



## Of Seasons and Anthills

LINDA ACHIAA AWUAH  
GHANA

ON PAGE 7

## Baby Caterpillar

CORONA CERMAK  
TANZANIA

ON PAGE 12

## Abinla's Lift-off

BARRA HART,  
NIGERIA

ON PAGE 32

## For Children Like Us

CHIJOKE EMENIKE,  
NIGERIA

ON PAGE 26

## Not Till the Sun Kisses the Horizon

INNOCENT MATEKERE,  
TANZANIA

ON PAGE 28

# Nathaniel Z Mpofu

Multi-Award-Winning Zimbabwean Author

PAGE 19

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For enquiries about WSA-Rwanda or to join the group,  
please use any of the following mediums:

email: [wsa@writersspace.net](mailto:wsa@writersspace.net)

WhatsApp: +250 781 899 256

## Table Of CONTENT

**05** ARTICLES

**11** CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

**19** A CHAT WITH NATHANIEL

**26** POETRY

**32** SHORT STORIES

**37** MIMI'S COLUMN

**41** MAGAZINE REVIEW

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## Comfort Nyati, Sdb.

Chief Editor,  
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# Dear Reader,

We have gone a step further from the terrifying January disease. It's February again, where love is acclaimed and proclaimed with great stamina. Plans to commemorate love anniversaries is already taking strides. The year is still young, while it keeps getting old each day, pregnant with unknown surprises. To anticipate these surprises a lot of priorities should be met. Of these, planning should top the list. For this reason, poor performance is prevented by proper prior planning. Doubtlessly, when a pregnant woman is due to deliver, the obvious and inevitable is her preparedness to welcome her unborn child. To this, what lies central are the plans she has in mind that would ensure the upbringing of her child to becoming a good human and honest citizen.

Perhaps it's an opportune time one re-learns to plan to live in order to live a planned life. As such, this edition is not a mere indoctrination with ungrounded thoughts. No. It is through thorough reading and comprehending every word, passage and content that one's stereotype of planning shall meet clarity and purity.

It's normal to wonder why the most successful people have invested in planning than executing. Following this, many reasons could be attached but I am of the conviction that planning stomachs more doing than doing itself. The answers I may not have to everything. It lies not in my fingertips but in the tips of this February (62nd) edition. Therefore, as we enjoy masticating this literary banquet, let us remember precisely in our circles to be the architects of our own contentment.

Remember, Twaweza!!!

*To fail to plan  
is to plan to fail.  
Not to plan  
is planning too.  
Isn't it?  
What do you think?*

# Articles

## Planning after Failure

Luqmaan Rawat, South Africa

Every person, no matter their age or gender, have goals. From the young who can barely run, to the old who can't run. Everyone has goals. Whether it be short-term goals or long-term goals; goals that will take a day or even years to achieve, each and everyone has goals. To reach them we all have to do the same thing – plan. We need to plan for ourselves and our lives. It is said, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” This is why planning is important. It's like a map we draw ourselves to reach that destination, to reach that goal. Some people succeed at it and some don't. To succeed is to achieve what you've always planned for, but what happens when that plan fails, or when we fail to achieve that goal?

Humanity is such that we believe we are owed everything. We believe, wrongfully so, that whatever we want, we should get. So, when we come up with a plan, we always believe that we are destined to succeed with it. We believe we are owed that success because we have planned everything out. Life is almost hurtfully funny though and the plans we make seldom go according to how we want it to. When things fall apart most of time, the people who created these plans also fall apart.

For example, a man can plan how he is going to get his dream car. He can plan how he's going to buy it, where he is going to get the money, how much he's going to save every month towards that purchase, etc. But as the days and months pass, he might hit a few stumbling blocks that could derail his plan. They could be small or large obstacles nevertheless; they mess up his plan to buy the car.

Suddenly, the car he wanted to buy within a year becomes the car he can only buy in two- or three years' time. When the man realizes that his plan is slowly coming apart, he also comes apart. Meanwhile, this man may have strongly believed in his plan, so much so that he felt he already owned the car. As humans, we must understand one thing; if the plan doesn't work, we ought to change it and never become despondent due to it falling apart.

Peter F. Drucker once said, “Plans are worthless, but planning is invaluable.” What exactly does he mean by that? In simple terms, it means having a plan really means nothing. It's a worthless piece of paper. It's something that you wrote out,



a map that shows you the way you believe you should take. If plans meant anything at all, then each and everyone would succeed once they made plans.

However, the process of planning is invaluable because it helps one to plot out a course to get what they want. Whereas a plan might fail, planning will never fail you. It is the simple process of giving yourself a road to follow. Sometimes all we need in life is some stability and that only comes with planning. A person who has mastered the art of planning is one who has mastered the way of achieving set goals because no matter how many plans fail, there will always be a new plan with which to reach the destination.

What made someone a great general in the past was their planning skill. Several great generals won battles that people thought they would lose all because of their great planning skills. They spent countless hours surveying the landscapes and other aspects to give them an advantage over their enemies. They planned to the smallest margins, and if their plan was failing before their eyes, they did not fall to their knees and give up. No, they went back to the drawing board to plan again and find a way to achieve victory, to achieve greatness. That is what life is really about. Those who can continue to plan, no matter how many times they have seen their plans fail, will be victorious.

A plan that fails is not a bad thing. It gives you the opportunity to learn how to handle situations that caused the plan to fail. We seldom see the positives in the bad things in life. As such, we let failure and

fear consume us and make us abandon our plans in hopes of getting something better. But if only we can dust ourselves off and regroup, we will realize how possible it is to have what we wanted to gain. Although humanity is unkind to itself, the moment we taste failure, we feel as if we can never succeed. To plan is easy but to plan after failure is courageous.

We should all vow to ourselves that no matter what our goals are; long-term or short-term, we will strive to accomplish them even if our original plan fails. We will dust ourselves off and give it another go and do our best to achieve those goals. As the saying goes, "If plan A doesn't work out relax. The alphabets have 25 more letters."

*"We seldom see the positives in the bad things in life. As such, we let failure and fear consume us and make us abandon our plans in hopes of getting something better."*



# Of Seasons and Anthills

Linda Achiaa Awuah, Ghana



I hail from Ghana where during my childhood, the months of November, December, and January, were jokingly tagged as winter months. Of course, we had no snow but these months were ridiculously cold, dry, and humid, and altogether uncomfortable to deal with; not to mention the cracked lips, heels, and all!

In 2021, we were no longer tagging these months as our winter. The rains came with a vengeance, and we waited for the ridiculous cold to rear its ugly head. Alas, how disappointed we were. The most common question on everyone's lips was "where is the harmattan?"

Last week, I had inadvertently left a piece of cake sitting on my table while I ran a quick errand when I returned to meet the horrific sight of an ant-infested plate. Rather than jump straight at ridding the plate and table of the unwelcomed army, I sat and watched them, intrigued for the most part at the little creatures devotedly taking trips to and from the plate to wherever their destination was. The white tips at the ends of where I presumed was their heads were indicative of tiny pieces of cake they were carrying away to their hideout somewhere in my own abode.

Ants are interesting creatures if you pay enough attention to them. They are said to have currently colonised almost every part of this earth and they thrive in most ecosystems. Studies have shown that the successes of ants in so many environments have been attributed to their social organisation and their ability to modify habitats, tap resources, and defend themselves. Well, the ants

certainly were modifying my habitat into their own.

As I watched amused, I was transported back to the story of the ant in one of Aesop's popular fables that I had read as a child, "The Ant and the Grasshopper" which shows us the industry of the ant and how well it survives because of its planning 'skills'. In the fable, the ants worked throughout the summer season to store enough food for the impending winter, while the grasshopper spent its summer humming and generally having a jolly good time. At wintertime, it was the ant that was found having a good time because it had stored up enough food while the grasshopper wallowed in misery and went a-begging. The ant planned for the miserable weather, and so when it finally came around, it was in control of how its life and survival went in that season, as opposed to the grasshopper.

As sure as day follows night, many of us can still remember the 31st day of December in the just ended year. We remember where we were, and

*"Studies have shown that the successes of ants in so many environments have been attributed to their social organisation and their ability to modify habitats, tap resources, and defend themselves."*

the euphoria in the air. We remember our 31st night service, party or the alone time spent; what we did, and the thoughts that were on our minds. We remember when the clock struck midnight, signalling the official end of the year 2021 with all its good times and its bad times, and the hopeful shouts of “Happy New Year!” We remember the fireworks and the general jolliness on the faces of people around us and on our own faces. We thought of the year past, and the kaleidoscope of our failures and achievements. We had mixed feelings of sadness and excitement. Sadness at the time lost and goals unachieved but excitement about the time ahead and the prospects of things to come. Resolutions were made, some were carried forward from 2021 and I dare say from the year 2020 as well. It’s now time to pause and question how we intend to achieve the things we have set our sights and minds on. The magic word ‘plan’ then comes in.

Whatever it is you want to achieve in life, plan towards it. Do not go through the year, or through life without a plan. Success will not accidentally meet us. One sure way of achieving happiness and satisfaction is planning for everything. Things are not always going to fall into place, but when they don’t, you can be sure that it won’t be for lack of planning.

It is a natural tendency of humans to question why we were dumped on this green earth. Is it for a greater mystery we have to uncover to enable us to live a so-called joy-filled life full of sunshine and what not, or is it to go through the motions of education and then the capitalist mill till death finally sweeps us away in its arms?

Christians for instance, believe that all persons are created by God or called to a certain specific purpose on earth. Some say that each person has a special and unique way of serving God on earth

and it is in finding that unique way that Christians discover a never before experienced enthusiasm for life. Most Christian literature advise that once a person has found their purpose, the foremost and most important way to achieve that is through planning. Oh, what a travesty it will be to miss out on living your purpose because you failed to plan!

And so, in this new year, with all our grandiose ideas, resolutions, and goals, let us not forget to be like the ant. For nothing good is achieved with automatism, but only through a conscious effort and action aimed at achieving our set targets. We know exactly where we are going or want to go and so let’s decide step-by-step and consciously how we intend to get there by mapping out our paths and strategies and be guided by Lewis Carroll’s saying that “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will lead you there.”

It’s already the second month of the new year. Time and tide they say, wait for no man. It matters not how the first month went. Take solace in the words of Henry David Thoreau that “If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put foundations under them” and start moulding your road-map into shape.

Just like the ant, let us take control of our lives and resolutions and actively put down plans to achieve them. Defer to whatever higher being you have wedged your trust in, or draw strength from whatever higher power or philosophy you are anchored to and make it work.

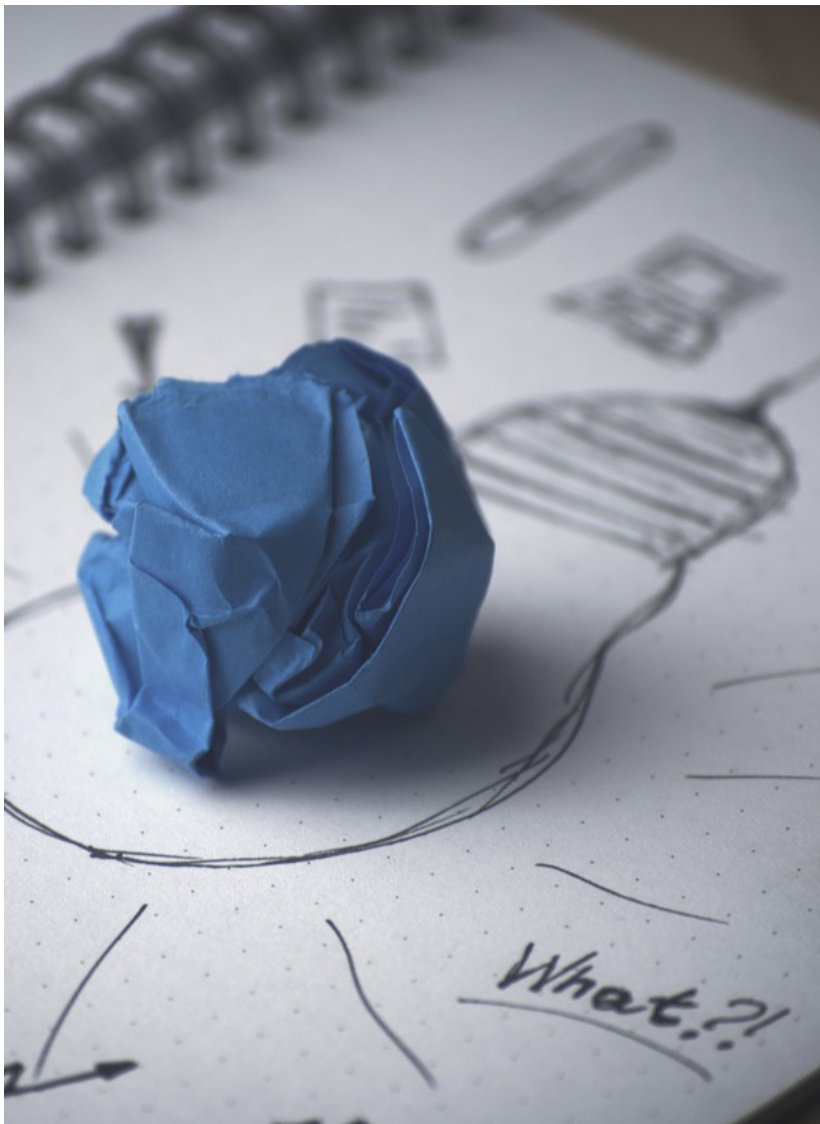
For when that second hand completes its 31,536,000th trip around the clock and finally hits the top of the hour on the 31st of December 2022, the only emotion we want to feel is that of fulfilment.



# Creating Your Possible Future

Ruth Akubudike, Nigeria

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A goal is an idea of a possible future that one hopes to achieve. It is the desired result of one's effort whereas a plan is a detailed proposal for achieving that goal. According to experts, setting goals helps create new behaviours and creates a new momentum for life. It channels your drive and gives you a long-term vision and short-term motivation.

As every year runs to a close, it becomes common to hear people talk about the goals they are making for the next year. Setting goals is not just a New Year's thing. We set goals for a new month, a new academic session, and even a new era in business. We set goals ahead of every new era in our lives. For example, as a student, you may set goals for the new term or semester to study for a longer duration or to spend more time on a particular subject or course. As a business owner, you may set goals to increase sales or to get a new retail centre. Even as a spiritual leader, you can set goals to increase your congregation numbers and boost a sector in your ministry.

Goals have been set and now, plans need to be made. This may sound daunting to a lot of people. One of the problems most people face is

indecision. Sometimes setting goals becomes a troubling thought as well. We do not want to think too much about what could happen in the next two, five, ten years or beyond. Perhaps, you have the tendency to over-analyze every choice you make. You ask, 'Is this the right thing to do? Do I do it differently? How many people will judge me for this?' The issue of indecision is common, especially for the younger generations - Generation Z and above. We live in a fast-moving, sensitive world where we need to be conscious of every step we take.

Although the future is not one hundred per cent certain, nor do we have clear-cut images of what it will be like, we can still make plans to ensure that we do not go off course. You may be the kind of person to do things on a whim without goals, or plans, but just the happy-go-lucky kind. While that might work in certain situations, there are other vital aspects of life that require careful thinking and proper tailoring. It is not every situation in which we let fate 'run its course' that will yield a put-together outcome. You do not just jump into a tertiary institution or into a business without sitting down and outlining how you want to get into any of those. In addition, while in the university or running that business, you do not live so carefree and accept whatever life throws at you. You still need to set goals and make plans.

As I mentioned earlier, goals help us create new behaviours and gain new momentum for life. Creating an outline for what you want in the nearest future keeps you focused on the most important things. It keeps you on track with little to no distractions. It also keeps you streamlined on what you want to achieve. Your mind is focused on that very thing in front of you. Even those who prefer to do things spontaneously will find this lifestyle helpful in organizing thoughts and decisions.

However, making plans might give you anxiety which lots of people, including myself, experience. It is better to calmly think about the possibility that not everything might go according to plan. There are always worst-case scenarios. While this might be discouraging to hear or read, it is reality. We live in a world full of uncertainties. Rather than focus too much on the anxiety, think about the amount of work you can get done if things do go your way. Think of the positives.

To make things less daunting, start small. Start with the simplest goals, like what you will do tomorrow. Make an outline of what you want to achieve the next day. Write the goal(s) in bullet points; call your relative, go to the market, do the laundry, go to the hairdresser's, call five customers, go to that business meeting, among others. Then, go ahead and plan for the day after that, and the day after that. Then, the whole week, and for the month, and the next month. Create the possible future that you want.

Do not be afraid to pick up that notepad or open that empty Word template. Visualize what you want to do next. Write down how you are going to make those ideas or dreams a reality. Transfer those thoughts from your head to digital or physical paper. It takes one step at a time. If you want to start a business, write down that business plan. If you want to write a novel, create your outline. If you even want to go shopping, write that budget list. No matter how little it seems, everything matters. You can even start with the new year. What do you want to do in the year 2022? What do you want to do right now?

Let me end this article with this cliché: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Seize the reins of your tomorrow, and make those plans as soon as possible.

# Children's Literature

## When I Grow UP

Seluliwe Taina Masuku, Eswatini

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I want to be a doctor.  
I want to be a teacher.  
I want to be a soldier.  
I want to be a mother.  
What do you want to be?

My dreams say,  
I will be the next Winnie Mandela,  
My right fist pumped high up in the air,  
Screaming, fighting and shouting for freedom,  
I will sing, "Mayibuye iAfrika!"  
Who do you wish to be?

Mother Teresa is who I wish to be.  
Just like her, I want to travel the world,  
From city to city, continent to continent,  
Spreading goodness, love, peace and happiness,  
And ensuring both boys and girls never hurt one another.  
Do you know who you will be when you grow up?

I will be anything and everything  
That I was created to be.  
Just like my grandmother used to say,  
"Nothing is impossible in this universe."  
That's exactly who I'm going to be,  
Miss Make-it-all-Possible.  
With my beautiful golden smile,  
I will light up the forests of the African continent.  
With my dark chocolate skin,  
I will cultivate the beauty within the young Kings and Queens of Africa.  
And finally, with my Afro Crown that never wavers,  
I will turn heads until I leave a mark.  
After all, I am the future of Africa.



# Baby Caterpillar\*

Corona Cermak, Tanzania

*Illustrated by Morris Rioba, Kenya*

*\* Dedicated to my Husband*



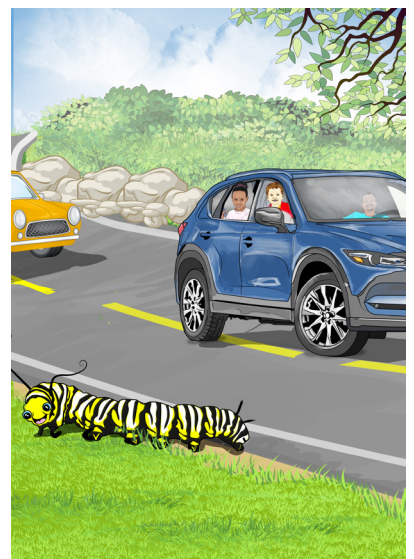
1 - After five lonely days inside the egg, Baby Caterpillar decided to go and look for her family. She ate the wall of her egg and pushed herself outside.



2 - She walked through a football ground, barely escaping the feet of the footballers. Quickly, she crossed.

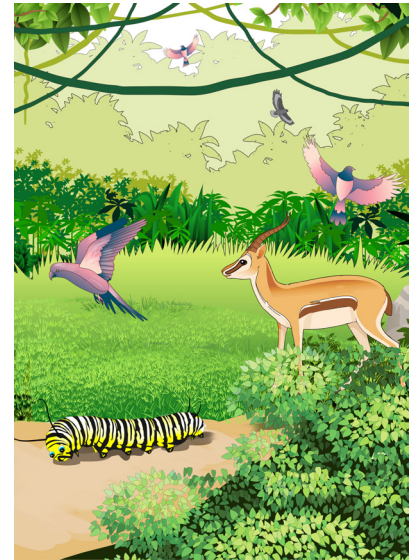


3 - She walked across a busy road, just missed by the tyres of the speeding cars. Quickly, she crossed.

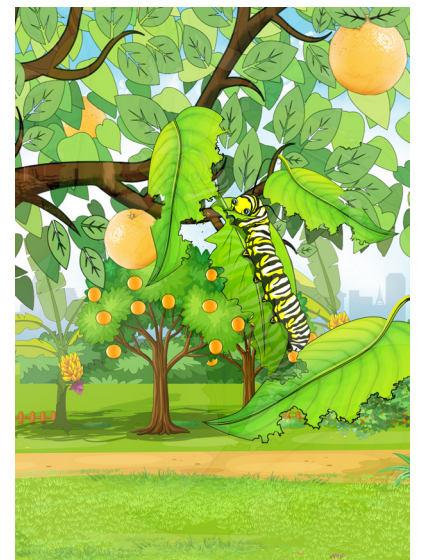


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4 - She walked through a thick forest. Other animals including birds tried to eat her up. Quickly, she crossed.



5 - Hungry and tired she decided to stop by the fruit farm to eat. Baby Caterpillar ate, big leaves and small leaves, soft leaves and hard leaves, sweet leaves and bitter leaves. When she could not eat any more, she burped and continued with her journey.



6 - She walked a long distance with no hope. When the sun was already setting, she thought it would be wise to have a rest. Her feet were tired and her skin had started to shed. Slowly, Baby caterpillar climbed an orange tree.



7 - When she was on the top of the tree, she sighed with joy. She ate a few delicious leaves and stretched herself out on a beautiful dark green leaf.



8 - Suddenly, she heard a thunderstorm rolling. She was so scared of getting wet! She started thinking of what she could do to stay dry. She did not want to catch a cold at her tender age.



9 - Quickly, she got an idea of building a house which could cover her from the rain. She called her house a cocoon. Baby Caterpillar was very tired, so she slept very deeply. She snored for two weeks without waking up once.



10 - When she woke up she felt strange. But the warm sun made her feel excited and she could not wait to be outside.



11 - She kicked open a hole in the wall of the cocoon and pushed herself outside to stretch. Baby Caterpillar could not believe her eyes.



12 - She discovered she had beautiful colourful wings! But they were still wet. She opened them wide to dry them out. She flapped them up and down in delight and they became stronger.

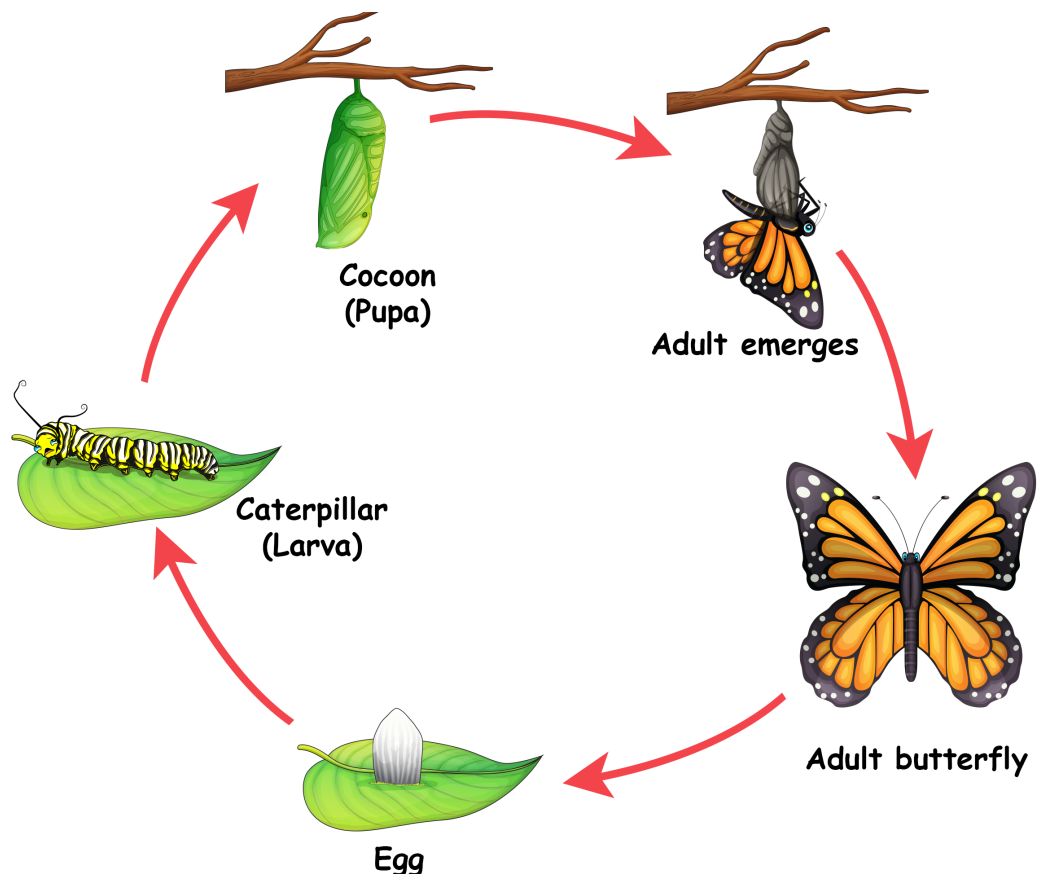




13 - She was amazed to find that she could fly. She had turned into a beautiful butterfly! She flew away to continue searching for her family, singing all the way.



14 - Fly, fly butterfly, fly high, fly low, fly, fly butterfly, fly here, fly there, fly, fly butterfly, fly back home.



The life cycle of the butterfly starts again from an egg laid by the butterfly.



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers



# Call For Submission

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international Literary magazine, is calling for submissions for its 64th edition (April 2022 Edition).

The theme for this edition is **Travel/Journey**.

**Starts: January 20**  
**Ends: February 15**

*We accept submissions in the following categories:*

Articles/Essays

Flash Fiction

Poetry

Children's Literature

Short Stories

To submit, please visit - [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)

# A Chat with Nathaniel Ziphoezinhle Mpofu

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*In this February edition of the Writers Space Africa Magazine, we bring you Nathaniel Ziphoezinhle Mpofu, a multi-award-winning author of several books, librarian at the Bulawayo Public Library, Zimbabwe, and third place winner of the 2021 Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature. Blessing Peter Titus (PPBlessing) had a chat with him.*

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**PPBlessing:** *Thank you for joining us for this interview, can we get to know who Nathaniel is?*

**NZM:** I'm a multi-award-winning author and librarian from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. My academic itinerary includes Mzingwane High School, Foundation College and Bulawayo Polytechnic where I studied Library and information science.

**PPBlessing:** *Seeing that you're a librarian by profession, how come you write?*

**NZM:** Being a librarian actually helps and enforces the need to write. I'm literally always surrounded by books, stories and a whole plethora of atoms of diction. If I had an efficient manifesto all librarians would write a book per year as part of the job description.

**PPBlessing:** *You earlier mentioned that you*

*are a multi-award-winning author, what other awards have you won aside from third place in the 2021 Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature?*

**NZM:** I've been thrice nominated for the ROIL Bulawayo Arts Awards (BAA) Outstanding fiction award. It's a rather new movement in Zimbabwe. I won it once in 2018. My other nominations are the African Writers Award for Creative non-fiction in 2020, and a longlist in the Kendeka short story prize in 2021.

**PPBlessing:** *This is wonderful. Do you only write children's literature or you write other genres too?*

**NZM:** I have a children's book series titled Inkless Quills; that being the first instalment and Nerfeti is the sequel. Inkless Quills was accepted for

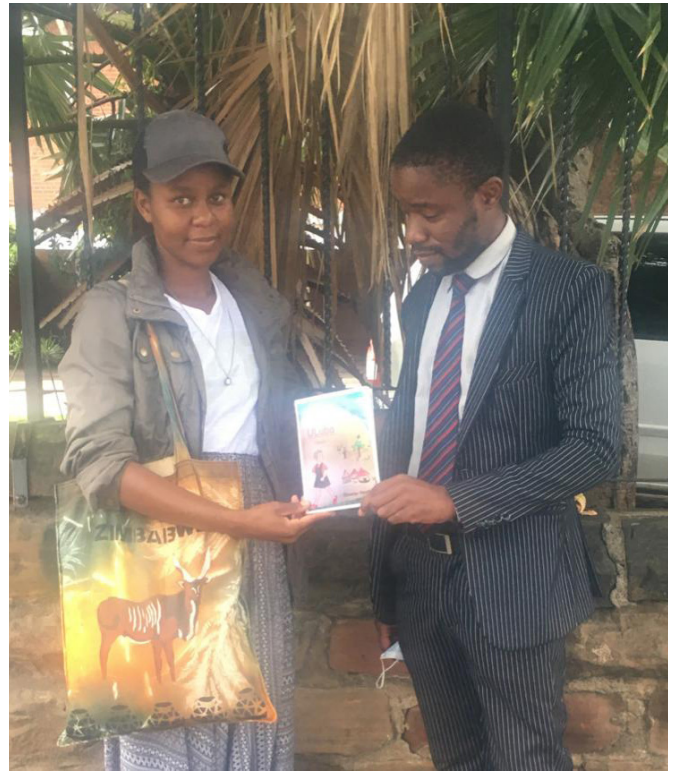
school library use by the Gauteng ministry of education, South Africa in 2021. My other books are in the young adult, and poetry genres. Except for a memoir, No.44 Andrea Drive. A Horcrux, an exorcism and a memoir.

**PPBlessing: Interesting. Are these available in print or ebooks?**

**NZM:**They're available in print and digitally on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and [www.cartofafrika.com](http://www.cartofafrika.com)

**PPBlessing: Alright. Let's step back a little, when exactly did you start writing and why?**

**NZM:**My real inception to write more than homework was from watching J. K Rowling's motion picture adaptation of her debut book in the franchise, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone, then reading the book itself. Imagine the com-



Nathaniel with his fiancée, Zibusiso Nyathi, author of *ULuba* (a children's book series)

parison. I was probably 10, and the idea that well-written words could paint the pictures in the movie I had seen found me pants down. From then I wanted to write but I only started to compile an actual novel in 2006, *The Parallel World*.

**PPBlessing: Wow! You started out quite early. When did you first get published and what was it?**

**NZM:** 2015. *The Parallel World* was my first novel.

**PPBlessing: Why didn't you study a course related directly to writing such as literature since you'd already had an interest in writing at the tender age of 10?**

**NZM:**I was accepted for a Masters in Creative Writing at Rhodes University in 2020. I couldn't go through with it because I couldn't afford the costs at the time.

**PPBlessing: Okay. How about at your under-**



With Marshal Chiza The Billionaire at the ROIL BAA nominees dinner 2018

**graduate studies? Why did you go for library and information science instead?**

**NZM:** It was circumstance and time. I had to enrol for something and librarianship fit like a glove at the time.

**PPBlessing: Assuming an ideal situation, what course would you have studied?**

**NZM:**Architecture.

**PPBlessing: Why?**

**NZM:**Architecture has been in my family since my father. I deviated a bit from it in pursuit of writing. Wherein I won and lost. Architecture's still my first love.

**PPBlessing: One of the battles a lot of Writers face is getting published, how have you managed to overcome this challenge and get 11 books published?**

**NZM:**I hear you. Writers write page-turning manuscripts and end up shelving them in a broom cupboard somewhere because a few traditional publishers said "it's not what we're looking for." Hence the advent of self-publishing. I've self-published all my books.

**PPBlessing: That's great. Can you share tips with other writers who want to also self-publish?**

**NZM:**The idea is to be contented with your book to the extent that you feel no need for an editor or proofreader because you would have done that

*Writers write page-turning manuscripts and end up shelving them in a broom cupboard somewhere because a few traditional publishers said "it's not what we're looking for."*



Nathaniel with Pontsho Rikhotso (next to him) and enthusiastic readers at Jozi book fair 2016

enough. Leave that manuscript alone for a day or two, then revisit it and clean it up again and again until you see no fault. Then invest in a 'professional' editor to go over your work. Acquire an ISBN from the National Library of South Africa by sending an email or call to [kholofelo.mojela@nlsa.ac.za](mailto:kholofelo.mojela@nlsa.ac.za) /012 401 9776. Include the title of the book and publisher on your request. Response time is 1-5 days or through your country's National Archives. You will usually need to deposit two copies of your book depending on their constitution.

**PPBlessing: Thank you for the insight. I almost thought you had no need for an editor until you finished that sentence. What will you tell those who write but aren't confident about publishing their work?**

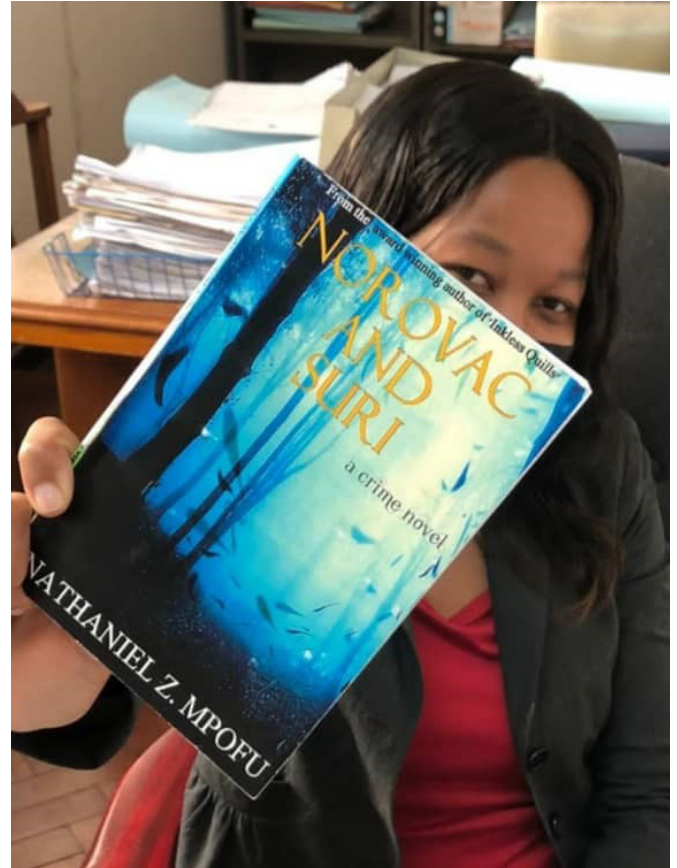
**NZM:**The fact that of all the things you can do for the catharsis you need, and you choose to write, makes you a writer and that's all that you need to remember. You could have pledged yourself to a hundred other addictions or you do both simultaneously. Whatever formula works for you. The constant is that you chose to write. And for that I

applaud you. Writing is the most immediate form of inception too. You're not built to comprehend the impact your words will have on whoever reads them. So let that battle go. It's esoteric biology and you won't win that war. But as I said it's inception. So you also can't comprehend the betterment or antonym that your words will bring to your readers. You won't live enough to configure both to the 'T' anyway so take that leap of unequivocal truth in your words. No one else will. Write like a god, and eventually, you will be one.

**PPBlessing:** *As a self-published author, what's the best self-publishing platform you'll recommend?*

**NZM:** I'm only on Amazon and Cartofafrika. Arguably the list is shorter when you're African but that's the system, and if the system doesn't work for your words what do you do?

**PPBlessing:** *Which among these two platforms serves you better? You find a way to make it*



Blessing, a happy reader

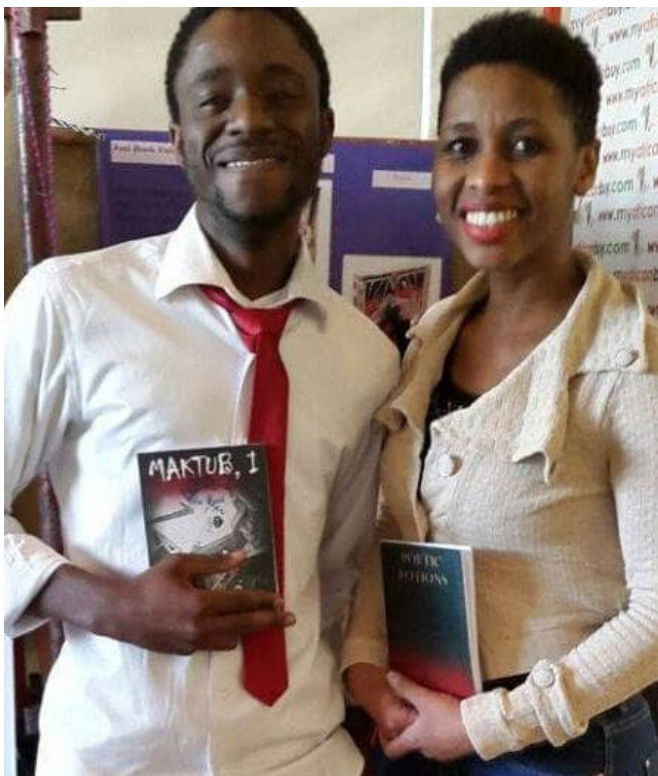
*work for you I suppose.*

**NZM:** Better than pushing my books myself? Neither. Nothing beats putting yourself out there and vindicating your own writing. That's priceless.

**PPBlessing:** *You mean you have a personal blog or website where you sell your books or you sell directly to bookstores?*

**NZM:** Yes, I do. It's <https://nathanielmpofu.wix-site.com/website> I also sell directly to bookstores and on social media but we all know social media's only ecstatic for social mediocrity. So since writing's furthest from that we can only offer the masses patience. Sabali in Swahili.

**PPBlessing:** *How has being a multi-award-winning author influenced your writing and lifestyle?*



Nathaniel with Sibahle Malunga. Writer and business diva at Jozi book fair

**NZM:**That hasn't changed much in me really. Every 101 poems for her was my retirement book.

**PPBlessing:** *Retirement? Do you mean you are no longer going to write?*

**NZM:**Yes. And no.

**PPBlessing:** *Please explain.*

**NZM:**I've written enough. The agenda now is for all that to be read with the same passion.

**PPBlessing:** *Okay... How do you intend to achieve that?*

**NZM:**Perhaps you have pointers?

**PPBlessing:** *Well, there's the option of aggressive personal online and offline marketing or you could even contract a marketing firm.*

**NZM:**I appreciate it. Thank you

**PPBlessing:** *Does your retirement mean no more writing even in the future?*

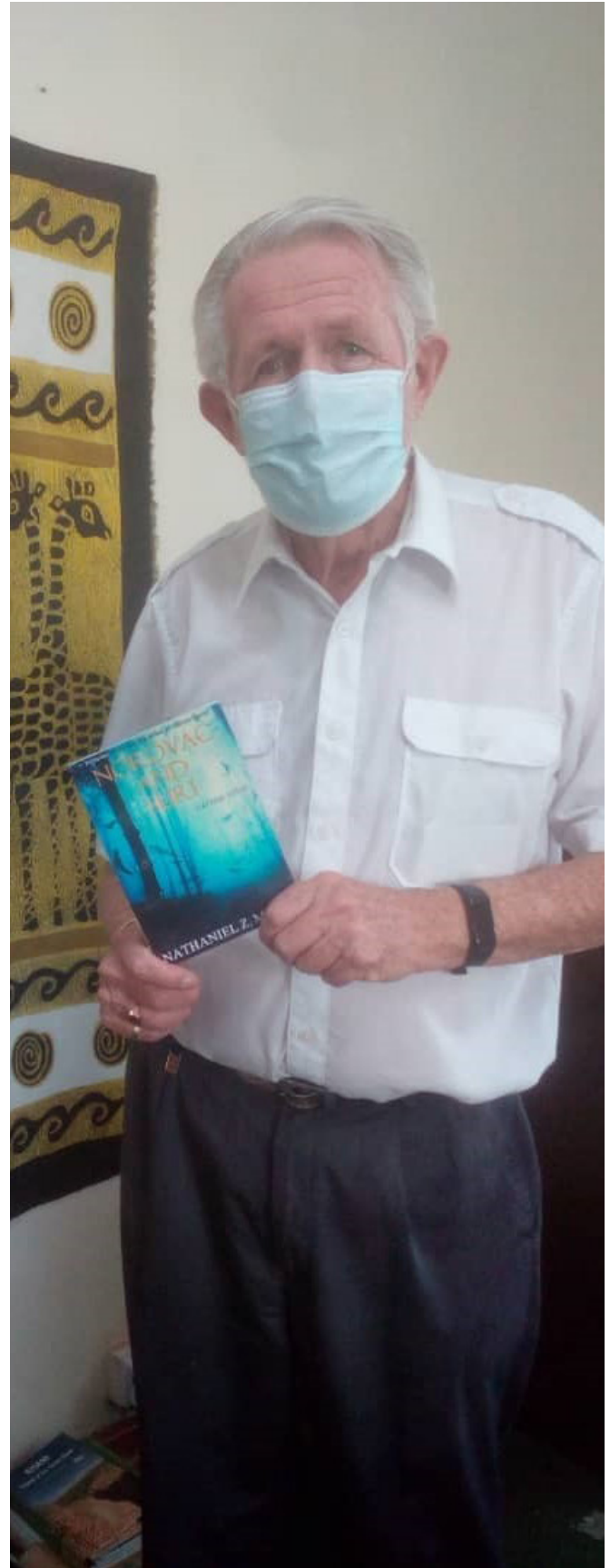
**NZM:**Do we ever really know?

**PPBlessing:** *Well, only you can answer that. Any concluding words as we wrap up?*

**NZM:**'Let no man be fooled that they can write. (Paraphrasing) For we intend to do unheard-of things with it.' -Chinua Achebe

My sincerest gratitude to WSA for giving me this platform to talk about my version of hallmarks and thoughts in this CRAFT. Let's keep writing.

**Thank you for being with us through this interview. Make it a date with us next month as we bring you another renowned author. Until then, keep reading the Writers Space Africa Magazine.**



Bruce McDonald, the Bulawayo Publicity Association manager with a copy of Nath's book





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## Poetry



# For Children Like Us

Chijioke Emenike, Nigeria

---

Broken homes, shattered dreams,  
Dirty diapers, dampened sheets;  
Sticky fingers, tangled hairs, tattered clothes,  
Nagging stomachs, furrowed brows;  
Watery eyes, tear-stained cheeks,  
We are the children from the other side;  
The kids your parents warned you of.

Your feet are on our necks,  
Devalued and undermined like dirt.  
Victims we are;  
When the day breaks,  
When hunger roars and bites,  
When thunder rails,  
When winter scowls,  
And when the night howls.

We too, have dreams,  
That one day;  
On the fire of love,  
A pinch of care,  
A spoon of protection,  
An iota of value,  
Some cubes of provision,  
Can make us better again - palatable children.



# I Didn't Know It

Allan Tulienge, Kenya

---

My friends say I've got the hand of a poet,  
But my, this long I didn't know it,  
Now what shall become of my wasted years?  
I mourn my ignorance in tears.

Searching for my gift, I joined the church choir,  
But I always seemed to sing just a note higher.  
The director's frequent frowns at my radiant face,  
Told me point blank this wasn't my place.

There was a day I tried to dance,  
But it only took the people around a glance  
And they all burst forth in thunderous laughter  
At the lad who never dared return after.

Surely I must know how to cook,  
After all the recipes were all in the book,  
But there was something about the pepper and the salt  
I just didn't seem to be able to tell what.

Football was every boy's hobby,  
This I can like Bob and Toby,  
They placed me at the post and I stayed put,  
But the ball always seemed to miss my foot!

"Now what shall become of me", I mourned,  
With pen and book I ran to the pond,  
Perhaps if I try I can become a poet,  
The magic! O I didn't know it!



# Not Till the Sun Kisses the Horizon

Innocent Matekere, Tanzania

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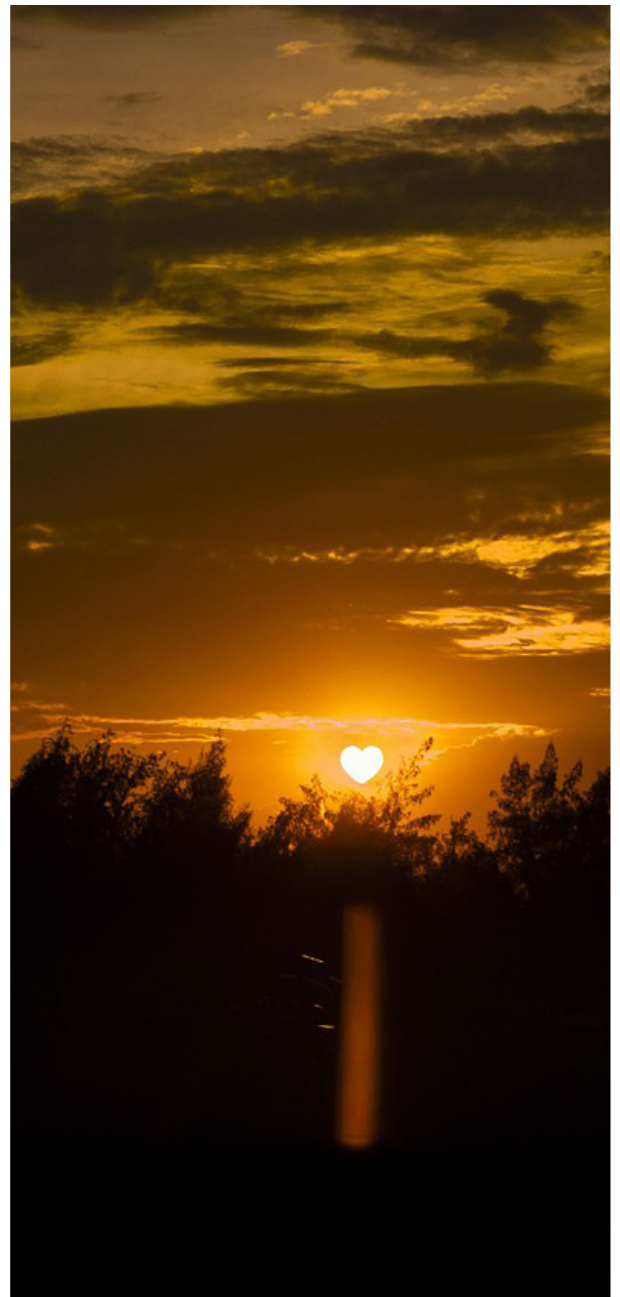


Could it be a real one won with no vision?  
Like the water flow with no mission  
Mixed with sands in blackish  
One would not swim in unless prepared

A long daytime has passed  
And no stone already has turned  
Life goes around and turns  
But nothing goes unless planned

The ancestors' words daily quoted  
That man failed and another prospered  
With nothing be 'hind, rather faked plans  
Victory comes not otherwise arranged

We yet have time in hand till the late nights  
To make the scars and falls be knights  
Remove the doubts and assure things made  
It's now, not till the sun kisses the horizon.

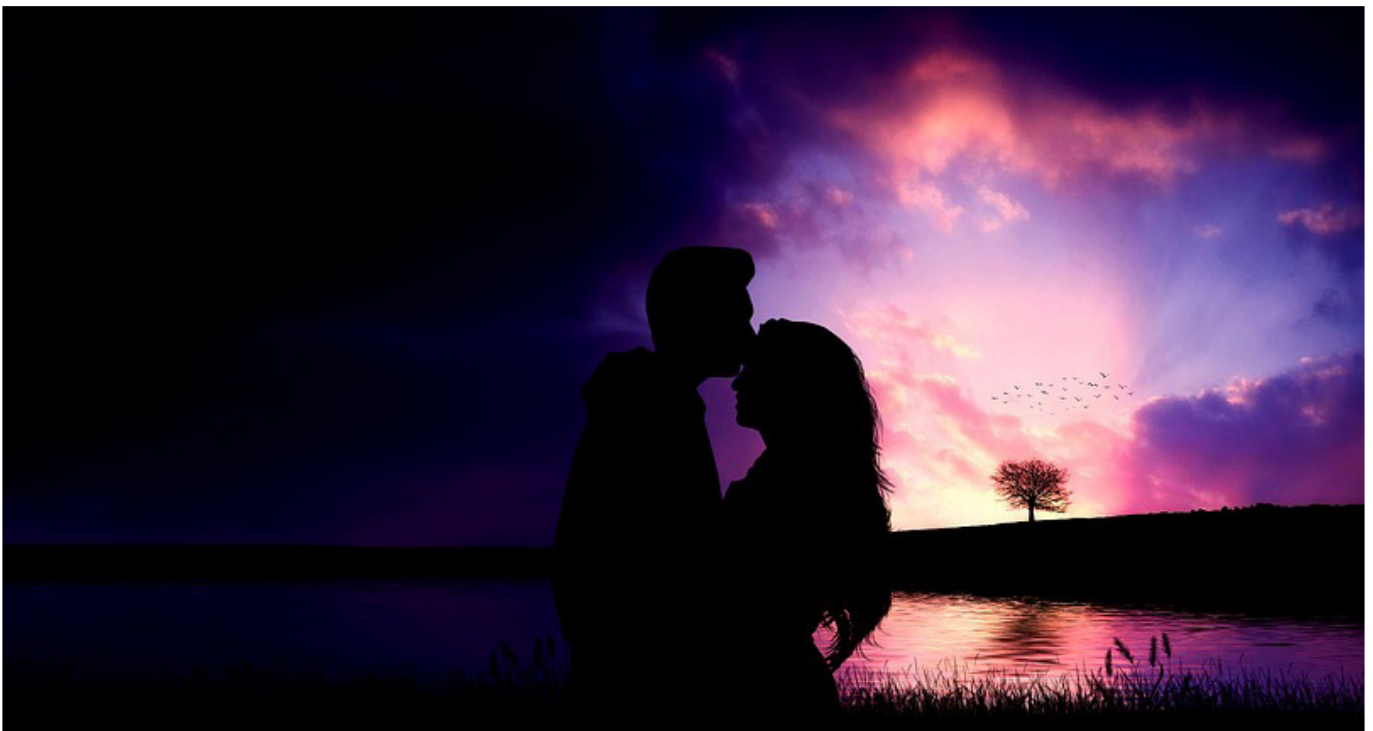


# Hey, Desire

Laurent Bwesigye, Uganda

---

I know that with receiving  
There's an expectation of giving,  
Do not do so much for me, I might not be able  
To reciprocate it.  
It tears me apart, it wrecks me, it ruins me  
When I lack the capacity to help those that help me  
So don't do a lot for me,  
I might not be able to reciprocate it.  
But if you do,  
I'm counting blessings a lot as the grains of dust  
Twirling in a storm,  
I'm counting blessings as much as the grains of sugar  
That fill a wine pitcher  
If you do, If you do, I swear if you do,  
I intend to kiss you like a drop of rain rippling  
In the pool of water from  
A gushing spring.



# Some Measure of Design

Simon Ngu'ni, Zambia

---

Something about the shadow and finding a black cat  
Something about white on rice  
Stars and the firmament  
Black clouds and the rain  
The sun and what it makes plain  
how the invisible dances, through all things,  
at a matchless pace.

Scribbling direction into a sense  
For it is only that.

Bodies turn with the wheel  
pivoted around a fulcrum.

We who have known time, will know  
That we are made of strands that run  
Through fingers as clocks are  
tuned to a boundless rhythm.

That it helps to have a plan,  
for we dance and tangle with time  
and time, with us, is woven in turns.

Wind as it is, only holds water with the rain  
pouring down through its grasp of the clouds.

And in that way, a seed sprouts, and grows,  
into something light can hold up, as light does  
to the questions of change and increase, in a tongue,  
crest still, with something to conquer.



# At the Tooth of Death

Paul Bamidele Olayioye, Nigeria

---

Under this lurking warped branch, waving  
to my closing eye, I chose to will a poem,  
to anyone that read it - let them know, my bones  
have heirloom the way of the elders; if you  
are patient, you can relic the pieces. To my mother  
I have no coffin neither to my bedridden body, after I  
have sand. The wars I fought are like the moments  
you were urinating on me, like a pebble from the bowel  
to the anus. If the caterpillar had known the day  
the butterfly would sprout, it would have glued its door.  
in this part of the earth, I have watched the lilies  
grow & die without planning for it. I saw the birds  
pricked on chicks - these have only little eye for life.  
I have watched my gore volcano. I have become so  
frailed, & weak than brittle. The best, I see now, is  
to allow grass root on my face. If you see this poem,  
know that I have no variant for dying. My kismet  
have herald this day, long before the earth knew me.



# Short Stories



## Abinla's Lift-off

Barra Hart, Nigeria



“So, this is really happening, isn’t it?”

Her voice was a whisper in a wilderness, drowned by the gusts of my own little wonder. The shuttle loomed tall in the distance, glistening in the motherland sun for everyone to see. 10 years, 10 unbelievable years, and here we stood, at the edge of the unknown, ready to take a great leap, the first great leap my people had taken in a very long time.

“Aby!”

“What?” I said.

“You’re doing that thing you always do again,” said Priye.

“Sorry,” I said, smiling at my own silliness. “It’s just... surreal... even after all this time...”

I reached for her hand, the puffy gloves making the gesture awkward, but no less heartfelt. From the corner of

my eye, I saw the car approaching, a white glint hurtling through the daylight, ready to convey us to our vessel. The crew that had helped make all of this possible looked on from the balconies and windows of the Agency building, much of which was still in the final stages of construction. Oh, what we could achieve when the will to do so was strong enough!

The communication line opened with a soft crackle. Kwame’s voice rung clear.

“Are you ready ladies?” he asked.

“No,” said Priye and I in sync.

“Well, you better be. It would be a very embarrassing broadcast if you backed out now.”

“We’re not going anywhere, Kwame,” said Priye as the car came to a soft halt in front of us. A young intern walked forward to open the back door, bidding us a warm “Good luck”, and we took our seats



inside. There was only so much comfort to be found sitting in these spacesuits, but the glory that lay ahead was well worth the odd squeeze downstairs.

“How many people again?” I said over the comms. I had asked over a dozen times so far, but every time the answer came, I would try in the moments that followed to comprehend it and fail miserably. Kwame heaved an exhausted but empathetic sigh.

“500 million viewers and rising,” he said. “News networks, synced-up sites, and of course, our YouTube channel. The whole world is watching you two.”

“Watching us,” said Priye. This time she took my hand. “They’re watching all of us. We did this.”

We cruised down the long road until I could just make out the engineering team shuffling across the launch complex, making sure everything was right, down to the tiniest detail. The comms channels were filled with queries and confirmations. I eavesdropped on a few exchanges, my neural implants navigating through the network like a fish through an ocean current. Clear skies. Thrusters fuelled. Navigation systems on standby. By the time the car hummed to a halt at the base of the complex, all systems were a-go.

Memories took me as we stepped out of the car and were led forward to the complex’s lift, a spacey structure in a clear meta-glass tube that would convey us up to the command module. I remembered the mind-numbing pitches and endless meetings in the days that followed the Great Reform, a socio-political revolution that transformed our broken continent into a true African Union. The echoes of our dark past still remained and were hard fought. But we pushed on; past doubts and fears, past the point of no return—a people united on earth, now looking to the stars, joining the rest of humanity in this transcendent quest. It was the busiest decade of any of our lives. Everything was changing so fast. Educational curricula

were overhauled while economies were diversified. New trade agreements were drafted while innovation and research experienced a renaissance. Whole cities were merged and borders were dissolved while the malicious forces that thrived on these divisions met a well-deserved end. Friendships and bonds were formed where they were never thought possible. Hunger, disease, pollution, corruption, all fading into the annals of our history at a slow but certain pace. And in the middle of all that, there I was, a young physicist engineer trying to get a space program together.

Getting the go-ahead from the AU’s Governing Council was the easy part. What took the remaining 9.6 years was the architecture, the team-building, the logistics, drafting the program itself, and discretely pushing past limitations our foreign counterparts had yet to overcome. That was the hard part. And now to be here, ascending towards the command module of a shuttle I had helped design, with my closest companion through it all, here to share this moment with me. It had taken a century and half, but the visions of our heroes past, our giants, our ghostly fathers, had finally become reality.

“Crew approaching command module,” came the voice from mission control, announcing our progress to the entire human race. “All systems in the green.”

The lift slid to a halt, and we stepped out onto the bridge leading to the module’s open hatch, waving our escorts off as they descended from sight. It was all us from here on out. I had seen the module a thousand times before, supervised every step of its engineering, every piece falling into place. But not a single one of those moments compared to this – to being inside it 700 feet above the ground, and soon, even higher.

Priye placed her hand over the lock panel to seal the door. We took our seats, sliding the visors of our helmets firmly into place and activating our private comms channel. Digital sims of the ship’s

various modules shone a calm blue across the monitors, a block of green pulsing beneath each image, indicating that all was still well.

“All systems green from our end,” said Priye to mission control.

“We’re all good here,” said I. Then I switched to the private channel. “Care to do the honours, babe?”

With a coy smile that set my heart a-flutter, Priye reached out to the screen in front of her and tapped on the launch button to begin the sequence. I had expected anticipation to slow down the time, but it seemed before I could even take my next breath, ‘T-minus 10 seconds’ flashed across the screens, and every cell in my body began to vibrate with the rest of the vessel.

9...

8...

7...

We reached out to each other; our other hands gripped the chair handles for dear life.

2...

1...

“Lift-off!” came the voice from mission control as the tremors multiplied and the long months of training kicked in. Live video feed from key points on the shuttle’s structure popped up on automatic cue, showing the land around us falling away in high definition, air friction and clouds soon making a dreamy haze of the world below. The perspective was breath-taking, the agency building shrinking into a bright white dot, the surrounding farmlands becoming a mural of shades.

And then... the sky above, darkening as we escaped Earth’s gravity, and the reusable booster fell away and shot back home with redundant precision, leaving us to our own devices.

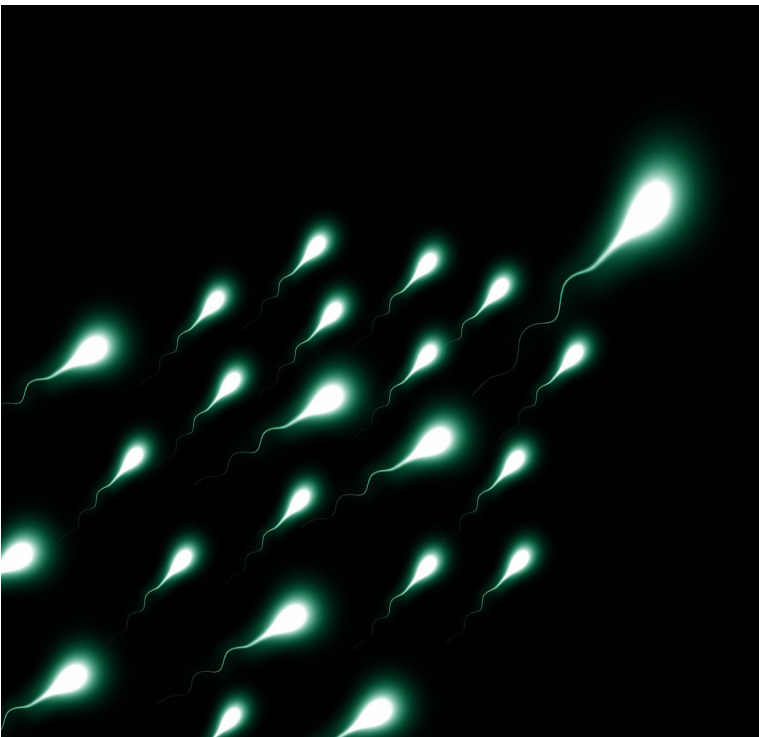
I widened the feed of the space in front of us, dimming the lights. The beautiful universe our little home planet floated in was a humbling sight. Priye’s laughter was musical as we unstrapped from our chairs and enjoyed a moment of childish play with our weightless states, flipping around the place like idiots. Then I glided back to the monitors, punched in the coordinates of our destination, and soared with spread arms towards the changing room to get out of my suit. The International Space Station was a twinkling star in the distance, waiting to greet us in two days.



# You Must Move On

Chukwuemeka Famous, Nigeria

---



My time was right! One wet Sunday morning, the Master had told us that we would be removed when the time was right. Before me, many had gone through a similar fate, and it had me wonder when my time would be. Whenever there was a jerking, I saw others spurt out. It was their right time. But mine seemed to take too long to come. One day, I asked the Master, will I ever exit? “Yes, you will, when the time is right!” He replied.

There is something about the right time that you must know. It comes like a thief in the night, usually at that point when you want to dash the hopes. And when it comes, it stays and stays fine. As much as we are living entities, until the right time comes, we are dead. Not physically dead as you might think. I mean oblivion. The right time extirpates this oblivion, removes the scales covering our eyes, and opens to us a new world entirely. But while we wait for the right time, what must we do? We must keep the hopes high if not higher. For that is the only thing that attracts the right time. And that is exactly what I did. I let my hopes float high even when it seemed as though I was not going to exit, I moved the hopes to a higher realm. I believed the Master when he told me that I was surely going to exit.

I wouldn't have known I was to exit that Sunday morning. I was coiled up in a corner when the jerking started. I stayed put, thinking, as usual,

that it wasn't my right time. But the jerking was stronger on my side. I clutched to the walls, still thinking it wasn't my right time. It was the Master who looked down from his throne at me and asked me to move on. I removed my hands, and I was swept out with other billions of us.

When we entered the new environment, we started a frantic race. Maybe, if the others before us had a chance to speak to us after they had left, they would have told us that a race as this existed. This was a race to become; to exit. And at that moment, I was beginning to feel - even though, at first, I didn't totally believe what I felt - that this was my right time. When I looked behind me, there were numerous others swimming with all their might towards me. Before me, there were numerous others also swimming like fish high on something. It was like a great stampede. There was a tremendous sound like spring water rushing down a cliff. I remembered the words of the Master; 'you will exit at the right time.' The fact that I was swept away with these numerous others, was, for me, an insignia that this was my right time.

'You must move on' I muttered to myself. I was almost infinitesimal in the midst of others, who were so big. But the Master's calm voice kept telling me that it was my turn to break loose from the confinement. That I had no reason to fail or relent. That there was a mission waiting for me. So, I moved on faster. It was not an easy route. I struggled amongst the others, trying my best to keep the mission in view. It's unarguable to say that focus breeds success. It goes hand in gloves with hope in attracting the right time. I could see this mission lucidly. It crouched against a muscular wall. It was silent and bigger. I was scared because I felt it was bigger than me. Our sizes were not congruent, so how then was I supposed to ac-

complish this?

But when I remembered the enthusiasm in the Master's voice, I discarded every iota of skepticism. I swam faster. Then I felt the fleshy house move a bit and I crashed onto the side, slapping against the wall and the others, who were strong enough to steady themselves for those few minutes of disarray. I leapt away from the wall and kept moving. One of them tried to stop me from getting to the mission. I pushed against it but there was no impact at all. It remained in the same spot and smiled at me, a mischievous smile. "Is that all you can do?" It asked mockingly. I was sad, and at the same time weakened. I began to move slowly. But deep down within me, I was assured that I was the right person for this. It was my property. This mission and its glory belonged to me. I was not going to relent. Nothing was going to stop me, not even the creature that had just mocked me.

The willpower built up gradually. I was furious for success, for achievement, so I swam faster until I was past it. It knew this right time was for me, they all knew, yet they struggled with me. Nobody wants to accept the fact that something coveted does not belong to them. No wonder Charles Darwin told us that the fittest will survive, and I add, only in a confined world. But on the other hand, whatever belongs to you is yours. No one can take it from you. It does not matter if you are fit or not, whenever it is your turn to possess a prize, it comes to you easily, on a platter of gold. You only have to struggle with those who do not want you to possess that prize. But you must possess it, with hope and focus. I was to be the victor, and that I became. I got to the mission first, penetrated through its shell, and here I am, waiting for the ninth month to see the world.

# Mimi's Column

## A History of African Literature

### Episode 2 - How The Art of Storytelling Brought People Together



Mimi Machakaire  
Zimbabwe

*“So much cultural history remains untold. Bringing hidden heritage to light engages audiences and creates a sense of community, identity, and shared history.”*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of time, storytelling has been at the core of culture. It is how histories are passed down, how customs are shared, and how traditions become endemic to a group. We can safely say that shared culture is rooted in a shared tradition of communicating. People with the same kind of cultural background tend to interpret life in the same way. They share a similar understanding of the way things happen. At the same time, people that have different backgrounds, other sets of experiences or values, may see things differently.

For centuries, with the help of pictures and stories, it has been possible to study these differences and share our experiences. For instance, the word culture has been a difficult word for people to define as it has a lot of different meanings. One of such is what is defined by the urban dictionary as ‘the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social groups’. This means that some of the best stories have come out of a society in the form of fine art, music, literature, and philosophy. Therefore, in this column, we will analyze how storytelling has the ability to bring all people of the world together, through cultural differences, traditions and communication.

#### **THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN SOCIETY**

For the most part, when we look at storytelling, it can be considered as one of the oldest forms of art besides cave paintings, dance, and song. It has lived on through many forms such as: teaching, entertainment, and at times we can also use stories to express one’s cultural heritage. So much cultural history remains untold. Bringing hidden heritage to light engages audiences and creates a sense of community, identity, and shared history.

For example, some cultures use stories that are more like parables, where a moral or lesson is learned at the end of the story that almost dictates to the listener how to integrate it into their mind and life. In West Africa griots (hereditary storytellers and singers) have kept the histories of tribes and African folktales for centuries through oral storytelling. A griot served as a trusted advisor to local nobility, as well as record keepers of births, death, marriages, and cultural traditions.

Another way to look at it is to describe a society's more widespread form of music, art, literature, and even popular hobbies; in other words, a society's pop/popular culture or mass culture. Storytelling has always had a role in humanity and besides being a means of entertainment, it has played an important role in preserving and sharing different societies' history, wisdom, and everyday life. This means that people with different cultural backgrounds and experiences interpret life in different ways. Through narratives, drawings, and photos, experiences have been shared, and differences between cultures can be explored.

As a result, this kind of cross-cultural approach can even change people's understanding of how to interpret the world. Looking at the world through another person's eyes can alter the way we see the rest of the world, how we relate to others and their ways of doing things, and it can possibly even create a new perspective of how people interpret their own world.

There are a number of benefits deposited by the art in question. For example, Sean Buvala (2012), a professional storyteller and author of numerous books on storytelling, defines the storytelling benefits as building emotional connections, an understanding of others, and a growing intimacy. Furthermore, Sean's work is older than 30 years to be exact. Starting back in the mid-'80s, he knew this gig was going to stick after he converted a classroom of hilariously homicidal 8th-graders into lovers and tellers of story. He had podcasts of great storytellers before the word "podcast" existed. This goes to show how by using storytelling, one can impact the lives of not only adults but children and people of all ages as well.

#### **HOW STORYTELLING AND THE ARTS HAVE DEVELOPED OVER TIME**

We can therefore say that there are lots of different kinds

of emotions that can be discovered through storytelling. A child may explore emotions such as wonder, fear or courage within a safe place, while youth or young adults may explore feelings in their emotional lives that they have not yet explored. For adults, the emotions experienced through storytelling can also trigger memories or create resolve by hearing a story to which they can relate. Stories help us understand each other and learn about one another's cultures, ideas, and ways of thinking.

Stories teach us how things were before and how challenges were faced at that time, or how people on the opposite side of the world face challenges similar to the ones we face ourselves. For children and youth, storytelling provides the base where empathy for others starts to grow. With growing intimacy, it means that people have the need to be seen and heard. This can further be explained in the sense that, when you tell a story, you spark a connection. That is how humans have communicated since the beginning of time —by telling stories.



Storytelling is like opening a window into the minds of the listeners. It is a widely used method in different fields such as teaching, entertainment, health care, leadership, and marketing, amongst others. Most people find it essential to focus on storytelling, especially folktales, used in multicultural settings to promote multicultural awareness. Storytelling can also be seen and used as an applied art form.

Applied art is when arts and culture are presented in a non-traditional way, or for a marginalized community. It is used in a manner that is not primarily aesthetic. With applied arts, you try to confront cultural and social areas from a grassroots level in order to exact change. Fields where applied art is common are: education, healthcare, homeless shelters, social welfare, prisons, and people in crisis. Its purpose is to try to acknowledge, improve, question or undermine current circumstances. With applied art, you try to challenge people to challenge themselves or to explore change.

Another example of the arts in development is detailed in *The Book of Songs*. This is where enshrined poetry was the most important form of literature across East Asia. (When Japan sought cultural independence from China, it did so by creating its own poetry collection.)

The importance of poetry also shaped one of the first great novels in world literature: *The Tale of Genji*. Its author, Murasaki Shikibu, had to teach herself Chinese poetry by spying on her brother's lessons with a tutor since women were not expected to know Chinese literature. When she became a lady-in-waiting at the secretive court of Japan, she used this knowledge to compose a portrait of life at court, full of detail and psychological insight, producing a masterpiece that grew to over a thousand pages. To give her novel the status of high literature, she included nearly 800 poems.

This development was particularly visible in the Arab world, which had acquired the secret of making paper from China and turned it into a thriving industry. For the first time, stories that had only been told orally made it into writing and were assembled in story collections such as the *One Thousand and One Nights*.

More varied than the older epic stories or poetry collections, the *One Thousand and One Nights* provided entertainment and education in equal measure, framed by the unforgetta-

ble story of Scheherazade and the king who had sworn to kill any woman after spending only one night with her. Faced with the prospect of certain death, Scheherazade began to tell story after story until the king found himself cured of his murderous oath – making Scheherazade not only his queen but also the hero of storytelling.

Thus, we can conclude that poetry collections, story collections, and epic tales cast a long shadow over subsequent literary history. This is also evident, when the Italian poet Dante Alighieri set out to capture and elaborate the Christian view of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, he chose the form of epic poetry, thus competing with classical authors (cleverly, he put Homer in limbo since Homer had the misfortune of living before Christ).

Coming back to the year 2022 we can start to analyze how we are living through yet another revolution in writing technologies, one at least as important as the invention of paper and print in China or the re-invention of print in northern Europe. The internet is changing how we read and write, how literature spreads, and who has access to it. We stand at the beginning of a new era of writing and literature – the written world is bound to change yet again.

As more and more parts of the world became literate, new technologies, above all paper and print, increased the reach and influence of written stories. As the tools available to publishers grow more sophisticated, it's up to us to experiment and see what sticks.

## CONCLUSION

We can safely say that stories have the ability to preserve culture and pass on cultural knowledge from one generation to another. In essence, stories keep cultures alive. On the one hand, stories provide a timeless link to ancient traditions, legends, myths, and archetypes. While on the other hand, they also connect us to universal truths about ourselves and our world.

The ability to learn from stories is a skill that will help us throughout our lives. In addition to academic, career, and personal goals, stories can enrich lives and provide guidance to living and, in the end, bringing people of the world together.



## CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Poetic Africa, a quarterly online poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her May 2022 edition.

*Africa is blessed with mothers who bore and raised giants of nations. Their contributions to nation-building, though huge, are rarely documented. Are mothers more than just mothers to you? Write and submit your poem under the theme **MOTHER**.*

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality, use of poetic devices and economy of words. Please present well-arranged poetry and note that the poem titles should not have the word "Mother".

The submission window is from February 11th until March 10th 2022. The edition will be released on May 10th 2022.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrika>. Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted (without equivalent translations in English).



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# WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW

## January 2022 Edition

Selected Reviews

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The image shows the cover of WSA Magazine, January 2022, Issue 61. The cover features a portrait of Rachael Twinomugisha, a woman with long braids, wearing a red top. The WSA logo is in the top left, and the text 'RACHAEL TWINOMUGISHA' is prominently displayed in the center. Below her name, it says 'THE WRITER - THE LAWYER - THE TEACHER'. At the bottom, there are four circular icons with numbers: 07, 22, 38, and 51, each corresponding to a section of the magazine.

**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

JANUARY 2022 | ISSUE 61

**RACHAEL  
TWINOMUGISHA**

THE WRITER - THE LAWYER - THE TEACHER

**07** **22** **38** **51**

**ARTICLES/STORIES**  
Featuring Afrofuturism, mental health, Leadership, Clean Energy and lots more.

**CHILDREN'S LIT**  
Read fascinating stories about a Blue boat, and a sugar stealing kid.

**AFRICAN POETRY**  
African poetry from South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, etc.

**MIMI'S COLUMN**  
A brand new monthly column that discusses the history of African literature.

## Pilgrimage (Short Story)

Writer: Nnalue Chidinma, Nigeria

Reviewer: M. S. Deen, Ghana

Without steady devotion to Allah, times of misfortunes cajole one into misplaced priorities. Nnalue Chidinma's 'Pilgrimage' is a short story set in Nigeria about a woman who lost her job as a result of a government demolition exercise. The woman known as Iya Risika, in trying to reclaim her social status through saving money for a pilgrimage to Mecca, sacrifices her religious priorities and dignity for false identity and eventually her plans of going for Hajj pilgrimage was squashed when her son, Gbenga, stole the savings to play gamble. The writer employed a limited third-person point of view to relate the fortunes and falls of the central character, the mother of Risika, whose traits do not reflect the conduct of a committed Muslimah.

Without steady devotion to Allah, times of misfortunes cajole one into misplaced priorities. Nnalue Chidinma's 'Pilgrimage' is a short story set in Nigeria about a woman who lost her job as a result of a government demolition exercise. The woman known as Iya Risika, in trying to reclaim her social status through saving money for a pilgrimage to Mecca, sacrifices her religious priorities and dignity for false identity and eventually her plans of going for Hajj pilgrimage was squashed when her son, Gbenga, stole the savings to play gamble. The writer employed a limited third-person point of view to relate the fortunes and falls of the central character, the mother of Risika, whose traits do not reflect the conduct of a committed Muslimah.

The title 'Pilgrimage' denotatively refers to a journey to a sacred place; its contextual and figurative meaning is a tedious and wearisome time. Moslems regard pilgrimage as a significant manifestation of Islamic faith and unity because it is the 5th pillar (principle) of Islam stated in the Holy Quran

Chapter 3 verse 97 that 'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed by the people to God, —those who can afford the journey.'

The verse ending with a condition, 'those who can afford the journey' indicates that it is not obligatory for every Muslim, except for those who are physically and financially able to make the journey. Some sections of Moslems, however, use unacceptable means, like borrowing and begging to manoeuvre their ways to perform the Hajj. Therefore, Chidinma portrays Iya Risika in the story to typify such Moslems.

Aside from pilgrimage, other pillars of Islam define the basic identity of Muslims - their faith, beliefs and practices. A believer has to follow the four pillars before thinking of fulfilling the fifth one, which is a pilgrimage. Yet, beclouded by her desire to raise her social status, the main character shirks some of the beliefs and practices as follows.

Iya Risika believes in superstitions. She ascribes her fortunes to creatures. Since she says, 'Those new girls I employed brought me bad luck'. According to the principles of the Islamic faith, one must believe in destiny; that is, good or bad, everything comes from Allah. In this regard, she would be very susceptible to believing whatever comes from a marabout or a quack Mallam.

In addition, she disrespects her husband. It is said that if a wife disrespects her husband, her children will disrespect her and grow wayward. Obedience is the first right that Islam acknowledges for a husband over his wife. The wife is required to obey his husband in everything unless he com-

mands her to disobey Allah. Shaking fingers at her husband while

saying that Baba Risika should not 'put [his] mouth in the matter' signifies disrespect. As a result of Iya Risika's disobedience of her husband, it translated into Risika giving birth to Tesbiu out of wedlock, and the Gbenga (their son) being a thief and gambler.

Besides, in Quran chapter 4 verse 34 commands, 'so virtuous women are those who are obedient, and guard the secrets of their husbands. . . In addition, as for those [women] who disobey, admonish and leave them alone in their beds, and chastise them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them.' That is why, it could be inferred, Baba Risika rebukes or reprimands her, 'Iya Risika, o ma gbon rara. You are not wise at all. So after losing your shop, you still want to go to Mecca. You still want golden teeth so you can show everyone in the village that you are something'

Iya Risika is also dishonest. She tells lies, pretending that she is poor and begs as 'one of those people who led fake lives'. Yet 'she could never lie past Mama Tobi. At first, Iya Risika had said she needed the money for Risika whose husband had started acting funny.' The lying and begging soil her reputation because she 'recognised some of the stares she got. She knew those eyes frowned at what she was doing.' The dignity she purports to preserve as she says she 'will attend that village meeting . . . with photos from Mecca and two golden teeth'.

Many Islamic scholars posit that Hajj (pilgrimage) calls those that she wants to come to her when Allah wills, so no matter how rich one is, he or she cannot make the journey unless Hajj calls the person. The writer also shows this assertion in the piece as Iya Risika's efforts to embark on the pilgrimage get thwarted through Gbenga, her youngest child, who takes her 80,000 Naira to 'the

lottery shop, gambling one naira note after the other'. Eventually, this is the consequence of her misplaced priority and adamancy to Baba Risika's pieces of advice.

To this end, Iya Risika, like many of us, forgoes the spiritual aspect of our religious duties but merely does perform some of the rituals for luxury and the eyes of men. Even 'Mama Tobi, herself, could understand the desire because . . . every Muslimah needed to visit the holy city'. Pilgrimage to Mecca is not a Dubai trip! That is to say, many focus on just the social status attached to religious practices. Therefore, they take all manner of means including unethical ways, claiming they are fulfilling their religious duties. Conversely, Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the House (Ka'bah) is a duty for those who can afford the expenses (for one's conveyance, provision, and residence). So believers should not go there just, as Iya Risika wants to 'be the talk of town.' In addition, Baba Risika's reply for such persons is apt as he says 'so that they can call you Alhaja abi. Alhaja without one naira. Shio.'

## REFERENCES

- Chidinma, Nnalue. "Pilgrimage" *WSA Magazine* January 2022: 32 - 34
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- Yusuf A., Abdullah. "Roman Translation of the Holy Quran" *Dar AL-Shahbaa: India, 1934.*

## A Peek into my Grandmother's Head (Article)

Writer: Sloane Angelou, Republic of Cote D' Ivoire

Reviewer: Chidiebere Udeokechukwu, Nigeria

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Sloane Angelou's article (a peek into my grandmother's head) may be the perfect mirror that betrays what goes on in the mind of one who suffers sickle-cell anaemia. More or less, it is a storied perspective of how a Sickler struggles against the genetic disease. While many will likely and rightly bemoan the misfortune of being born as so, Sloane takes a twist. Each time a pat on the back is needed, she reminisces the times spent with her grandmother and draws strength therefrom.

By extension, this piece sings a tune of solidarity for those who suffer similar misfortunes. In another way, a lesson is gleaned; that there are many positive ways of dealing with maladies that life may throw at us especially when we may have lost something worthwhile that we thought would always be. If the latter point makes more sense, then the concluding paragraph of her piece will resonate beautifully. In that part of her write-up, she acknowledges the ephemeral nature of good things but also proffers her perspective of dealing with the disappointment of losing what we thought would last. In her case, she dwells strongly on the good memories made with her grandmother.

In essence, a crucial take-home point from Sloane's piece is the importance of the moments we spend with family. Because long after they may have gone, it is most likely that the good memories will keep us going.

Grandmother must have been a wonderful presence for all the while she lived. She was there to help the "persona" who unfortunately is a sickly soul. She was there with her even after her mother abandoned the person. Grandmother showed her the secrets of the herbs and roots that helped to allay the sufferings her sickness gifted her. Importantly, grandmother offered her wisdom in the times she talked with the persona.

Amid the persona's misfortune, she draws comfort from the moments spent with her grandmother whilst dealing with the disappointment of her death.

In the end, every word spent in writing this work will conspire to draw down tears from any reader that may have had a similar experience.



## Laurent and the Sugar Bowl (Children's Literature)

Writer: Ejang Patricia, Uganda

Reviewer: Benita Magopane, Botswana

The story of Ejang Patricia, a writer from Uganda, pretty much brought back my childhood memories. I was as mischievous as Laurent. When my parents were not home, I would reach for the bottle of honey they kept in a cupboard and have licks of it almost every day. Both Laurent and I are a cut of the same cloth; we were sweet-toothed troublemakers. However, our personal and dearest dreams certainly set us apart. While he wanted to be rich so that he could buy bags of sugar for the pleasure of licking it, I wanted to go on top of clouds and bounce up and down on them because I thought they were a fluffy thingy. I wonder who had the most absurd dream between us.

As silly as Laurent's dream was (which was probably one of the reasons his mother disagreed with him), it was also sweet. It brings to me an admiration of the innocence of a child's imagination. A limitless zone. A force to reckon with I say. Mr. Laurent, the Bigtime, sugar licker. To the adult mind, it is insane, but to Laurent, it was a vivid and achievable vision. My dream (the one in my imagination) was so vivid that I even dreamt a cloud had fallen on the ground just in front of my house once and I was jumping up and down on it. While an average adult would even forget there were clouds in the sky, I would muse at them with the hope of somehow flying up to them. However, imagine my disappointment when I learned that the so fluffy clouds were just some watery vapor.

Disappointment. An important lesson to note in Ejang's story, which Laurent's mother had the tough duty of doing to her son.

"She constantly reminded him, that too much sug-

ar was not good for his health."

Laurent's dream(s) was "cute"; however, a voice of reason had to be present, which Ejang represented in the form of Laurent's mother very well. The truth had to be told or else if it were not, there would be repercussions. This brings me to the core lesson of this story; every action has consequences. Only Laurent's mother understood this best, for her son and herself.

She knew that if she did not reason with her son and burst his bubble whenever necessary; there would be consequences. If she let him go without punishment after helping himself to the sugar when she was gone, there would be consequences. Therefore, she did discipline him, and consequently, Laurent knew how to behave if he wanted that sugar in his tea, where it was supposed to go. "Laurent stayed away from the tin from then on, only taking it when his mother put its content for him in tea."

This story is one of the best I have ever read. Simply because a wave of nostalgia and affinity swept over me while reading it. It gave me warmth. It gave me lessons. The ingenuity of Ejang Patricia in creating the two characters, one young and innocent, one older and wise, is just impeccable. One sweetens the story, giving it an amusing touch, while one gives an edginess to the story without dampening it because that is just how parents are supposed to be. Thus, the two characters, Laurent and his mother complement each other and bring out qualities in one another that each reader can relate to, both young and old. Anyone, young and old would enjoy this very much.

## Jamal (Flash Fiction)

**Writer: Akanbi Omotayo, Nigeria**

**Reviewer: Halieo Motanyane, Lesotho**

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From the very first line of the story, it is quite hard to realise what is real from what is a dream. It is true that Jamal is Jamal by name, but is she 18 years old and a president?

A good flash fiction, as Piol Tiek Awer says, “is like an orgasm, short and brief but extremely excitingly magical.” In just 2 minutes, Akanbi Omotayo narrates to us a story of a sick girl who has both accepted her fate and married hope. Does Jamal get her hope?

The story starts and ends right in the hospital bed. Although Jamal gives us a glimpse of her dream, it is noticed that all these are her way of escaping her sufferings by dreaming of the hopeful land where she is pain-free. The focus of the dream shows just how much Jamal wishes her pain could end and get her to what she sees as a presidential achievement. With this, it is quite clear that the story is themed under hope and achievement.

The story is focused only on Jamal, which makes the story more focused and on point. In this very short time of the story, we learn a lot about Jamal. She is only 18 years old. She suffers from Leukemia, goes through chemotherapy the following day, and passes away before tomorrow comes. As a reader, everything Akanbi wants us to feel, he expresses it so well that pity, remorse and fulfilment come naturally from us.

The complexity of the story has marked such importance of Flash Fiction itself aside from the good storyline. It is stories like Akanbi’s Jamal that should be recommended as great flash fiction.



## Life (Poetry)

Writer: Katana Grace Tendo, Uganda

Reviewer: Sesame Mookodi, Botswana



The dynamic nature of life is a reoccurring topic brought up through its various stages. The importance of adapting to its ever-changing forms and volatility is emphasized as a coping mechanism technique to the lack of control we have over it or simply to encourage being empathetic to others' current situations. Life takes on this journey employing a descriptive chronicle.

This quatrain takes on a narrative style. A pattern of contrasts can be picked up, which is symbolic of the erratic flow of life's conditions. The brief yet concise lines allow the poem to read in a blatant tone. The use of the word "revolutionary" (S1, L1) highlights the interchangeable manner of the various states in life, giving a smooth opening to the contrasts the writer uses throughout the poem. Beginning with a low and sombre state that transition to a positive state sets the mood of the poem to that of an uplifting nature. This is much more apparent in the first two stanzas.

In the next two stanzas, the writer emphasizes the struggle for self-improvement. Diction such as "wade" (S3, L3) – which is a physical struggle as a metaphor for the mental struggle to aid in the imagery and serves as a great descriptive tool.

All that was endured in life shall culminate in death; the legacy we leave behind and the purpose of all the tribulations made, challenges faced and victories achieved. The writer ends this poem with the comforting suggestions that the good we did in our lives is what will prevail when we are no longer here.



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