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Victory

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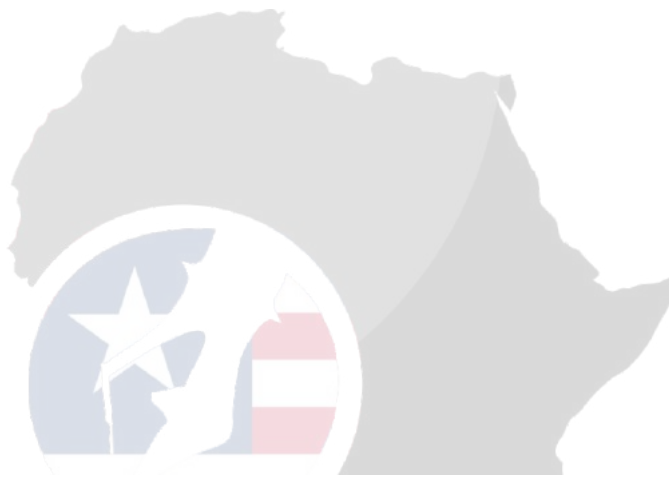
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Editor's Note

Our theme for April is Victory. Victory entails battle and battle produces scars. Victory also entails the defeat of an opponent. Now, that defeat of an opponent can be as grandiose and public as a national sports team winning a coveted trophy or a politician winning a hard-fought election or a student proudly holding up his or her university degree at a graduation ceremony.

Victory can also be as quiet and personal as leaving a toxic relationship or landing that longed-for job or even managing one's addiction to alcohol. A friend of mine, Zambian author Jimmy Kanzobya offered these words about one aspect of women and victory: "To every woman searching for her true worth, redefine your beauty and the value placed on you before your birth. Internalise your true-self, past each breath you take."

It just goes to show that Victory is the result of perseverance, having a level of self-confidence, hard work, self-reflection, and it may mean having to relearn or unlearn a thing or two on that journey and in that battle.

We hope you enjoy our buffet offering this month. The select offerings stamped Editors' Choice will also be up on our website. So, do check it out and follow us on our social media pages.

Let's win!

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My Husband Never Left

TJ Chikambure
Zimbabwe



My husband left the day before our fifth anniversary. No, it's not what you are thinking. He still loves me deeply; he just went away for a few days, 364 to be exact. It has been a year now. So, I should be celebrating our sixth wedding anniversary instead of lamenting his one-year absence, while impatiently waiting for him to come home.

His departure has changed my daily routine a little. I don't leave my bed. This is to the dismay of my family that seems to want to fuss and fumble about me now. They never used to. They were never there before. But now, I constantly have one or two of them parading in and out of my room with this or that, trying to get me to eat or to take a bath. It is all so exhausting actually. Can't

they just leave me alone until he comes back?

Rumbi, my elder sister, fusses the most. She is the 'rock' of the family; she is strong and dependable. Rumbi is the rock, Ruvarashe is the river whose vastness of love contains us all, and I am the water that flows aimlessly, following its own will and disrupting everything. That was according to my father the great army leader vaShumba. My father insisted we called him Commander, even at home. I don't think he ever left the war. At times, I saw him fondly cleaning his rifle which he will never fire again. Commander was a single father to three daughters; our mother had died giving birth to me. On the day I was born, he had been asked to make a choice between saving her life or mine. He chose me. I

felt like the most special woman in the world around my father, until I met my husband.

My husband was charming from day one. He wore a gorgeous, flirtatious white-teeth smile that warmed each room he walked into. We instantly connected when we met. We were both filling in college application forms at an internet café when he approached me. We spent the rest of the day together, chatting, laughing, and kissing. It was destiny. I knew I was going to be his wife. I got accepted into colleges in the UK, but he was only accepted into one, the University of Zimbabwe. I was very proud of him.

"Ruveneko, marry me." My stomach fluttered. I rejected all the university offers and accepted the one role I knew was mine forever.

There is a knock on the door. It is probably that time again when Rumbi or Ruva come and pitter patter around my room, denying me the little joy I have reminiscing about precious memories of him. I will not answer. They will come in anyway.

"Should we tell her the truth?" They are murmurings outside.

"No, she would lose it," Rumbi whispers. "She is not strong enough."

"I am scared we are losing her each day," Ruva responds.

The door swings open. I am curled up in my bed, my knitted blanket pulled up to my neck. It is only Ruva who walks. She looks like a flower, as her name means. She is incredibly attractive, slender and everything about her is gentile, down to the way she sits down and gingerly places a plate of food beside me. We go through the routine of our usual conversation. I brought you food, will you

eat? No. I am not hungry. Please sis, just a little. I will try. Then she normally leaves. But this time, she does not leave. She stops by the door on her way out and asks, "I know we have talked about this before, but where do you think he has gone?"

Where has he gone actually? It slips my mind sometimes. I don't like to focus on that day. We had a fight about Jessica again and he left. Yes, the she-witch that worked with him. The first fight about Jessica had been four Christmases ago at his company's end-of-year function. I saw the glances she gave him, and the way she touched his arm. She thought I was dumb, but I saw it all. And then, I saw him.

The way he intimately whispered into her ear and laughed at her jokes. And don't get me started on the kiss. He kissed her in a way that I had never seen, tucked his hand under her braids and pulled her in. Like they did in the telenovelas I loved to watch. When we got

home, I told him I didn't like that. He apologised and explained what had happened. It was all for show to his new work colleagues, a game. Relief washed over me and we made up, passionately.

I got pregnant soon after. I was twenty-two at the time. My husband was overjoyed but then, I lost the baby. The joy swiftly turned into rage. I was heartbroken. He was inconsolable. I forgave him the first time he laid his hands on me. It was my fault I had lost the baby, something about trauma to my womb caused by the complications during my birth. I could never give him a child, so I allowed him to take his anger out on me. I deserved it.

Ruva discovers that she isn't getting an answer. She continues to say, "Ruveneko, I love you so much. I need to tell you something that no one wants you to know."

I push my back to sit up against the headboard. Is he back and here to surprise me?

"Your husband isn't coming back."

"You all keep saying that," I laugh and slid back down into the bed.

"No. I mean that... Commander took care of him."

My brows crease in confusion. But I know what 'took care of him' means when we are speaking about my father. I open my mouth, but nothing comes out.

"Commander took care of him," she repeats with a murky mixture of pain and love evident in her eyes.

"So, he isn't coming back," the words finally pour out of my mouth. "Ever?"

Ruva shakes her head. Silence ping pongs between us until she speaks.

"You need to get up. You need to bath. You need to take control, or he has won again." She pulls the door to a quiet close and it clicks into place behind her. My sister's words plague my mind. He is not coming back. You need to take control, or he

has won again. Won what?

The routine continues in the weeks that follow. My sisters would bring me food that I would never eat, and I would give them the same response, "I am not hungry."

Twice a week, they take turns to force me to shower. I do it mechanically. I never even feel the water or smell the soap. I dry up and go back to bed, waiting for him.

Until one day the waiting s t o p s .

I start to feel the bruises on my skin as though his fists on them are fresh. It is painful. I

could see the marks. I reach for a photo of him under my pillow and analyse his broad flirtatious smile. The same

smile he had given to Jessica that night and then over the years to Yeukai,

Colleen, Rachel, Chido, Gwen, Matii, Mutsa, Maruva, Chenai... A smile he had

long-stopped giving me. I remember the nights I blacked out from a beating, and woke up in the hospital alone, because he had forbidden me from seeing my family and slowly, they stopped seeing me.

Commander took care of

him. He is gone.

I feel a flutter in my stomach, a feeling I have not experienced in a while. It spreads through my body and bursts out from my lips which curl upwards, ever so slightly but it feels like a momentous feat to me. Slowly I instruct my feet to move and they fall with a thud onto the floor. I amble to the shower and let the water flow down my body. Although the water is hot, it feels like icy needles crashing onto my tender flesh. Then it soothes. I feel my feet against the ground, the droplets on my face, and smell the berry scented shower gel.

If you don't get up, he would h a v e w o n .

He would not win, not again. This is not his victory.

I wear my favourite bright yellow dress and powder my face. I brush my hair and wear a jersey. The family

c h a t t e r i s a u d i b l e downstairs. They are having Sunday brunch after church.

With steady steps I reach for the handle and with great effort I open the door to the start of the rest of my life.

In My Name Lies The Answers

Pearl Mokgatlane
Botswana

“They say we belong. They say we have freedom, yet we are constantly chastised by limitation of boundaries.”



When I was born, my family held a naming ceremony for me to select a name that uplifted my strong heritage and opened doors for me. Before I could crawl, I already knew that I was named after a warrior, that amid chaos my role was to continue standing. I was shown where this warrior lay, a small grave piled with rocks and her last trinkets. My mother sent me to my aunt's house in the big village of Ghanzi for school and returned each term break to our small village Xwee. Ghanzi was but a culture shock and I stuck out like a sore thumb because of my dark skin, blue eyes and long wavy hair. In Ghanzi, the people were light-skinned, had kinky, short hair and

they spoke with a click sound. None of the locals could pronounce my name and called me Tala because of my blue eyes.

I became withdrawn and reserved spending whatever leeway of time at the local library. What I lacked in social skills I amassed in intellectual knowledge. The more I learned, the more I surpassed my peers, the more I was a living mythical creature. By the time I was twelve years old, I was studying for the Cambridge secondary exams.

I yearned to spend my time playing with the local kids on the sand dunes, but I just did not fit in. Each time I told my mother how I was different

she would affirm that I was precious not just different. My mother speaks in riddles and doesn't give easy answers. When I'd tell her why the other kids called me Tala, she would say, "Seed of my loins, do you wish to lament that you prefer to be justified as odd or do you know that you are a descendant of the Herero tribe, bone of Wasuri? Does your father's honour mean nothing to you?"

At thirteen, I was awarded a tertiary scholarship to study medicine in New York. My parents told me to go and be with the world but to always listen to the spirit of Wasuri for it would guide me and keep me. I lived with a childless couple, the McCarthy's till I was turned eighteen. They cared for me generously. I excelled in academics. Then, I ran into Chris.

I was drawn to Chris like a moth to a flame; he brought out the rebel in me as he was unapologetic about his life and often rude. Chris was my axis of mortality. However careless he seemed to be, his persona resonated with my many years of frozen pieces of my childhood. Still, no one outside my parents' house had called me by my name. To the McCarthy's I was sweetie pie and to Chris I was baby girl. Over time, I wanted to change my name to Sue or Lucy or Janet. The options to a new identity seemed infinite.

On my fifteenth birthday Chris told me I was ready to be his steady girl. I did not understand what that would mean but the euphoria struck something in me. Naivety had me lusting in dreams of riding cross country on the back of Chris's Harley Davidson motorcycle. I was aware that slowly I was coming into bloom. My usual petite frame was now adorned with lush bust and hips, my blue eyes seemed to intensify in hue, my skin glistened and my hair grew lavishly long, it took great effort to upkeep.

Standing next to a lanky framed, red haired and tattooed Chris, I was filled with superficial feeling of belonging.

Then the dreams started, after few years of being far from home and never really communicating in my mother tongue, I woke up one morning to sense of having been emerged in deep conversations with people back home. I recalled vividly the otjikaiva that rested upon my head. How the contrast between its vibrant pink and yellow cloth made my blue eye's more prominent. The elders said I should look for signs, that they would be signs.

At breakfast I unpacked the details of the dream to my guardians. They were in awe of the details so much that Mrs McCarthy the pro intellectual suggested that we keep a dream board and research on it.

"Sweetie pie, a true intellectual never dismisses anything, anything can mean something in the end or nothing at all. Our role in life is to understand, investigate data gathered

and conclude."

Later that day with the dream long forgotten, Chris and I embarked on a trip to the botanical gardens.

"Creation is God's artwork. I can see why women love flowers. How can one be in the presence of such splendour and not be moved?" Chris murmured to himself. I was about to respond with some witty response when the words got caught in my mouth.

I could not explain it to Chris, but I was drawn away to the edges of the garden shop. I cannot say I heard her cry for he was more than five km away from me.

I tiptoed, using my heart as anchor or perhaps as supersonic hearing. Much to Chris' frustration, I detoured from the mapped trek. I found her and her toddler lying on the floor. I don't believe in coincidence but that day, not only was I lead till the point of tripping over the feet of Ms Palmer as she cooed her baby boy to calmness, I instinctively knew how to help. In subtle tone,

I introduced myself to Ms Palmer, asking if she could let me help her and the baby. I gave instructions to Chris to call for urgent medical attention, as I transferred the pale boy named Ethan from his mother's arm on to the floor and continued to monitor his vitals. They say time crawls in hard times.

As we sat at Princeton University Paediatric Hospital, I recalled, much to the amazement of my guardians, Chris, and doctors, the events that led to us all being gathered in the waiting room. Though I was yet to graduate, I spoke with confidence when discussing Ethan's condition. Ms Palmer begged hospital management to allow me into the discussion as a specially elected next of kin. Minutes clocked into hours, we watched Ethan through the paediatric unit and discussed surgery versus non evasive treatment. I was plummeted by questions birthed by fear and self-doubt.

Why me?

Is this what the dreams were about?

How can I be sure that this is what is right?

Did I have the dreams, or did I

imagine them?

We all sat crammed up in the visitor's waiting room, praying silently for Ethan's life watching the sliding doors that led to his ward. None of us dared to sleep whilst Ethan was in the battle of his life. Needing succour from speech, I whispered to Chris, "When Ethan wakes up, I think we should buy him a mini cactus." He smiled just enough for me to catch it in the light of the neon beams. Every other hour, the matron on duty would come to give a progress update: he is still stable, no changes thus far, we are all watching him.

Dawn came; Ms Palmer's family arrived looking sympathetic yet remorseful. Mrs Palmer clung to my hand, saying I was her spirit sister. A glimmer of hope when Ethan was moved from paediatric high care to the normal ward. By the end of the week, he was discharged from hospital.

My dreams continued sporadically over the years, the McCarthy's and I continued to record with much enthusiasm. I have never had an instance quite

like Ethan's. Ethan lives a normal life, as his diagnosis permits. Ms Palmer still calls me her spirit sister. Chris the wonder of the campus completed his studies with distinctions and joined Doctors Without Borders. With a threat and a kiss, I was bestowed his precious motorcycle. He says if I wreck the bike, I have no choice but to marry him.

So far so good, I still ride the motorcycle to Princeton University Paediatric Hospital where I am completing my residency in paediatrics. Over the years, Chris and I have saved every dollar we can to relocate and open a practice in Xwee, Botswana.

My name is Dr Uataraa Kzingowabugo, daughter of Wasuri and I dedicate my qualifications to my fierce tribe of Herero. In our language they say, "do not give a girl child a pretty name but give a girl child a name that shatters glass ceilings." I have had to grow into my name like when we grow into hand me down clothes as kids. My name loosely translated means I am a beckon of victory.

Each Little Win

Oladejo Oluyemisi
Nigeria

Champions reserve songs of victory for the wake of history. You and I know a host of them— Nelson Mandela saw the end of Apartheid in South Africa, Mary Slessor ended the infanticide of twins among the Ibibios— we join in their celebration; we supply the refrains for their songs. Sometimes, we amplify their music.

But, there are no drums heralding victory in my battle... hmm... except warriors have other landmark achievements apart from winning this battle, like Tosyn Bucknor who held the sword in one hand and the microphone in the other. She was celebrated, not because she had the ultimate win of this battle, but because she held the microphone skilfully. The champions of the battle I fight never celebrate; they are late. They are never

belted; they are shrouded.

Michael secured his ultimate victory at nineteen, free forever from Vaso-Occlusive Crisis, from attacks of Malaria, from the sickling of the red blood cells, from blood infections, from Leg Ulcer, from Priapism, from Acute Chest Syndrome, from Avascular Necrosis, from the pricks of needles, from doses of Morphine. He didn't get a medal, rather in mournful mood we gathered. The end of the battle I fight is not decorated like a Christmas tree; the end of the battle I fight has the acrid taste of bile. The champions of the battle I fight surrender the sheath in defeat; they leave the war front for the home front. They are champions, though. Here, we don't celebrate the ultimate victory; we celebrate each little win while the battle cries still ring.

We celebrate each Vaso-Occlusive crisis that is over, though we have writhed in pain for hours. We celebrate recovery from each Malaria attack, though we have been bed-ridden for days. We celebrate each return from hospital admissions though the bills have mounted. We celebrate being alive, though we often get asked "Why are your eyeballs yellow?"

You saw me in that parade, marching like a pregnant goat, and you were laughing while I was celebrating my participation in the parade, free from the bone pain that had held me fettered few days earlier, escaped being screened out of the parade with the "incapable ones".

I celebrate days the symptoms of my Avascular Necrosis stay tame.

I celebrate two weeks of not being down with an infection. I celebrate a month without a hospital admission. I celebrate six months without blood transfusion. These are my little wins. They don't come often, but when they do, I celebrate. Yes, I celebrate. I don't look forward to my ultimate win, I just want to keep on celebrating my little wins, and celebrate them often.

Did I disgust you four years ago when I sang "God bless my baby girl", carrying swaddling clothes in my hands, pacing the reception of the Neonatal Unit of Sacred Heart Hospital, and you wondered whether I was sane; whether, indeed, there was a baby in that swaddling cloth? Yes there was, she was the tiniest baby I have ever seen. She weighed only 1 kilogram, but she was a baby. She was! And she is a winner. Ten babies had come and gone before her; and because she came unripe and her life hung on a balance, she underwent a myriad of medical procedures and was nourished the unconventional way, and was kept away from

me for several weeks, and a diamond came with the moment I finally got to hold her. She stays because she won and her win is my win, another little win.

So, you tell God you don't want Paracetamol-induced health. I tell Him I want it anyways – Paracetamol, Paludrine, Hydroxyurea, over-soaked herbal concoction that smells like cow's dung or the combination of everything. Seasons of fitness for me are like oasis in the desert. They are seasons of wins! They are seasons of celebrations!

I could get a bone marrow transplant and get rid of the disorder in my blood; but I would sell my country first. They say miracles happen, that it is at the Cross and at the Crescent Moon, even in the Rusted Metals at the African Shrine. I read their testimonies in the news. On TV, I see them standing in overly decorated altars before an audience of eager listeners who chorus "God is great". I tell them that I know another example of miracle.

It is to see one's thirty-fourth birthday and beyond, even with red blood cells the shape of that Crescent Moon.

"Thrombosis", a word I would later look up in the dictionary, entered my vocabulary stock, not from my many nights at the reading-table, but from my many hospital admissions. I am pricked multiple times as the nurses struggle to find a vein to pass intravenous fluid because blood clots have blocked my veins. And the doctor, his silver-rimmed eye-glasses sitting on his nose, keeps on muttering 'thrombosis', 'thrombosis'. So I lie there writhing in pain from my Vaso-Occlusive Crisis and from the needle pricks, sometimes for an hour, sometimes less, and praying to God that they find the vein. And I celebrate, even in my pain, when they finally find a vein. Nurses join in the celebration when a vein is found in not more than four tries. It's another little win.

They sing it in my ears that I am the hole in my father's bag and why my mother is clothed in rag. They say I am the subject of Wole Soyinka and J. P. Clerk's poem, Abiku.

Even yesterday, a professor of Genetics said spending money on me is like loading money in a sachet and throwing it out of a moving car. And I am supposed to walk around with my head bowed or hide my face in shame? And I am supposed to wear my reproach around my neck like a garland?

An optimistic disposition does some trick. When I emit some cheerfulness springing from a heart of positivity, I attract to myself, even built an enduring friendship with a host of people who would otherwise have been repelled by my story and my skinny arms and my yellow eyeballs and my fatless flesh.

I will be the last person to show up at the crucifixion of Prof.; he is only a mouthpiece; he is acting a script that is team-written. Here, the warriors at our battle are not expected to return home and the tell tales of war. Who then wants to sow seeds in a barren land? But you didn't listen, I was going to tell you about the walls I have scaled and the mountains that I have climbed and the medals I have won, even with my red

blood cells the shape of a crescent moon. These are my wins. I celebrate them, and hope that the wind of time will take my song to Prof.'s ears that spending money on me is not a synonym for throwing money out of a moving car.

And when in a crowd, my yellow eyeballs and tiny arms, the ready herald of my story, stay active, and I get those glares that say 'Oh poor thing', I return a smile that spreads warmth and says 'I love me the way I am'. It's the only way I don't return home brooding.

Perhaps I'm not mom enough for my daughter, because I don't have the stamina to throw her in the air and catch her the way you would yours; because I can't lie on the rug and have her crawl around me; because most times other people take care of her while ill-health keeps me away for days; because family times are as rare as snow in Africa, yet, it's a win that there is a human being for whom I am Number One, a human being who calls me "Mom". No painkiller is as

potent as her voice when she calls "Mom". I have been at the threshold of depression, but counting my little wins has helped me to accept myself, to say yes to life, to dare to dream and live the dream; to share the story of my journey living Sickle Cell Disease. When I, at 34, share my story, I say "With my sickled red blood cells, see how far I have come." I have counted each little win, it has helped me not to give in.

I don't celebrate my little wins with the popping of champagne, or before a congregation of eager listeners. My celebration finds an expression in laughing louder than you consider normal; in unusually heavy make-up; in voicing my opinion where I am expected to stay mute; in locking my fears away in air-tight containers. Today, it is in sitting up late and penning thoughtful lines, while I find a melody in the chirps of crickets.

Each Little Win by Oladejo Oluyemisi is the winner of the [2020 African Award for Creative Non-Fiction](#)

What shall it Profit a Man?

Ojo-Ibukun Tim
Nigeria



What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul? This statement is one of the most popular statements made by Jesus Christ. However, it is one of the most unpopular in the minds of people.

Anytime I approach the subject of Victory, this Bible verse comes to mind. It is okay if you are wondering what connection exists between this verse and the subject in question. In Mark 8:36, one word that calls for attention is 'soul' and in the Christian faith, to lose one's soul means to die a sinner. Bear in mind that this is not the context in which I write; rather, to make my case in this article, I seek to portray losing one's soul as being comfortable with anything that discomforts other people as a result of one's actions to gain the world.

This rhetorical question Jesus asked about gaining

the world and losing one's soul self-answers dissentingly. Looking at the reality of our world today, does the answer still remain dissenting? Are there really no profits? Perhaps, the situation may not be the same in every part of the world.

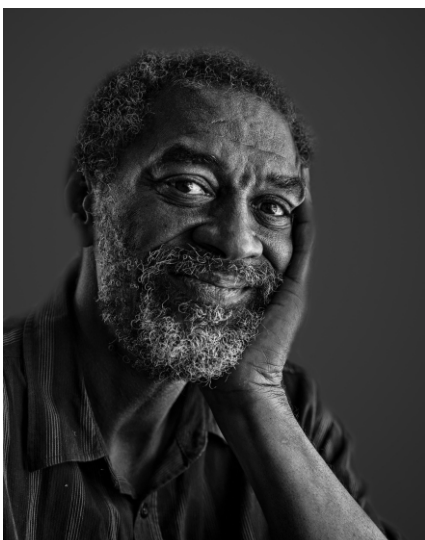
This is the truth; in our world today, many of the most valued personalities in different sectors of society are people who get victory and lose their souls. From very young ages, we're taught to believe that what matters most is the competition for victory, and little focus is placed on the need for cooperation for the betterment of our collective human existence. The challenges put before us as kids are those that show our strength when used against others, not when we use them alongside others to make reality the greatest conceivable ideas.

From time immemorial when homo sapiens walked out of the cave, the bond men had therein appears to have disappeared. A new day always revealed to them a new way in which they were different from others. To date, people are trapped in their minds and only see the egoistic delusion that they always have to strive to remain above those they see as different from them. From the fight between Cain and Abel to World War II– the deadliest human conflict in history in which about seventy-five million people perished – it came to my realisation that as human beings tried to differentiate themselves from others, they became worse off and every development they attained fell like a pack of cards.

In recent times, most people are trying to put their money where their mouth is;

little do they know that they involuntarily end up having a taste of everything, including from where they did not put their mouth. Everyone is trying to get victory and to prove themselves. Yes, we all work and create value, but the downside of it is when we belittle some people in society because they fail to make it to the top, even though luck plays a very huge role... in my opinion, of course.

On the path to victory, many of us have the conviction that the end justifies the means, when in fact the means takes all of the time; it is what we experience every second of our lives, when in fact there is no end at all. We all chase success in order to chase more success that doesn't lead to happiness.



In the chase of victory, we lose ourselves from within, thinking it will help us keep everything we have to lose, when we really do not have anything to lose. Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, who we can say lived a victorious life on many pedestals, agrees with me on this. He once said, "Remembering that I will die soon is the most important tool I have ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything – external expectations, pride, fear of embarrassment or failure – just falls away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important." The question that remains then is, what is victory when there is death?

Most of the time, the victory we chase exists only in the future, making us lose every bit of the present moment. Just like others, Hitler chased victory by killing millions; we all might not be murderers but may be guilty of killing ourselves in order to get victory, and hence may lose our soul like Jesus said. When our focus is totally shifted to the future,

destruction of the present becomes inevitable.

Since the invention of the wheel thousands of years ago, the internet has become another invention that has caused terrific change in the world, and in the way humans live. It has also changed our perception of victory, and if you ask me, it has for the worse. Victory today is measured by the number of likes a family picture gets and not the actual amazing family experience everyone deserves. Young people are more interested in the number of followers they get than the productive things they get done, which shouldn't be so. The internet is revealing the weak nature of our shared human connection, and is making it even weaker.

It's about time we reviewed our view of victory, to know that what matters most is the present moment, to understand that the end does not justify the means, and to realise that there is no end to our made-up chase for victory.

Amaga and the Football Match

Patricia Peace Ejang
Uganda

Amaga was a very stubborn boy. He was always up to some sort of mischief. He had few friends because he had either played a trick on them or their parents had told them to stay away from troublesome Amaga. This made him sad. He spent his free time climbing trees and playing football on his own. Amaga might have been stubborn, but he was a great football player.

One day, as Amaga wandered around the village, he found a group of big boys playing football. One of them kicked the ball off the pitch and it landed near him. Before he could kick the ball back, a big boy who seemed to be the owner of the ball shouted that Amaga should not touch the ball. He felt hurt and walked away. That night, he dreamt that he was the best player in the village and the village

chief was handing him a gift. This made him exhilarated!

The next day, Amaga walked back to the pitch and asked one of the big boys if he could play with them. At first, the big boys mocked him for being small and said he could not play but he stood his ground and insisted on playing. Tired of Amaga's nagging, the big boys let him play. Amaga was so excited. He took off his shirt and joined them on the pitch. One could easily tell that he was the smallest on the pitch. He however used this to his advantage.

As soon as he got the ball, he dribbled it past his opponents, his size helping him to dodge the big boys with ease. Soon it was only the goalkeeper between him and the two poles that made up for the goalposts. Amaga knew a trick. He had practised it a thousand times. He made as if to kick

the ball to the left and when the goalkeeper dived that way, he quickly shifted and kicked the ball to the right end of the goalpost. It was a goal. Amaga jumped up and down, and the big boys, impressed, patted him on his shoulder. He scored two more goals and his team won. That evening, Amaga walked home daydreaming about the many more goals he would score at the National stadium and later that night, he dreamt that he had become the best football player in the world.

Amaga woke up at dawn and ran to Ocuku, the wise old man who stayed near the village square. He asked Ocuku what it would take him to achieve his dream of becoming a great football player.

"Hard work, my child, and discipline," Ocuku said.

Amaga ran all the way home, knowing just what to do in order to become a star player. He was quite cheerful that day, he did not even chase the chicks and neither did he spin the cat around like he usually did. In fact, he helped around with the chores. He swept the compound, washed the dishes and even helped his mother gather firewood. His mother was very surprised because Amaga hated doing housework and would only help a little after his mother threatened to beat him with a slipper.

A week later, the village was celebrating the harvesting

season and in honor of the great dat, a football match was set between Amaga's village and the neighboring village. Amaga had been practicing hard, every single evening as soon as he was done doing the house chores. He replayed the tricks in his head over and over. He dreamt of nothing but winning on that great day.

The day finally arrived, Amaga and his teammates wore orange shirts and black shorts. The other team had big boys, they wore blue shirts and white shorts. They looked tough and very strong. Amaga and his

teammates had prepared very well and therefore knew they were ready to win the match. The drums were beaten and the game started. Amaga dribbled the ball as soon as he got it, dodging opponents here and there, solely focusing on the goalposts. He scored three goals out of the five that his team scored to win the match. So impressed was the village chief that he gave Amaga a special necklace and a pair of brand new shoes.

Amaga swore to work hard, both at home and on the pitch, to be the best football player of all time.



Muta

Margaret Njeri Mungai
Kenya

This is the story of Muta, he is eight years old. Muta enjoys going to school and playing with his friends. He also loves playing games on his mothers' phone and watching cartoons. Like many boys his age he enjoys action-heroes-themed cartoons and fantasises about being a hero himself. As much as he loves school, he also loves his sleep and sometimes it is a struggle to get out of bed in the morning.

But, he realised that when his mother instructs him to go to bed early so he is able to wake up early in the morning, she was right. Muta now knows that when he goes to bed early he is able to wake up feeling fresh in the morning without feeling like going right back to sleep when his mother wakes him up to prepare for school. Muta looks at this as a

victory, he is winning over the heavy sleepiness that he used to feel in the morning. He is yet to win the battle over wanting to watch his cartoons late into the night and therefore he still looks forward to the weekends and holidays when he gets special permission to go to bed late and sleep till late the following day.

Unfortunately, Muta has been having a hard time understanding the right way to solve mathematical equations. He has been working very hard in his school work, yet this one subject has been giving him a hard time. His mother advised him to talk to his teacher about it and he is glad that he did. The teacher told Muta to first of all read the instructions slowly and carefully so he is able to understand what the question is all about. For example, is it about addition

or subtraction. From there he should take time to do the calculations and then double check his answer. This has been of so much help and Muta is determined to improve his performance in maths. He is also secretly looking at a maths equation like a villain and seeing himself as the hero who needs to have victory just as the super heroes in his cartoons.

Right now, Muta knows victory feels good and he enjoys to win, like when he scores a goal when playing football with his friends. He is also slowly understanding that victory also requires a lot of hard work. His mother also talks to him about failing, that it is not the end when you fail in something. Rather you should be glad that you tried and you also try your best next time.

Muta was also worried because he was not very sure what he wants to be when he grows up. Most adults keep asking him that and sometimes he has so many options and other times he is not sure. At one point he wanted to be a firefighter because he thought it would be so cool to drive the fire truck. At another point he wanted to construct houses because

big buildings fascinated him. At some point he wanted to be a doctor because when he visited the doctor's office it looked really nice not to mention the white coat and the stethoscope fascinated him. Of course, he also wants to be a super hero so he can defeat all the super villains but his mom always insists that super heroes only exist in the TV world and not in real life. This one

really disappointed him.

But as his school principal said, it is okay if you are not sure what you want to be in future. There are very many options to choose from and you can be anything you want to be so long as you put your mind into it and work very hard at, then victory will be yours. You can even be the president, imagine that.



Silent Master

Temani Nkalolang
Botswana



Long time ago when the rocks were still wet with mist, people lived in harmony with their master, Soil. Master Soil was spread like a carpet throughout the whole kingdom and sustained life. He took care of his people, made sure they were well fed and happy always. Though Master Soil could only speak with his actions, the people respected him and understood their obligations towards their master. They kept his body covered at all times except the small portion of land where they built their homesteads. So, Master

Soil's kingdom flourished.

One dark night, a piercing whistle was heard tearing through the forest. People woke up to a disturbing sight, trees were blown about, their leaves falling and sand getting into their ears and eyes. Wind galloped into their homesteads neighing like a horse, on his back was his rider, Drought. The people were not happy with Drought's arrival because they could see the damage caused by his horse, Wind. One look at him and they felt pity on him. Drought was thin, dry and smelled like a rotten carcass. The people

ignored Master Soil's warning of falling leaves because they couldn't believe frail Drought could harm them.

With Drought's arrival, life changed drastically. Trees lost more leaves, animals started getting sick and died. Drought realized the people were not aware he is the cause of change in their kingdom so he took advantage of their ignorance and started making up stories. Drought told the people that his kingdom lost all life because of an unexplained occurrence that's why he took his horse and ran away before he died, too. When the people believed him, Drought instigated them against their Master Soil by telling more lies. As result people were occupied with worry and fear such that they did not listen to Master Soil's warnings anymore.





Taking Drought's advice, the people cut trees and built big storages. They collected all the fruits, vegetables and herbs from their kingdom and stored them in their storages. They killed most of the animals that were left, dried the meat and kept it for future use. As far as the eyes could see, Master Soil's body was left uncovered but no one cared because they were busy listening to Drought's lies. Drought's horse, Wind, would be seen galloping around blowing soil all over filling the atmosphere with dust.

With each passing day life became hard for the people and they started getting sick

and dying of hunger with their food storages depleted. Drought had made himself King of their kingdom and anyone who opposed him was punished by hunger until death. Their kingdom looked exactly like Drought, dry, hot, bare and smelled of rotten carcasses. Great fear befell people because they realized Drought was the cause of their hardships. They started sneaking off when Drought was not watching and pleaded with Master Soil to rescue them. But Master Soil was too weak, he had a disease called soil erosion.

The people sat by the dry river bed and cried bitterly.

When their tears wet the dry river bed, Master Soil regained a little bit of his strength. He pitied his people so he told them to gather all the dry seeds they could find and bury them deep in his body where Wind wouldn't be able to blow them away. He told them they had to work fast before Drought turned their kingdom into a desert and stayed there permanently. People scattered all over and gathered as many seeds as they could find and secretly buried them. In the middle of the night when everyone was asleep, Master Soil with all the strength he had left stretched his arms to the heavens and called rain. That night it rained so hard Drought and his horse drowned in the flowing rivers while they tried to escape.

The people were so happy their Master defeated drought and saved their lives. They apologised to Master Soil and vowed never to disobey him again. Life returned to normal and they lived happily ever after.

The Win with a Price

MaryCythia Chinwe Okafor
Nigeria



It was the final day of the football competition. One of the two villages participating had hired Kaluana - a dibia - and the opposing team Eleanya, Kaluana's father to make charms for them to win the match.

It had caused quite a sensation that father and son - who were great dibias - who had always been cordial could come to blows.

Eleanya dared his son not to challenge him. "If you do," he had added to the amusement of both villages and his son, "ikuku will take you."

The threat that wind would carry him off sounded a lot threatening. And as he knew his father well enough, Kaluana didn't want to go against him, but the money he was offered cancelled all odds and he overlooked the



threat.

On the day of the match, Eleanya came, walked round the pitch, chanted incantations and went away. Kaluana came after and set kitchen beside the pitch. He boiled his medicine in a clay pot on a tripod without fire under it while he burnt dried leaves on a fire burning beside the tripod. His

supported village won and he rejoiced but his victory was short-lived as that night Eleanya's promise came to fulfillment.

That night, Kaluana went as usual to hunt but didn't come back in the morning. He disappeared never to be seen again and to this day, nobody knew what happened to him.



Chipó Chama
Zambia

I'm Winning

Margaret N. Mungai
Kenya



To watch this Sunset
And to have the courage
to hope for the Sunrise tomorrow
To wait for a New day
May not seem like much to some
But it's me winning
Against this dark cloud
This fog
That makes it impossible
To see any joy in tomorrow
Or to have any delight
In the beat of my heart



Disciples to Victory

Akin-Ojo Oluwaseyi
Nigeria

We have trained our men
To be valiant Lions in any den.
We know we face a threat
But in its midst, we shall not fret.

Come at us, you epic enemies.
Ride the dust and become tragic stories.
Unsheathe your swords and take your
stand.
After the battle, your remnants would
understand.

Our women have been tortured
In ways that should not be mentioned.
Our children have become slaves
In your smelly low-slung caves.

Our men have been trained
To be Lions that cannot be tamed.
We know the threat we face
And out of it, we shall efface.

No Apology

Ronald K. Ssekajja
Uganda



But the sky will never run dry,
Grow pale with no shooting star!
The lurid candle will burn in the chilling
winds.
Illuminate the paths ahead,
And paint smiles on willow faces.

It is never too late to embrace the smiling
future.
To free the past from the prison of your
mind,
It's easy to get stuck in the past,

But it's not the present; so, don't stay
there forever!

Melt the apology of inefficiency
In the mouth of the renaissance.
The syllables of your name
Breathe fire of greatness,
And it all rhymes.

Your Victory is already in hand
Have no apology for inefficiency!



Over Myself

Munashe Nyamazana
Zimbabwe

An unconquerable will for victory
Coupled with an avalanche of effort
A sisyphian life is all I got,
I've the champagne, I've the glory.
Triumphed even the gruesome.

The acme of my story
As a victor, I wasn't born
Gathered the courage alone
Rest is history,
Environs of consistency.

Courage over fears,

Over myself to be victorious,
Overcoming me was laborious
Never to drown in my tears,
The lamentable catalogue of the past.

A self that ensnares
Begets not being glorious,
Be courageous
Victory genes dares
Subdue yourself in the whim.



Victory

Mogboyin Olayinka
Nigeria



On this tunnel, we footlog
With our bulbs peeled
On daggers of those
That lose the battle and win the war

Millions of throats slashed
Thousand heads dwells on fated strand
Ones the war cost arms and legs
Here, we have on bravery
Heads we win, tails we lose

We may not have hit a home run
When our arms can be broken by beats
Nor did we ever after
dart in and out the fool paradise

We've heard of vain hope
We've traveled cloud-cuckoo-land
All in the name, to hold all the trumps

We've tasted sour grapes
Offered by sour hearts
Our eyes, like wet weekends
We've come like ducks to water
To give mournful kisses,
To rejoice that we didn't lose
to bad hair days
We won.



Emotional Scar

Masenkane Nahano
Lesotho

It is between what hurts and what heals
The testament of our inner strength
Her unbeautiful truth about to show
Unbeautiful truth that made her strong
There is beauty in her scar.

It is between what hurts and what heals
She is not afraid of what people will say
She was clinging to life by
a shredding thread
She lost her smile, she picked it up
She lost her people, she reconnected.

It is between what hurts and what heals
Inside and out we all have freckles
Her healing process started
Started with a word received as a
birthday gift
A strong human she is.

It is between what hurts and what heals
All the painful bruises slowly fading
away Between the shadow of tragedy
and light of joy
Only strong people will admit it
There is beauty in our scars.



Victory will Come Again

Bwesigye Laurent
Uganda

Victory will come again, I know.

I know we were trodden like grains Of
sand
In the desert
I know, the masters with smite got us
ridden
Like slaves in the dirt.

But victory will come to us like the night
To a bat.

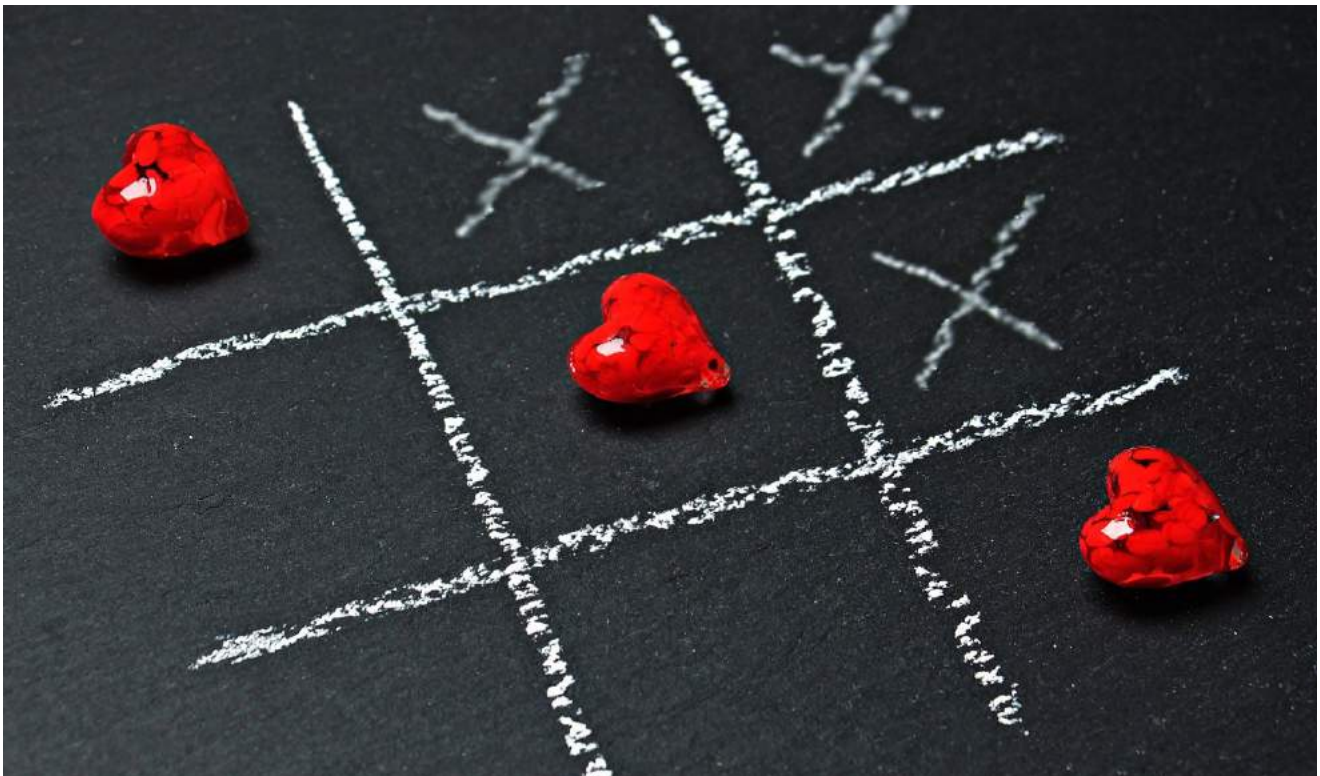
I also know
The people we trusted, the people that
surged

Like angry oceans and ran like belligerent
rivers

To cut the tongues of the masters
Have now mastered the art of the
masters.

I know the victory we claimed created
more chains.

But I also know as I sit in the dark
And watch the light fade
That victory
Will
Come again.



Untamed

Simon Ng'uni
Zambia

We will dance like wild things.
berth on the ocean floor, we will dance
like wild things
melody our lakes with brimming, we will
dance
like wild things, when the calm is restored

like wild things, and like wild things, mend.
like wind, like water, like wild things taking
up the need.

with the only thing a man holds true
This story of ember and flame. like wild
things,
blade a veil — when the ground weevils
within
feat of their horde and nooses

like wild things gazelle, our feet are
guided by grace
some say we are savages, I say we are
born running
kicking when we crawl out of our shell. I
say,

it is in our waiting - in what we wait for,
it is in what we become after. what we do
in between,
it is who we've always been. we take wing
anchoring
root, we are planted thus. like wild things

into song,
the gown verdant on bare hills, slews of
ululation
stamps in unison commemoration, we
conquer
struggle or endeavour against odds or
difficulty.

I say it is who we are. A taut fleece on
drum skins,
the songs we sing, it is in our grace, it is
in our rhythm,
the very fabric of our gait when we have
overcome the night
with caverns of laughter, it is in the way
the sun captures our smile.



Individuated Triumph

Uwayezu Sandra Nadege
Rwanda

Drizzle on sidewalks
Doubts daunting the heart
Fear taunting the soul
Sight unseen
Faith soars.

Searing need
Invisible battles
Fought in silence
Help unearned
A path is paved.

Personal wars

Unknown to the world
Decays zest for life
Seeking peace in pieces
Leads to renewed avidity.

Victory nigh
Journey tiring still
Joy mounts nevertheless
A will gives a way
One by one, demons are slayed.



The Road to Victory

Andrea B. Matambo
Zambia

Seventy-two hours after their bitter defeat,
Their loved and feared commader rose to
his feet;
He had just lost an eye and many a close
friend in that great fall.
Threw he his remaining eye on his
remaining soldiers and spoke so:

"Yeah. 'It will be ease as a smile' -did you
think?
Walk in, grab it, return with glory in a wink?
'It will be ease as a Sunday' -did you
suppose?
Chains of heartaches and loses; is victory
any close?

"And so, here we plant our loved kins

down deep, alas.
Please borne their dreams and many
memories in your hearts;
For until the day our many-fold freedom
we gain
Tonight we're going to spring in that
warzone again."

Seventy-two hours after their bitter
defeat,
Their loved and feared commander rose
to his feet;
Knew he well -the path to glory is not
always sunny and flowery.
"Sorry!" Said he to his troops "Gory! The
road to victory."



Warmth (Finally)

Steve Otieno
Kenya

I remember what happened
When I took my hand out of my pocket
To reach for the sun,

I remember staring at my palms,
Caught off guard by my nail's edges,
After all those days of lurking in my
shadow,

And I remember
How my heart looked,
Prancing on my sleeve,

From then on,

I've been talking about suns,
More than I have of silhouettes,

From then on,
I've been talking about
Nothing but its floodlight,

Though sometimes,
Rain drips from my fingers,
Sending me into another curve,

But the dance,
Isn't for the rain,
As much as it's for the sun's return.



Genre: Short Story

Title: May 20th

Writer: Kingsley Aaron Onuigbo, Nigeria

Reviewer: Bildad Makori, Kenya

The narrative on Africa's Leadership structure is one that has faced numerous challenges.

Since the time immemorial, men have always been occupying the top leadership positions.

But thanks to the "May 20th", a short story by Kingsley Aaron Onuigbo; this cliché narrative is seen to have changed, all thanks to a revolution!

The persona is a female president of the Republic of Nigeria. The better part of the short story sees her preparing and reading a speech as the president.

I really love how the writer has structured and arranged the short story. That is, the key highlight being the manner in which it has been written and how the setting is being presented to us. The whole story is from detailed accounts that were written in the persona's diary's event that took place on May 20th.

Nevertheless, had the lengthy account that happened in between 9.17AM to 12.06PM being shorter, it would have prevented a reader to easily lose track of the knowledge: that what we are reading, are diary accounts that occurred on that day.

But in general, May 20th is a well-structured and enjoyable short story that I urge especially ladies to read.



Genre: Article

Title: Trends of Colonialism in Africa; A call for Mental Revolution

Writer: Comfort Nyati SDB, Zimbabwe

Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana

Oblivious we were of the fact that independence from an authoritarian foreign rule would accelerate the emancipation of the African dream. Where self-reliance and cohesion thrived for all seasons. We woke from this illusion as freedom from one colonial rule was a plunge into the perils of tribalism and mental slavery.

This, being the core around which the author revolves this article in.

The author is describing colonialism with evidential historical precedence and refers to it as a practice of dominance and subjugation of a feeble group to another. This inculcates the paradigms where ethnic groups engulf neighbouring groups and establish dominance over them while encrypting in them novel ideals and beliefs which are peculiar to that of the conqueror.

At the climax of a keenly led path to deciphering the various perspectives which we can view colonialism from, he adds that colonialism (dominance) is a natural trait of both rational and irrational beings. This implies that the zeal to establish dominance over the feeble and be feared is an intrinsic mental craving of all individuals. This attribute, if not controlled, is highly detrimental.

I could not agree less with the article since we have not adequately evolved from the animosity attributed to establishing dominance to fuel our social prestige and satisfy our ego. The refusal of a number of African leaders to retire from political offices affirms the claim of colonialism/dominance being an intrinsic trait of humans.

The author calls for revolution. An armless revolution that will seek to alter the integral or core aspect of colonialism; a mental revolution whose threshold is our educational system. Our freedom from mental slavery is not proportional to academic excellence but an informed, gallant and daring mind. A zeal for freedom from mental slavery; a revolution which can only be birthed in the classroom.

The author unravels to our consciousness the roots of the declination in growth of Africa emancipating herself from the chains of neocolonialism. He does so by making compelling and undebatable analyses and backs them with tangible paradigms which has proven to be a very effective method of sparking a sense of awareness.

Genre: Children's Literature (Wakini Kuria First Runner up)

Title: Sophie, What Did you Say?

Writer: Blessing Tarfa, Nigeria

Reviewer: Thuto Vanessa Seabe, Botswana

Sophie, what did you say? As the title suggests is an interactive read for children, it centers on teaching them manners, how to carry themselves, how to interact with adults as well as boundaries and discipline.

Sophie is a bright and intelligent child who just needs to be taught some things as she grows, her parents are patient with her which is how children should be taught. By repetitively teaching her what and how to ask for things she wants and also show thanks, Sophie soon catches on and assumes the behaviour taught to her by her parents, this speaks to the influence that parents have in molding their children and ultimately the people they send out into the world. Sophie's teachings from home are shown when she visits her friends for a sleepover and is able to carry herself well.

The author has managed to not only teach children a few lessons in the story but has also taught parents how to interact with their children and be a positive influence.



Genre: Poetry

Title: The Revolution

Writer: Adegboro Samuel, Nigeria

Reviewer: Omadang Yowasi, Uganda

For any revolution whether political, social or economical to be fruitful, time MUST be ripe, everyone or almost everyone must be disgruntled and the only option left with is a revolution!

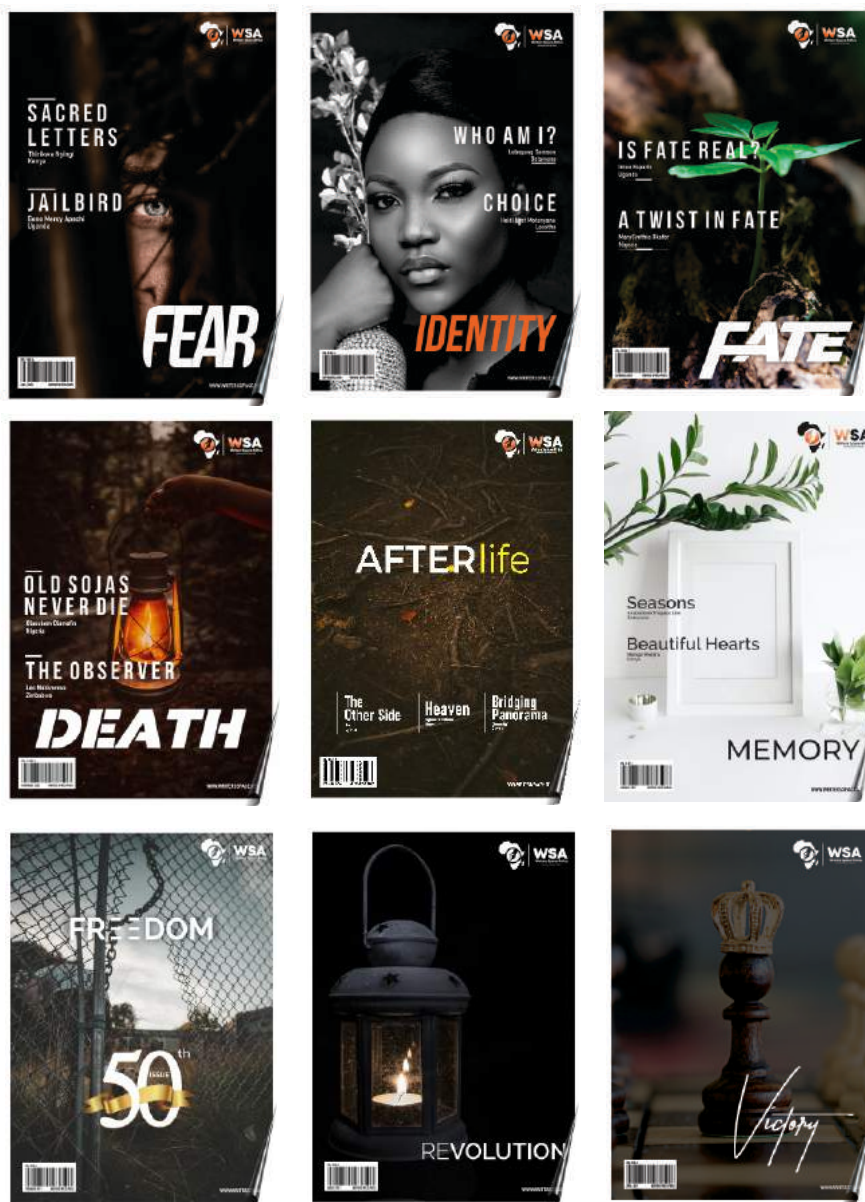
Adegboro writes THE REVOLUTION creating a persona calling and reminding the masses that "the time is now," to change the status quo, to crucify the "hawk" which can mean the grand oppressor. There's urgency in this line to morale boost whoever is ready to take part in the revolution.

The poem implores those in solidarity with the revolutionaries to pray for those killed and those suffering and crying, which vices are castigated by those in power. There's hope in the poem that with time, the revolutionaries will crucify their tormentors on the cross, an act of ending all badness meted out on them. The fall of the "king of Persia" is figurative. The poem is written in short and neat lines with a refrain reminding the people of their pending obligations.

Biblical allusion to the king of Persia foreshadows the downfall of the state whom the people have risen against. There's good use of imagery, auditory and visual.



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