



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

JANUARY 2022 | ISSUE 61

# RACHAEL TWINOMUGISHA

THE WRITER - THE LAWYER - THE TEACHER

07

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## MIMI'S COLUMN

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**WSA-N**  
Writers Space Africa - Nigeria  
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## From the Founder's Desk

It has been five years already since we began the journey of publishing the Writers Space Africa (WSA) Magazine. We have so far published 61 editions with this edition inclusive. The journey has had its good moments and we have experienced sad and challenging times too. We are not yet where we intend to be in terms of magazine reach and advertising but we will continue this journey nonetheless.

This edition is put together by a new editorial team led by Comfort Nyati, SDB. Our editorial team members serve for a renewable 12-month period and they are drawn from a diverse background. They are highly talented, motivated and dedicated to their tasks and for this, we are grateful.

We have begun the new year and like every other year, several people make resolutions that sometimes can fill up a notepad. For us at WSA, our resolution is to keep moving forward. We shall continue doing what we love best and when we hit a brick wall, we shall

find our way around or through it.

For this year, there are lots of things planned. In the coming weeks, we shall announce the theme for the 5th edition of the African Writers Conference to hold in Cameroon. We shall also announce the call for submissions for the 5th edition of the African Writers Awards and the call for the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature. We shall also continue with our virtual creative learning programmes and continue to populate the WSA website with the best of Africa literature.

Finally, we do hope that you the readers are happy with this magazine. If there are areas where you would like us to improve, please send us an email at [wsa@writersspace.net](mailto:wsa@writersspace.net). We will reply. Additionally, we ask that you continue to share our magazine on your social media pages and within your networks.

Wishing everyone a happy and prosperous New Year!

**Anthony Onugba**  
President/Founder

*For this year, there are lots of things planned. In the coming weeks, we shall announce the theme for the 5th edition of the African Writers Conference to hold in Cameroon.*



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# Message from The Chief Editor



In the pursuit of the cause of existence, the zeal for progress is key. At the edge of a cause, we realize that it is actually the beginning of the quest. You and I have walked miles away and miles apart chasing a given destination. To some, the journey has been short, while in contrast to others quite longer. What kind of a journey will 2022 be to you?

The page is flipped. The chapter is tossed. May it create a climate of joy so glorious.

In this festive light, New Year breaks the dawn of a new but blank page of life intoning a chapter of its own fragrance, factually unknown and unpredictable. Yet in this updated new vision called year, we keep vigil anticipating and vaccinating ourselves to stay immune

to survive any aspiring catastrophe.

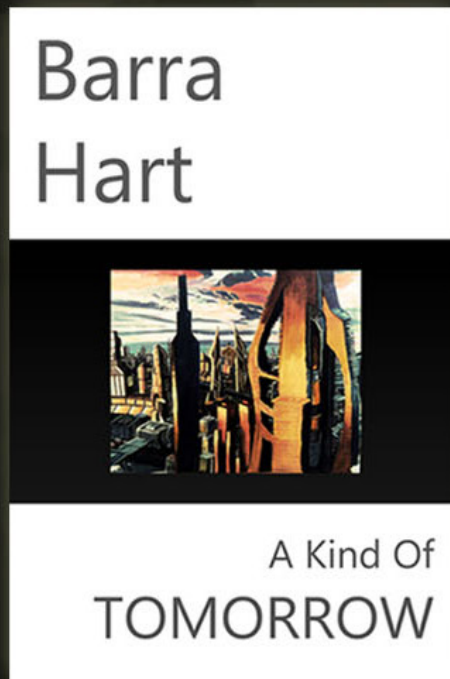
Should one feel dazed amidst the storms of this chapter, to stay resolute and shear off the tides, let one drink the opium of resilience. Not as such to impose a recommendation, rather as we assemble into this new consciousness, may each moment like a drop in an ocean, fill the blank space in the page. The book is open. The page is flipped. The chapter is tossed. May it create a climate of joy so glorious.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

Comfort Nyati, Sdb



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## ARTICLES



### **A peek into my grandmother's head** | Sloane Angelou Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

Grandma liked to share stories with me. She preferred to share them especially at night and outside under the moon, after a meal. She always sat on her stool bare chested and would go on for hours, but I never complained. I spent too little time each year with her and loved her too much to not enjoy whatever she had to say to me no matter how long it took. Occasionally she would end the evening with a tale of how pathetic she felt my grandfather was and how cruel most of his family members had been to her in the cause of their marriage.

“Visit Equatorial Guinea whenever you can. My dear, these people in your papa’s family have no regard for us.”

What she really meant each time she said something like that was that her in-laws treated her badly, so I was obligated by her experience and as a demonstration of my loyalty to her not to get entangled with them.

“You know it’s not that your mother just gave you away to her best friend to raise you, it’s that your mother knew she could not be a good parent to a small sickly child like you so when

the other asked she did the right thing to let her have you. You have to understand that someday.”

Grandma was always defending and explaining this issue to me like some phenomena that I needed to understand. She always tried to get into the why’s and how’s of my biological mother’s actions as if it related to me, though I never gave her any reason to do so. At least that’s what I thought. I never complained, never really asked questions about why I was given away, I was never that curious about my release. I was too invested as a child and young adult in my own aches, weaknesses,



and isolation to care about a lot of other things outside my head.

Yet, answers and justifications were always volunteered to me, other times thrown at me on sight, more for my biological mother's sake than mine and each time I would try to change the subject to something more interesting, like how my grandmother knew massaging my feet with local shear butter (okuma as she called it) would help relieve the pain in my chest or help ease the ache around my neck. The odd connections she made with different parts of my body and how whatever she applied or gave me to consume almost always worked. Those were the how's and why's I was interested in.

As a child and even as an adult, I have always been sensitive in so many ways that even grandma could not describe, so how could I? I have been referred to as metaphysically somatic many times. The doctors were always confused, even worse, indifferent. So we all turned to grandma for solutions and she never failed to make a good attempt at restoring my peace.

“You see those oyibo western medicine doctors like the ones your mother works with, they don't know anything about your condition. My dear don't let them upset you. Here, let me show you some things to do and say to relieve your pain when they start.”

Grandma's solutions did not always work completely but they always helped me feel better and as I became older, I learned how to be in control much better. She taught me how to cast spells of wellness on my body, she helped me become accustomed to tea, showed me how to study plants, and tell if they could be useful just from their smell or taste. With time I discovered my triggers, and found ways to bend the aches in my body with my mind, and successfully relieve myself of lingering pain. Overtime I began to notice that my body seemed to have its seasons, occasionally it would perform a new allergy, introduce another ache, or trigger a different kind of illness.

How could one explain any of that to the doctors? I would ask my grandmother

and she would ask me to learn to speak their language, to practice patience, and learn especially when it was absolutely necessary to use my words. She helped me understand that they would not always listen, but my prerogative was to be able to say truthfully that I was there with my words serving as a witness, that way I would be able to tell my god when asked that I was not silent.

Losing my grandmother really felt like an impossible thing in my chest. It has been a couple of years down the road of acknowledging her death yet I am still unable to process her absence. I have not mourned, I cannot, not yet. Life gives us really great gifts in each lifetime and just when we start to truly believe those gifts are permanent, something that resembles ingratitude taps us on the shoulder, we take a glance and before we can look back, its gone, but not all of it; if we are fortunate enough a memory or several memories remain as apparitions – we can see them but can't touch them. In my case, I have my grandmother's head and each time I need a pat on the back to stop me from choking on life, I take a peek into it.





# MENTAL HEALTH

Alliance Ankiambom  
Cameroon



In the 90s, mental health was not something we often talked about, neither were there many people who felt comfortable talking about it. I never heard of depression, eating disorders, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), etc. Should I blame this on the part of the world I grew up in? Mental health is still grossly overlooked across Africa. Much is left to be done irrespective of the several attempts to bring the issue to light.

There is a good number of reasons why mental health is still low in this part of the world, some of which include poverty, wars and conflicts, insufficient resources, lack of awareness, etc. These are just some of the few factors that hinder the talks and research on mental health. But, don't get me wrong here. Many of us are stepping out to talk about mental health, mostly emphasizing depression and anxiety, yet there is still no significant research on how these symptoms can be managed medically.



Let me tell you a little about depression. I am a young Cameroonian who has seen quite a little. I completed University some years back, bubbly and free-spirited. I had always thought that I was going to get a job after I had finished my studies. Fast forward to 2 years later, applications dropped all over the country, no calls returned, I resorted to voluntary service and internships. I started living in my mind, and I dared not talk about my struggles with anyone. I felt I was not good enough. I lost confidence after looking back at all the money spent on my education and I could not even get myself a job. I spoke to a few persons and the conversations went like 'we have also been out of school for a while and nothing to show for it, so forget.' Others told me to pray about how I felt. I went

about every day with a smile, but I'd be lost in my thoughts by the end of the day. I was very withdrawn, had a lot of negative emotions, and became very inefficient and unresourceful. Mental health is not written on the forehead hence we need to be very vigilant to notice some of these signs.

Many young people are struggling but there are very few facilities put in place to manage these struggles. Not leaving out the fact that we grow up in a highly religious part of the world and everything could be associated with the devil trying to mess with us. This calls for high spiritual interference, and very often to the neglect of the actual problem (with Cameroon being a case study). Normalizing seeking help, talking to a trained psychiatrist or actually going to the hospital for proper diagnosis, will help curb a lot of the pressures that young persons face today.

Talking about pressure, it comes from different aspects, the most prominent being social media and unemployment. Social media has become a place where young people, instead of

getting the value it gives, choose to show off, shame others, flaunt lifestyles that do not exist, and send others into depression. It is okay to not be confident in your abilities or in yourself. No one was born confident; some just have it more than others while some learn it and 'slay' it very well. While social media has many advantages such as the University of YouTube and some amazing influencers advocating on different topics that are actually growing the society, there are also some ills such as anxiety, loneliness, fear of missing out, low self-esteem, to name a few.

We see a rising amplitude of crime rate amongst the youths, most of whom just want to get an iPhone, snap good pictures and flaunt on social media, to get a good number of likes and hype. We are social beings and we desire group interaction. When these pictures do not get the desired number of likes or interactions in the comments section as projected by the individuals, low self-esteem sets in, loneliness follows, and then depression. It is common to see a young and talented person drowning in sorrow just because of social media.

**“Not leaving out the fact that we grow up in a highly religious part of the world and everything could be associated with the devil...”**



It is highly disturbing that a young person can throw away all potential just because of a social media self-validation criterion.

Social media has become highly addictive and brings about ineffectiveness and less productivity. Scrolling through Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp status could literally take up one's whole day. This plays so much on our mental well-being. We do not only scroll through but give analysis. This definitely slows productivity. If you are given a task that has to take two hours and you use one hour thirty minutes on social media feeds, the task is bound to suffer.

Social media triggers more sadness and social isolation. We get false information from what we see on social media. In my country, we say everyone is 'packaging' on social media. Not everyone is mentally healthy to avoid the sadness that comes with what we see on social media. Comparison and competition have become very unhealthy and unproductive. Most certainly, there are also some positive aspects to social media. For example, I have a friend who saw an advocate on social media and immediately fell in love with advocating for persons with disabilities.

In my opinion, the negative effects of social media on mental health can really be handled. But this will only mean that we all be aggressive with our push against it and look out for one another. Yes, though easier said than done, it is possible. This is a completely different generation. Kids aged 13 years have smartphones and by the time they are 18, they would have fed their minds with so much already.

I will like to propose integrating social media lessons in schools. This will help curb low self-esteem that comes with the negative effects of social media. It is important that we teach these lessons to kids at a young age. We already know that some children and youths will listen to their teachers better than they listen to their parents. And these lessons should go right through to college for efficiency.

There should be programs too for parents to attend to be able to detect signs of depression in their kids. This could also be done as group therapy. It will foster education and parents will help in the education of kids on the use of social media. We have to tackle this from every angle. As soon as we can get all these mediums

put in place, we will be saving our mental health.

Social media firms should also be able to use behavioural economics and signposting to create awareness. These firms are fast on the increase; it is only fair that they incorporate some of these techniques to help curb depression and other mental health signals.

A friend of mine always says "we are a sad generation with happy pictures on social media." But, we can and must avoid that.







# THE FUTURE IS POSSIBLE

Chipo Chama  
Zambia

EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

## Introduction

We were all very excited to hear that Zambia had attained significant socio-economic progress and achieved a middle-income status in 2011. That was a promising headline and still is, with a promising future. But with the current state of affairs, that statement is slowly losing grip in people's hearts as they question what the future holds.

## Economic hurricane: story of the day

Nowadays, it's almost impossible to walk down the streets of any part of the country and not hear people complain about the economic hurricane, or economic hardships. I call it economic hurricane because it has destroyed a lot of hopes, dreams, and jobs of many Zambians, when they least expected. Of course, the economy was already declining, but with the invasion of Covid-19, things have gone quite bad as the economy has worsened. The only question that remains on people's lips is, what is the future for Zambia? With the political environment steering up with so much uncertainty, a lot of people are worried. But can we hope for a better Zambia, one with an improved economy and

improved lives of its citizens? I will confidently say yes, the future is possible.

## Zambia's economic performance

According to the World Bank, Zambia's economic performance in the recent past had stalled greatly. In the years 2000 to 2014, the annual real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate averaged 6.8%. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate then slowed to 3.1% per annum between the years 2015 and 2019. These fluctuations were attributed mainly to the falling prices and declines in agricultural output and hydro-electric power generation due to insufficient rains and insufficient policy adjustment to these exogenous shocks.

## Zambia's economic performance

The intrusion of Covid-19 worsened many economies than the world could have ever anticipated, and Zambia was not an exception. The pandemic pushed the already weakening economy into contraction. According to the World Bank, economic activity through the third quarter of 2020 contracted by 1.7% as declines in industry and services outweighed growth in agriculture. Mining and services suffered from lower global demand and







social distancing measures respectively, earlier in the year. However, relaxation of the lockdown measures in the second half and a global pick-up of copper prices helped activity to recover. Overall, the economy is estimated to have contracted by 1.2% in 2020, the first recession for Zambia since 1998. Inflation had remained in double digits throughout 2020, averaging 15.7% and reached a high of 22.2% in February 2021.

### A glimpse into the future

Not all hope is lost. It is reported that a gradual recovery is expected, with GDP growth projected at 1.8% in 2021 and will average 2.8% over 2021 - 2023. Higher copper prices, the commissioning of a new hydro power station, and a return to normal rainfall patterns are expected to support growth in agriculture and electricity production, key contributors to Zambia's industry and service sectors.

However, the World Bank Report still postulates that the impact of Covid-19 will continue to dampen activity, especially in tourism and retail and wholesale trade. The risks to this outlook are balanced. Timely achievement of macroeconomic stability will

largely depend on progress on debt restructuring, fiscal consolidation efforts, and the availability of the Covid-19 vaccines. A prolonged fallout from Covid-19 could amplify fiscal and domestic liquidity challenges and lengthen the time for Zambia to embark on key macroeconomic and structural reforms. Rainfall variability remains a key structural risk to Zambia's sustainable growth, affecting key sectors like agriculture and electricity, and highlights the need to incorporate climate-smart solutions in Zambia's long-term growth strategy.

### Zambia's Trade situation

In terms of trade, Zambia hasn't been doing very good. According to World Integrated Trade Solutions, Zambia had a total export of 9,052,164.77 in thousands of United States Dollars and total imports of 9,461,739.09 in thousands of US\$ leading to a negative trade balance of -409,574.31 in thousands of US\$. It is with hope that with the African Free Trade Area, Zambia will have a positive trade balance. Zambia has a great potential to export a lot of commodities across Africa. It has an opportunity to grow the agricultural sector on a larger scale and sell to African countries, especially

with this agreement in place.

### African Free Trade Agreement

With the coming of the African Free Trade Agreement, it is projected that it will open many business opportunities for Africa member-countries. Africa will be a giant market for Africans. This agreement will eliminate tariffs on intra-Africa trade, making it easier for businesses across Africa to trade within Africa and benefit from their own growing market. It will introduce regulatory measures such as sanitary standards and eliminate non-tariff barriers to trade.

Furthermore, such opportunities will be of significance to Zambia. The International Growth Center Report asserted that there are about 1.02 million informal micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) in Zambia, along with about 30,000 formal MSMEs. The African Free Trade Agreement brings to these micro and small enterprises a great opportunity to expand and grow, especially those in agriculture, retail and wholesale trade. According to the World Bank Report, the trade agreement will lift about 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty and boost the incomes of nearly

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68 million others who live on less than \$5.50 a day; boost Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035, a gain of 7%, while adding \$76 billion to the income of the rest of the world; increase Africa's exports by \$560 billion, mostly in manufacturing; spur larger wage gains for women (10.5%) than for men (9.9%); and boost wages for both skilled and unskilled workers, 10.3% for unskilled workers, and 9.8% for skilled workers.

### The role of MSMEs in Economic Development

It is good to understand that Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a very crucial and vital role in economic development of Zambia, and Africa at large. MSMEs, as stated by Ibrahim Zeidy, the Director at COMESA Monetary Institute, are a vital engine in African economy, since they drive growth, create employment especially among youth, and spearhead innovation. MSMEs provide a customer base to larger companies across the supply chain and supply vital goods and services to companies and households, helping to keep the wheels of the economy in motion, take for instance Zambia breweries which is a big company. They do not distribute their products on their own throughout the country, they rely on MSMEs to order from them then distribute to the wider market. Many of Zambia's MSMEs have the potential

to become tomorrow's large corporations, this also goes to other African countries that the continent needs to continue on its path to growth and prosperity. Many studies reveal that MSMEs' growth in Africa are constrained by lack of financial support, poor management, corruption, lack of training and experience, poor infrastructure, and insufficient profits, among others, and now are highly exposed to the negative impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

### Develop critical regional value chains and supply chains

Despite all these difficulties, African MSMEs will benefit from greater access to new markets and the possible economic transformation that competition in these markets could promote. For the surveyed companies by COMESA Monetary Institute, the majority companies rely on international suppliers for raw materials essential for production, it appears that micro and small companies are not really exploiting the African market to get their supplies. Therefore, there is a clear opportunity with the ongoing establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to develop critical regional value chains and supply chains so that businesses, particularly MSMEs, can better take advantage of the African market to source their inputs.

### Will MSMEs benefit from new markets?

The agreement, as postulated by World Bank, offers a number of benefits to African SMEs. SMEs are vital due to their importance to the continent's economy, accounting for up to 80% of businesses and contributing up to 40% of national income. And benefits that might accrue to African, Zambian SMEs are: fostering specialization and boosting industrialization; increasing employment and investment opportunities, as well as technological development; allowing African-owned enterprises to enter new markets, expand their customer base and create new products and services, making investing in innovation viable; reducing the manufacturing gap and creating more avenues for SMEs to create more well-paid jobs, especially for young people; increasing investments that drive capital to domestic businesses; and easing the process of importing raw materials from other African countries and enabling SMEs to set up assembly firms in other African countries, creating cheaper means of production.

### Conclusion

African economies may be lower than desired, but the African Free Trade Area brings immense opportunities to create jobs and reduce poverty among African communities. This is also a great opportunity for Africa to come together, form a great alliance, and drive to their potential economies.



# AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY IN THE EAST AFRICAN REGION

**MARY OTIENO**

**KENYA**

Sustainable energy is a form of energy that meets our today's demand for energy without putting them in danger of getting depleted or exhausted. According to the East African energy research, sources of sustainable energy include solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal, and biomass energy.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a collection of seventeen global goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. This article will focus

on goal 7, that's Affordable and Clean Energy.

In the East Africa region, we have a variety of clean energy sources including solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and hydro energy. Solar energy is an ideal alternative source of energy because of its potential in the region since most countries experience sun all year round. Hydropower is also an important renewable source because it plays an important role in the region's energy system and development. According to one of the

experiments conducted by Energy Engineering students at Makerere University, Biomass contribute to about 90% of the total energy consumed in most of the East African countries. It provides almost all the energy used to meet basic energy needs for cooking and water heating in rural and most urban households, institutions, and commercial entities. Biomass is also the main source of energy for most rural industries. However, wind energy is not exploited that much in most East African countries. The reasons for this range





from site selection dynamics in some countries like Kenya, to inadequate resource information in other countries. Nuclear energy is usually considered as a non-renewable energy source. Although nuclear energy itself is a renewable energy source, the material used in nuclear power plants is not.

Nuclear energy is not fully developed in the region due to the dangers associated with harnessing it. These dangers include operational risks and the associated safety concerns, uranium mining risks, financial and regulatory risks, unresolved waste management issues, nuclear weapons proliferation concerns, and adverse public opinion.

Here in Kenya, we have various wind farms including Ng'ong, Wajir, and Turkana. Geothermal power plants also exist, from Olkaria 1 to Olkaria 4, together with many other private sectors having private geothermal power plants that still contribute to the national grid. There are also several solar companies offering employment opportunities to many people within the region since we receive sunlight throughout the year.

My rural community is a practical example with a solar energy company known as Sunking Solar Company, which supplies solar panels together with other electronic devices like televisions, radios, Mobile phone chargers, electric bulbs, and elec-

tric torches. The common citizen with low income really finds it hard to walk into an electronic shop to buy all of these items at once hence the company helps people in the rural areas by selling these items to them on hire purchase terms, which is more affordable to those in the rural areas. From the little earnings they make, they are then able to provide for their daily basic needs and also pay the company. This has greatly reduced the use of non-renewable sources of energy like kerosene and others.

There are currently several companies fighting for the reduction of the use of non-renewables. They include BBox Kenya, DLight solar, Solar Panda, and Solar







Mwezi, among others. From a personal experience, one of the greatest challenges I ever faced was during my primary school education, when I had to study at night using a small kerosene lamp which was never reliable. The lamp eventually worsened my eyesight forcing me to get a pair of spectacles. I believe several students improved their grades since they use solar lighting which is reliable and also good for their eyesight.

Currently, I have friends who are employed by these different solar companies to market their products to the local people. They walk from door to door educating the locals on the importance of using clean and sustainable energy like solar energy.

Clean energy has immensely improved living standards in the local communities. The data collected from KenGen overproduction and Kenya Power over consumption shows that a bigger percentage of Kenyans (almost 60%) are using renewable sources of energy. Another impact it has had is that since solar panels need humans to install them and wind farms need technicians for maintenance, it means on average, more jobs will be created for each unit of electricity generated from renewable sources than from

fossil fuels. In addition to the jobs directly created in the renewable energy industry, growth in clean energy can create positive economic ripple effects. For example, industries in the renewable energy supply chain will benefit and unrelated local businesses will also benefit from increased household and business incomes. Local governments also benefit from clean energy most often in the form of property and income taxes and other payments from renewable energy project owners. Owners of lands on which wind projects are built often receive lease payments as well as payments for power line easements and road rights of way. Renewable energy is providing affordable electricity across the regions now and will help stabilize energy prices in the future. Although renewable facilities require upfront investments to build, they can operate at a very low cost, and as a result, renewable energy prices can be very stable over time.

Kenya and most of the countries in the African continent are third world countries. With the current trends in technology, I'm convinced that with time they'll develop some more and adopt clean energy technologies. Once the government decides to

subsidize these projects, we shall not only go far as a region but also as a continent. Kenya being in the region shall realize its dream of vision 2030 about being the most industrialized country in Africa.

In order for our region to achieve Goal 7 of the SDGs and become competitive, we need to invest more in solar, wind, and thermal power, improve energy productivity and ensure energy for all. The government needs to wake up in terms of expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology to provide clean and more efficient energy which will encourage growth and help the environment. The region needs to support policies and programs on technology development and transfer in the area of renewable energy, especially building on international discussions on technology transfer and climate change, low carbon, high growth, and development options. We may also want to harness biogas as the region has many domestic animals such as cattle, goats, horses, etc. The governments should subsidize energy-related courses in our higher learning institutions as well for students to enrol for such courses so that we may have more experts in the field.



# LEADERSHIP: A WEST AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

*“The Jobateh, Kuyateh, and other griots clans’ tasks were to make sure that the history of the empire never dies. From an early age, anyone born of these families, including future generations, had to learn about the people’s history from their parents.”*

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**BAKARY S.  
SONKO**

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**THE GAMBIA**

Where I come from, leadership is of utmost importance and embedded into everyday life. All members of the society learn its scope and breadth as if it were a school course. After the battle of Kirina in 1235 C.E., the Manding Charter was created, which led to the formation of one of the greatest empires in West Africa: The Mali Empire. The Mandinka Empire, satellite kingdoms, and chiefdoms followed the “Kurgan-Fouga” (the Manding Charter on human rights), one of the first created human rights charters worldwide. It was used as a source of guidance and road map to distribute leadership, but more importantly, to treat everyone with dignity and respect, thus fairness and equality for all.

During the meeting to draft the “Kurgan-Fouga,” the empire’s authorities

divided the leadership amongst clans. Various clans and families were tasked to become leaders in different domains of the empire. For example, the Keita clan was the princely clan tasked with governing. The Jobateh, Kuyateh, and other griots clans’ tasks were to make sure that the history of the empire never dies. From an early age, anyone born of these families, including future generations, had to learn about the people’s history from their parents. Since there exist very few written texts about the Malian Empire, its history was passed down from one generation to the other, keeping the relevance alive over the years.

Additionally, security was the task of the warrior clans. The trades clan was tasked with trade and the rest of the tasks were equally divided among clans to take

leadership in different aspects of the community’s social and political life wherein they find themselves. So it is as a young child that education with experience to becoming a leader starts. It matters not what kind of family you are born in; leadership means much more to our people. And with the configuration of our society, every member has an important role to play.

In an average class Mandingo family, the head of the family is usually the eldest surviving family member, whether male or female. That head of the family — usually the grandparents — always has the final say on decision making and other matters, including what may be trivial in the eyes of an outsider. In making decisions, they (for the sake of this article, let’s say the grandparents) consult with their children who are allowed to opine and even appeal their case if required.



# African Union



The grandchildren are not primarily present when decisions are being made on critical family issues but they are influencers of their grandparents' final decisions.

Consequently, the role of a father is to provide food and shelter. He must use the available resources to ensure that he maximizes and efficiently produces required food and other family needs. The mother controls what happens at home and monitors daily food portion sizes while keeping an inventory of food stockpiles. Any decision concerning children and other family issues must be filtered to them for approval before implementation.

Firstborns are conditioned to follow the footsteps of their parents, especially the father. For example, if your father is a griot, the child must learn the art of storytelling from a young age to carry the legacy when the father has transitioned. Other children are trained on the

skill, however, they are not expected to shoulder the weight of the tradition. To train the younger children to be responsible, they're entrusted with the care of plants, trees, or small animals. While these tasks may seem menial, they are held in high regard by the elders as this role comes with accountability, and going before the matriarchs and patriarchs is akin to going before the judge.

My people believe that leadership positions show outsiders and the world who we are and what we are made of. We believe that you will not know man's true character until you give them a sense of power over something. What differentiates leaders is how they carry themselves when they have power, how they execute that power, and how those around them feel about them in private. To elaborate further, if people do not think (opinionated) their leader is trustworthy, they will perceive that the leader is not doing what is right. We

know and understand that not everyone will like you, but if one is being called to task and has shortcomings, they need to check the modus operandi, go back to the drawing board, and revise their course. To my people, a great leader:

1. Helps followers grow: As a leader, you should have that natural charisma to speak wholesome words to people with the intention that they will follow. As a result, it is incumbent upon you to help them and lead them into things that will help them grow their talents. You should make sure to delegate and decentralize power to your followers so they would be able to learn the functions and essence of executing power. This way, your influence causes them to continue without supervision. Growth includes initiating plans that will improve skills wherein there is an interest, and not relying majorly on the leader for socio-economics needs.



2. Knows what motivates others: As a leader, you must understand what motives your constituents. You should discover your constituents' strengths and weaknesses and work on elevating or training where needed. There is no cookie-cutter approach to this task, as everyone is different with varying needs. However, the leader will show excellent leadership skills by learning of the needs of his people and addressing them.

3. Is available: A great leader should be available when needed. When people see the leader involved, things are likely to remain calm, though not always. One of the leader's purposes is to remove barriers between the leadership and the people. When barriers exist, the people feel disconnected and rejected, as if they do not belong. They see this as distancing and that the leader is not making enough effort to know them and their needs. When distancing takes effect, the people will not carry out authoritative orders.

4. Is disciplined: Unruly people can't have good behaviour. As a result, people in leadership positions will learn to manifest degrees of discipline, humility, and self-restraint. Leaders are under the scrutiny of everyone, and behaviour unbecoming to the role can cause uprisings, leading even to revolting and anarchism.

5. Is trustworthy and honest: A leader's

subjects should find him/her trustworthy. Trust is earned through honesty, consistency, fairness, and equality. So, it is paramount to be honest in all dealings and manifest the highest amount of integrity in words and actions, whether in public or private. There is a common saying that anything done in the dark will come to light one day; history has proven this repeatedly. An analogy of trust is that it's like a sheet of paper, when folded several times, it cannot be straightened.

6. Is reliable: Leaders who show dedication and commitment will undoubtedly have devout followers who will follow them on every path. Loyalty has a price, and the currency is being there for others. When people feel respected and valued, there is a reciprocal effect that they will do the same for the leader. Good leaders show that they are servants first, and therefore gain the trust and respect of the people.

7. Manages conflict effectively: Leaders never stop learning and growing in knowledge, wisdom, and experience. Leaders must be adaptable to the needs of the people which change continuously. Since no one knows everything, the leader must rely on professionals to guide them in ways they've not ventured before. The effects of learning will be evident in their use of the knowledge pertaining to the constituents. Consideration to be fair when making

judgments will be at the forefront of meted-out decisions, policies, and laws. In the end, the efficacy of the role is under scrutiny, and the leader should ensure that he/she is qualified to make judgments from a learned position and not an emotional one. When laws are in place and a leader exercises its effects without prejudice, the people will respect the leader's role to manage conflict effectively through the written rules.

While the above are essential qualities and skills a leader should possess, they should also encourage people to take risk, especially in today's business world. The higher the risk, the higher the reward. One has to get out of their comfort zone and explore creative and innovative ways beneficial to themselves and others. Leaders who overlook feedback are making one of the most prominent mistakes. Feedback reveals what's in the mind of the people. When the leader acts upon the input, the people will feel that their needs are being met and hence motivate them to work even harder. Change in any aspect of life is inevitable, so leadership should strive for changes to meet the demand and the reality of current happenings. Leadership is not all about leading, managing activities, or giving a command. Leadership is a process where you serve as a reference point for the constituents and still remain humble enough to learn from them daily.





## FLASH FICTION



# JAMAL

AKANBI OMOTAYO

NIGERIA

My name is Jamal and I am the first female president of my country. It would impress you to know that I am only just 18 years old!

I had done it! I achieved my long-lived dream and won the fight against Leukaemia almost simultaneously.

Exhausted from the day's activities, I took a seat on the soft sofa in the office. The softness of the sofa made it easy for my drift into la-la land in less than 30 seconds. I make a dizzy mental note to avoid that sofa henceforth.

It wasn't long before

the sharp pain coursing through my joints jolted me out of dreamland into the reality I live. The rick-rick of my barely upright hospital bed serenaded the night as I tossed side to side.

"Can't wait for the morrow." I whispered into the night.

Tomorrow is never guaranteed in a refugee camp, they say. But not when it is heavily pregnant with my breakthrough.

I smiled knowing well I would not be here in 24 hours. Help is on the way! The Heavens finally paid attention to me. I am

going to start my journey into a life that hopefully would be cancer-free. A life where my presidential dream would be birthed.

A Few minutes in, I succumbed to the embrace of sleep with a big smile on my face muttering, "Help is on the way"

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"Jamal! Jamal! Wake up. the mercy volunteers are here."

I hear my mama call from a place that seemed so far away; there I knew I was never going to answer that name again.



# Laurent and the Sugar Bowl

Ejang Patricia - Uganda



Laurent loved sugar more than anything else in the world. His dream was to become rich and buy many bags of sugar just to lick. However, his mother did not agree with his ideas. She constantly reminded him that too much sugar was not good for his health. Whenever she was going to the market, she would place the tin of sugar on the cupboard, out of Laurent's reach.

One day, she was rushing to the well and forgot to keep the tin of sugar on top of the cupboard. Laurent, who would always check the table for the precious sweetness every time his mother went out, was

excited to find it within his reach this time. He checked to make sure that his mother was not on her way back already. He closed the door and drew the window curtains. Laurent helped himself to several spoonfuls of the sweet grains and for a while, he was perfectly happy.

He soon wiped his hands and mouth clean, to clear any traces of his act. He closed the tin and went outside to sit on the verandah. A few minutes later his mother returned. Laurent rushed to welcome her. "Laurent, what is that smeared on your nose?"

"Nothing mother."

He touched his nose to check and felt some grains

of sugar remain on his finger. Lowering his gaze, he apologized to his mother. That night, Laurent was made to take boiled water mixed with tea leaves without sugar, as punishment for his bad act.

Laurent stayed away from the tin from then on, only taking it when his mother put its contents for him in tea.

~





EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

# The Little Blue Boat

by Hellen Akeyo Owuor - Kenya

The little blue boat looked beyond the horizon as the sun was setting. He looked at how round and red the sun was. He wished that someday, he could follow the sun to where it went every evening, just as his parents had done time and again. From afar, he spotted his grandfather, who always had a smoking chimney. His grandfather had told him many stories about the big seas and oceans that he had travelled to.

"Grandpa, is it true that you travelled with pirates?" the little blue boat would ask his grandfather.

"Of course, but that was a long time ago," Grandpa said.

"I wish I had lived a long time ago to see pirates," said the little blue boat sadly. "I also miss mum and dad so much." He added. "No, do not be sad, come with me, I will show you something."

The little blue boat went off with his grandfather. His grandfather had many hidden cabinets and they opened one.

"Look grandpa, this looks like a chest of treasure!" Said the little blue boat, excitedly.

"It sure does," grandpa replied smiling. "Can I open it please?" The little one pleaded

"Of course you can, I have been saving that for you."

Opening the chest happily, the little blue boat was delighted to find various ornaments and jewelry. There were also pieces of gold coins.

"Where did you get all these?" asked the little blue boat.

"I got them from the pirates who used me for their travels. Most of them usually hid things and forgot about them," grandpa replied.

"Oh that's awesome, but grandpa, I barely have enough space to put all these treasures," he said sadly.

"Do not worry little blue boat, when you were made, they made sure to put a false bottom beneath your floors. Now, that should give us enough space to keep these."

Little blue boat was happy and surprised at the same time. He did not know that he had so much space. So together, they started transferring the treasure onto the little blue boat.

"This will be our little secret," grandpa said and winked at the little blue boat.

Grandpa no longer went to the sea. He had seen better days. Now that the little blue boat's parents were out in the sea; he had to take care of him until they returned. Each day, he told Little blue boat about his many sea adventures. Together, they watched the beautiful sunset from the shores.



# Rachael Twinomugisha

As part of our drive to promote and encourage the writing, reading, publication and popularity of African literary works, Writers Space Africa Magazine is introducing an interview corner where we will host African Writers from across the continent. In this January Edition, we bring you a beautiful and delectable writer, author of Muniini the weeping bean and founder of Tale Time Africa all the way from Uganda. Her name is Rachael Twinomugisha.

- Blessing Peter Titus (PPBlessing)

***PPBlessing: Who is Rachael Twinomugisha please?***

**RT:** Rachael Twinomugisha is a girl yet about to know herself better, so you have no assurance you'll know me so well. I am a passionate writer of children and young adult stories. A teacher by passion, a lawyer by profession, an adventurous traveller and a warm heart to be around.

***PPBlessing: You are certainly an interesting person. When and how did you get into writing?***

**RT:** Unlike many other people, I started writing at 18. I was in high school when I wrote my first poem. I thought it read beautiful and so did my teacher and classmates in our little Literature in English class. I wrote a number of poems while





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at school and when we took our holidays, I fought to draw in words everything I'd seen that interested me. I summarised every experience into a poem until the poems started boring me a bit (reading so normal) that I challenged myself to write stories. The idea was always for someone to see vividly what I would be talking about. That is when and how I started writing, officially.

**PPBlessing: Okay... How about unofficially?**

**RT:** I wrote before I even joined school. I drew things in my book because I badly wanted to write. Once I'd joined school

and learnt to write, I went back home almost every day to write whatever interested me at the back of my book. Until I took up writing seriously, the back of all my books were always full of simple notes from events I loved. If you checked now, every photo in our album at home has something inscribed at its back. I wrote what would have happened the day a particular photo was taken, or what event we would have been celebrating when we took that. I also marked days and dates at the back. That was me being a nonfiction writer - unofficially. Unofficially, we also wrote stories in our English classes in primary and secondary school.

I didn't think this made me a writer though because everyone else wrote.

**PPBlessing: Wow! So is it safe to say you've been writing since you knew how to write?**

**RT:** Matters exactly what I've been writing. [Laughs] I love to say I started writing at 18. That was when I had my mind to it. At 18 by the way, my Literature in English teacher tasked me to write a poem for one of the professors that had taught him at University. It was a birthday present. The professor loved it. I also wrote a poem on the theme of materialism among teenage girls. It was





It was pride, it was public opinion, it was family. To start with, teachers are the least paid Professionals in Uganda, so “I wasn’t going to doom my life while I watched.”





used in a presentation at our school then. That was when I knew I was actually writing.

**PPBlessing:** *You've been making giant strides a long time ago. You mentioned earlier that you are a teacher by passion and a lawyer by profession. Since you knew you were passionate about teaching, why didn't you study to become a teacher instead?*

**RT:** It was pride, it was public opinion, it was family. To start with, teachers are the least paid Professionals in Uganda, so "I wasn't going to doom my life while I watched." The public also

sees the profession as a not so good blessing since it doesn't earn them money. In fact, once you tell your parents here that you're going to study for a degree, diploma or certificate in education, you worry them. I didn't want to be the one worrying my family. (Laughs)

I first taught a few weeks after I'd joined nursery school back in Kawempe, Kampala. My teacher, Madam Monica, had taught me how to write, count, add and subtract immediately after I joined school. I went home to make a small blackboard using the battery cells powder on the little board I'd found in our store. I had

chalk. I always picked the tiny pieces the teachers would drop in class. Once my blackboard was dry, I was ready to teach my little brother what teacher Monica had taught me. Our second class had over 8 children. Every child in the neighbourhood attended my class. Of course, I think they always looked forward to the play we'd have immediately afterwards, but there I was, teaching.

Later, my friends at school (primary, secondary and high school) always came to me to explain chapters they'd not understood well in class. They always stressed that I explain well. A number of teachers also mentioned that I would make an amazing teacher of the English language, Literature in English and of history, but here I am, a lawyer.

Finally, I was quite a good performer and my family suggested that I study law since I'd pass it with ease and be able to mint money easily. Aside from Law, I had be studying journalism and not education instead. Barely did I know I was called to serve.

**PPBlessing:** *This is interesting. I think it's one of the dilemmas a lot of young people face in Africa, studying a course that is deemed respectable as opposed to studying what they are really interested in.*

**RT:** Yes. But even at that, I should have studied journalism



*Fans of Muniini*





and not Education. Only if I'd had a mentor!

**PPBlessing: Well at least now some other young chap will be saved from some of the stress by reading your experience and hopefully, getting mentored by you. Still on teaching, you're the founder of Tale time Africa and I understand it is specifically for children. Can you shed more light on it?**

**RT:** Yes, if there is any glory or pride teaching has brought me, it has been Tale Time Africa, the African child's story school. I started Tale Time Africa in

where I told them.

The other idea behind the creation of Tale Time Africa aside from the fostering of creativity is the mental health of children. Writing brings relief. A problem shared is a problem half-solved and we all know that the modern-day parent barely has time for his/her children. So if the child is able to put his/her story or pain in writing, then surely, salvation will come his/her way. The grand reason behind the creation of Tale Time Africa is the preservation and promotion of African Literature at a tender age.

Teaching at Tale Time Africa is learner-centred. It is a learning contract kind of setting. I remember our parents didn't first understand for example why I ask children what they want to do at the beginning of every class. We have activities like story writing, storytelling, debates, quizzes, public speech, instant story creation (where you use the objects; toys and dolls given you to create a story instantly.) You tell that story and later write it. We run on a weekly timetable but even when I'll know it is debate and maybe quiz today, I'll ask the children what they want to do. We'll

A number of teachers also mentioned that I would make an amazing teacher of the English language, Literature in English and of history, but here I am, a lawyer. Only if I'd had a mentor!

September 2020. The idea was to have a platform that allowed children to tell their stories and taught them how to. You'll notice that in my case, for example, had I had a mentor, I would have become an amazing writer at a much younger age... maybe. I only didn't mention that all this time I didn't write, I was always busy creating stories in my head and sharing them with my friends. I created stories to entertain, to teach and to bring back hope - a counsellor of sorts. I can only imagine if I'd put these stories in writing, a number of other people would have benefited from them, but they stopped

**PPBlessing: This is wonderful. Thank you for promoting African Literature and helping our children learn to not only read but to write their stories too. How has your passion for teaching been used at Tale Time Africa?**

**RT:** I'll answer this with the question you've not asked me. People ask how one is able to write children's literature, for example. My answer is always that for you to be able to write a story that children will enjoy reading and relate to, you have to be a child in the first place. Brings me to your question.

go by majority vote, do that for a few minutes and then do what we were actually meant to do. By doing so, you'll have their attention because you prioritized their opinion. They will enjoy the next lessons, make maximum use of them, and will never find school boring.

**PPBlessing: You are indeed setting up new paths in teaching and learning. Thank you for sharing these useful tips which I believe schools can imbibe to make learning a more worthwhile experience.**

**RT:** The pleasure is mine.





***PPBlessing: Your book, Muniini, the weeping bean which you recently published has been buzzing all over social media, can you tell us about its birthing process?***

**RT:** I wrote a number of stories between March and May 2020. That was around the time most African states were totally locked down due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Uganda was under lockdown. That meant that you could only go as far as your feet could take you. I used the time to create stories and *Muniini, the weeping bean*, was one of those creations. It tackles the life of a rejected bean. She -Muniini - is rejected because of her size. She is the smallest bean in Mrs Kanyama's bag. She has no hope as everything around her indicates that her sad end is nigh. What is intended for her end, however, brings her the biggest blessing of her life. I thought about the lives of many people out there that were going through situations they had no control over. In my bedroom, where I spent most of my time as I had to isolate from everyone else because I had just returned from Nairobi which had Covid cases already, I wondered if these situations around us are always really our end. I wrote the story to talk to souls, to encourage them and sprout dreams anew. That same year, Muniini landed in the

hands of a publisher who felt the world needed hope from it.

***PPBlessing: From publishing until now, how have you managed publicity and sales considering the stereotype that Africans don't read?***

**RT:** While Muniini got edited and published, I was excited mainly about how its marketing would be. I knew for sure that I had to challenge myself out of every comfort my life had ever known if Muniini was "to be read." Thanks first of all to my publisher, publicity came easy for me. Acacia publishers have made the book popular. If there is any book you never have to judge by its cover, then Muniini isn't that book. People loved Muniini from its beautiful

cover and have not been disappointed reading it. These people refer many more readers to me. Then there has been the blessing of family and friends. Those ones pre-ordered the book even before I had seen the final copy. You said Africans don't read. I don't know if they were going to read the book or not, but they ordered it and have since got copies. Tale Time Africa also brought in sales from our dear parents. That's what people have done. As for myself, I have used social media mainly to publicise Muniini as our country has been locked down and I couldn't do much beyond social media. This has brought me readers from near and far. Muniini has been read in over 9 countries so far and this has been mostly by the power



*With the Award-winning Tanzanian Author, Nahida Esmail*



of social media.

Aside from social media, I've visited bookshops, schools, libraries in different places, including in Tanzania where I attended the recently concluded African Writers Conference and left copies of *Muniini* not only with individuals but with bookstores, organisations and schools too. So I'll say Africans read. *Muniini* is being read.

***PPBlessing: It is a beautiful collaborative hard work, well done! Moving on, what will you tell Writers who are sceptical about publishing their books?***

**RT:** Have a mentor, have their opinion. I'll not do the motivational speaking habits of go ahead and publish the book because if it isn't a good enough book, it'll only but slow down such a writer's journey. So please, find a mentor, consult writers you trust and have their opinion on your book, and once they've approved your story, please go ahead and hunt down a publisher, or may they hunt you down.

When we published *Muniini*, I'd had another story in my preference. It was a happy and very hilarious story. My publisher insisted on *Muniini*. We sought the opinion of other profound African writers from West, East and Southern Africa. They also chose *Muniini*. I didn't want to enter the market with

a not so happy story, but here we are. Who knows, maybe my other story should not have done as well! Also, pray for guidance always.

***PPBlessing: When are we expecting this other book to be published and are there any others too?***

**RT:** This other story could come out in a story collection around August next year, fingers crossed. A number of my stories have been published in the Writers Space Africa magazine, I have two nonfiction stories published in the *Twaweza* anthology, and on a number of other platforms.

***PPBlessing: Recently, Muniini was nominated for an award, can you tell us more about that?***

**RT:** The Janzi awards are a national award here organised by the ministry of gender, labour, and social development, the National Cultural Forum, and other stakeholders. The award covers everything artistry in the land of Uganda, including music, books and publishing, visual arts, comedy, drama, name it.

*Muniini*, at 3 months old was nominated for the Janzi awards in the outstanding children's storybook subcategory of the books and publishing category. For a three-month-old book, I must say I was

overwhelmed by the support given us in the nominations and voting time: my special thanks to Writers Space Africa members, my people of Rubaare, Edith, Dissan, Comfort, Rosset, Anthony and Alexandra, Cohens, Colyvas, and Omandang, Sandra, Brian, and Henry Ssekajja Ronald, president Writers Space Africa - Uganda to mention but a few. We didn't bring the award home, but we brought so much popularity for the book and our platforms in return. It was such an amazing marketing platform the awards gave us.

***PPBlessing: How do you feel about not winning the award?***

**RT:** It has been a celebration for me since I learnt that our *Muniini* was nominated for the Janzi awards. I'm still celebrating the nomination. At the awards, we learnt that there had been over 750,000 nominations in total. I can't start to imagine how many of those were in my category, but the mere fact that we got nominated for the award was already so much victory for me.

The other bit I found really humbling about the awards was the winner of that particular award. Mr Walabyeeki Magoba has written children's storybooks for 48 years now. In that time, he has been on the radio running children's shows. Learning that I was put up to compete with such a renowned



and celebrated servant of our land, humbled me. How do I feel? It's a celebration. I think this has much to say about my kind of work and the reception it's being given.. (Alhamdulillah).

**PPBlessing: What's the next steps now after these?**

**RT:** There's always one next step for a writer: to write, write, and keep writing. Watch out for another of my books coming next year around August. Acacia publishers will grace your eyes still. Also, wait for more grace from Tale Time Africa. Children may get the opportunity to write and publish their own magazine. How about that?

**PPBlessing: That sounds amazing. We look forward to seeing that happen. Any concluding words?**

**RT:** Thanks for having me, Blessing. My appreciation goes to Writers Space Africa for making me the writer I am today. Special thanks to Acacia Publishers, and warm greetings and thanks to the children, staff and parents of Tale Time Africa. To you, the African writer, keep writing, trim your path and let no one discourage you once you have.

**PPBlessing: Thank you so much for your time. It's greatly appreciated. To our readers out there who are interested in getting a copy of Muniini, you can reach out to Miss. Rachael Twinomugisha via [taletimeafrica@gmail.com](mailto:taletimeafrica@gmail.com)**

**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.**



### BEACH TIME

Rachael showing off her greatest read at Bagamoyo, Tanzania



### MEETING NEELAM BABUL

Rachael met Neelam, a columnist with the Citizen Newspaper, at the 4 edition of the Writers Mingle in Tanzania.



### MD OF TPH BOOKSHOP

Rachael at TPH bookshop, Samora avenue, Dar es salaam with Mr. Tapiwa Muchechemera. Mr. Tapiwa is the MD of TPH bookshop.



## SHORT STORIES

Nnalue Chidinma's

# Pilgrimage

Nigeria

Iya Risika was the most popular food seller in Ileja. Every day, she sat down surrounded by huge pots and coolers, dishing out meals to customers while giving orders to the girls who worked for her. Girls who wrestled with mortars full of yam. Girls who stirred pots of boiling food or food steeped in oil. Girls whom Iya Risika later accused of bringing her bad luck because it was the day after she paid their salary that the government officials fulfilled their year-long threat of coming to hew down shops that were on the 'government road'. 'Those new girls I employed brought me bad luck' was the answer she gave everyone who asked what had happened to her shop. But that was six months ago.

Now she sat at the far back of the danfo, her grandson, Tesbiu, propped on her lap while they waited for other passengers to board. Tesbiu sneezed and Iya Risika placed a hand on his back,

rubbing it gently. Tesbiu was turning out to be such a smart chap at school and a good helping hand at home. Iya Risika remembered how angry she had been with Risika when the girl had fallen pregnant. Now that same baby was Iya Risika's closest companion and today again he was going with her to Madam's house. She would give him some little tasks to do so they would finish the work faster. She still had people to beg money from today. She needed to.

Just then, a woman opened the door to the front seat of the bus and sat close to the driver. Iya Risika didn't hear what the woman said but the driver's voice was loud enough for her to hear, 'No worry. I go carry you.' The woman seemed to sigh in relief at those words. 'Did something happen to her car somewhere?' Iya Risika thought. 'She doesn't look like the danfo type', she said to herself. Unless the fine-looking lady was one of those people who led fake lives in

this Lagos. One of those people who moved from place to place, claiming that they needed help. People who claimed that they had lost their money and needed help getting to their destination. People like Iya Risika.

Tesbiu looked out the window watching the yellow buses zoom past while Iya Risika pulled a thread off the collar of his shirt. 'Gbagada, new garage', the conductor continued to call. Soon enough, other passengers trickled into the bus. 'Madam, abeg shift small! It was the heavyset woman beside Iya Risika who spoke. 'The two of us na orobo', Iya Risika said, smiling. The other woman didn't smile back so Iya Risika pressed herself closer to the wall of the bus to make room. She would oblige the woman. After all, the woman might just be the one to pay Iya Risika's bus fare today.

The bus made its way down the tarred road and almost imme-





diately, the conductor started to ask for his money. 'Owo e da-Where's your money?' he asked. Before he got to her, Iya Risika tapped the woman close to her lightly, 'Aunty, please I'm going far. Can you help me with transport?' The woman shook her head without shifting her gaze from the game she was playing on her phone. Iya Risika turned to ask the woman in front, then said 'thank you,' as the woman pressed a #200 note into her palm. She handed it to the conductor. Then she moved on to other passengers, telling them that she was 'still going far'.

Iya Risika recognised some of the stares she got. She knew those eyes frowned at what she was doing. But then this was Lagos. Many people did what she was doing now. Besides she had her reasons. Good reasons too. Holy reasons in fact! Couldn't they see she looked better than a street beggar ever could in her iro and buba? A woman like her deserved a break and a place to go to other than remain in a small Nigerian town year after year. That was

why she needed their money in the first place.

'Gbagada,' the conductor called, breaking into Iya Risika's thoughts. She held Tesbiu as they alighted. They would walk for a few more minutes then go into the compound with the big white gate, knock on the door of flat 5, respond to Madam's 'Who is that?' before being let in. Iya Risika and the boy would get to work, scrubbing and cleaning. The aroma from the meals Iya Risika would prepare would have Madam smiling satisfactorily. Then they would go from the house to a bus stop where Iya Risika would beg for more money while holding Tesbiu's hand tightly. This was her new life. And if it could fund her dream of going to Hajj this year, it seemed like a perfectly okay life.

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'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'. So that they can call you Alhaja abi. Alhaja without one naira. Shio.' It was baba Risika who was talking and teasing. Iya Risika was sure that the neighbours would soon tell her children to hush while they pinned their ears to the wall, straining to hear.

'Look Baba Risika. Don't put your mouth in this matter o', she said, shaking a finger at him. 'If person fall, shebi he go rise again?,' she asked. 'I will attend that village meeting and I will go there with photos from Mecca and two golden teeth.' She paused to catch her breath. 'After I have told everybody last year that I will be the talk of town. Wallahi, no put sand sand inside my garri o. Don't do it o', she said. 'Nonsense,' Baba Risika replied. 'Nonsense,' he said again before leaving the room.

Iya Risika bit her lip. How could she have been so careless? He had walked into the room right after her call with mama Tobi, her best friend, who had agreed to



send her some money. 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. But when mama Tobi demanded the truth, Iya Risika had confessed that she needed money to go on the Hajj pilgrimage.

Baba Risika could shout all he wanted. She needed to do this for herself. 'What sensible Muslim woman doesn't want people to call her Alhaja?' she asked. Well, if no one did, she wanted to be called that. Mama Tobi had promised to send her a sufficient amount. She didn't say how much but Iya Risika trusted her friend. Mama Tobi, herself, could understand the desire because she was the one who had first planted stories about how every Muslimah needed to visit the holy city.

'Ah, God, if you can do this for me, I'll be so thankful,' Iya Risika

said, rubbing her hands together in supplication. One more month and she'd be on an aircraft out of the country. Out to the vast world that God had made. Out to see that city called Mecca. And to pray too. Of course, she would pray as well. For now, she needed to work harder. This begging was bringing in quite a lot. She just needed to put in extra effort. She had survived many things. She could win at this one too. And Baba Risika would not stop her shine. Never. She couldn't care less about him.

\*\*\*

There was no work to go to today so she would sleep in and rest a bit. But before then, she needed to count her money. It had become like a ritual now, counting the money, wishing that it would increase every time that she counted. But as Iya Risika dipped her hands into her bag of clothes, she couldn't find the big green Milo

tin where all the money she had stuffed in it was. She turned over the bed, searched the cupboard and in between the few books that were in the house, yet nothing. It couldn't be baba Risika. Did he know about the money? No, he couldn't have known where it was.

Suddenly, her mind went to Gbenga, her youngest child. He had left the house that morning saying that he would return home with some good news. Where was her phone? Could it be him who had taken her 80,000 Naira? Was it Gbenga? Was it baba Risika? It had to be one of them. 'Where is that phone?', she asked herself again, pushing a chair out of the way. If it was Gbenga, she knew what all her money, all her labour would go into. And even now, she could hear his voice, loud and confident in the lottery shop, gambling one naira note after the other. 'Gbenga', Iya Risika breathed. 'Gbenga has killed me ooo', she screamed.





# Glowing Cinders

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Nkole Mulenga  
Zambia

It was the twilight of 1943, pitch blackness plagued the kingdom of Dourom. It was hard to tell the difference between night and day as the sky was covered with a blanket of smoke. The civil war that had torn through the kingdom had every structure on fire.

Two factions; one led by Princess Uria raged war against her brother, Prince Swelle who had ruled since their father's death in 1936. Under Prince Swelle's reign, the kingdom had been plunged into chaos after the Prince lost the Lunsol in a reckless bet against their rivals; the Reith-Kul. The Lunsol was a relic of immense power, passed

on from ruler to ruler of the Dourom kingdom.

Princess Uria rallied up the top councils of the royal Insaka and led an uprising against the careless Prince. But with the support of the Reith-Kul army, the Princess and her allies faced defeat. But, there was one option left that offered hope...

Three figures presently ran through a descending passageway, heading deep into the heart of the Kompriza, the ceremonial burial pyramid of all the past rulers. They had managed to thwart the guards and were now heading for the Crypt located in the subterranean chamber.

"Why did it have to be the crypt?" Moaned Aram, "why not the Garden of Farhat?"

"Well, then anyone could get to it," replied Shaye.

"Quit complaining Aram!" Snapped Nifrit, "you're free to go back you know."

"Nope, here is better than all that zapping and slicing on the surface," responded Aram. "I never thought I'd live to be a part of the war."

They continued running; Shaye led the way, Nifrit close behind her and Aram trailing them. The surface they ran on changed from large cobblestone to tiny pebbles in mortar. They were getting close.

"Nifrit, your armband is glowing," said Aram, "that can't be good, right?"







Nifrit lifted his arm to his face without reducing in pace. "We'll soon have company," he responded.

They reached the Crypt entrance and Aram went to work on the access panel. Plugging in his armband, he began cracking the access code.

"Hurry Aram, we haven't got much time before they get here," urged Shaye.

"Keep rushing me and I'll keep making errors," responded Aram.

Nifrit was pacing from wall to wall of the passage, letting out sighs that almost sounded like groans.

"That's not helping either, Nifrit!" snapped Aram.

"Just get it done, man," replied Nifrit, "It's not like someone has a blade to your neck...yet"

Nifrit froze mid-pace, face turned to where they came from, he heard boots rapidly stomping the passage floor. The echo of the passage made the sound even louder, accompanied by chants.

Aram finally managed to pry the door open. They rushed in, but when they tried to lock the door behind them, the all too familiar mechanical hum

and click were not to be heard.

"Hacking the lock meant killing the entire system," said Aram, "lock is a dud."

Shaye pulled out her gun, "I'll keep them busy, you two get to work. Fire up the bridge."

"No Shaye, you're supposed to be preparing for the ascension," responded Nifrit, "I'll do the guarding, you and Aram open up that bridge."

Nifrit stood at the entrance, chanting the warrior's prayer under his breath, his triple barrel revolvers at the ready.

Shaye and Aram began keying in the bridge activation sequence on the alter.

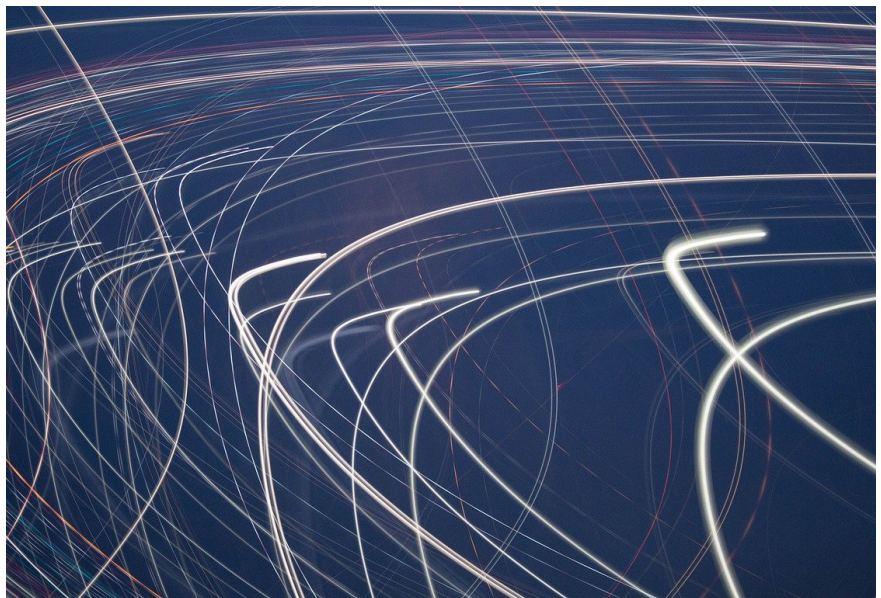
"Here you go Shaye, you'll need this," Aram said, handing Shaye an armband. "I made this one especially for this task."

Shaye looked at the armband then looked at Aram. "I already have one," she said, showing him the one on her wrist.

"Not like this one, you don't," he responded with a smirk on his face. "I tweaked this one to channel electrical currents into the astral realm you're going into. This way, you make your way out in case you encounter any hostility up there. Kind of like an anchor to the world of the living."

Shaye smiled "Your great mind Aram, it has been a great asset to the army," she took the armband and wore it above the standard military issue she had.

Presently, they could now hear shots being fired from the passage; Nifrit was returning fire "They're getting closer, if you do not fire up the bridge, we'll be toast" he shouted.





Aram keyed in the last of the sequence. The alter trembled a little, let out some smoke, and began to expand at the corners. Just above the surface of the alter, a blob of lightening, the size of a baby's head, appeared. Slowly growing in size, it began to change shape into an arch. The arch grew bigger, and soon, Shaye and Aram could see through the arch; figures like hooded people were gliding across the opening.

"I can't hold them anymore; I need more juice in my guns," roared Nifrit.

"Now's the time Shaye," said Aram. "Now remember, you'll be able to see us from the realm you're going to, but there is nothing you can do or say to interfere. You'll only be responsible for what happens in there," he said, pointing into the arch.

"Right" she sighed heavily, "no pressure at all. Need I bring you anything?"

"Besides the map?" He asked, "just my great grand uncle's rum and steak recipe."

With that, she bid him farewell and jumped through the arch. It closed right behind her.

"It just had to be cold," she thought to herself. She looked back, all around her was a blue mist. When she shifted her gaze to the ground, she froze. It was like standing on a floor of glass, she could see Aram pointing his gun at the back of Nifrit's head, who slowly lowered his guns. It all seemed to happen in slow motion. The Reith-Kul soldiers walked in to apprehend Nifrit, shaking Aram's hand and others patting his back. She felt heat flood her face and her fingers clench into fists "Damn you Aram!" she hissed.

"You are not supposed to be here child," a voice said that seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere at the same time. "Why risk your life?"

"I come on behalf of Princess Urilia and the lives of Dourom. I seek the map of Eric," she responded, trying hard to conceal her fear. "Surely you have witnessed the chaos that has befallen your kingdom."

"Yes, we have," the voice responded, "but, that is your Princess and Prince's doing. They will have to battle it out themselves."

"And all you do is watch?" She asked, blood pounding in her ears, "what use are ancestors if they can't steer the kingdom from doom. What is it that they say at your death, 'in life you served, in death, you will serve?' Well here's your chance to serve in death."

Silence hung around her. Then, a glowing globe appeared above her head. It bore intricate patterns and runes she remembered seeing one object; the royal sceptre.

"Come child," said the voice "Let us save the lives of Dourom."





## POETRY

# Wound

Melinda Fakudze  
Eswatini



I have this inner wound  
I don't want to heal  
It has a certain sound,  
It has a repulsive appeal.

I have this inner wound  
In its pain I find pleasure  
I peel it off to keep it alive,  
Its smell gives me life.

I have this inner wound  
It gives me the best company  
I hear all its tranquil thoughts,  
It gives me an absolute testimony.

I have this inner wound  
It gives me sudden happiness  
I also feel extreme sadness,  
I see its pain and feel joy.





# The Beggars

■ Elias Dodo - Nigeria

We've been reduced to nothing  
Bent down by forces entrusted with our survival,  
Broken to helplessness like a bamboo during a hurricane.

We have become slaves under the roofs of our fathers;  
We are beggars, at the table of our mothers' food grace  
Scrambling for crumbs that fall from the plates our mothers have prepared,

We are subdued to tearful pleading for what is ours in birthright  
Having bones and the dredges of the cup dangled before us in mockery,  
Like Pavlov's dogs.

We have become the foreigners in the land of our birth  
And the whip does well to put us in place should we raise our voices  
In supplication for the countenance of our father.

We are the children neglected to the shadows  
Yet, it is in our youth that the future lies  
Whereof then, can tomorrow come if we consume its very essence today?







FROM

THE

RIDGE

Sarah Frost  
South Africa

Along the Durban ridge, late winter days,  
The harbour wharves and quays in postcard gloss,  
The water levelled to silvers and greys  
It is too late to grieve your loss.

The absence of love hurts, like a betrayer's kiss,  
I was the child you failed to raise,  
Walking the lonely hillside streets, I miss  
your rare tenderness. In the evening's haze.

The white yacht at the harbour has set sail.  
Remorseless as a swan, it glides through piers,  
Parsing cryptic waves that flail against  
dolosses furred with sea-green moss.





# The Last And The Least

**Philimon Nchimunya**  
**Zambia**



EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

The Last And The Least  
Born in the danger zone  
The moment you blink you're gone  
They learn to live on the edge  
From a very tender age  
On life's compassionate list  
They rank as the last and the least

They are their own fathers and mothers  
They do not wait to be fed like others  
Day and night they wrestle  
Survival depends on their hustle  
Yet, from what they earn  
They cannot gain

What they eat is never sufficient  
Drugs are what makes them efficient  
Without this fuel  
They don't work too well  
Strength resides in their addiction  
Food is just an addition

About them, everyone knows  
Who cares? No one knows  
They have seen themselves through the impossible  
Someone would've seen them if they were not invisible  
You and I are just lucky and not clever  
That's why we owe them a favour.

EDITOR'S  
CHOICE

# Flowers

Mayeso Grace Mazengera  
Malawi

He was not a gardener  
He broke stems, plucked petals, devoured her whole  
So, she bloomed like a belladonna as he swallowed  
She was the wreath they hung on his unmarked grave.

He was no poet  
Broken promises and knives for letters, he tore her apart  
She became the sword that buried herself in his heart  
His body was too mangled for polite viewing.

She was water, she was air,  
Formless and bending into the shapes he created  
Like all good women she birthed what was given.  
She became chaos and darkness,  
She was the noose we found around his broken neck.







# Thanksgiving



**Oghenetega Jewo**  
**Nigeria**

It's another day of festivities-  
Or whatever you call a gathering of crows around a carcass.  
A chicken glazed in scarlet sauce lies unmoving on a golden platter.

But it's not the only dead thing here today,  
The difference is, the others still accommodate oxygen in nostrils.

Uncle smiles at my younger sister, and her face morphs into an artwork  
Of unrefined agony, a contorted sculpture of poorly masked shame.  
I have a good idea of the unspeakable things running through her teenage mind.

Memories of muffled screams, and unzipped trousers in darkened rooms;  
Family has an evil twin called incest, who dwells in alcoves of lust.

He sleeps beneath buried piles of silenced anguish and pain,  
And he rears his ugly head, on holidays when uncle returns home.

Mama smiles at father's face, and he stares back with no expression-  
for he dwells behind bars of tempered glass, in a frozen portrait.

A feeble attempt by the bereaved to remember a pillar of strength;  
Sometimes I wonder if things would change, if only he were still with us.







# A Beautiful Flow

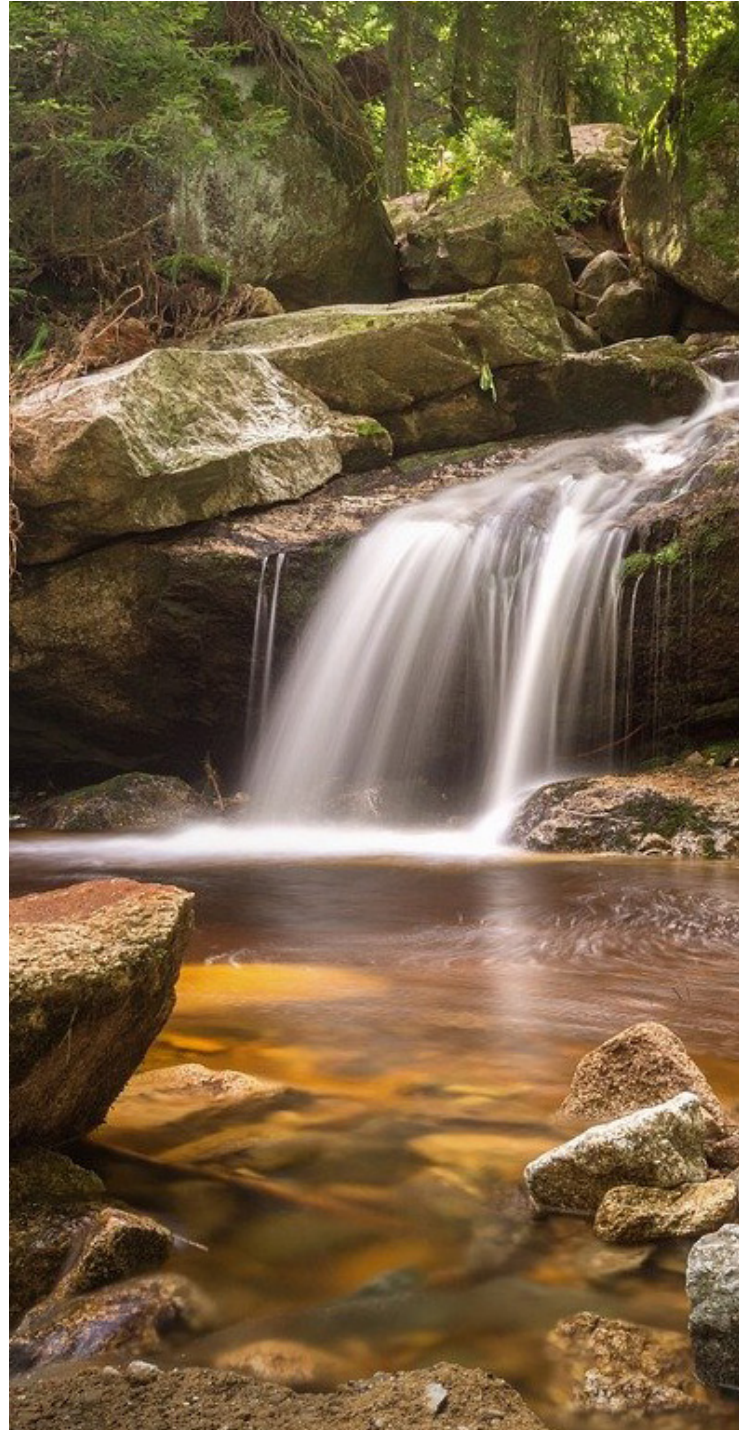
Mirriam Kyalo  
Kenya

A river that flows clean and wide  
Is a river that is bold enough  
It feels like a song when it roars  
With calmness it talks about freedom;

It is a river that knows its direction  
It never quarrels with its cause  
It just cuts through clearly  
It gives life and eternity,

It offers shelter and protection  
It quenches thirst  
It replenishes  
It is therapeutic,

It gives birth to more  
It causes heavy falls and beautiful sceneries  
It's the river of Life  
That is of no use to itself  
But to the things around  
Things that are sometimes ungrateful.





# Snippet Of Pain

Festus Boama  
Ghana

I was blind at the sight of light  
At a wink, pleasure won over integrity and sanity  
It breaks me every time; Memories of that dark night  
Just then, I felt these chilled winds  
I couldn't find my voice as much as I tried  
Slowly, it faded away until it sunk.

It wasn't money he wanted when he was in 'need'  
He pulled the dagger; Just then, I felt naked  
My life tore apart when those clothes were ripped to pieces  
And he got his token while I lay broken.

"Are you okay?" If I could speak those words so he takes what was left; My life.  
What is there after here when my fate would be faulted  
It has always been my mistake; for what I wear, and how I walk  
How can I blame you when he held my mouth in the act so I don't have a voice in  
the council?  
That night he walked away and I crawled home in pain petrifying my freedom.

News of me allowed cash out for the days it made the headlines.

Walls are not enough to protect us when laws could not  
Stop justifying rape in any form it may take  
We don't want to "get over it"  
End it now!



# Label of a Murky Past

■ Paul Abok - Kenya

You know, some folks were once convicts;  
Convicts of circumstances they acceded to  
They walk with a murky history of a felon,  
A shameful label of a haunting downfall.

They've been to the opposite side of the wall;  
The blue, daunting, desolate side of the wall  
Where you live, not by bread but by thoughts;  
Thoughts of a better future in the present.

They've fought to be heard, loved and valued,  
Fought for things that come freely to others.  
They walk with a weighty burden of a loader  
hoping you'd look past their glaring mistakes.

When they meet possible companions of love,  
They fear the moment you'll ask for a résumé;  
a résumé, that tells a past they aren't proud of,  
They cringe, eager you won't judge, but you do.

They often kneel to pick up pieces of themselves  
broken and scattered in their attempt to please,  
Regardless, they rise, dust up and keep walking;  
walking, towards a dream and a world before them.





# Vultures in Doves

Sheriff Dada,  
Nigeria

Vultures in doves

Some, in Tarshish groves were hashed  
Looking for means to make their purses swell  
Leaving the common people in pains, with the men in guns  
As they daily plead with them to let the men with pens in  
To lead them with the Decalogue.

The men with pens came into the town in Lincoln's attires  
As soon as the gunmen agreed to rest in peace  
"It is all about the people"

In Lincoln's voice they had told the people  
Promising to make the city look like a woodland where only doves dwell  
Where cassowary and vultures will never be allowed to dwell  
Never did the people know they were chameleons in doves

The people casted their dices and the men in pen were let in  
Soon before noon doves became chameleons  
"Some doves are more equal than others"

Like a voice in Orwell's satire became their abstract slogan  
Never did the people know they were vultures  
Devouring the people's meat became their acts  
Letting sorrow, tears, and blood rain in the town  
Never to mind if the town and her people lie in ruins.





# Life

## ■ Katana Grace Tendo- Uganda

Life's a revolution  
From misery  
To a rebirth  
Of great power.

From rejuvenation  
Via reconciliation  
Through to transition,  
Overcome fear.

And of all promises,  
Wander from lust  
Wade to freedom...  
To victory.

And if self-progress  
Is a solitude  
Life fulfillment  
From our roots,

Then our identity  
After death  
In the afterlife  
Is not fate

But a sacrifice  
Catapulted by a memory  
Of love  
And not failure.





# The Pages I Flipped

Olayinka Mogboyin  
Nigeria

I flipped over this book  
Where tensions create lines  
And birth their offspring.

These pages have deaths, terrors  
And readers gulp grievances  
Like morning coffee.

Those faces that giggled  
Confessed of stale joy,  
Shredded harmony and the melody  
Are sung with raining bulbs.

From this bread, I ate fluffy confusion,  
Drums were beaten  
But no one's to dance  
With wriggling legs, teary eyes.

In this book,  
Only grieving hands  
Are treasured on empty nights,  
With madmen noises and  
Sorrowing pens to make a jotting,  
Of this dusty boulevard.

The mad in faith,  
Are to clap and lose  
Their vocals, till their  
Bodies become barren of moisture.







# Grass

Yaone Gaerupe  
Botswana



Dry and ugly,  
Shrinky...  
A tumble thin stalk  
Easily blown.  
Ashen and producing  
Flash when burnt,  
Dingy and frail.

Poverty adorns me;  
Wind greedily pushes me  
To a place of no destiny  
Grisly and futile  
So, all the night tide  
I keep on shaking  
For I have no nutrient to live by,  
Flirting and fragile as a feather  
Wishing I was a leather.





Mimi's Column

# A HISTORY OF AFRICAN LITERATURE

Mimi Machakaire - Zimbabwe



## Introduction to African literature

I am an African, as are most of my friends and colleagues considering we live in the continent of Africa. Some of those friends are writers including myself. So we can't help but wonder

what it means to be a writer in Africa and where our art originated from.

To start with, what does it mean to be human? What are the common experiences of all people? These may be general questions, so let's be more specific: what does it mean to be European? Any

answer to this question would have to ignore specifics for each country. A similar problem arises when trying to define African literature.

According to facts, there are 54 nations which make up Africa. This means that, each of these nations have their own history, culture, ethnic



groups, and traditions. That being said, there are some commonalities shared by literature which comes from the continent as a whole.

However, defining African literature can be complicated. There are some authors who believe African literature can only be composed in African languages. Others believe African literature can be composed in any language so long as it is composed by authors from Africa.

Therefore, in this context, we'll narrow our focus to the broader history and characteristics of African literature in general.

## History

African literature has origins dating back thousands of years to ancient Egypt where hieroglyphs or writing which uses pictures to represent words were discovered.

However, some of these ancient Egyptian beginnings led to Arabic poetry, which spread during the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century C.E. and through western Africa in the ninth century C.E. These African and Arabic cultures continued to blend with the European culture and literature to form a unique literary form.

Nevertheless, Africa experienced several hardships in its long history which left an impact on the themes of its literature. One hardship in particular, which led to many others, is colonization.

Colonization happens when people leave their land or country and settle in another land, often one which is already inhabited. In this case, the problem with colonization is when the incoming people exploit the indigenous people and the resources of the inhabited land.

In the end, colonization further led to slave trade, as some people say. Millions of African people were enslaved and brought to western countries around the world from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. This spreading of African people, largely against their will, is called the African diaspora. This is when sub-Saharan Africa developed a written literature during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After which, it was noted that this development came as a result of missionaries coming to the area.

Furthermore, when the missionaries came to Africa it was with the intention to build churches and language schools in order to translate religious texts. As

a result, this led to Africans writing in both European and indigenous languages, almost as close to what we know today.

All the same, African literature's history is as long as it is rich. One of the most popular works was published in 1950 titled, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. In the same era we also have, one of HC Bosman's best works, *Cold Stone Jug* (1949), this is a semi-fictionalized account of his time in jail, which was published. The book *Zambia Shall Be Free* is another from a 1962 political autobiography by Zambia's first president Kenneth Kaunda. He is often referred to as the "father of African literature", although he was also known to vigorously reject the characterization. There were others who have impacted the lives of writers everywhere but we shall only list a few.

## What are the characteristics of African literature?

According to information gathered, it is also documented that African literature is as diverse as the continent itself, but several characteristics and themes prevail throughout much of the written works emerging from Africa. This for example, is often a great emphasis on the history, culture and customs of a



group of people when telling their stories.

On the other hand, African literature is in large parts to be educational as well as entertaining. Many have noted that morals and lessons are typically woven into well-crafted and engaging stories from Africa. This means that there is also great pride in sharing stories about our rich history and culture, even if the stories aren't always pleasant and uplifting. There is a certain pride that is buried within the essence of African literature and the only way to bring this to the fore is to share the stories

### What Are the Common Themes in African Literature?

African literature can be divided into three distinct categories: precolonial, colonial and postcolonial. For starters, precolonial literature is more of aesthetic in nature that takes the form of oral narratives accompanied by music, art, drawings and centered on the trickster figure. Colonial literature examines the horrors of slavery and the slave trade, revolting against colonialism and drawing inspiration from Africa's past while Postcolonial literature focuses on the clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, expressing hope for Africa's future.

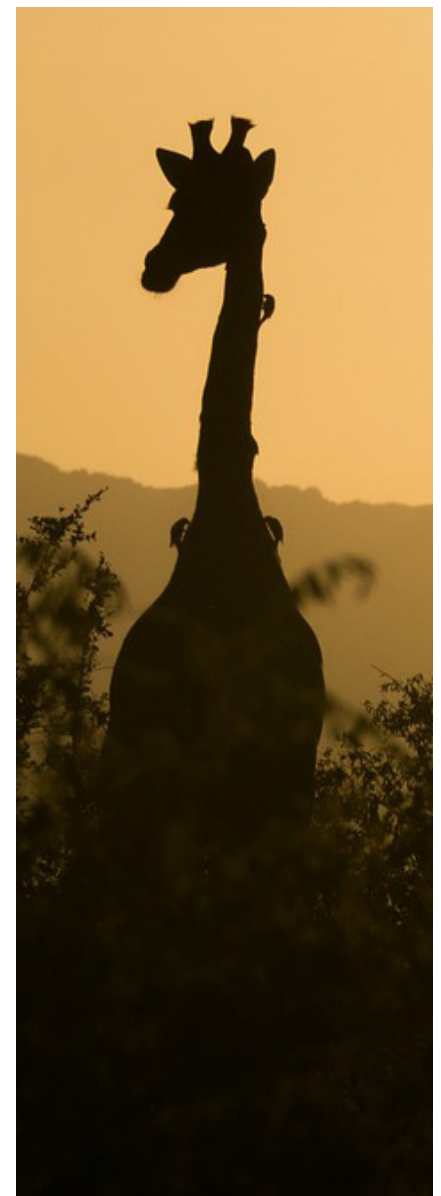
However, within these categories, is a subset of female African writers who focus on the ordeals that women face in a patriarchal and colonialist country. Their work often contains sub-themes of women finding strength in each other's company when abandoned or dismissed by their husbands and fathers, who are, in turn, subjugated by the English (British Native). The narratives depict the struggles of women trying to hold together their families and preserve their cultures, but they often find themselves overruled by men.

Some information further states that as more, African literature started to develop and get published in European languages, some scholars have criticized its place in the African academic community. At times, others see this contradiction as a symbol of the eternal conflict between African and Western identities. Yet, some writers further argue that African literature cannot return to what it once was and that it is important to acknowledge and understand how the continent has been changed by a foreign presence.

### Conclusion

As Africans we can safely say that our stories should be told in our own way and not how others may

try to make the world believe we are. Storytelling in itself is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's (or reader's) imagination. Therefore, I believe that, if we can only begin to imagine what type of Africa we would like to achieve possibly through our art of storytelling, an Africa that is not divided but rather united as a whole, then maybe we might just get there in the end.







# WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW

DECEMBER 2021 ISSUE

## Selected Reviews



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa



### **The Allure of Promises**

Blessing Amatemeso  
Nigeria

### **Dreams that Fly**

Laurent Bwesigye  
Uganda

# Promises



[www.writersspace.net](http://www.writersspace.net)



## ■ Article

# THE DEVIL IN A SAVIOR'S GARMENT

Nwankwo Praise, Nigeria

Reviewed by:  
Joseph Oduro, Ghana

The African Political ecosystem is represented as a stock market with similar commodities traded by different brands. You are likely to see a surge in profits and trade the most stocks just by selling a bouquet of tomfoolery promises. “The Devil in a Savior’s Garment” opines the contemporary political atmosphere on the continent.

The article represents the sequels of an electioneering season. The time of the year where the hungry and economically deprived become the most valued resource to the success of the politician’s ambition. In efforts to erase memories of hardship they have endured during the years of their rule, they clad themselves in deceit while advertising cajoling promises to win them another term of office. The opposition, who has no intention of creating better opportunities and raising the standards of living, ends up capitalizing on the failures of the previous government whereas when given the power will make no effort in doing otherwise.



Eke is an African community like many others who have to endure unbearable and harsh conditions as a reminder of voting for flattering political manifestos. A grave mistake that has cost them their lives and the future of their children. In the advent of such crises, these leaders remain scarce and unreachable. Aspirants who once presented themselves to the doorsteps of their countrymen to solicit for their votes now set barricades and fences between themselves and their countrymen.

“The Devil in a Savior’s Garment” takes on the theme of promises by reflecting the core parts of our contemporary lives that remain desolate as people within power fail to honour their words. The devil does not always come scantily dressed but in a saviour’s garment.



## ■ Short Story

# DAYDREAMER

Kwasi Adi-Dako, Uganda

Reviewed by:  
Halieo Motanyane,  
Lesotho

A promise is a plan said to be performed no matter what. This plan can either be to oneself or for another person, It can either be a small or a big plan. But its importance lies mainly in its achievement.

Halim gets tired of sleeping in the Daara and his fear for Serigne Moussa grows by seconds. Although living in the streets, he

is not as free as anybody could think. And so he seeks his freedom. The achievement of his promise brings him happiness and contentment.

The story is centred on the streets of Dakar where a young boy, Halim, has to survive each day on the streets. The life of what would be viewed as a low boy but Kwasi shows us that even promises are made and kept between futureless folks. From the title of the story, Halim's dream is one that even a normal boy can have. And despite all the challenges, he presses hard to achieve the dream that he silently promised himself.

The narration shows us determination and thirst for achievement. Halim's fear for Serigne Moussa and his admiration for the hawks give him a dream to be free. And his freedom can only be achieved from the top of the big building. When we desire something, we unconsciously promise ourselves to get it, and that will result in working hard and trying by all the means to fight the challenges we encounter. It may not be visible, but it is something that happens regularly. Kwasi's story gets us to pause a bit in our daily life and see those little things we always work for because we love them.







## ■ Children's Literature

# THE GOLDEN RULE

Patricia E Peace, Uganda

Reviewed by:  
Tamunomieibi Enoch,  
Nigeria

Patricia E Peace writes most of her children's literature like "short story and poetry", all at the same time. We can describe her children's literature as expository poems.

The Golden Rule is not an exception to Patricia's style of writing Children's Literature. The poem is made up of two stanzas, containing 8 lines each. It has a repetition of lines which is to aid children's understanding of the poem better and allow them to commit it to memory.

In this poem, she admonishes children that if they want to live life to the fullest, there is but one thing to do to keep their friends close and to earn the respect of others and it is 'Do as you say you will do, stick to the truth always'.

In the second stanza, she reiterates that to make parents happy and earn their trust, children should do as they say they will.

The poem teaches children how to keep promises made by them. If they learn to



keep promises, they will earn respect, keep friends close and make parents happy.

Children can also convert it to a nursery rhyme and sing along. The diction of the poem is simple and easy for children to understand.

Great work, Patricia E Peace.



## ■ Poetry

# I PROMISE

Saniamu Ngeywa, Kenya

Reviewed by:  
Nnane Ntube, Cameroon

Someone once said; 'don't make a promise you cannot keep and don't say something unless you mean it.'

This statement holds true in Saniamu Ngeywa's 'I Promise'. In Saniamu Ngeywa's one stanza poem, s/he opines that the two words 'I Promise' is not fancy driven but a 'covenant', a mysterious covenant. Well, you may agree with me that when something is mysterious it comes with a shallow understanding or a complete blankness. In this case, looking at the word 'covenant', the word 'eerie' (mysterious) can be associated with sacredness. That is, the act of promising is a sacred vow one makes whose sanctity is got from that of 'word'.

Saniamu summarises the process of taking a vow in two words, 'I Promise'. The 'I' does not only stand for a sign of personal commitment but moral conviction and obligation. 'I' envelopes the mind, the self (body) and the will. These three powerful elements embodied in a single word 'I' heighten the strength of a promise. The words 'vow', 'oath' equally highlight the divine nature of 'promise'. S/he further explores the different actions taken during the process. The apt description s/he gives takes us, the readers, back to our childhood memories where parts of the body: palms, arms, fingertips, play key roles in the signing of this 'covenant'. This only goes to amplify the importance of the body (self) in the act of promising. The body itself being sacred. Thus, propounding that the sacred nature of the words 'I Promise' intertwined

with the sacredness of the body is deeper and serious than one could think.

Failing to keep one's promise is suicidal. Saniamu projects this idea of suicide in the following lines:

'That sin that's associated with oaths and daggers,  
Undoing their sharpening.'

The alignment of the words 'oaths', 'daggers', 'undoing', and 'sharpening' comes with a sharp sense of deceit and the frustration that follows. This frustration may birth traumatic experiences and suicidal tendencies especially in the word 'sharpening'.

In an attempt to avoid such situations s/he says,

'Better to have put a knife in my heart  
and twist it a bit till it tore me apart  
and set me ablaze from the word on its handle  
than to make me a vow which you knew you  
couldn't handle from  
the start.'

From the above, it is clear that words possess power: the power to heal or to kill. But it is up to us to know how to handle it (to use it). John 1:1 says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' This shows how deeply rooted and divine one's word is. Taking it for fancy or granted is sinning. Word is not just wind of nothingness but it is a holy garment that clothes the body and renders it spiritual. This explains the strangeness of words. Words come with respect, devotion and commitment. From Saniamu Ngeywa's 'I Promise', one is left with the following message: 'When you make a commitment, you build hope. When you keep it, you build trust.'

'I Promise' is a very powerful poem that explores the ordinary and the extraordinary, the spiritual and the less spiritual, in very simple and familiar diction.





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**THEME: DREAMS OF TOMORROW**  
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