

# WRITERS SPACE

NOVEMBER 2024 EDITION

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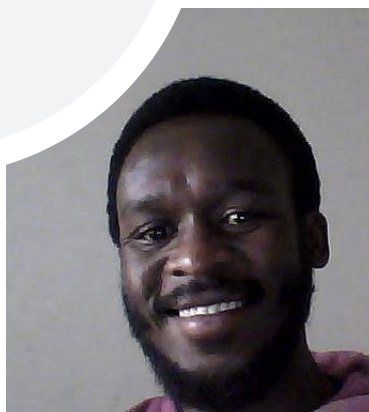


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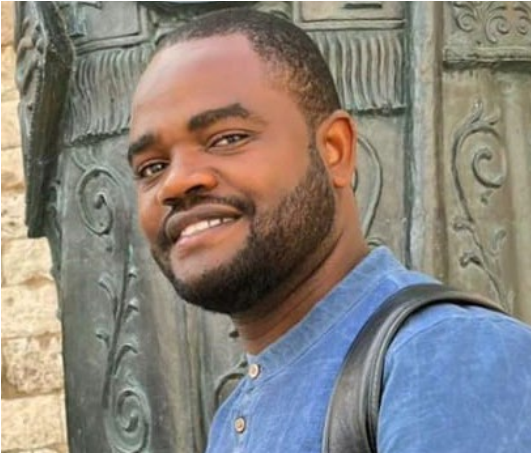


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# EDITORIAL

Comfort Nyati, SDB

Chief Editor

Dear reader,

As the tick tock of the year is almost at its verge, we explore the complex theme of identity barriers. Through diverse perspectives and powerful storytelling, our devoted authors unearth the personal struggles and societal identity disparities that hinder our collective progress.

I am pleased to present this collection of provocative pieces, each one a testament to the charismatic and progressive power of deep reflection and intellectual cu-

riosity. In these pages, you will find voices from miscellaneous backgrounds and perspectives, each offering unique insights into the human experience. We believe that by amplifying these voices and fostering a culture of open dialogue, we can begin to dismantle the identity barriers that divide us.

Consequently, as we navigate the complexities of our contemporary world, it has become increasingly evident that “uniqueness” continues to pose significant obstacles to understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity. Hence,

in the midst of our increasingly interconnected world, identity barriers persist as stubborn reminders of our differences.

This 95th edition invites you and me to embark on a journey of self-reflection and discovery, as we review the intricate web of identity and its intersections. Therefore, dear reader and African child, join us as we amplify marginalised voices, foster open dialogue, and strive to break down the walls that divide us.





**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

# CALL FOR **Submissions**

Theme:  
**Fresh Pages**

Writers Space Africa (WSA) is accepting submissions for its 97th edition (January 2025 Edition). We accept Children's Literature, Creative Non-Fiction, Flash Fiction, Poetry, and Short Stories

**Submit to: [www.writersspace.net](http://www.writersspace.net)**

Deadline: November 15, 2024



# **Creative Nonfiction**



# BRICK BY BRICK: A 20-SOMETHING'S JOURNEY TO HEALING

Tovia Inokoba  
Nigeria



E. Joseph Cossman once said, “The greatest power is often simple patience.” I concur wholeheartedly, as this principle was embodied in the way my father built our home.

As a child, I remember gazing at the building plans, marveling at how sand, water, and cement could transform into blocks, and how those blocks would eventually become a house. I was captivated by the process and eagerly accompanied my father to the construction site whenever I could. Watching the structure take shape was nothing short of magical.

Then came the rainy season, and the project was paused.

On those days, I would sit by the window, watching raindrops race against the louvre glass. Some droplets hurried down and crashed into each other, while others took their time, forming a pool beneath the window. I learned early on that even the simplest of things exhibit patience.

When the sun came out to play, the construction resumed, as did my visits. However, one day, I saw my father’s excitement turn into worry, concern, and finally disbelief. The drive home was silent, and it was only through my unrepentant nosiness that I learned about the issue: the foundation was flawed. It was a prob-

lem that couldn't be ignored, as it would cause serious repercussions later. Rebuilding the foundation would cost more money and time, which explained the deep scowl on my father's face.

As a child, I didn't understand why he chose to start over, especially since it meant the house would not be ready as planned. I was disheartened, eagerly awaiting the day I could finally move into the new house. But now, as an adult who has had to build her life brick by brick, I understand.

Life often requires us to take the road less traveled. In a world that constantly moves, we are sometimes forced to mirror the slow pace of snails. Although it's difficult to see at the time, delays often remind us that they are not denials. My father's goal was clear: he wanted to build a sturdy house that would stand the test of time and seasons. To achieve this, the foundation had to be solid. These days my house is a shadow of the shiny building 15-year-old me used to love twirling about in, but it stands tall and intact. I don't

think this would have been possible if my father hadn't made the decision to redo the foundation.

In the same vein, as an adult, I've had to cultivate patience in my own life. Rupi Kaur writes, "To heal, you have to get to the root of the wound and kiss it all the way up." One might think that knowing this would prepare me for the challenges of adulthood, but I am living proof that knowing better does not always equate to doing better. Knowledge alone is not power; it is the application of that knowledge that makes us powerful.

Entering adulthood, I realized that patience is easier when everything is going well. On days when I have accomplished my tasks and the weather is just right, patience feels like a walk in the park. But when life throws heavy storms and blinding suns my way, patience bids me farewell. On those days, getting out of bed can feel like a herculean task, and I retreat into myself, abandoning patience.

I often joke about a mean

woman in my head who criticizes me, but on days when she's loud and harsh, it's less of a joke and more of my reality. When anxiety keeps me rooted to the ground, incapable of crossing to the other end of the street, I chastise myself, and patience seems to vanish. I preached and advocated for self-love everywhere but when the curtains were drawn, I was the meanest person to myself

For most people, love is a beautiful thing but when your lover goes by the name fear, it becomes a thing that you dread. Fear is a terrible lover, smooth-talking with deceitful sweet nothings. I often let fear into my bed, allowing him to whisper doubts and insecurities. "What do you think you're doing?" "How dare you try?" "Did you forget that you're not good enough?" "Look closely, they're all laughing at you."

I want to tell fear that no one cares enough to laugh at me and that I'm willing to try despite not being perfect. Yet, fear's comfort is a double-edged sword. By avoiding risks, I avoid failure, and



I can convince myself that if I had put in the work, I would've succeeded. So, I leave the door open for fear night after night, until one day, I borrow a bright torch from Peculiar, who is breaking ceilings of her own. I wield Tofunmi's belief in my supremacy and I chase fear away. We establish a routine—me chasing, fear running.

I wish I could tell you that I win this battle every day, but that would be a lie. I keep fighting, and sometimes I win, while other times, fear thrives. What matters is my consistent pursuit of victory. On days when fear wins, before the mean woman in my head speaks, I play Alessia Cara and remind myself that I should take my time to recover because healing and patience are lovers.

Healing isn't always obvious. Sometimes it looks like lying in bed with closed eyes because the world is moving too fast. Other times, it involves ticking off tasks on a to-do list. I might cry myself to sleep only to drag myself to work the next morning

because the bills won't pay themselves. I wish I could provide a formula for healing—perhaps something involving motivational quotes and bubble baths, or self-discipline and workout routines. But there's no quick fix for healing. It's like Shakespeare said, "To each, his own." Healing is a cloth sewn just for you. It may not always be glaringly obvious, but it's happening regardless.

So, on my worst days, I look myself in the eye, call myself by my name, and say, "Tovia, please be patient with yourself on days when the light at the end of the tunnel is dim. You are a work in progress, and you are deserving even if all you do today is survive."



# MY FRACTURED IDENTITY

Angel J Okonkwo  
Nigeria

I sat looking at the blank page on my laptop; that blinking cursor was relentless, almost mocking me as if I could not put pen to paper. At 24, one would expect me to have ideas racing through my mind, gushing with all the ambition and creativity that marked my generation. All of it was actually a shamble, a fraud; quite at the other extreme, still only a shell of the person I had ever wanted to be.

My early adulthood was all contained within that shabby, crumpled résumé that lay beside my laptop. Patched with part-time jobs, internships, and short-lived attempts at a career, it had all led up to this moment:

jobless and clueless about what came next.

It had not always been this way. I had grown up as the ultimate high achiever: the straight-A student, the extracurricular overachiever, the first-class graduate, the pride of my family. I dutifully followed the path that was set before me, checking off all the boxes society had deemed requisite for success. College degree? Check. Internships? Check. Networking events and career fairs? Check, check, and check.

And yet, sitting here amidst the remains of my professional failures, I couldn't shake the feeling that in some fundamental way, I

had just fallen short. That corporate world, tinged with colour and full of promise, now felt foreign and unforgiving—a scene into which I didn't fit.

I had tried. God knows I had tried. The research writer position I was fired from in under six months—it was just “poor body language,” my boss had said. My brief career as a sales assistant? There, I had quietly quit after two weeks, unable to feign the necessary legal-ese-loving enthusiasm to push product after product onto disinterested customers. Now this role—gone in an instant, after a year, the brand manager position was downsized by the company.

The weight of my failures threatened to suffocate me as I sunk deeper into the cushions of my second-hand couch. Where had it all gone wrong? Haven't I done everything right, following that well-trodden path they all laid out for me—one leading to a stable career, financial security, and respect from peers?

To be frank, I had never felt

all that at home in the world of corporate culture. The competitiveness, constant pressure to fit in, and putting profits before purpose due to my introverted creative sensibilities, consistently created a kind of friction.

The more I looked at that résumé, reviewing the words strung together, the more I wondered if my problem all along was that I'd been on the wrong path. Could my problem have been not that I couldn't hack it in this traditional career but, rather, that I never really should have been there in the first place?

And then it all dawned on me; a rush of self-doubt and regret washed over me. Had I spent the valuable years of my early youth chasing a dream that was never meant to be? Had I sacrificed my passions and real self for the sake of what was supposed to be the dictates of society and financial stability?

My hands were shaking, but I still managed to reach for the pen and a clean sheet of paper. I was determined to finally face those questions which had been haunting

me; what did I really love doing? What turned on that spark in me, apart from the drudgery of a 9 to 5? I started writing, and the answers started flowing in. It was that kind of falling into place, piece by piece, one under the other's fit of a puzzle.

Drawing. Painting. Writing. Those creative outs I used to revel in as a child before the 'real world' had told me to put away my crayons and pick up a calculator. Activities that used to, at one time, make me feel so very full of joy and purpose before I had buried them beneath a mountain of résumés and cover letters.

With every word I pounded into the keyboard, it felt as though I was shedding one pound from my shoulders. This was it, the key to unlocking my real identity, the missing piece that had been eluding me all this time. That isn't to say I was made for being a gear in a corporation, grinding away in some cubicle. I am an artist, I am a storyteller, I am a creator, and the very thought sends shivers down my spine in exhilaration and trepidation.



I did know one thing: it wouldn't be easy. Turning my back on the "respectable" career path and steeping myself within the unknowns of a creative profession would be an extremely daunting task. There would be financial woes, judgments from society, and that constant fear of failure. Yet as I looked at the resume once more, the words no longer seemed to taunt me.

It was my chance to break free from a fractured identity, finally accepting it, and shedding the expectations of the outside world to find the person whom I was all along. It would take courage, resilience, and an unwavering belief in myself—things in which I had once held so much faith but had gradually been whittled away by disappointment and rejection in the corporate world.

I took the résumé out, tore it, and watched it fall into pieces on the floor. In its place, I jotted down a new plan: building a great portfolio, getting in touch again with creative people, and taking the leap of faith into the un-

known. It was scary to the point of paralysis, but staying on this course meant a career that would slowly dry my very soul.

Of course, as I set to work, the doubts and fears still lingered, whispering in the back of my mind. What if I couldn't make it as a freelance artist? What if I never nailed down that same degree of financial stability and security again? But those I swept aside, focusing instead on the thrill of finding once more the things that set my passions afire and a chance to finally exist in a life that felt authentically mine.

In the weeks and months that followed, it wasn't an easy journey. There were times when the fear threatened to overwhelm me when the responsibilities of adulthood—rent, bills, and the ever-present need for a steady paycheck—loomed larger than my creative dreams. But with every commission that I won, every piece that sold, and every positive feedback received, this flame of my new identity burned bigger and brighter, burning away

doubts and insecurities that used to hold me back.

But, standing now in my tiny studio—colours and textures littered all over the place, my own creations—what was there to do but smile? That was it, the life I always really longed for, that which was missing in me, which I couldn't get hold of all along. It wasn't perfect, and the future still had its share of uncertainties, but for the first time in years, I felt alive again. Finally, my fractured identity was whole, once again.

# I WANT YOU TO LOOK BENEATH THESE PALE EYES

Coco Anetor-Sokei  
Nigeria

Growing up, albinism was never really something I thought about. My childhood was a happy blur of playing outside, laughing with friends, and dreaming about the future—just like any other kid. My family made sure I felt included and loved, and I never felt like I was different from anyone else. ‘Albino’ was just a word, something I knew about but didn’t pay much attention to. I was just me, living my life.

But life has a way of peeling back the layers of our carefully crafted worlds. It wasn’t until secondary school that I began to realise my reflection in the mirror wasn’t what everyone

else saw. The stares became more pronounced, the questions more direct. “Why is your skin so light?” “Are you really Nigerian?” These were things I hadn’t really thought about before. But now, they were impossible to ignore.

My first sunburn happened when I was five years old. I barely remember it, just flashes of a day spent on the beach with my family. The warmth of the sand, the sound of the waves, and everyone smiling—it was just another day in the sun. The sunburn was a minor inconvenience, something my parents took care of without much fuss. I didn’t understand then that my skin was

more sensitive than most. It was just another day in the sun.

But then came my second sunburn, the one that really counted. It happened in secondary school, and this time, I remember every painful detail. We had been outside for some event, and I hadn't thought much about it. By the end of the day, my skin was on fire. It wasn't just the physical pain that stuck with me—it was the realisation that I was different in a way that mattered. That sunburn marked a turning point. It wasn't just my skin that was burning; it was the first time I truly felt the weight of my albinism.

In a society where community and belonging are deeply tied to cultural and physical identity, I started to notice the subtle ways in which I was set apart. My pale skin, light hair, and sensitive eyes became markers others used to define me. It was as if I suddenly became aware of an invisible barrier, one that I hadn't felt before but now couldn't ignore.

University brought even

more clarity—or maybe it was confusion. I was stepping into a world that wanted to categorise me, to put me into a box marked “different.” People would comment on my appearance, some with curiosity, others with an edge of pity or discomfort. I began to understand that my albinism wasn't just a detail; it was something that others saw as defining. But here's the twist: by that point, I had already defined myself in a completely different way.

When I went to university in Ghana, the stares became more pronounced. People would look at me unashamedly, sometimes with confusion. Yet, it didn't bother me. I had learned to block out the stares, the whispers, and even the catcalls. By then, I had tuned them out so completely that I barely noticed them anymore. It was like background noise, something I'd trained myself not to hear.

As I grew older, I began to understand the implications of being a person with albinism. There were expectations—both from others and

from within—that I should somehow connect more deeply with this aspect of myself. In adulthood, I even tried to build a community for people with albinism. It seemed like the right thing to do, a way to contribute. But as time went on, I started to question whether I really cared enough. The truth is, nobody seemed particularly interested, and I wasn't sure I was either. It felt like I was trying to fit into a role that wasn't really mine. I was aware of my condition, but I didn't feel connected to it in the way that others might expect. I often forget the International Day of Albinism, which might seem odd, but it just doesn't resonate.

One thing I still struggle with is deciding whether or not to tick the “disability” box on forms. I mean, do I count as disabled? Technically, yes. But I don't feel disabled. It's always this little internal debate—tick or not to tick? Sometimes, I just wish there was a “kind of” option!

People often call me “brave” or “confident” because of how I live. They say it's because they don't expect



someone with albinism to live so boldly, to draw attention to themselves. But to me, it's just living. I've always been this way—unapologetically myself, not because of or despite my albinism, but because that's just who I am. I find it strange that people think it's something special, but I suppose it's all about perspective. To them, I'm defying expectations. To me, I'm just being me.

I've realised that storytelling isn't just about the narratives we craft for others—it's also about the stories we tell ourselves. My journey has been one of self-definition, of choosing to see the world through my own eyes, even when others want to hand me a different lens.

In my work, I help others craft their narratives to find the voice that feels true to them. Because I know what it's like to feel the pressure of outside expectations, and I also know the power of embracing your own story. It's not always easy and doesn't always fit into neat categories, but it's yours. And there's nothing more power-

ful than that.

My albinism, once something I rarely thought about, has become a part of my story—but it's not the whole story. I've learned to take pride in who I am, not just as a person with albinism but as someone who has chosen to live authentically. Each challenge I've faced has taught me to navigate the world with resilience and to see my pale skin not as a barrier but as a unique perspective that enriches my view of the world.

Today, the sun's light is still bright, but instead of hiding from it, I confidently step into it, knowing that my identity is not just skin-deep but rooted in resilience and self-love. My journey with albinism has taught me that identity barriers are not meant to be feared or avoided—they are meant to be confronted and overcome. Through pale eyes, I have learned to see the beauty in diversity, embrace the complexities of identity, and live with a spirit unbound by the limitations that others might try to place on me.

In sharing my story, I hope to inspire others who face their own identity struggles. I want them to know that they are not alone, that their struggles are valid, and that their uniqueness is their strength. My journey may not fit the typical narrative, but that's precisely why it's important. It's a reminder that there's no one way to live with albinism—or any other identity. We each carve out our paths, shaped by our experiences, our choices, and the stories we choose to tell.

And that, to me, is the essence of true storytelling.

# MEET OUR WINNERS

CATEGORY	WINNER	PRIZE WON
The 3rd African Teen Writers Awards (Poetry)	'Right to Peace' by Adrian Nyarko-Boateng (Ghana)	\$100
The 3rd African Teen Writers Awards (Prose)	'Five Things Mother did not Prepare Me For' by Sumaiyah Muhammad (Nigeria)	\$100
The 7th African Writers Awards for Short Stories	'When Love Exits' by Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare (Ghana)	\$500
The 6th Edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature	'A Close Call Honoured by Absentia' by Grace Thuo (Kenya)	\$200 1st Place
The 6th Edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature	'Bee: One Another's Keeper' by Cynthia Anjie Nkweti (Cameroon)	\$150 2nd Place
The 6th Edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature	'Nandera the Brave - A Tale of Triumph' by Laura Pettie (Tanzania)	\$100 3rd Place
The 1st Wanjohi Prize for African Poetry	'At Vlekete Market' by Eniola Abdulroqueeb Arowolo (Nigeria)	\$100 1st Place
The 1st Wanjohi Prize for African Poetry	'For Sale, African Drums Designed by Robots' by Gabriel Awuah Mainoo (Ghana)	\$50 2nd Place



# Flash Fiction







# DOUBLE PERIOD

Celestine S Reuben  
Nigeria

His death chilled me to the bones. Was it the compact layers or the spongy layers of my bones? I couldn't discern. Not because I do not want to, but because I chose not to.

My father, as a teenager meticulously warned me about boys but he was dismissive about girls before he rested. He also meticulously warned my siblings about girls and was dismissive of boys. Once, he swapped our brains with the idea of 'notebooks' and 'exercise books' in history. He had requested exercise books from the local bookshop and then, a week later, when he was hosted at the illustrious hotel close to the airport, he requested notebooks or a diary.

"Why was that daddy?" one of his children asked, after he recounted enough stories on his sick bed; the most hilarious.

"Those of us colonized by the British call it exercise books while those who weren't colonized called it notebooks," he said. "Ameri-

cans call it notebooks while we call it exercise books."

My proclivity for historical knowledge was still shut down after my father's death because I could not make a measured sense of it. My incredible sense of ambition made me selfish in other areas of life that would have benefited me until I lost my boyfriend; my fair-in-complexion boyfriend; the one my father warned me about and against, on a black and dark Tuesday in the heat of the pandemic, to the orchestrated extermination of young black boys and girls by the black police, and three months later, I was denied the scholarship to study in God's own country. I was upside down and unfortunately unparalleled to my siblings.



# BAGGAGE BOY

Winnie Wekesa  
Kenya

I stand at the edge of the airport, the constant hum of suitcase wheels and the chatter of travelers filling the air. Another oversized bag in my hands, I heave it onto the conveyor belt. I know these bags like I know their owners, they are bound for the skies —Paris, New York, Cape Town—places I’ve only seen in glossy magazines and heard of in passing conversations.

Those destinations call to me, but I stay grounded.

The guys at work joke about the stack of travel brochures in my locker. “You really think someone like you could make it out there?” they ask, half laughing, half serious. I laugh with them, but their words sting a bit. They reflect a truth I would rather not admit. My own doubt.

I grew up in a home where travel wasn’t an option. My family barely made ends meet, and ‘seeing the world’ was a luxury

I couldn’t even afford to dream about. But something in me still feels like I’m meant for more—to leave perhaps, to explore beyond these airport walls.

But here I am, —chained to this place by circumstance, by fear. “Born to travel the world,” I mutter, “but stuck as a baggage boy.”

As I load another bag, a piece of paper flutters from one of its pockets. I pick it up—a boarding pass to Tokyo.

“Another city I may never see”. I sigh.

I should just put it back. But I don’t. Instead, I fold the ticket and slip it into the side pocket of the next bag on the belt, a small act of rebellion. Maybe a ‘Good Samaritan’ isn’t the job I have. Maybe it’s the belief that I’m not meant for more.

Creative  
**SPOTLIGHT**

*Rose Wangari Kinyanjui*







*In this edition, Lise speaks with Rose Wangari Kinyanjui, a multi-faceted educator and creative from Kenya. Rose shares her journey into writing, her love for teaching, and her passion for African children's literature and its influence on youth. They also discuss the role of African proverbs and narratives in shaping future generations, and Rose opens up about her free-time pursuits, including learning new skills like Kenya Sign Language and playing the saxophone.*

**Lise:** *Greetings, Rose. It's my pleasure to have you. Can you please tell us a bit about yourself?*

**Rose:** My name is Rose Wangari Kinyanjui.

I was born, bred, and schooled in Kenya.

I am cosmopolitan in that I have lived in different parts of Kenya and interacted with literally every tribe. I am a teacher by profession. I studied the Kenyan curriculum and also the Waldorf curriculum, under the Centre for Creative Studies South Africa. I have taught formerly in public and private mainstream schools and schools under Cambridge and American systems in the Coast, Central,

and Nairobi City. Currently, I am self-employed, teaching music and offering learning support for individuals in the spectrum and regulars.

**Lise:** *How did you get into writing?*

**Rose:** I sincerely don't know how I got myself into writing.

I probably started off pretty early in life when I could scribble things on the margin of my book while the teacher taught. The scribbles were not related to what the teacher was teaching. Whatever came to mind, I scribbled and let go. As time went by, I realised I loved writing. I am quite observant of my surroundings. They inspire

my writing. I am a dreamer. I put my dreams and feelings on paper.

**Lise:** *Which genre of writing do you find yourself most comfortable in and why?*

**Rose:** Creative non-fiction is where most of my writing falls. I think the reason for this genre has been captured in the last part of the answer to question 2.

**Lise:** *Ah, I see. Rose, apart from writing, what else do you do?*

**Rose:** Apart from writing, I Travel, Hike, Cycle, Read, sing, play an instrument, teach and mentor.

**Lise:** *Wow! That's huge! How do you juggle your*

*other responsibilities with writing?*

**Rose:** I write when all is quiet. However, there has to be some music playing in the background. Mostly instrumental. I handle other responsibilities during the day.

**Lise:** *This year, AWC's theme is "the role of African children's literature in shaping the youth"*

*Permit me to ask you, what do you think is the role of African children's literature in shaping the youth?*

**Rose:** African literature is rich in moral values, language development, character development and writing. The use of rich African proverbs, metaphors, satire are some of the core elements that influence both the writing and character development. Whether written or oral narrative, literature captures the imaginative faculties of the youth and help shape their futuristic writing.

**Lise:** *Rose, what do you do in your free time?*

**Rose:** I wonder if I have free time.

When I find myself finding free time, I learn a new skill. In recent years, I have learned Kenya sign language. I am using it in church to reach out to the DEAF community. Currently, I am learning how to play a saxophone and how to ride a motorbike.

**Lise:** *Is there anything else you would like to tell us?*

**Rose:** I am a go-getter. I am always look-

ing out for opportunities to grow and make money.

**Lise:** *Thank you so much, Rose. It was good to have you.*

**Rose:** Thank you!!!



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.



# Poetry





# NOT YOUR HOME

Akuei M. Adol  
South Sudan

I stand on the brink of language,  
 words drift away like smoke,  
 each syllable a hidden stone each accent a chain—  
 my tongue, a foreign river unable to merge into the sea of your understanding.  
 In the mirror, I see fragments,  
 a mosaic of who I was—  
 the child's laughter echoes down my forgotten street,  
 the warmth of my mother's embrace  
 now fades like pages torn from someone else's book.  
 When I walk these streets; pavement cracks like the dreams I once held,  
 each step asks the same question:  
 Do I fit within this skin, this borrowed identity?  
 Am I a fading silhouette, lost beneath the hard glare of your unforgiving eyes?  
 The job postings loom like a cold gate,  
 demanding what I lack; experience, fluency, citizenship.  
 My résumé, a fragile kite caught in the wind,  
 dragged beneath the waves of rejection.  
 At night, I cradle my memories,  
 bracing them against the cold grip of isolation,  
 woven from threads of a past that cling like persistent shadows.  
 Hold my hands; I am a refugee boy adrift in a land where I feel like a ghost.  
 I am both the wanderer and the home, yet neither feels whole;  
 each day I build my walls, only for them to crumble with every new dawn.



# IN THE DEPTH OF ME

Thompson Emate  
Nigeria

*"In the nakedness of an abode, the barrier is taken off an identity."  
-Thompson Emate*

Through which lens do you view me?  
It's beyond what you see,  
How do you view me?  
It's beyond those colours that jump at you.

Go through the pages  
Seek answers from the sages  
You'll know some of me,  
The part not hidden in the night.

I embark on Dawn's bus wearing its mask,  
The day smiles on me  
I'm embraced by nature  
The sun opens my door,  
You see me in this glow.

I'm a turbulent sea,  
This you can't see  
My plight is my night  
This I sometimes write,  
My identity seeks redemption.





# SAGES IN EXILE

Takunda G Nyika  
Zimbabwe

Ideas and capital, the latter is ideally and capially late  
Sages surge into diaspora die or be spared  
Their minds, mineral mines to be mourned  
The hosts benefit or burn our sages when they do not fit

Sages with pages wedge war with men in badges  
Should they slate divergence from norms of their offices.  
Exile is their style, voicing is made a vice and a fate to prison  
Asylum is for the lucky some who sail overseas at alarm  
Sages with massaging messages to the masses manage safety  
And so are their yes-critic counterparts, a disgrace to Enlightenment

Sages with money ideas are discouraged and intimidated  
by the connivance of the rules, the rulership and the rulers  
and so move to excel in exile where exaltation is the x-axis.



# MAN AS HIS ALTER EGO'S SHADOW

Ridwan Tukur  
Nigeria

Find me in the rainforest of the world's ecosystem.  
My face is a shallow river of visible blushes and wrinkles,  
When I try not to unleash the fire heating up my soul.  
Do not be misled by my snail— the secrets in my shell  
Are bigger than my mother's potbelly when she conceived of me,  
So, do not misconceive me—  
These mysteries morph like a fetus.  
I stomach a python of fearsome strikes for peace to slither.  
The world is burning in enough fire of war yet to die out—  
I must not add more fuel, but I beseech you  
Not to narrate my survival  
If you do not burn in the same fire with me,  
Merry with me, share farewells with me.  
I'm standing at my numb corner of melancholy,  
If you do not think, that hiding yourself  
In the glass door of your mouth is safer than spilling flames,  
Unless you can assure me that there is a race I can run  
Away from myself, exorcise me of these smokes  
My burning pot wants to uncover before your nose.



# BLACK DÉJÀ VU

Bokang Moshoeshe  
Lesotho

They cast their blame like shadows, stoking fire in the hearts grown hollow  
A black man's hand, cuffed and roughened, torn from roots he longs to follow,  
Baptized in the black, bloody oil from infiltrated Iranian sands of sorrow  
WE, the Black sheep, shipped to a promised land of lies,  
A Heaven built on the backs of Black man's silent cries.  
Heaven wonders how many of the seven wonders,  
Were wrought by the calloused hands of the black man.  
Black tomes, torched to dust or hidden in shame,  
Erased by a pen of guilt that fell from white hands.  
The hands of a Black man could not fend for Black man,  
For he toiled as the hand of a White man—never a friend.  
But whose hand marks the end of a Black man? I vent.  
Let these words echo with ease, from West to East,  
A peace persistently paid in Black flesh,  
A pound of each—devoured by the so-called beast.  
Or let this poem burn, turning to beautiful black ash,  
For it was coined and carved by the hand of a black...





# STOLEN FACES

Ewurama Welbeck  
Ghana

The stolen faces of the sages  
Weave their masks with pepper smiles.  
Their hanging lips fall off the dining table,  
As their naked bones crawl in the misty dust.

As they stir in boiling pots;  
Their missing voices fade in discordant echoes.  
They look for freedom in harrowing depths  
Causing buried embers to jingle.

Stolen faces lick the rain in the mud  
As slanted stars look on with anticipation  
The whisper of independence calls for them.  
The shadow of murkiness dwells upon them,  
Threatening hope and glimmers.

Rising fires scale the walls of boundary,  
Looking for liberation.  
Gently and nimbly, broken toes leap  
With hopeful fists.

Now, liberation hangs on frayed ropes,  
Ready to be honoured by fresh faces.  
Likewise, the young hearts welcome this revolution with uncertainty.



# UNWRITTEN HISTORY

Neba Terry Phebe Ngum  
Cameroon

Decades ago, our essence was termed folly;  
Like a python, we were designed to swallow another's heritage,  
Regarded as cousins to apes,  
And our languages crafted and refined only to be erased.

Like Christ, we were nailed with disgust and inferiority was our headstone.  
Maybe a miracle, like turning water into wine  
Could erase the stains that tattooed our skins  
And grant us thrones instead of the chains that choked our throats like pious priests.

Our kins crawled in the belly of the Atlantic,  
Yet "they" came back for more,  
Ridding our villages of the plague,  
(Yet worthy enough to infest "their" plantations and chimney tops)

Our melodies went unheard,  
And the restless spirits of our ancestors still roam the Mediterranean, seeking solace.  
But we are as strong as Kilimanjaro,  
Roaring across like the Lion; indomitable  
Adorning our rightful suits like our equals,  
We will reclaim our stories  
And, unlike Jericho, our resilience will not be breached.

# FORGETTING AND **OBLIVIOUS**

Odirile Aubrey  
Botswana

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I sit in my mind's crevices  
And witness all I now know to be true

My mother's tongue  
Squarely drummed out of me

My father's strength  
Sapped from within my bones

My ancestors resolve  
Driven from every fiber of my being  
I am drawn from my reverie

And behold all that I hoped wasn't true  
Our homeland's purity  
Violated in ways the sun weeps at

Our names corrupted  
Changed to echo their conquests

Our stories twisted  
Filtered through soiled sieves

Our entire identity  
Forced out of our sight by their yokes

I sit in the chasms of my psyche  
Lamenting the undoing of my people...  
Consigned to oblivion.



# Short Stories



ALWEIWEI  
MODERN FORMS

Wolfgang Iser  
The Act of Reading

Wolfgang Iser  
The Act of Reading

THE ART OF HISTORY  
Main Ray

DANIEL LIBESKIND  
KEITH GORDON MATERIAL ECONOMY

ALBERT CAMUS  
The Stranger

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# YOUR PEOPLE

Mathew Ntulwe  
Kenya



We had congregated at our local pub, to sum up the just concluded 2017 general elections, and not everyone seemed to be in a pleasant mood. For the past few days, one could smell the political tension everywhere, especially around our table. Having grown up together

and attended the same High School, the six of us were inseparable. We referred to each other's mothers as 'mum', we broke our virginities at the same time – the same estate girl – and we had experienced the mischief of smoking our first cigarette together. The



estate community loved our friendship and the chief occasionally used us as an example while brokering peace between conflicting tribes in the estate. 'Why can't grownups behave like those six boys?' was a quote the chief used when addressing the intertribal commune.

We were seated around a table laden with alcohol apart from Ali's bag of khat. Being a Muslim, Ali didn't drink but he loved hanging around us as we recounted our childhood escapades. Kipchoge, the successful Nandi businessman was in a jubilant mood buying us drinks to celebrate the success of his tribesman. There was the Luyha Makokha, a failed law student who made it to the University but the only bar he knew was our local pub. Next to him was the ever-loud Luo scholar Otieno, a political science student. Mutua, the humble Kamba and my business partner in our slow-growing IT Company sat humbly by my side. He wasn't a heavy tippler but couldn't resist pushing it to the limit when we coaxed him. At home, he was the drunken 'McGregor'

when it came to facing his 'Mayweather' wife Nduta.

"You people will ruin this country!" shouted Otieno while pointing a finger at Kipchoge.

I grabbed my glass of vodka and gulped it down to avoid being pulled into the conversation. Mutua and Makokha both pretended to be busy with their iPhones while Ali sat secretly recording the drama on his phone with a stick of khat dangling from his mouth.

"Your people are thieves!" added Otieno as he diluted my drink with showers of spittle from his mouth. "We know that you have rigged the election," he added while waving his hands in frustration.

"You know what Otieno?" asked Kipchoge. "Your people need to become men and accept defeat. Only men who have faced the knife are men enough to accept defeat," he added invoking laughter from Makhoka, Ali, and Mutua. I couldn't join the merriment because Otieno and I were from the same Luo community.

"If it is all about the male anatomy, why do your women get married to us?" he asked grinning. I concurred with him, stood up, and high-fived him in triumph. "Your men can not satisfy your women," he continued as he sipped his beer. "You know what I mean because your sister is married to this handsome brother of mine from the lakeside," he added while slapping me on the back.

I ignored Otieno and took another swig from my glass. Kipchoge was my 'brother-in-law'. He had introduced me to his sister during my college days and it had led to a 'come we stay and see what happens situation'. I had wanted it to be a one-night stand at first but my respect for Kipchoge and the drinks on Fridays made me get attached to Chebet.

"Otis, please stop," I ordered as I watched him squirm uncomfortably in his seat.

"Sometimes I tend to think that you have also taken their oath," said Otieno as he gave me a look that would have made Judas give back the 30 pieces of silver and



bare witness for Jesus. Kipchoge didn't seem concerned as he took his glass and stood up "I want to toast to our victory and hope that these people," he said while pointing his glass at Otieno, "may as well go to h..."

Hardly had he finished toasting when Otieno stood up and hit the glass from Kipchoge's hand spewing the liquor over Ali. Mutua tried to hold back Otieno with difficulty while I restrained Kipchoge who had now taken a boxing stance ready to battle it out with Otieno. Makokha the lawyer stood up to assist the puny Mutua as it seemed obvious that the burly Otieno would break loose from Mutua's meek hold. Finally, Otieno being overpowered by the two threw in the towel.

"Let go!" he screamed as he straightened his shirt. "You people cannot keep on oppressing us just because you run the economy," he added as he started heading towards the exit. "You!" he shouted pointing at me. "You are a disgrace to your people. And as for you Kipchoge, keep stealing and looting from these other people he said while pointing at Makokha, Mutua, and Ali. "People who cannot stand up for themselves let alone buy themselves a drink," He stormed out of the pub leaving the four of us exchanging glances. Ali stood up mumbling curses in Arabic hoping that Allah would ensure that Otieno did not make it home as we contemplated over what had just happened.

"How am I going to explain this haram to my wife?" he asked while wiping his face with a handkerchief and staring at us demanding an explanation. "The problem with

you people is that you cannot handle your drink," he added as he checked if his phone had been damaged.

"What do you mean by you people?" asked Mutua raising an eyebrow at Ali.

"I mean you Kaffirs," replied Ali as he spat out his khat. "If you cannot drink in peace, why don't you try chewing khat for relaxation?" he suggested trying to ignore the stare he was receiving from Mutua.

"This terrorist has the audacity of calling us Kaffirs." slurred Mutua. "What kind of man steps into a bar and still claims to be a pious Muslim?"

"I think Mutua is right. You can't call us Kaffirs while your religion condones killing," retorted Makhoka.

Ali who was about to put a fresh stick of khat into his mouth burst out laughing and took a sip from his bottle of soda.

"Finally, someone has discovered his profession," he exclaimed. "In a bar instead of a courtroom," he said tittering.

"That is foolish coming from a person who comes from a region in Kenya where two out of ten people are educated," fired Makhoka. This threw Mutua into a frenzy of laughter as he picked up his drink and toasted Makhoka mocking Ali.

"Laugh now little man, Ali attacked Mutua. "We all know in a few hours to come Nduta will be knocking those teeth off."

Angered, Mutua lunged for Ali's throat. Ali, who was sober stood up and evaded Mutua making him fall on the table spilling

the drinks. The Somali warrior in Ali kicked in and he backed up beckoning Mutua to get up. Mutua stood up shook himself and glared at Ali. He knew he didn't stand a chance against the Somali so he dusted himself and made to go home. Makokha stood up and supported Mutua as they headed towards the exit.

"That is why your people are a minority of terrorists and nothing good will ever come from your region," Mutua spat at Ali as they left towards the exit. Kipchoge and I sat there staring at Ali as he picked up his bag of khat and made a point of leaving.

"I can't take this anymore," he said as he collected his bunch of khat. "I would rather go and chew khat with my Muslim brothers and not around a bunch of kaffirs," he said as he left the two of us bemused.

Kipchoge beckoned to the barmaid to clear up the mess and ordered one bottle of beer. I looked at him amazed because I was out of vodka too. Noticing this, he turned to me.

"So, you are going around telling people about your sexual prowess with Chebet?" he asked with a face expecting an answer if I was expecting a drink from him.

"Look bro that is utter nonsense," I almost pleaded for the sake of a shot of vodka. "You know Otieno and his stupidity," I almost begged until I realized that this was nonsense. 'Why should I beg for a drink from this Nandi just because I was sleeping with his sister?'

"Go to hell," I hissed at him as I staggered towards the exit. On my way out, I couldn't

help overhearing a conversation between two old men seated at a table near the exit.

"I watched these boys growing up and they were like brothers. Nothing could separate them. Now they are grown up and they have realized that they are different. Politics belongs to the devil."

Curious, I looked at the table. Seated comfortably behind the table was Chief Kairu nodding his head solemnly as he urged his friend to take another one for the road.

# UNSHAKEN ROOTS

Favour Aniemeke  
Nigeria



A soft breeze blew across Utica Avenue, Brooklyn. Windows chattered as they clicked, creating rhythms to the ear. Utica's old walls, broken tiles, and cracked concrete clearly reflected the lives of the people who lived there. It stank of homelessness, stray dogs, and poverty, mostly among Africans who had forgotten their roots, their cultures,

and had firmly clung to the trends of New Yorkers. The fish had forgotten the waters that stirred its growth and made it strong. It had renounced its culture, language, and even its hair color. Only a few differed, upholding their culture with dignity, passing it on to the next generation. One of these Africans was Akin, a 32-year-old man of great

valor. He held onto his culture and traditions fiercely. He refused to let them go. He refused to let distance be a barrier. He believed that the ways of his ancestors should not go extinct, nor should his mother tongue.

Akin sat on the balcony, arms spread wide, gazing outside his apartment. His thoughts wandered, soaring across the oceans, miles away to his hometown—his roots. He could feel the warm embrace of the village stream, the market square—he could hear chattering, exchanged greetings: “Ekaaro, Aje a ya o!” in Yoruba. He remembered how children would greet their parents—males would prostrate, and females would kneel. He smiled. Okaka in Ibadan was so homely and welcoming. The culture was specific yet beautiful. His thoughts drifted, and he could hear his mother’s voice: “Wake up! Wake up! Only lazy men sleep at this hour. Go help your father.” He would go help his father mould clay at the riverbank. Oh, how his hands spoke perfection at such a young age! Clay—the base of his craft—became

his friend. The sun aided the process, quickening it. His mind was far away until he felt a touch. It was his daughter, Omosewa, kneeling as she greeted, “Ekaaro Baami.” The Yoruba culture had become a strong foundation in his home. It didn’t fade from his memory easily. This culture had sculpted him into the man he had become, and he would pass it to the next generation. His wife, Wunmi, was also a strong shoulder to lean on.

After morning prayers, Akin set out to work. He worked in a bottling factory, a mile away from home. As he walked across the vibrant streets of New York, filled with people chasing their dreams and cultures blending, the city came alive. People chattered as they walked. Honking horns could reawaken the ears of the deaf, and wailing sirens sounded like moving bells as street performers added to the hullabaloo.

In this concrete jungle, Akin walked daily. His footsteps spoke of resilience—swift and sleek. Passion and determination radiated through his body. His resilience

made him work tirelessly, even when others felt he was pushing too hard. He would always say, “I didn’t come to count stars in New York.” This diligence earned him visible recognition from his superiors. Akin was different. He worked with passion and became a shining light among others. After two weeks of assessment, Akin was promoted.

What most people didn’t know was his ability to sculpt. In his home, in the far-right corner, lay his pillar. He would head there immediately after dinner. Even when he worked double shifts, the relentless fire within him kept pushing. His father’s words echoed in his mind: “Never forget the son of whom you are; the fire goes through the clay for perfection.” This room took him on a journey whenever he stepped into it. The sweet fragrance of his hometown overwhelmed him. Clay, his old friend, welcomed him as they moulded beautiful pieces together. Each sculpture bore an essential mark with symbolic motifs. They looked ancient, with a touch of modernity. The symbols



spoke of life, power, and stability. Some had scarification patterns and tribal marks, representing the beauty of the Oyo people. Accompanying these traits were the crown (Ade)—a prominent symbol of authority in Oyo, worn by the Alaafin—horse tails, the staff of office (Opa Ase), royal beads (Ileke), elephant tusks (Ekutu), the drum (Gbedu), and the sword (Obe).

The sculpture room held hidden glory. Akin decided to share it with the world. He began showcasing his art through various platforms: the digital space, fundraising, and meeting various organizations for sponsorship. Some called him archaic, others labeled him a madman. He was shocked that the people mocking him were Africans. What had happened to their culture, their heritage? Had it all been shoved under the table? He pitied them. They had forgotten their “ori iran”—their roots. They wandered aimlessly like a river without a source.

Back in his home, he looked up at the sky. A sweet breeze blew. He believed his ancestors were behind him. Days

after seeking sponsorship, some rejected his proposal, while others wanted to exploit his talent. He bluntly refused. His neighbors constantly called him a fool, but he agreed, “I am a fool—a smart fool.”

After a while, “Form Forge,” a sculpting company, sent him a mail expressing their interest in projecting his work. Akin was elated. He beamed with joy as he shared the good news with his family, and they celebrated together. Months later, Akin had transformed. He dined and wined with wealth, yet humility remained his watchword. He greeted both the young and old as he passed by. People in Utica began to imitate his ways. Their cultures were re-awakened, and they began to incorporate their heritage into their families. Akin became a role model to many. His pottery presence mirrored exclusivity in various media outlets. Akin had established a showroom where his pieces were displayed. People knew that his pottery was not just beautiful but also deeply rooted in tradition and culture. He had left a legacy for the new genera-

tion.

As Akin’s reputation grew, so did his impact. Amidst his pieces, Akin stood proudly. His art spoke volumes. He felt a sense of pride and fulfillment. He knew he had made a difference. With a warm smile, he gazed at the bustling New York City, knowing his legacy would live on.



# NOW THAT YOUR LOVE IS BLACK

Afia Boatema  
Ghana

When you were leaving for America, you heard a lot about green cards. You heard about the exhausting stories of how people, especially Africans, use white people to obtain their green cards. And you had convinced yourself that never for once would you use any white dude for such an endeavour. Because such things make you pale as hell. And because of that, you searched for a picture of a white dude on Google, then you took a kitchen knife. Staring at the picture while bending the knife into your chest, you began to think about how your ex jilted you, and the hard-forgotten hurts started coming back into your heart, tipping your chest with the tip of the knife and starting to drive it into it. The pain of your stab, mixed with the flourishing hurt of your once failed relationship cemented your hatred for this white innocent dude and the thousand others you are yet to meet. It was your way to stay committed to the ethics of your journey before leaving for America.

You arrived in America. It was during the

winter season. And you had no car. Your feet were the pity. Because even after catching the train, you still had to walk three miles before reaching your workplace. Sometimes you cry upon arrival. Especially when you think about how easy it seemed in your country even in your hardship. You were only a dishwasher at the hotel, but it was so tedious. Your back had started hurting like a bird suffering from a knee injury. Your fingers had started crinkling; the detergents were so strong your black Palms were cracking.

You could have died but this dude showed up. A lanky white 22-year-old boy who had a car. He was your supervisor. You also heard he was the son of the CEO of the hotel. He was an ordinary dude. The point is all the white dudes you've seen so far in America have always turned out ordinary. They don't have the blue hot eyes, endowed pacts and well-statured figures like those you have been watching on Netflix. "Hello." You had closed and were getting ready to

leave when you heard him from behind. You turned. "I noticed you use the subway trains, but you have to walk miles to catch them all the time. But you don't have to anymore because I can drop you every day." He spoke. Your ears erected like to say 'Come again, sir.' And he read it on your face. "I can drop you. Come on." "Sir..." You hesitated "Collins." He said smiling, beckoning you to come along. And just like that, you followed. It was a four-wheel drive. Black and too big for a 22-year-old boy.

You sat very quietly. It happened that you were in your head asking all the questions for which you couldn't hear him to respond to any of the questions he had been asking you. It wasn't until you felt his icy palm on the back of your left palm you turned, smiled sheepishly and uttered a shameful 'sorry.' From the time you sat down to the time you stepped out of the car; he had told you everything about himself. He confirmed his mother owned the hotel. His father used to be a politician until he ran mad during one of his campaign rallies, so he

was currently at the psychiatry. He is in law school but every time he is on break, he comes around to take charge so that his mother can go and be with his father. You sympathized with him and even when you saw his tears coming to hug his cheeks, you quickly reached out for a tissue for him. And he smiled as he accepted the gesture. Immediately, you felt you could be happy about something now even though you didn't have a car. Because your father was still strong and well and not at a psychiatry hospital, he was only a cocoa farmer, but he was healthy. Even though your mother was a CEO, she wasn't a hotel CEO; she was the CEO of a fast-food joint. "Thank you." You expressed with your big smile as you shut the car's door. You were truly grateful.

A friendship quickly started budding forth. You and Collins started spending a lot of time together. He changed your position. You became the girl at the reception. So you also realised he was a kind, sweet human; yes, he didn't pretend as if you weren't African and very

dark and that meant nothing at all to him because black isn't supposed to be plain, right? Sometimes, his words are so fallible you can read through them, making you know that you may not get to be his girlfriend because his family wouldn't accept you even if he accepted your black love.

On your part too is a crisis. The last time you spoke to your mother and told her everything he told you about himself, she warned you to be careful. Because you cannot marry into a family of mad people. You tried to explain, but your mother wouldn't take it. She kept to her warning. "You are African. Before your generation, our husbands were searched for us because of some of these things. If a family has any chronic ailment like madness or epilepsy, we are forbidden to marry a man from that family." Your mother has always reminded you of this identifying trait, but it was just that you had seen love and you were desperately considering what love is telling you.

On the other hand, there were your travelling ethics.

But with this white dude, you knew you love him; it wasn't for the sake of a green card. And you thought it would be easy until you saw them together.

You were closing; you were getting ready to leave when you saw them approaching. A tiny lady filled his arms; she was so clingy, and it was beautiful because they seemed perfect in all ways. "Hello, Amoanimaa." He was an expert at mentioning your name. You responded but with a bitter smile "I am sorry; I won't be able to drop you home today. My girlfriend and I have a very special date. I sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused."

And you said it was fine and that you would be okay, but you knew that inside of you was a raging chaos. Your life would become harder. Now you will be more miserable. But you will pray. You will ask God to take every tiny girl in the life of Collins away.

Crazy? Anyway...

You didn't go to work. It was your off day. You had done yourself a good pity

party and were trying to rest your eyes when you heard a knock on your door. It was Collins. He was a total sight of dejection and you felt pity for him at once. He looked like someone who had been rolling on the floor crying. His suit was dampened, and he seemed like a wretch. You helped him inside. You offered him water and he declined. "I heard that Africans have witch doctors and they are capable of treating madness, do you know of any?" This question spoke poorly to you. Then it built a sudden rage in you. "What do you mean?" You asked with your fumbling lips "You could probably get me a witch doctor who can treat my father's madness because Elsie says she won't marry me if my father doesn't recover. Elsie is also an African but only that she was born and bred here, but even so, when we went to see her super rich family and upon hearing that my father was mentally deranged, they bowed their heads and raised them only to say they were sorry."

You grew cold. Pain rushed subtly through your chest, just like the pain you felt

when the knife grazed your skin. Should you kiss him to show how far you're willing to go to be with him? Or should you call your mother and ask her to find a witch doctor for him, so that after curing his father, he can go on with his wedding plans with Elsie while you sit in America, hating every white dude—but this time, for a real reason?

Maybe you should let the African witch doctor cure his father, hoping that he recovers but only with his left brain working, just enough to recognize you—the African girl he wants his son to be with.

You picked up your phone and dialled your mother's number. You might soon become Mrs. Whyte.





Liza Chuma Akunyili  
@iamlizachuma

# GONE TOO SOON

Just because I like a piece of writing does not mean it is the best thing I can produce. Just because my editor cannot see my vision does not mean they are myopic.

Last month, we spoke about ignorance and how we can leverage it to be better writers and creatives.

This edition, I want us to look at ways our creativity dies a sudden death.

I have been around the

mental health conversation long enough to hear and see some level of activism and one of the disadvantages of it is that people are quick to excuse bad habits under “traumatic response”. Baby, I love you but I am not about to end up in therapy because you will not get your acts together. Let us set this record straight!

Among writers, it is the pressure to always have something deep going on

in a piece of writing to show connection to society. The problem with this pressure is that we are beginning to create poor work laced with huge emotions (that feel superficial).

We must write for our time but we must also write from who we are. When the conversation is no longer a hot button topic, would we remember you were once creative?

In the fashion industry, there is something called

a trend. The Cambridge dictionary defines a trend as a general development or change in a situation or in the way that people are behaving. With trends, you go in the prevalent direction. The reason you don't write in Elizabethan English is because it's no longer trendy. Yet, we still read and study Shakespeare!

What is it about our trendy writing that is murdering our art? It is too generic! It has no presence (and I speak to myself). A few years back, I was told of a poetry compilation that launched and upon reading it, first it was the same sad theme, but next were the letters, no flow, no figures of speech, nothing. The anthology felt like it was slapped together in one weekend.

### **Our Problems**

*We've traded work for ease.*

When an editor reviews our work, we simply walk up to the next one who just wants money. When

a publisher highlights an error or a lack of connection, we simply publish it ourselves. We have an I-will-do-it-myself mindset. Yes, these people can be annoying gatekeepers of the industry. Yet, there are people who sincerely care about the craft. 3 editors, 10 reviewers, and 20 readers can't possibly be all mad.

Yes, your work has an audience and you might have to find them but you need to be open to the assessment that says "this is crap".

The first time an editor scrutinized my work, I remembered questioning if I knew what I was doing. A few years later, I let another editor review a 12-line poetry of mine and after about five or six reviews, I remember reading it and seeing my work clearly without all the embellishments I used to cover my fear.

We cannot be creatives who fear the work of cre-

ativity. Yes, sell your work and make a truckload of money but you best create something that won't be gone too soon.

*We want to constantly produce bestsellers*

Best sellers many times are not the result of the writing but the result of the marketing team. A great marketing plan puts your book, your poem, your play, your song in the right bookshops, on the right shows, the right stages and on the best streaming platforms. But after the marketing team has done their work and the sales team has received the check and your publisher has mailed you your money, then comes the real results - the people's review.

Were people tricked into buying? Was this a waste of time? Was this poorly edited? Did the marketing team forget to tell us there were many loopholes in the work?

If you watch movies, you've seen advertisements for

the sequel of a movie you loved. With your excitement, you bought tickets and even got extra for your friends only to watch the entire storyline get murdered in this “sequel”. The likelihood that they almost ruined your favourite movie is high. The likelihood that you will not trust their next advertisement is higher.

Dear Affluent Author, it’s okay to release your work when you don’t trust it to be a bestseller. Just don’t trick people into thinking this is better than anything you’ve ever made.

*We always want to create on trend*

A bane of content creation in 2024 are trends. Yet, trends are the reason the most unlikely artists succeed; a poem read on Instagram draws on two million listeners, an extract of a story read on TikTok drives a thousand people to check out the author and even mass distribute pirated copies, etc. The

name of anyone can go viral overnight.

Yet, the night does pass and people want more. Unfortunately, the trend that sold us to the people cannot keep us with the people as human experiences are constantly changing.

Dear Affluent Author, I beg you to please explore other genres of writing like I’ve said in previous editions but please also be consistent. Be consistent in language, in persona, in style, in delivery - choose your consistency. Let us find your work in fifty years-time and study the peculiarities of it. Create work younger writers can sit down to deconstruct and reconstruct years from now. If you merely write for social media, your work will be gone too soon.

For example: If you write an anthology about grief, people in a happy place will nod and walk away yet someone grieving would feel seen. However, they would not always

be grieving which means your anthology may not be needed by that person in six months but you would have created something that almost everyone at one point can relate to.

Now that you know, do better. Write and market it to posterity.

As you write this month, stay powerful and profitable. Cheers!!!



# WSA Magazine

# REVIEW

*October 2024 Edition*

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OCTOBER 2024 EDITION

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# THE SPECIAL CHILD

## IN CLASS 6A

A Children's Literature by  
Munachim Frank-Dobi, Nigeria

**Reviewer**

Funmi Richards  
(Nigeria)



The Special Child in Class 6A focuses on Nora, a student excelling in Mathematics and Science but struggling with reading due to dyslexia, a condition that sets her apart from her classmates.

This contrast isolates Nora, highlighting the ignorance surrounding learning disabilities. Her classmates mock her, underscoring humans' even little humans' speed to shun what we cannot fathom, while Mr. Agbeko, her teacher, shows kindness. Redemption is the central theme, depicted through Nora's journey from being ridiculed to being celebrated for her unique abilities. The story also explores sub-themes of acceptance, inclusion, and the struggles faced by those with learning disabilities.

Foreshadowing hints at Nora's deeper struggles, while her misspelt yet heartfelt poem symbolises her hidden talents, highlighting the theme of misunderstood creativity. Imagery, such as Nora sitting alone under the

orange tree, reinforces her isolation, while irony is employed when her classmates initially laugh at her poem but later celebrate her when they learn of her dyslexia.

The language used in the story is simple and accessible, appropriate for children's literature. There is a clear emotional tone, especially when describing Nora's feelings of isolation and later joy. The misspellings in Nora's poem are a deliberate choice, highlighting her struggle with dyslexia but also her poetic talent, creating a powerful contrast. It would be great to further develop the plot into a Bildung Roman, then it could be explored as a coming-of-age story.

It reminds me of the 2007 Indian film Taare Zameen Par which also helped raise awareness about dyslexia. Shedding light on the importance of compassion and understanding in fostering a supportive environment for children with learning differences.

# MONDAY EVENING

## 1950

A Creative Non-Fiction by  
Carla Chait, South Africa

**Reviewer**

Francis Mkwapatira  
(Malawi)



This piece of creative nonfiction is an evocative portrayal of a family's history, weaving together personal memories with historical narratives. The author paints a vivid picture of generational perseverance through their grandparents' immigration journeys and explores how these experiences shaped the family's values. The narrative emphasises familial bonds, heritage, and survival against the backdrop of displacement.

Monday Evening 1950 stands out for its ability to blend intimate family moments with significant historical events. The author's detailed recollections—such as the small wedding ceremony in London and the later development of professional careers in Johannesburg—are juxtaposed with the weighty history of immigration from Lithuania and the turmoil faced by earlier generations. This dual focus on personal and collective memories adds depth to the narrative, linking the family's prosperity to their difficult origins.

The descriptive style brings old photographs to life, enabling the reader to picture the author's grandparents in various stages of their lives. Visual elements like a cigarette in hand or a light-coloured dress with polka dots add layers to the personalities of these characters. The piece is further enriched by the author's reflections on how the past has influenced their generation, addressing themes of legacy and resilience.

However, the story feels slightly disjointed at times as it shifts between generations and narrators. While these shifts highlight changes in the family's identity, they occasionally disrupt the flow, making it harder for the reader to follow the timelines. Despite this, the story's emotional core remains strong, particularly in the final section, where the grandfather's letter symbolises hope and renewal after years of hardship.

# SUNRISE

A Flash Fiction by  
Christiana Agboni, Nigeria

**Reviewer**  
Akuei Adol  
(South Sudan)



Sunrise is a thought-provoking piece of flash fiction that explores the depths of human despair. It follows Ojotule, a woman who, after thirty years of relentless loss, faces the ultimate temptation to give in to her grief.

The opening scene, set at 3 a.m. beneath a brooding sky, reflects her inner turmoil—her heart heavy with sadness and emptiness. The narrative then unfolds, taking us through her sorrowful journey as she reflects on the deaths of her family members, one by one, until she stands at the edge of a river, ready to surrender.

Agboni's story employs brevity, intensity, and emotional impact. The sentences are sharp, infused with powerful imagery. The metaphor of "spear grass tearing at tender hands" illustrates Ojotule's suffering, while the river, described as "deep and dark as the sky," vividly mirrors her internal struggle. Every word is purposeful, creating a haunting portrayal of grief.

However, the central theme extends beyond grief; it is also about redemption. Ojotule has endured the harrowing experience of watching her family die, leaving her without hope. Yet, the rising sun at the climax of the story shifts the tone, signifying that redemption can come unexpectedly, even after years of suffering.

The sun rising earlier than ever symbolises a new beginning for Ojotule, suggesting that perhaps her pain is not without purpose—that even in loss, there is a chance for healing. This twist transforms the story from one of despair to one of redemption, offering Ojotule a glimmer of hope when she least expects it. The twist is effective, subverting the reader's expectation of tragedy with a moment of unexpected grace.

In short, Sunrise provides a powerful reflection on resilience, encouraging readers to hold on, as even the most broken souls can find their way back to the light.



# REDEMPTION

A Poem by  
Jane Frances, Nigeria

**Reviewer**  
Akuei Adol  
(South Sudan)



“Redemption” is a powerful poem that explores the human experience of guilt, imperfection, spiritual weariness, and the offer of unconditional grace. It brings to mind Maya Angelou’s quote: ‘You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated.’

The persona in Jane’s poem is someone grappling with the consequences of their actions. They confess their shortcomings and acknowledge the destructive weight on their soul. A second figure, though indirectly present, represents a divine being who offers love and salvation without hesitation.

The poem centres on the persona’s spiritual crisis. They feel overwhelmed by the world and distanced from purity. Despite their crushing sense of guilt, they are met with an outstretched hand of love, offered by the divine figure. This hand symbolises unconditional forgiveness and grace.

The poem’s free verse structure, free from formal rhyme, mirrors the chaotic state of the persona’s inner world, where thoughts and emotions swirl without order. The language is rich in metaphor, particularly in phrases like “tainted hands” and “prints of destruction,” which convey the persona’s sense of moral failure.

The mood shifts from despair, as the persona wrestles with their identity and failures, to hope when the possibility of redemption becomes clear. The tone begins heavy with regret but transitions to one of lightness, hope, and eventual redemption.

In conclusion, the poem teaches that no matter how deep we fall into guilt, grace will always raise us. This message echoes Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan, which also addresses the struggle between earthly temptations and the call to spiritual salvation.



# SECOND CHANCE

A Short Story by  
Thirikwa Nyingi, Kenya

**Reviewer**  
Rita Tembo  
(Zambia)



Second Chance is a short story by Kenyan writer Thirikwa Nyingi. Centred on the theme of redemption, Nyingi tells the story of Mutero, a football coach on the verge of professional collapse, who is recruited to coach a high school team aiming to win the continental cup – and almost fails.

The narrative begins with Mutero's despair after a devastating defeat, setting a sombre tone that sharply contrasts with the jubilation following a later victory.

The tension between Mutero and his son, Jack, raises the personal stakes, highlighting a fa-

ther-son dynamic complicated by expectations and performance. Their evolving relationship is an intriguing subplot, offering a clearer glimpse into Mutero's home life.

Vivid imagery, particularly during the storm and the match, enriches the setting, making it relatable for sports fans and those familiar with the pressures of competition.

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