

Liberian Literary Magazine

KWEE

Jan Issue

Iss. # 1/28

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

**Book
Reviews**

**Mae
Azango**

**Author of
the Month**

Liberian Classics
Gifts of the Masters
Resurrected Master

Unscripted
Liberian
Proverbs

Words of Nia
Janice Almond
Ezra Pound

Featured Poets:

Althea Romeo Mark
Richard Wilson Moss
Thelma T. Geleplay
Cher Antoinette
John Eliot
Jeanine Milly Cooper
Jack Kolkmeier
Berenice Mulubah
Sylomun Weah
Mohammed Sy
Edwin J. Barclay
Alonzo Gross
Renee' D Brown
Hialil Karahan

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Liberian Literary Magazine

KWEE





Overview:

New Look

Hurray! You noticed the new design as well right. Well thanks to you all, we are here today. We are most grateful to start our print issue. This would not have happened without your dedicated patronage, encouragement and of course, the belief you placed in our establishment. We look forward to your continual support as we strive to improve on the content we provide you.

Our Commitment

We at Liberian Literature Review believe that change is good, especially, the planned ones. We take seriously the chance to improve, adopt and grow with time. That said we still endeavor to maintain the highest standard and quality despite any changes we make. We can comfortably make this

commitment; *the quality of our content will not be sacrificed in the name of change.* In short, we are a fast growing publisher determined to keep the tradition of providing you, our readers, subscribers and clients with the best literature possible.

What to Expect

You can continue to expect the highest quality of Liberian literary materials from us. The services that we provided that endeared us to you and made you select us as the foremost Liberian literary magazine will only improve. Each issue, we will diversify our publication to ensure that there is something for everyone; as a nation with diverse culture, this is the least we can do. We thank you for your continual support.

Place your ads with us for as low as \$10

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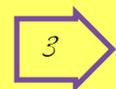
Gifts of the Masters

New Releases

Meet the Team

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Liberian Literature Review



Segment Contents

Editorial

In our editorial, one should expect topics that are controversial in the least. We will shy away from nothing that is deemed important enough. The catch theme here is addressing the tough issues

Risqué Speak

This new segment to our print covers the magical language of the soul, music. It will go from musical history, to lyrics of meaning to the inner workings of the rhythm, beats, rhyme, the way pieces connect and importantly, the people who make the magic happen.

Our host and or his guests will delve into the personal life of our favorite musicians, bands and groups like those that we have not seen. This is more than their stories; it is more like the stories behind the stories. They'd shine the spotlight on the many people that come together to make it all happen on and off stage. Watch out for this segment.

Kuluba's Korner

The owl spills out wisdom like no one else; won't you agree? Our own KLM hosts this corner and she shies away from nothing or no one with her whip- the **truth**. They say fewer things hurt more than the honest, uncoated truth. Well, she does that but with spices of humor and light-heartedness like only her can.

Authors of the Month Profile

This is one of our oldest segments. In fact, we started

off with showcasing authors. It is dear to us. Each month, we highlight two authors. In here we do a brief profile of our selected authors.

Authors of the Month Interview

This is the complimentary segment to the Authors of the Month Profile one of our oldest segments. In here, we interview our showcased authors. We let them tell us about their books, characters and how they came to life. Most importantly, we try to know their story; how they make our lives easier with their words. In short, we find out what makes them thick.

Articles

Our articles are just that, a series of major articles addressing critical issues. A staffer or a contributor often writes it.

Book Review

One of our senior or junior reviewers picks a book and take us on a tour. They tell us the good, not-so-good and why they believe we would be better of grabbing a copy for ourselves or not. Occasionally, we print reviews by freelancers or other publications that grab our interests.

Education Spotlight

Our commitment and love to education is primary. In fact, our major goal here is to educate. We strive for educating people about our culture through the many talented writers- previous and present. In this segment, we identify any success story, meaningful event or entity

that is making change to the national education system. We help spread the news of the work they are doing as a way to get more people on board or interested enough to help their efforts. Remember, together, we can do more.

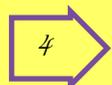
Artist of the Month

We highlight some of the brilliant artists, photographers, designers etc. We go out of the box here. Don't mistake us to have limits on what we consider arty. If it is creative, flashy, mind-blowing or simply different, we may just showcase it.

We do not neglect our artist as has been traditional. We support them, we promote them and we believe it is time more people did the same. Arts have always form part of our culture. We have to change the story. We bring notice to our best and let the world know what they are capable of doing. We are 100% in favor of Liberian Arts and Artists; you should get on board.

Poem of the Month

Our desire to constantly find literary talent remains a pillar of our purpose. We know the talent is there; we look for it and let you enjoy it. We find them from all over the country or diaspora and we take particular care to find emerging talents and give them a chance to prove themselves. Of course, we bring you experienced poets to dazzle your mind!.



Editor's Desk

The Year Ahead



2017 actually flew by... too many things zoomed at faster than light speed. Many of our contributors had awards, new publications, deals and even travelled around. Yet, in all this, they still fed us those stories, poems or articles that make us survive this competitive industry. The better news is that, most have remained and a few new ones have come on board. GREAT right?

I am excited for many reasons. Are you?

It appears that we might outdo ourselves this time around. Each issue, we see a better [KWEE](#) and for that we remain thank to you. Yes you. All of you that have stayed by us, that take time off to read and support us in the different ways you do. Thank you once again.

I will try to let nothing out of the bag too early, although I can't promise. The excitement is too much to contain.

Oh here is a teaser, but I'd deny it if quoted! Oops, did I just type that? There goes my plausible deniability.

Anyways, I'm one that likes my bad and not so good news first, that way, I can enjoy the good ones. So here it goes. Our hot corner [Kulubah's Korner](#) by our sharp wit KLM will not be with us for a while. Sad right? Don't worry, she's not gone yet, trust me, she is on a refresher and will be back with more of her insightful, but truthful opinion bites. Frankly, am I the only one who thinks that at times she's just meddling ☺ [-I'm whispering here-]? We will miss you KLM, please hurry back.

We'd also be shifting some of the segments to the blog exclusively. Yeah, we know, but we wish to keep the magazine closely aligned to its conception- *a literary mag*. You will not

lose your segments they will only be shifted. The blog is also attached to the new website so you don't have to go anywhere else to access it. It is the last page of the site- [KWEE](#).

We have new segments hosted by poets and authors from all over the world. "I ain't sayin' nothin' more" as my grandmamma used to say. You'd have to read these yourself won't say a thing more.

The Poetry section is our major hotspot. It is a fine example of how KWEE manages to be true to her desire of giving you the best form of creative diversity.

We have new poets still finding their voices placed alongside much more experienced poets who have long ago established themselves and found their voice. They in a way mentor the newer ones and boost their confidence.

In *Unscripted*, as the name suggests, Cher gives it raw. The artist, the poet, the writer- anyone of her talented side can show up and mix the science geek. You never know really what will come up until it does.

Richard Moss goes about his randomness with purpose in his poetry corner, *'Twas Brillig*. He can assume the mind or body of any of his million personifications, ideas or characters or just be himself and write good poetry. I am sure you know what to expect there.

Well, I knew I said only tips I was giving but it is just hard to contain myself considering all the things that are in store.

If there is one message you want to take from here, let it be this-prepare for a roller-coaster this 2016.

We are bringing you a better KWEE every single issue. We will break the boxes; go on the fringes to find what it is we know you would love.... Creative Difference- the best of its kind.

From the entire team here at KWEE, we say enjoy the year, sit back, lay back, relax or do whatever it is you do when you hold a copy of our mag and feast along.

Read! Read! Read!

KWEE Team

Liberian Classic



HOW WE BECAME THE LAND OF THE PEPPER-BIRD

By: D. Othniel Forte

(Were The first Humans, Kru?)

In the Creating, God made 3 men and 3 women. When God made the first six(6) people, he laid them out on the grass to dry. While they lay there an idea crossed God's mind. "I'll add a little spice", he thought. Umm Yes, Pepper.

So, God gathered some dried pepper and began to grind it between two rocks. Three minutes passed and a tornado size "Achooo!" was emitted from God. "Acchhooo!", he sneezed again uncontrollably.

That sneeze uprooted the little tree that had been shading him, pulled the roots right out of the ground.

Pepper flew in a black cloud, fell on those New People that were still wet. God felt awful He had let loose a fire(pepper) that would burn in their blood and make them mean and wanting to fight, to make wars.

God sat down with his head in his hands, trying to take it in. Finally he

stood up and said, "Well if one grinds pepper, one has to expect to sneeze. And you cannot sneeze without a sound."

Now we know why people quarrel and are mean and make war.

Pepper Bird:

Now when God was grounding the pepper that caused his big sneeze, there was a bird in one of the small trees which was uprooted by the blast of air. The bird was eating yellow berries that grew on the tree. Even though they were now coated with pepper dust, he kept on eating, eating, eating. Finally, when he had his fill, a terrible fire started to warm his belly. He tried to cool the heat with water, but water has no power over pepper. In his misery he found God and begged for help.

"Doctor me, I beg you. My insides are hot. I will die from the burning in my belly."

"You will sing," God told the bird. "Singing is for cooling a heat in the gut- There is no good song without some heat."

The bird swelled out his chest and began to sing. The sound was so beautiful that even the wind hushed to listen. All the creatures of the forest raised their ears to hear. Plants stopped growing lest the rustle of their leaves dim the sound. When the song was finished there was no longer any fire in the belly of the little bird.

Before he tucked his head under his wing to sleep, he went to God to ask God how much he owed for being helped.

"The fee is this," God said. 'Every morning you are to greet the sun with a song. This is to make the day glad. You are to be called the pepper bird, and this place is to be named the land of the pepper bird.

Remember that it takes some heat to start proper song."

A local Legend!

In Celebration of Bai T. Moore

Ebony Dust

Bai. T Moore

In this speck of ebony dust
Blown over east and western climes
Forever burns the yearning
To tap the springs of ancient bards
Whose tales of African heroes
Lie buried in the ruins
Of the kingdoms that are hidden
Beneath the waste of centuries;
Empires like Bornu, Songhay and Malinke
Or the domains of the Bantu.
Fabulous tales of elegant courts
Trimmed in royal splendor
At Jene and Timbuktu,
Where kings and comely queens
Surrounded by their courtiers
Kept aflame ambition
And millions on the march.
Tales of brilliant warriors,
On galloping steeds and camels
Who wielded the sword and left
Behind in blood and flames,
Achievements of the scholars
Who gave the world the rudiments
Of medicine, math and arts,
And the secrets of stars.
To catch the sounds of mocking bird
Whose lives and love enrich
The boat songs of the Congo,
The Niger and the Nile .
Or the new "High Life" of Ghana.
To carve with pen like masters
Whose delicate hands create
A ritual dancing mask
Or a silent god in ebony.

Authors of the Month Profiles

MAE AZANGO



Mae Azango

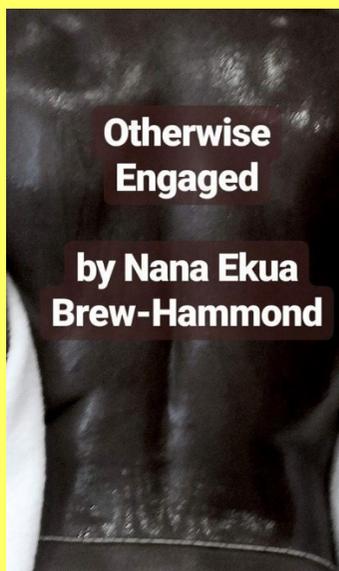
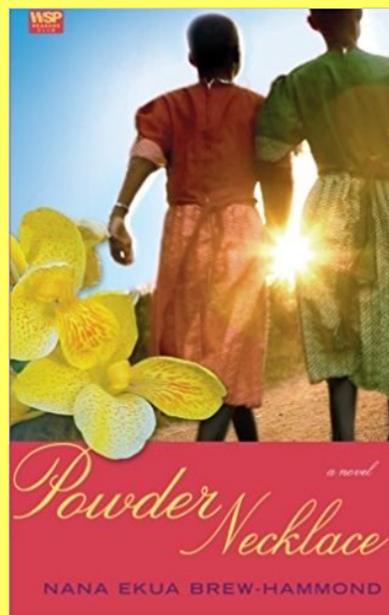
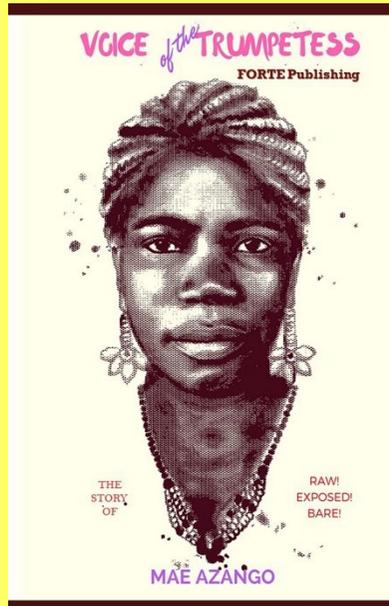
Mae Azango is a multi-award winning Liberian journalist and female activist. She is known for her reports on female genital mutilation (FGM), which helped suspend the practice in Liberia. Azango is the daughter of Robert G.W. Azango, an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia who was dragged and beaten by rebels, later dying from his injuries.

Mae Azango later became a refugee. She returned to Liberia in 2002 and began work as a journalist. Topics of her reporting included abortion, illegal mining, rape, teen pregnancy.

Ms. Azango is a recipient of the International Press Freedom Award of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

In 2011, Azango won a grant from the US-based Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting for her work on "under-reported stories" in "human interest and developmental journalism".

She lives in Liberia where she continues to advocate for female and child rights. She is writing her second book.



NANA BREW-HAMMOND



Nana Ekuia Brew-Hammond is the author of [Powder Necklace](#), which *Publishers Weekly* hailed “a winning debut.” Named among 39 of the most promising African writers under 39, her short fiction was included in the anthology [Africa39: New Writing from Africa South of Sahara](#). She was shortlisted for a Miles Morland Writing Scholarship in 2014 and 2015 and has contributed fiction to [African Writing](#), *Los Angeles Review of Books*, [Sunday Salon](#), the short story collection [Woman's Work](#), and a forthcoming anthology from Atria Books. She has shared commentary on everything from Michelle Obama's role in the presidential campaign to Nelson Mandela's legacy on MSNBC, NY1, Sahara TV and ARISE TV and online at destinations including [EBONY.com](#) and [TheGrio.com](#). In April 2015, she was the opening speaker at [TEDxAccra](#). Also noted for her personal style, a host of photographers have captured her sartorial choices for outlets including [New York Magazine](#), *Essence Magazine*, [TheSartorialist.com](#), and [The New York Times](#). Brew-Hammond co-leads a monthly writing fellowship at the Center for [Faith and Work](#) and is currently at work on a new novel.

Our Spotlight author is a Liberian author and world acclaimed JOURNALIST

Mae Azango

Author Interview



Liberian Literary Mag conducted an interview with

MAE AZANGO

LLR: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Tell us a little about you- your education, upbringing, hobbies etc.

Tell us a little about yourself:

I am a Liberian Journalist working for the **Front Page Africa News Paper** and online news organ and the new Narratives online news outlet and I have been practicing journalism for the last 14 years.

I never dreamt of being a journalist, but a hotel manager; I wanted to be my own boss, but when the Liberian civil war that lasted fourteen years started in 1990, my youthful days and dream of becoming a

hotel manager were shattered and I became a refugee in neighboring Ivory Coast. I lived less than a second class citizen as refugee and my life was living a nightmare, where torture and violations was my companion.

I remembered on one instance when I mistakenly bumped into an Ivorian in a populated market, and he spat in my face and called me dog. I could not do anything because I was a refugee and did not have voice.

Why writing?

I chose to write my book because, I have a story to tell, because I believe that my experience will help many young women to overcome challenges and failure in their lives and press forward.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

There are many books that influenced my life and career but just to name a few as follows; **Sidney Shelton,**

Danielle Steel, Amanda Quake, Sandra Browne, African Novels like; **Things Fall Apart,** Animal Farm, Liberian Authors like: **Bai T. Moore's Ebony Dust,** **Wilton Sakawolo's** , **The Rain and the Night,** and **Why Nobody Knows When He Will Die,** and **Joseph Saye Guanu's Liberian History up to 1847** among many others.

How do you approach your work?

As a journalist, I approach my work, by being objective in gathering information and then I report the facts, to create a debate for a positive change. In that one of the jobs of a journalist is to make an impact in changing lives or situations in the society and the Country at large.

What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?

I explore many themes including rape, prostitution, domestic violence, Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Human and Sex

Trafficking, Substance abuse, Developmental, Health issues, Violence against women, which includes Female genital Cutting and child right abuse. One of my themes that brought my government to her feet was when I reported about Female Genital Mutilation or cutting and pointed out the health implications according to Doctor's view.

I was forced into hiding, because I was threatened by the Traditional people of my Country. But at the end, the government for the first time suspended the practice for time indefinite. The next theme, was when I exposed the Human Trafficking story, involving some Liberian Girls who were trafficked to Lebanon and used as sex slaves.

My continuous reportage forced the Liberian Government to act, when citizens took to the street in protest that government bring our girls home. The heat pressured the Government to establish an Inter-ministerial Committee

to fly into Lebanon and bring back home, 16 girls, of whom the government denied and dismissed the report from the beginning. This is what we term as making an impact in journalism. If I had not reported stir up the citizens to demonstrate, a debate would not have been created to force the government to act.

Tell us a little about your book[s]-storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.

My book talks about the ordinary people or citizens I write about, because I believe they too have their stories. It also talks about my life as a child, a young adult, a woman and a mother, who nearly died in childbirth. My inspiration comes from bringing joy on the faces of others who are at the bottom of the poverty ladder, as I was, when I lived as a refugee in Ivory Coast. My inspiration comes from exposing human rights abuses and other ills in society, in order for a change.

What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?

I wrote the title, "Voice of the Trumpetess" because I am the person who is blowing a trumpet that sounds out many things, including societal ills, violations of all kinds, health problems that has claimed the lives of many women, man and children.

I came up with the storyline by speaking for people who were once like me, deprived of my rights as a refugee, my rights to health care, which nearly claimed my life as a young mother. My storyline also includes the violation of my rights, when I was tortured and abused as a refugee.

Is there a message in your book that you want your readers to grasp?

Yes, I want to tell my readers, most especially the young women to who find themselves in similar situations of violence and challenges

and cannot find their way out, to continue to press forward, and you will become victorious. Do not allow disappointment and setbacks to cause you to lose focus and your self-esteem, because no matter how many times you fall, as long as you get up and strive for greatness, and you will end your journey.

Is there anything else you would like readers to know about your book?

Always strive for the best and never settle for less, because the best is yet to come, and when you rush and take the less, you will be left out when the best arrive.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

“Never put off for tomorrow what you can do today, or you will never have it done” A wise saying from my mother. So my advice to other who intend to write or have started but can never find the time to complete;

If you want to write, get up and do it, even if it is

a line or two and do not always put it off for the next day, or you may never have a done. Writing is an everyday thing, and not occasionally when you are down.

11) What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?

I am reading all African novels such as; *Scary Dreams, Daunting Years, and I Speak of Ghana.*

Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.

I launched my book on the 17th of December at the Palm Spring Hotel, and it was super, many family and friends graced the occasion and bought some of my books. We at **Monrovia READS**, have been doing a book drive every Saturday and swap books at the Radio Monrovia, and we have a literacy program, where we read to our audience. **Team Monrovia READS** also read and tell stories to schools and orphanages in and around Monrovia

and we also read at Cuttington University in Bong County.

13) What are your current projects?

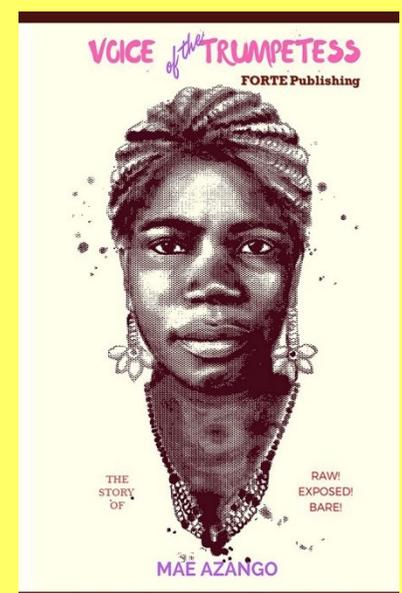
Reporting the news and writing news stories.

14) what are your favorite book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?

Some of my favorite include; *Daunting Years*, by a young Liberian Author called; Kpanah Gaygay and *Scary Dreams*, by; Lekpele M. Nyamalon.

Any last words?

Thank You.



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VOICE OF THE TRUMPETESS

While navigating the minefield of rights advocacy, Mae Azango has been skipping a few sizes of her own.

In her explosive new book, *Voice of the Trumpetess*, she shares on why her passion burns for those whose stories she tells—she can empathize with them.

In a shocking revelation, her brush with rape, her physical, psychological and even sexual abuse, in her decades upstream, she witnesses her demise, in a raw, provocative yet reflective narrative.

She trumpetess the horrors of her own past.



MAE AZANGO IS A LIBERIAN JOURNALIST AND RIGHTS ADVOCATE WHOSE STORIES HAVE WON MULTIPLE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS.

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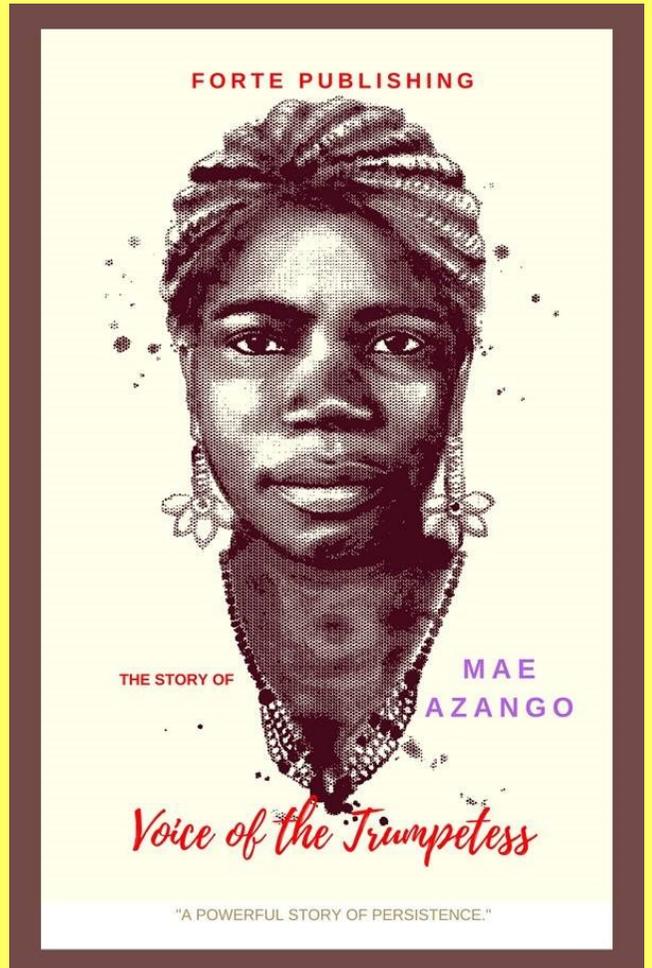


THE MAE AZANGO STORY

VOICE OF THE TRUMPETESS

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Diaspora Poet

Eclipse

In days gone by fear
imprisoned us,
fear born in tradition,
borne in culture,
invoked by ancestors
straddling the worlds
of the living and the
dead.

Some youth disavow
this mystic realm.
That world now
misread as nonsense,
disowned, dead to
them.
We pray these dying
roots
of our young will
regenerate.

Today we are
spooked by other
ghosts—
the ghost of our
children
barely out of cradles
already gone to
their graves.

We are haunted by
unused potential,
hunted by amoral
gangs,
weaned on violence,
conscience stripped
of empathy.

Navel strings cut off,
ancestors cannot
hear
their children's drums
talking,
their voices are lost
in the wind.

We fear deadly
metal missiles.
that shout our
names,
sing our death songs.

We will not die from
fear of ghosts,
but from fear of
becoming ghosts.
Violence, like a
chanting juju man,
waits outside our
doors.

Our universe holds its
breath.

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Romeo-Mark 21.11.2011



Born in Antigua, West
Indies, [Althea Romeo-Mark](#)
is an educator and
internationally published

writer who grew up in St.
Thomas, US Virgin Islands.
She has lived and taught in
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands,
USA, Liberia (1976-1990),
London, England (1990-
1991), and in Switzerland
since 1991.

She taught at the
University of Liberia (1976-
1990). She is a founding
member of the [Liberian
Association of Writers
\(LAW\)](#) and is the poetry
editor for *Seabreeze:
Journal of Liberian
Contemporary Literature*.

She was awarded the
[Marguerite Cobb McKay
Prize](#) by *The Caribbean
Writer in June, 2009* for
short story “Bitterleaf, (set
in Liberia).” *If Only the
Dust Would Settle* is her
last poetry collection.

She has been guest poets
at the International Poetry
Festival of Medellin,
Colombia (2010), the
[Kistrech International
Poetry Festival](#), Kissi,
Kenya (2014) and The
Antigua and Barbuda
Review of Books 10th
Anniversary Conference,
Antigua and Barbuda (2015)

She has been published in
the US Virgin Islands,
Puerto Rico, the USA,
Germany, Norway, the UK,
India, Colombia, Kenya,
Liberia and Switzerland.

More publishing history
can be found at her blog
site:

www.aromaproductions.blogspot.com

Monrovia READS

Monrovia READS is a reading literacy program run by a team of Liberian writers. It is sponsored by **FORTE Publication** in collaboration with **RADIO Monrovia – ELRM 92.1 FM**.

The major goal is to encourage a culture of reading amongst Liberians. Emphasis is placed on low to poor end schools and communities that do not have as many opportunities as those more fortunate.

Every last Friday of the month, there is a public reading for writers and their audiences to meet and network whilst having fun, wine and dining. The guest reader for #Monrovia READS 11.0 for the month of January was **Dr. Patrick Burrowes**.

The guest reader gave an overview from his most recent publication, *Between the Kola Forest and the Salty Sea*, a book he took 30 years researching. It covers Liberia’s history before the nation-state Liberia was founded by settlers from the US.

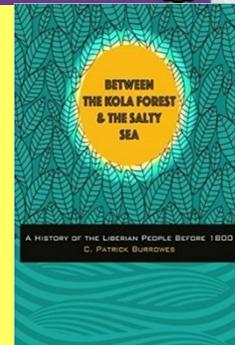
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MEET OUR READER
C. PATRICK BURROWES

FORTE PUBLISHING PRESENTS
Monrovia READS 11.0
MEET OUR READER
MAE AZANGO

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MEET OUR READER
KPANAN. GAYGAY

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HOST
D. OTHNIEL FORTE

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LIBERIA'S FINEST
AUTHORS/POETS
ARE READING
JAN. 26, 2018





Dr. C. Patrick Burrowes



Cross section of the guests



City Mayor and guest mayor from the US







HUGH MASEKELA, A TRIBUTE

By: C. Patrick Burrowes



The passing of Hugh Masekela has me reflecting on his legacy. Yes, he was a world-class musician, an extraordinary composer, a vocal stylist and a consummate entertainer.

In concert, he would range from storytelling to cracking jokes to blowing the blues away on his trumpet, all without missing a beat. But Masekela was more than all that. He was an agent of change. His lyrics helped expose the horrors of Apartheid while inspiring his listeners with his vision of a new and better world.

Driven from South Africa, he took the lemon of exile and made a refreshing sweet-tart lemonade. He invented an exhilarating pan-African punch that blended A Night in Tunisia (Dizzy Gillespie's homage to North African music), Rekpete (Liberian), Languta (Ghanian), Lady (Nigeria), and Grazing in the Grass (South African).

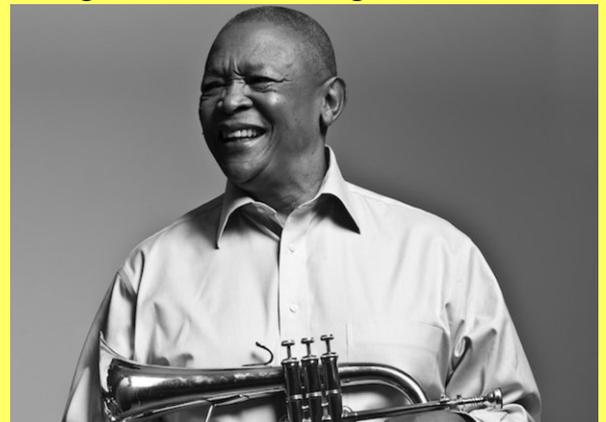
A major ingredient, which held those dissipate flavors together, was jazz. Jazz itself was a pan-African concoction. It was forged in the Diaspora by children of Africa who - generations before - had been forced into exile like Hugh. In short, Masekela was a visionary.

Time and time again, history shows it is the creative men and women like Masekela who supply a society's vision. Societies are soulless shells without the inspiration, direction and passion that can only come from musicians, poets, painters, photographers,



playwrights, actors and other artists.

Too bad Liberians don't understand that self-evident truth. Instead, we wait and wait and wait for politicians to supply our national vision and sense of identity. We keep waiting for government to do what we, the people, can and should do for ourselves. We keep waiting because we have bought into the Hollywood myth that Nelson Mandela alone created the vision of a new South Africa and single-handedly brought it into being. No, no, no.



Mandela was merely the standard bearer of a national vision that had been forged over many decades by Masekela and other artists. If Hugh had not released "Bring back Nelson Mandela, bring him back home to Soweto," the great man might have languished in prison sometime longer and even died there.

We wait because those of us gifted

with book learning have turned books into fetishes. In so doing, we blaspheme against God who, in His Infinite wisdom, gave some a gift for books while bestowing on others talents for sports, the arts or farming.



In our egocentrism, we force our children to pursue OUR calling, not theirs. We fail to realize that playing soccer well requires an advanced understanding of physics, and performing music draws upon sublime abilities not captured in books. Like the siblings of Benjamin, our rallying cry is, "come let's slay these dreamers."

We, Liberians, keep waiting because many of our parents and grandparents were neutered and spaded, like house pets, during the autocratic 27-years reign of Pres. William V. S. Tubman. They were told "leave those people's thing."



And they have passed that mantra on to their children. What we are told to leave

to politicians is not just governance of the "republic," but almost everything from culture to history. I would be a millionaire if I had a dollar for every time some well-intentioned person said that I should not be writing Liberian history because "that's the government's job."

Liberians need to stop crushing the creative impulses in our compatriots. As Hugh Masekela ably demonstrated, you don't have to be a politician to lead. Here we are celebrating the life of Masekela, as we regularly do when famous musicians die, usually from some other country. Let's start nurturing the dreams, aspirations and careers of our artists.

Let's start honoring and patronizing Liberian musicians, painters and poets, instead of denigrating and bootlegging their works. And the artists themselves need to stop allowing politicians to play them against each other. Until we do, we will stay inside our sad, self-imposed silos longtime.



C. Patrick Burrowes
Historian/Educator

Resurrected Master

Edwin J Barclay



This series focuses on the writings of one of the literary giants of Liberia. Unfortunately, more people remember the man as the politician or the masterful lawyer.

Arguably, the Barclays [he and his uncle, both presidents of Liberia] were the sharpest legal minds of their times, rivalled only by an equally worthy opponent JJ Dossen.

What we try to do in this series is spotlight the literary giant, E. J. Barclay was. We attempt to show the little known side of the man- free from all the political dramas.

The Death of Faith

Awake, O Love, the dream is o'er!
Awake to a redeemed earth,
—
A world whose beauty has its birth

In thy sweet influence and power!

Awake! the horrid nightmare past!

For Faith and Hope, they shall not die!

Thy prayer has reached the realms on high,
And Truth is conqueror at last!

Thou trod'st, ere while, a realm of sin;

Thou treadest now a Paradise, —

The triumph of thy sacrifice,
—
Awake, and thy new reign begin!

Arise, O love, in sleep is death!

Awake to life's extatic joy!

Up to activity 1 and toy
No more with dreams! . . .
Above, beneath,

And all around, ascends earth's call:
"Arise, O Love, and let us live!
Awake, awake no more to grieve!

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#KolloquaTakeOva

I say my pepo yor hado ohh. I say yor welcon to ley koloqua segment of KWEE! Yor na noe ha I too hart like copat seat! Dah me le drawor foh ley car, so jes call me KOLOQUA JUE. So iffy you na noe ha to tok or wreatey, you juke wae rusty nail ya.....Hahahahahha.

Ley orllor tin I wan tok arbu la ley wan son man dem gwen aran forcin leirsef on womon dem. Book pepo calley rape. La wikeyness mon stap!! No la no, or jes becors you see one gaeh walkin by horsef na, kpluh,you jum on hor en slee wae her. La one la bad tin der. We callin ley gorment to say yor do sontin, yor make law dem for lo kina wikey men dem nut to be culoff. Yeah ohhh, la me tok la one. Iffy ley Kahn rape youn youn chiren dem, oldma dem en sontin seh sonmor dem can die, leh ley sho dem ha wikeyness goo too.

Hokay, so I fini blasin na en I na kahn bak to myseh.

So I jes wan teh yor la ha we wae be doin tins here ya. We wae laff, Buh wen serous tin der foh us to tok,we wae tokey. Iffy anybaly vex, go

sue me to Tamba court. My brabee Forte na fini buyin my red shoes.

En one tin I noe, my hea too big to go insah sonbaly muff to chew en my muff too big for foh la yor sumor hea to entor

So untay I tok to yor nes mon,yor takey easy ya. You do goo,you do foh youseh. You do bad,you do foh youseh

Dah me, yor real geeh

Koloqua Jue

In Liberia, the closest thing to pidgin is the Colloqua [Liberian English]. It is the one thing that every Liberian understands and or speaks. It is tonal and has roots in the deep southern belt of the US. There are elements from the Caribbean and West Indies adopted due to the transatlantic slave trade.

Unfortunately, this rich language has received very little scholarly study. This however, has not limited its growth. Regularly, new words and phrases are added. Its growth is alarming. It's used in more than the markets and streets it used to be restricted. Currently, many radio

programs are delivered in this medium and serious advertising goes on using the Colloqua.

Marketers, it seems are not the only ones cashing in on Colloqua, the music industry over the last five year has hugely vested in it usage. This is greatly responsible for the growth in the industry. Their movie and film counterparts are growing into tapping into this market.

Sadly, it seems only the academia and writers that are not making major usage of it. This is partly due to the stigma once associated with the usage of colloqua- it was once believed to be used by the with little formal education.

Here at KWEE, we break barriers. We do the unexpected we keep finding new frontiers. We threw the box away long time just o swim in the open sea of creativity.

This segment translate works into Colloqua or create new, original ones. Our host will explain things so our non-Liberian readers can enjoy the beauty of the pieces.

Markay Dhor

She sticking in ley
corner coworhing her
face
she yelling for hep
bor nobahlay wan
hep her Her chayren
dem crying She's
scary
Dey chayren dem seh
scallor him
Allor dem wan hep
bor no way

In ley mean time
He punching her lek
sandbag
He wepping her lek
markay dog
I say, vexation fullor
his hay he's dam vex
bad way
He jeh flocking her

He way nah stap seh
for le chayren
He way nah stap seh
for lay woman
He say nathing way
stap him
He say no one way
stap him

He only wan flock la doh...

Market Dog

She squeezes
Over in the corner
Covering her face
She screams for help
but no one helps

Her kids are wimping
She's afraid
they're afraid
They all call for help
But it comes not

Meanwhile
he pounces away
he kicks away

His mind is consumed
with rage
Beastly anger
overtakes him

He doesn't care
If she's hurt
He doesn't mind
If she's in pain.

He doesn't stop
for the kids
He doesn't stop
for the woman

He stops
for no one
He stops
for nothing

He has but one goal...
Teach her a lesson...



Born in Voinjama City
Lofa County, *Kpana
Nnadia Gaygay* is an
emerging Liberian
novelist.

Her writings lean
strongly towards
education and social
justice, especially
domestic and sexual
violence. She uses her
short stories and poems
to address these issues.

She is a regular
contributor to the
Liberian Literary
Magazine, KWEE.

She is a biology major
at the University of
Liberia and holds a
diploma in Trauma
Healing and
Counselling.

Kpana currently
resides in Monrovia
along with her family,
where she continues
her writing.

©D. Othniel Forte

Unscripted

Cher Antoinette



January 2018

STUCK

Stuck,
stuck,
stuck in a rhythm
that's going no where
gripped by fear.

Should I dare
to question
my pace,
my place
in this race
for award?

Reward
my efforts;
give me the cup
to sup
of the dreams
I should follow.

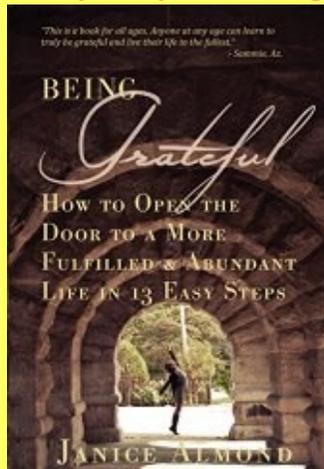
Sprinkle the
path
with fairy dust,
click red heels,
feel the wind
at my back.

Blow!

Cher-Antoinette ©2013



Finding Meaning in Everyday Living



Janice Almond

Almond Joy Newsletter

3 D's for an Effective New Year!

1. **Decision**
2. **Dedication**
3. **Determination**

How dedicated are you to having a successful and prosperous new year? How determined are you to start a new and or different course this year? More importantly, have you decided to make the changes you need to make?

These are questions to ask yourself today. If you are not dedicated and determined, your year will not be effective. Any decision you make will peter out. This new year is a great time to focus or refocus. Let's break down why it is important to be decided, dedicated, and determined.

DECISION-Nothing is ever done or accomplished without first making a decision. Why is this so hard for some of us to do? Most likely it is because we will need to make some sort of a change that we don't want to make. Because we know that if we make a decision, we are supposed to stick with it. Take me for instance, I want to lose some weight and tone up. But have I done it? Nope! I haven't made a decision to. Oh yeah, I have attempted to eat less and exercise, but there is no real true and lasting commitment, no actual follow through, no consistency.

A decision must be more settled. There must be some sort of accountability. You can't halfway make a decision. You will know that you have truly

decided to do something only when you take steps and make plans to see your decision through. If I want to lose weight, I will have to do more than just eat less and exercise sporadically, I will have to make a "life change." That's really what a decision is-a life change. You say to yourself, "Ok. I have had enough of this or that!"

DEDICATION- Once a decision is made, this is where dedication comes in. It's one thing to decide, but it is another to stick with a decision once it is made. Why is that? We are lazy, that's why! Deep down, we want things to be easy, and we don't want to work that hard.

Think of something you have decided to do. Have you actually taken the steps and made plans for its completion? If you haven't, then you are not dedicated. To be dedicated means that you are wholly committed to the task at hand. Dedication means devoted to a purpose. This is when you really know that your mind is made up. You don't waver. You say to yourself, "It's NOW or NEVER!"

DETERMINATION- A never give up mentality is what you have when you are determined. Your thinking is that *no one* or *nothing* is going to get in your way and stop you from making progress. No matter what decision you have made for this new year or are making, see it to its end. Say to yourself, "I will finish strong!"

I wrote a book about *being determined*. https://www.amazon.com/Janice-Almond/e/B01326RZ92/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_2?qid=1514587924&sr=8-2

In Chapter 2 of my book, *Engage Yourself*, I talk about the story of *The Tortoise and the Hare*. In this classical children's story, the tortoise (turtle), although slower, manages to beat the hare (rabbit) in a race. The turtle wins because he stays focused and determined; whereas, the rabbit gets distracted and sidetracked.

Remember, as you head into 2018, whatever course you take, keep your focus! If you need to make changes, make them! There is no better time than the present. Make your plans and take your steps.

Happy 2018!

Until February,
Janice

#1 Amazon Kindle Best Seller New Release

www.janicealmondbooks.com

Reach out to me: Get a copy of my first book, *BEING GRATEFUL...free!* Simply click the link: begrateful.subscribemenow.com

-- You will join our "being grateful" community. We look forward to having you become a part of spreading gratefulness around the world.

Until next month-
Your attitude matters,
Janice

Follow me on twitter: @JAlmondJoyRenee
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Sign up for my monthly inspirational newsletter and get my first book *Being Grateful: How to Open the Door to a More Fulfilled & Abundant Life in 13 Easy Steps* FREE!

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I choose to never back down by ...

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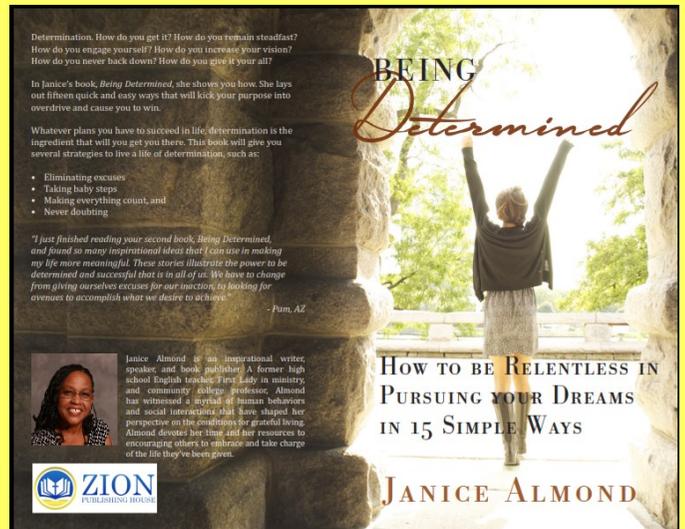
Janice Almond is the author of the *Being Grateful* book series. Her first book in the series, *Being Grateful: How to Open the*

Door to a More Fulfilled & Abundant Life in 13 Easy Steps is available on her website:

www.janicealmondbooks.com.

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Author Interview 2

Spotlight Author

NANA BREW-HAMMOND



Liberian Literary Magazine conducted an interview with the writer Nana Brew-Hammond 😊

LLM: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Let us kick off this interview with you

Tell us a little about yourself

I'm a writer based in New York grateful for Jesus, my multiple family WhatsApp groups, and free exercise classes on cable TV. I am not an "animal lover," but I am in awe of animals and will one day allow my children to coax me into getting a pet. I am a film snob—won't do a blockbuster—but I love trash TV. I respect and collect well-crafted articles of clothing. Of late, my uniform of choice is a custom-tailored suit made of Ghanaian *batakari* fabric. I am not always optimistic, but I believe God has a plan and that

keeps me going, and singing. I slay at karaoke. I read all the descriptions at a museum exhibit. I love traveling. I can mimic most accents. I'm very encouraging. I'm a good listener.

Why writing?

I don't know. While other people were needing to sing or act or sketch, I needed to write.

What books have most influenced your life/career most?

Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* is my favorite book ever, so far. I love the way Emecheta critiques gender norms, colonialism's impact on Nigerian society, and cultural tradition without hitting the reader over the head. I really felt the irony, frustration, and resignation of the main character, and I felt all three mount with the passage of time. I admire Emecheta's very natural presentation of characters, settings, dynamics, and I aspire to it in my own writing.

Bebe Moore Campbell's *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*, was my introduction to the tragic horror that 14-year-old Emmett Till was beaten, shot, and thrown into Mississippi's Tallahatchie River after being falsely accused of flirting with a white

woman. Moore's novel was a fictionalization, but I was so moved to learn it had been inspired by a true story and went off to do my own research of the story.

To me, Moore's book is a perfect example of how a story can introduce past events to a new generation and the power of fiction to explore the impact of acts on a multitude of people, a visibility we don't usually have in our lived lives.

White Teeth by Zadie Smith, aside from being brilliantly written, made me feel seen. I was a young reader in the '90s when books by African American authors were experiencing a relative publishing boom. I devoured the works of Terry McMillan, E. Lynn Harris, and Bebe Moore Campbell, but missed stories about black people who weren't American.

There were, of course, some, like Jamaica Kincaid, who wrote of characters in or from the West Indies, but Smith's book told a modern story that didn't ignore the mix of ethnicities and cultures that converge in London. And there was no gimmick! The ethnicity wasn't a conceit. It was just life and it was real. And it exposed the blindness of so many authors and books that had ignored the diversity of their settings.

White Oleander by Janet Fitch was one of the first books I read about a white person that wasn't growing up in an idyllic situation. As a young person, I read lots of *Sweet Valley High*, a series about popular blonde twins living in a split-level ranch house with in California. Their looks and home and school life were painstakingly described in each edition of the series, and their stories reinforced much of what was presented on American television about white life.

There was a television series called *Roseanne* that debuted in the late 1980s that attempted to shatter the ideal family trope with the story of a white family who struggled to pay their bills and discipline their children or get along with their parents. For me, *White Oleander*, which I was first introduced to as a movie, exposed another kind of narrative. Ironically, a photogenic blond (like the *Sweet Valley* twins) who had anything but an ideal childhood or life.

A Man of the People by Chinua Achebe also among my favorites because of the frank and easy humor Achebe uses. The story deals with serious issues—a man's descent into moral compromise, and political corruption, among them—but by depicting the characters in all of their idealism and frailty, and so

lovingly rendering the scenes of political pomp and life, Achebe doesn't allow the reader to take an easy judgmental view. Rather, he forces us to confront the corruptible nature we all have, without making us feel judged.

Salman Rushdie's memoir *Joseph Anton* rounds out my favorites list. As he details his life, he gives readers an incidental timeline of the rise of contemporary independent publishing forces like Bloomsbury and Ganta. As an author, it was also encouraging to learn he'd earned enough income from his books to foot his security bill during the years he was under fatwa.

How do you approach your work?

My approach to writing has been fluid. I used to write from an idea. I would get an idea or "hear" a piece of dialogue and use that as the thread to fabricate the story, not always sure what the final product would look like. Of late, I've started writing outlines that flesh out where the story is going and who the characters are.

What themes do you find yourself continuously exploring in your work?

I find myself returning to stories about displacement

and its impact on identity. I think it's because of how I grew up, but it's also what I'm drawn to: how we adapt in different settings or code switch among different groups of people.

As the middle child of Ghanaian parents living in Queens, New York, I definitely tried on different characters and personas and I was hyper-aware of how I was expected to behave as a black person, as a Ghanaian person, as a good little girl, and so forth—all expectations I picked up from cues transmitted via my family, friends, popular culture, books, magazines, the news, and at school. I think the writer in me was titillated by all these different narratives, though many hurt me and demanded I stow parts of myself away.

It's interesting to me to write about characters who are similarly trying to figure out who they really are amidst expectations and obligations, and how to accept themselves. Recently, I have been writing a lot about the need for unity among Africans on the continent and those in the diaspora whether due to the slave trade or immigration.

Tell us a little about your book[s]- storyline, characters, themes, inspiration etc.

My first novel *Powder Necklace* is about a girl named Lila who is yanked from her life in London after her mother catches her entertaining a boy, unsupervised, in their home.

Her mother completely misreads the scene, due to her own issues, and uses it as the excuse she didn't realize she wanted to take a break from raising her daughter. She sends Lila to their native Ghana, and in Ghana, at a girls' boarding school, Lila is thrust into a culture that is at once her own and unfamiliar.

As she navigates her new normal, we watch her flail to preserve herself and her ideas of herself, even as she confronts the aspects of her identity she has buried.

My short story "**Mama's Future,**" in the anthology *Africa39: New Writing from Africa South of the Sahara* is an allegory of a personified Africa, and the children who gather at her deathbed. They confront her, their love and resentment of her, and their feelings about each other.

My short story "**Back Home,**" published in a print edition of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, is about a Ghanaian mother in New York grappling with how to connect with

her Americanized children, specifically a daughter dating an African-American and a son who got a tattoo, even as she is forced to interrogate her Ghanaian identity given how long she has lived away from the country of her birth.

My short story "**The Way of Meat**", published by the online literary arts journal *The Missing Slate*, is about a billy goat ultimately sent to a slaughterhouse.

My short story "After All, What?" published in both the anthology *Just Like a Girl: A Manifesta* and on African-Writing.com is about a Ghanaian immigrant in New York anxious about her lapsed immigration status and her friend's threat to come and visit her. She has embellished her circumstances in letters home.

My second to-be-published novel is about a girl forced to leave her family home and accept employment as a live-in maid, after a government-enforced resettlement of her village completely undermines her family's livelihood.

Sent to work for a woman who hired her as a trophy of her precarious middle class status, conflict simmers between the two women, ultimately exploding over the course

their 30-year relationship, even as Ghana evolves from Independence through ten successive leadership changes.

What inspired you to write this title or how did you come up with the storyline?

Each of my stories were inspired by different experiences I've had or situations I've wanted to explore more deeply. I usually start with the nugget of an idea, and let the characters lead me to the story, but I am at work on a new novel that I outlined before I began. It's been an interesting and surprisingly exciting experience knowing how the story will end, and that I need to hit key touchpoints. The joy is in figuring out how to get my characters to that end.

Is there a message in your work that you want your readers to grasp?

I want my readers to know that nothing in life is accidental or coincidental. It all has meaning and purpose—they have meaning and purpose. It all points to God.

Do you have any advice for other writers?

My advice to writers is to:

1. Figure out how to write—from a craft perspective and on a practical level.

Educate yourself. Read widely. Write often. Determine what your voice is, that is, what you have to say and how only you can say it. Then, create space and time to write. Don't allow a tight schedule, discouragement from family/friends/life/your bank account stop you from saying what you have to say. The world needs your unique perspective. It's that important.

2. Approach it as a business.

If you want to write professionally, don't accept it as a given that you will not earn a good living from your work. Treat your writing like the good that it is, and value it accordingly.

i) Read about how to start a business, Devour whatever you can find about how to build a business and how professional writers earn a living—some writers share this information on their personal blogs or in article.

ii) Decline (most) opportunities to write for free. There are some instances where submitting your writing will truly get you the exposure you crave e.g. publication in a poorly funded but widely respected literary journal, or a guest post on the blog of a writer far more popular than you, or but the time, skill, and art required to create your

writing is precious and if you don't value it, no one else will. In cases where you know you want to include your work regardless of whether they will pay you, make the ask for compensation anyway. It will force the one asking to explain why they don't have a budget and send the message you expect them to have a budget the next time they hope to work with you.

iii) Diversify your writing. If you are not earning any/enough money from your creative writing, consider trying to find work that requires you to write. This is not a practical option for everyone, but if it is for you, it will help you strengthen your writing muscle. Crafting a legal brief, advertising copy, an article, blog post, or a report at work can improve your skill as a writer and help you earn a more lucrative income.

iv) Join/cultivate a community of writers and readers. It's not easy getting rejection after rejection and/or facing discouragement from concerned loved ones. Conversely, it's easy to believe you've written the great Liberian novel because your mother cried after reading your manuscript. You need writers whose work you admire and readers whose opinions you respect to share fellowship and

unvarnished feedback on your work.

What book[s] are you reading now? Or recently read?

The last book I read was Padma Lakshmi's memoir *Love, Loss, and What We Ate*. When I'm in the middle of writing, I don't read books in my genre because I don't want to be subliminally influenced by the writer's approach to the topic.

Tell us your latest news, promotions, book tours, launch etc.

Right now, I'm focused on finishing my third novel, so I am not actively seeking opportunities to promote myself.

What are your current projects?

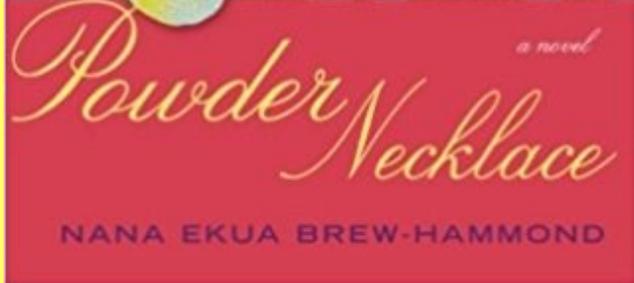
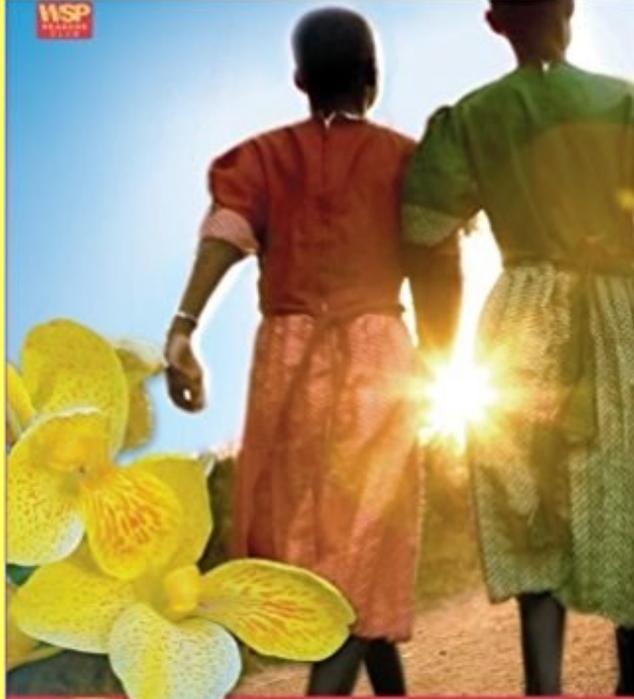
I'm at work on my third novel, and I have a few business projects in the works.

Have you read book[s] by [a] Liberian author[s] or about Liberia?

My friend Hawa Jande Golakai is going to kill me as I haven't yet read her books, *The Score* or *The Lazarus Effect*, but *The Score* is in my Kindle and I plan to read both of her books.

Any last words?

Thank you for interviewing me!

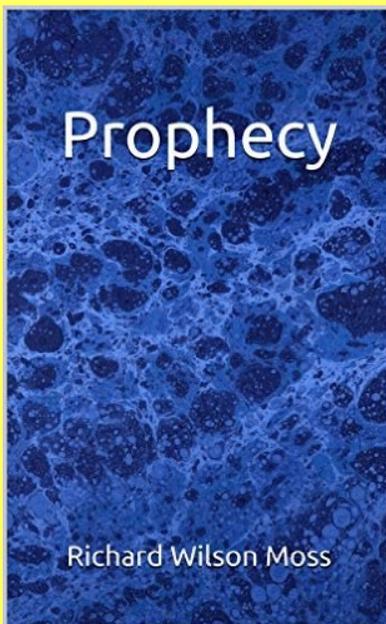


'Twas Brillig

Richard Wilson Moss

Purpose

Purpose is merely a bit of lint
Caught in a nest woven
Of golden petals and mud.



Bus Stop

Off to work, the bus is late
I stand at the stop unduly worried
The boss will dock my pay
The rent is overdue, the day is grey
Showers start, I hesitate
To sit on a wet metallic bench
But then I hear the song
On a passing cars radio
Glory be to god, I hear
At the light the car sits
Glory to the almighty

Is the song and then there
are fits
In aisles recorded, this
scene
In some far removed
church
The Lord will save us
A congregation sings
I look at the spotlight
turning green
Then at shop window
displays
Of expensive digital things
Across the street I stare at
the homeless
Huddled under cherry trees
Some consider them
nothing more
Than lazy godless bums
The car and its choir move
on
And the bus at last
At last it comes.

When I lie Down In Woods

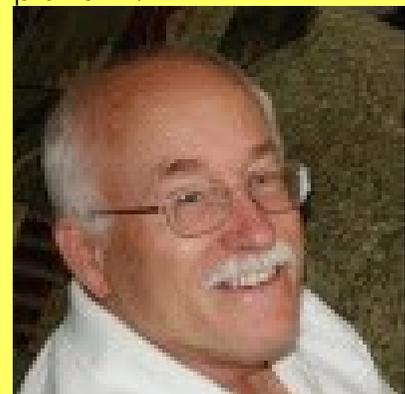
When I lie down in woods
For the last time
The crows will no longer
call
To each other.
Deer will stand still longer
looking
At me crumpled on pine
needles
Field mice may come
To play with my feet
Gnaw at my dead phone
Though crushed, most
weeds beneath me
Will survive
Next morning the sun
Will again arrive

Red and then yellow
That night the moon
The color of bone.

The Dead Leaves of Summer

On concrete steps
Near the Chinese plums
I found acorns
On my walk came across
The dead leaves of summer
Far from their fathers
In piles pale green
Further on I saw the sinking
The natural slums
Of excavated soil, now
cracked
Sterile and tested not
By yearly rains.
Once sitting by the doors
Of the last cafe
Where my waiter
Absentmindedly hums
I rested and measured
The losses and gains
Of lines of ants lifting
Then dropping then
Lifting their crumbs.

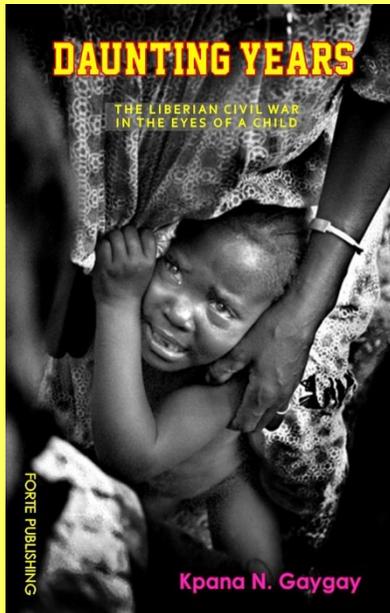
Richard Moss is the author of numerous full length poetry books. You can find his books on every major platform.



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BOOK REVIEW

Daunting Years; The Liberian Civil War in the Eyes of a Child



by Kpana Nnadia Gaygay

Daunting Years – The Liberian Civil Conflict through the Eyes of a Child brings together a mastery of prose, narration and insightful documentation with purposes of shedding light on the brutal Liberian conflict and breaking the syndrome of “suffering in silence”

of many Liberians who have remained quiet about their experiences of the war years and its ramifications.

This collection of eye-witness accounts speaks for many children and adults alike and is situated in a non-blame finger-pointing backdrop. Thus assigning blame to no particular person or group as to their role[s] in the sustained atrocities meted out to Liberians during those dark years. The war uprooted the country, disabled some families permanently, and wiped out a generation of Liberians from productive livelihood. It left them with no education, no skills to contribute to their country, and took away the empathy of the normal Liberian attitude toward a disadvantaged person. *Daunting Years* is a motivation to

Liberians to tell their stories. For too long, they have been the story and object of being presented in ways that “others” think they should be perceived.

This masterpiece takes a lead that many should follow to proudly say *it is possible to rise up, shake the dust off, and move on again.*

This work also serves as a healing balm for many Liberians carrying such memories. The author provides for options to restoration, peace and meaningful community membership.

Reviewed by

Professor T. Debey Sayndee,

Director, Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation, University of Liberia

According to Eliot

The Window, Looking into and out of Ourselves.

Recently I read the novel *Room With A View* by E.M. Forster. I had no expectations about the novel, whether it would be an enjoyable read or not. But it was a page turner. On Goodreads my review ran as follows, 'If I'd had to study this in higher school education 40 years ago when I was aged 16/18 I'm sure it would have left me somewhat bored. I would have been out of touch with what the author was telling me. Aged 63 this was a page turner! As they say, I could not put it down. And the novel is only about a kiss! Although of course it wasn't simply the kiss. There was far more going on; class, the role of women in society, intellectual snobbery and windows. Their view on the world. Whether one looks inwards or outwards is to do with how we view the world; that is not the whole picture. Two quotations from the novel:

She never gazed inwards
and

He looked at her, instead of through her for the first time since they were engaged.

Place the word discuss at the end of either of these quotes and it would have been the examination question all those years ago.

We can gaze at a view, but here let us gaze through a window. The window is a symbol. To look through a window one is either or in or outside of the room. Simply put, being in a room looking out is looking at the world, outside of oneself. Being outside the room looking in is more dangerous. It can either be introverted and not willing to learn about oneself or

soul searching, which for me is positive. The character, Lucy, never looks inwards. Although a lovable person her life is shallow, tripping round Europe with a chaperone, she looks at art and architecture but does not really see. A kiss from a man she hardly knows, changes her life and begins the whole process, soul searching, looking into the window of herself, learning, until she reaches ultimate fulfilment as a woman. A stanza from my poem **Mantra** demonstrates a similar use:

*Time I've wasted, treading
empty room.*

*Looking from the window
at countryside.*

Windswept autumn. Bare trees.

Forgotten the green. Spring. Summer.

Winter. Haunted. Waiting for the voices.

Here the subject of the poem is alone in a room, looking from a window so outside of himself searching for the inner soul. Which would appear to contradict what I've said above. But of course authors use many different devices.

Poet Leonard Cohen asks in his poem *The Window*,

Why do you stand by the window...

In the poem he answers his own question.

come forth from the cloud of unknowing

Looking outwards is the way that we will learn about ourselves. Full circle to E.M Forster's novel *Room With a View*. The room is the body, and the view through the window, the eye, is the way we learn about ourselves and others.

According to Eliot Extra

This month I'm presenting the reader with two poems. What is unique about these poems is that they are the first time the poet has been published anywhere. I know from the messages we are passing back and forth she is very excited by the prospect.

The poet is a female from Bangladesh. Through Facebook I've known her for a few years. Her poetry during that time has improved a lot; I add modestly! that I have been a mentor to her and encouraged her in her work.

I really wish I could persuade her to write an article for Kwee about the role of women in Bangladesh society.

A little about her. Her name is Afroja Ekram. She is an English language trainer for a government project. When asked why she writes her reply was, "Because I don't know what to do with my thinking." Which may sound a little odd, but think about it! Like a lot of writers she has been writing creatively since she could write.

Here are two poems from her.

Spoiled

The heart which is given to you.
Your face is unclear in the veil of fog.
In the stream of blood you've gone;
I'm so thirsty to leave you, but you

make me content with two eyes.
Vulnerable is a word
To be given up
Cast into nowhere
Strategically dumb.
Conflict:
Why don't you end?
Come back after a while
With magical infatuation.
Allow me to sink there where I'm left
far behind.
I'm all human; full of curtains.
Darkness
You are a searchlight.
Dimensional
Falling apart.

The Pearl

Fortune flies
in the morning caught full of
hands mesmerized beauty.
Spotless attire so
innovative
free from mistakes.
"Assumed innocence.
ahead of your duty,"
said an ordinary Pearl with
all part assurance. Confused
biased
echoed as a pale roar.
Firm figure fades
into sediment of night.

c. John Eliot

John Eliot is a poet. He shares his time between Wales and France. In Wales he lives close to a capital city where he spends a lot of time reading his poetry to an audience.

In France he lives in a tiny village and enjoys the silence to write. John was a teacher.

He is married with children and grandchildren. He has two books of poetry published. '**Ssh**' and '**Don't Go**' his new one which is his latest creative effort, titled '**Don't Go**'. Both books are published by Mosaïque Press of England" and are available on Amazon.

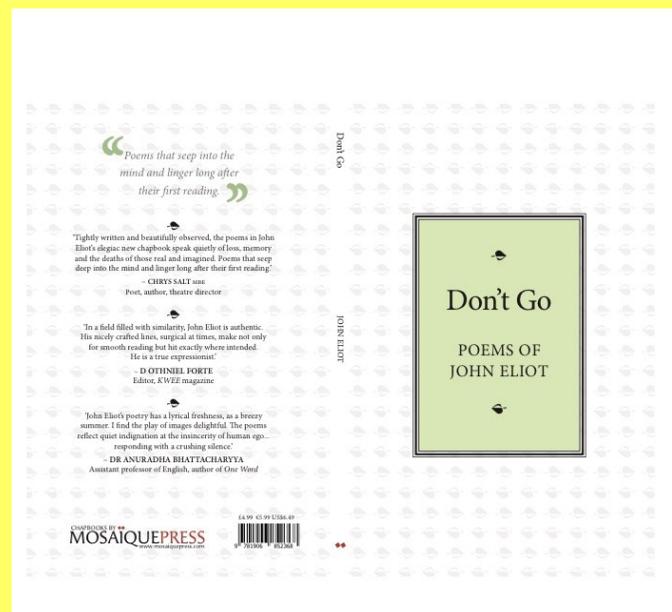
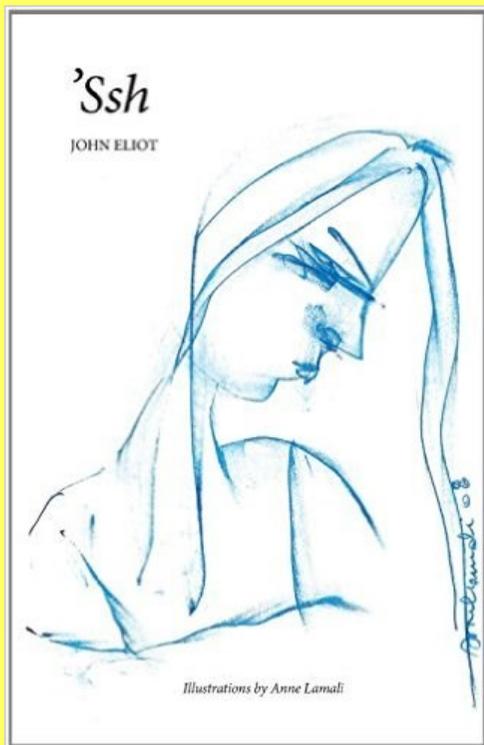
I would welcome any comments you care to make. All emails will be answered. Please contact. I will reply to all emails.

Connect here: johneliot1953@gmail.com

John Eliot



"The photograph of John Eliot was taken by Dave Dagers during a live poetry reading. Dave is a professional photographer and artist. He has contributed drawings to John's new collection of poetry, 'Don't Go' which will be out in the Autumn."



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LIBERIAN PROVERBS

Excepted from, **The Elders' Wisdom**

1. No sane person sharpens his machete to cut a banana. *The relative softness of the banana makes it seem foolish for one to use a sharpened knife on it. Some tasks are so obvious or have easy solutions that when others try to make them complicated, it gives room to question their sanity. In this case, the one who sharpens the knife is viewed as insane.*
2. Nobody gathers firewood to roast a thin goat. *Some tasks require little to low effort; they are virtually useless. The effort to undertake them could be used to do something else more rewarding.*
3. Nobody knows the mysteries, which lie at the bottom of the ocean. *We say that the ocean holds secrets, or it is too deep. We often mean that no one knows the true nature of another's heart. We can guess, but to claim with any certainty that we truly know what one holds in one's heart is foolishly misleading.*
4. Nobody mourns an unnoticed death. *If one is doing something and it is virtually unnoticed to everyone, then the chances are it is unimportant or doesn't really matter.*
5. One bean does not make a whole meal. *It takes a collective effort to accomplish meaningful things. We need to work with others at times to get certain things accomplished. Alone, we can only do so much, but together, we can do more. This speaks to the collective nature of most Liberian communities. Most of the times, these are related people hence, everyone has some interest in the affairs of the others. This is usually helpful but as is with anything else, it can be damaging.*
6. One bird in the hand is more valuable than a hundred in the sky. *It pays to appreciate what we have; imagining things we do not have or can't have does not make us to have them. The value of the actual bird in hand, outweighs that of a thousand that one has yet to catch and never may catch.*
7. One does not follow the footprints in the water. *It is foolish to depend on or make plans that rely on unreliable people or situations. Footprints in the water vanish with the next wave, following this is a fruitless venture; it is not a plan worth implementing because it leads nowhere.*
8. One does not need to engage in lengthy discussion with a wise person. *A few words from the wise are enough. They speak the right words one needs to make do. This goes to say that a wise person learns quickly not to waste valuable time or to allow experience to teach it difficult things when they can avoid them.*

Renee' B. Drummond-Brown



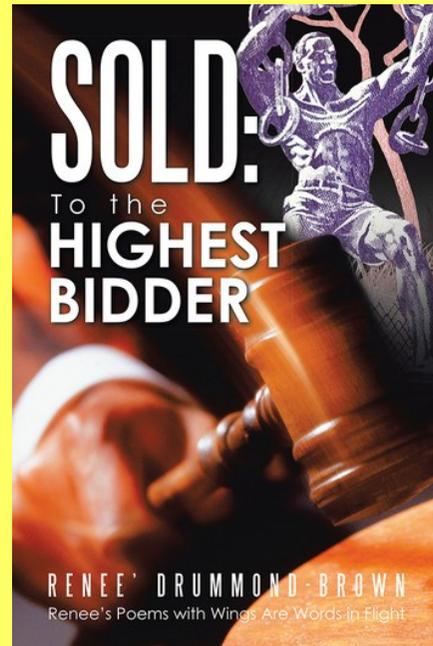
Renee' Drummond-Brown, is an accomplished poetess with experience in creative writing. She is a graduate of Geneva College of Western Pennsylvania. Renee' is still in pursuit of excellence towards her

mark for higher education. She is working on her sixth book and has numerous works published globally which can be seen in cubm.org/news, KWEE Magazine, Leaves of Ink, Raven Cage Poetry and Prose Ezine, Realistic Poetry International, Scarlet Leaf Publishing House, SickLit Magazine,

The Metro Gazette Publishing Company, Inc., Tuck, and Whispers Magazine just to name a few. Civil Rights Activist, Ms. Rutha Mae Harris, *Original Freedom Singer of the Civil Rights Movement*, was responsible for having Drummond-Brown's very first poem published in the Metro Gazette Publishing Company, Inc., in Albany, GA. Renee' also has poetry published in several anthologies and honorable mentions to her credit in various writing outlets. Renee' won and/or placed in several poetry contests globally and her books are eligible for nomination for a Black Book award in Southampton County Virginia.

She was Poet of the Month 2017, Winner in the Our Poetry Archives and prestigious Potpourri Poets/Artists Writing Community in the past year. She has even graced the cover of KWEE Magazine in the month of May, 2016.

Her love for creative writing is undoubtedly displayed through her very unique style and her work solidifies her as a force to be reckoned with in the literary world of poetry. Renee' is inspired by non-other than Dr. Maya Angelou, because of her, Renee' posits "Still I write, I write, and I'll write!"



Border

Don't allow no drama cross
 your threshold; when one sees' YOU coming
 tell Trouble (capital T)
 "get behind me"
 YOU gotta be-gone. Jus go!
 Anytime it shows its ugly face; it can never
 be
 a simplistic hello;
 But rather...a hello BUT...
 in its place.
 Dramas' their first, middle an' last surname,
 derived
 from them OOOL'plantation games. jus the
 same. (I know YOU VERY well.) An'
 you wonder why
 people don't let you in, or do, the likes of
 your kind?

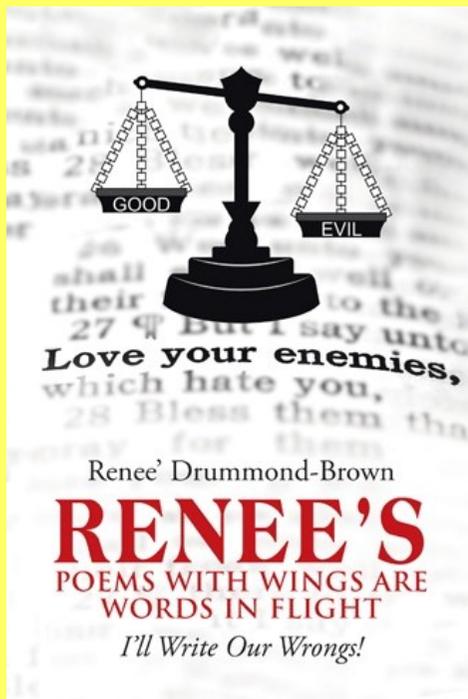
Dedicated to: Clean up your own 'dirty'
 house and stay out of others'.

A RocDeeRay Poem

Cycles

Momma told her not to do IT.
 IT was done; she did not LISTEN
 LISTEN to her, for what, and why, she too did
 it, AFTER-ALL?
 AFTER-ALL, she had her at 16.
 16, she, herself, should've been pristine
 CLEAN.
 CLEAN as bleach on a summers
 CLOTHESLINE.
 CLOTHESLINES, yeah, not soils hung out to
 DRY.
 DRY stains. Tide can't even get these out, nor
 CAN;
 CAN a praise and/or SHOUT!
 SHOUT it out!!! Should've been playin wit
 dolls, jacks and balls til 9:00.
 NINE months to GO.
 GO to jail...do not pass go til 18
 EIGHTEEN-year BIDS.
 BIDS her FAREWELL.
 FAREWELL Momma says, "I told you so."

Dedicated to: Recurrences



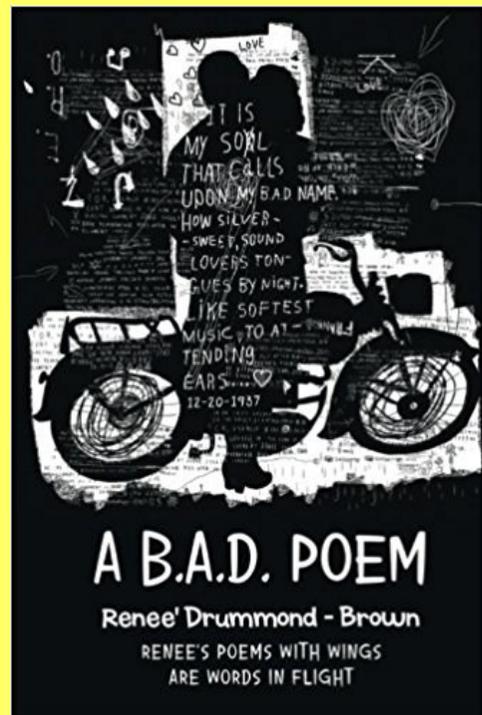
Gore

I know twas' the blood.
 I know twas' the blood.
 Father,
 forgive me
 please.

Trouble in my way.
 Like judas' I gotta
 hide
 sometimes, 30 pieces O'
 silver shadows; real 24kt
 fools-gold;
 exact same kiss of death,
 or death kiss bid of ancient old.

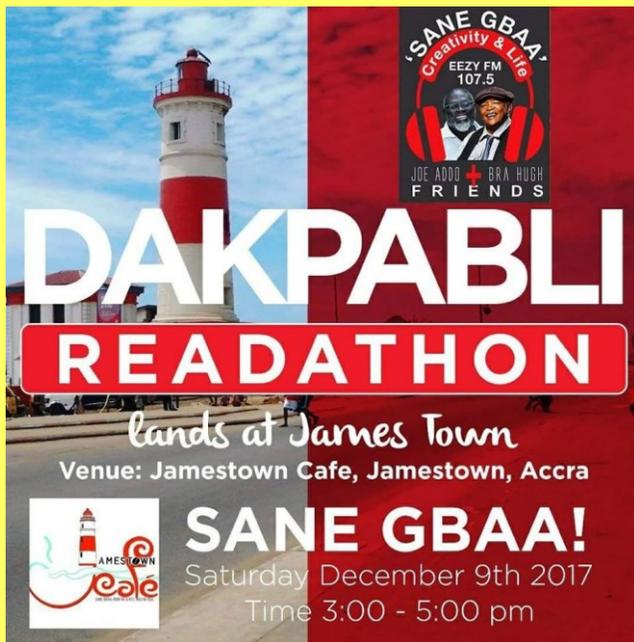
I knew twas' the blood.
 I knew twas' the blood
 handed ov'r
 by me.
 Father forgive me
 it was I.

Dedicated to: BLOOD BANK...One day when I wuz lost; He GOT UP on my cross; saved me. All Rights Reserved@ August 24, 2016.



Renee B. Drummond-Brown

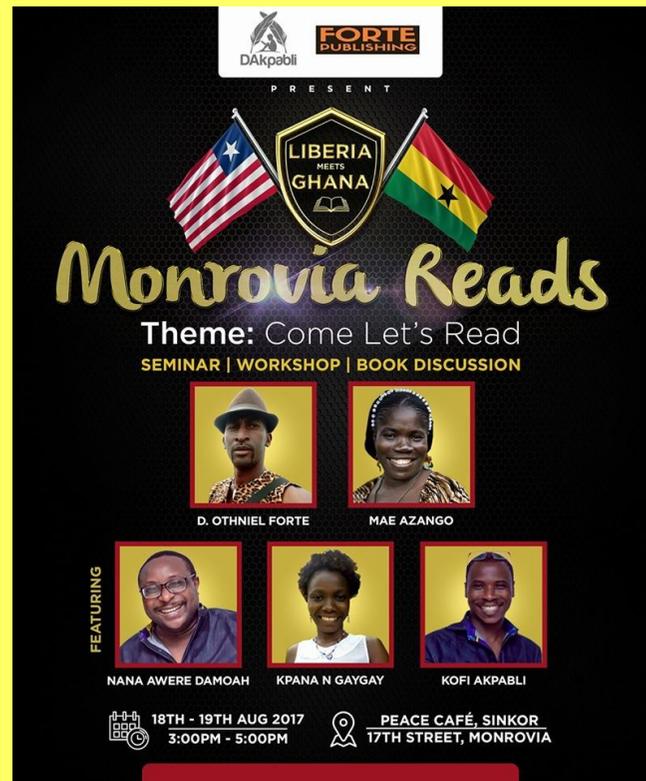
DAKpabli Readathon



In 2015, two Ghanaian writers Kofi Akpabli and Nana Awere Damoah gave themselves two targets: to do quarterly public book readings and to extend the activity beyond Accra. They dubbed it DAKpabli Readathon. With eleven books between them including popular titles *Tickling the Ghanaian*, *I Speak of Ghana*, *Romancing Ghanaland* and *Sebitically Speaking*, these two writers who grew up in the same neighbourhood, Kotobabi and attended the local Providence Preparatory School set out on the mission to make reading books for pleasure hip again.

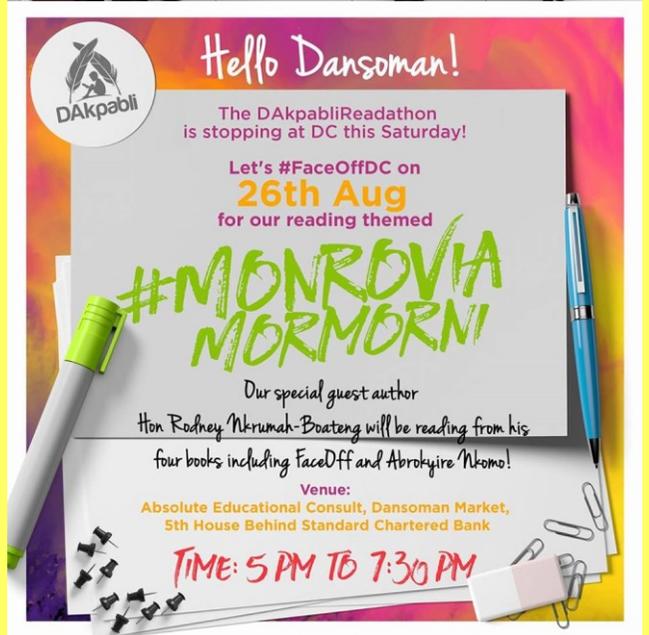
They vowed to take writing and reading to the level of pop culture. Status update, not only have the duo done several readings in Accra (including taking the readings to outlying suburbs like Dansoman and Adenta), they have extended their literary event to Tema, Kumasi, Ho and Takoradi. Actually, they have also pushed the frontiers beyond the country's shores. Last April, Nana and Kofi read to a delighted group of Ghanaian professionals at a home in the cosy suburb of Banana Island, Lagos.

They called it their first international Readathon.



This foray into the international scene has continued with the two authors joining a group of Liberian writers in Monrovia Reads, a two-day reading and literary festival in Monrovia in August 2017.







Words of NIA



January 2018-

PARENTING is Not a Job

I heard some woman refer to taking care of her kids as “a job” and I took offense to

that. Excuse me but the definition of a JOB is “a piece of work done for pay. The

thing or material that is worked on, a task or duty.” This is according to Webster’s

New World Dictionary (c) 2003. Other words that can be substituted are

assignment, career, duty, employment or chore.

Sorry, but me taking care of my children is none of the above! Certainly not the

way this woman stated it on a television show this morning.

I was blessed with sons and via that, became a mother. It was what I wanted for my

life. My job- was what I went to school to learn skills to acquire. It was what I

needed to help me take care of and support my children. However, bathing,

changing, feeding, clothing, taking care of, nurturing, watching over, protecting

and teaching the boys- these are things I did because I am a mother.

My job was something I applied for and got. I did not apply for motherhood. My

job is something I could quit or walk away from. I couldn’t “quit” motherhood or

walk away from my sons unless I wanted to be a bad mother. My job is something I

will retire from. A real mother; a real parent does not stop parenting. The role

shifts to that of an adviser once your son or daughter becomes an adult but you

never really stop and those of us who have helped our adult children from time to

time know that.

It is a hard “job” but the meaning has more to do with responsibility rather than

something for which I seek monetary compensation. If my boys love God and turn

out well, that is payment enough. Even if they get into trouble but know who God

is; they’ll be alright. He will take care of them when I am not able and He will

rescue them if necessary, even from themselves.

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RuNett Nia Ebo, Poet of Purpose to contact this poet

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THE NEED TO INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN POPULATION



As a Liberian living and working in the United States and working in the Information Technology (IT) field, I have seen first-hand what technology educated population can do within their communities and country. In the last 20 years, I have visited my birth country three times, and each time I visited, I saw the young population love for technology and trying their best to understand it. The one problem I have noticed on these visits, have been the need to invest in technology and everything that comes with it.

During my first visit in December of 2010, I visited a friend who was teaching technology and communications at Stella Marist Polytechnic. On this day, my friend's class was learning Networking, specifically the Open System Interconnection

(OSI) model. This is a networking framework to implement protocols (rules) in layers, with control passed from one layer to the next. It is primarily used today as a teaching tool.

As I sat there and looked around the classroom, I saw boys and girls, men and women enthusiastic to acquire knowledge in technology. On the other side of this, students were sitting in a classroom that had no sign of computers or hardware, or anything that referred to what they had been discussing that day and week on technology. Since that trip, I have always said to myself, investment, investment, investment is what is needed for such a group of encouraging students.

On my second trip to Liberia in 2013, I made it my duty to visit the big colleges in Monrovia and the University of Liberia, and they all seem like technology is nonexistent so they shouldn't invest in it and the students they teach each day.

I saw that all the colleges and universities were missing great investment opportunities, which is to invest in the technology-driven population. Facebook is an app, not technology, but knowing how Facebook works and what makes it work is technology.

What touched me the most were the young population willingness to absorb everything technology, but how? With the institutions not investing in such programs for such enthusiastic population. Yes, Arts and Business, communications are all great majors, however, in this 21st century students majoring in those courses goes nowhere if they do not understand the magnitude technology have on those majors. Just with the knowledge of Microsoft Office means a lot in the workplace and can set one apart.

The one great benefit of investing in technology driven population is huge. First of all, there will be a population that can help create entrepreneurs and drive the local economy of their communities and country. As one look all over the globe, technology and the Internet have created one big global economy for everything no matter your background. Once you put it online, someone will buy it.

However, this cannot happen until colleges and universities investment in teaching technology and allow students to use their technical skills to become entrepreneurs that use technologies to their advantage to

create jobs that generate revenues in their communities.

As technology is use to grow the economy by the technology driven population, colleges and universities all benefit because more individuals will return to those colleges and universities to further their education or improve some skill sets needed for their technology driven businesses.

Governments too must also invest in state institutions to encourage and educate technology drive students. When this happens, even governments will get relieve from the population depending on it for everything, instead will generate tax revenues from businesses created by the technology driven population who benefited from such technological investments.



Emmanuel Luke

Instructor, IT
Mid-Plains Community College

How It Feels to Be Colored Me

Essay by Zora Neale Hurston

I am colored but I offer nothing in the way of **extenuating** circumstances except the fact that I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother's side was *not* an Indian chief.

I remember the very day that I became colored. Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. It is exclusively a colored town. The only white people I knew passed through the town going to or coming from Orlando. The native whites rode dusty horses, the Northern tourists chugged down the sandy village road in automobiles. The town knew the Southerners and never stopped cane chewing when they passed. But the Northerners were something else again. They were peered at cautiously from behind curtains by the timid. The more venturesome would come out on the porch to watch them go past and got just as much pleasure out of the tourists as the tourists got out of the village.

The front porch might seem a daring place for the rest of the town, but it was a gallery seat to me. My favorite place was atop the gate-post. Proscenium box for a born first-nighter.

Not only did I enjoy the show, but I didn't mind the actors knowing that I liked it. I actually spoke to them in passing. I'd wave at them and when they returned my salute, I would say something like this: "Howdy-do-well-I-thank-you-where-you-goin'?" Usually automobile or the horse paused at this, and after a queer exchange of compliments, I would probably "go a piece of the way" with them, as we say in farthest Florida. If one of my family happened to come to the front in time to see me, of course negotiations would be rudely broken off. But even so, it is clear that I was the first "welcome-to-our-state" Floridian, and I hope the Miami Chamber of Commerce will please take notice.

During this period, white people differed from colored to me only in that they rode through town and never lived there. They liked to hear me "speak pieces" and sing and wanted to see me dance the parse-me-la, and gave me generously of their small

silver for doing these things, which seemed strange to me for I wanted to do them so much that I needed bribing to stop. Only they didn't know it. The colored people gave no dimes. They deplored any joyful tendencies in me, but I was their Zora nevertheless. I belonged to them, to the nearby hotels, to the county—everybody's Zora.

But changes came in the family when I was thirteen, and I was sent to school in Jacksonville. I left Eatonville, the town of the oleanders, as Zora. When I disembarked from the riverboat at Jacksonville, she was no more. It seemed that I had suffered a sea change.

I was not Zora of Orange County any more, I was now a little colored girl. I found it out in certain ways. In my heart as well as in the mirror, I became a fast brown—warranted not to rub nor run.

But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low-down dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little **pigmentation** more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

Someone is always at my elbow reminding me that I am the grand-daughter of slaves. It fails to register depression with me. Slavery is sixty years in the past. The operation was successful and the patient is doing well, thank you. The terrible struggle that made me an American out of a potential slave said "On the line!" The Reconstruction said "Get set!"; and the generation before said "Go!" I am off to a flying start and I must not halt in the stretch to look behind and weep.

Slavery is the price I paid for civilization, and the choice was not with me. It is a bully adventure and worth all that I have paid through my ancestors for it. No one on earth ever had a greater chance for glory. The world to be won and nothing to be lost. It is thrilling to think—to know that for any act of mine, I shall get twice as much praise or twice as much blame. It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage, with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or to weep.

The position of my white neighbor is much more difficult. No brown specter pulls up a chair beside me when I sit down to eat. No dark ghost thrusts its leg against mine in bed. The game of keeping what one has is never so exciting as the game of getting.

I do not always feel colored. Even now I often achieve the unconscious Zora of Eatonville before the Hegira.

I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.

For instance at Barnard. "Beside the waters of the Hudson"

I feel my race.

Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, overswept by a creamy sea. I am surged upon and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself.

When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again.

Sometimes it is the other way around. A white person is set down in our midst, but the contrast is just as sharp for me. For instance, when I sit in the drafty basement that is The New World Cabaret with a white person, my color comes. We enter chatting about any little nothing that we have in common and are seated by the jazz waiters. In the abrupt way that jazz orchestras have, this one plunges into a number. It loses no time in circumlocutions, but gets right down to business.

It constricts the thorax and splits the heart with its tempo and narcotic harmonies. This orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks the tonal veil with primitive fury, rending it, clawing it until it breaks through to the jungle beyond. I follow those heathen—follow them **exultingly**. I dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop; I shake my assegai above my head, I hurl it true to the mark *yeeeeooww!* I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way. My face is painted red and yellow, and my body is painted blue. My pulse is throbbing like a war drum. I want to slaughter something—give pain, give death to what, I do not know. But the piece ends. The men of the orchestra wipe their lips and rest their fingers. I creep back slowly to the veneer we call civilization with the last tone and find the white friend sitting motionless in his seat, smoking calmly.

"Good music they have here," he remarks, drumming the table with his fingertips.

Music! The great blobs of purple and red emotion have not touched him. He has only heard what I felt. He is far away and I see him but dimly across the ocean and the continent that have fallen between us. He is so pale with his whiteness then and I am *so* colored.

At certain times I have no race, I am *me*. When I set my hat at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City, feeling as snooty as the lions in front of the Forty-Second Street Library, for instance. So far as my feelings are concerned, Peggy Hopkins Joyce on the Boule Mich with her gorgeous **raiment**, stately carriage, knees knocking together in a most aristocratic manner, has nothing on me. The **cosmic** Zora emerges. I belong to no race nor time, I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads.

I have no separate feeling about being an American citizen and colored. I am merely a fragment of the Great Soul that surges within the boundaries. My country, right or wrong.

Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How *can* any deny themselves the pleasure of my company!

It's beyond me.

But in the main, I feel like a brown bag of **miscellany** propped against a wall.

Against a wall in company with other bags, white, red, and yellow. Pour out the contents, and there is discovered a jumble of small things priceless and worthless.

A first-water diamond, an empty spool, bits of broken glass, lengths of string, a key to a door long since crumbled away, a rusty knife-blade, old shoes saved for a road that never was and never will be, a nail bent under the weight of things too heavy for any nail, a dried flower or two, still a little fragrant. In your hand is the brown bag. On the ground before you is the jumble it held—so much like the jumble in the bags, could they be emptied, that all might be dumped in a single heap and the bags refilled without altering the content of any greatly. A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter. Perhaps that is how the Great Stuffer of Bags filled them in the first place—who knows?

GROTTO REVIEW: JANUARY 2018 EDITION

22nd January 2018

My good friend Caleb Kudah of Citi FM recently shared a very insightful philosophy from antelopes with me. He heard the story from Jude Aggrey during one of the National editions of The Young Debaters (TYD), an international Public Speaking Competition, which he (Caleb) had won in 2011 before picking up the Audience's Choice Award at the International event in the UK..

Here is the story!

Antelopes are believed to be one of the most united groups of animals in the jungle. When under attack, they tie their tails together in order to build a force and attack their predators. An antelope unties itself from the group at his own risk and is doomed for destruction. The thrust of the philosophy lies in the anagrammatic of the word 'united. When the 'i' and 't' are interchanged, the word formed is 'untied' which is to say, once there is confusion among the antelopes and the tail-bond is untied, the tie that binds them and makes them united is compromised. The group is then exposed to disaster.

Before I go into this review, let me say that aside the euphoria that characterized the January 2018 edition, almost all the lessons are in the first two reviews which can be accessed in the in-links.

READ ALSO: [GROTTO REVIEW: NOVEMBER 2017 EDITION](#)

The January 2018 edition of the Writers and Readers' Grotto was a

rendezvous of writers and readers clothed in antelope skin, tails-bound, united, and ready to fight a literary battle; the literary battle that the Ghanaian creative army appears to have lost to its contemporaries. I see in the excitement an immutable desire to rise very high to the literosky. I saw ambition; I saw creativity clad in authenticity; I saw life; I saw a species of Ghanaian young writers ready to take over; I saw fire in their eyes and heard thunder in their voices. It was an unforgettable and irrecoverable moment. Lord, give us more of such experiences, we pray thee!

I was at the first two grottos and I reviewed both events with so much pride and hope. I had not heard of or been part of anything like that before but when I wrote my review for the maiden edition, I prophesied with my eyes opened, "This thing will only get better". And alas, the next event blew us apart.

Then, the third edition, which was held last Sunday, took us to the crescendo of literogasm (this is a grotto term). I am still in doubt as I write this and I don't know if we can ever replicate the literosphere we had on Sunday. It was a highflying unmissable pitch and I think we reached the denouement of what the grotto is about, and can now sing the Nunc Dimitis. Be no, we are anticipating something bigger and better in the subsequent editions.

Now back to the issue of unity. Again, in my review of the first grotto, I began with King Solomon's words in Proverbs 27:17: '*iron sharpens iron*'. I will be

extremely surprised if there was any writer at the last grotto who wasn't sharpened by the works of others. Personally, while people were reading their pieces, I could hear plots, themes and characters screaming out loud in my medulla. When I got home, I compiled a long list of topics and 'inspiration'.

Inspiration!

If literature is a living thing, then it inhales inspiration and exhales creativity. Inspiration is everything and is everywhere but after being at the first three grottos, I can confidently say that inspiration is from/at the grotto.

Being a part of such a union is the surest way to stir in you desire to write or read.



READ ALSO: [GROTTO REVIEW: DECEMBER 2017 EDITION](#)

Just yesterday, we got to know that another word for 'grotto' is shrine. Friends, we were in a shrine to receive fortification and purification. All the reviews we received were hyssop for purification from our *litero-sins*, and moringa leaves as supplements for our deficiencies. The communion was a family affair with all present having a common *literogene*.

Permit me to paraphrase the feedback from a participant at the Grotto yesterday: *"This is a priceless moment! Sitting down to listen to all these wonderful people read such wonderful pieces. If I had to pay something to be here, I wouldn't have been able to afford it. It's priceless!"*

And before I go, every grotto has its own good news. The good news from the January grotto is that we are going regional. So stay tuned, the grotto train will stop in your city very soon, very very soon!

By way of vote of thanks, thank you all for being a part of this.

By way of testimony, one of our readers has, through the grotto, received an international publication offer.

By way of announcement, our next grotto is on Sunday, February 18, 2018 at the Bambu Centre, Adenta.

By way of benediction, go labour on, folks! Read, and be read!

Selah!



Culled from:

<https://philadelphiawrites.co/grotto-review-january-2018-edition/>



I HAVE ARRIVED

Lovette Tucker

My aunty Yede is the quintessential organizer. When there is an event to be planned she takes the lead. For family reunions Aunty Yede schedules the conference calls and gets everyone in line. Aunty Yede calls us when family members pass away. She tells us who will bring the food, who will pay monies and who will do what. She is always a reliable source of information.

So what's the issue? Well, one day while at my house I naturally assumed that Aunty Yede would give me direction or at least offer an opinion/advice. She looked squarely at me and said "No!" I was confused. "Huh?" I felt like she was being unreasonable. Rather sheepishly (because I didn't want to be disrespectful) I said "Why?" She said, "I have arrived". Again I looked at her questioningly. Well what I expected honestly was that she would say she was tired or "later". After all I had asked nicely. Also, I was merely asking out of respect. I fully expected her to provide me with what I needed at the time I needed it which was "Right now". I mean. "Wasn't I her darling niece? Aren't old people just wired that way? Wasn't she supposed to give me guidance and be a strong shoulder to lean on? Isn't that what the older should do for the younger?" As you can imagine I was in a huff

I was pleasant (as much as I could be in my hurtful, rejected state) for the rest of the afternoon. I determined that I wasn't going to ask her to do one more thing for me. If she wanted to be that way then two could play that game.

Later, I asked Aunty Yede what that meant "I have arrived".

She said "It means I don't have to do anything I don't want to do. I don't HAVE to DO anything!" Well that was that!

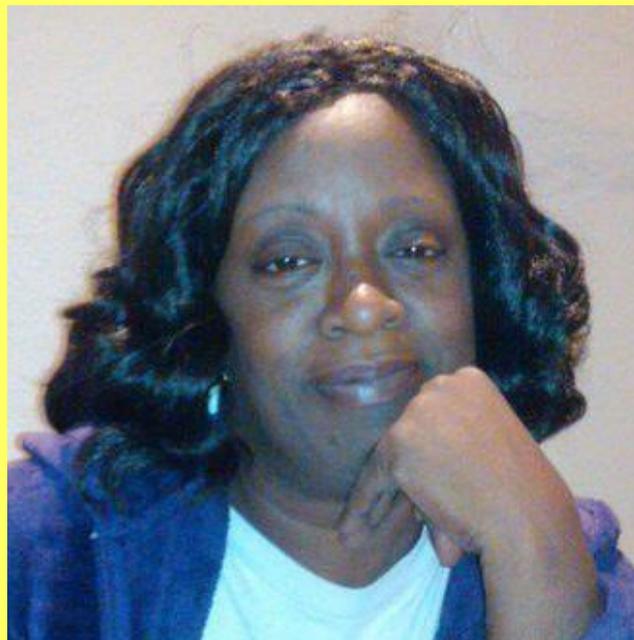
I pondered over that phrase for a long time. As children from "good" upbringing, you don't say "no" to anybody unless they're younger than you. The most common word in your vocabulary from ages 5 to 16 is "Yes" or other variations of it, i.e. "yes ma'am", "okay" or "yeah" (in which case be prepared for a reprimand). This word is said to parents, teachers and anyone else at the school. Preachers, older siblings, and the list goes on and on. Imagine, for most of your while living

under "their" roof, they have told you what to do and how to live, and then poof! you're an adult, more or less but since you've lived in child mode for so long it's the most comfortable place to be.

Being an adult has been great. It's like eating chocolate from both ends. As a mother I have had more experience than my children so for them I am this fountain of knowledge. "Wear your jacket because it will be cold later". "Don't play near the stove. There's hot stuff on there and you'll get burned". Your first breakup? Don't worry. There are other fish in the sea ". For the girls, "Don't let anyone touch you under your clothes. Boys want ONE thing. Once you give in, they're gone". For the boys, "respect women like they're your mother". As a young mother there were older people like my parents, aunts, uncles, and others who were a phone call or nearby that I could run to for help. Even my priests were always older.

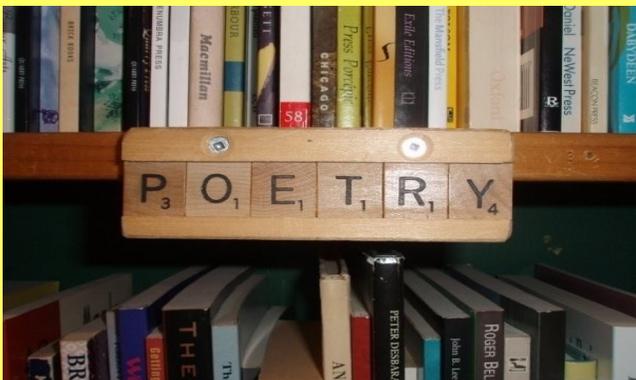
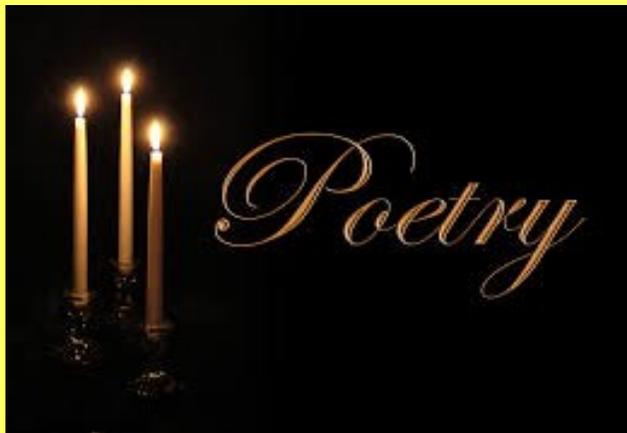
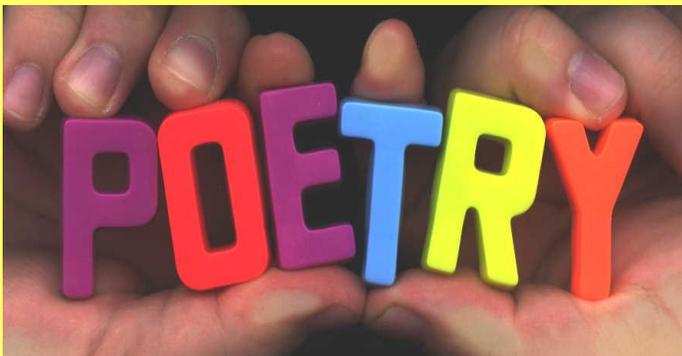
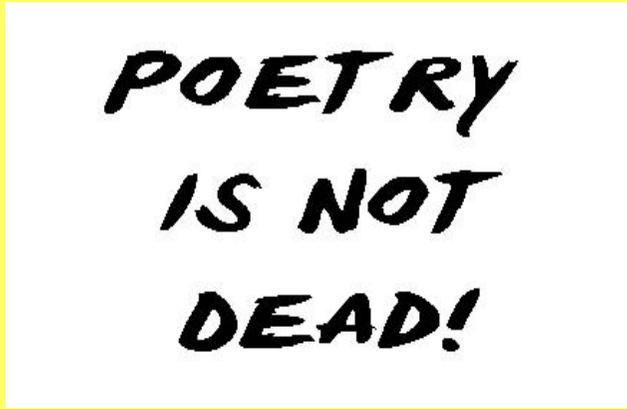
You can begin to understand why this new dichotomy that aunty Yede had put me in was worrisome. What was I to think or do now?

I have realized now that Aunty provided me with a gift. In essence what she said was "I'm living my life for me. For too long I have been the one others have leaned on. The ones I turned to are gone for the most part. Now I have to reorient my thinking. I have to figure out what matters to me.



Mrs. Lovette Tucker is the VP at Cuttington University, Bong County, Liberia

Poetry Section



HALIL KARAHAN



Halil is Turkish and has a known secret. She lives a triple life, all of which she is successful at, a mother, a poet and a medical doctor.

“4 Gece gidip geliyordu aramızda”

Soyunur rengini gece
gümüş otların üzerinde
sere serpe

Büyür ıslıklar
ıslak fısıltılar
toprak büyür

Kokulu yağlarla
ovar ilginları
o eski yazlardan kalma
avare rüzgâr

Gecenin alnı ak
kolları kalın
yumuşak

Gecede
sonsuzdur
atlası tenin

« La nuit allait et revenait entre nous »

La nuit se déshabille sa couleur
sur les herbes argentées
librement

Les sifflets s’agrandissent
les chuchotements mouillés
la terre s’agrandit

Ce vent vagabond
resté des étés d’autrefois
masse les tamaris
avec de l’huile parfumée

La nuit est franche
ses bras sont épais
mous

Dans la nuit
l’atlas de la chaire est
infini

“The night was going and coming in
between us”

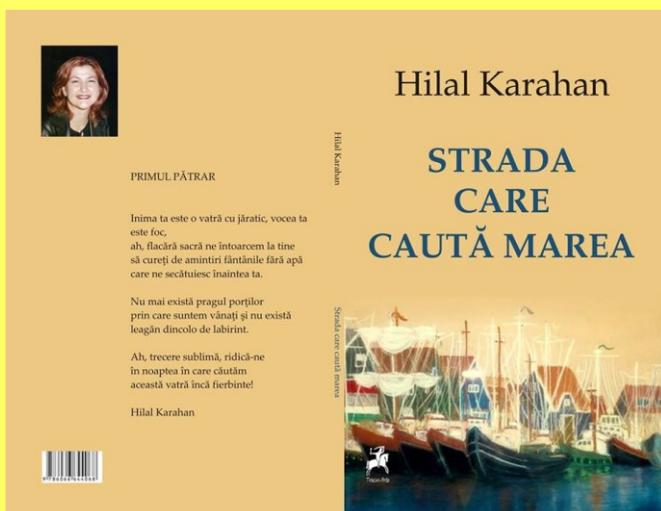
Night undresses its color
on the silver grass
freely

The whistles expand
wet whispers
the earth grow

The vagabound wind
remained from ancient summers
rubs tamarisk with scented oils

Night is blameless
its arms are thick
and soft

In night,
the atlas of skin

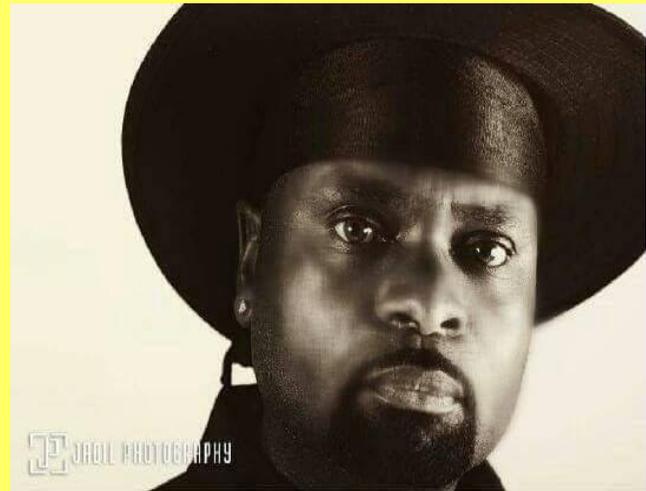


is infinite

Alonzo "Zo" Gross

Ghetto TaleZ

He & his brother Alvin~
 Hittin the block,
 Scoutin'~
 Young ThugZ,
 Ta sell drugZ,
 (I mean That White Talcum~)
 ClotheZ,
 Designer jeanZ,
 Ta stay fly,
 Jus Like a falcon ~
 Servin fiendZ,
 By any meanZ,
 Jus Like Malcolm ~
 So how come~?
 They would then,
 Hit a liquor store>
 (So Brazen |)
 High on more treeZ,
 Than sycamore>
 Wit CopZ chasin |
 BulletZ racin |
 Shell casingZ |
 Till they both got hit,
 The End of their hell raisin | .
 Losin their heartbeatZ ()
 Bloody Chests,
 On the concrete ()
 Guess they gave their heartZ,
 2 tha streetZ ().
 Mom on the corner waleZ----•
 She lost,
 a son plus a son+
 So many ghetto taleZ---•
 A ghetto tellZ---•
 HereZ just one+.
 zO



Alonzo "Zo" Gross

Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, raised in Allentown Pa. Zo graduated from William Allen High School. He went on to graduate from Temple university with a BA in English literature and a Minor in Dance. Zo started Dancing, writing songs, poetry, and short stories at the age of 7. Zo successfully performed at the Legendary Apollo Theater as a dancer at 18. Zo signed a contract with Ken Cowle of Soul Asyum Publishing in 2012, & released the book of poetry and art "Inspiration Harmony & The Word Within" Noveber 2012.

On December 2nd 2012 he won the Lehigh Valley Music Award for "Best Spoken Word Poet" at the LVMAS. In October 2014 Zo traveled to Los Angeles, California to be one of the featured poets/musicians in a documentary film called "VOICES" Directed by Gina Nemo. The Film is slated to be released in 2016. Zo was again Nominated for "Best Spoken Word Poet" again in 2016. Zo's Poetry has been featured in several anthologies, as well as magazines.

Zo's New Book of Poetry & Art "Soul EliXiR"... The WritingZ of Zo will be released in 2016, along with His Debut Rap CD "A Madness 2 The Method" to be released the same year.

© Alonzo "Zo" Gross

Jack Kolkmeier



birds of the nether

birds of the nether
stalk the nesting of innocent watchers
together
to stuff their mouths
with phony words
and empty paraphrasing

they fly around
in blazing frocks of darkness
together
flashing their downward lilt
and pompous vigor
always to insinuate

pecking is the order of their day
as there is no other way
to determine the elders from the youth
together
as they squawk and ruffle feathers
among themselves

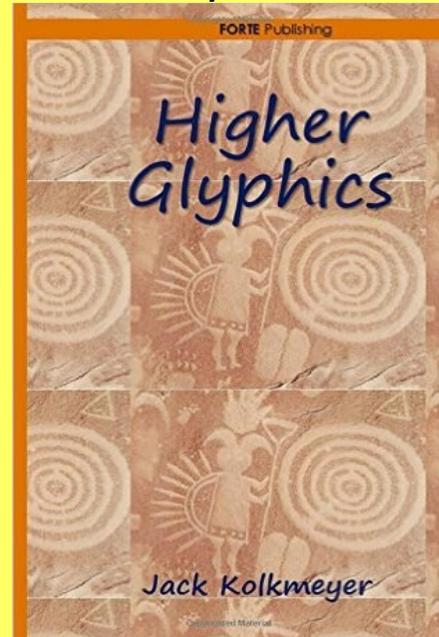
but they capitulate

waiting on the wires
for another moment
together
to strike back at the starkness
of guilt and feathered illusion

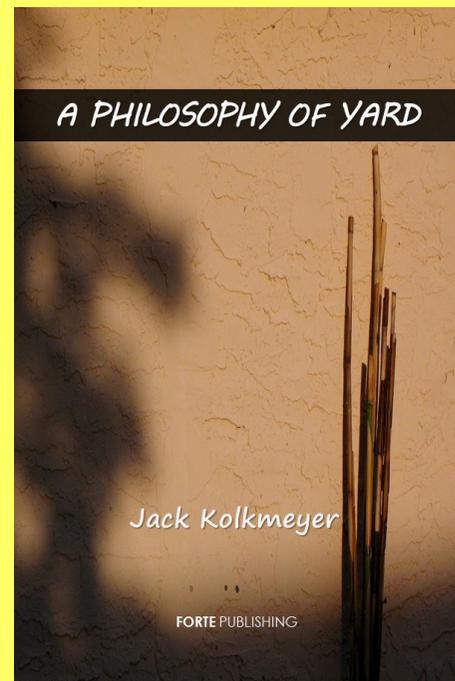
and flights of fancy

together
the birds of the nether

Delray Beach



FORTE Publishing



Jack's newest book **Philosophy of Yard** is was published in 2017. And **Higher Glyphics** [published 2016] is currently available for purchase.

Thelma Teetee Geleplay

A QUEST FOR PEACE

I sat up in the cool of the day
Thinking to myself, "we all need peace
in a way".

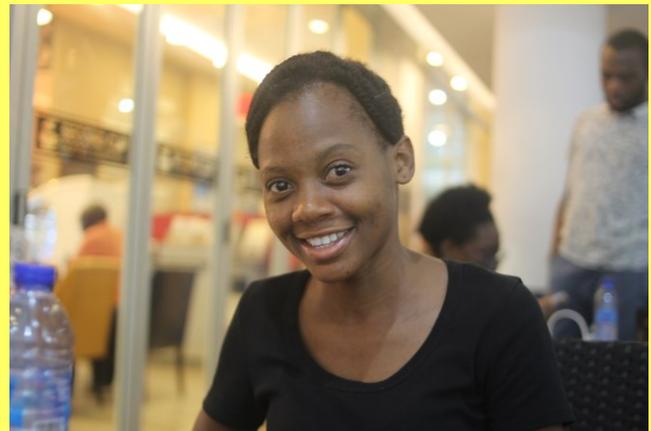
The thought of violence, famine,
pestilence and wars pierces my heart
like an arrow

When will all these eventually end?
We search for peace but can we really
find it?

We have seen wars of pestilence
against man,
Famine against nature
Violence and discrimination among
humans
Wars among brothers and countries
When will all these eventually end?

We all deserve to be happy and live in
peace
Peace with nature and ourselves
Lives are destroyed and hearts broken
I asked myself, when will all the pains,
sorrow and agony calm and be perfect
harmony?
Let us find peace within our hearts
Let us make peace with our past
Let's let go of the pains, hurt and
hatred

And live together in peace as humans
Let the earth find peace with us and
let's rejoice in PEACE.



Thelma Teetee Geleplay, is a Liberian Poet, Entrepreneur and Marketer. She is the CEO of ModestAfrik Styles.

She's passionate about self-development and youth empowerment.

She is interested in photography, word smithing and volunteering to mold minds through poetry.

Thelma is currently concluding her maiden chapbook expected to be published this year.

To You My Contemporaries

Behold, each day when I tune to the
radio

My ears get shock of you

Hold on awhile!

When you rain insults on

him, perhaps he might

Be your dad, your mom, your
backbone

To you my contemporaries

These moments are brief thou

Heap on about tomorrow

The cast of you might change

And so he could be the haven

When your friend could be the fiend

To you my contemporaries

The people are hearing you

So when your stories are told

The memo will resonate, the good
or bad ?

Bell-sounds into memories like

Rain drops falling into a river

To you my contemporaries

Mohammed S. Sy

Death Becomes...US

Kids assassinated.....

Cops assassinated.....

Country gone crazy...again..

tearing at the seams violently busting
loose

Producing the hate...that hate
produced

It stops and begins with US

Our perception, our thinking

A "WE" that is now and pretty much
has been...divided

So there is no "we" only us. ...who
separately...die together.

Whose side are we on....it definitely
isn't our own...as we kill each other

and even watch and share on
facebook, just how sick are some of us

Death becomes...us

Because of us ...and the way we act...
the way we think...the feelings we
ignore...

racism, bigotry, hate, danger, lack of
concern....all rolled up into one big ball
of fire reigning down upon us...

The one who attacks doesn't want
the other one to fight back....and

the one who fights back doesn't
want the other one to attack

so people die...senselessly...as we
sense less, because

we are being lulled to sleep by
apathy or rudely awakened by hate...

Death became usa loooooong
time ago...Dear God...when will

it....end.

Todd Ed

by The Son of Black

RICHARD ALDINGTON

ARGYRIA

O you,
O you most fair,
Swayer of reeds, whisperer
Among the flowering rushes,
You have hidden your hands
Beneath the poplar leaves,
You have given them to the white
waters.
Swallow-fleet,
Sea-child cold from waves,
Slight reed that sang so blithely in the
wind,
White cloud the white sun kissed into the
air;
Pan mourns for you.
White limbs, white song,
Pan mourns for you.

H. D.

HERMES OF THE WAYS I

I
The hard sand breaks,
And the grains of it
Are clear as wine.
Far off over the leagues of it,
The wind,
Playing on the wide shore,
Piles little ridges,
And the great waves
Break over it.
But more than the many-foamed ways
Of the sea,
I know him
Of the triple path-ways,
Hermes,
Who awaiteth.
Dubious,
Facing three ways,
Welcoming wayfarers,

He whom the sea-orchard
Shelters from the west,
From the east
Weathers sea-wind;
Fronts the great dunes.

F. S. FLINT

I
London, my beautiful,
it is not the sunset
nor the pale green sky
shimmering through the curtain
of the silver birch,
nor the quietness ;
it is not the hopping
of birds
upon the lawn,
nor the darkness
stealing over all things
that moves me.

But as the moon creeps slowly
over the tree-tops
among the stars,
I think of her
and the glow her passing
sheds on men.

London, my beautiful,
I will climb
into the branches
to the moonlit tree-tops,
that my blood may be cooled
by the wind.
31

EZRA POUND

FAN-PIECE FOR HER IMPERIAL LORD

O fan of white silk,
clear as frost on the grass-blade,
You also are laid aside.

Gifts of the Masters

In this segment, we run poems from some of the greatest literary masters that ever lived.

CLAUDE MCKAY

The White House

Your door is shut against my
tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with
discontent;
But I possess the courage and the
grace
To bear my anger proudly and
unbent.

The pavement slabs burn loose
beneath my feet,
And passion rends my vitals as I
pass,
A chafing savage, down the
decent street;

Where boldly shines your shuttered
door of glass.
Oh, I must search for wisdom every
hour,
Deep in my wrathful bosom sore
and raw,

And find in it the superhuman
power
To hold me to the letter of your
law!
Oh, I must keep my heart inviolate
Against the potent poison of your
hate.

LANGSTON HUGHES

Life is Fine

I went down to the river,
I set down on the bank.
I tried to think but couldn't,
So I jumped in and sank.

I came up once and hollered!
I came up twice and cried!
If that water hadn't a-been so cold
I might've sunk and died.

*But it was Cold in that water! It
was cold!*

I took the elevator
Sixteen floors above the ground.
I thought about my baby
And thought I would jump down.

I stood there and I hollered!
I stood there and I cried!
If it hadn't a-been so high
I might've jumped and died.

But it was High up there! It was high!

So since I'm still here livin',
I guess I will live on.
I could've died for love—
But for livin' I was born

Though you may hear me holler,
And you may see me cry—
I'll be dogged, sweet baby,
If you gonna see me die.

Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is fine!
From *The Collected Poems of Langston
Hughes*, published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
Copyright © 1994 the Estate of Langston
Hughes. Used with permission.

COUNTEE CULLEN

I Have a Rendezvous With Life

I have a rendezvous with Life,
In days I hope will come,
Ere youth has sped, and strength of
mind,
Ere voices sweet grow dumb.
I have a rendezvous with Life,
When Spring's first heralds hum.
Sure some would cry it's better far
To crown their days with sleep
Than face the road, the wind and
rain,
To heed the calling deep.
Though wet nor blow nor space I
fear,
Yet fear I deeply, too,
Lest Death should meet and claim
me ere
I keep Life's rendezvous.

GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON

The Heart of a Woman

The heart of a woman goes forth
with the dawn,
As a lone bird, soft winging, so
restlessly on,
Afar o'er life's turrets and vales
does it roam
In the wake of those echoes the
heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back
with the night,
And enters some alien cage in its
plight,
And tries to forget it has dreamed
of the stars
While it breaks, breaks, breaks on
the sheltering bars.

**Source: *The Heart of a Woman and Other
Poems* (The Cornhill Company,**

JESSIE REDMON FAUSET, 1882-1961

Rondeau

When April's here and meadows wide
Once more with spring's sweet
growths are pied
I close each book, drop each pursuit,
And past the brook, no longer mute,
I joyous roam the countryside.

Look, here the violets shy abide
And there the mating robins hide—
How keen my sense, how acute,
When April's here!

And list! down where the shimmering
tide
Hard by that farthest hill doth glide,
Rise faint strains from shepherd's
flute,
Pan's pipes and Berecyntian lute.
Each sight, each sound fresh joys
provide
When April's here.

Gwendolyn Bennett

Fantasy

I sailed in my dreams to the Land of
Night
Where you were the dusk-eyed queen,
And there in the pallor of moon-veiled
light
The loveliest things were seen ...

A slim-necked peacock sauntered
there
In a garden of lavender hues,
And you were strange with your purple
hair
As you sat in your amethyst chair
With your feet in your hyacinth shoes.

Oh, the moon gave a bluish light
Through the trees in the land of dreams
and night.
I stood behind a bush of yellow-green
And whistled a song to the dark-haired
queen .

Lady Lazarus

SYLVIA PLATH

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.
Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify?—

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot—
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut

As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the
same brute
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a
charge
For the hearing of my heart—
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large
charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your

great concern.

Ash, ash—
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there--

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.
23-29 October 1962

From *The Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath,
published by Harper & Row. Copyright © 1981 by
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Georgia Douglas Johnson

When I Rise Up

When I rise up above the earth,
And look down on the things that fetter
me,
I beat my wings upon the air,
Or tranquil lie,
Surge after surge of potent strength
Like incense comes to me
When I rise up above the earth
And look down upon the things that fetter
me.

Tribute by The President of the Republic Of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, At The Funeral Of Hugh Masekela, On Tuesday, 30th January, 2018, In Johannesburg, South Africa

JANUARY 30, 2018



I had to come, and came from the AU Summit in Addis Ababa on my way back home to Accra, so I could express my condolences to Barbara and his family in person.

Coming here, it was difficult to believe the news. But being here, at this service, it is clear to me that the news is, indeed, true. Masekela is gone, Masekela is no more. All that energy, all that vitality, all that zest for life, (what the French call *joie de vivre*), all that infectious sense of humour, all that loud laughter, all that love of beauty in all its forms, all that passion and belief in a higher destiny for mankind, especially for the African people, all that charisma – they have all been extinguished. That is the way of mortal man. We each have our beginning, we each have our ending. It is what you do in between that matters.

What an amazing life he lived, and did virtually everything he wanted to do. We met a long time ago, nearly 50 years ago. Predictably, for both of us at the time, it was at the bar of Keteke, then the hottest night club (or disco, as they were then being called) in Accra. He was already a legend – “King Kong”, and “Grazing in the Grass” had seen to that. But, he wore none of that. Simple, straightforward, he exuded fun and warmth. Many drinks later, we became firm friends, and looked out for and saw each other at various clubs across the world – New York, London, Paris, Lagos, Abidjan, Lome – wherever we were together, we would meet and party. Nobody partied like Masekela.

From the beginning, that is what I called him – Masekela – and he called me Nana. It never changed. For some reason, I could never come to terms with Hugh or Bra Hugh. He was Masakela, unique and compelling.

He bore his exile with dignity. He never lost his belief that the inhuman system of apartheid would be dismantled, and that South Africa would, one day, be free. And he did his best to ensure that happened. He was one of the most prominent of the South African exiles, who kept the struggle alive before the eyes and conscience of the world, and he did it largely through his wonderful music. Trumpet, cornet,

flugelhorn, his voice – he made beautiful music out of each of them. And when his idol, the iconic Nelson Mandela, greatest of all Africans, walked out of prison, his joy was without end. I came here to visit with him when he returned home, and that was my first experience of South Africa. He took me to the recording studio in downtown Johannesburg, where he had recorded in the old days with Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), and the others. In fact, on the day we went, the new diva, Sibongile Khumalo, was actually in the studio, and he introduced me to her.

I was fortunate in my friendship with him and his great friend, that other great figure of African music, Fela Anikulapo Kuti (Fela Ransome Kuti of earlier years). They made exhilarating company, and left me with marvellous memories. One such was at dawn, in Lome, capital of Togo, when, after leaving the nightclub ‘Z’, we went to the beach, behind the Sarakawa Hotel, and, sitting on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea, looking out across the Atlantic, Masakela played for us for one hour. It was like a song of praise to all that was beautiful on our African continent. Even Fela was moved, and every time I think of it, it brings tears of joy to my heart.

His love of Ghana was such that he became a Ghanaian, and, for me, a member of my family. My wife Rebecca, my sister Mamaa, her daughter Khadija, my brother Bumpty, his wife Irene, our mutual friend Sabah Bedwei Majdoub, Joe Ampah, his widow Rosalind, and the talented Accra musicians – Francis Fuster, The Todd brothers, Frankie and Stanley Todd, Sol Amarfio, the late Faisal Helwani, the outstanding Ghanaian music producer – we were all his family, to whom he remained faithful to the end. He even married, for a time, the lovely Ghanaian woman, Elinam Cofie. South Africa will always have to share Masakela with us in Ghana, and, indeed, with the rest of Africa.

There are some people who cross your life, and you know that it is a privilege to share the same time and space with them. Masakela was one such. I feel truly privileged to have lived at the same time as him, and to have been blessed by his friendship.

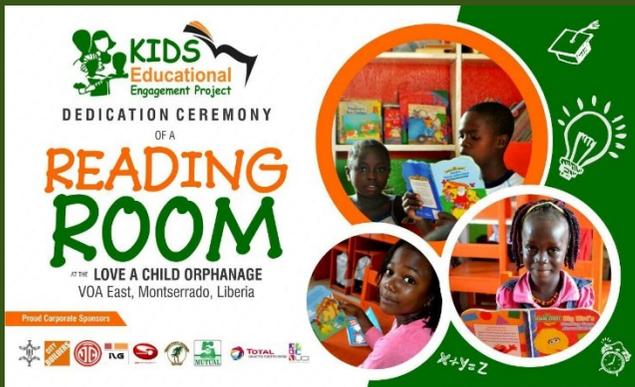
Last year, he did what we had both talked and dreamed of for decades – he played at my inauguration, as President of the Republic of Ghana, on 7th January, 2017. He played on two occasions that day – at the official lunch, and at the wonderful party my brother gave for me and my wife, Rebecca, that evening, both, unforgettable occasions. Indeed, several diplomats told me, on the news of his death, that that was the first and only time they heard him in flesh, a memory they would always cherish.

I am reluctant to quote Shakespeare – he wrote some 500 years ago, and has since been extensively quoted. But the reason for that is his mastery of the English language, which allows him to find the appropriate words for each occasion. This is how Mark Anthony described Brutus, one of the conspirators against Julius Caesar: “This was the noblest Roman of them all. All the rest of the conspirators acted out of jealousy of great Caesar. Only he acted from honesty and for the general good. His life was gentle, and the elements mixed so well in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, “This was a man.”

Masekela, you were the man. Rest in perfect peace. God bless.

Damirifa Due.

KEEP



Kids Educational Empowerment Program

– **KEEP**, is a literacy program in Liberia that focuses on children. Its vision/mission are:

Vision: We envisage the up-liftment of the Liberian children through educational empowerment regardless of social and geographic status.

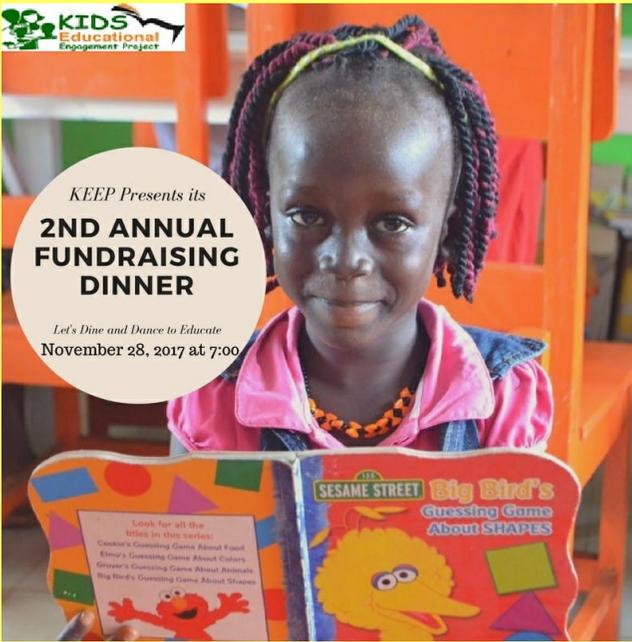
Mission: We provide various resources that would facilitate access to primary education by engaging with parents, community leadership, established community structures and other partners. KEEP seeks to promote social justice and development of vulnerable children and youth by strengthening their capacities.



KEEP with support from development actors (i.e. ActionAid-Liberia, Universal Outreach Canada, Monrovia Rotary Club, APM Terminals, Alpha Phi) have been able to reach over 8,000 children and counting in 76 communities across rural and urban Montserrado, Gbarpolu and Grand Gedeh Counties in Liberia. KEEP has also provided “Back-to-School” bags for beneficiaries in the greater Monrovia area with support from the Liberia Telecommunication's Authority. Each book-bag contained one dozen notebooks, half dozen pencils, crayons, sharpeners, erasers, geometry sets, etc.

KEEP successfully completed several projects for ActionAid-Liberia by establishing Girls Forums in 10 communities in Gbarpolu & Grand Gedeh counties and provided life skills training to the girls as well. We also created awareness to school administrators, parents, teachers and students on the rights of a child and the promotion of girls' education in Gbarpolu.

KEEP successfully coordinated and established after school tutorials for over 2000 children in Grand Gedeh & Gbarpolu and provide life skills trainings. We have since transitioned in providing sustainable actions at the grassroots community levels – providing various support in the educational sector, particularly at the primary school level. KEEP also engages in women & girls empowerment, economic livelihood, access to justice, promotion of rights in schools, strengthening youth education through computer and reading literacy programs, child sponsorship and advocacy.

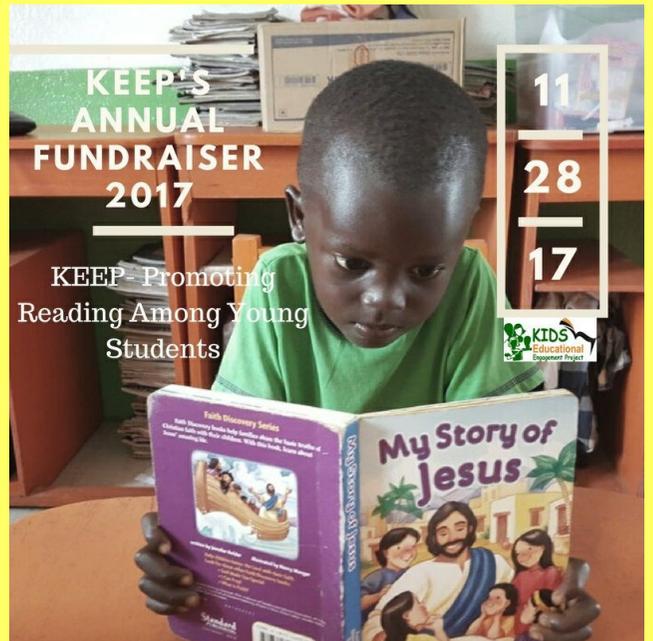


KEEP Presents its
2ND ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER
 Let's Dine and Dance to Educate
 November 28, 2017 at 7:00



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KEEP'S
 ANNUAL
 FUNDRAISER
 2017



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KEEP'S
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 2017

KEEP - Promoting
 Reading Among Young
 Students





KIDS EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT PROJECT
FUNDRAISING DINNER



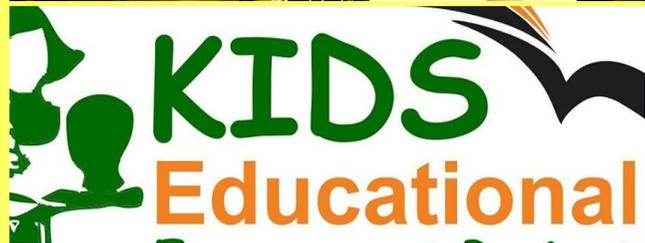
HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING 2017!

- Established 5 reading rooms
- Addressing SRHR for adolescent girls
- Conducted 2 teachers training (25 teachers)
- Distributed more than 200 hygiene kits to kids
- 75 students received back to school kits (bags, notebooks, etc.)
- Provided tuition support to 4 physically challenged kids
- 2400+ notebooks donated
- Conducted more than 15 weekly reading sessions
- Completed the construction of a public school in Gbarpolu
- Established a Learning Resource Center

SPONSOR TICKET \$200 USD
PATRON TICKET \$150 USD
REGULAR TICKET \$50 USD

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7:30 PM
Monrovia City Hall
RED CARPET STARTS AT
6:30 PM

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LETTER TO MY NEXT WALL NEIGHBOUR'S GIRLFRIEND, WHO GOT PREGNANT RECENTLY

Nesta Jojoe Erskine

.....

Hello Pipiloo,

Good afternoon. I'm here hoping this letter finds you well. Congratulations on your latest milestone. I know you'll be surprised that I know about your pregnancy. Let that not bother you. I know more than just your pregnancy. I know things because I hear things. I hear things because it's just a wall that separates me and Akwasi, your boyfriend.

Before you came into the life of Akwasi, things were different around here. I remember most nights, Akwasi would be in his room and be chatting with me while in my room. We didn't need to go over to each other's room. The partition wall is thin enough to allow us to share our troubles across rooms each night. People call their neighbors "next door" neighbor but we call each other "next-wall neighbor." It's just a wall. It's just a thin wall.

Before you came, there was Ama. Before Ama, there was Mansa. Before Mansa, there was Alaba. Actually, she's called Araba but for some reason known to her alone, she called herself Alaba. Before Alaba, there was Mezoo.

Mezoo, the dark beautiful lady with seven tribal marks on both of her cheeks. She was my favorite. She was the only one who pronounced my name with such an awesome accent that I always wished to be called by her. Pretty Mezoo... how I miss her as I'm writing this.

Hmm...

All these ladies have passed through the corridors of Akwasi and warmed his bed on different occasions. There were nights I had to cover my ears with my pillows because the sound coming from Akwasi's room was disturbing. Really... it wasn't that disturbing. Those sounds only disturbed my sense of celibacy. I was a man on sex exile but these ladies never stopped to remind me of the things I'm missing while on exile. The sweetest of sound came from Mezoo. My sweet pretty Mezoo.

She had a different sound for every time that Akwasi changed the rhythm. At some point, I thought of Mezoo's talent and wanted her to become a musician but she declined my offer, saying she only have a beautiful moan and not a voice to sing.

At some night, she moaned in Twi though she could barely speak the Twi language. At some nights she moaned in her beautiful Frafra dialect and I would stay up all night just to enjoy her melodies. Then one night things changed. The melody coming from Akwasi's room didn't sound like Mezoo but it was a beautiful melody all the same. I tucked my ears to the thin wall just

to be sure. It was Mezoo! This time, she was moaning in Chinese. “Wooooow!” I exclaimed. “What language couldn’t Mezoo moan in?”

One day everything changed forever. One day all the ladies passed and returned no more. Then on another day you appeared. Pipiloo, when you came along, I had a bigger expectation from you. Looking at your curves and height, I knew something greater was coming. I knew for once, there’s someone to change the love I had for Mezoo. I knew, Pipiloo, that you were going to change everything for me.

I was wrong!

Ever since you came along, I’ve never heard even faintest whisper from Akwasi’s room. It’s been 9 months and I still haven’t heard even a little sound to suggest Akwasi has been busy. Pipiloo why? A woman can be quiet, I know but this level of quietness can only be wicked. At some point, I thought Akwasi is now living with a catholic nun.

Just last night I overheard you two arguing... arguing over a two months pregnancy. I heard you crying. For over 9 months you’ve been here, the only sound you could give me is a sound of you crying. I overheard Akwasi saying the pregnancy couldn’t be his. Then I overheard you claiming Akwasi would be a wicked person to say that to you. I nearly said something from my room just like I and Akwasi used to do. I stopped so I could put it in this letter.

Pipiloo...

Akwasi is right. He can’t be responsible. A woman that can’t

make sounds has lost every right to a pregnancy. Nine months of silence. Nine months without a melody. Nine months without continental sounds can’t lead to a pregnancy. I stand with Akwasi. He’s not responsible. I know it. Many have come along with an orchestra in their voices but none got pregnant. Why you, the silent one?

Mezoo...my sweet polished face Mezoo with artistic marks on her cheeks couldn’t get pregnant though she could moan in Chinese. At one night I could swear I heard her moaning in Mandarin.

But...

She couldn’t get pregnant. Why you, Pipiloo? We are not accepting this. Take us to court!



Nesta Jojoe Erskine

Blogger |

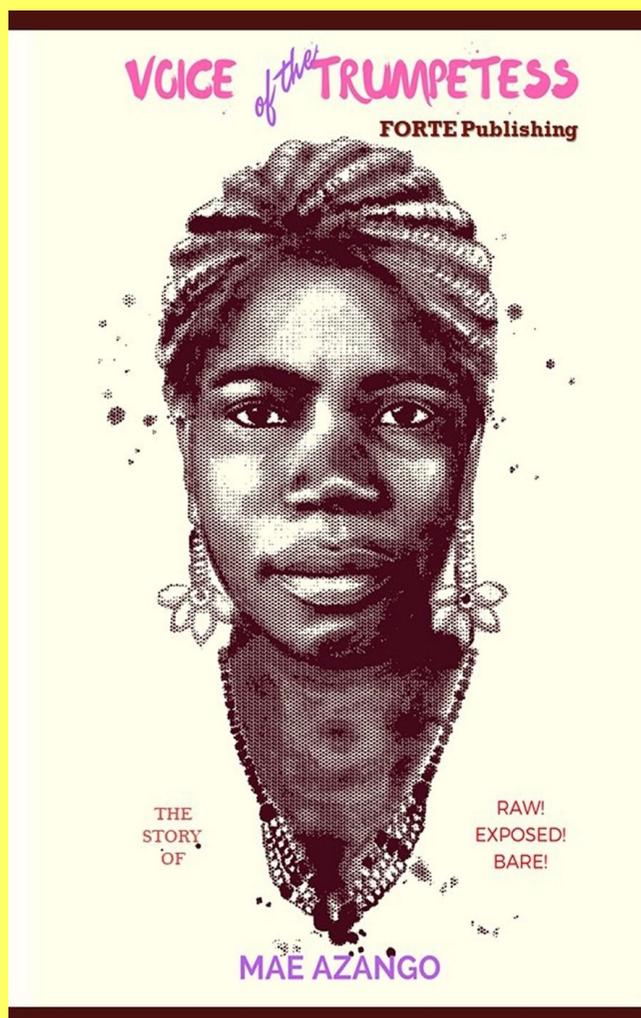
Speaker |

Social Media Enthusiast

Email: erskine@nestaerskine.com

Blog: <http://nestaerskine.com/>

Recommended READS



Blurb

Whilst navigating the minefield of rights advocacy, Mae Azango has been skipping a few mines of her own.

In her explosive new book, *Voice of the Trumpetess*, she shows us why her passion burns for those whose stories she tells—she can empathize with them.

In a shocking revelation, her brush with rape, her physical, psychological and even sexual abuse. In her fearless signature, she unclosets her demons, in a raw, provocative yet reflective narrative.

She trumpets the horrors of her own past.

Excerpt

“Confess!”

“Ooooooh,” I moan on the cold floor.

“You belleh say ley truth eh!”

“Ay God.” I whispered, unable to speak. My voice gone from screams. My body riddled with pain. I feel the life draining out of my body.

“Tor nah! Jeh call ley name. Call ley person name. If you nah stop lying you way die!” The Zoe intensely lashing me with a rattan as she yells. I no longer feel the lashes for I am in even greater pain. A few paces away, sits an elderly man, chanting, humming some strange ancient tone.

The pain is unbearable. The traditional midwife is resolute. The baby bridged. The male diviner lost in the spirit realm. I am dying.

The little cottage that houses this commotion begins to spin slowly. It is a shabby mud house littered with dead animal bones, old utensils as rustic as hell. Even the clay pots were all broken.

“La who ley man? John? Garyou? Who?”

“No,” I tried. I can no longer take the pain.

“Dah nah dem, den dah who?”

“Ee-e.” a bout of pain jostled through my spine. I’d do anything to stop it. Rolling over the wet muddy floor. Suddenly, a warmth engulfed me. The Zoe looked alarmed. The oldman stopped chanting.

“Liar. If you nah stop lying, de baby die!”

Da Youjay?”

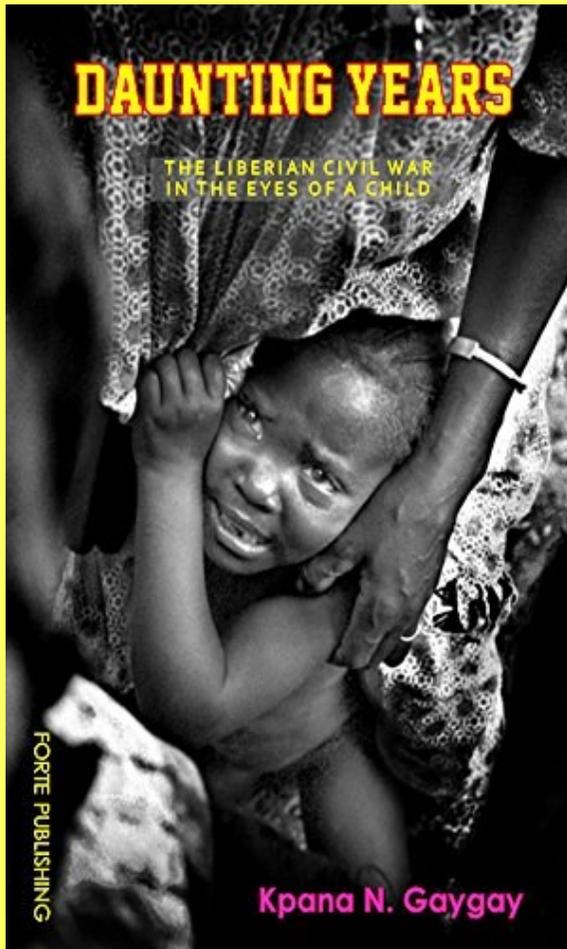
I nodded vigorously. At this point, I didn’t care. I had to stop the pain.

“Thank Gor” She exclaimed jumping to action. For once she stopped beating me.

By now, I was taking slow, measured breathes. My lower abdomen was numb. For some reason, my placenta won’t come out, trapping the baby and risking both our lives. The traditional belief suggested that I must have been unfaithful during my pregnancy thus angering the Gods, hence the complication. They had to beat out that confession if we had any chance of surviving. Naïve to the danger I was in and desperate to keep my piety, I maintained my innocence. That was over two hours ago when the ritual began.

She hurriedly lifted me. They must have been working at lightning speed but it all seemed like slow motion to me. She kept yelling at the frantic old man who rushed to her with some object in hand. She tilted my head as he pried my jaws apart. My lifeless form didn’t even resist. The taste of kerosene assaulted me before I realized it. Just as the lights went out, I breathed my last breath!

Recommended READS

**Blurb**

A little child wakes up starving. Her mother can't feed her because she's dying from hunger. Her village can't protect her because they are engulfed in the midst of a bloody civil war. They have the misfortune to live in a village that is a strategic spot on the map of warlords and government forces; both groups determined to take and or keep that little town at all cost. Their men have fled; left them unprotected. Their sons have been taken or killed.

But a small group of women must ensure the lives of their children, their elders and themselves.

What they do, how they do it and when they do it, will determine their fates.

Who survives, who doesn't? Who turns on the other, who doesn't? Who holds the group together or who falls apart?

Kpana tells her story as a child trying to make sense of it all.

Excerpt

Boom!

Brrrr, brrrr.

Boom! Boom!

Brrrrrr, brrrrrrrr, brrrrr

The sound of gunshots and heavy artillery raged outside of our home in Voinjama city, Lofa County. I ran inside to my mother and jumped on her laps. I was the only child with Mama at the time.

"Pack small clothes and a lappa, let's go!" Mama ordered. She left no room to argue. She was firm.

I knew better than to argue with that tone. It is not as if I even wished to argue. "What is happening Mama?" I inquired.

"Look you, I don't have time for your plenty questions. Just hurry let's get out of here!"

"Yes Mama," was all I could manage. In the process, I forgot to take the lappa.

Then we heard, "Yor mon kill ley dirty dog them!" barked one of the fighters!

"We will roast them to eat," another echoed.

Just outside our house, a man was pleading for his life.

"The man dah enemy," shouted one person.

"I nah enemay oh," a heavily accented response came. It was most certainly one of the residents with Guinean heritage.

"Weh yor wasting time with this dog for? Finish him!"

This order came from a female. It was cold, crisp and left no room for argument. Seconds later, several short rounds were fired. Just like that, I experienced my first death in a long, bloody, senseless war.

The silence was short lived for immediately after that, we heard banging on our door. "Open the damn door!"

Mama covered my mouth as she scurried to unlatch the back door. She had no sooner freed the latch and gotten out when bullets riddled the house, most missing us by inches. We maneuvered in between a few houses and ran towards the outskirts which leads further into the forest. Just as we cleared our neighborhood and turned towards the main road, we saw ourselves facing a group of people, all well-armed and guns pointed at us.

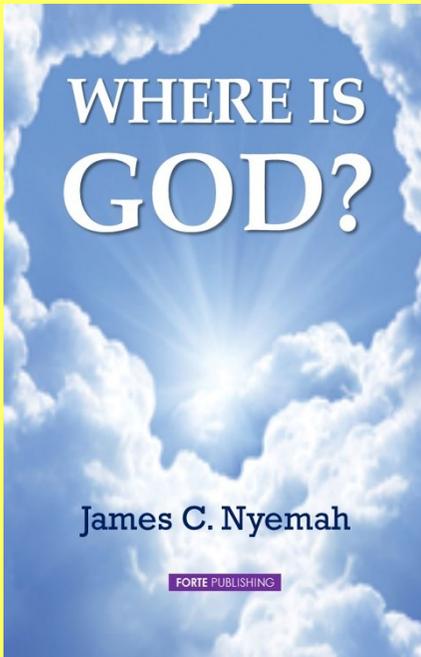
Something immediately died in Mama's expression as the voice from the one ahead of the group shouted

"Open fire!"

Recommended Reads

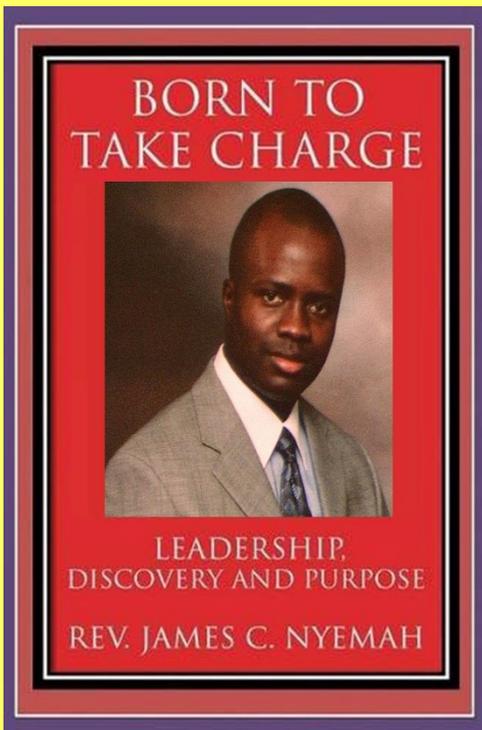
Published by **FORTE Publishing**

WHERE IS GOD?



“Where is God?” A most difficult question no doubt but a necessary one about God and life. If things are worse, we even go further and ask all sorts of questions. For example, “If God is such a loving and caring father,

why does he allow bad things to happen to good people, including Christians?



We were all born to do something or for a reason, even if one does not know or has not yet figured out theirs. Grab a copy of this book and be inspired.

Pastor James

Nyemah writes a powerful motivational book that spurs one to do one thing... TAKE CHARGE.



MOMOH SEKOU DUDU

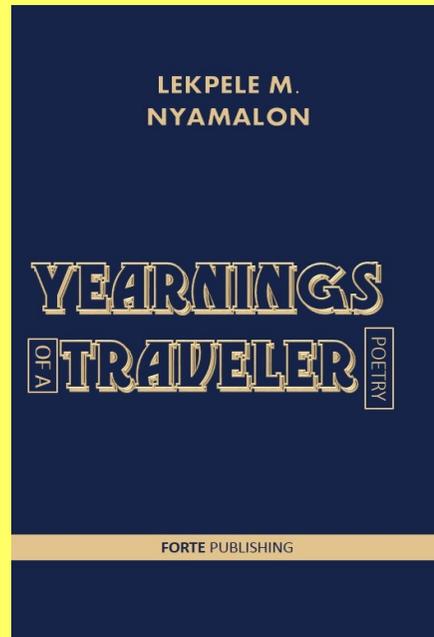
takes us on a mental journey in his latest release, *When The Mind Soars*, poetry from the Heart.

He exposes us to a Liberia as freshly, honestly and

chaotic as he sees it. He presents us a broken Liberia that is pulling herself up by its own boot straps. Let your minds fly, soar with ideas.

Yearnings of A Traveler

We all have a yearning for something. For



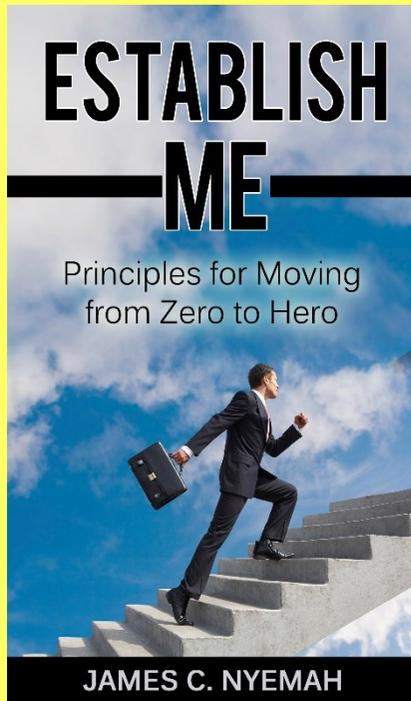
Lekpele, his has been a message of self worth, as we see in his signature piece, My Body is Gold; one of patriotism, as in Scars of A Tired Nation; one of Pan Africanism as in the piece, Dig The Graves. He

also has a message of hope as seen in his award winning poem, Forgotten Future. He is an emerging voice that one can't afford to ignore. Yearning is the debut chapbook by Liberian poet, Lekpele M. Nyamalon.

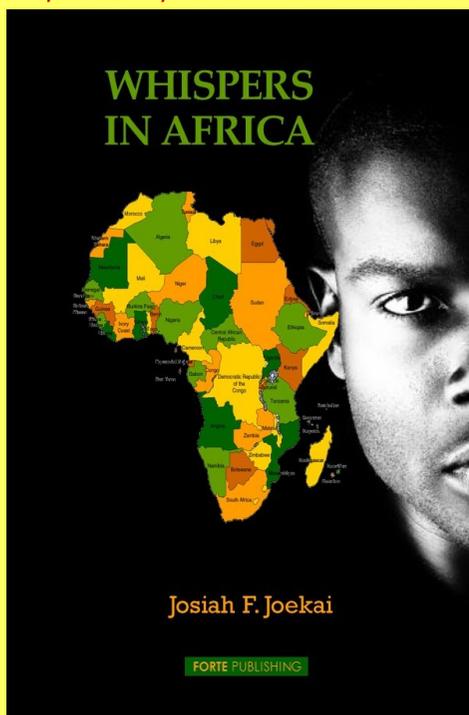
Recommended Reads

ESTABLISH ME in the world is Liberia?

WE GET BROKEN, DAMAGED, THORN UP BY THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE. IT RIPS US APART, IT SQUASHES US. WE FEEL DEJECTED, REFUSED, ABUSED AND USED. WE OFTEN DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH OUR SHATTERED SOULS. WE SEEK A PLACE OF REFUGE, OF CALM, A PLACE TO MEND THOSE PIECES. WE SEARCH FOR A PLACE SET APART FROM THIS WORLD TO PULL US TOGETHER

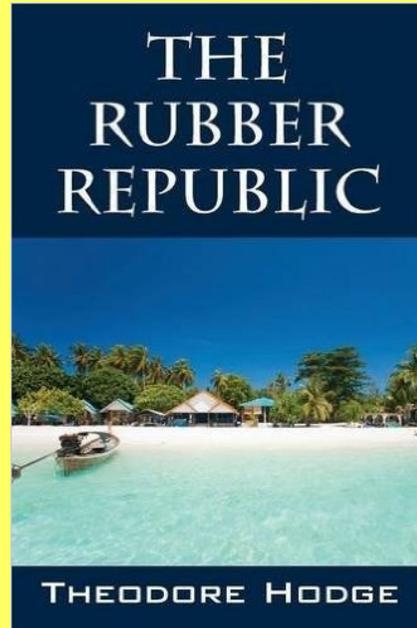


In his latest work, Ps. Nyemah lets us know that God can **Fix Us, Mold Us, Create Us** and then **Establish US**.



Available now from FORTE Publishing

The Rubber Republic



From relative stability to upheaval, military coup, violence and revenge. . . The Rubber Republic covers two decades, the late 1950s through the 1970s. Set mainly in West Africa, the story takes the reader to the United States and a few

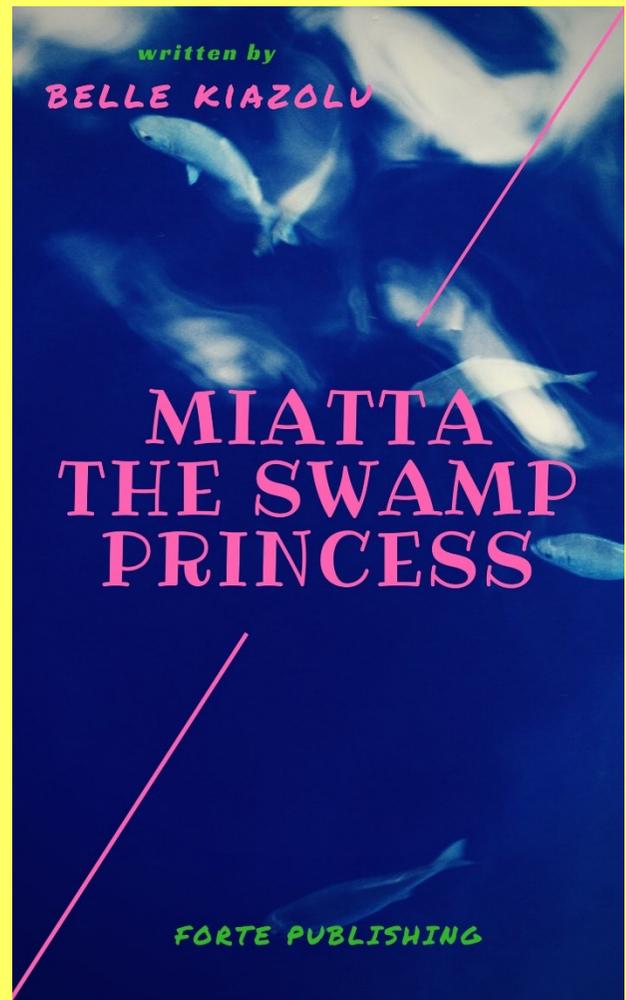
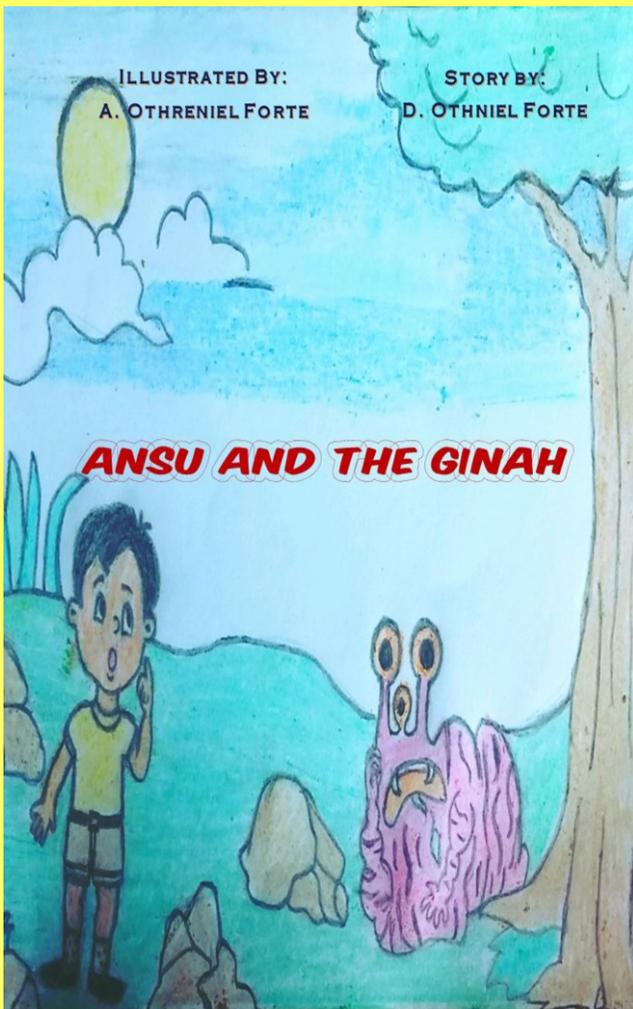
other stops along the way. The story is mainly about the intriguing and fantastic lives of two young men, Yaba-Dio Himmie and Yaba-Dio Kla, who leave their parents' farm in search of enlightenment and adventure. But the story is also about their country, the Republic of Seacoast, and a giant American Rubber conglomerate, The Waterstone Rubber Plantation Company.

Mohammed Dolley Donzo

In his debut endeavor, Our Future Today, the author writes about things that should unite not just Liberians but Africans as a whole. He encourages African youths to stand firm and revive the strong warrior spirits of their ancestors.



Available now from FORTE Publishing by Mohammed Dolley Donzo



Ansu, is a stubborn boy, he doesn't like to listen to his parents. He prefers to do naughty things.

He runs off to avoid working and encounters a strange creature. What will happen?

Follow Ansu as he journeys through the deadly Liberian forest. **Ansu And The Ginah**, is a part of the **EDUKID** Readers Series.

In this book, the father and daughter duo combine to bring a great reading experience to little ones as they begin their life's journey of reading.

FORTE Publishing Int'l

Miatta, an orphan, lives with her foster parents. She is hardworking and focuses on her studies. Life is dull, boring and quiet. She is ordinary, or so she thinks. Accidentally, she stumbles on a magical kingdom deep in the Liberian countryside where she learns that not only is she welcome, she is a princess.

Miatta The Swamp Princess recounts her adventures into the African forest.

Belle Kizolu is one of the youngest published Liberian authors. She lives in Monrovia where is attends school. She is in the 7th grade.

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Around Town



Cozy Evening



Kids carrying on the tradition of Old Man Beggar



The boys here re already training for the big stage. That they are brave enough to go around serenading is a testament to their courage. In a few years, they'd have much experience under their belts to hit the big stage.



The Gabriel Tucker Bridge- New Bridge



A Powerful message in support of arts/artists



Traditional Dancer from the Gio Tribe-Gio Devil



Photo: S. Mark

City Center





Hustle is real.

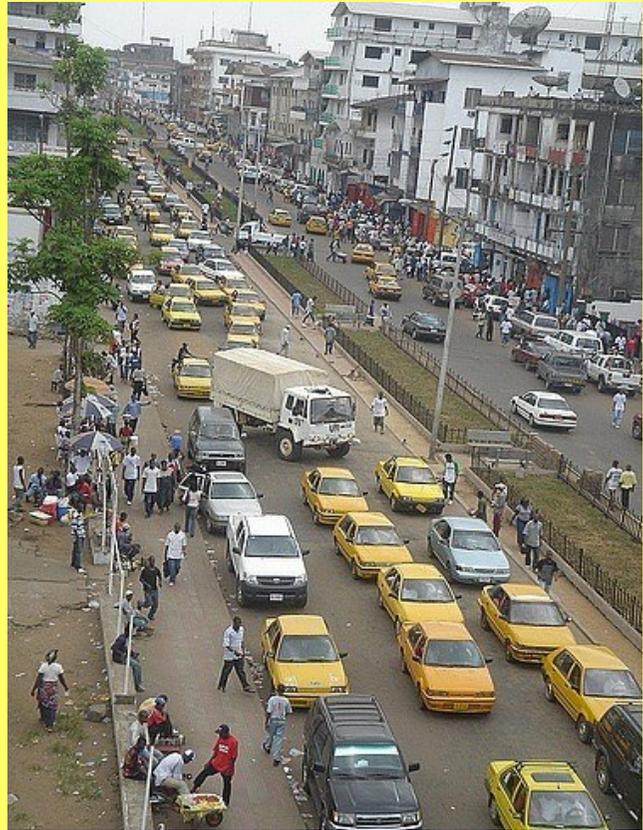


A scenic view of Monrovia, city center

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Magazine
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DK, one would only ask if they are unfamiliar with LIB



Around Town



Bomi County, a perfect view



Famous Liberian Piggy Hippo



**This exotic waterfall is a great opportunity
To expand tourism if developed.**



Down town Pehn Pehn Hustle



The People's Monument

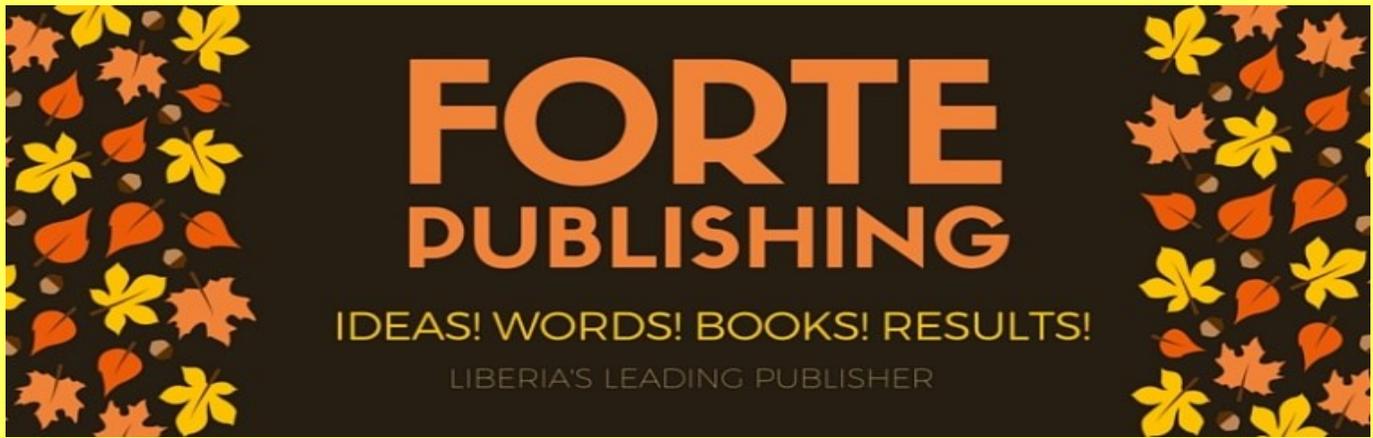


Forget us not



Broom & Mop sellers. Hustle; real life situations

Credit: Darby Cecil & Daily Pictures from around Liberia



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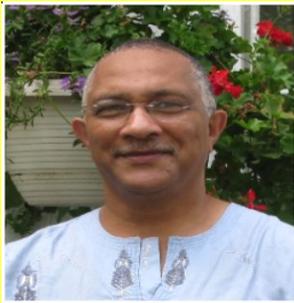
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Here at Liberian Literary Magazine, we strive to bring you the best coverage of Liberian literary news. We are a subsidiary of [Liberian Literature Review](#).

For too long the arts have been ignored, disregarded or just taken less important in Liberia. This sad state has stifled the creativity of many and the culture as a whole.

However, all is not lost. A new breed of creative minds has risen to the challenge and are determined to change the dead silence in our literary world. In order to do this, we realized the need to create a *culture of reading* amongst our people.

A reading culture broadens the mind and opens up endless possibilities. It also encourages diversity and for a colorful nation like ours, fewer things are more important.

We remain grateful to contributors; keep creating the great works, it will come full circle. But most importantly, we thank those of you that continue to support us by reading, purchasing, and distributing our magazine. We are most appreciative of this and hope to keep you educated, informed and entertained.

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