

**2019**

## **ESSAYS/OPINION PIECES**

## 1ST PLACE

### Humanity

#### *Asanele Ndzinya*

\* \* \*

I miss my home, my community, my parents, my siblings, my dogs and their love. I miss being called the son of my father or his forefathers. I miss brothers, the brothers who taught me how to fight, how to woo women and how to survive, while I thought I was being exploited. I will forever be grateful for it is all that you taught me that has made me who I am. I miss my place of serenity. I remember the fire with which we use to warm ourselves. Every evening we used to sit together, surrounding it as a family; listening to beautifully told stories that were narrated by my granny. There in the corner lay my dog Tiger, lazy to bark, lazy to wake enslaved to sleeping. My pregnant sister always fought with it, but it could always find its way back to the corner.

I miss herding, I enjoyed watching cows coming from the veld because that is where I get to witness God's creativity, I mean the grass, variant trees blown by the gentle breeze, the melodious voices of birds singing, I like it there for I get to witness the sun on its way to bed. I miss the dung smell, the fresh milk in the morning produced by the cows. I like the colostrum more, I enjoy watching cows fighting, the experience is incredible. I miss staying in the mountains and forests watching boys turned into real men, indeed tomorrow will be way better than today. I love music for it is my therapy and my source of motivation. I do miss the musical concerts in my village that are normally held on Saturdays. The love for music here is real; music defines us; we have given our souls to it.

This community is all we have, we look out for it, and we care for it. The support system here is inexplicable. Togetherness is power, even when the enemy was trying to break us apart, we firmly stood together for unity is what we breathe, we are unity, and unity is us. We were born of love and solidarity. As disseminated as we may be, we invariably pray for one another for we know there is no one without the other. Even our mothers back at home had starved themselves praying for our safe return, and for that, we will forever be grateful. We are the descendants that truly understand the spirit of Ubuntu. We are a garden planted with harmony, kindness, respect and humility.

None of this is practised in the city; for the city is filled with greed, cookery and violence. There is no spirit of togetherness for it is a dog eats dog setting. Here there is little love, fractured love for humanity, kindness and gentleness. Too much love for profitability and productivity. The city life has poisoned many souls; it has barricaded the world with hatred. City people prefer to think, and judge too much and feel too little, they watch too much and act too little. They have forgotten the way of life. Where I come from, we do not run away from thieves, criminals or witches but we look for them to ensure they face the music instead. Here in the city, I am greatly amazed at how so many human beings lack humanity. They would rather live with each other's misery than live with each other's happiness. City people care too much about looks, gossip, phoney stuff like fake nails and hair. The knowledge they have acquired has made them cynical and selfish to an extent.

However, the city is very big and rich and pregnant with a variety of dreams. It can provide for us all. If only we could look at one another through the eyes of humanity, only then

we would realise that together we can live freely, be happy and simple. I think there has to be more togetherness and the billboards should be encouraging love, humanity and the spirit of Ubuntu, we don't need Aunt Caroline that much. More than information, profitability and productivity we need humanity. More than looks, make-ups weaves and feigned smiles; we need true love, true hearts and true smile. These are the qualities that make life pleasant.

## 2ND PLACE

### Is Our Government Blind?

***Romania Kistensamy***

\* \* \*

Patrice Lumumba said, “Political independence has no meaning if it is not accompanied by rapid economic and social development.” A nationalist who united a nation with hope and whose ideas of an independent Congo free from the shackles of the colonizer was indeed ahead of its time. What is Nationalism though? This fundamental political ideology has been tainted throughout history. The basic notion of nationalism is valuing upon anything else your country, your people and the continued advancement of one's nation. Sadly, though I believe our current government has very little intentions of putting its people first. With a current list of failed policies, a struggling economy and basic services reflecting the very image of its corrupt gatekeepers, it is clear to see that we need help. We often hear the President and other officials speak about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, almost in biblical terms; a solution to all our current ills; an age of technology and innovations. Our government needs to be able to reach out to the pioneers of this technological era who have the knowledge to assist and the willingness to collaborate. Truly an exciting time and a time of potential great progress.

Unfortunately, it seems our South African Government is “applying the brakes” instead of accelerating us towards greatness. Our leaders hold on to certain old, outdated foreign policies and alliances which are not in the best interests of the nation. The United Nations (UN) recently released a list of the world's top ten countries that are

leaders in innovations. One country that stands out is the State of Israel. A country which our government has deemed to be unworthy of relations. According to the previous Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Lindiwe Sisulu, South Africa has "no relationship with Israel". This essentially downgraded our embassy to a liaison office that has no political mandate, no trade mandate and no development cooperation mandate. An extremely short-sighted and ill-advised decision considering what we can gain from strengthened ties with that country. Israel has revolutionised farming and agriculture.

With our country's current land redistribution project set to take place soon, new farmers would be able to benefit tremendously from Israeli expertise such as drip irrigation which reduces the water needs of a plant by up to 90% and at the same time increases crop yield by 15%. This remarkable innovation is feeding almost a billion people worldwide. According to Stats SA, 6.8 million South Africans experienced hunger in 2017. This is the reality our people face, and it is unacceptable. Israel recycles 86% of its wastewater using new technologies. A combination of drip irrigation with Israeli technology in water recycling would result in greater food security and clean water for South Africans. Given the fact that water and food security are of great concern in South Africa's growing population, with an estimated population growth expected to reach 73 million people by 2050, South Africa will have to produce 50% more food or face a catastrophic shortage. South Africa is a water-scarce country. A recent example of a water crisis in South Africa was in the Western Cape where we saw on media outlets people queuing with buckets for water as taps run dry. The good news is we have an ocean.

Desalination- the process of removing salt from water- is also

a revelatory concept. Israel is on course to produce 1.1 billion cubic meters of water annually by 2025. Israel has five desalination plants in operation currently using state of the art technology and innovation they have found a solution to their water needs.

A leading nation in the science of desalination our country can learn much from. These are only a few notable mentions. Israelis have made leaps in the medical field, safety and security as well as renewable energy, with Israel proclaiming that after 2030 there will no new petrol or diesel cars being sold. With the cost of crude oil, and coal used in coal fire power plants saving South Africa will need to look to countries like Israel to help solve their future energy needs. Unemployment has reached an all-time high in South Africa, hovering at the 29% mark while Israel is currently one of the world leaders in start-up companies. According to Start-Up Nation Central a non-profit organisation that helps Israeli businesses connect with the globe; they estimate that between 1100 to 1380 start-ups are formed every year in Israel. Better relations with Israel could create opportunities for employment and through collaboration locally and globally.

Especially amongst our youth who are characterised as being “techno-savvy” and technologically advanced. If the fourth industrial revolution was a ship, then Israel would be its captain, however, the South African government’s refusal to get “on board” is a massive barrier to the growth and development of the nation. Our government’s old political alliance should not blur our vision of what is best for our people currently and in the future. The conflict between Palestine and Israel and Israel’s “alleged” occupation of the West Bank, which was previously occupied by Jordan is one of the key factors in our government taking an anti-Israel stance. This is the *height of hypocrisy* in my opinion. South Africa has an



extremely close relationship with China, a country that has violated the sovereignty of Tibet. Invading it in 1950 and has subsequently occupied it, resulting in a million deaths. China is not a democracy. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of religion and no democratically elected leaders.

They are also not on the UN list of top 10 countries in innovation. How is it that our government views such a country so highly yet totally disregards Israel? Israel is a democracy, in fact, the only democracy in the middle east. It has democratically elected leaders. There is freedom of speech, religion and freedom to express your sexuality. Over 1.5 million Arab Israeli live and work in Israel. Jewish and Arab serve in the Knesset, the national legislature of Israel. The Israeli army also performs many humanitarian missions throughout the world. The latest mission was in Brazil where the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) sent 130 soldiers to provide aid and rescue people from southeast Brazil when a dam collapsed resulting in hundreds of people going missing.

The BRICS alliance which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa have all with the exception of South Africa renewed or rekindled relations with Israel. This is undoubtedly a decision made in the best interest of their respected nations. More and more countries and governments are waking up to the fact that Israel is most certainly a beacon of hope in a dark world. With their inventions already proving to be essential in the future of humanity. One such example was made in Cameroon where an Israeli invention helped combat a cholera epidemic. This invention uses a sophisticated filtration system, this device provided clean drinking water to people in high-risk areas, ultimately saving lives.

In the words of Sir Winston Churchill during the Battle of Britain, "Give us the tools and we'll finish the job". This is the

mentality I expect from our leaders. I am not referring to South Africa asking for handouts. I am a proudly South African, but I believe that we require collaboration rather than self-inflicted isolation. I remain hopeful that the SA government will “wake” up and puts its people first. We need not see the State of Israel as an enemy to South Africa, but we should embrace them as friends who if given the opportunity can enlighten our great nation and provide a better life for its people. This is the responsibility of a government who respects its people and a government worthy of respect in return.

### 3RD PLACE

## A Country Reborn

***Nkosinathi Mkize***

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Democracy is interesting from a South African context. South Africa's democracy has been experiencing many challenges in the past few years. From clashing opinions, principles and failure to implement policies that were drafted jointly for the betterment of the society. The youth is unemployed and is reverting to drugs and substance abuse. The public is frustrated and feels hard done. This becomes a domino effect that ends up resulting in a volatile society that, from time to time, boils over and clashes with the authorities. In the end, society disintegrates into a state of absolute chaos. This is somehow surprising because the same people jumping and chanting on the streets voted the leaders to power. How are people failing to appoint just and honest leaders to lead them to the next huddle of democracy, could we be missing something? Democracy and education go hand in hand. Democracy is a system of living and education is a way of maintaining the status quo by promoting existing values such as obedience to learners to ensure that the system is barely challenged.

In this piece, we are going to critically examine the challenges of our young democracy. The first being the issue of higher education. I am going to demonstrate how the higher education system is flawed and what can be done to change it. Then I will discuss the need of educating voters and leaders. Then our voting system and the possibility of improving it. Finally, I will evaluate the possibility that we are overreacting as a society as this might be just a stage in our democracy

that we will eventually get over. Our education system is divided into basic and higher education. Basic education has made enormous strides even though it has its flaws however the focus of this piece will be on higher education. It will be on how the structure of higher education is upside down and hence affects the socio-economic status of the country.

Higher education comprises of universities, universities of technology and FET colleges. Ideally, the majority of society should be in FET colleges. This is because they are supposed to provide practical courses that have less critical thinking and more day-to-day practical skills that are essential in the industry. Courses like plumbing, electrical technicians are essential for the functioning of all professional fields. If a person needs to develop their knowledge further, they then have opportunities to proceed to universities of technology where their knowledge is supposed to be improved and deepened.

Alternatively, for those people who are less practical, and logic inclined, they are supposed to take the route of the university. These people are generally few and society needs few of university graduates compared to more from universities of technology and even more from FET colleges. A recent practical example in South Africa was during the preparations for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Artisans had to be hired from other countries in order to fill the gaping void in the project. Yet in South Africa, we keep producing more and more university graduates that will be frustrated and unemployed. The other youth will be unqualified for practical skills that could have been learnt. In addition, it is not as if they do not qualify because they only need grade nine to get to college so obviously there is something wrong at the top. There is also the issue of perception. We, as a society, take these jobs lightly but they are essential and that is where opportunities for employment could arise.

Unqualified youth that were forced in the logical route are frustrated; graduates from universities that are surplus to requirements may be employed if they are lucky or be employed for something completely irrelevant to their qualification, which contributes massively to unrest, frustration and chaos. Democracy was the system of living in the city-state of Athens and Socrates was concerned about a number of issues then that can also be identified in our democracy today. Democracy is ultimately about involving every member of the society in the decision-making process of the society. This is good because it means no person is more important than the other and that every voice counts. However, in the city where democracy was conceived, Athens, Socrates recognised that whenever a decision has to be made, it must be put to a vote.

In the sixth book of “the republic” in the dialogues of Plato, Socrates engages in a conversation with another character. Socrates asks, “If you are heading out on a journey in sea, who would you want to decide who is in charge of the vessel. Just people educated in the rules and demands of seafaring?”

“The latter of course” the character responded.

“Then why do we think just anyone should decide who leads the country?” Socrates asked. The point here is that voting is a critical skill. Socrates was against the idea that everyone can vote. Rather he believed that only people who are “well educated” and hence critical in their approach should vote. This was not to say that he was against the idea that everyone should vote but rather that people should be educated first before they are given the massive responsibility to vote: which ultimately determines the direction and state of the nation.

This is therefore a strong belief that education should enlighten people and should not just promote existing establishments and obedience but should also empower people to contribute to improving the existing conditions. There is also the issue, which I believe is key, of education. Firstly, the education of the leaders. Plato noted the carefree attitude of Athens society towards education. This meant that when people were voted to power, they didn't have training for what is to come. This presented problems when it comes to carrying out duties that are expected because the person chosen by the people may be clueless about what to come. Our democracy can presently identify with this issue.

Often, we see this in local government elections. Chancellors elected just because they may be perceived as decent and helpful to the community. However, they have no training for the position they are about to assume. Some may even be illiterate or computer illiterate. In essence, this means the person is not qualified to do the job. However, can we even draw that line because the system does not take that into account? The qualities for the job are not important in the voting system; rather it is the popularity that counts. This is a cause for concern. The capacity of the average person in a society to critically examine a situation is of utmost importance when a leader is to be elected for a position. Critical thinking is supposed to be induced by the education people receive in schools and beyond. This means that if the education system is inefficient then the election processes end up being popularity contests, which defeats the genuine purpose of voting. In the end, the people suffer because not all the promises that were made will be delivered and this will only cripple the functionality of our democracy.

The second challenge democracy experiences is that it does not provide a suitable alternative for the people who did not

agree with the majority decision. This means even though a decision has been taken democratically, there will still be tremors shaking the foundations underneath. One man, one vote sound nice. It is catchy and it makes one feel part of the process and be convinced that no one, in society, holds a higher voice than the other. The problem with voting in the first place is that the decisions are almost never unanimous. This means a portion of the society will have to endure being led by someone whom they do not fancy and will have to be miserable for the next 5 years.

This clearly shows that the system does not take into account the feelings (which are important to maintaining rest in the society). It is for this reason that I believe that the “preference voting system” is probably the better option for the growth of our democracy. This system allows voters to arrange the candidates that they would like to see lead them in the correct order. This significantly alters the landscape. It means that the victorious candidate will be someone who was first, the second or third choice for the majority of the voting population. This means that there will be less division within the society. It will help with minimizing the issue of the voting process for a serious position ending up being a popularity shootout between top candidates.

The other benefit is using the preferential system; society has a bigger influence on deciding the “opposition party”. When people feel the party that they have been loyal to for a long time is not delivering, they may feel it is time for other parties to deliver but the feelings of the average person often overpower the logic and critical decision and end up voting emotionally. Voting is not supposed to be an emotional decision but rather a logical decision. The preferential system does not take away any power when compared to a one-person vote but rather it adds power. It allows the voter to

decrease the power of one party without completely abandoning them. This makes change smoother and possible compared to dumping the party completely which is difficult and the parties not delivering rely on the emotional attachment of the people.

It should now be clear the role that higher education should be playing to society. It should allow the people to challenge systems and be open-minded. Voting alone is useless in a democracy but the real power in voting lies in the reasoning capacity of the voters. The more learned the voters are, the less emotional they will be when voting. This should lead to a prosperous democracy that grows indefinitely. It is also crucial to consider the possibility that this is just a stage that every democracy goes through. This would mean that these problems would eventually be resolved as we constantly try to find the balance as a society. As the Scottish professor, Alexander Tyler, noted in 1787, a democracy last for a cycle of about two hundred years. With just that in mind, this means we would only be ten percent in our democracy and that only screams one thing: patience. It is also important to note that it has not been all bad. The fact that as a young black man I can be able to express myself on such platforms openly about such sensitive topics is a testament to the progress we have made. Basic education is reaching most of the people throughout South Africa. Even though there are so many imbalances that still need addressing, it would be hypocritical to relegate the progress made to shadows down below.

This is therefore a call for one and all to start embracing the next step of this long walk, for many: to economic freedom and to exploring the multifaceted of our society and ensure that this system of democracy which is meant to serve the people does so and not demolish progress and be exploited by crucks who just want to feed themselves and forget about



the needs of the society, that entrusted them with the responsibility in the first place. Even more importantly, it is a call for academics and society alike to lead the transformation of our education. This will ensure that the skill of voting (due to critical thinking being enhanced) is enhanced and those who lead us are trained for such responsibilities, which will eventually breed a fruitful democracy for a country reborn.

## **POETRY**

## 1ST PLACE

### June 16 - The Midst of the Hectors

*Khodani Ramabulana*

\* \* \*

Deep down was the sky shining,  
Gasps of air was the blood drowning,  
Never was I to see the redlining,  
Bullets were the last Hector clothing of the last ironing.

Was it galore or resentment of tribalism?

Or the iron ore verbs breaking the barriers around racism?  
Or the heartless core of the triangular colour prism?  
Print out the price of the crime before the gunpoint,  
Missionaries of yesterday eating off the sins of the white joint.

It was the one plus one that roamed the mind,  
The one minus the pun of the colour blind,  
The killing of the broad subject kind,  
Educational torture was the bones that grind  
Before the soul left, and the bodies behind.

Listen to the cries of the paper in their wallets,  
Listen to the lies and blood they kept in their pockets,  
Listen to their deception of integrity between their teeth,  
Respond to their calling of the dark ground beneath,  
As the curtains fell from the ashes of what the Hectors  
breathe.

Peace does not say it's the fault of the black or white nation,  
But the indisputable, indecisive hate after the creation,  
Of the compost of every book and its dictation,

**And the claims of uneven blood that created a hole in education.**

**Rise Earth child, be your motivation,  
Rise African child, be a demonstration.**

**2ND PLACE****Father don't...*****Andile Ngubane***

\* \* \*

Even if the sun rises or sun sets or the oceans lose their  
momentum  
Even if the earth chasm, or clouds sullen  
Even if the moon turns red, or stars shine no more  
Even if the dawn ceases, or confines itself in the dungeons  
Even if the natural catastrophes capricious  
Father don't...

From my kindergarten to infinity  
You have been living in the fantasy  
In the battles fighting for my whim  
In the society refusing to succumb to conspiracies  
Always thinking you would come back to earth  
Father don't...

Fro and back to school searching for you  
Trails and marks of your existence were not found  
Nor inscribed in the palms of my hands  
Not even a glimpse to which your body was laid  
My soul had always been meandering in anguish  
My dreadful body had always been dripping in languish  
Oh, how I beg to differ!  
Father don't...

Father's Day celebrations turned to ferocious celebrations  
You failed me, father, not even to utter the words of love  
Maybe we could have been sharing the same stars or maybe  
birthmarks

Maybe we could have been sharing these sphered eyes or  
maybe this cheesy smile  
Maybe I could have been able to have asked for my rite of  
passage or recognition  
You have been living nowhere else but, in my absence, and my  
presence not  
Your absenteeism in me triggered hatred towards men  
I couldn't help their bearded and lying visages Inter alia and in  
turmoil, oh I am the resident there! Father don't...

I've been confined in hostage, hurt, and held in the chains of  
fear  
Your absenteeism father left me with no identity  
Only temptations had governed my identity  
Chasing for love in the wrong places  
I had developed feelings that seemed normal to me but  
weren't to the society  
All I wanted was a feeling of belonging and a sense of  
significance to a being  
Father don't...

I've been labelled and called names depriving my manhood  
From the place, I felt sacred  
From the place I founded refuge and security, I was banished  
They took all my happiness and propelled it in the calabashes  
Thought education would be the best weapon to fight them  
Behold they came with spears and pistols  
Behold I came with pages and pens  
My heart aches, they tore it apart  
I took those pieces mended and healed theirs  
I was no longer a stranger to them,  
I reckon  
Father don't...

Even though through my entire life you had always been a  
stranger

Not even caught me daydreaming about you  
In spite of only knowing you when you had ceased to be  
Today my curiosity is abundantly satisfied  
I feel nothing but elevated from weariness  
I feel nothing but liberated from slavery  
For I know your free spirit is eternally immortal  
Perused or not for your transgressions  
I pardon all of your iniquities and irrationalities  
I still love you  
Father don't...

In those green pastures  
Where meek and keen souls lie  
Where flesh meets the famine  
Where diaphragm meets the dust  
Where dreams deteriorate for eternity  
Where wishes are washed away for eternity  
Where accomplishments are concluded  
Where brains are brainwashed by the state of  
unconsciousness  
May your soul rest and find peace  
If you ever happen to come again  
By the rivers and streams of Hammarsdale  
Beside that brown painted door,  
where you met Sindisiwe  
I'll always be steady and waiting for you  
That's only if you promise not to leave me again  
My daily prayer is indeed,  
Father don't leave me.

**3RD PLACE****Voices*****Divani Coopoosamy***

\* \* \*

*Hush*

Close your eyes to open your ears  
Do you hear the singing?  
The people are drowning out of their fears  
Up in arms, hand in hand  
They stand

Tears stained please  
Heart in hands  
My eyes open

I hold my hands up and speak  
I will be heard  
My streets will be filled with this metallic smell  
The roses of victory will bloom along the olive branches  
My brothers and sisters, side by side  
No colour in sight  
We will rise  
Reaching for the moon and the stars in the sky  
We'll sing louder than 1000 grasshoppers  
You will hear me  
No sounds of gunfire

The sounds of my ancestors crying  
Of my people dying  
I wish to hear my people laughing  
*Hush*



## **SHORT STORIES**

**1ST PLACE****Welcome Comrade - A rendition of Mlungisi  
Madonsela's last moment*****Gugulethu Goodness Hadebe*****\* \* \***

(Packing clothes)

“But why are you leaving so early?” asked my little sister. Before I could even answer she went on to inform me about the dates that my institution was opening as if she was my Vice-Chancellor, and she knew exactly when she set the academic calendar for the year 2019. She didn’t want to see me leave home so early, I am not sure if it was because she was going to miss me or the fact that she now has to do all the house chores by herself. I informed her that I was going to SIZOFUNDA’NGENKANI; a campaign that was made to help students who are marginalized, students who couldn’t be admitted to the higher education institution due to their living conditions back at home and those who had no registration fees but passed their matric so well. I explained to her the importance of the campaign and how it will not only help the students but the entire nation. How it will decrease crime, poverty and all the socio-economic issues that we are facing in our country. As sad as she looked her face began to light up as I could now see the curves on her cheek that allowed her teeth to show. My little sister loved helping people, so I understood what brought the smile back. “Okay then, make sure you help more than 20 students since we will be missing 20 days of our extra time with you.”, she said folding her arms like she was my boss. “Relax, this is my last year you will have all the time in the world to be with me,” I said as I was pulling my bags to the door.

Leaving home early was not easy as I was still enjoying the “freedom” of being “rich”, since at home there is no pressure. I eat what everyone at home eats without feeling poor, but it is a different story when one gets to varsity. The system reminds us that we come from poor backgrounds as one has to wait on SBUX to survive: the oppressor number three that I have encountered in the “Devil University of Trouble”. SBUX is what determines if you go to bed full or with ghost food in your stomach. Oppressor number one and two is the Registration fee and accommodation which students had to sweat like mine workers to get their things sorted. The day came for me to leave, the 5th of January 2019. I knew my old folks were not happy to see me leave home early as I was the “Trevor Noah” of the family, but I assured them that I will see them soon.

Little did I know that exactly a month later...

(Three gun shots)

“Mlungisi, Mlungisi!” I could hear them screaming my name, bit by bit their voices started to fade. I feel no pain but slowly my body is giving up on me. I see their terrified faces as they wait for an ambulance, I could sense their panic and not knowing what to do. I grasp this as it was our first and only glint of what it was to be the class of 1976 when live ammunition was opened at them. I waited with them but not to be helped as I knew that my time had come. I wanted to tell them “Comrades kulungile” (Soldiers it's fine) so that they could stop panicking because I was no longer in pain but the only word that I could utter was “comrades”, whoever heard me was lucky as this was my last word. I knew my fight against the world, the education system that continued to oppress the underprivileged students had come to an end. The world got blurry as my body got lighter and slowly, I was losing my earthly sight.

(Curtains opening)

“Wake up Mlungisi today is your big day!” said a strange young man, who looked more or less my age, whom I did not know in person, but I was certain that he looked familiar. The last time I checked I had no fiancé and today it is said to be my big day. “Here are your clothes for your ceremony,” said the strange young man, pointing at an army like uniform that was written *African Education Hero 2019*. He instructed me to get ready. With no questions asked I got ready and wore my uniform which fit me perfectly. The strange man escorted me to where my big day was to be held. The place was filled with a lot of strange people who were in uniform like I was, however, each uniform had significant writing representing their struggle. “Welcome comrade,” said a 13-year-old looking young man, “I see we left the earth the same way,” he said with a smile. “And you would be?” I asked.

(Hospital bed moving)

“Mlungisi stay with us,” said a man wearing something in white - not sure if it was a priest saying a prayer for me or a doctor trying to tell me not to shut my eyes. I kept my eyes wide open, lights moving like I was on a train, but my sight was failing me as the light suddenly became darkness. My ears could no longer collect any sound. My dear comrade by my side, I am sure he wasn't aware that I was already on the train, the train to the other life. I was gone.

(Handshakes)

“How rude of me not to introduce myself,” said the 13-year-old looking young man – he went on to say “Comrade I am Hector Pieterse and that is Solomon Mahlangu” - pointing at the strange man who had been a great help since I got here. I

asked what I was doing there. A deep but soft voice answered from behind “Comrade this is a paradise of heroes and today we welcome you as you have fought for our peoples’ liberation on earth” - as he stretched out his hand for a handshake and identified himself as Bantu Steve Biko, “Come, Mama Winnie and Chris Hani want to see you.”

*Dear Comrades*

*Remain fighting the good fight, remain fighting for the attainment of Free Decolonised Education in our lifetime.*

*Remain genuine to the cause like how I have been.*

*Do not let them instil fear in you.*

*Let my death be your strength Do not be afraid.*

*A Luta Continua. For our people.*

*Madonsela*

## 2ND PLACE

### **Msweli the Homeless**

#### ***Thembelethu Kubheka***

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Employees were getting tired of working for him for he had become impossible to work for. It seemed employees could never get anything right. One minute he would want reports written in a particular format, British English, and the next minute he would change his mind and he would want them written in the American English version. The name of the man was synonymous with Terror, Godzilla, Dragon, and Hitler in the office gossip spaces of Kukhanya Computers Inc, located in the heart of Durban in Embassy Building; 188 Anton Lambede St, Durban. Msweli Mthembu was his name. Aged 35 years, he was the CEO of Kukhanya Computers Inc - the multi-million Rand company that was soon to be listed on the JSE.

Msweli started the company in the year 2012, aged 24 years old, with no investor to back him up. He did not come from a well-off family and had to learn to fend for himself at an early age. Hence his name Msweli, means the physical state of lack in IsiZulu. He invested in his IT business on a waiter's wage and tips and he was fortunate enough to have NSFAS to fund his full tuition since he was an intellect and taking a course on computer sciences. The company, Kukhanya Computers Inc, was now established, with it being the fastest-growing emerging SMME Company in Africa and having taken a few accolades for its success and innovation. With the growth of the company, Msweli became obsessive with having more in order to make up for the long fall of having to struggle for a long time. That created friction in his relationships because he

lost sight of what is important. Hence, he was projecting his insecurities on his employees and loved ones to perform at levels even he did not understand.

One evening after work, Msweli was driving his Mercedes Maybach S600 to his R16 million Balinese architect home in La Lucia. Seeking to avoid traffic, he travelled by Humber Crescent road, and just before he stopped by the robots at the intersection of Kenneth Kaunda Rd and Humber Cres, a man wearing a mask ambushed his attention by smashing the car window on the driver's side and ordered him to get out of his vehicle or face death if he disobeys. He did as told. With the ease of an experienced hijacker, the man quickly got into the driver's seat and Msweli watched helplessly as he sped away in his luxury car. At that moment there was no traffic nor anyone walking nearby therefore Msweli could not find help since it was at night. He walked about 300 meters further down Kenneth Kaunda Rd hoping to run into someone from whom he could request to use their phone, but with no luck. When he had given up all hope, he heard a voice that startled him coming from the dark shallow edges of one concrete wall. Opposite road stood Riverside hotel being lit up.

"Be still and know that I am God," the voice said in a deep masculine tone.

Msweli turned and looked in the direction of the voice and saw a homeless man making his cardboard bed for the night. Happy to find another human being in this location, Msweli drew closer to where the man was. The homeless had only one old blanket and a duffle bag. On top of the makeshift bed lay a bible that had lost its cover and its pages had aged with time. He appeared to be in his 40s and his beard had not been shaved for some time - you could barely see his lips. The homeless man's attitude caught his attention. Standing and

watching this homeless man who appears so relaxed with having nothing but cardboard to sleep onto whilst he has just lost his R4 million worth car.

The homeless man was unfazed by this new visitor, the homeless man looked up and said, “You seem troubled and tense”. It was odd for a man to be found walking in this area at 09:00 pm and wearing a designer suit.

“Yes, I have been hijacked at the intersection of Kenneth Kaunda Rd and Humber Cres and I am trying to get a phone to make a call to my friends nearby” Msweli answered. “No wife I see,” the homeless man presumes.

“Yes. My engagement fell off two months ago but that’s none of your business.” Silence. “Do you know who I am?” Msweli enquires.

“No, I do not know you. But I do know people like you” the homeless man responded.

“What makes you say such?” Msweli’s inquisitive stance has heightened because he does not know who this man is and the thought of him figuring him out this fast scared him. “I was once stubborn and was hit badly by life itself.” the homeless man offered, with regret in his voice.

“Do you know how the chicken egg develops from the chicken?” asked the homeless man out of the blue. He started to present a hypothesis that seemed irrelevant to the current circumstances that Msweli was in.

“I do not know. Enlighten me” Msweli said.

“The process starts with a yolk being a size of a single and small pearl. It is rooted on the inside of the chicken and the



mother feeds the yolk until it reaches a weight of 40 grams. Are you following?”

“Yes, I am following and please get to the point,” Msweli said with an impatient tone. The homeless man was now excited because he was getting somewhere.

“Ok, good. When the yolk has reached a weight of 40 grams, the chicken releases the yolk to another compartment in its body where the yolk sustains itself and produces the egg whites. The process goes on to produce the inner layer of an egg that looks like thin toilet paper. You know that thin layer of an egg, don't you?” Msweli nods. “And then out of the thin layer comes the last stage which is the eggshell, and the egg is ready to be laid by the chicken”. With that, the homeless man ends the poultry lecture session.

“And your point with this egg development thing is?” Msweli enquires with no enthusiasm.

“You are the yolk. The chaos around you has been brewing from within you.” The homeless man makes the statement unequivocally and Msweli's eyes are wide open with a shock of revelation. He struggles to neither move nor blink.

“Don't make the same mistakes that we made of trying to control every circumstance and trying to force what we think life ought to give us,” the homeless man counselled, took a pause and continued: “All of us on this planet are called to write a story in people's hearts. You write what you want them to remember you by. If you do well, they remember your exceptional service towards them or if you do bad, they remember the heartache you have been.”

“Who are you for real?” Msweli enquires with amazement.

“Don’t ask that question”, the man responded. “The last thing that I want to say to you is that you need to let go of your past.”

The next moment, a police van stopped by where they were and a police officer rolled down the window and said, “Good evening gentlemen. Our surveillance cameras captured footage of a hijack about 20 minutes ago. Have you witnessed any such activities?” Msweli and the homeless man looked at each other with bewilderment knowing the answer very well. Msweli reluctantly identified himself to the police and was taken to the police station.

The significance of that night for Msweli was not being hijacked but it was coming across that random man in the dark who gave him a life-changing principle about himself. Msweli still drives by Kenneth Kaunda Rd till this day, on a new car of course, hoping to see him again and thank him but so far, he has had no luck. He did not even get the stranger’s name. It was a once in moment experience at night.

Msweli made drastic changes after that encounter with the homeless man. Thus, Msweli felt the need to establish a skills development initiative in partnership with other companies for the homeless and give them jobs. “We all equally created. There is light in every one of us. Just because someone is destitute in any manner, it does not define their capabilities”. Msweli said at the inauguration of his initiative in his speech.

Now Msweli has improved his relations with his employees and slowly mending his love relationship. His recent tweet was “Be still and know that I am God” and continued “thinking of joining a church”.

### 3RD PLACE

## How I Lost My Bracelet

*Andile Ngubane*

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It was a normal day on my way back from school to home, passing those resplendent fields of flowers and harmonising all the way. It felt as if the world was watching. I stopped by the puddle, admired my reflection, and buttoned my white and marron lined shirts. Being on cloud nine, led me not to the realisation that I was even on the road, until a dark-skinned and bearded old man shouted at me for my carelessness, and promised to reprimand me the next time he sees me standing in the middle of the main road. I didn't care about all of that. All I knew was that I wanted to be home as I couldn't wait to spill the beans to my mother about the most fascinating day I had at school. I had won the top learner award for the most performing student in mathematics. Walking around those dusty streets felt nothing but three steps back in getting myself clean and neat. I had just passed this house, an old lady watering her flowers and thought of stealing some for my mother, to my shock her eyes were fixed as the sparrow.

Walking past the small white wooden painted spaza shop, I searched for my pockets and one rand was all that I could find, I wanted to buy something sweeter than the day I had. Hoping my mother would give me more but the reality was that I was living in the past. As I was approaching home, I saw a bunch of people, loitering around the house, wondering where is my mother in all of this as she was a busy woman and usually by that hour, she would be waiting for me outside the gate. Not even my little sister screaming with her squeaky voice, dragging on my mother's long silk linen skirts, playing

with mud in the red clayed anthill or playing hide and seek with my mother for the very last time. My mind began travelling through the four cardinal points.

As I was about to enter, everyone and with their ample wrinkled faces stared at me, thinking to myself am I dirty? Oh, this woman is going to kill me! At a very first glance, I saw my grandmother cuddling my little sister, thinking about what she is doing here? Then the moment froze, could she be here to see us, why all this crowd though? Or maybe they have come to bring us prayer? However, the look on their faces resembled no good news, as it seemed they were the ones who needed more than just a prayer. When I walked into the room, I saw a new scenario, I felt a new aura, it looked as if darkness was drooling over this place. Death had walked in and made herself comfortable even though she was an unwelcomed guest.

My young, toddler mind vividly felt the presence of the strong ora, during this moment time froze and I began to look for a cartoon we used to watch when we were kids, where Jack was taken by the grim reaper smiling from a dark corner and snatched him from his home. Just as I was busy staring at this cartoon paper, I then knew... My grandmother called me, and I snapped back to reality and thought why should I be even meditating with such bad thoughts. Does this mean that my life would be as miserable as that of Lindokuhle at school who doesn't have parents? As I was imagining the grim gripper, I then remembered Lindokuhle in our class whose parents were no more, and his life had drastically changed for the worse in the past few months. Who walked in barefoot entirely the four seasons of the year and only had to feast with his eyes... Was this going to be me now? was his reality also becoming mine? I quite frankly felt as if the grim ripper had entered into my life like what it did for Lindokuhle ever

since that happened. I cried to God, not today, but even though I had cried to God and said not today, it was still coming. All these people have made my house, their home, I felt intimidation running through my veins and arteries. With a quivering voice accompanied by a shed of a tear, I started shouting " Mom, mom, mom" and all I got was an echo sound.

"Come sit grandson," said my grandmother. Then her facial expression delivered a thousand words, that felt like a thousand thorns and in that moment my heart sank... I had walked into my mother's funeral, this explained why I had not seen her since I had arrived. I couldn't believe my ears that day, I thought to myself how was this possible, as I left her fine this morning. As my grandmother was talking, at that moment, then I suddenly walked into the five stages of grief. Suddenly there was denial, although she had told me that my mother was no more, I still wanted to hear her shout my name from the kitchen but I was confused and angry, why are these all people in my house and making this whole situation real? and then I started to bargain with myself and with God, that wherever she is, wake her up! wake him up! In that very bargaining with God, I remembered the meaning of my mother's name, "Sindisiwe" which meant the redemption and the saved one, how then did she not beat this disease? Tuberculosis had become a resident in her blood, breath and bones. It had taken away her voice as she was talking in riddles, but people had been saved, I saw myself sitting in a classroom, banging a desk thinking that my future self should be a medical doctor as I couldn't let it happen to other children or family members and that's when I began to know that medicine had always been my calling till thus far.

At that very moment, I remembered that as a child I'd call to God to come down, and hastily, I stood up from the bench, sat on the bed and said God sits next to me, let's talk. We have

some reasoning to do and said come, sit here, let us talk, why are you doing this? As I started quoting in my mind thinking that I am bargaining with the supreme one, it was too sad for me to realise that she was gone. Couldn't have she had been spared just for grandmother's namesake "Nomusa" which means mercy and kindness, couldn't just for once in a lifetime her name serves its purpose? In my bargaining with God, I then started bargaining with my grandmother that where is she? I would like to see her and then suddenly I was overwhelmed, and I started feeling the tears, rage and agony coming from deep down within me, I wanted to shout out to cry and then finally when I looked into the room, saw the black clothes and sad faces, I realised she was gone. I suddenly felt overwhelmed with everything, I had found a new mother named depression, day by day the situation felt even worse but eventually I came to acceptance.

Few days posthumously felt like nightmares, drowning from deep end streams with ferocious species consuming me daily. I felt as if I was buried alive, as if I was living in separate worlds. My pillowcase had been my comforter, all that I could talk to was the wall against me. On my way from school, I would sit beside the palm tree and cry, deliver all these painful words, share my dreams and to my surprise, I would sometimes find myself laughing. I ended naming the tree, "Siphiwe" meaning the gifted one, as it had the gift of taking away all my hindrances. I had lived in darkness more than anywhere else as such, I was no stranger to it. They said to hide away, you are not welcomed here, we would not accept you, you are broken and incomplete. I had learnt to be ashamed of all my scars, they said to run away because nobody will love you as you are but I couldn't let them break me to dust, I knew that I had a place in this world, I knew that I was entitled to live and had a purpose to fulfil. As days turned into weeks and turned into months our lives suddenly changed like that child from school

whom I once referred to, as we were now forced to stay with relatives and because of the mere fact that growing up without the presence of the parental figure in my life I found myself appreciating the beauty of another man. I thought getting closer to a male figure would get me protected and fill in the gap of trying to cope with my parent's absence.

However, our culture and society condemn these feelings. I had become a stranger to myself, I ended up not knowing who I was. I have been rejected, deserted and disowned and for more than I can remember. I remembered that when I was younger, I couldn't wait to be older, now that I'm older I realised that those broken crayons and lost toys were better than broken hearts and lost beloved ones. I had been designated adjectives to which people would refer me, I lost my dignity and self-confidence. However, through it all, I thank God, for the brains he gave me as such the very same people who used to suppress me, were now suppressed by my dawn, seeking for my help, and when floods came along them, I drowned them out. It is only through God and my education that has elevated my self-worth. That even though they were breaking me down by their words which felt like sticks and stones, it was building me up. I may be bruised but I'm still brave. I am who I was meant to be, yes this is me, and my future looks nothing like my past, I am marching to the beat that I drum to myself, I am not scared to be seen. I make no apologies for who I am. I am me and I am proudly unapologetic. My only prayer is to know God in new horizons and to become free from these chains that are binding me.

This is what my struggle and my life story have produced. I am not afraid to dance to my tune, to walk my path even if it means being alone or being different. Today that difference has made me the boldest, courageous and successful person and whose dreams are yet to be held. I have embraced that even if

I had lost my bracelet of my mother, I still have one to wear with pride and confidence that is defined by my struggles and grief. I call out to the atmosphere that if you were around maybe, I wouldn't have run in the arms of another man, but as much as I am proud of what the man I have become today. I stand firm on what my struggles and how losing my bracelet have defined me as a man in the current society but let us go back to asking the questions if Sindisiwe was sitting next to me.