

## *Fifth Faculty Festival – Shortcut to (y)our heritage*

### *Entries for creative writing: Short-short stories*

#### **Destination: Limbo**

by Selasi Akrong

A kaleidoscope of thoughts surge through my mind, they tug at me. I'm in between worlds. I am neither here nor there. There is a constant struggle to keep these worlds at bay. Without me they cannot co-exist and without them I do not exist. What's a girl to do?

#### **What is this love?**

by Mzimasi Mabokwe

I fell so deep its ultra vires. Failed to see I could run insolvent from giving my love, but why did I expose myself to such for who will rehabilitate me. I fear for my life, if this love is justifiable. I found love and I abide to my love...

#### **Transformation**

by Marcia Mashele

Violated  
Ignored  
Discriminated  
Criticized  
No voice  
No audience  
Where are only rights  
Oh!  
Actually  
I mean  
Mine  
Yours  
Us  
Our human rights

I needed one  
I demanded one  
Asked for one  
Struggled for one  
Voice for one  
We all needed  
A thing  
Mine  
Yours  
Our  
Human rights

Finally granted

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### **Jou Africansburg**

by Karabo Mosienyane

Fair enough they may have the Big Apple  
but we have the big seed  
that stems through the branches of the veins of the body that produces the  
Golden Fruit  
that reminds us that even though we are rooted in the African soil  
we are not limited to it.

### **Heritage**

by Daniel Rafferty

Through her I saw myself – self as other.  
History migrating like the ducks on the wall.  
First in form then in thought.  
The tweaked fine structure directs the compass eternal.  
The old, stirring porridge for the new, nourishment through the ages.  
This wooden spoon.  
Sole inheritance.  
Full enchantment.  
Left unwanted.

### **I Give Thanks**

by Yukthema Sibran

A hundred and fifty one years ago young Indians arrived in the magical land of South Africa. As indentured laborers their hearts ached to taste the sweet freedom that this new and unexplored land had to offer. Today I thank them for their awe-inspiring sacrifices that gave me my freedom.

### **Ikhaya Lami...**

by Thubelihle Shange

Its beauty lies in its rivers that flow from the Drakensburg Mountains  
Rivers that flow into the Indian Ocean  
Where the stories of honorable kings and legendary warriors still echo  
All over the World  
This place they call KwaZulu-Natal, is the place I like to call my home.

### **My Heritage in 50 Words**

by Solami Mbatha

Heritage is about being an individual in a larger group known as society, it is about embracing each others differences because our differences make us the wonderful rainbow nation that South Africans is. My heritage is where I come from, where I am right now and where I am going.

### **The Road Less Travelled**

by Alet Uys

Awakening, still enclosed by the concrete tunnel. A petite red rose stretching through a crack. Trying to sit up. A healthy, happy rose it seems. Approaching the nearest highway, foot by foot, the rose still in mind. Energised to start the road, weary of its outcome.

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## **Kaleidoscope**

by Talent Maturure

My life is like a kaleidoscope or colour-spectrum. I'm a woman, sister, daughter and aspiring lawyer, all in one. Ever grateful for my bi-ethnic background, a Kalanga mother and Zimbabwean father. This life's journey has been bitter yet sweet. Through it all I stand proud. I'm a phenomenal African woman.

## **My Life In 50 Words**

by Jeandré van Zyl

My life is a story of black and white, love and hate, truth and lies. And even though every contradiction has a fight within me – the fights are obsolete. Because life alone is a fight itself and the peace it brings is only temporary. My life is nowhere, but There.

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**Chris Vick**

by Lufuno Ndouvhada

This is a told story by a well-known spin doctor, journalist, activist, advisor Mr Chris Vick. Here he tells me about his first journalism internship big assignment that he had to do out in the field with his supervisor. I communicated with Mr Chris Vick via emails, blackberry messenger and also in person. He is a white man who almost sounds like he understands the oppression of black people, hahaha. Chris Vick has spent seven years in the government communications environment. He currently runs Black, a communications consultancy. For a profession that is so reflective on the state of the world, South African journalism is sadly remiss in being reflective on the state of itself. This is Mr Chris Vick's perspective on the current - probably temporary - crisis of conscience.

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In the past few years, he has been accused of selling out on journalism and crossing some weird ethical line to become a spin doctor for the great and the good. He has been, well not anymore as he resigned five months ago, was our human settlements minister's advisor, Tokyo Sexwale.

What he went through on the day that he first visited Soweto is what changed his life from being a "typical, ignorant, white, prospective journalist to being a member of the ANC, an activist, from that time until today.

He was part of the struggle, as he says "I am the struggle" hahaha.



Mr Chris Vick's story of 16 June 1980, like he told it.....

In Soweto, the children are crying "In Soweto, the children are crying," they sang. "Fuck off, kaffirs," we replied. It was June 1976, and we were 16. We were sitting outside the Sasolburg post office, and the two young men walking past us were singing softly, in English, to make sure we could hear them. They were singing a hymn in honour of the young black South Africans who had died during protests in Soweto a few days earlier. We showed our usual disdain for all things black. By-products of an apartheid education, we neither knew nor cared for the children crying in Soweto, or for their comrades singing quietly outside the post office.

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Fast forward to four years later, and I was a trainee journalist on a Sunday newspaper.



Errol and I had been sent to cover the third anniversary of the Soweto uprising. As it was a Saturday, we needed to get in and out as quickly as possible in order to file for Sunday's paper. Earlier that week, as part of our research, Errol had taken me to interview Hector Peterson's mother, Dorothy Molefi, at her Soweto home. I was 20 years old and still learning the ropes, and it was my first real visit to a township.

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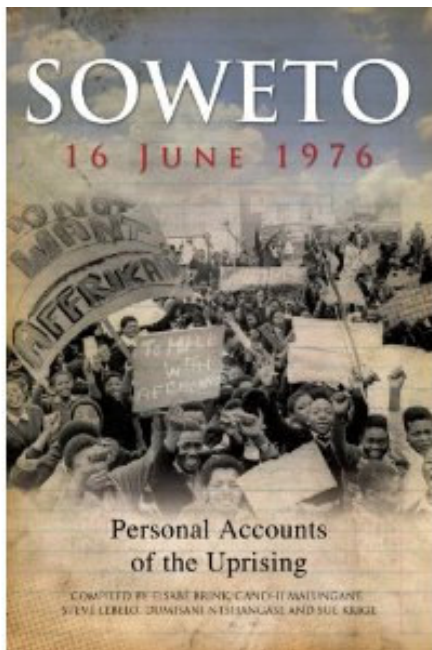
The interview with Mrs Peterson took ages, but it was incredibly moving. Hector's mother spoke of her burden on so many different levels, but every level was littered with pain. There was the generic poverty and misery that almost seemed a way of life in her township, but was so unknown to me. She had no tangible source of income. No real hope of a better life. No sense of any other existence. But her sense of hopelessness was compounded by the particular piercing personal pain

that had come with the loss of a child. She spoke quietly, almost patiently, about how Hector had died. She explained the intense shock and pain of that day, and the hurt of every day that followed it, as she struggled to cope with what it meant to be a black South African woman. The loss was immense, she said. It was a time of despair, of loss, no hope.

I left the interview feeling dizzy, even vacant. It was almost too much to take in. Paramount was an overwhelming feeling of shock at the "quality" of life in a township. A sort of desperation that it could never change, a completely apolitical response to something very political. And yet at the same time I was experiencing a sort of awakening, a sensitization to something that I'd never experienced or participated in and a realization that there were other ways of living. I felt a deep sense of shock about Hector, this kid only a few years younger than me, whom I'd never met. He represented so much to so many, and yet I knew so little about him: a young schoolboy had been shot dead and hundreds others, in one of the largest mass protests in South African history. It had happened less than a hundred kilometres from my own home. He was my peer, albeit at a distance. I hadn't even known his name. I hadn't known about him. I hadn't cared about knowing. Until then.

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Later that week, Errol and I were back in Soweto - this time, part of a small group of journalists who were privileged to be allowed inside Regina Mundi for the commemoration of June 16. There was drama when we first tried to enter the church. At the time, the Black Consciousness movement was custodian of June 16 celebrations and there was visible hostility and agitation at the presence of two white journalists. Errol seemed to be known, though, and managed to convince the event organizers that we had good intentions. We were shown to a spot at the front of the church and told to keep our heads down. We tried to blend in (as much as two white guys in a Black Consciousness meeting can), and were witness to a powerful set of speeches by church leaders, community representatives and student leaders. None of their names meant anything to me then, and the content of their speeches and songs had little more than an emotional impact. But language almost didn't matter. What was palpable was their anger, coupled with a very definite sense of potential power, a sense of moving forward.



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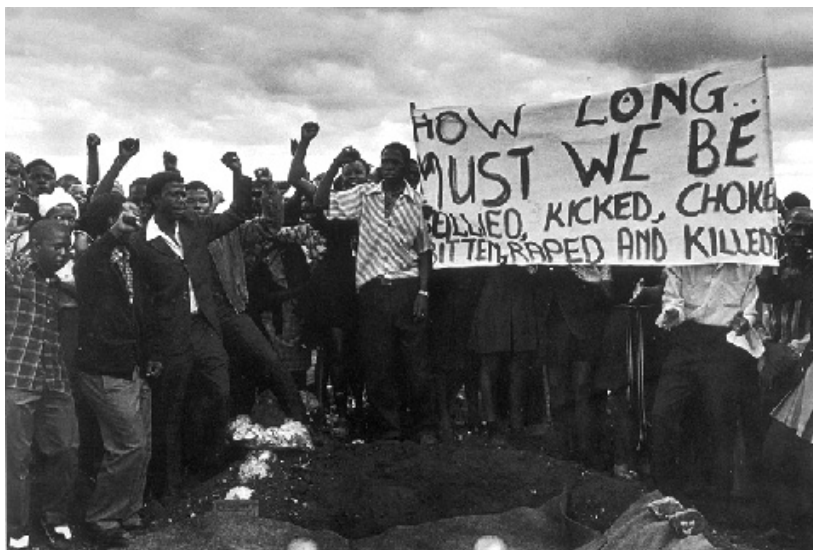
The mood shifted when we left the church. While the numbers had been growing inside Regina Mundi, so had the numbers outside - dozens of armoured police vehicles, Land Rovers mounted with teargas blowers, and what seemed like hundreds of police carrying sjamboks. At first, there was a standoff. On our side of the road, the crowd continued to sing and wave their banners. On their side of the road, the police watched and waited. It carried on like this for a good 10 minutes, the mood rising ever higher on each side of the road. And again, from the people who had been surging forward in church, that sense of potential power. Then, suddenly, the police lost all sense of reason. The Land Rovers moved in, blowing teargas that was mixed with talcum powder to give it weight. It was everywhere, so thick that we couldn't see the second wave of teargas -- this time fired in canisters and aimed specifically at groups of young people outside the church. It's amazing how quickly people adapt and learn. The canisters had hardly hit the ground when the people around me started lighting bits of paper.



Proud posters promising apartheid's downfall were rapidly converted into burners, and passed from protestor to protestor. Kids were lighting up faster than a 60-a-day smoker. I quickly latched on, and lit up too. The third wave was a human one: big, stocky cops wearing riot gear and smashing their way through the crowd with sjamboks and donkey piels. They were incensed, like robocops, and moved like a human machete to clear the area outside the church. I stood stunned next to the car. My eyes were locked with water, and every tear brought more pain. The burning paper just wasn't working quickly enough, and the talcum powder was making it stick to my clothes.

Through the smoke, I could sense and hear people running past us to escape. The cops were getting closer to us, and

I could see the sjamboks flailing. I began to hear the "whup" sound of sjamboks hitting clothes. And there was a thinner, more stinging sound of them hitting skin. As the cops approached, the one closest to me seemed to sense I was different. I have no way of knowing if he thought I was a priest, a journalist, a cop or a freedom fighter. But whatever the case, he saw "one of us" and did something close to a pirouette to ensure my lilywhite body wasn't scarred by his sjambok. It was better footwork than I'd seen on any football field. A sidestep, a moment of grace, agility and elegance that was quite surreal in the midst of all that aggression. And within a second he was back in action, beating the hell out of whoever was black and in front of him.



Errol and I took advantage of a lull after the first attack and bundled as many kids as we could into the back of the car. I seem to remember five, but there could have been more. Young, wounded and black. Faces stung by sjamboks, bodies bruised by donkey piels, they were glad to find a refuge. For us, it felt like the right thing to do - the only thing to do. Cramming that many people into a small hired car has its risks. But they're trivial compared to the risk of cramming that many teargas-coated people into a small

hired car. We sneezed, we coughed, we wept off each other's teargas fumes, we even thought about burning the car's paperwork as we negotiated our way out of the smoke, choking on each others' smells.

Eventually, we made it. The teargas subsided, the road cleared and, in what was something of an anti-climax, we dropped our passengers off with barely a word spoken and headed back to the city. There was calmness, but we didn't really know what to do with it. The people, the smells, had left. But the vivid images of violence remained. Errol went to the office to file his story. As a trainee journalist, I mulled around a bit and then headed for home - in this case, my girlfriend's flat in Hillbrow. I'd barely opened the door when I burst into tears. I just wept, and wept, and wept. It felt like all the anxiety, the anticipation, the confusion and the pain just had to come out. We stood in each other's arms for ages while I wept. It could have been the remnants of the teargas on my jacket, it could have been the violence, it could have been fear. But I wept that day in a way that I will never, ever forget.

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A year later, I took a conscious decision not to do military service in the SADF, which was compulsory for young white boys at the time. Four years later, I was recruited into the ANC and the SACP, and joined an underground propaganda unit. From there, I was to spend another eight years using my journalistic skills to help build ANC propaganda units and, in 1994 -- having voted for the first time -- was deployed into government and spent a total of five years doing my "new national service" as a government communicator, and another two years as a ministerial advisor. If you were to ask me what propelled me into struggle, what compelled me to become an activist, what moved me to join the ANC and the Party and fight for social justice, it was that day in Soweto.



The power of the people. The power of the police. The correctness of the people's protest. The incorrectness of the police's response. The humility of the people. The brutality of the police action. For me, there was to be no choice. Those guys outside the Sasolburg post office had been right: In Soweto, the children were crying.

Except, that one rare night on the 16th of June 1980, there was a young white guy crying in Hillbrow too.





## Chaise

by Alexander Crause

1

For a second one could imagine a silken mirror as the cold, artificial light caught in the many fibres woven strong to achieve such ascension.

The distance spanning between the support and its host would seem a chasm to such explorers, brave and unfaltering as they attempt always with precise perfection journeys to heights unthinkable. Distance meant nothing. Time meant nothing. For where the subject of time is oblivious to it ruling them, that very reign is as pointless as it is superfluous. Time becomes a concept as those imagined in the mind of a child, such realms being foreign to us in any extent, alien in their reach and solemn in their strangeness. Strangeness. *L'étrange qu'est le plus folle*. Mad strangeness, but so perfectly sane in the very reaches that make it strange to the other. So the traveller moves along the gossamer strand, strange adjacent to its otherness, quite odd to that which is different.

Down came the spider, a thing of such innate fear to invade the hearts of other things to make them hated for themselves. It is curious how such a small a thing can shift perceptions of the mighty, where it stays but on its course to inevitable doom through the continuation of life. Life leads to death. Survival then, is death. It passes in oblivion, the spider unable to comprehend that its many eyes and legs and venoms have been placed within it by time itself, its work never finished, for survival is never finished, until death claims the effort of time. Death, the ultimate thief of the work of another. The thief of time.

Down it came, feeling its way by an incomprehensible sensitivity through the light and air and dust. It came to rest on something hard, wooden.

A chair.

Straight lines fused together by all manners of metals and chemicals, violent methods of joining the vivisected limbs of different bodies. Nailed here, glued there, a precise execution of a carpenter whose hands know not what they do, and their owner concurring with their ignorance. He would say to himself he was but doing a job; that his hands were not stained and be done with it.

He would wake up after what sleep he had and forget about the fleeting woe within his heart for his creation. He was only the carpenter he would say.

Only the carpenter indeed.

Standing ominous amidst unsettling fluorescent light was the chair, resembling a tall man crouching down, his back upright, his legs exuberantly bent and the fulcrum of his arms rounded and outstretched in front of him.

Beheaded, footless and unnatural.

Atop his back hung a strange thing, somewhat like a bowl or even the bottom of a light invented by those who would proclaim functionality and style partners in efficiency. It was quite loose, adaptable to the height of its occupant, and had a sponge-like thing as a cohort. Together they formed a terrible and deadly pair. Draped in a rather reckless fashion were other forms of dead things altogether. Dead skin of some animal bred in cages for the purpose of death, their survival monitored to achieve a state perfect for their slaughter. One could say a great kindness has been granted them, having no fear for the unknown and no need for feed, drink or sex. They could live untainted but for a quick, albeit violent, death.

Time is mocked here, its work trodden upon by malicious beings, its masterpieces defiled, raped and broken, becoming pieces of furniture, articles of abuse and items for murder. Time's work becomes carpets and leather, and so is ruined.

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Along crawled the spider on the arm of the chair, disappearing occasionally under the precipice of the wood and be gone for only a moment, brief in its exploration of that unknown for it would always come back up top and continue. Endlessly criss-crossing legs scuttled the creature down the groove of the copse, meeting sometimes with an eye in the timber, giving the idea that behind one's own orb lurks such a very beast, fighting hard to escape that watery gloom ere it succumbs to its own biology and want of air.

Though, it walks but on lumber, sightless lumber.

It seeks a morsel to ensnare, kill and devour, contributing to its survival. To do this it needs to move, always move; be always active. *Tempus fugit*. Thus it moves, from the arm of the chair, up on to its back and down towards the seat, arriving there oblivious to its demise. It cannot hear, though if it could the sounds of the persons arriving through the door of the room where the chair stood would have startled it and given initiative for its evacuation. It cannot hear, alas, and they arrived nonplussed by the existence of the spider, as it was to theirs. They shared their lives in the same space, the same air and atmosphere, yet they know not of each other, whether by ignorance or incapacity.

The space between the door and the chair was traversed quite quickly, and for a while the sight made onlookers forget the circumstance of their summons, for the man that walked alongside his captors had with him an air of sublime release, like his flesh was made of dust and his soul was in danger of slipping out between the granules at any moment.

They sat him down on the wood, ruining the hapless spider which was still scuffling along.

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## 2

With skilful hands they prepared him. They removed his shoes, but left the socks. They were torn, and one could suppose that under different circumstances he would be embarrassed for it. Legs wrapped in trousers were visible through tiny holes that spanned the circumference of the belt now keeping them tight. His arms were half-hidden behind a long shirt of bright orange, it providing the only separation between the living skin and the dead that were now fastened tight around his wrists. His abdomen was similarly encased in a barrier of old and filthy leather.

The ghastly dish protruding from above was fixed atop his head, tousling his hair and giving him the appearance of a boy who was playing some game with his friends, picking out a bowl from his mothers cupboards and fashioning it as a helmet for battle.

Dark eyes watched from beneath that hood, shadowed by thick-set eyebrows which, if he had frowned, would animate and form a well on his forehead to make him look quite concerned. He did not frown, however, but sat silent, yet *pas grave*. The emotions of many years were evident on his face, his skin creased and wrinkled in places where laughter, sadness and anger were manifested as images from within his soul.

He was stunning in appearance, a man of soul and passion.

When the work was finished, they left him there, a vile guest to a vile host. One proceeded to the back of the room, and went on to ready the circuits for the reception of another soul. One wonders if his soul will become part of the current, as the electric impulses from his body are released through the hood and wires and pieces of metal threaded together. Will he succumb to the force of power in such a manner as to adjoin them eternally? When another will in a place so very far from there energise their spaces, will he stand there in the walls, in the room and in their eyes as the lights from the bulb descend upon them? Will he be that light? He might yet be in that light, as others before him. He might yet see himself when he is released.

He might yet be the light.

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They were not alone.

Along the wall sat a great score of people, some with eyes swollen from the expulsion of tears, others with a solemnity gathered from years of tortured contemptuousness intermingled with a sense of morality, unable to hate fully due to their restrictions of a soft voice and sympathy for the wrongdoer. Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you. We must not hate, and forgive, for we want to be forgiven. The Bible binds us to such, they would say. The Bible tells us so. So they sit there, emotions running with them from all corners of the galaxy and back to their convictions, where it is made grey. So they sit there, unable to despise this man, unable to mourn him.

They sit there in solemn sympathy, in mitigated loathing.

A voice spoke. It commanded the man to address for the last time the world, had he something to join to such an address.

He remained silent.

A church man was standing there, his lips moving now fast, now slow as he read. Deep grooves hung to his skin, as if afraid to fall from the head and slap down on the floor in empty heaps. His eyes were wide and blazing, burning as though Jesus Christ himself was presiding over the proceedings. Like Jesus Christ was here, in this room, speaking from the voice of his church man, looking through his eyes and smelling the salty stench of human bodies packed together. The lips moved. The eyes blinked. The nose flared. Faster and faster the muscles worked. Faster and faster his judgements were made. Faster and faster the man fought to speak his christ, his church, his bible. In a sudden movement he slammed shut the bible, the sound echoing through the cavernous room. Christ had gone. The church man left.

The time had now come.

Flickering lights swayed in their momentum from the door that was closed by those who exited just before. The flickering came in short bursts but later became frequent and unceasing. With a distinct sound of a candle being snuffed and glass broken, the bulbs crashed to the floor and the room was plunged into utter darkness. Suddenly there was a great flame, and the spectators threw up their hands to their faces, faces contorted in horrific stares. Though, none as horrific as the man that was now burning in his chair. His hair was already singed, now a black pile of ash on his head. The holes in his socks became gradually bigger as they were burned through. His screams pierced the darkness, as if the vibrations and the agony it conveyed could illuminate the surround. He burned like a pig would burn in a furnace, his fat melting with short bursts and splashing here and there. The skin crumpled like a paper would give way under the force of one's hands and his eyes beheld the flames licking his very flesh. The guards shut down the apparatus, but the time for that had long since passed. The man could do nothing but burn until the wings of sweet Gabriel enveloped him.

And burn he did.

When he could no longer scream, and his body had allowed him a sense of no feeling through its many chemical buffers, it appeared as if he merely sat there, burning. He looked like he was somewhere in space, floating endlessly through the sea of myriad stars and suns. He was there alone, touching nebulae, taunting comets, seeing all from far, far above.

And was dead.

The men had finally managed to extinguish him. Now his body was a leathery pile of blackness, still smoking, still warm to the touch. The flames had burned up his face, placing the nose on a spot where the eye should have been, replacing it altogether. The other was still open, the glassy surface untainted but for it protruding slightly. His lips were retracted, revealing the teeth underneath, scoured to pearly whiteness by the fire. It was like he was smiling, like he had given up his fear and in the last seconds of his life let go of it here and accepted another someplace else.

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The face, grotesque and twisted, was peaceful.

The men came there with lights and took him off, touching him not with their bare hands and looking not at him.

They feared him in death, as they feared him in life.

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A moment of light will last eternities in a memory that was subject to such an event, gleaming brilliant on the blade hilted in his hands. They were quite large, his hands, the fingers long and the wrists broad, twisting skilfully as the craft was executed, flawless through much practice. They worked fast, unstopping and with such mathematical precision.

Clinical. Sublime.

On the floor around him fell with a disgusting flop leathery chunks, sometimes spotted with hair, always fused with gore. He worked in silence, sounding not, hearing not, as if in the vacuum of space.

Yet, at the seemed circumference, what sounds could be heard!

The child screamed quite loud at first, when the blade initiated its vivisection, but as the vibrations tore the material from the throat, blood ran down and it could only gurgle as the decortications continued. And continue it did, until the child was pared and the flesh exposed.

In places, small nuggets would have been removed, opening the very bone to the air. Those pieces of fatty meat were bade to an element, releasing a sickly smell of searing flesh.

He ate it.

At his back a woman sat, her eyes wide and her mouth stretched in a scream that seemed to fill the room with horror. She was silent now, catatonic by the sights and sounds of her child being skinned alive, unable to aid the child, unable to comfort it.

He sat fire to the mutilated corpse of the child.

As the fat in the body squeaked and crackled, he ejected his seed in the inferno, burning his manhood, and fell spent on the floor. Sleep took him then, and he slept well.

He dreamed nothing, only slept in the trappings of his passion, for he was indeed a man of passion.

The body burned.

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#### 5

The chair stood there alone, touched with fire, doused with death. The air was acrid, the dust unsettled.

It is dark now.

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## **Shortcut To Our Heritage**

by Amandla Mugisha Karungi

It is said that without history we are nothing. If we know nothing about our past we are powerless. We are hopeless in the present and we are afraid of the future...

We could take a look at one of the biggest acknowledgements of our own personal history, a birthday. A birthday is a fusion of the past, present and the future. It is a tribute to our heritage. Every year on the date that you were born, in the month that you came into the world, you celebrate that special day. It is not just another important day to mark off on your calendar. It is a reminder that you have grown from what you were the year before. It is a commemoration of what you are now because of what you were before. Sometimes we look to the stars to guide us, to describe our paths and tell us who we are. Sometimes we look to biology and theology to give us answers, because the direction is only as firm as its starting point. We yearn to make sense of our heritage. Yet we still do not know who we are. We do not know how powerful we are.

As a people of a continent called "the dark" for so long, we have a past painted with uncertainty and fear; a history, of darkness and shadows in a dusk that resolves never to give away to daylight. We are the shadows in that darkness. We are no one's. We are nothings. That is what we have been told. We are told who we are, but we do not know who we are. We do not know who we are. And without our history we are, nothing.

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## Death Of A Dream

By Fadzai Madzingira

There was a darkened shadow over Sekuru's face,  
His breathing on its final rungs,  
Yellow-edged eyes swivelled around.  
How had God let him last so long?

"Herbert", he rasped,  
For his son long dead in war.  
I gave him my hand in the hopes of comfort  
And he held and spoke to me in delusional frenzy.  
"Herbert, my son, this cause you fight for,  
This dream you dream of,  
Will be your death.  
Let other men die for such a dream,  
Let older men fight such a fight.  
Other men are not my eldest son."  
He squeezed my hand with what little he had,  
Holding on to the ghost of a dead soldier,  
Pulling on the hem of his phantom son.

My father enters the dark room.  
What little light shows his reddened eyes.  
Bleeding tears for a dying father, a weathered rock.  
Sekuru's eyes swivel to him  
And he reaches out for his son's hand.

"This was not the dream, mwanawangu,"  
He whispered, a voice heavy with death and emotion,  
"It was a freedom to live we wanted,  
It was land to call our own we craved,  
It was dignity in this cursed skin we desired, my son."

My father nods silently, trying to quiet Sekuru.  
The tears begin to form behind the cracked wall.  
And I, in my anguish, wonder if I should not leave,  
But Sekuru's hand, steel in suffering,  
Clasps on to my young arm.  
Anchoring me to all that is he.

"Jimmy, mwanawangu, what happened to the dream?  
You too heard the gunfire not so long ago,  
You too felt the white hand of oppression  
On the back of your not-so-long ago youth.  
I prayed for you, I prayed for your future children.  
Mwanawangu, when did our promise die!"  
Sekuru's words were choked with apology.  
A father in grief of the wrong to his son.  
My lungs were screaming without air;  
Release me!, a frightened voice within cried.

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But Sekuru's hand, age-old bonds,  
Were tight with a history that needed to be told.  
A history I thought I wished to forget,  
A history I knew too uncomfortable to ignore.  
My father's streaming tears were smothered by the silence.  
His face turned away from me in the shame of a man.  
His future burdens as the head of our mourning family  
Already a heavy load on his shaken mind.

"Jimmy, do not forget the dream!  
The dream that Herbert saw so clear.  
The dream that you risked your life dear.  
Tell your children about the dream, my son,  
Tell your children, my son, without shame you must tell them.  
The dream we promised so deeply to you, our children,  
The dream we prayed for and fought for till our knuckles bled.  
The dream we inadvertently signed away,  
Signed away for a reality worse than any known hell.  
The dream that in turn became the burden for you to bear.  
The dream that I hope that your children may see."

The sound of his voice, a sea of all the ages,  
Waves of cold reality whipped against my very soul.  
The blood in my veins, Sekuru's blood, my father's blood,  
My blood pulsed in his clenched fist,  
Rushing to my head and filling my ears with a current,  
An ocean of history, incomprehensibly filled with pain.  
Sekuru's eyes turned to me.  
In the darkness of coming death and the mist of a lost soul,  
I saw clarity and the ghost of a long gone youth  
Hidden under a mask of lost hopes and old age.

"Fadzai, Zhou, mwana waJimmy, blood of my blood.  
Do not be harsh when you think of me.  
We did what we thought was right.  
And though our sins permeate through the stones  
That are the foundations of your life now,  
We only wanted to do the best by you.  
How could we have known...?  
We were wrong but at least we fought.  
Be kind, surely that means something."

At that he released my arm from his fiery grip.  
My skin stung, burning from his touch.  
I stood still, paralysed, confused, unsure,  
I turned to my father for guidance, overwhelmed by truth.  
But he too was looking for his father to guide him  
As he stared at the figure in the bed.  
Baba's tears had left dried paths of salt over his worn face.  
I glanced down to the bed and saw, with shock, pain and relief,  
The sun had finally set on the horizon  
And a new generation ululated in the coming twilight.

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## Discourse Amongst Trees

by Wilhelm P. Preller and Daniel J. Rafferty

*Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees nohow he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, - no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, - my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all: the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me... The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, - master or servant, is then a trouble and a disturbance.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The infinity of Space plays host to a drop of planet which slowly rotates itself towards the glow of its most proximate star. Spiralling down to earth its fingers puncture through the atmosphere and brush across the immediate landscape. The face of which welcomes it as a mother does the promise of a child. Africa is rising, her voice is multitude. What is foreign is made domestic and germinates from seed to sapling. Inspired it expands from slumber the mineral into the organic. Whatever goes down must also go up. Hope is a thing with feathers and its call is cosmic, it breeds its young upon a sturdy branch, from egg to embryo, to fluff, to flight.

Pine:

Through you the light is shattered into shadow, as an oak your arms are everywhere and it canopies my needs!

Oak:

My need is great as my roots grow wide. Yours find sustenance in the deep. And when the sun retires in the winter months my leaves and fruit fertilize the earth and from this you reap.

Pine:

A sunbeam or two when the season is bright does not a healthy tree incite. From you I see the dewdrops shine whenever the summer rain pours down. You sparkle in your prime while I must burrow further down and further down the soil is hard and many stones obstruct the way - my roots are mangled upon descent and such tender parts so scavenged and bent beneath the cold and clammy depths. In those dark chambers my nether parts reside - as if ashamed, they are condemned to hide.

Oak:

Listen, you ungrateful tree, with slender limbs and tiny leaves. I may be guilty of robbing you of light, but does not your nature furnish you with knowledge of the infinite deep... of subterranean mineral wealth and occult knowledge of shapes that you so proudly flaunt from twig to needle and in cone and somehow magically entrust your progeny to the fickleness of the wind? While I must suffer the indignity of critters burrowing into me, scarring and destroying me with slight chance of continuing my legacy.

The oak shuddered and shook its leafy mane in acknowledgment to a wayward gust of wind as the pine creaked in rigid lament.

Leaf drop blankets the forest floor and a fresh veiny specimen is collected and heaved high above the heads of several ants. Nourishment for the colony feeds also the forest basement. The root cellar of the world is a place of secret amazement. Somewhere, deeper down, the Queen stirs - micro-mother of the earth. Up above her airy counterpart resides - hive mind hanging from a protruding limb, the swarm is alive, its chemical communications legion. Nature's grey matter exposed and enshrined; abuzz the trees compound their thoughts through beating wings speaking literature - sweet as honey is the language of the woods.

Drones amongst the wild flowers dance, exciting pollen in powdery puffs. In this community of coloured politics here and there a worm exists. In time and after many meals a butterfly erupts and five petalled flowers evolve six legs to learn the mysteries of flight. Short lives sacrificed to the winds before the light drops into night.

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And as the line of sight declines, the forests eyes perceive by sound. The canopy becomes alive with hoots and at the floor the vermin scurry in search of the day's decay. A fat rat finds its way towards an elevated stench – something dead is up ahead and meal time has arrived. However, appetite is interrupted by a lightning strike of poisoned fangs – enveloped through unhinged jaws. The night holds many secrets and it knows, the ones death is the others reward as an owl wings its way towards the ground and all that slithers and all that peeps becomes the prey of yellow eyed chicks, nestled in a cradle high. Wisdom from below consumed by wisdom up high.

Rockabye baby on the tree top... the night time is split with the sound of a chop as the morning light breaks the pines bow is broke, collapsing eternal from matter into mind.

On the third day of labour the structure was made, from the corpse of the pine a house was now built, its ribcage was hammered to the spine of the oak and new voices echoed along a path through the woods. A small family took up refuge - removed from the tribe, two voices mingled with the cries of a third. Water was hauled and fire raised, a single habit emerged where once instinct ruled. Fragrant smoke now whispered daily through the canopy, inflicting flight upon the nested and commanding retreat of all four footed. Where nature resided, natural law now presides, the image of nature developed to tool.

Amongst the two more mature certain sounds were shared and in time the whole area subdued to their calls. A space in the forest in time became cleared, were animals gathered a patch was prepared, planted and cared for as the seasons revolved.

In the mornings the female would sing as she travelled the path to the well, bucket on head and baby on back. Many times this would be done in a day, as water was scarce and the garden now abundant would often be dry. The male hunted for what he could find. At night her singing was drowned by the sounds of the township which they fled. Local music and voices were heard, but strange to her ear and odd to her tongue. She listened though, for most of the night and mumbled the phrases which often repeat, fearing the threat of being too foreign too long as this was the reason they moved from the town.

The days became hot and the child irate, and now at the well where the water was pumped other woman gathered, some quickly annoyed by this foreign woman with child that had nothing to say, but always unquiet and always in line. That evening two men approached the forest and walked up the path. They stood around the garden, talked and pointed abruptly at the house by the tree. Before leaving they gathered a part of the crop, but the owner emerged angry, stick in hand and raised his voice at the thieves. The two men came closer and forcefully yelled back, pointing to the garden and the bucket that stood near the shack. The men did not know him, he was darker of skin and it soon became clear that their sounds were not shared, a loud commotion ensued and the stick rising higher was eventually thrown. One of the men gave a cry as it hit and the two ran away after fierce words were spoken and one spat on the ground.

The moon grew in the sky as the town's music swelled high. In the house the two people huddled and the baby continued to cry. Late that night an owl appeared near the house and its omen was sung in low hoots for a while. When the mob appeared at the house in the woods all had quieted down in the nearby town, the door was kicked down and with swift strokes man and child slaughtered. The woman sobbed for the better part of an hour before a hurried slash to the throat sent her down to the ground, a splatter of blood on the cross of beams where the pine met the oak.

Fire was set to the house and the garden pillaged. Flames ascended in spiralling shafts, licking the life from the canopy as the plant sap boiled. Before long the tree was alight, transfigured aflame it gave up the ghost and gasped forth into the night a violent cloud of black smoulder that slowly drifted towards the town, intermingling itself with the smoke from home fires and the enduring smell of cooked supper.

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## The Turning Point

By Damilola Jayeola

It was a bright sunny day, summer had just set in, and the end of spring. I had a long flight, it was my first. Being on the plane had been something I had looked forward to for so long. I had just taken a trip half way across the continent. I remember the day before the trip, the anticipation and expectation. I could not wait to leave the country, experience something new, something different and exhilarating. Studying abroad was every teenagers dream. Though there was a sense of sadness, the larger part of what I felt was happiness. I packed my bag two weeks before the day, my passport was ready and I did my hair on the very day was due to travel.

"Emily", Titus called, "you seem to be lost in thought, what are u thinking about?" "Nothing" I said, "I just can't believe I am finally here. So where are where are we off to?" "School" he answered, I need get u settled in, lectures start next". As exciting as that sounded, it was also daunting. I can't remember the last time I had to start anything afresh. I elected to study law at an early stage of my life, law has always be my childhood fantasy, besides my dad has always called me a lawyer and joked about how he was going to get into lots of trouble when I become a lawyer, knowing I was going to get him out.

It was already midday by the time we finished with my registration. "Titus I'm really tired and hungry" I said. "Would you like something to eat?" he asked. "Yes please" I answered. I already heard so much about KFC; finally I was going to know what it tastes like. "This really tastes weird" I said to Titus, to his amazement I peeled off the skin. "I can't believe you just did that, people only come to KFC so they can have a taste of that. Hurry up we have to leave" he said. "Where are we off to now", I asked? "To find you a place to stay" he answered. While at school earlier we found out the entire school hostel were full and that if I was lucky I would find a place not too far from school.

Titus called in a few favors and after looking at five places I found a place I liked and it was seven minutes from the school, if you walked slowly and five minutes, if you walked fast. It was commune of about 100 rooms. My room was small and cozy; it had its own bathroom, toilet and kitchenette. "Thanks so much Titus" I said. "You are welcome; give me a call if you need anything and if you have any problem". Andrew had been really helpful all day long. Although I met him a few hours ago I felt I could really trust him and that he was a very nice person. He is my dad's friend who came to South Africa twenty years ago. He promised my dad he was going to make sure he took very good care of me. So far he had done a really good job.

Finally I was on my own, the room came with furniture and beddings but I still had to go out and get a few things. Just before I got to the gate I accidentally bumped into a girl who was probably on the way back from the gym. "Oh! I'm really sorry" I said, at first she gave me a cold look but later said "never mind, it was my fault, I was not looking at where I was going". "My name is Emily" I said. She answered "I'm Jen, Sorry I have to run, see you around" "ok see you" I answered. Before I could ask her anything else she was out of reach. The mall was only fifteen minutes from my apartment. In about two hours I was back in my room. I bought beddings and groceries; those were the things I felt I needed really urgently.

A week had already passed; I spent most of the time in my room. It's finally the day I had being waiting for, my first day of school. The first lecture was just an introduction class. The girl I sat next to had invited me to her hostel, her name was Liz, she stayed at the school hostel had, and had already made a few friends she promised to introduce me to. One thing I loved about South Africa the very first time I walked into it was the diversity, the people. Wow what interesting history they must have. At this point I did not know anything about the country's past. I already got some books to read up on. Luckily Liz was also not from South Africa. She introduced me to two other people who were also not South Africans. We all agreed to form a book club, where we could read up about the country's past and what effect it had on the present and the future.

I had an idea, "why don't we invite some South Africans, sure they can give us light on the issue and even help with real life scenarios." "Good idea said Taye, I know a South African guy buy the name Andrew, and I'll give him a call now and see if he would be interested." "Jen! I shouted" out of excitement. "Who is jen" Liz asked" a very nice girl I barely know, I'm sure would be my best friend soon and that I think would be interested. "Andrew is in said Taye. "Why don't you give jen a call and see if she would be interested". "I don't have her number but she stays in the same commune as me so I should bump into her soon." I answered. I was already feeling bored of the conversation about the relationships and dating was just not my type. I asked to leave because I had a 7.30

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class and like the famous saying “early to bed early to rise”, I had to go so I can get some sleep. I was allowed to go. That was a lie, I knew the only way I would be allowed to leave was if I came up with something convincing.

Luckily for me I saw Jen just before I entered my apartment; she was on her way back from the gym again. This time I tried not to bump into her. She was about to turn back on seeing me, but I called her just before she could. “Jen! I shouted out loud, “hi, remember me from last week?” “Of course” she said. “How have you been?” I asked. “Very well thanks.” she replied. “I have been hoping I would see you and there you are”. “What’s” up? “I’m forming a book club with a couple of my friends and we would really love you to join us. The main idea is to learn about the country’s heritage and we are trying to get as many perspectives as possible.” I said “sorry don’t think I am interested.” She answered “why not”? I asked eagerly. “It just doesn’t seem like my kind of thing. But thanks for asking anyway”. Then she hurried away.

The next day I went to class. After all my classes I went with Liz to her hostel, it was our first book club meeting. We allowed Andrew being the only South African to give us a brief introduction about apartheid and the transformation. The story moved us all to tears. I came from a country where we were all just seen as human being, nobody care about the colour of our skin. Maybe because it was the same colour, it did not matter to us. I promised myself that day that I was going to treat everybody the same way and mix with all kinds of people.

After the meeting I was determined to be friend with Jen. I went to Jen’s apartment to see if she was there. When I got there she was with two other girls. She introduced me to the two of them. “This is Aliyah and Tammy. This is Emily”. “Nice to meet you guys” I said. “Same here”, they both replied at the same time. We all sat there looking at each other not knowing what to talk about. After a couple of minutes I felt out of place and decided to leave. They all walked me out and said goodbye. As I walked off I heard them talking out loud and laughing, though I could not make out what they were talking about. That was awkward, I thought to myself.

I had not spoken to Mr. Titus since he left on the day I arrived in South Africa, so I decided to give him a call. I was really excited to talk to him again. I told him school was fine and that I already made lots of friends. “I need to ask you something” “what? He answered. I have been trying to be friends with a girl in my complex but she just does not seem to be interested, what do u think could be wrong. “I don’t know this girl, he said. But you should remember that people sometimes find it hard to mix with people that they are not used to or maybe she thinks you are not the type of person she would normally mix with. He said. “Sorry but I would have to disagree with you” I answered. Forget I mentioned it, sure she would come around soon” I said.

The next day I was in class with Liz, I ran my problem with Jen past her and she said “just leave her alone, she will never be friends with you” “what do you mean?” I asked. “You would find out soon enough. I went home sad and confused, there was a link between what Liz and Mr. Titus had said. There was a knock on my door and I was Jen. “Hi Jen”. “Hi, sorry I can’t remember your name” “it’s Emily” I replied. I’m going out with my friends tonight, just thought you might want to join us. “Yes sure” I said excited. I was so eager to fit in I did not ever ask where we were going. “Can I come with my friend Liz, she’s really nice”. “.Ok” she said. I called Liz but she did not pick up so I left her a message.

We went to a pub, I was offered alcohol, at first refused but after much persuasion I decided to just have one. Before I knew it I was drinking the second and the third. It was the first time I would drink so I was already drunk. I asked to leave and they said it was fine. Jen offered to carry my bag for me and I gave it to her. After driving for about ten minutes, we were stopped by the police; he asked to test Jen’s alcohol level as she was the one driving. Jen was the one driving. After being tested, her alcohol level was below the limit. As she was about to enter the car she stumbled on stone and fell. The contents of my bag were emptied and something that looked like drugs fell out of it. Jen Aliyah and tammy said it belonged to me. I said it was not mine. So the policeman decided to arrest all four of us.

Jen called her dad and so did the other two girls, it was already 11pm so Jen and the other girls parent could not come to bail them, because partly because it was late and also because they lived in another province. The police had told us we were charged with possession of drugs. Jen and her friend had said it belonged to me and that the bag belonged to me. I denied it but we were told it would be resolved through thorough investigation. Due to overcrowding the four of us were put in the same cell as three other girls. For the first time I became aware of the colour of my skin. The other three girls immediately rallied around me and welcomed me like I was a part of them. For the first time I dawned on me, the four of us on one side and the three of the on the other side. This is going to be a really long night I thought. It was already 12 midnight.

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First the five girls on my side asked what happened and I told them all that happened, including the part that Jen knew the drugs was not mine and in order to get herself and her friend off she said they belonged to me. I decided to confront her about that but she simply looked at me as if unaware of how to reply. "Why did you not just tell me you did not want to be my friend"? I shouted. Suddenly she said "because I'm not use to being friends with people like you." "What do you mean people like me, you don't even know me" I replied. "I don't need to know you, I see you and that tells me a lot about you." The way I see it is you are not good for anything and I'm better than you all. "Stop it, you don't know me, you might think you do but really you don't". It is true you see people like me all the time but I am just me and whatever you think you know about people like me might be true with regards to them but it certainly does not apply to me. I am just trying to get you, trying to fit in, trying to treat people the same way. You know what where I grew up we are all the same, no one is better simply because of the way that they look. At least try and get to know me before you condemn me. "I'm done talking". I said.

She went back to her friends and lay down on the floor. It did not seem like anyone was going to get any sleep here tonight. Suddenly Jen started to shake. At first I thought it was a joke and frankly I could not care less what happened to her. Then Aliya said she is unconscious, they tried to call the officers on duty but they were no were to be found. She needs CPR to save her life someone shouted. Who knows how to administer CPR the voice asked. Everyone in the room said they did not know how to. I did, but I thought to myself why should I help her now, she was ready to let me go to jail for crime I did not commit. She can die for all I care. I looked up and everyone's eyes was on me. Emily do u know how to administer CPR, she does not have much time. Then I remembered the saying two wrongs don't make a right and that if I did not save her life I am being just like her and saying what I she did to me was ok. That was my turning point. I rushed to her and in after about two minutes she opened her eyes. Just then the cell officers came and she was immediately taken to the hospital. She managed to say thank you on her way out. The feeling of saving her life felt really good. We all sat there in silence and no one said a word.

When it was morning the police came and said that we were all been released and that Jen had said she gave my bag to a friend of her and DNA was found that proved the drugs belonged to her friend. I sent Jen some flowers in the hospital and a card that read get well soon. I went to my book club and told everyone what had happened. Two weeks had already passed. I was just returning from school. When I got to my apartment Jen was waiting at my door. "I'm really sorry she said, u were right I should have given you a chance to prove yourself as a good person before I decided you were not good enough to be my friend." I would really love if we could be friends" she said. I replied "right now Jen I'm not so sure, I will always say hello and who knows maybe one day South Africa would move forward.

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## **Shortcut to my heritage and space: Journey to myself**

by Amandla Mugisha Karungi

What happens when water is heated but it refuses to reach its boiling point? What happens when the cold tries to freeze water molecules but the water keeps running? I want to know, because this is what I'm trying to do. I'm trying the impossible. I'm trying not to feel it. I'm trying to feel neither the heat nor the cold. I'm trying to defy nature, and I'm going to win.

It's not the distance from your loved ones that cuts you deep inside; it's not the sudden change of environment. It's the lack of warmth, the feeling you get as you pull your heavy suitcase up the hollow echoing stairs with no one to help you. It's the lack of sound when you enter your vacuum and close the door. When not even your voice can be heard within yourself and the only image in the mirror is you... I swear there's not a sound in this room! The tree outside my window lost all its leaves due to the winter. It is just a mass of grey branches. Blessing, the cab driver who picked me from Oliver Tambo airport said it gets to 1 degree in the morning. Oh God, I almost miss the loud drunk woman in the plane who drank six 135ml bottles of red wine and started singing the songs from her church.

Just yesterday I sat with my eleven year old little sister laughing at the trickery depicted on a new show on television. There we were on the couch our legs scattered lazily, her hands on the remote controlling the channels like she always wants to do. The light bulbs were glowing, that same yellow bright glow they always have at night. I always imagine they are dying to get to bed too but they can't help but fight the tiredness. They keep on shining just for our sake. The tea cups still lay stranded on the dining table though it was way past supper time. Some cups with half drunk tea and some empty and unused. The neighborhood dogs were barking. It was the same night as many have been before. I had already picked out and ironed which shirt my dad was wearing the next day. My other sister was on the internet. The other two were on their phones. My parents were asleep. Five sisters awake, at 11.00pm on a Sunday night, very busy with their silly little things as though it were the middle of the day. I knew I was going to be alone the next night. I was afraid of leaving, but everything was already set. I had to go.

I lie here stiffly on my tiny bed tonight in the south of the continent, facing the pale light in my cold university room. A plane and a train away from everything I have ever known, miles and miles away from my heritage, tonight I hope for more than I thought I would ever miss.

I hope that when I wake up tomorrow, my mother will be peering over my bed, asking me why its 10.00 am and I'm still in bed. I will look into the next room and see someone I have shared a lifetime with. I hope that when I sit down to take my breakfast I will smell chapattis and sombosas in the kitchen. When I'm drinking my tea, I hope a big fat mosquito, will land on my leg. I hope it is too lazy to lift its weight so I can squish it in a slap. I will feel the heat of the savanna climate and wonder why the sun is picking on me. The dust on the potholed roads will fly at me but it won't matter because dust or no dust I will have somewhere important to get to.

I will quarrel with a bodaboda man as I bargain for the price to ride on his old fashioned motorbike. And we shall waddle through the tiny traffic ridden streets until we get where we are going. On the way I will see business men in coats and those bank ladies in their cute outfits crossing the roads. I will give the blind beggar a coin and run away from the rest who chase me down the road. I will meet a friend in the street and see a familiar face in the car that passes by. I will sing along to the songs playing in the background. I will hear a language I know; people chattering about a Minister's secrets which I have already heard of. I will live without remembering what the color of my skin is. And when I get home, there will be someone to hear about my day. The frogs and crickets will perform an orchestra. I will say goodnight to my dad and mum as they go to bed, and then pick up my phone and call all night because the rates are cheap and I do not have a reason to save.

I hope that when I wake up tomorrow, I will be back home. Back to the comfort of my heritage.

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## Our Heritage...

by Jannes Buys

South Africa. To some this conjures an image on a map, to others it's just some country somewhere far away, and to some it is a place where life is a constant struggle for their very survival. To some it is a reminder of a bitter past. And yet to some it is a place of opportunity. A place to start over, a second chance, a chance to right previous wrongs. South Africa is a lot of things to a lot of very different people. But to about fifty million people calling South Africa home, we all have one heritage.

We as South Africans live in what is possibly the world's most diverse community. We are people from all different kinds of races, religions, ethnic groups, cultures and backgrounds. Each has its own way of thinking, way of believing, way of being human. Each has its own dreams and hopes and also fears. But in spite of our many differences, our many conflicts, our bitter past, we as South Africans have reminded the world once again of the power of the human spirit.

We have shown the world that no matter the adversity or problem or conflict, no matter the difference between race and ethnicity, no matter the difference in beliefs or the different fears, the human spirit is unconquerable. It is not something that can be bent or directed or shaped to suit the wishes of one individual. The human spirit cannot be tamed and cannot be broken. It will not, it cannot succumb to the direction of any one entity or group or individual way of thinking. The spirit within each of us cannot be defeated. And yet it can unite a group so different in every aspect to join together as one, for however brief a time.

We have shown the world that in spite of years of relentless oppression and struggle, the will to survive and be free *must* prevail. And even after years of hatred and fighting and struggling, this spirit that we all have inside of us, can unite us as a nation, can help us overcome our differences and fears, it can help us forgive. It made us stand as one, united as one nation.

Our heritage as South Africans is not something that is easy to understand, nor is it something that we can carry forward or live with easily. But it is something that the world we live in today needs so very desperately. It is a beacon of hope in a world that is sometimes dark and divided. It is that small hope that each person on this planet can always look to for comfort: No matter the circumstances or troubles that any country or community is facing, no matter how dark the day becomes for any race or religion, in a country somewhere far away, a small spot somewhere on a map, the spirit inside each and every human being on this planet has found a way to unite, to forgive, to *triumph* and to unite the most diverse community on the Earth.

Our heritage is this: We as South Africans remind the world every day that every person can hold on to the small hope that no matter what the circumstance or situation, the human spirit will always find a way to triumph as long as we as humans keep fighting and hoping and believing and never give up.

This is our heritage...

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## Rose tinged memories: a family of strangers

by Nozuko Siyotula

I took a drive to that dusty street whose length had been once filled with so much family, to own the truth, I was led there by a longing to eat freshly baked cake in MaTema's kitchen with the banana tree that blocked the light from the window and feel her motherly gaze from behind her sixties styled pink sunglasses. A decade had passed since I was here last, so much had been happening then in the country, so much change in the air. It was why we left, because staying meant accepting that life was always going to be the way it was and for us, for uMama, it became a bitter pill. Ironically I had been led there now by a need to breathe in the familiar. To drive past houses where I knew how the furniture was arranged inside or how the black and white wedding photo hung so precariously on the nail hammered into the wall. I wanted to laugh about the day Bra Simon and Bra John had the whole street running out of our houses in our underwear going to intervene in their latest fray, once, long ago. I wanted the dust to cover my car and be the nuisance I remembered it to be, engulfing us in its restlessness. Turning into the street I found it tarred and I felt instantly that I had been away a while. All the neighbours had extended their houses or were in the process. There were still a myriad of colours of the painted houses competing to be noticed, the elaborate details of the metal gates and chained dogs in case there was a visitor during the day and at night, in case there was a thief. The dogs sat with their heads resting on their stretched out fore legs waiting for either. I arrived at MaTema's house, two houses down from where I had once lived and I parked my car.

The working class have always been an aspirant class but with little or no opportunity to become the somebody's of the world we measured out our days with drama and reconciliation. The one thing that was always true was that we needed each other. A cup of sugar here and pots there meant that we lived in each others homes and struggled to maintain any sort of privacy. Those who did keep others at bay were often thought to be filled with airs. Of course another reason for the lack of privacy was that houses were built on top of each other. Most of the people who did not need others were the happy families, the ones with two parents and the children who obeyed their parents and the parents whose wholesome example to people in general on how to get by in this life inspired envy. The contrary was also very true.

Some people regarded those families with so much suspicion, worse those that had accumulated some possessions, they became targets. The neighbourhood had little patience for the elusive ideals that those families represented. Each member on our street lived in a house that stewed in its own tale which almost always ended up being aired in one or other public brawl. It became public knowledge that Meiki's mom was an alcoholic, which is why she, Meiki, had fallen pregnant. Bhut'Sipho did not have a wife, which is why he was such a womaniser. Mule was going to be a soccer star like his older brother which is why his parents had him drop out of school. Usually these brawls were started by lending a pot a neighbour and then not returning it or the placing hot food in Tupperware.

'don't you talk about my child like that, at least she did not abort, we know how your family hates responsibility look at your brother, he has children all over God's earth'

'hoooo shem Ma ka Meiki,(meiki's mother) just say that your child has defeated you and let my brother be, uSipho is a grown man he is not like that daughter of yours who opens her legs for anything. Sies man!'

'yazi'ni Ma ka Nelli,(Nelli's mother) I don't want to see you near my house, and don't ever ask me for my pots! anyway it's not like your function was nice, you borrowed my pots so that you could cook *umgodu nje* and the way you were going on and on one would have thought you were going to show us *mara niks!* That tripe is still blocking my throat I'm so full of it!'

'Ag man, let me be, I don't care about you. Jealous people never see good anyway, you're a hard hearted witch, I also will stay out of your way and you better stay out of mine or else you will eat blood!'

But as it went on this street it was not long before folks needed each other again, we always needed each other. You see the times were changing as times often are and the freedom violence was escalating to new heights. There were frequent protests at the soccer field that was three streets down. Most of the freedom fighters would approach the older children who were playing on the street and tell them that Chuck Norris had flown in to come meet Mandela at the soccer field and that they had to be there at a certain time without their parents. The name Mandela alone ensured the streets were cleared at the named time, we were all high on his fever. 'viva!' would

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reverberate all around the neighbourhood during the protests and the older children would come back pumped with a new light in their eyes. In those days, it was dangerous to travel to work. Rare to board a train and make it to work. Almost impossible to climb a taxi and not take a different route or run late. Normal to drive your own car without it raising eyebrows as to how it was financed or subsequently get hijacked. It was a dangerous time and we all needed each other. The politics created the times but folks generally loved being close to each other and smelling the sweat of each other's backs it made life worth it because for the most part it could be easy for life not to be worth it.

Then of course there were the ridiculous things that kept life moving like the fall out of long time friends. Bra Simon and Bra John had been drinking buddies for decades since moving from their respective villages to come and find work in Joburg, this is the common thread between all of the older generation, that only the children are from Gauteng. Nonetheless, on one of their drinking sprees Bra Simon ran out of money and Bra John naturally offered to cover him and since nothing was for old times' sake Bra Simon told him he would refund him at the end of the week when his wages were paid but he did not. Bra John, hot tempered as he was filled a quartz beer bottle with paraffin and a match inside and threw it into the house one Saturday morning. The window the bottle had broken had a curtain shielding the inside which quickly caught fire and within seconds the house was in flames.

We were sleeping when a hurried rapping on the door woke us.

"Umlilo Ma ka Zaza. Fire!" the person then ran out of the gate and into the next yard to inform them as well. uMama broke through our bedroom door and violently pulled off our covers and told us to stop sleeping whilst our neighbours were in trouble, how we would like it if Lerato slept when we needed her. Alarmed at the terse manner of address so early in the morning we jumped out of bed in excitement and slight irritation. The whole street came out. Ma Tema had her hands on her head screaming 'Modimo, Modimo, oh Lord!' her blue cotton night dress with lace trimmings revealed a bit of cleavage which I found a little embarrassed to see hang out for the whole world. Every neighbour offered their buckets. It did not take long to figure out what needed to be done. uTata was already with other men who had jumped the wall to try and save belongings and the people inside. We were frantically filling buckets with water and throwing them into the house. The older boys were connecting hose pipes to various houses and spraying the flames from all angles, the yards were pretty close to each other so the pipes could reach. This action lasted for most of the day.

It was only then that the police were called and a new competition began; that of the eye witness accounts. The investigating officer asked people to form a line, since so many were willing, and recount what had occurred in as much detail as possible, much to his detriment. The investigating officer though, relishing his importance to the community continued to take notes and the 'number phones' of people he thought relevant in case they were called to testify. This impressed people, the fact that their observations could be worthy of a court of law, so as the investigating officer progressed further along the line the accounts became outlandish and more heroic, the one hanged on a tree to exterminate the fire. The other ran into the house after seeing the smoke from three streets down, he pulled the little girl out and so forth. Others garnered attention by coughing uncontrollably, asking for water and when the investigating officer walked over blamed it on the heavy smoke but then quickly began telling him their accounts of what had transpired.

Bra Simon and Bra John had fought right there in the middle of the street,

'I said I would pay you'

'but you didn't'

Bra Simon was a lightweight man, tall and slender with thin biceps that stretched out along his torso. He was no physical match for Bra John who had the weight of a normal man and who was used to tavern brawls due to his hot temper. They threw each other on the ground their backs dirty from rolling in the dust. Nobody interfered really because Bra Simon needed to vindicate his manhood after watching his house go up in flames for a ten rand debt. We all knew Bra John would not kill Bra Simon, not in front of his family.

The days rolled by after the fire. Bra Simon and his family lived with different neighbours on the street until they rebuilt the house. It turned out that only the roof had suffered the most damage. The younger boys were commissioned for the painting of the house and the church Bra Simon's wife attended donated money for the

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windows and other people donated curtains or old furniture they had stored in their garages which hardly ever had cars. Bra John and Bra Simon no longer spoke though, Bra Simon called Bra John *liVenda le* with such contempt in his eyes that even we stopped playing with Tshilidizi and them for some time, fearing that our parent's houses might just be burnt down as well. The cold war did not last long, just a year. New Years Day was coming up.

New Years meant fireworks and new clothes; the only other time for new clothes was Christmas and confirmation. New Years also meant that we could countdown to the song of the year while stealing to some dark part of the street since only the main road had streetlights, to drink Crown ciders in their gold and red cans. They were supplied to us by the older girls also who taught us salacious dances afterwards when we were light with merriment with a wash of warmth spreading over our bodies. uMama forbid us from going into people's backyards especially, on busy days like New Years and on one year I finally knew why. We saw two figures, can't say who now, but they made sounds that we knew immediately our parents would have censored. We ran back to the party a little wiser now about backyards in the night time. Each house on the street bought so many explosives to shoot off into the night until dawn coloured the sky then only the drunks kept the party going. The rest of the street retired to prepare for the later hours of the day where there would be elaborate dishes prepared. The youth would be in their shortest items headed for a park in the city to have a picnic and braai, leaving in a convoy of taxi's blasting the crowned song of the year.

We spent most of our times at Ma Tema's house sitting in her kitchen with the linoleum floor and the banana tree that blocked the kitchen light eating vanilla cake with granadilla frosting. Her burly body sitting next to us asking if we wanted more of everything through her pink glasses, wisdom etched all over her face. We always said yes. Besides, most of us never had grandmothers who baked and who let us sit in their lounges with our feet on the sofa. She was the storybook grandmother we all yearned for but only ever saw on television. Ma Tema worked *emakitchini*, she was a domestic worker, and most times we saw her on the weekends when the aromas in her kitchen wafted onto the dusty street where we were constantly making a nuisance of ourselves with all the other children, soon after that the games would end and we would find ourselves at her door, led there by our poverty for some and false nostalgia for others.

After New Years, folks generally buried the hatchet because when times were hard, and they were, one needed every available person to be called a friend. It was partly why Bra Simon and Bra John slowly found their way back to each other and when Bra Simon held a function to re-open his house, as though it were a place of memorial with a red ribbon tied onto the gate, it was Bra John who cut it, ironically. The investigating officer never did come back to call the relevant witnesses and it was just as well as that turned out to be the largest ceremony we ever attended for the building of a burnt roof. Sheep were slaughtered. The elders spoke to the ancestors. The church women prayed. The programme director entertained the crowd which was largely made up of families who lived on the street. There were tables upon tables covered in white cloth laden with all the salads and meat in the world and there Bra Simon and Bra John sat, reconciled, drinking a *lala* of traditional beer.

Then the happy times ended. First uTata missed his train, he took the train to work and uMama drove the car to take us to school. uTata, Bra Simon and Bra John accompanied each other every morning since they all worked *emafirmini*, in the industrial areas of Johannesburg. uTata missed his train that morning having misplaced his wallet. Bra Simon and Bra John left him to catch the early train out. They were both killed. Shot several times by anonymous men who left as swiftly and deftly as they had come. Sixty dead, going to work. uTata tried again but he missed the train again. Sixty dead, going to work. Then a hundred. Then all Xhosa and Zulu boys became the hunted. Then all Zulu and Xhosa men were feared. The protests at the soccer field were scattered by tear gas and bull horns, whips cracked to disperse the crowd. Kangaroo courts for snitches mushroomed and usually ended with tyre necklaces hanging on the accused's neck all black fumes and red flames with their heads shooting off their bodies.

uTata began using the car to go to work and with us inside they shot at him. He pressed the accelerator hiding his head under the steering wheel and rammed into the knees of the gunman who flew in all angles in the sky before landing as a heap on the side of the road as we sped on by. There was no peace, a locked door meant nothing for the style at that time was that they either kicked down the door and upon entering punished the occupants for their efforts or they pummelled the door down with arsenal without knocking first. Police sirens sounded all the time. Folks did not care about death they were so reckless. We, during those waves of violence, slept lightly on most nights forever worried about the slightest noise outside.

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Then one day they charged into the house with guns so long it took two hands to carry them, but they were common thieves feasting on the times. They were not the freedoms nor were they police informants or the police themselves. Four men walked in and asked for uTata's car keys. The leader slapped him around and the other man put a gun down umama's throat. Her tears flowed so steadily down her face without a pinched noise or anything actually coming out of her, she kept her eyes on us all the time. I knew we were not going to be harmed, our bodies had not formed enough to be fodder for them but I wasn't so sure about uTata. They wanted to know where he kept the safe. The more he denied any knowledge of a safe the more the magazine of the gun brutally found his head. We knew not to cry, that might make them kill uTata but Cece didn't know that, she was a baby. That irritated the one who was slapping uTata, he threatened irascibly to ease her discomfort permanently. The other one, the one who had a gun down mama's throat intervened and he ordered one the other boys who were looting in the other rooms to take the baby to the next room with the rest of us. He had a gentleness about him that seemed so contrary to the vulgarity of his current act. It was to be years until mama confessed to me that she had once taught him at school. This interrogation continued for hours until they left with the car and some the appliances and groceries.

The gun umama had eaten left her with an after taste so strong she stopped eating all together. She watched us all the time, paranoid about every stranger walking into our yard selling ice-cream or taking photographs for money. We tried to teach her the new hand game we had learnt from the television, the hand movements went along with the words:

*'South Africa,  
We love you,  
Our beautiful land,  
Let's show the whole world,  
We can bring peace in our land!'*

We sang that song along with Leleti Khumalo, Sarafina as she was known, all the time infatuated with her caramel even tone skin and the confidence she exuded in the fact that we could actually achieve what the words aspired to do. We sang that song so much that the peace people came to give each household a white t-shirts with a blue and a white dove imprinted on the left breast of the t-shirt. On the other breast, all the way to the navel were the words of the song in black print. We learnt the song. We taught our parents the song. We taught Lerato, Bra Simons daughter the song. We taught Ma Tema the song. It exploded but umama hardly cared, she had eaten too much of that gun that day and wanted to leave. uTata too had seen enough, buried too many a friend and had missed death enough to know that his angels had grown weary of him.

It was to be some years before we left, officially. We were separated from the neighbourhood by our medium of instruction in the different schools we attended, in the manner in which we played there's-a-party-round-the-corner and how we only slept in the house where we returned to from another life. We left long before the day the white truck pulled up in front of the house.

Ma Tema cried the whole day. She begged my mother to reconsider, the times were changing. Hani was the last. The vote happened didn't, we all thought it wouldn't but it did. The children were getting a good education. uMama would not hear it though. She longed for the taste of food again, her senses to be invigorated by something other than that gun that was lodged forcefully into her mouth by a boy who she had taught how to calculate fractions, she was determined. Meiki's mother told her never mind the old lady since she was probably jealous of her going to live the high life. 'you must come back and tell us what it feels like to be a Madam'.

We did not see Ma Tema before we left; we left with the first load the truck took. Our minds were high about finally living near our school friends and having a maid accompany us everywhere and not having to wait by the corner of the school on the pavement to be picked up by a red taxi that collected those like us who were mere visitors in the suburbs. Our loyalties were reasoned out like those of children, never looking back at people who knew the insides of our homes and whom we had needed all these years. The dust kicked up in the air carried us away in its restlessness.

And so a decade passed. The excitement of the suburbs soon cooled and in our sober moments we realized that we longed for the kind of party we had had on New Years or for the drama of saving a neighbour in need. We longed for a family with strangers. I longed for Ma Tema. I thought about her all the time with her pink glasses. One time I had pulled them off her face. It was a Sunday after church and she was hosting us for lunch. The

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fourth lunch hosted by a family on the street we had attended after my mother's graduation from university. My mother sat in her gown, they all insisted she must wear it to every lunch, on the other end of the kitchen eating vanilla cake with the granadilla frosting; the men were outside preparing the braai. This was normal: to have a braai after the formal meal. I pulled off the cat eyed glasses off her face and wore them. The cat eyed shaped sunglasses slid off my face, they were too big. She laughed heartily. I asked her about why she wore them all the time. Taking them and wearing them again she said 'where else is there glamour in this life, in this dust?' she laughed so loud cupping my face in one of her soft fat hands, 'look at us, all of us, on this dusty street that hangs onto a person's palate so tightly choking the life out of them we need the glamour if not for the fashion then for ourselves, that is the Gospel!' she continued to laugh as she stood up to open a cupboard with canned peaches. 'you didn't know me when I was young. I wasn't beautiful but I had it elsewhere, where it mattered' she said slapping her thighs suggestively her big arms jiggling with fat, 'in a few years you will know' then she laughed so loudly it spread to all of us, 'that is the Gospel'.

'Ma...' mama laughed trying to cover up her mortification at Ma Tema's unusually forward comments. I threw my eyes to the half empty Crown cider on the table.

'Ag man, they must know' she said waving away my mother's conservatism, 'no harm done'.

Without asking she scooped canned peaches with the syrup onto my plate next to my thick slice of cake. 'No harm at all'. I remember her open her face laughing at her last comment, really throwing her head back and digging deep as if she realised seconds later the humour of it all.

I cling onto that memory.

Opening the gate of the house, I walked around familiar territory noting the subtle changes, even the aging of things all the way to the kitchen door. I found Matlaku, her granddaughter sitting on the veranda kneading dough. My stomach sank as I thought about how I could have had those recipe's passed down to me and how these days I had my own ideas that vehemently resisted the scene currently playing itself in front of me but seeing Matlaku working from memory made me long for access to Ma Tema's secrets on her domestic prowess. Matlaku looked up at me warily.

'Hello'

It took a minute for my face to shift into focus in Matlaku's eyes. 'It cannot be!' she squealed raising herself up from her knees. Then we poked at each other, her rounded cheeks, my height, her wearing a dress, me wearing pants. We held each other in a long embrace, suspended in disbelief and relief that the moment was real.

'Come in come in' she held my back with her hand covered with flour. The other arm cradled the bowl of dough that she set on the table and covered with a dish cloth for the dough to raise. She then washed her hands at the sink. I stood next to her.

'So I see people are extending' I said and we shared a knowing laugh about the competitive nature of the people on this street.

'It started with Meiki's mother when she got promoted'

'Promoted? *Chesa!* I'm sure nobody lived that down'

'Eh! It's like you were here, she threw the biggest party on God's earth, bigger than Bra Simon's, and it lasted days. A few weeks later she began complaining incessantly about how everybody was so jealous of her success-'

'She loves people being jealous of her *ne?*'

'How do you know her. That was when she started buying bricks and things every month end. She didn't tell anybody what she intended to build which of course is always a question that needs answers. She just said she should be left alone, complaining about jealousy and whatnot. Anyway we eventually heard from Bhut'Oupa, because she stopped greeting and talking to everybody. She said that when your mother graduated from university she used her best table cloths made from silk to host a huge lunch but when she moves up in the world

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in the world the only thing she gets is the party she threw for herself and you know Ma'Meiki, she never lets anything go. So Mama,' referring to Ma Tema, 'snesing the impending doom joined together with the other women and secretly organised a party for her inviting people from even three streets up. *whooo* friend! It was so huge you would have thought it was a wedding' she began laughing heartily that she resembled Ma Tema so much, 'anyway after that everywhere she went people called her Promotion'.

'And I bet she loved that' I said in raptures of laughter.

'Eh! How do you know these old people!' we laughed in unison. We sat in the kitchen eating the vanilla cake she had pulled out from the fridge. 'They still call her that'.

'So she stopped drinking?'

'Hai, she says she has but...I don't know, do you ever know with these old people'.

'True. Where is Ma Tema?'

'What do you mean?'

'Is she at work?'

'*He e wena*, you don't know?' Then suddenly I knew. 'We told Bhut'Oupa to tell you because he said he had a relative who lived in Pretoria. We thought when you guys didn't come to the funeral that maybe you had other arrangements plus Mama lost your mother's numbers after she came here after school one time'

'No, we would have always come' I said annoyed at myself, ashamed even.

'*Yho*, she was sick for long time, cervical cancer. She bled and bled and bled it was awful.' Her voice filled with the memory of that time. She placed her fork on her plate. The flippant nature in which she spoke stung me a bit; she had the privilege and the time to reconcile herself with a world without Ma Tema to speak about her this way. Selfishly, I had assumed that she had remained frozen in that time and that only my life was asking me questions about who I am. It hurt to know she was mortal.

'But she loved you guys' Matlaku continued saying, 'no matter who lived at number 56 they just were never the same, never quite fit into the groove of how we do things around here. She thought you guys were going to come back sometime, convinced herself really. She just could not believe that you would want to live elsewhere. You know old people'.

'I do' I replied and I was left wondering about the sincerity of my answer.

Matlaku put her saucer in the sink and walked into one of the rooms. I sat in silent grief, replaying the last time I had been on this street driving away in a white truck. I envied how Bra Simon and Bra John lived on, their ghost's still part of this changed world. I resented myself for never having said goodbye properly, for being a child. I thought about death briefly. Our silent twin who walks with us everywhere, quietly biding its time until cervical cancer became the catalyst or a swerving car or a gun. I felt centred and rooted to the truth of life; that we all die.

'These are yours' Matlaku said coming back to sit down opposite me. I took the pink glasses from her hands. I smiled. 'my brother and I agreed that you would return one day, today, and that we would give them to you since you're the only one who seemed to love those ridiculous glasses'

'That is the Gospel'. We smiled knowingly at each other, 'Thank you'.

A few hours later, I made my rounds up and down the street greeting old friends. People enquired about my mother and if she ever received another degree. How old Cece was now and what were our numbers. I even ran into Promotion herself and she began telling me about her promotion which I pretended to not know anything about which for some odd reason upset her terribly. Lerato, Bra Simon's daughter, holding her own child, kissed me on the mouth lightly as was the custom. She introduced the child who peered curiously from behind her

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mother. There were embraces all around. I promised to pass their greetings along to my parents and to drop by another time.

In my rear view mirror I watched them wave me off, my family of strangers. It looked like an old photograph you would find in a forgotten album, with the edges turning slightly red, rose coloured, with arbitrary trees framing the group that stood arranged in the middle of the photo wearing their widest smiles for the lens to capture forevermore. At an intersection, I pulled out my pink glasses and I put them on. This time they fit. I smiled thinking that this is how she had seen me all those years ago, through this haze of rose. I drove off.

In the years I continue to live after that visit, when I most alone in a room filled with expectations or bored by the droning voice of uninspired lecturers I take myself back there. To the length of that street and I live it again, if only for a moment, I am in that kitchen with the window shielded by the banana tree eating vanilla cake with granadilla frosting.

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## **My Story**

by Ntebo Morudu

Standing where I am now, has proved to be remarkable as the road I am embarking on is long and from far.

A journey from an unknown world. A world that modernise me by how I look and what I am wearing. Being characterised by how I act and represent myself around those who are different from me.

I took courage by my own bare hands, one of the most hated and feared professions as known by man. At first I was lost not knowing, not being aware. I am still unable to find myself in the shadows.

Then I got woken up by a ray of light and it made me realise, I have a story to tell. A story to tell and describe my brave journey, the one that I have to live, the one with a purpose.

My story is this: I am a transformational pedagogy, a leader and an active learner. My deeds are of excellence and fuelled by my inspiration of life. I am a creative mind behind a desk and before the "desks". My actions have been proven by a desired need to excel. I am giving and providing meaning and learning.

Isn't this brave? Doesn't this story say a lot about where I am from and to where I am going? I am criticized about the money I get rewarded for my services, I get disliked for my way of educating and I get appreciated when one gets his/her certificate of life. This is a journey of a remarkable person doing the bravest thing in the whole world.

So who am I? I am an educator!

This is for all brave educators, who took what is feared and turned it to an achievement.

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## *Entries for creative writing: Poems*

### **Gender, Inequality and Injustice**

by T.T. Matsvai

Am I the abuser,  
Am I the Monster  
Am I the foe  
Am I the unbearable storm,  
Am I the dark cloud in her life  
Am I the source of all the agony and anarchy  
Am I the human beast the world perceives me to be,  
Am I the source of her pain, depression, low self-esteem, fear and silence

I ask myself this  
But why why why,  
I am the Man,  
Oppressed, abused, physically, emotionally,  
I am the man  
Living in my own dark world,  
Suffering from oppression by the overprotected "girl child"  
Raped, beaten, sometimes even to death, emotionally tortured,  
I am the man who they think is powerful and strong,  
But in the midst of it all  
I am the man

As weak as a frail old lady,  
I am the man,  
With no voice to speak out against my abuser, the overprotected "girl-child"  
I am the man,  
Suffering in my silence  
Ashamed of what the world will think of me  
Ashamed of what my friends will think of me  
I am the man  
Struggling to survive in this Feminist world  
With no one to talk to  
With no one to turn to  
With no one to protect me  
With no one to hear me

I ask them  
Is this it, the world, where only the cries of women, the "overpowered girl-child"  
Are heard??  
What of my cries??  
What of my worries?  
What of my insecurities.  
What of my needs?  
What do I hear,  
SILENCE,

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I am the man,  
Ignored, alone, scared, abused, raped, tortured,  
With no one to listen to my cries  
I am the man,  
The world perceives to be strong and powerful,  
But in the midst of it all,  
I'm just like a frail old lady  
Maybe even worse



## **Because I Am A Poet (Kemoreti)**

By Joseph Skosana

Through my untainted knack, I express my art, music, and literature  
Through my voiceless voice, I give vocal cords to my ethos and culture  
For many centuries, to many my tradition was but a miniature

**Because I am a poet**, the choired voices of nature  
said, 'rise, moreti, rise O thou poet'

Give voice to the stories of your forefathers  
Deduce the rock art in the caves and give understanding to the eras  
The errors of our lives are given a counterfeit image.  
The errors of our lives are not oozed by our heritage  
In this day and age, the image of our heritage  
is either kept in a bondage  
Called a museum, or misinterpreted by the chauvinists.

### **Because I am a poet, Kemoreti**

I bear a duty to tell you misogyny and my culture is not a replica  
I bear a duty to paint an undiluted picture using lexica  
Tradition is beautiful, my heritage, my birthright  
Of paramount importance is my heritage, my inheritance  
For instance, you can tell from a distance,  
by the resemblance of my attire, food and my language  
That unity in diversity is an offspring of our heritage  
As a poet at this stage, mine is to repair the image of my heritage before I age  
The younger ones should know, the older ones should know  
We should carry our heritage as we grow  
We should carry it always all the days  
We should embrace the heritage in space  
I tell you these things **because I am a poet, Kemoreti.**

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**Dead Rose Month** (a dedication to March)

by Eunette Beukes

It's dead rose month  
Let's wear floral to the funeral  
I hope the reverend prepared a sing-along-song

As it is love's burial

It's dead rose month  
Family – never met - came from far away  
Blessing Dead Rose with pretentious respect  
Put those red grins away

It's dead rose month  
Throw the aborted in the coffin  
Adolescent mom and dad fornicated during commercial flashes  
It's a foetus love, don't cry too often  
It's dead rose month  
Flower dead, cards burned, lyrics forgotten  
Come kids  
Wear floral  
Forget the intense  
Forget the promise  
Savour the end of a life  
And eat those chocolate hearts fast

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## Home

by Talent Maturure

Tears cascade down my cheeks, like meandering rivers.  
As my body shakes and shivers.  
My heart yearns for my homeland.  
I have a thirst that only home can quench.

Miles away, I am, in foreign lands.  
With each day, in greeting, I shake different hands.  
This journey of life has brought me here.  
Each day I toil, through blood sweat and tears.

The clink-clank of heels in long corridors.  
Opening and closing of lecture room doors.  
Noisy banter unique to aspiring lawyers.  
To be seen in small clusters in the faculty's foyer.

A long day, well spent in Academia.  
A long walk into the sunset to the place I now call home.  
Thoughts of love I can't seem to find.  
Countless words said that seem so unkind.

I lay in bed and think of my lover.  
Can't help but wonder, the reaction of my mother.  
What will she say, if she knew?  
That her little lawyer found a home in the heart of a Zulu.

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## **The Glory of South Africa**

by Kgomo tso Leshage

Arise, shine, for your Light has come  
And the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

See, darkness covers the earth  
And thick darkness is over the peoples,  
But the Lord rises upon you  
And His glory appears over you.

Nations will come to your light,  
And kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Although you have been forsaken and hated,  
With no-one travelling through,  
You will be the everlasting pride  
And the joy of all generations.

No longer will violence be heard in your land,  
Nor ruin or destruction within your borders,  
But you will call your walls salvation  
And your gates praise.

The sun will no more be your light by day,  
Nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,  
For the Lord will be your Everlasting Light  
And your God will be your glory.

Arise; shine South Africa, for your Light has come.

\* *Based on Bible Scripture in Isaiah 60:1 to 3,15,18 and 19*

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## **Turn Back The Clock To My Heritage**

by Khodani Tshidzumba

I wish I could turn back the clock to my heritage  
turn it back to a time  
when aids is alien  
money unknown

Poverty just a word  
sickness in another world  
abortion abolished  
Satanists foreign

Turn it back to a time  
where prostitution is a taboo  
drugs and alcohol emancipated  
crime and abuse extinct

Where death is no more  
pain and suffering dead  
disabilities only a nightmare  
disasters and exploitation bared

I wish I could turn back the clock to my heritage  
A heritage of peace and goodwill  
I wish I could turn back the clock to my heritage.

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## **Black Feminist Rage**

by Ofentse Motlhasedi

They told me to behave and to always be polite.  
They said a woman's tongue must never be crude and her words must never bite.  
I was asked to shelter a man's pride, to give him what he needs.

To place a wet cloth over my shoulder when I serve him something to eat.  
To serve him food as I knelt on the floor pressed to my knees.  
They told me to cover my head with a doek and to never wear a dress that fell above my knees.

I laughed and said:  
You abduct a 12 yr old and marry her against her will to a man twice her senior,  
You call that culture.  
I say you're a vulture.

You value a woman only when she is "pure" or married with children.  
You call that religion.  
I call that a sexist - schism.

In my culture I am a Queen. A honey bee.  
The epicentre of my nest. Humanity suckles life from this very breast.  
You and yours, male and female alike, arise from me.  
In my faith, I am a wife and mother  
The one who holds the knife by its blade  
To ensure me and mine get our way.

Down with your mutilation of MY culture and faith!  
Down with your misrepresentation of MY gender!  
Totally indifferent to you and all the lies you tell,  
I am brimming full of rage on the verge of beginning to yell  
With all due respect you can go to Hell.  
(And that's the clean version of what I really want to say)

Your outdated cultural practices attempt to oppress me.  
For being daring, ambitious and unashamedly myself.  
I apologise for having an opinion and a personality  
And not being an object you wipe and show off with  
Only to be put back neatly on a shelf.

So I don't care what you say.  
I still listen to hard core gangster rap  
Dress like I want to and talk smack right back.  
I don't drink or smoke  
But if I wanted to I wouldn't need your permission for that.

I will chew my gum and bob my head  
Be true to me and stay fresh while I get ahead.  
So either way it's all the same, you will never dictate my life to me again  
In God or in Culture's name.

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