

2017

ESSAYS/OPINION PIECES

1ST PLACE

History will not judge us

Nkosinathi Mkize

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As I sit with my fellow brothers, I cry silently as I listen to the excuses made by people seemingly trapped in tin-roofed houses. I listen to backroom philosophies of drunk uncles and old women narrating stories of the struggle. Wake up, Africa! The chance you have fought for has arrived.

On this piece of paper, I light the biggest fire the world has seen. When the flames fade, I hope the fire burns on in your hearts. Our history and heritage are not in books but dwell within our hearts. We are the vessels of knowledge, the link between African customs and the children of our beloved Africa.

I stand on the tip of Kilimanjaro.

Since the very beginning of time, men had only one purpose; to survive. They had developed ways and patterns from age to age to best support their survival. However, one of the very core aspects that ensured that man survived was adaptation. In order to survive one had to adapt to whatever change “Mother Nature” presented.

The core problem facing us, as Africans today, is accepting that time does change. By convention, culture is the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society. In other words, every generation develops its own culture that best suits the conditions it lives under. However, as Africans, we define culture as the way our forefathers lived. This defeats

the conventional wisdom of viewing culture as a variable of time, and frowns even on progressive change – which has always been an independent variable even in the survival of our forefathers. With different contexts and times, it would seem counter-intuitive to aspire to the kind of life (culturally) our forefathers lived.

The context of different societies has changed both negatively and positively, in the past decades and centuries. The Shakespearean English of the 16th Century is now obsolete and almost meaningless to most in Britain. Likewise, the sun-worshipping and human sacrifice of the Aztecs have now been relegated to the realm of absurdity. Some of Africa's pride rituals and cultural practices have been exempted in this inevitable alteration. Raw animal skins are no longer used for everyday clothing in most African cultures and using livestock for *ilobolo* is slowly being phased out due to the scarcity and high expense of cows. I believe this is the progressive change that Africa desperately needs in this modern world as long as the value of communication, religious observance, bodily integrity and re-establishing new relationships is still respected; the means of achieving this should, rightfully, change.

Why then is modern Africa sceptical of change? Fear is the reason most of us are afraid to even start moving forward. We are afraid that while trying to embrace the change, we might lose ourselves in the process. While it is true that Africa is behind with development in almost every essential aspect of life compared to the rest of the world; I do believe that half of the reason is that we are afraid to make reasonable efforts to move forward and embrace the new era. The era where people of different races, ethnic groups and nationalities mingle together on a daily basis, may seem to take away from our identity yet it opens us to our new inclusive selves. As

such, I believe, embracing and adapting to this change is the best strategy to survive today.

Another cause for concern for us Africans is language. Language is primarily a form of communication. Its purpose should therefore be to allow us to communicate effectively. In most African languages one finds that the language is stagnant. Little or no progress and transformation can be observed from the time it started. This is yet another aspect about our “culture” as Africans of remaining how and where we are that frowns on progressive change. If, however, you look at European languages like English, the language progresses. As stated earlier on, the Shakespearean English of the 16th century has minimum relevance in the modern world.

This is perhaps the reason English is used across the globe: it remains a variable of time. It transforms to meet the standards and conditions of that particular time. There are countless words that English has adopted from other languages to maintain its relevance, especially from Latin. I therefore believe that opening ourselves to our newer inclusive selves is the best way forward for everyone. Accepting our differences and trying to work around them will ensure that we live in a blissful and just society. We should understand now that in ancient times people were grouped by language but now we are grouped by something bigger than that, being human.

History will judge us if we don't share our languages with the world. If we shy away from saying, “*Sawubona, unjani?*” to the world to express and illuminate our identity. If we fail to share and express our opinions on social media platforms in our native Tsonga or Xhosa, if we fail to conduct meetings and gatherings in our African languages history will judge us.

As a consequence, the culture that we start to develop in our era would be that which we all share as different races. We are now bound together by a bigger bond, being countrymen. And in our country, and Africa at large, we should set our values based on mutual respect and love to promote peace and harmony. We should create a culture of being willing to learn, read, and research because that is how we grow, by enriching our minds. We should create a culture of promoting academic learning and all other forms of learning so that people can gain skills and be able to have a professional career in order to afford the cost of living. Amongst many, those should be the values and principles of our inclusive, progressive culture.

Of course, this is not going to be a straightforward transformation, but it is worth the effort, especially because we are no longer small tribes living the most basic form of life. As often said, everything begins with one's 'self'. From me and from you, let's diffuse and pass on the message (of progressive change to our culture) to the ones closest to us. And if that happens, we will have taken the first step in the journey of a thousand miles.

Principles (or purpose) count more than means, in this context. New realities and opportunities enable us to find new means of retaining our proud value systems. Therefore we can still remain truly African even while we embrace modern technologies, education, and lifestyles. As Africans, we should start embracing and accepting change because it is what we make of what we have that separates one person from another, one group from the next, and even one country from the other.

History will judge the old. For they have lived in a time when the customs and rituals were still done accordingly. However,

they hide behind pride to unite with other seniors to put together the fragments of our identity to create a broader, brighter and everlasting image of an African. History will judge the old for coming back home from work “too tired” to narrate stories of old for children and leave them to the mercy of comic books and fiction. History will judge us if our stories are told in italics.

History will judge the younger generation for not realising that the pride and heritage of the African people now rest with them. The young can now create websites and pages on social media, yet they seem less keen about progressing their very being. How easy it would be for the very rich history of ours to be accessed if it dwelled deep in the belly of the sky drives and at the bottom of our hearts. History will judge African games developers for not programming African themed games, whether it is stick fighting or just the tactics of an *impi*.

History will judge the young for abandoning school and running for quick fixes. As the world progresses, so should we embrace progressive change as Africans to ensure that we integrate our culture and customs to refrigerate African identity in the heart of globalisation. The world currently requires more than literacy, it requires that people learn more, do more in their respective fields to prevent external influences to crowd African heritage. The more the youth studies, the more they can get opportunities to go abroad and take along with them Africa, to share it with the world and defeat the stereotypes about who we are.

African literature is about a place most people have not visited, even in imagination. It is a place worth getting to know. The sights and sounds are unique. The rain beats heavily on tin and thatched roofs. When the rain stops, a small bird begins to

sing in a mango tree. Then people come out, talking. On their way, they meet others and stop for a while to talk some more. The conversation may be in any of the eight hundred languages spoken on the continent, but it is undeniably African. In the spoken word may be found the quality that some African writers have called the genius of African civilisation. And in the spoken word there is magic. The spoken word, always fresh, is the source of all African literature. History will judge us if we shut that door to the world.

History will judge us for not recording and performing our African music. For not beating drums and blowing horns hard enough. Almost all music currently playing on radio and television across the globe has an African element. This is due to many Africans being shipped to all parts of the world taking with them the one thing the oppressors could never take. Music has been a symbol, for many Africans in Africa and beyond, that we are still African inside and out. It is our responsibility to ensure that we wear the African tag with pride, for many long for it in foreign lands.

We shall wear the African tag with pride. We shall appreciate the beauty of the hills and valleys back home. The varying climate and topography. The brand of cultures is unique and vibrant. The sound and rhythm of music, the instruments played. The foods that gave *okhokho* hundreds of years in this life. We shall be proud of the rich beliefs, the natural rain forests and the architectural masterpieces, the pyramids.

Being African means being able to rise above all obstacles that have been placed on our path. Engraved in our DNA is the work ethic to work tirelessly to achieve what we desire. The “motherland” is blessed with mineral resources, which is the wealth of the continent that Africans are not getting privileges from. It is up to us to work hard enough on all fronts,

academically and politically also, in order to enjoy the riches of our home.

We now stand at a crossroads. The fate of this lovely continent rests upon our capable hands. It is up to us to embrace progressive change, for change is inevitable and our culture and identity, though it remains the same, manifests differently in different times. The path each African decides to embark on, will collectively define who we are. Never before has the world been so connected. With connection comes sacrifice. Languages will be lost, beliefs, customs and culture will all vanish into thin air, and then history will judge us.

We can fight, we can be strong together, united. History will judge us whether we do good or bad. We can be proud. Sit around the fire to tell stories and bond with our loved ones. We can embrace a chance to share ideas about our native land. We can critically plan our future, one where Africa leads. We can be heroes in our communities, schools, cities and universities and let every month be September.

2ND PLACE

The Moffies of the Motherland

Dillen Gounden

* * *

This land, this majestic land! Selflessly she has given life since time immemorial. This is where it all began. The land that has given rise to man. The birthplace of humanity. For millennia this continent showered mankind with love, life, longevity, legacy and legend. A place where nature was a part of life and mankind reciprocated respect to all beings.

Today there is no resemblance to the greatness of what this place was. Greatness is nothing but a memory found deep within the pages of unbiased history books.

This land is now tainted, and the inhabitants' minds are poisoned. Poisoned by a shroud of perversion and clouds of ignorance. The invaders came and they bastardised this land and corrupted the people. Turning the land, diverse with abundant flora and fauna, rich with minerals and fertile land with a gigantic spectrum of culture into nothing but a Dark continent...

The invaders relinquished their hold on us. They have admitted and pointed out their wrongdoings. So why, when we take back our glorious land and gain our freedom, do we turn against each other?

Have you not seen it? The inhumane hellish treatment of our comrades. Open up a newspaper! This virulent despicable behaviour is now the norm and is promoted across the Dark Continent. "*Iqaqa alizizwa ukunuka*"

It is not torture; it is far worse than that. My brothers and sisters are tossed into cages like vermin. They are jailed for no crime, yet their human rights have been torn away from them. Worse than pariahs they are portrayed as the ultimate taboo. Hunted down and slaughtered as if culling an infected herd. "Moffie" and "faggot" are some of the arrows of prejudice armoured with the sounds of hate that are ubiquitous today. The gays, the lesbians, and transsexuals - they are my brothers and sisters. I will stand up for them. I will stand up for my brothers and sisters that are suppressed in Zimbabwe, jailed in Uganda, tortured in Nigeria and slaughtered in Gambia. My brothers and sisters suffer in every country on this continent. This is their land too. This is our Motherland!

"Homosexuality is not African," that is the shield they use to defend, justify, and promote their heinous crimes. Homosexuality is just as much African as the Baobab tree.

Homosexuality is strong rooted in African culture and tradition which has become bastardised after Africa got colonised. From the dawn of culture, we have had and accepted homosexuals in Africa. The Langi, the Kisii of Kenya, the Nuer of Sudan and the Kuria of Tanzania, as well as the Igbo of Nigeria. Even the Great King Mwanga II was an open homosexual and a glorious monarch.

These are our brothers and sisters. They are all just as African. We are all African. I will not rest! I shall fight tooth and nail until we are given our equal rights! That is my vow to my brothers and sisters and our Mother Africa.

3RD PLACE

Unity Through Dialogue

Lulama Zono

* * *

Beth Moore once said, “Differences will always exist, but division doesn’t always have to result.” South African society is a divided one, primarily along racial lines and the City of Durban is a microcosm of that division.

I started living in Durban at the beginning of 2017, as a student at the Durban University of Technology. One of the things that struck me was the deep-seated antagonism and mistrust that existed between Black and Indian Africans. After conversing with different people, it became clear to me that there was a logic maintained on both sides. The African Indians view the African Blacks as a people who want things for *mahala*, as the colloquial expression goes. Free housing and free education are mentioned as examples of this tendency. They also see African Blacks as perpetrators of criminal activity, such as house break-ins, hijackings, heists and the like. On the other hand, Black Africans maintain that the average African Indian sees himself as intellectually superior to his black counterpart. As far as African Blacks are concerned, the employment given to them by African Indians is unfair, in terms of pay rates, working hours and career progression. This makes Black Africans see the African Indians as cunning, malicious and exploitative employers. These perceptions are held by both groups as indisputable truths and dispelling them is not easy.

In seeking solutions to these problems, we can draw from the traditional African way of life. “**Ukubutha**” is a Xhosa word which means to collect or gather. The word also relates to a

traditional social norm of visiting family, friends and acquaintances merely to converse about anything under the sun. Steve Biko in his book, *I Write What I Like*, page 42, writes, “House visiting was always a feature of the elderly folk’s ways. No reason was needed as a basis for visits. It was all part of our deep concern for each other... We regarded our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition amongst us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life.”

Ukubutha created an opportunity for individuals in communities to be mutually enriched by each other’s knowledge, experiences, and insights through talking to one another. I am not advocating the advent of house visiting during the day or after work, as the orientation of society is vastly different from the traditional African society. Rather, I suggest that we nurture a culture of meaningful dialogue in spaces that we commonly occupy.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” so to move the wheels of change we need to impact our immediate surroundings. In the Durban University of Technology,

- our Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mthembu, in his 'Iminingo' communique dated 21st July 2017, called for the revival of a student parliament. Regardless of the structure and constituency of such a platform, it would certainly assist in creating a space where students can meaningfully engage amongst themselves and the powers that be.
- there is no functional debating society. Such a society would create a platform where issues of cohesion, cultural diversity and myriad of other social issues could be frankly,

rigorously and constructively debated.

- at present, student political organizations are mainly, if not wholly, led and constituted by Black African students. Student political movements in our university must diversify and re-orientate their manifestos and action plans so that they can appeal to and attract African Indian and White students. This re-orientation will require and lead to engagement and dialogue which will help bridge the racial divide on our campuses.
- there are about 25 religious organisations registered with the Student Representative Council, each requiring at least 150 members to qualify for registration and recognition by the university. Theoretically speaking, there are at least 3 750 students that are religiously affiliated on our campuses. I believe student religious organisations have a latent potential, responsibility and obligation to bind and unite students. Student religious leadership must foster dialogue in its ranks on social integration. For instance, inter-organisational panel discussions, meetings, conferences, camps, get-togethers and so on, can be hosted where matters of social cohesion are discussed.

Through dialogue, the Congress of The People, composed of people from all races and all walks of life, was able to formulate The Freedom Charter in the 1950s. During the transition from Apartheid to a democratic South Africa, dialogue was the basis of negotiations, compromises, and agreements, from which a new and united South Africa was born. Our beloved Ngugi Wa Thiong'o put it so well when he said, "There is no way we can survive as a nation in the world without finding unity." It is only by meaningfully talking to one another can we have the hope of finding that unity in our diversity.

POETRY

1ST PLACE**Sober Thoughts Drunk Actions*****Njabuliso Mofokeng***

* * *

Like a pack of hungry wolves,
We prowled the scene
Canvassing every inch of the packed club.

Three bottles in and predator mode engaged.

I glided to the counter flashing my best smile,
I asked her name.

With a smirk she stole a sip, drinking up her poison,
The infection began.

“Hi I’m Zama”

Three words that spread through my being
Like a virus in its last stages,
Infatuation was in the air,
An intoxication spreading like wildfire.

I asked her for a dance,
And she bit her bottom lip.

Clasping her warm soft hand
We manoeuvre around drunken hostiles,
At centre stage our provocative selves embraced
Gingerly gyrating unlike the music in the background,
We swayed and slid
Caught in a ghetto salsa
The infection spread...

Lost in lust our sin grew,
Our pelvises met timely
Like a woodpecker and a tree.

We touched and danced like two deprived souls
Hungry enough to kill.

As the music slowed
We kissed until a new song poured in
As cheers rumbled all around
Like heavy rain on a tin roof.

Almost sober we staggered to my table,
The wolfpack drooling through their bared fangs
All they saw was fresh meat ready for a feast.

She brought her feminine herd and sat on my lap,
The infection spread.

Slurred and wobbly
We all left in a giggling mess
Paired up we all disappeared into the night.

She stuck with me like bubble gum on hair,
We kissed until our lips went numb,
And rolling on my bed we danced
Like untamed beasts chasing their first meal
After a long time.

The infection spread...
Jerked awake by a rooster,
Confused and scared we awoke to a condom-less situation.

Strangers in bed,
We hid our nudity like Adam and Eve.

Regret a potent stench dripping off the walls
And foggy windows,
While we dressed in silence and awkward glances.

She walked out like a house robber,
Tiptoeing in the hallway with her hands full
Trying to contain her leaking tears,
Lamenting her lost dignity.

While I rejoiced entering the shower,
Already texting the wolfpack.

Three months later the pack and herd crossed paths again
A pregnant Zama leading the flock,
Sweating bullets and charged up with stubbornness
I braced myself.

Her glaring gaze pierced my poker face,
she said hi again
This time my fear almost tangible
Her next words cut through it like a double-edged sword,
Yes it's your baby...

2ND PLACE**Daughterless Mother*****Siphesihle Nzuza****** * ***

She has brown skin wrapped in grace
God lived in her once warm tender embrace
A light like the stars
But she is also human, her skin also scars.

Pink cheeks Black lipsticks
She is poetry on a dirty sheet
Her perfection has become so obsolete.

Her life told on a thin, flimsy, disposable note
Her thoughts drag her down like waves on a sinking boat
She wrote her guilt in a page in the Bible to make it holier
Added a few drops of tears to make it softer.

Her first daughter
Her first murder
She took the same life that she gave
Now she cannot stomach the thought of her stomach being a
grave.

Dark brown toned skin nourished by guilt and self-hate
A decision made in the wrong mental state
Life is never lost until you give it away
But today she seeks to leave this world, she cannot see any
other way.

As the sun sets today, going down with it is her light
Tomorrow her body will be found cold as a winter night

Heaven can you hear her?
I know that hell can
Grave grant her mercy.

3RD PLACE

Be Proud

Nkosinathi Mkize

* * *

A touch of beauty, from head to toe.
Ridiculed by the world, the centre piece of the world.
Independent and connected to all by the Indian and the Atlantic.
Rain beats on tin and thatched roofs.
Cut-open to the core, she bleeds wealth, that's shipped off to the west.
Another story, perhaps of one who could only be a shadow of her best.

Eyes into the sky, back on the stone-cold concrete floor,
I say be proud before the sun rises and bakes your ebony tropics.
Once men diverged but now they converge, indeed there is no place like home.
The maps of history draw past your front door
Tracing the footprints of the very first men.

Be proud and call upon amadlozi!
For they have idols, crosses, and gods.

Your story is buried beneath the ground yet, your wisdom of Ubuntu lives on.

Like a skull, the land mass gaze to the east, a symbol of your fate.

Crowned by the great pyramid in the bald of the Sahara,
Your white and blue tears flow throughout the year in the
arid to the Mediterranean.

Some ride them, drink them, seek life.

What seems to be doom, is life, the purest form!

Be proud, before you utter foreign words.

The sweat of your hard labour drips in the Victoria and falls,
we marvel!

Savanna, Congo basin, Madagascar, the busy streets and
beaches of Ethekewini.

Indeed, a home with a hut for all!

SHORT STORIES

1ST PLACE**An archive of flowers*****Shuratta Muyeni***

* * *

I am pregnant. I am pregnant. I play the words over and over in my head. “I am pregnant.” The words fall flat on my lap as my school uniform cradles them. I am not too sure what this means; all I know is that my breasts are sore. I have missed two of my periods and everyone has something to say about my weight. I rock myself, shaking my head free of all this worrying. “What’s wrong with you?” My mother asks as she walks into the maid’s quarters, a place we call home. “Mama...” I brace myself, as my hands involuntarily start shaking.

“Speak up girl!” My mother retaliates; her mind now fixed on what her hands are searching for above the wardrobe. “It can wait,” I offer, as a distraction.

“No, it cannot.” My mother has always been impatient, her excuse being “What if Jesus comes back while I am waiting, for all we know He is coming tomorrow.” “Child, you know I do not play that game,” she utters mindlessly. I might as well keep the ball rolling.

“I am pregnant.” She freezes gruffly and turns to study me. “Speak up little girl!”

“Mama, I am pregn...” Before I complete my words, the back of her hand makes its mark on my face and I stumble to the ground. She raises her hand at me again, I quickly cringe and protect my face from another unannounced attack. She looks

at me, disgust and rage apparent in her eyes. She takes a step back; I remain rooted to the ground. “Mama”

“Shut up. SHUT UP!!” She bends over me, pointing her index finger to my face. “Who is the father?” She spits out the words.

“Josh, Mama.” My face sinks to the floor because this is a tragedy, even I at 14 know that. “Which Josh?! Which Josh, Swazi! Which Josh?!” She regains her composure, and places her hands on her head, seeming dazed. “What have you done you stupid girl? You know that this will leave us without a roof over our heads! You stupid children! Why would you do this to me, huh?”

“I am sorry Mama.” The tears flow, hot and furiously, “I am sorry Mama.”

This day haunts me. It has haunted me for nine years now. As soon as Josh broke the news to his mother, I was ordered to stop attending classes, for no one was to see me. Shortly after I had given birth, I was sent to the UK to continue with my studies. This, as far as my mother was concerned, was a generous gift after my despicable act. The child was, almost, as white as snow, so the Van Ryne’s told the neighbours they adopted a bantu baby. It was 1996, people could accept such a noble act. My mother kept her job, and it was the only way she could see her granddaughter. However, she was not allowed to stay in the maid’s quarters anymore, due to a lack of trust. Possibly also due to the fear that the secret might come out.

The year is 2005, I have succeeded in life, but these memories still bring me a great share of heartache, often making me feel as if life is not complete. Although I have met a wonderful man

here in London, one that nurtures me with his love, but however sentimental and genuine his love is, it can never lick all my wounds. Sometimes I think, maybe there is no void that needs to be filled. I have Marcus now; shouldn't he be enough? Is a relationship built on lies and missing information, ever enough though? It shouldn't really matter, since this man is crazy enough to want to marry me. Since I am a Xhosa girl, I cannot simply just marry. Marcus being this 'African English' man is naïve to anything truly African. Momentarily after he proposed he reckoned we could get married within three months.

He does not understand that customs have to be followed and Lobola negotiations cannot be done over the phone. Trust me we have tried, so I have to head back home, to the 'new South Africa'. My fiancé, his older brother, father, uncle, and I are ready to leave so that this minor problem can be solved. I have notified my mother that she is to expect us this Saturday so we can conclude the Lobola negotiations. When the day to leave arrives, my system is flooded with anxiety and panic. On the plane all I can think of is the day Mrs Van Ryne found out about my pregnancy. Before the whole scandal she took me as a daughter, and the news truly astonished her. It was no surprise that on that evening everything changed, maybe that is why she shipped me off to a foreign country.

Eleven hours later, we arrive, home at last. "Welcome back home baby." Marcus plants a kiss on my cheek, I shrug, "hmm, 'home'...". As soon as we step out of the plane and onto the runway; I recognize familiar voices. "She must be in this plane Madame." "Oh, let us see, Joyce." There is some chatter, amongst my entourage but my attention is on the voices I keep hearing outside. "*Nangu!! Oh umntanami*, (Here she is, Oh my child)". My mother rushes towards me, I float across the room to offer her a long hug. "Yoh Mama, bendikukhumbula, (I

missed you.)". "Oh, my child." After a long hug, I kiss her cheek. While doing so, I get to take a look at her face. My mother, she has aged. The wrinkles only add on more grace to her face. "You look so beautiful baby." I cannot hold back the tears, as a lump forms in my throat. "You have not changed Mama." She kisses me, she kisses my face as if I were a baby. With each kiss, I feel her love and how much she has missed me. I also feel her regrets. I am so wrapped up in my mother, but Mrs Van Ryne's comment drags my attention to her. "Swazi, dear, save some of that love for me."

"Oh yes." Before letting go of my mother, I give her one last kiss, then I go to Mrs Van Ryne. "Long time dear." We embrace and my heart feels heavy.

"Indeed."

"Hey," what feels like a small tap on my back grabs my attention. As I pull back, from Mrs Van Ryne's embrace she offers a warm smile. "Hey Waz."

I turn, "Oh Lord."

"Not by a long shot."

"Josh," I am puzzled, perplexed to say the least. "Oh my, Hi Josh." I signal for a hug; our hug is very brief and cold. "You have not changed."

"Good thing I hope," I clear my throat. It all feels strange, being here. It's a bizarre experience. I guess the Van Ryne's offered Mama a lift. "Where are my manners, babe?" Marcus interrupts as he moves closer. As he does so, I see a tiny figure. We are all standing on top of each other, so I barely notice. She walks towards me, as if to cling onto Josh. I

observe this human being. My exact copy, “Sweet Jesus.” I swallow sharply. She is me. The last time I saw her, she was two weeks. I stare at her; she does the same, not blinking. “Are you okay, honey?” Marcus studies me. “She must be experiencing jetlag,” Josh comes to the rescue.

“Uh, yeah, yeah,” my mind is clearly distracted.

“And what’s your name little girl?” Marcus asks. Her voice is soft, but as clear and pure as honey, “I am, Zoe Sithelo van Ryne. Nice to meet you.”

“Aren’t you adorable. I am Marcus.”

They kept the name I gave her; Sithelo. They kept it.

2ND PLACE

The Grey Wolf

Thobile Ndlazi

* * *

“If I had R22.00, I would have gone to Queen Street to buy a KFC schwarma (wrap) and had it for dinner,” I thought as I was preparing my two-minute noodles. I had had a long day on campus, so I could not stand for too long cooking a proper meal.

After cooking noodles, I received a call from my bae (boyfriend). We had a cosy conversation and said our goodbyes. I sat down and started watching a series called Avatar on my tablet and connected my Samsung ear phones. I do this every time I eat. It brings that warm feeling of being home while I am alone in my small single room.

VROOOM!!! What was that? I paused the series. “Argh, it must be one of the Blessers (Sugar- daddies) dropping off a student. These VULTURES!” I thought as I pressed resume on my Mercer tablet.

A few seconds later... “HELP!! HAWEMAAA!!” A loud scream shocked me. I froze. A shiver ran up my spine. My stomach felt like it was packed with ice. Goose bumps developed within the blink of an eye. I tried to stand up. I could not. My knees became weak in a second. I felt powerless. I took heavy steps towards the window. A young lady in her 20’s wearing high-waisted jeans and a crop-top was still sobbing uncontrollably. People rushed to the scene. They formed a mob. The lady told them that her sister had been kidnapped.

According to the Bible, God created a man first for a reason. He wanted men to protect women. He gave them power and strength to protect women. Women follow men. The words man and male form part of words woman and female.

I stood there by the window. Warm tears rolling down my cheeks. I cried a painful cry. We are all connected by love. My heart was heavy. The pain was too much to handle.

The DUT Communication Department had sent emails earlier that week warning us about a grey VW Golf car which abducts women, I thought it was all fiction. I never thought there was a human who could be capable of such cruelty. There I was, looking down at the scene.

Where is love? Did money occupy every space of love from our uncles and brothers to the extent that when they see women, they only see millions from our body parts? They see their ticket out of poverty. Who will protect us if they do that?

I stood there crying on the fifth-floor window of Abdul residence, an outsourced DUT residence located on Victoria Street, just five minutes away from the Berea Station. My mind was frozen. Only tears rolled down my cheeks. The lady could not stop crying. They tried to comfort her.

The mob called the police and they arrived in a heartbeat. Police cars rang sirens and disappeared in the Grey Street light towards Greyville, following the grey Golf. The grey wolf disappeared.

3RD PLACE

My Mother's Teachings

Busiswa Mnqabe

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While those who are mothers to daughters my age taught their children how to pray, avoid boys and make a success out of their lives through education, my mother taught me how to live the luxurious life using nothing more than my body. I recall from the early age of thirteen, how I had grown accustomed to having different men walk in and out the house, I remember all the different cologne scents on my mother's clothing and the different voices that filled her room with moans and groans as she made enough money to maintain our living standard.

When she passed on, just a few weeks before my eighteenth birthday, I was shattered. She had suffered from a mere headache and never did I think it would take her away from me. She had been the only family I knew all my life, the only person I did not mind receiving hurtful words and ill treatment from because she was my mother and I knew that despite everything else, she loved me. I had heard and seen different stories on various media platforms about children who lose mothers and are raised by other family members who do not treat them well and that was my fear, fear of the unknown, the fear of living without my mother.

Her burial was very intimate, mostly people from the township who knew her for the bubbly personality that she had always presented were there to bid her a final farewell and after everything was said and done, I was left on my own. Together with the house, the clothing and the little money

that she left for me, she also left a very important note, one that had a concluding line that read, 'Take care of yourself like how I taught you to.'

The night I lost my innocence still plays itself in my head every day of my life. I was with the Mayor who left his wife and kids at home to be with me for a few hours that evening. There was a disgusting look of lust that he gave me as he watched me undress like he had instructed me to and he told me to dance for him, which I did. It was not long after that when he began touching me. To him I was just an object, and he did everything he wanted to do with me. His rough hands wandered on my body as he began to sweat and breathe heavily on top of me.

My eyelids were tightly pressed together yet the tears still rolled down the side of my face and my teeth were grasped painfully on my lips, yet the sounds of agony were still audible from my mouth.

It felt like he had been at it for hours when he finally stopped. I did not move an inch. I calculated his every move in my head, from when he dressed up to when he threw a stack of money on the bed next to me, saying something along the lines of 'Your mother taught you well,' and his exit marked the beginning of my life as my mother's daughter.