



WSA
Writers Space Africa
M a g a z i n e

September 2022 Edition - Issue 69

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Adétutù Adedoyin
Winner of the 2021 African Writers
Award in Creative Nonfiction

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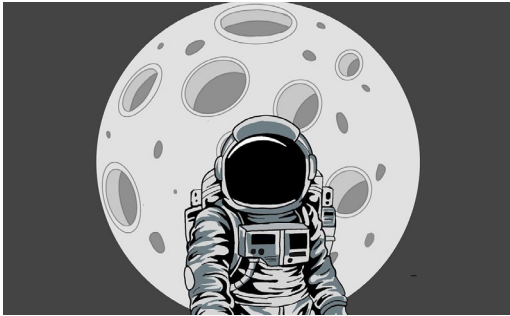
THEME:
HUNGER

We are accepting submissions from 20th August until 15th September, 2022 in the following genres for the November 2022 edition of the WSA Magazine:

- ✓ *Children's Literature*
- ✓ *Creative Nonfiction*
- ✓ *Flash Fiction*
- ✓ *Poetry*
- ✓ *Short Stories*

To submit, visit www.writersspace.net

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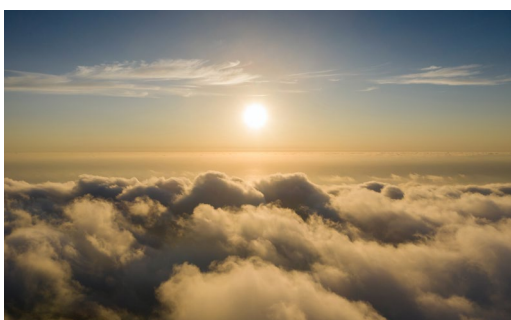
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From the Founder's Desk

Anthony Onugba (PenBoss)

The theme of this month's edition is home. It is significant because we all have somewhere that we call home. It does not matter its size or location but what matters is that it brings us peace. When we are no longer at peace in our homes, we look for a way out; to go somewhere that will be home to us. But home is not just a place. Home is where the heart is. It can be with another individual, friends, colleagues, family, and lots more. Peace is what makes it home for

us.

It is safe to say that home is a feeling. It can alter our moods or inspire us to greater conquests. Home is where we can begin our stories or even extend a hand of friendship. Home is where we are not judged or condemned but loved and appreciated. It is where we mature in character and get inspired to face the new day. It is where we go to when we are dealt with fate's disappointments or when we are blessed by

good fortune. Home is everything to us and this is why we must nurture our home always.

The collection in this month's edition explore home from diverse perspectives. From the children's literature all the way to short stories, we read remarkable prose and poetry about what home means. So, I would ask you to enjoy this September edition of the WSA magazine... I would ask you to enjoy home.





From the Chief Editor

Comfort Nyati, SDB
Zimbabwe

Dear Reader,

One fun fact about September is that it is the ninth month that contains nine letters. The longest among other months. It is a pretty good coincidence to crown this unique month with the most versatile theme that defines our citizenship in the world. The ancient fathers taught that a home is where your heart is. Does this answer the question of being homeless as being heartless?

This entails that the attributes of an ideal home are not to be observed as foreign but native to us because it should not be identified as where people of common interests or family ties dine together but, in as much as one is sheltered by

the feeling of belongingness where his feet stands, he can still be a representation of a home away from home.

On the contrary, one of the tragedies which present-day life suffers is not being homeless, but rather letting the very essence of homelessness die in us. This has to some extent (especially in Africa) contributed to the day-to-day atrocities because we no longer treasure the value of a home within our confinements. Traditionally, a home in Africa is not defined by physical boundaries or demarcations from house to house, but rather by the interconnectedness of persons in the society. It is the manner

in which one welcomes the other. Hence, a hospitable heart is the ambience of a good home.

I believe this 69th edition will amplify our stereotypes towards 'home'. Therefore, I invite you dear reader to approach this magazine with a sober mind as we celebrate the African literary prowess incarnated in the heart of every word. Our seasoned authors will remind us that Africa's ability in being a 'home' is not only limited to human geography and cultural landscapes or even contemporary cultures. It is known as being home to diversity with its myriad cultural groups and practices.

Remember, Twaweza!!!



Children's Literature

Oh, My Home

Lovelyn Ugwuezema, Nigeria



Oh! My home

When shall I see my home?

When shall I see my native land?

I will never forget my home!

I could remember when we, the leaders of tomorrow, in our dusty rubber sandals disturbed the earth with our foot march as we sang at the top of our voices – birds perched on the trees lining the sides of our assembly ground to watch us. We believed in the soil we marched on and our voices were like thunder because we were enthusiastic. Even in our wretchedness of mud

buildings and thatched roofs, with our clay pots' content giving us the absolute refreshment we needed after getting roasted by the sun, even with the rushing excitement to peep through the door of papa Onyi to watch TV because we had none at home, we would never exchange those for any luxury. We loved home. Home was where our hearts lived. Our hearts were filled with hopes; hopes that we were the future; hopes that we would sustain our culture.

I remember one day when Onyi's uncle who lived in the city came to take him along



with him. Onyi ran out of the house to the bush. He didn't want to leave behind all that he was, he didn't want to leave all the memories shared, and he didn't want to leave home. He was only ten, the big brother to us children in the compound. His father had to beg him and made different promises to him before he finally agreed.

"Will I come back soon?" He asked.

His father affirmed, but the 'soon' was eight years later.

We all cried when he left. We were each other's keepers in the hood.

We didn't like formal education. We didn't like that we had to wake early, wash our faces and legs, and walk the long distance to school. We didn't like that we have to sit quietly in class and listen to a teacher mixing words and letters we don't know. We didn't like that Uncle Haruna the maths teacher always wore that aggressive look that seemed like someone was living his life. He always held a cane longer than any of us. Before the end of each maths class, most pupils would be crying from uncle Haruna's cane's touch. He made us hate maths and I remember hating maths even as I grew.

We preferred to sit around Uncle Nna (our paternal uncle) after dinner while he told stories of the wise tortoise, the animal kingdom, and spiritual beings. He told us stories of cultures, traditions, superheroes,

human existence, and we sang along. Afterwards, we went to bed with smiles and moral lessons. We didn't care that we had to sit on the ground for our mother to comb our kinky hair. We didn't care that we played in the rain or that at twelve, we still played with sand. After each day's *waka*, we all found our way home. Home gave us peace, made us carefree, and gave us happiness, freedom, and protection while we worried not.

As we grew up, one by one, we began leaving home for different adventures. We had a taste of something different, something that didn't have the sourness of our native udara. It was an apple, and we loved it. We preferred it. Like the forbidden fruit, our eyes opened. Our kinky hair didn't fit anymore. Our homes became local, outdated, and hard upon our skin. I remember the last time I met with Simi after years of being away, she said, "Amarachi, I'm tired of this place. It is just boring. If I have a chance to leave, I don't want to return."

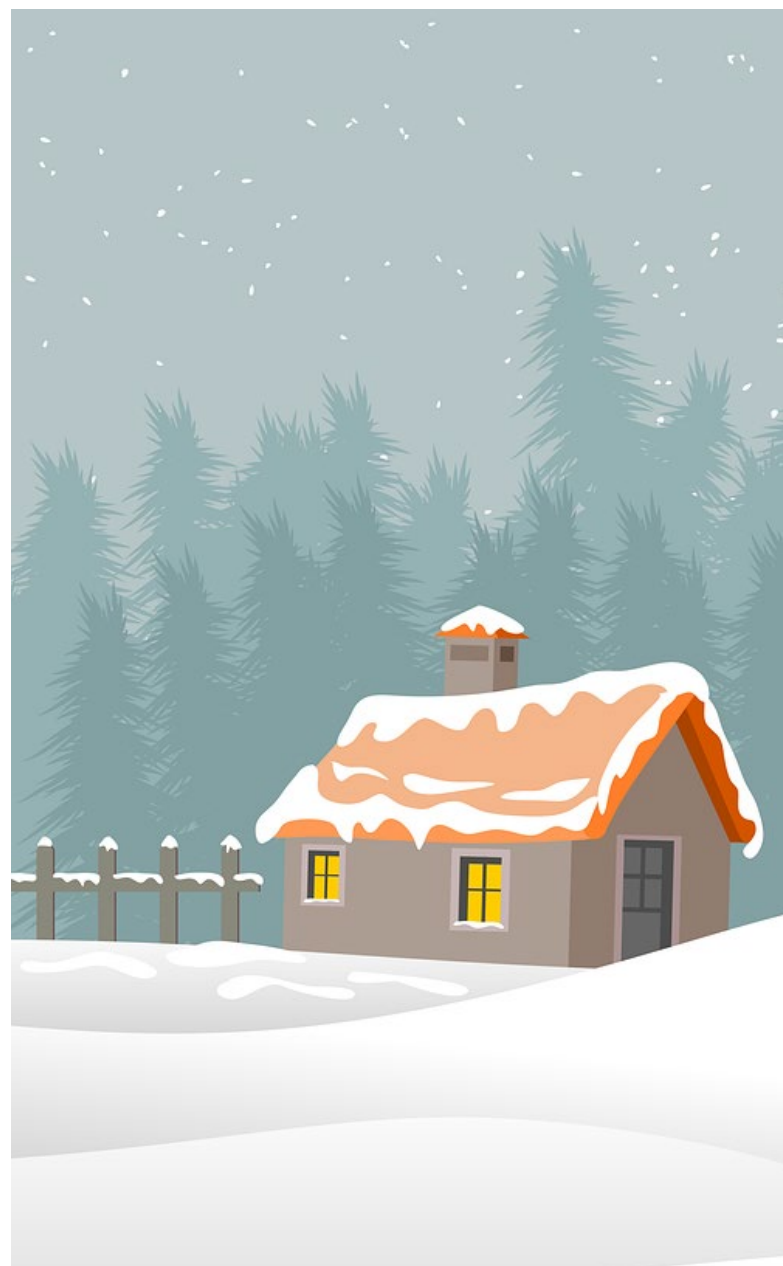
Of course, we are chasing after shadows that we might never catch up with. No matter how hard we try, we left a part of ourselves somewhere at that place we once called home. This is to say, our hearts only know peace and is at home when we think of home or when we smell the earth there. This is to say, just like a soldier on a battlefield, we long to go home someday.



Home

Hafsah Seedat, Tanzania

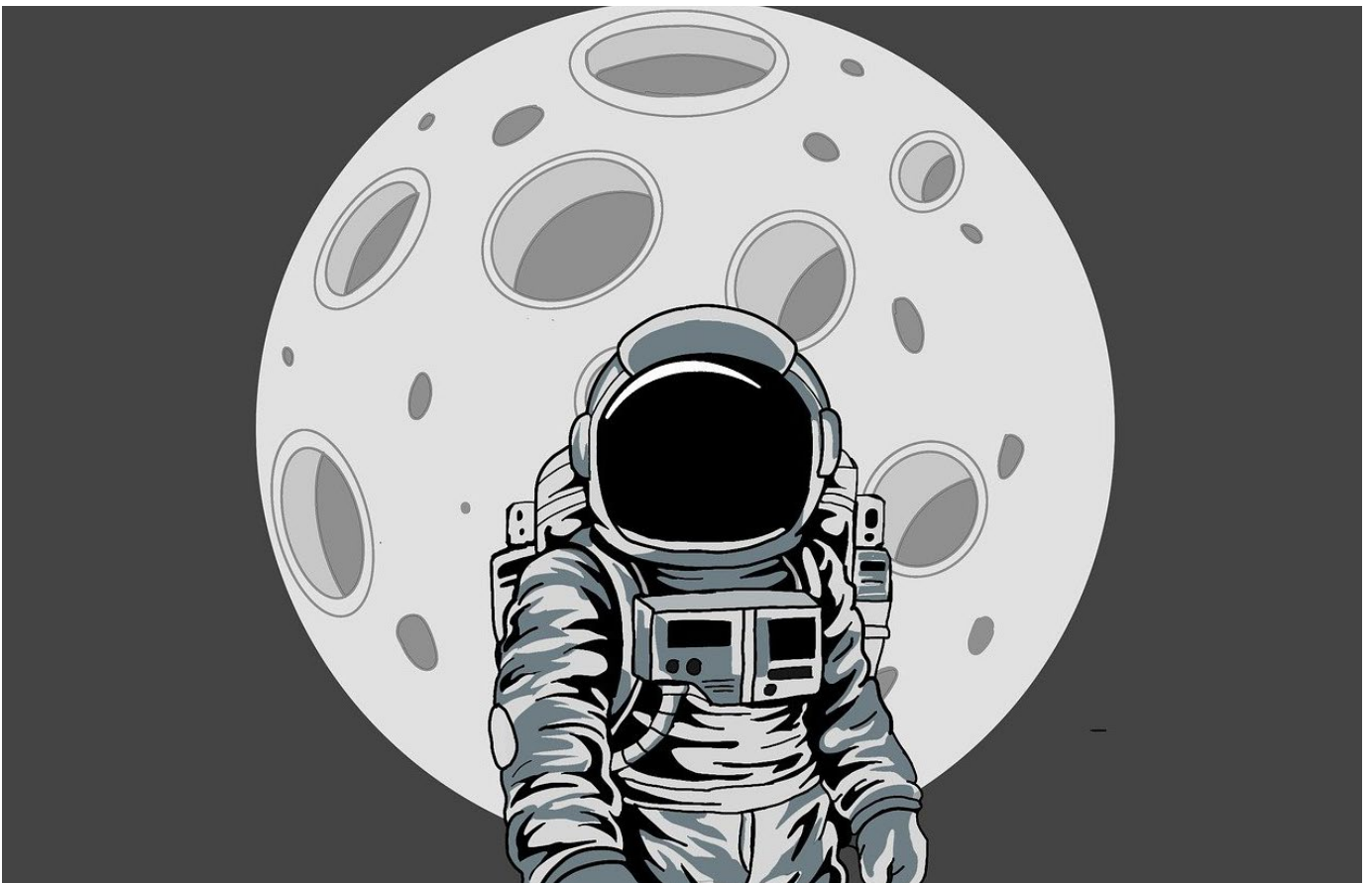
People say home is where you live
But....
I say it's where you feel safe
Home is known as your personal throne
Or a precious stone you own
You can go home with a groan
Or a bad tone
It doesn't matter
Because home
Is where you belong.





Our Dying Home

Moses Tololo, Zambia



“Our home is dying,” the teacher said to the class. Everyone in class was listening as the teacher was talking.

“Our Earthly home is dying,” the teacher continued.

“What do you mean, teacher? Asked Tebuho.

“I mean, every day the earth is being destroyed,” he said.

“How?” Tebuho asked again.

“Global warming is a sign that our earthly home is being destroyed.”

“What is global warming, teacher?”



“It is a situation where the earth is becoming warmer every day,” the teacher explained.

“Isn’t that good?” Asked Sepo, “We will no longer feel cold in the cold season.”

“No, on the contrary, it is a problem,” the teacher said.

“How is that a problem, teacher?” Tebuho asked again.

“When the earth becomes warmer, all the water in the North and South Pole will melt and the whole Earth will be flooded,” he explained as he showed them the map of the world.

“Aahhhhh!” Exclaimed the class.

“We will have floods in some areas and severe drought in some,” the teacher said, “we will have wild fires.”

“Our home is dying,” Tebuho said.

“Yes, our assignment for tomorrow is to find out what we can do to save our home,” said the teacher.

When school was over, Tebuho walked with her friends home. They were discussing planet Earth. They were talking about what they could do.

“What should we do to save planet Earth?” Tebuho asked her friends.

“The best way is to leave planet earth,” Sepo answered.

“And where should we go?” Asked Mutinta.

“Mars,” Sepo answered, “it’s a beautiful planet.”

The girls laughed about it as they went to their various homes. When Tebuho got home, she helped her mother to sweep the kitchen and to prepare supper. When they had eaten supper, she felt very tired so she went straight to bed. She was still thinking of what should be done for planet earth. She thought about going to Mars. In no time, she was fast asleep.

In her dream, Tebuho was an astronaut preparing to go and find a new home. She was going to find a new home away from home. She was part of the crew who were on a mission to Mars. She was excited that she would get to see the beautiful planet. She put on her space suit and got into the space ship. She would be the first Zambian female to be in space.

They were leaving planet Earth from the Mongu Space Centre. The three of them were in the space ship when the countdown started.

“In three, two, one, blast off!” Announced the controller as the space ship went up. Tebuho was excited as they went up into space. After some minutes, they were above the Earth. They were able to float in space. She was very happy.

“Are we almost there?” She asked the other astronauts.

“Ha, ha!” Laughed one astronaut, “it will



take us two years to get there.”

“Two years?” Asked Tebuho in shock.

After two years, they got to Mars. It was very far from planet Earth. Tebuho was not excited any more. She did not like Mars. The planet was a desert with no sign of life. There were no trees and no rivers.

“Can this be our home? Asked one of the astronauts.

“No, our home is better,” Tebuho responded, “they don’t even have oxygen here.”

“Our home is dying,” the astronaut stated, “we have to shift everyone from Earth to this place.”

“No way,” Tebuho said, “we only have one home, Earth.”

“It’s dying,” he said.

“We will save it,” she responded.

When she said those words, Tebuho heard her mother’s voice. She was awake. It was time to go to school. She was happy that she was not in Mars. At school she presented on how Earth could be saved before the class.

“We need to stop cutting down trees and we need to stop polluting the environment,” she said.

“Our home is dying but we can save it,” she continued.

“We need to stop burning things and we need to make things that don’t pollute our Earth.”

She displayed a large chart which read,

“Earth our dying Home! We can save Earth.”





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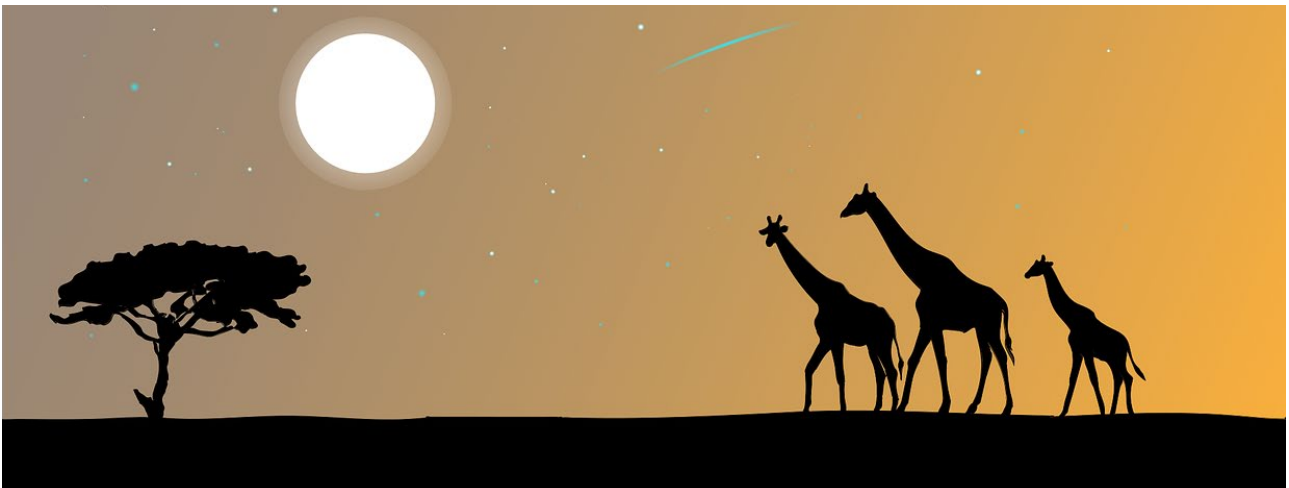
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Creative Non-Fiction

Africa is Home

by
Sinoxolo Odidi Mahlatshana
(South Africa)

Africa is home to social activists, feminists, artists; sculptors, writers, and actors. It is home to Mama Esther Mahlangu; the first woman and first African to take part in the BMW Arts collection.



The universal narrative about Africa is the prevalence of poverty, conflict, systemic violence, dwindling economies and corruption. Perhaps many other parts of the world find Africa synonymous with backwardness and underdevelopment, a permanent antiquated continent.

While poverty is more endemic in Africa, the continent remains a home that many constantly return to. Africa's endowment

with natural resources helps one to provide context when comprehending the continent's socioeconomic background.

If one attempts to reinterpret the famous adage, "Life began in Africa", it makes sense to attribute this to the continent's ability of being home to multiple resources, people, cultures, and customs. To expand this adage; Africa remains a continent that is home to fifty-four countries. As one scholar,



Ian Tattersal (2009) asserts, the continent “is in a profound sense the fount of human evolution”. And this is evident in how it remains home to human origins; being the only continent with fossil evidence of human remains displayed in different phases of their development. It, therefore, makes sense why it would be the perfect home for significant historic cultural landscapes such as the ‘Cradle of Humankind’.

However, Africa’s ability in being a ‘home’ is not only limited to human geography and cultural landscapes or even contemporary cultures. It is known for being home to diversity with its myriad cultural groups and practices, traditional customs, and varying belief systems, with one of its countries, South Africa, having been dubbed “the rainbow nation” by the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, which would also have been fitting for the entire continent.

It is also home to vast resources, with the Northern Cape in South Africa being enriched with some of the richest kimberlite dykes in the world, which are a significant source of primary diamonds. Furthermore, it is home to the largest diamond mine the world has ever seen; the ‘Big Hole’, which has produced a portion of the world’s largest diamonds with three tons of them having been excavated from it during the diamond rush (Sardone, 2019).

The adage, “dig a hole in Africa’s soil and you’ll bump into diamonds or gold”, is an

indication of the wealth of resources that the continent is home to. It is revealed in the palpable ability of the Democratic Republic of Congo to sheath the earth’s second-largest rainforest; the Congo Basin, which is significant for regulating Climate Change (White et al, 2019). It is evidenced in Guinea being home to the world’s largest bauxite reserve. Seven years ago, it is reflected in the United Nations’ Commission for Africa data whose statistics revealed that the continent contains over fifty per cent of the world’s platinum and over seventy per cent of its diamonds (Igbhonor, 2014).

Despite the aforementioned, Africa is also home to multiple countries that exist on the other end of the wealth spectrum, with nine out of ten of the world’s poorest countries coming from the continent. Ironically, the factors which have contributed to such pauperism are other negative and nefarious elements that the continent is unfortunately home to, and perhaps this explains the phenomenon known as the “curse of Africa”. This phenomenon seeks to illustrate the oxymoronic nature of the African continent; the indisputable richness in natural resources coexisting with stark poverty, exacerbated by structural factors such as human rights injustices, lack of access to quality healthcare and education system, lack of proper infrastructure, poor economic management, and the embezzlement of state resources by state officials.



Thus, while Africa is home to wealth, it is also home to poverty; It is home to social, economic, and unending political issues coupled with authoritarianism. As Emeka Duruigbo (2005) asserts, “Africa presents an unnerving paradox of poverty amid plenty. It is home to political leaders who constantly enrich themselves by embezzling state funds while leaving those who voted them into power impoverished. It is home to extreme corruption that has been so institutionalised that, when he wrote on ‘African leaders & Corruption’, Kalil Timamy (2005) said “embezzlement has become the strategic sense of governance.”

But Africa is also home to potential. It is home to a fast-growing youth population in the whole world. Having a relatively young population as the backbone of Africa is an indication of the potential that

the continent has. It signals not only an abundance in the supply of labour which is a primary production, but of transformative ideas and policy implementations that will shape a renewed continent.

Africa is home to social activists, feminists, artists; sculptors, writers, and actors. It is home to Mama Esther Mahlangu; the first woman and first African to take part in the BMW Arts collection 31 years ago. It is home to brilliant and compelling writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tsitsi Dangarembga. It is home to Chinua Achebe; a gentle giant of African literature, whose work remains widely studied throughout the world. It is home to all who live in it. Africa connotes more than just a home. It is who we are, and the place for which we feel the deepest affection.





Discovering Home

by
Hannah Tarindwa
(Zimbabwe)

The great part of learned behaviour is that it can be unlearnt! It is possible to unlearn self-rejection and feel at home in one's mind and body.. it is in becoming a home, that we find our homes.



'Where are you from?' is a simple enough question to answer but for me, a Zimbabwean woman living in a different country, it can produce 3 different answers namely my current place, my birthplace and my ancestral origins which should be the real 'home.'

In the Manyika context, there is mhatso (room or house, or place to live) and there is khanye, home.

This concept has always fascinated me

because of my definition of home vs the Ubuntu definition. For many, home is, or at least should be, the place where judgement is set aside and acceptance wafts through the air like warm and hearty comfort food on sad wintery nights. We like to think of home as safe, happy and good, but is this the experience many of us have?

The 'Hannah' concept of home may not be in sync with the African idea of home, I must confess. For me, home is where one lets their hair down, though in the African



context it would be safer to say where one lets their afro be! I believe home is the place where one is not afraid to take off their shoes despite what their feet smell like because there is a solution, not judgement. Home is where one can cry without reservation or laugh like there is no tomorrow and until their stomach hurts without worrying about drawing “attention.” They can dance like no one is watching, even though the whole clan watches.

Home is that place, that special space that brings a sense of rest and peace.

For the African reader, this definition may not ring quite as true because home implies the place one’s ancestors are from and at best, where they are buried and their spirits look after. It is Kumusha for the Zezuru tribe, and Khanye for the Manyika and Ndau, the tribes I was familiar with growing up.

While this makes sense for those whose families have not migrated in the past 200 years, for me, that’s not the straightforward case.

For the longest time, as a child, I thought home was where my mbuya/gogo (my father’s grandmother) was, but I also come from a paternal social system where even after being abandoned before birth, a child belongs to their father. So, Gogo’s home was not really our home; our home was actually in Mozambique, where sekuru/khulu (my father’s absent father) was suspected

to be from. However, upon his death, my father who had lived and worked in Harare was given his ‘eternal home’ in Chiyadzwa, Mutare, his mother’s home, where her brothers were; a home he never in his living years, considered home.

That’s how it rolls in my culture.

Now you can imagine how complicated it is for me who has no attachment to the places I am told are ‘home.’

The Anglicans and Methodists of Zimbabwe have a funeral song which goes:

Handina musha panyika, (I do not have a home on earth)

Musha wangu uri Kure (My home is far away)

Zita rayo, ndi-Zion (Its name is Zion)

Inopenya nguva dzose (x2) (It shines all the time)

I love this song because it is a reminder of the temporary nature of the ‘homes’ we hold dear in our current state of living. For many religious believers, we are in phase one of home and are preparing for the real ‘home.’ We are preparing through specified good works or faith in the Creator. It also makes me think of how a home is not necessarily a physical space but a concept which is greater than walls and a roof above our heads.

Have you ever been stuck in a bad situation with someone; a parent, a friend or a ro-



mantic partner and just felt whole, secure and weirdly happy despite the prevailing circumstances? I think there are some people whose energies or aura, as some would put it, just merge seamlessly with ours and truly make us feel 'at home.' In their company, embarrassing moments can be bearable if not downright laughable; vulnerability happens without second guessing or filters to make our truth more palatable; whilst the aspects we would consider 'ugly parts of ourselves' are not the main focus. It is with these people – our tribe, regardless of relation by blood or none – that we are celebrated as well as supported, and corrections of our faults are given in the spirit of love and the desire to see us winning.

It may sound like a walk in the park to identify these mystical and magical individuals, but the reality is that despite our advancements in communications such as social media which brings people together from different parts of the world in real-time, and the ability to migrate easier than ever before in the history of humankind, people are finding themselves homeless, literally and figuratively.

Many people are like lonely satellites looking for home despite being surrounded by other people who seem to also feel the same. It is heartbreaking. I often wonder if there is a solution. How do we find a home that embraces us, faults and all, yet helps us to grow to be our best versions without

making us feel like projects? How do we meet those people that make us glow at just the very thought of them; people who not only sing our praises but motivate us to get those praises in the first place?

I believe the way is to be at home with ourselves first. If you believe, as I do, that we are spiritual beings having this physical experience, then the first home we have is our body or our minds, where we have quiet and private conversations.

How do we treat ourselves? Hopefully, we are not consistently berating ourselves and pointing at what we deem to be our 'ugly bits' each time we face ourselves in the mirror. If you do, know that you are not alone, and there is good news; it is probably learned behaviour. The great part of learned behaviour is that it can be unlearned!

It is possible to unlearn self-rejection and feel at home in one's mind and body; to settle in and be at total peace. It can even be such an adventure discovering the beauty of the image of the Creator at your very core. To find your creative self, your non-judgmental self and be at home. Once this home is found and accepted, it will send out a glow like a lighthouse which calls others to it for safety.

I have learnt that it is in becoming a home, that we find our homes, and I hope you can give it a try and find your true home, here on earth.



Cranium

by
Rachel Ajokeade
(Nigeria)

“That is what most parents say. They say they will pay, but after the term, they take their children elsewhere without paying the school fees.” We had done that many times. And I was sad because I knew we would do it again.

A year. Then she could take no more. Even when I begged. In my fifteen-year-old imagination, I'd already carved out a future for all of us. For better for worse. But she had seen enough. In the beginning, I wanted to leave. After twelve months, she wanted to leave.

So, on the 19th of August 2017, we moved. It was during the day. Bright, sunny, for all the neighbours to see. Favour and I nearly broke our backs carrying our sofas down the stairs. Mummy carried all she came with. The curtains, the bed, and even the malfunctioning generator. He hadn't returned from work, but some of his children were around. Love even helped with the packing. Aworan was crying. Eli, the two-year-old baby, looked lost and curious. Big Faith had taken Hope to a prayer camp. I wished they were around to see that our existence didn't depend on that monster they called their father.

Mummy had hired a truck to move our

things, but when the movers saw him approach, they halted and requested permission from him to continue. He gave a tired nod. He called Mummy upstairs. I stayed close by, in case he tried anything funny like in the books. She came back, shaking her head.

I went back downstairs. Love came seconds later, holding a loaf of bread.

“Daddy said do you want bread?”

I could have said no. The bread could have been charmed. Poisoned. Cursed.

I gorged my mouth with it, though. Your curse can't do me anything.

As a parting gift, I gave Love my crocheting pin. I left my book, Everywoman, which I had bought with my hard-earned savings, for Big Faith. I left Hope nothing, I guess. Since I do not remember, it means I left her nothing.

We got into the truck and it coughed to



life. I looked back and Love was crying. The most real tears I had seen since I met her.

I didn't cry back.

In the truck, Mummy told me in Yoruba, "Right was crying real water from his eyes. He was now begging me saying, 'Who will take care of my children?' Am I a nanny?"

I almost laughed.

The truck drove us to that church Mummy went to weeks ago before she was admitted into the hospital. Perhaps the hospital was the last straw.

Mummy dumped all our belongings at the church.

"I need *lati kuro leko patapata*." We need to leave Lagos completely. A pastor had instructed her. "So, it's either Abuja or Port Harcourt."

O...kay.

On Sunday 20th August 2017, we travelled to Abuja. I told mummy if she waited till Monday, the traffic would be suffocating. But I was scared.

At the park, we bought awful plates of rice and ate. I remember vividly. Mummy said she added the meagre alimony to the money her friend in Dubai sent to her so we could abscond. We'd only packed essentials. The bed and other major furnishings were left at the church. Later my mum's el-

der brother would go and move them to his place. They would rot there.

As the bus drove, I thought, *we are leaving the hub*. Mummy might have made plans, but I was uncertain.

We arrived at Abuja past 2 a.m. It was raining. Her cousin sent a taxi to pick us up at the park. His apartment was nice, except for the toilet. He was generous, stuffing the refrigerator with local thick, unsweetened, yoghurt. He bought *Kilishi*, that spicy beef jerky, and Coconut bread. We ate like kings. I was relieved, till Mummy said we were moving.

"He reported me to his mother, that I came to abandon children with him. But he knows I'm working."

Mummy had gotten a job at a hotel. So she usually worked the night shift, over days, coming home rarely. Perhaps Uncle Rayo felt burdened. We had large appetites, after all. Or maybe we crowded his space in his room and parlour self-con.

Then our reality crashed. When you stay with family, you don't know how poor you really are till you move into your own apartment. The lines were beginning to crack between mummy and Uncle Rayo, so she began apartment hunting.

We moved in September, after my birthday. September 29th, I think. From Karu to Mararba.



No need for big words. I just sighed when I saw our true reality; what mummy could really afford. They called it Round Compound. A large expanse of land with round huts in a circle, within another set of round huts in a circle. Each hut was divided into two rooms which were rented separately. Rusted corrugated iron sheets. Cold cement floors. Dirty short children running about, stones nicking their feet. Women gossiping loudly, then softly when the matter concerned someone close. Someone carrying a stained potty to a toilet.

I wanted to swallow the sun.

My two brothers were enrolled in a school nearby. I wanted to cry when Mummy almost went on her knees just so they would accept my brothers without the school fees.

“I will pay, I promise I will pay.”

“That is what most parents say. They say they will pay, but after the term, they take their children elsewhere without paying the school fees.”

We had done that many times. And I was sad because I knew we would do it again.

And we did. After Favour wrote his Junior WAEC, we moved to Statehouse, Ruga. Whilst owing school fees. Since my father left before Flourish was born, we have been changing schools every year. I changed school every year from Primary three till I graduated. Every year, because house rent expired every year, we had to move every

year.

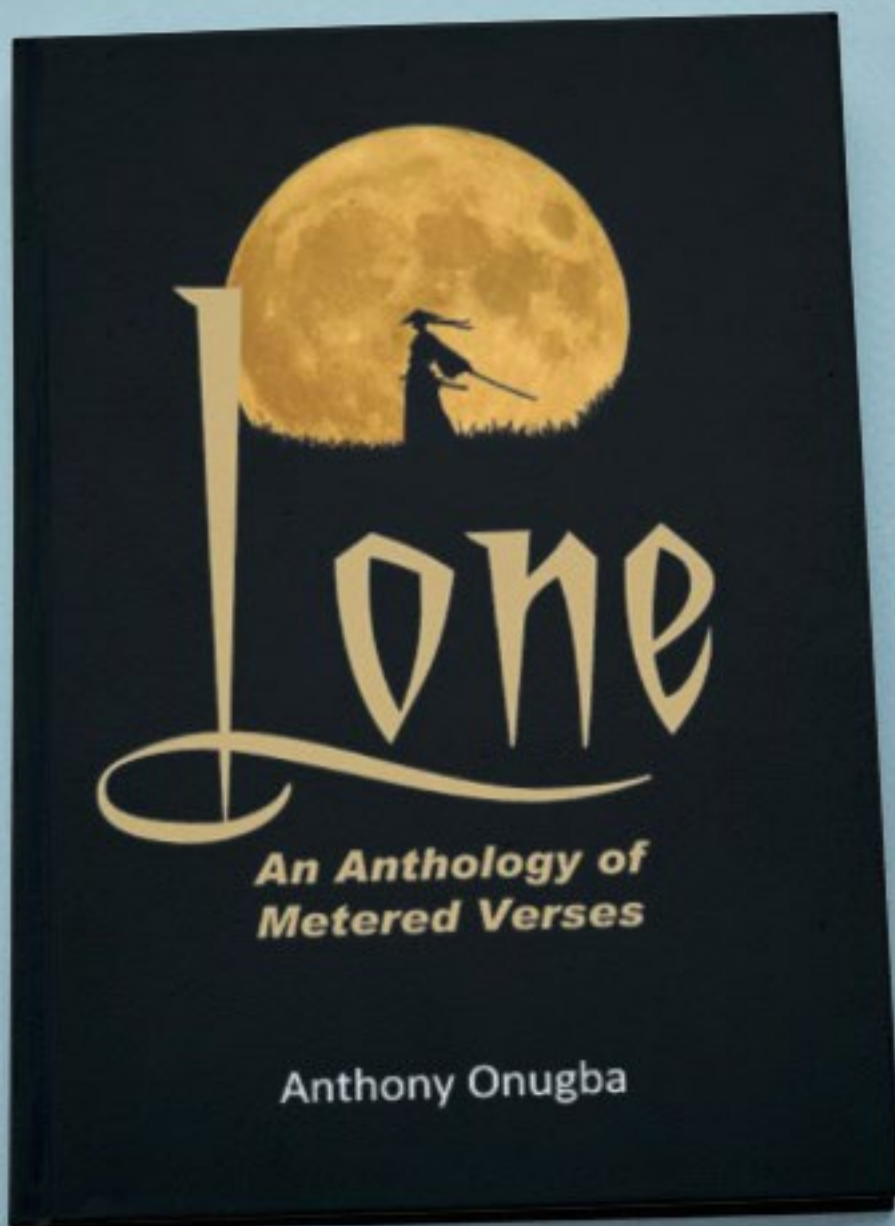
Just one month after turning fifteen, I began job hunting. Our situation forced me to be confident. Then, I didn't think of it as suffering. I still don't think of it as suffering. It's just that my mates with whom I had graduated were not trekking from Mararaba to Nyanya, entering every shop, plaza, and restaurant, dropping phone numbers in search of a job.

I entered a cybercafé to type my CV. The woman looked quite tired with life, from the way she dragged herself to put on the generator, to the depressed sluggishness of her voice. I went back to the plaza I was asked to submit my CV. The man said he didn't need a sales girl but boarded two bikes and took me to a plaza inside Abacha Road. We entered a children's boutique. Wow. I had to turn down the job, though. The pay was 12,000 and Mummy said no. Considering transportation.

She told me to go back to the cybercafé. To learn how to use the computer. Something most kids learnt at home or in their secondary school. Mummy scraped sweat to pay the 15,000 Naira in pieces. The first good deed my tutor did for me that day, Tuesday, 10th October 2017, was to send me to the hair salon in the opposite lane. I came back with my forehead eyeing the sun.

Suffering builds. Hardship straightens.





Download from
www.anthonyonugba.com

Night Raid

By: **Olabode Oluwabukola**
Country: Nigeria



It's past midnight. I look around before crawling out of the hole I share with the burly dimwit beside me.

"Let's move," I say to him.

He rolls over the shredded paper and some raw rice scattered all over and lazily chews on a dried pepper. The grind noises he makes are less irritating than the fact that I have to keep motivating him. I set out on the mission of restocking our food stash without him. Our kids would need it.

I scurry off into the kitchen on my legs as fast as my weight would allow. Oddly, I hear light footsteps, and quickly hide behind the kitchen door.

"Mommy," the person calls quietly. It's only the little boy in the house. I scratch my belly, imagining myself as a mom. The footsteps fade away, and I conclude that he was re-

turning to the bedroom.

I walk into the kitchen. As usual, the sink has some leftovers from dinner. But more inviting are the breadcrumbs on the floor. It has a buttery taste. But my savouring is interrupted as I can feel something peppery in my stomach. I start darting restlessly around the kitchen. Tired of running, I close my eyes, hoping the piercing pain halted.

I open my eyes, and it is bright in the morning. I find that I've been tossed onto a heap of dead leaves. It's chilling, and the morning dew has gotten the hairs on my body wet. A lizard runs over the leaves, making a loud noise in my ear. The breadcrumbs I ate were poisoned. I envy the lizards, as they only get a few stones pelted against their tough skin. Us rats never stop getting poisoned by those with whom we live.





Creative Spotlight



Welcome to another interesting edition of the Writers Space Africa Magazine. This month, I chatted with Adétutù Ade-doyin, the winner of the 2021 African Writers Award in Creative Nonfiction.

- *Blessing Peter Titus (PPBlessing)*



PPBlessing: Thank you for joining me for this interview. What do you do for a living?

AA: I work as a content manager/Copywriter for a Digital Marketing Agency in Lagos. I also double as a Community Manager for the company and clients.

PPBlessing: Was this career path influenced by your being a writer or by what you studied in school?

AA: A little bit of both. I studied English for my first degree and majored in Literature. For my second degree, I studied Communication. But I would say, it's more of the first one. I am passionate about writing; specifically telling stories. So when I applied for the job, I had one thing in mind "at least, you'd get to write". But I found it's not the same thing. And I think I am learning that because I can do something, doesn't mean it's what I have to do. I'm also learning to embrace the uncomfortable and create what I want from it. Life won't always welcome me with pleasurable things, but I will make what I want out of it.

PPBlessing: Exactly! Life's all about creating what we want from it. How long have you been writing?

AA: I have been writing for about 9 years plus now. I used to count from when I wrote my first poem in SS2, but I think I have been writing before I realised it be-

cause some years ago, my father gave me a manuscript I wrote when I was 9 that I wanted to publish for my 10th birthday. I went to a few birthday parties where the celebrants published books and I wanted one too.

PPBlessing: Whoa! A young writer that started out with big dreams! Did you get to publish it?

AA: No. By the time I read it again, I had a good laugh. It would have made for a good Children's book now that I think about it. Banter aside, I think for a 9-year-old, it was a really superb story about the beauty of faith and taking care of what God placed in your care. It was about a couple who had to wait for years before they had their son. They went on to pamper him as a result and let him get away with many bad things until it backfired. At the end of the day, Jesus came to the rescue.

Now, I believe it was influenced by a Mount Zion movie I watched, but nonetheless, it feels like God was preparing me for such a time as this. I published something else in 2015 though; an anthology of poems. I was really surprised when I got a call that my manuscript was accepted. I look at the content now and just laugh at myself.

PPBlessing: Well done. Have you published anything else aside from that anthology?



AA: No, I haven't.

PPBlessing: When do you plan on publishing?

AA: If everything goes well, very soon. I've got a complete manuscript sitting in a folder on my laptop and I don't know what to do about it. At this point, I am considering self-publishing but I want to make sure it's good enough before weighing in on every option. I need an extra pair of eyes to spot things I might have missed. I haven't gotten that yet.

PPBlessing: Godspeed on both. What made you start writing?

AA: I started writing as a form of escape. That's the short answer. It was a way of expressing feelings that I couldn't share with anyone for the fear of being misunderstood and to also understand myself. The long answer is that writing found me. God blessed me with this gift and although I didn't know it then, I started writing at the core part of my life when I felt vulnerable and everything I was feeling would throw me on the path that I am now. It felt like something came on inside of me and continued to grow.

I am big on emotional health. It's one of the top things I use my writing for. At the time, I wrote to express feelings I couldn't verbally put into words, to make sense of

what I had in my mind, the world, and other people's behaviour towards me.

PPBlessing: What themes do you write on?

AA: I write on themes that have to do with identity, faith, emotional healing, friendship and love. I don't restrict myself to those themes though because I like to explore different topics and have conversations with people that could broaden my knowledge and help me understand people better. Over the years I have grown, I have dabbled into more complex topics like toxic masculinity, suicidal thoughts and battling with faith. Basically, things people don't readily talk about interest me.

PPBlessing: If you were to meet a character from a book, who would it be and why?

AA: At first, it was Heathcliff from Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë because he just seemed to have a lot of pent-up anger and was so vengeful. Understandably so. Now, I think it's Chinoso from Orchestra of Minorities by Chigozie Obioma to knock him for what he did at the end of the book. I mean, why? Why couldn't he be patient? I pitied him at first and was really rooting for him. He just used rage to mess everything up. His Chi tried to defend him, but that's just really unacceptable what he did.

Sometimes, I occasionally think about Ayoola from My Sister, The Serial Killer



by Oyinkan Braithwaite. I mean, what was going through her mind all the time? Why was she leaving a mess for Korede to always clean?

PPBlessing: That's a handful of characters to meet. What's your favourite thing to do?

AA: My favourite thing to do is talking with my really close friends. I have been blessed with people who have an amazing sense of humour and also speak the truth without going back. If I'm letting myself spiral from overthinking scenarios or sleeping on myself (and abilities), they call me out without a second thought and set me straight.

PPBlessing: What's your preferred writing genre?

AA: Prose. That's where I can do all the talking I don't do verbally. To be specific, I like Nonfiction the most. On some days I like poetry, but I think for that I have taken to writing it only in Yoruba.

PPBlessing: Why poems in Yoruba?

AA: I don't have a specific reason. I just enjoy writing it. Although I don't think I write it that well. I try to when I feel like it.

PPBlessing: Why are both your website and medium page starting with Tutu?

AA: This question made me laugh because for the longest time I have preferred to be called Adétutù. My name means the crown

is peaceful. When put apart, it's just crown and peace. And for the type of writing that I do to help foster emotional healing, it came naturally to me to stick with Tutù. There's still peace that comes from soothing words and healing to become whole after being broken apart from events. I put a whole lot of thought into my writing process because I understand the importance of what I'm trying to achieve with it. I have a great idea of what God would have me do with it. Although I have a friend who calls me Adé, most people naturally just call me Tutù. So, I think there's also that part.

PPBlessing: Beautiful name. Can we say you're already declaring peace to your readers even before we read your words?

AA: I didn't even think about it that way.

PPBlessing: Who is Adétutù Adedoyin?

AA: Adétutù is an Osogbo girl who enjoys speaking Yoruba. Seriously now, I have tried to relegate this question because sometimes I wonder. But who hasn't at one point or the other?

Adétutù is an amazing writer. I don't know if it's because I referred to myself in the third-person but it was actually easy to say. This is the first time I am letting myself say it out loud to someone without feeling like a fraud. And it's amazing because it's also the first time I am letting myself believe it.



Adétutù is an introvert who likes to laugh and believes in wearing one's heart unapologetically on one's sleeves regardless. She's committed to sharing stories that help people get comfortable with what they're feeling and how to grow from there.

She's totally sold out to living a purposeful life in the way God has intended it. She enjoys reading mostly African novels, and watching Kdrama. She believes in being honest about where one is at each stage and having difficult conversations. She's presently learning to do it afraid.

PPBlessing: Such a clear appraisal of one's self. Cheers to showing up regardless of the fears. What is your ideal day like?

AA: My ideal day is Bruno Mars's "Lazy Song" video. I just want to wake and vibe, no need to go to work and all that.

PPBlessing: Who are your top 3 authors?

AA: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chimeka Garricks, and Elnathan John.

PPBlessing: Why them?

AA: It's in the way they wield words. Chimamanda is so good at describing things that all your five senses will be involved in what you're reading. For Chimeka, he's that good too and the way he makes me feel things. It's like any time I read something from him, I have a willing suspension of

disbelief and I am truly involved with the characters. For Elnathan, it's satire. The way he says serious things lightly without losing its effect. The way he wrote Dantala's story in Born on a Tuesday.

PPBlessing: How will you describe your writing journey from when you first started writing until now?

AA: It's been a constant pulling of my edges. If you check, you'd see it forming a W already. Writing, especially the kind that I do, happens in such a way that, to be honest with others, I have to first do that with myself. That's not always easy. But it's like being in a love relationship where it gets sweeter as time passes. It's not to say I don't have moments when I don't feel like writing, but even when I don't, I still write.

PPBlessing: Would you say that writing even when you don't feel like it has helped?

AA: I have never thought once that writing hasn't helped me. Because after talking to God, before I even open up to someone about what's going on in my head, I probably might have written it first.

PPBlessing: Do you have a mentor?

AA: Yeah, I would say that it is Chimamanda N. Adichie. From a distance. I mean, you don't have to know someone personally to learn from her. So, when I read her



works, I am paying attention to what she says sometimes. She writes in Igbo unapologetically. She doesn't italicise or have a glossary for it at the bottom.

PPBlessing: A distant mentor... Interesting. Are there any others?

AA: No, there aren't. It's actually funny because in the real sense of it, I don't think that should qualify. But you know there's a way you can guide and advise people without even knowing that's what you are doing. I feel she knows. She's intentional about what she says and what she writes and I pick out what's important and relevant to me in those things.

PPBlessing: What do you consider your greatest achievement as a writer so far?

AA: Finding my voice. When I started out writing, I was borrowing voices from people I had read. Reading my stories in those voices sounded like a badly-produced auto-tune song. Like I tried to be someone and failed woefully at it. Finding my voice has helped me bring some sort of relief to people at different points in their lives and that's really awesome for me.

PPBlessing: How did you feel about winning the creative nonfiction award in last year's African Writers Award?

AA: Ecstatic! Everything was divinely orchestrated. Because when I applied, I had

done it without much thought. It was so bad that I didn't follow up. I got to know I was longlisted from my manager at the time. It took a while to internalise it, but as I did, my smile became wider than the Joker's. If he and I had a smiling contest, I'd win by a long reach. It made me more confident in my ability as a writer and that my story was important. That my friends weren't just gassing me up when they told me my writing was good. Because here I was, an Osogbo girl having her story chosen by strangers

PPBlessing: Have you won other awards aside from the African Writers Award?

AA: Yes, I have won two other awards. They were from my undergraduate study. "Writer of the Year" for the whole school. And there was another one with the same title within the English department to which I belonged.

PPBlessing: A multi-award winner! Congratulations. Do you have a writing routine?

AA: I show up every day. My writings on Medium have been largely spontaneous. All I do is show up every day in front of my laptop, ready to write something. I guess that's my routine. On some days, I don't succeed and on most days, I do.

PPBlessing: Have you experienced writer's block?



AA: Oh yes, I have. Depending on the kind of block, either ice or cement, I have had to take a different approach every time it happens.

Sometimes, I just let it be and try to enjoy life till it feels like it's cleared.

PPBlessing: Eish! Which one is ice and cement Ma'am?

AA: Ice can be melted over time, cement might need to be broken or blown up. Either way, the block will disappear.

PPBlessing: What do you hope to achieve with your writing in the next 20 years?

AA: This is the first time I have thought that far. That would be about 29/30 years of writing in total. I hope to have helped a lot more people heal emotionally then. Who knows, I might even dabble into learning to write for children. Maybe turn some of these writings into podcast topics where we can have deeper conversations. I also hope to have written for stage plays, movies and documentaries.

PPBlessing: That would be awesome. How far had you thought before now?

AA: I have thought as far as 5 years. And then, it was in line with publishing a good book.

PPBlessing: Which among your writings do

you consider your best so far and why?

AA: Hmmm... this is so hard to answer.

Because it changes per time, but there was something about Adétutù that meant a lot to me, and still does. It felt like I fully came into myself and wrote in my voice.

PPBlessing: And it won you the award too. What will you tell young writers who hope to follow in your footsteps?

AA: Follow *who know road*. Specifically to where they would want to reach. Writing can be a subjective thing. We might all be writing fiction, but there's still something that will make each of us distinct from one another. They should find their own pathways. Really.

PPBlessing: Do you have mentees?

AA: No, I don't have any.

PPBlessing: Are you open to mentoring though?

AA: I honestly don't know. I often feel like I am just vibing through life with little to no knowledge of what I am doing. I don't know if I can help them do better.

PPBlessing: I know your present career let's you write but have you considered being a writer/author as your sole career?

AA: That's what I wanted at some point.



Maybe I will eventually become that, but I look at the reality at times and think about survival. I often remind myself that even in this present economy, people are still doing it. So, why will my case be different? Why will I be the “unlucky” one?

PPBlessing: True. So is there a timeframe to when you might likely start?

AA: To be honest, I haven't put a timeframe to that. I'm at a phase where I'm defining things and learning to put hard stops on goals and not make excuses. This is one of them. I mean, it has always been my dream and I'm trying not to let the fear of survival keep me from living my fullest life. And when you get too many rejections, on some days, you'd wonder if you should just stick to the things that bring you money or if you should wait a while longer, but I'm done being that person. So, like Burna, I'll bank on myself and go all out. At least, if I would regret something, it won't be that I didn't live my life the way I truly intended.

PPBlessing: What will you tell Writers who are scared of submitting their works to magazines, anthologies or awards?

AA: I will tell them to start small, and share their stories with friends and people on WhatsApp. To bank on themselves. What's the best that could happen? (Because I am sure they are already thinking of the

worst). If I didn't win that award, I would still have been proud of myself for putting it out there. Truth is, even after that, I have had rejections, but that won't stop me. They also need to know that selection is often subjective. So if their works don't get picked, it's not because they aren't good writers.

PPBlessing: True. What one Judge or Editor might consider crap could be considered awesome by another. Thank you too for your time. It was a pleasure chatting with you.

AA: Honestly, I must say that I'm grateful for this opportunity. I have never been interviewed for something this big before. It's given me more confidence to pursue my dreams boldly with little to no fear about survival.

Thank you our esteemed readers for staying with us through this chat. Until next month, keep reading the African Writers magazine.



The background of the entire page is a lush green tea plantation on rolling hills, with misty mountains in the distance. On the left side, there is a stylized map of the African continent composed of three overlapping shapes: a red shape at the top, a yellow shape in the middle, and a green shape at the bottom.

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Poetry



Poet: Isiaka A. Kromah
Country: Liberia

A Home like No other

We played in the rain
Males and females unclothed
Neither shame nor pride encroached
Like a suckling whelp and blissful raccoons

We fought and played in the fields
Built mansions in the sand
Named ourselves mama and papa
A play that ended with happiness ever after

We rode the kites high in the sky
So were our dreams unified
Some to be pilots, another a leader
At sunset, we waved goodbye

Nightfall;
We sat by the lantern
Listened to stories and tales
About how great our forefathers were

At a later time; we played ouwee
Chased girls and boys under the moonlight and glowing stars,
Sometimes, we went to war for our sisters
Threw orange dirt and water plastic at our enemies,

Retreating back with smiles and laughter
From a battle that was never lost nor won
Life was floruit at cradle, our success was found in our unity:
A story of every African child/this was us at the beginning of time.



Poet: Peter Ubi
Country: Nigeria

Where I'm From

I come from a place
Where the sun scorches when it merely smiles
The air is choking but it's normal now
Out of breath, and out of life, yet fully alive

I come from a place
Where love is lost, lust a luxury
Pain's the constant and it feels lame to aim
For anything but to see the day rise again...

I come from a place
Where when I say I come from this place
Eyes lighten, attentions are at attention
And I fall to its planes
Recognizing the cognizance that now comes to play in mind
Dim thick skies, pale faced trees
Hard cracked earth...

So if I come from this place
Where I say I come from
This place where when I say I come from
You quiver, pout and cry
Like you've spent a flicker of time
From where I come from
How do I go into the world like it's mine
When it truly isn't mine?



Yearning

Poet: Aubrey Odirile

Country: Botswana

I yearn for a place;
Where mom's cooking fills the air,
And the laughter of siblings echoes.

I long for a time;
When we'd share granny's house,
With cousins, play until the cock crows.

I crave a destination;
Where sharing was a thing,
And granny didn't have favourites.

Take me back there;
Where love spread wildly,
And toddlers were the only chaos.

I miss the old point in time.
I miss the old perfect place.
I miss the old happy home.



Poet: Favour Edet

Country: Nigeria

Mother's Womb

If a home is a giant mother's womb
I'd scream for days to be re-born
To cling within and never without
Till grey my hair
And wrinkle my skin
For never have I known a place
So divine where
Warmth is gold, preciously rare
Like a thick duvet for
Harmattan mornings.

If a home is a giant mother's womb
I'd scream for days to be re-born
To drink her old nostalgic wine
Of golden memories that overflow.
I'd shout for days to be re-born
To chew her tasty, savory meal
From thick red cord that binds me in.
On days my stomach mumbles aloud
I'd scream for days to be re-born
To kick and call for old folktales
And listen to her heart thump loudly down
Making my cheek a rosy pink
Her womb, I know; is my haven



Poet: Ontlametse Tidimane
Country: Botswana

Inner Peace

Mouth gasps for a serene breath
Able to soothe all pain,
Only one place exists
Where I'll hum for inner peace.

Ears are aching for the unbridled joy
Of walls echoing good news,
"We are home."

Tranquillity found,
Happiness restored
My soul rejoicing to the core.

My heart is restless as it pounds abruptly
For a time to come;
To step in and forget the world exists

Laughters conceived
Wild thoughts flickered
Sorrows forgotten

Heart at ease
Mind at rest
I am home.



Poet: Doreen Mayomba
Country: Tanzania



My Big Red T-Shirt

I have a big red t-shirt;
My favorite attire
I wear it as an advert
Of all that I desire
I wear it when I dust
And when I retire
An oversized misfit
That makes me feel higher
I don't wear it outside
They'll make fun of me
Its color is slightly fading
It's torn at the back
I wear it during chores
I wear it when I'm bored,
In my big red t-shirt I feel at home.



Poet: George-Shadrach
Michael
Country: Nigeria

Bitter-Sweet Poetry

When the guests arrive home
Home,
Lavender haven rebutted with unfamiliar smiles
Welcoming arms, an embrace of a hard turned soft comfort
A dozen laughing hazel eyes, steering through dewy mornings
Clarified cherry lattes, pacified jasmine candles beneath wrists of
steady pulses
Paired hearts devoid of thornless roses, pulsating warm blue converse
Home, Home,
How sweet home

Home, Home,
Bitter home
Liminal space, celestial beings turned demons
Prickly chuckles, laces of written sentiment
Fresh new scars, these weedy nerves trapped-in (parentheses)
Rented oxygen, part-time human
Pain turned teary carthasis,
Lilacs of sorrow, a bouquet of scarred lilies tomorrow
Home,
After the guests go home



Maria

Poet: Halla Immaculate
Country: Tanzania

It could be in the burning fire of hell
Or high as the seventh heaven
It could be on waves of the ocean bed
Or within buried caves
Whether scorching or freezing
In her arms I find home

It could be from the farthest distance
Or it could be from our closeness
It could be in the confines of a bedroom
Or with the whole world watching
Whether breathing or deceased
In her arms I find home

It could be for all the books I read
Or in the lines I've written
It could be for the ones trashed
Or the ones I put out to the world
Whether lost or won
In her arms I find home

It could be for all the tears from her eyes
Or the sound of her beautiful laughter
It could be for her remarkable sweetness
Or the love she gives out
Whether holy or sinful
In her arms I find home



Poet: Rehema Kasanga

Country: Zambia

Yearning

Here do I find comfort.
Windows beautifully draped in ice
Coldness of a mother's love waiting
Doors left half open to let the fears in.
Windows shut to keep the strangers out,
Perfection at its finest
But, what is this fire
Attempting to disrupt my solitude?
What is this furnace
Threatening my silence?
A laughter peaking in
Burning my insides
Fanning its own flames
Growing its own body
Swiftly and quickly
Calling out your name in the dead of night
Like hearts once lost now returning.
What is this want?
To succumb to all that you are
Like water flowing into the ocean
Desiring only to make your heartbeat my address.



Poet: Matthew Daniel
Country: Nigeria



The Mantra

Each time I get here, the mantra breaks
into a festival of laughter.
Mother said our glulam house is like us;
a construction of woods & glues,
but we are bodies and bricks
raising a home where each body is a pillar of flaws,
conjoined with love, yelling, rules & laughter.
Each time she says, home is a fireplace that needs no fire.
Each of us holding its flames
in our lungs, like jars storing every ooze,
where every cold weather draws warmth
& it warms our bodies; the love,
the yelling, the rules & the laughter.
Yesterday, the carpenter's hammer hit
the hard headed nail with deafening sound on the ceiling
like father's bass voice that mends our goofs,
it mended the roof.
Father says love is in the loud bang,
the yelling and the hard rules.
This time, I leave the glulam house again,
ablaze with smiles, the fire place
staring at me, & home becomes a mantra,
a longing, and a rule to return with laughter.



Poet: Bemsii Junior Mai
William
Country: Cameroon

Childhood Days

The kokoriko of the hen resonated from behind the window
The chuckles of the chicks penetrated right inside my ears
My mind processing the information in slumber
It is time to wake up and face reality.
One, two, three, four, five of us packed on the same bed
Each thinking how to get up in strategy
Because some of our bladders uncontrollably flowed all night.
Who will be accused, who will be the scape goat?
The spirit of Judas had possessed one of us: the eldest
He had quickly undressed, metamorphosed in a new, clean, innocent person,
The scape goat had already been designated.
As these questions paraded our minds
An imposing, advancing, angered voice called in an ascending tone:
“Willy! Willy! Willy! Woukop kam fo here”; it was my mother’s
I knew my day would be long, very long indeed.
Whipping, crying, hunger, doing all the chores, fetching wood
Was the meaning of that call and no justification was needed.
It was time to get up and do the routine, with love, smile and joy.
Home has always been like that during childhood,
The first to get up always got exempted, you know what I mean.
A happy and free weekend depended on swiftness, smartness and strategy.
It was something great and moulding.





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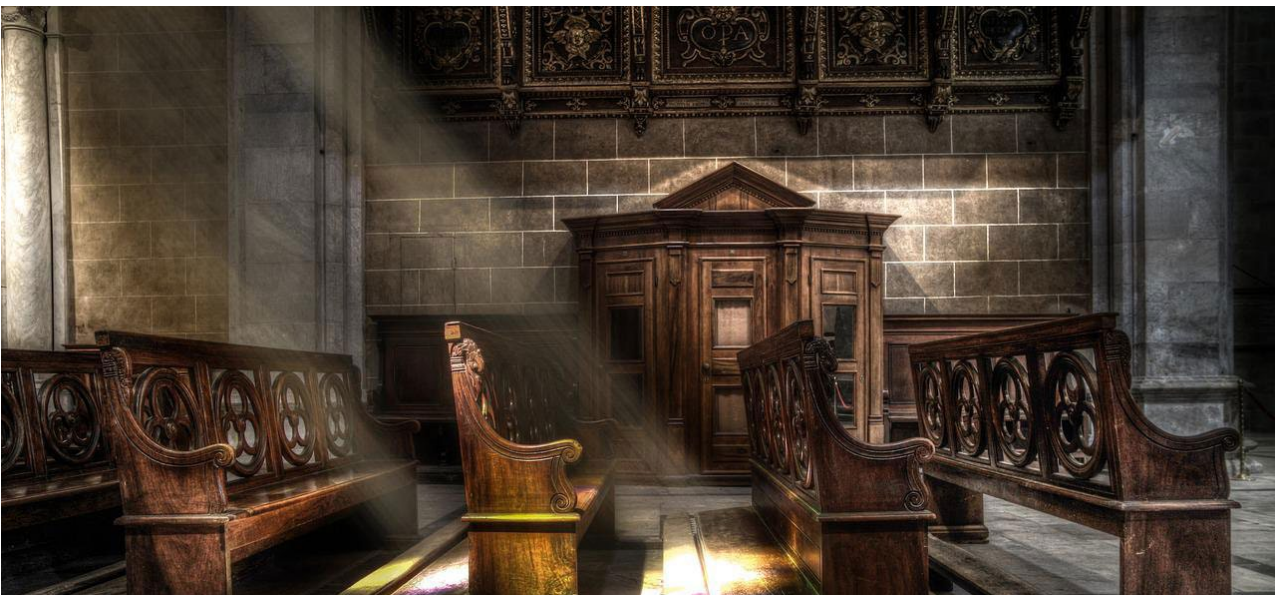
PoeticAfrica is Africa's first trilingual poetry magazine published quarterly. The magazine showcases rich and diverse poetry in English, Kiswahili, and French from all over Africa to the world.

Short Stories

A Prayerful Woman

By: Cynthia Chukwuma

Country: Nigeria



The sound of breaking glass, Yemi's shrill voice wailing in the background, Ejiro's mocking laughter resounding in her ears...

Oma opened her eyes with a start. She blinked and straightened up on the hard seat of the pew. She looked around with the realization that she'd dozed off while staring at the monstrance. She had been staring at the golden monstrance for an

hour since she came into the church. She could hardly summon any word of prayer, so she just sat and watched the altar, counting the spikes surrounding the monstrance, looking at the people as they came and left, forcing herself not to think of her marriage.

Her eyes fell on a woman kneeling behind the railing that separated the altar from



the rest of the church. She was probably in her mid-thirties, only a few years older than Oma. The woman's lips moved rapidly, her body shivering with the intensity of her prayers.

A prayerful woman keeps her family together and protects her home from outsiders.

"I am prayerful," she whispered to herself. *Wasn't she?*

The home she'd built in ten years showed evidence. She woke her family as early as six, chorusing songs from the hymnbook. She enjoyed compliments from neighbours that their voices were angelic. She would lead them in praying the rosary, alternating between Yoruba and English, and they would follow after her. They took the intercessory prayers in turns. Her son, Dafe, prayed for the day's meal and the children with nothing to eat; he prayed for his exams, for his parents and then for his teachers at school. Her youngest child, Yemi, prayed for her parents, too, for her grandmother and that her brother wouldn't tease her. Ejiro prayed the shortest, committing his job into God's hands. She prayed the longest, starting from their small family to the extended family and then whatever bad news hit the news the previous day.

She had created a happy home. *They were supposed to be happy.*

Divorce. The word still tasted like an unwashed bitter leaf in her mouth, dry and dirty and bitter. Constant repetition of the

word didn't make it any more palatable. Neither did it reduce the sting of the word coming out of Ejiro's mouth. His now-pink lips that he now used to kiss another woman. On their ninth wedding anniversary, she'd gifted him the *miracle* lip scrub and balm. Then monitored him for regular usage. Was it the pink lips? she thought. The last time he kissed her with those soft lips was on Yemi's two-year birthday celebration three months ago. The framed picture replaced the one from the previous year's wedding anniversary on her desk at the office.

I do.

Ejiro wanted a divorce. She scraped at the candle wax on the backrest of the pew in front of her. After ten years of marriage. Why? What had she done wrong?

A young woman, most likely in her early twenties, wearing jeans sat in front of her. A pungent smell clogged her nose making her slide to the other end of the pew. She looked at the woman. The white handkerchief on her head did little to cover her thick and curly wig. She knelt, made the sign of the cross then clasped her hands in front of her chest. Oma noticed the shiny silver on her middle finger. She looked down at the gold band on her ring finger. In the past, she hardly noticed its weight. But since Sunday, the 4-gram band was beginning to feel heavy on her hand. She blinked rapidly as she put her other hand over it protectively. *I never want to take it off*, she'd



told Ejiro the night of their wedding.

She closed her eyes and attempted to pray again. Nothing. She licked her lips and then started humming a hymn. In her mind's eye, she saw her and Ejiro walking down the aisle, then performing the traditional marriage rites. She saw Ejiro pacing the hospital corridors while she pushed Dafe into the world and Ejiro rushing through traffic as Yemi took her first breath. They moved into their current home six months after Yemi's birth. Ejiro bought the furniture based on her requirements and they held hands and smiled at visitors as they showed them around the three-storey house. Her teeth were chattering now. A tingle of pain spiked through her nose. She bit her lips to still the chattering and squeezed the muscles of her eyes.

The pain was back. The fist squeezing her chest, threatening to steal her breath. Her mind went back to last Sunday.

"Oma, I want a divorce," Ejiro said when she started clearing the plates. They had just finished lunch. The kids were watching a cartoon in the parlour.

Her hands stilled. She looked at him. "What are you saying?"

"I want to get a divorce." His voice was cool as though he was just talking about what the kids would have for dinner.

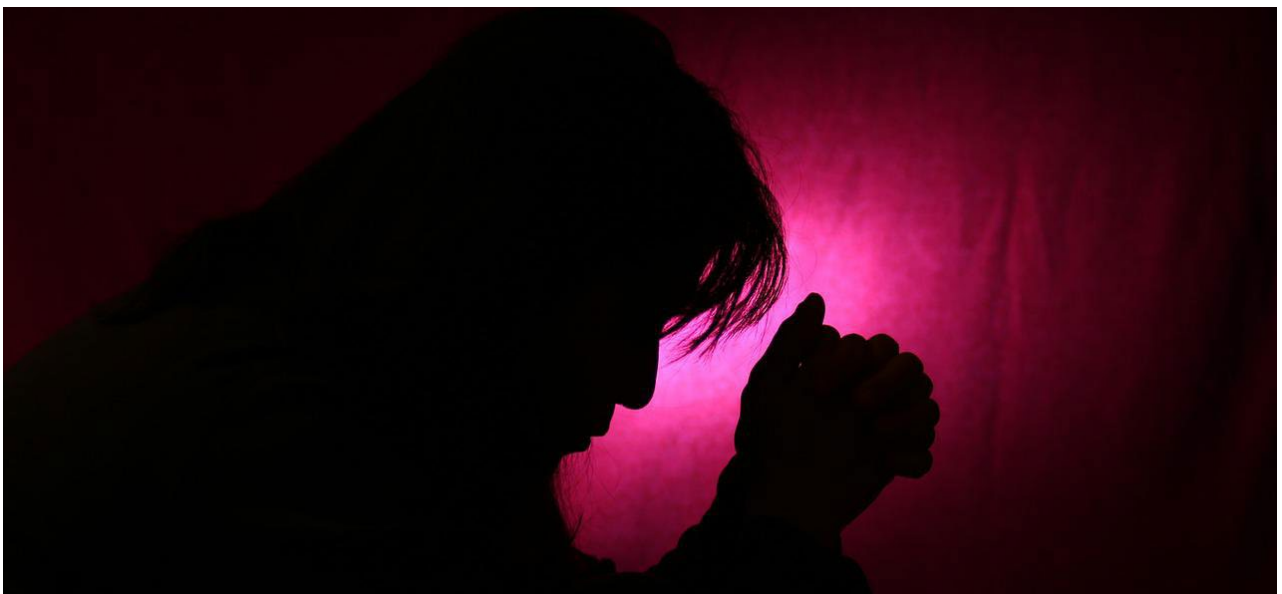
"Where is this coming from? Why?"

"I'm in love with another woman. She loves me too."

She scratched at an itch on her elbow, surprised at how calm she was being. "Since when?"

"I met her when I travelled to Abuja. For the retreat. I didn't expect it to go this far."

A hysterical laugh had escaped from her lips. The retreat. It was a church retreat that they were supposed to go to togeth-



er. But Yemi had gotten ill and she had to remain at home. Ejiro looked at her with creased brows.

“Why?” she asked.

“I just told-”

It was at that moment that she lost her cool and shouted at him, “Why are you leaving the children? And me? What did we do wrong? Have I not been a good wife? Have I not given you a healthy home?”

His shock at her outburst was visible on his face, his lips opened slightly and his wide eyes stared at her. She’d always been the quiet one. But did he expect her to take the news with a smile on her face?

“I’m not going to agree to it,” she said finally and continued to tidy up the table.

He stood up. “I will let you think about it.”

“There’s nothing to think about,” she said but he already left the dining. Her hands stilled for a few seconds before she picked up the plates and took them to the kitchen. That night, she sat on the couch after Ejiro and the children went to bed, and cried.

A light tap brought her back to the church. She opened her eyes. The young woman stood in front of her. “Can I borrow your prayerbook?” she whispered, pointing at the book on Oma’s lap.

Oma handed the book to her. She stretched her leg over the kneeler and scratched at

her knees. Ejiro had not said anything else since Sunday. She wanted to think that the conversation was a product of her imagination and that everything was okay. She preferred not to think about Ejiro not coming home on Monday night or the packets of condoms she found in his pocket while she was arranging his clothes that morning.

She touched her wedding ring and looked up at the monstrance. A child was now kneeling next to the young woman. His hands were joined together and his eyes tightly shut. She imagined the child praying for peace in the world or something as inconsequential as a toy gun. Dafe had once prayed for a toy car and she pulled his ears, cautioning him to be less selfish when he prayed: “Pray for the world. Pray for orphans. Pray for your parents.” He listened. But she suspected that during the moment of silent prayers, he prayed for himself and new toys. She looked away from the child, blinking rapidly.

A prayerful woman keeps her family together and protects her home from outsiders.

She knelt on the cushiony kneeler and clasped her hands like the young woman in the seat in front of her. She was not going to agree to Ejiro and she suspected he knew it. But it only had another implication for them—her, Dafe and Yemi.

When she closed her eyes again, a sigh of resignation left her lips.



A Place Yonder



By: Linda Achiaa Awuah
Country: Ghana



SHE clutched the black leather-bound book tightly to her chest and with her right arm raised upwards, let out a flow of words that may have sounded unintelligible to others if the setting was different. Her eyes remained tightly closed, and her bosom shook while her body rocked intermittently to the rhythm of the words that rolled off her tongue. “Yes Lord!”, she echoed. All around her, other young people were contorted into different forms and shapes and rattling off similar seemingly unintelligible words.

The room fell silent when the man in an oversized green suit walked up to the pulpit on the stage. Loud cheers rang out again to welcome him as he stopped abruptly, his face displaying a pensive look. He held a microphone in one hand and kept his other hand on his waist, hiking up his oversized coat. He screamed into the mic, bent over twice and with one leg raised, rolled his shoulders in a series of exaggerated moves, and staggered side to side in a drunken manner. An eager band which was set took over the stage and rolled out an-



other earsplitting number. That was a signal people needed to get out of their seats.

Some fell and rolled on the floor. Others gyrated against the wall on the eastern side of the room, where a photo of a long-haired man hang.

SHE knelt and rocked her body heavily back and forth. All around the room, sweats dripped to the floor around people's feet and saliva flew to and from the animated men and women.

The green-suited man bellowed into the microphone, "We shall be united with God soon!", "pick your mansion!", "reserve your rooms". He spat into the microphone while he held up the fabric of his trousers with his left hand so he wouldn't trip on its hem. "Is somebody hearing me?! Claim your heavenly mansion from the devil! Declare that you receive it!!" His crocodile skin shoes shone almost as bright as the tiles he said paved the corridors of the mansion his congregation was going to inhabit in Heaven.

She screamed "Jesus!" Jesus! Take me home. Baba ooo, take me home! Ooh take me!" and fell to the ground, rolling from one end to the other, chanting to a higher being all the problems she was facing that she needed rest from. In her heart, as she rolled, she believed there was a better place than earth and the current circumstances she was destined to be in. It couldn't be here. No, it couldn't be this particular earth!

Finally spent and thirsty from all the rolling, shouting and crying, she lay still on the floor and embraced a strange calmness in her heart. "Oh, when I make it to heaven!" she thought, believing it with all her heart, mind and soul.

The frail little boy lay on the worn mattress, its peeling leather breaking through the thin sheets and pricking his back. He lay still, unfeeling, as bigger pain seethed through his body. He winced. It hurt.

His left arm was riddled with small dark spots. He had scars from countless needle pricks and his veins could no longer take the inflow of liquids that his body craved. His right arm was no better. The doctors had barely managed to find two working veins on it and these currently played host to two needles that ushered liquid into him.

The machines around and behind his bed beeped. One would think his was a set of a sci-fi movie. He was lucky to have had access to them as his whole home region only had this set to serve the whole community.

The glass jar which was attached to the wall at the head of his bed bubbled with water, slowly gathered steam at the top and broke into droplets of water. A long transparent tube extended from the jar, draped the side of his face and just above his dry, cracked lips where two short sharp stumps of the tube branched off their sep-



arate ways into each of his nostrils.

He winced again. It hurt so bad. It was as if his body was on fire. His insides felt like mash. He could neither lie left nor right. There was simply no comfort to be found.

He was tired. He longed to walk into the light shining ahead. The light had appeared two days prior, only as a flicker at first but he had seen it. It warmed him to stare at it and over the last two days since it appeared, it had only gotten bigger and brighter. It beckoned to him, and he was ready to heed the call.

He heaved as hard as his frail little body would let him. He felt the resistance like something was binding him to the uncomfortable mattress. He gave a second heave; this time slightly stronger than the last, and the ties that held his torso down gave way. Up his shoulders went.

The light shone brighter. It was closer. It was bigger.

He knew with every fibre of his young being that there was peace ahead. The light was home only if he could reach it.

He rested on his elbows and tried to bend his knees.

Left knee first and then right. They came up with little resistance.

The light was almost blinding him now. He had to go home, he thought. This place with all its machines, tubes and needles

was certainly not the place to be.

He let his legs drop off the side of the metal hospital bed and shoved his body up. He planted his feet on the ground as firm as he could manage and got up off the bed.

His left foot taking the lead, he took a step towards the light. They were wobbly at first, but he soon found his gait slowly.

He looked back at the bed he had just vacated and saw the frail little boy that lay there. The boy's breath was almost non-existent. He looked pale and thin and sickly. The glass jar still bubbled, and he saw one tear drop back into the water. The machine had begun beeping rapidly in a frantic cry for attention.

He took a quick glance across the room. His elder sister sat on the blue plastic chair in the corner of the room asleep. She looked so tired. He watched as she abruptly woke up from the high beeping sounds emanating from one of the machines. He watched as she rushed to the frail little boy on the bed calling out his name. He watched as a nurse rushed in towards the metal bed, followed shortly by the fat doctor.

Filled with energy, he walked ever so steadily into the bright light ahead and for the first time in all his 10 years of life, he felt no pain.

Not an ache and not a burn, only absolute peace.



[WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW] AUGUST 2022 EDITION



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M a g a z i n e

August 2022 Edition - Issue 68



Nathago Peter

*Winner of the Wakini Kuria Prize
for Children's Literature (2021)*



Sheila in Bamako

Writer:

Kudzai Mhanga, Zimbabwe

Reviewer:

Alice Kasonkomona, Zambia



Seeing the title for the first time, I thought the story was about a person who faced a lot of challenges in a strange and unfriendly land. It was only after reading through the story that I realised that Sheila was leaving beautiful Paris and her friends for another adventure and worth-telling land of her ancestors.

Like most of us, the little girl became so comfortable with whatever Paris offered her, such as friends and a cosy home, hence imagining that another place would give her more experiences was far from reality. Indeed, this is a story about our inherent fear of the unknown, which the majority of

people have when for example, they have to travel or move to a strange land. But lo, like most of us Sheila realised that Bamako too was a good place full of good experiences and stories worth telling.

Granted that, Bamako then became a 'new world' with different people from all walks of life and races which Sheila was more than glad to share with her old friends in Paris.

This is a beautiful story teaching not only children but adults about the need to be open to exploring different lands and places, if and when the opportunity avails itself. Thank you Kudzai for writing.



A Place Called Elsewhere

Writer:

Chidinma Nnalue, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Laurent Bwesigye, Uganda

“If you’ve not travelled, you will assume that your mother is the best cook” — Luganda saying.

A Place Called Elsewhere is a wonderfully written piece of creative non-fiction threaded like a winter sweater to create warm experiences from being a renegade of movement to being a lover of new places. As children, we may feel like the only place joy could be found is with familiarity. Once a child felt like he/she was in a strange place he/she would start to cry. Such was the situation of Chidinma before she grew fond of these strange new places she had never been to. She recounts that growing up she was a person that hated moving to a new school, house or town since it meant leaving behind her friends with whom she used to play and sing along with in church when her father, Joachim led a song during church donations.

This later came to pass when she accepted that twenty children couldn’t play together for twenty years. She learnt from life that one can’t always be afraid of change and

keep on holding on to old places. That joy was never found in just one place.

Ever since Chidinma started appreciating new places, she has been to five Nigerian provinces and now makes jokes about her siblings who haven’t travelled. A person that hasn’t travelled could delude themselves that where they are is the best place but it’s until you travel that you discover that the best place can never be fully defined. Each time you travel to new places you learn, meet new people of different cultures and also find different challenges that make you wiser.

However, Chidinma considers herself a woman that has travelled. She still feels like there are many places like Madrid and Istanbul she hasn’t gone to. She would love to go to all these new places and experience more fun and joy.

This is a beautiful story that I would recommend to people who are resistant to moving to new places.



With This Pen

Writer:

Chikapa Bernadette, Malawi

Reviewer:

Everisto Tatenda Simayo, Zimbabwe

“With this pen” is a clear testimony of the writer’s journey through writing which eventually resulted in great success. The symbolism of “wings” manifests the magnitude of the writer’s success which elevated him/her to fame. The poem covers diverse topics which are being evoked by the beauty of writing. The language employed is simplistic hence bringing out the poetic devices aglow. It is safe to argue that the poem is an extended hyperbole through its well-placed imagery and diction and these have been applied for exaggeration effect to strengthen the core of the writer’s theme which orbits around the beauty of writing.

A sense of responsibility and empathy is brought out in the second stanza which paints the writer as a person who understands other human beings and animals. And in this phrase, “I have been a lad, a mother, a hero and a villain...” The diction “villain” portrays the dilemma that writers

sometimes face in their creations, it may be the truth that the readers are in denial of, so that makes the writer a villain in the eyes of those individuals. The third stanza illustrates the puissant imagination of the poet through its visual imagery, hence, one can argue that visual imagery has been coupled with hyperbolic language to paint images in the reader’s mind and to awaken the exaggeration effect which is presented as a mascot of glory in this case. In conclusion, writing is presented as a place of comfort (refuge), responsibility, empathy, and adventure. I would recommend the poem to all readers and writers out there because it is inspirational- it can boost the confidence of other writers out there who are afraid of exposing their works to the world. This read focuses on the lucrative side of writing and it can make a reader become an artist.



Sight to Behold

Writer:

Ngovi Lebron Bulelani, South Africa

Reviewer:

Blessing Emmanuel Amatemeso,
Nigeria

A sight to behold can either come to you or you go for it. Either way, when you see it, it leaves an indelible mark on your mind. Bulelani brings this new sight to our doorstep.

The thought of exploring the world brings joy to many, and trepidation to a few. Thought of a new place has strong ties with thoughts of freedom for how can one explore such novelty unless one is free to do so?

Oby has been bound to her place of origin by a condition beyond her control. She longs to see the world. The possibility of achieving her dream is presented to her, by the Devil. Did she take it? Oh, yes she did!

Bulelani takes us on an exhilarating journey. Oby's 'chains' are broken at last. We journey with Oby around the globe until there's no-

where else to go. When she returns home, we discover that something is wrong. Home doesn't feel like home anymore but we don't know why, not at first. Bulelani keeps us in suspense till the very end.

A sight to behold gives us sights of not just new places but people, from in and out of this world. It leaves you wondering, 'was it worth it?' In its entirety, it is a character-driven story that brings to mind a quote by John Steinbeck 'people don't take trips, trips take people.' Oby was freed from the first chain only to be bound to another. She could now go wherever she wanted but she didn't want to anymore.

A sight to behold is a story you want to take with you to new places. Happy reading.





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