursuit. It makes us bolder; it makes us happier and for many it makes life worth living.

A deteriorating economy has however, made it more difficult for young people to build better lives for themselves and their families and at the same time realize their dreams. The people who have been able to do so are the exceptions as the latter are usually sacrificed for the former and vice versa, or, quite tragically, both are sacrificed for survival. The stories are as diverse as they come, someone who trained to be a marketer is now a vendor, someone who longs to be a musician, has an 8 to 5 office job - the common factor is that there are unfulfilled dreams aplenty.

In a world where many incorrectly find their sense of purpose and worth in their job, the physical, mental and emotional cost of being unhappy with your career path is great and underestimated. According to studies, it can lead to weight loss or weight gain,

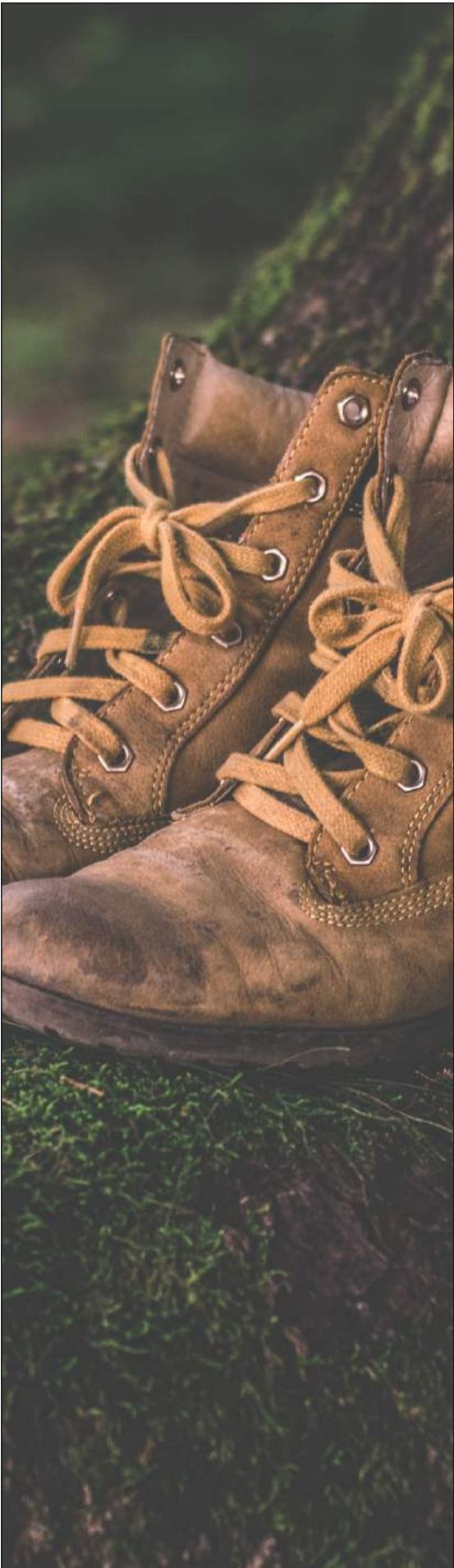


depression, anxiety, losing sleep and a loss of confidence and self-worth.

For the aforementioned young woman to come forward - albeit on a platform like Twitter - must have taken some courage. Expressing such thoughts to an older family member may be met with a sympathetic 'shingirira mwanangu'; an encouragement to be strong and to push forward, because our default mode as a nation has become survival. This young woman's story is not the first of its kind that I have come across nor will it be the last. Her story elicited empathy from those who read her tweet because they

could see pieces of themselves or of someone they knew in it.

In the times we are living in, there are no easy answers to the personal fulfillment vs. survival problem. In a country where poverty is prevalent the cost of losing your sense of fulfillment and the cost of losing your financial security may seem to be of equal weight. What is certain is that those determined individuals who have managed to attain both success and happiness through their careers instill hope and belief that a time may come where there will be many others like them.



Daddy's Boot

Joy Ngethe.
Kenya

Daddy's boots,
Like grandma's hair'
Are old and grey,
Worn out and losing color.

Daddy says his boots,
Are here to stay,
Still good as new,
Serving him as they should.

Daddy's boots I'll replace when I am bigger,
To say thanks for his hard work,
His money he spared for us,
Even though he needed new boots for work.

I'm a Storyteller

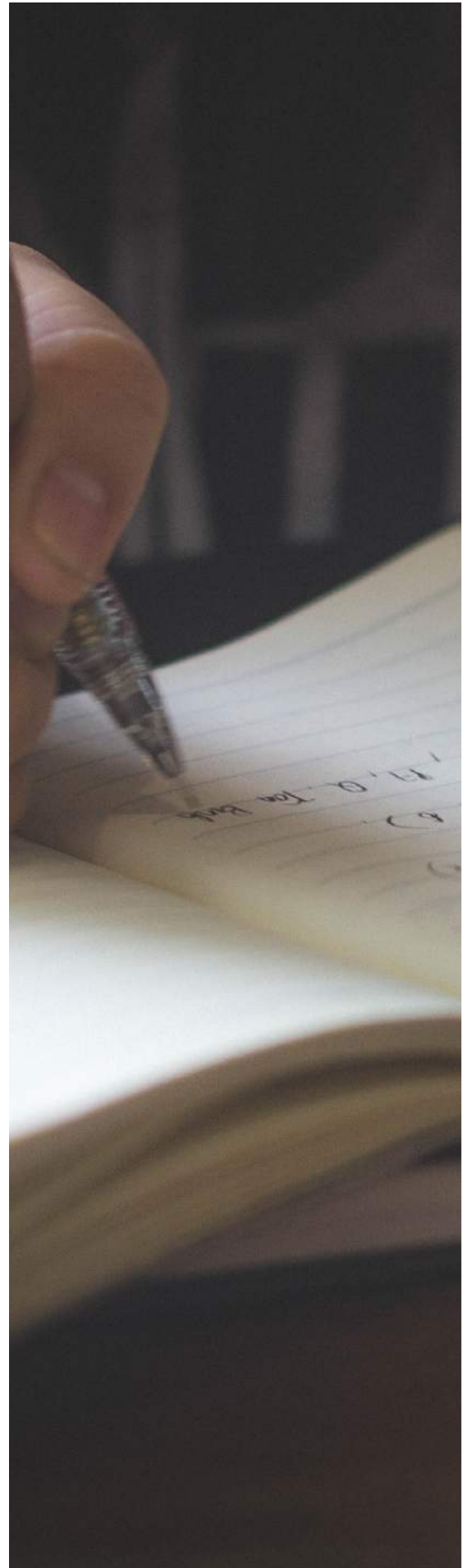
By Thuto Vanessa Seabe
Botswana

Time's sacrifice I am,
Sleepless nights my cup of tea,
Caffeine runs through my blood...
So I may pour out on paper.

Tick! Tick! Tick!
Goes the clock,
Minutes melting into hours,
My lover's impatient hands
try to caress me from this table.


The night lamp illuminating
the shadows under my eyes,
Self-doubt is setting in...
Should I erase that line?
Is it good enough, am I?

These words I write...
Why do they take so much from me?
It's draining living on paper,
inked on pages but a ghost in reality,
Who am I When words run out?



The Unpaid Debt

Thomas Arthur Opio
Uganda



On one dark cold night,
When I was nothing but filled with fright
She offered me her scarf
While she remained unarmed to face the elements.
At one fateful afternoon meal,
After I spilled my soup and its accompaniment
Rather than scorn me, she offered hers.
As if I were a project for development,
She would pull resources from wherever to make me
go to school.
And forego luxury,
To make sure I was a better me.
Sadly, she passed on three weeks ago,
After offering me her heart for a transplant.
Was that really a sacrifice?
Because I am still hurt.

Letter from a Father

Ademokoya Adedayo
Nigeria

From the milky half-moon, the
Lips rounded in grief of another
Labour. My heart is the river of
Bleached thoughts with no sponge
I saw how the kangaroo curls her
Joey and the love flows from mother
To offspring. How your mother runs
Through the pain of bearing you with
More than 76 hours of labour exchanging
Her life for you. She lives but I know you've
Taken the smile of my wife. She's creaking like
Dried bamboo waiting to be made for fire. In
exchange
For your joy, she loses her sleep. Pointing at invisible
Shooting stars and her eyes yearns for sleep
Her hands weary of carrying you but she
Loves you more than her hands
You've become a dream come
True for her but you have
Stolen my wife from me
I'm not jealous, I just
See how she has gone
From living for herself
To living another's life.



Sacrifice

Amarachi Maduka
Nigeria



Would you do anything for me?
Accept my demons
Lay in the closet where my skeletons hide
You know,
The whole cliché deal really
Or better still
Could you be selfless while I am selfish?

Who will bell the Cat?

Faniyi Oluwatomewa
Nigeria

Who will bell the cat?
One who can bear the cart
And has more than he can eat
To feed a stranger not a feat
One who has more than he can spend
It isn't hard to give or lend.

Who will bear the cat?
He who give but will never miss
Will never know what giving is
He'll win few praises from his Lord
Who does but what he can afford.

Who will bell the cat?
He whose eyes and mind
To worldly things are blunt
The widow's mite to heaven went
Because real sacrifice it meant.



Brief biography:

Faniyi E.Oluwatomewa (popularly known as Tommy Brian) was born on the 6th of May 1998. He is a student of the department of Chemical Engineering, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso Oyo State Nigeria.

He is a vision inspired young leader, spontaneous quick thinker, colourful writer, poet, teacher, social activist, teen coach, a girl-child advocate and an inspiring motivational speaker. His passionate interest in writing and choice of words is always something to watch out for.

In just 21 years of existence, Faniyi Oluwatomewa has positively impacted thousands of lives and our nation as a whole through different platforms.



The Road Home

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema
Nigeria

These roads are a collection of gravel and holes
Hiding miseries and sweat, lost sacrifices
Blood mixed with tar poured to be trampled upon
By endless tyres and the back of hurting heels

These roads are the sum of our souls
You can glimpse it in the holes
They deliberately dig for bottomless contracts
That open the gates to the afterlife

These roads lead home...
But home is where we serve the tale of our souls
Buried in the laughter of those whose lives are our
death.

Brief biography:

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema is a husband and father, a short story writer, poet and cultural enthusiast. Among other awards, he won the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Prize (2014) with his collection, Home Equals Hole: Tale of an Exile, Mandela Day Short Story Prize (2016) and was nominated for the Wole Soyinka Prize for African Literature (2018). He has also been shortlisted for the Abubakar Gimba Prize for Short Stories (2015) and the PEN Nigeria/Saraba Poetry Prize (2013). Su'eddie has just completed a Master's course at the University of Sussex where he was President of African Writers and Black History Month/Project curator. He blogs at <http://sueddie.wordpress.com> and is @sueddieagema on Twitter/Instagram/Facebook.

Sacrifice

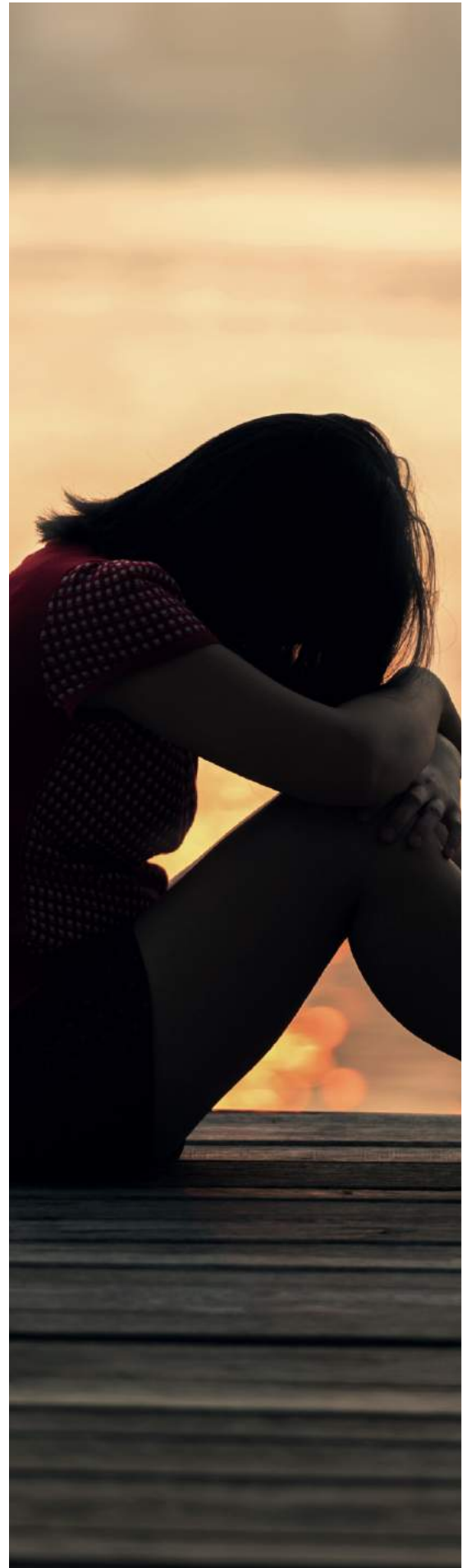
Praise Okwuchi.
Nigeria

It's been all day long
And I haven't moved an inch,
Is this how love sits on the swing
With silence sticking out it's tongue?

It's still the same old song
More ancient than Rome 'o' and Juliet,
Using our hearts to hold this palette
Painting our thoughts on this slate called Love.

Could this be it, what Mama endured for years?
The sweet bitter taste of silence,
Mixed with the spice of endurance
Her eyes lifting fury and holding back tears.

We were much younger, till we grew stronger
To understand that Love is an offering,
A sacrifice we offer for our offsprings
An oath made to forever, till we breathe no longer.





GENRE : FLASH FICTION

TITLE : VICTIM OF LOVE

WRITER: MAJORY MOONO SIMUYUNI ZAMBIA

REVIEWER: TAMUNOMIEIBI MILDRED ENOCH, NIGERIA

This excellent piece of work is written by Majory Moono Simuniya from Zambia. Victim of love is a micro flash fiction, made up of 48 words and has all the elements of a flash fiction piece which includes brevity, unambiguity and a sudden twist at the end of the story.

The story gives a well written background. It begins with the second act not giving room for details.

The story revolves around a wife who was made to stay in an abusive marriage because of what society would say. Her husband eventually kills her.

The characters in the flash fiction are nameless. The protagonist of the story is 'her'. The others are 'we', 'they' and 'he'. The writer smartly writes about a multitude of people only referring to them as 'we' and 'they'.

The setting of the story is in one scene which is an effective way of writing a flash fiction piece.

For once, one would think that the antagonist of the story is 'he' (the husband of the protagonist), however he has allies in 'they' because of their inclusion in making her stay with an abusive husband.

As always, it ends with a sudden twist; one which makes you take a deep breath and reflect on what just happened.

The title of the flash fiction is symbolic. Love shouldn't have victims but Victors.

The story is also poetic using figures of speech such as simile - 'leaving a man because he cheats is like leaving Zambia because it rains'.



GENRE: SHORT STORIES

TITLE: THIS KIND OF LOVE

WRITER: JACQUELINE NGAO, KENYA

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

|| "When a woman loves, she loves for real." These are not my words but R Kelly's. Is Samu the narrator's perfect match, Is the narrator mad, does she first have to wait for death before she escapes? These are some of the questions that roam in one's mind when and after reading this short story.

The narrator is a woman patiently waiting for her lover whom we later know as Samu. She's worried and fear takes a toll on her. It is night; sleep "mocks" her but she doesn't sleep not until her Samu is back. This is not how life used to move initially; it changed at a time the narrator didn't expect. Her Samu drastically changed to a drunkard. After hours of waiting, she walks to the mirror, she's taken back to her childhood memories when her mother used to wait for her dad in the same way only to receive blows and kicks. It is the same treatment she now receives from Samu but she can't move on and leave him because he's the man she loves. This faithful night, Samu comes back, throws her on the chair and beats her hard. She recalls how her mother told her the way she loved her dad. She stays, hopeful that he'll apologize because he loves her.

It is an intriguing story that checks on the strength of love in this modern era of advanced feminism where women have become "more delicate." Waiting for Samu to come back, waiting for Samu to apologize, waiting for love to flow afresh, waiting for everything!

The themes of love, domestic violence, patience and endurance are succinctly portrayed in the story. Through illusion and flashback, we learn about the narrator's home. She is married to Samu who resembles her father in character by chance. The use of symbolism can't be underestimated. The mirror, where she recalls her mother symbolises the past and the present. It's through this mirror that she sees herself in the footsteps of her mother.

Character and Characterisation.

It is through Samu's character that we learn about the narrator's father and the resemblance of both. She's patient, loving and forgiving.



GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: AT A COST!

WRITER: AMAMI YUSUF, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI

From the previous episodes, it is obvious that Zarah was clear of any memories she had of her home back in the village. It was through her wit that she found Kajiru, who understood her situation and his conscience prompted him to take Zarah to Aunt Joy's Home as he thought it would be a solution to the troubled child. Sourcing from previous episodes, it is plain to see that rural Nigeria is still stuck in tradition, which symbolically pushes development from their areas during a time where the women folks are being empowered.

Through episode 12, we see Zarah breaking off from her past. However, she is reluctant to let other teenage girls into her space. With Susan constantly on her business, it is evident that Zarah detached herself from people who were close to her. Nonetheless, her father is seen to have noticed her daughter's free spirit at a time he cautioned her against playing in the rain with Kamal, but she defies him. As per her age, Zarah's father might have been thought of as irresponsible. However, it is in fact a show of love that he decided to let her daughter be, and allow her to live according to her beliefs and principles. This is the first display of love between a child and the parents. It is without doubt that the parents' greatest joy is seeing their children happy.

As for the proprietor of the orphanage, it is cynical to claim that she too, was a victim of bad tradition. Concerning the hefty donations she received from donors, it would be unusual to have the building walls whitewashed, as one would expect them to be state-of-the-art buildings. More so, her interest in Zarah's story reveals a space within Lucy. It is as if she gets confidence or let's say satisfaction once she gets to listen to a victim's story. Or perhaps, she used the information to align needs to the victim in accordance to the intensity of the story.

Susan is an interesting character as she sort of understands the trials and tribulations of the newbie Zarah. She showed love from first sight, but Zarah kept dismissing and turning a blind eye to the moves Susan made. Despite this, Susan illustrates that love takes time and patience. It was through a piece of cake that Zarah let her guard down and began to express the feeling of love. Episode 12 is fascinating as love as a theme is showcased on several occasions, and it is without a doubt that the love Zarah's father expressed towards her catapulted her journey towards self love and discovery, which is evidently crucial to her survival in the city of Lagos.



GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: THE PORTRAIT OF LOVE

WRITER: AKINMAYOWA SHOBO, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: ESTHER MUSEMBI

What is Love? The persona is trying to understand by defining what he thinks Love should be; by picturing it.

S1: Love is immeasurable, it defies statistics, unshaken; and goes beyond just looks and color.

S2: Love is a warm connection between two people. It binds people with distinct differences together.

S3: As opposed to 'modern love', no money, no love. Love does not rely on the economy -bad or good- to make it work, rather it rises above it.

S4: Love is a rock. It is firmly rooted against temptation; it does not budge.

S5: We cannot truly understand Love as it is insane to try to do so. It's just a strong enduring conviction made for two people. It has to be fought for sometimes, but is worth it.

The poem is very rich in wording which strongly brings out the message the persona intended. 'ageless ore', 'gallant spirits fighting for garlands.' The rich imagery works well to paint a picture, just as intended, 'two young birds together, warm company of two hearts in sync.' Personification: 'firmly neglecting every wanton thrust and bowing torrents of communal knocks.'

The title is apt and fits the message.



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