

# LONG TIME COMING!

## *Short Writings from Zimbabwe*

You don't have to be in Zimbabwe to know or experience what is happening in Zimbabwe. All you have to do is get yourself a copy of 'amabooks' **Long Time Coming** and plough through it. At the end of your reading you'll, without doubt, have gone through the total Zimbabwean experience.

This publication pits together thirty three writers from different backgrounds, races, experiences and genres. Thabisani Ndlovu, Pathisa Nyathi, John Read, Monireh Jassat, Brian Chikwava and Petinah Gappah are some of the contributors to this anthology. Thirty three writers as different as their names, writers with their own individual voices and styles. Old writers who have done it all share this platform with young and new writers still trying to get on their feet in the literary world.

Thirty three writers painting their thoughts, feelings, dreams, fears and nightmares about Zimbabwe, a country Julius Chingono aptly describes as "an empty but attractive/ plastic packet . . . / that leads to a rubbish dump/ by the cemetery."

Old wounds refusing to heal, scars yearning to be scratched, fresh and open wounds begging for attention, diseases, drought, betrayal, and a lot of other issues afflicting the former bread basket of Africa are unpacked in this poignant anthology whose stories are connected by their setting, the interlinking themes and a shared responsibility by the writers to be the voice of those that are still searching for their own voices or too afraid to open their mouths.

Bhekilizwe Dube writes about an abusive relationship created around the squalor and ugliness of a township slowly being reduced to a village. City people are seen fetching water from boreholes like in the rural areas. It took Thandi "near death" to realize she has to get out of a violent relationship. There is obviously another layer of meaning to this story, some kind of political connotation. The writer is not just angry at his sister for allowing the abuse to go on for so long. He is also angry at his fellow citizens who have allowed politicians to abuse them to a state of near death. The story is, perhaps, a wake up call to say its time people changed their situation by getting out of politically abusive relationships.

*King of Bums* has the streetwise Chris Mlalazi examining post independent Zimbabwe and what it means to a new generation of born frees. It is a story of anger and betrayal where the young feel they are being held at ransom for not having been born or being old enough to take part in

the liberation war. In this story post independent Zimbabwe is seen more as a living nightmare instead of the land of honey and milk promised during the war of liberation. Ian Rowland, a casual Welsh visitor to Zimbabwe, comes face to face with the rape of innocence during a visit to a township in Bulawayo. At an Aids orphanage he comes across young orphans whose only crime is to hope and dream for a better Zimbabwe. And at the end of his visit Ian Rowlands can only ask: "What manner of man would allow such innocence to be destroyed?"

There is so much going on in Zimbabwe that sometimes it is difficult to maintain one's sanity. The pressures are just too much. Ignatius Mabasa explores the theme of temporary insanity in *Some Kind of Madness*. One of his characters wakes up to the realization that he has forgotten who he is. Although he can remember his hunger, the smell of hospitals where relatives are taken and never come back, of the colour of death on people's skins (obviously AIDS related), he can't remember who he is. A very worrisome experience.

But then all is not gloom and depressing. There are lighter moments in the anthology. Moments like the ones Mzana Mthimkhulu creates with *Not Slaves to Fashion*. A wedding and preparations for celebrations. Moments of hope. Like all citizens of Zimbabwe the writers know the importance of hope. A hope for a better tomorrow. This is explored by Judy Maposa in *First Rain*. In her story she wishes for "rain to wash away all the corruption in the land. A rain to cleanse and restore all that has been touched by the dark side of man." This rain is long overdue. It has taken a long time coming.

***Long Time Coming: Short writings from Zimbabwe*** is about hope, about resilience, and how the people have waited for so long to be delivered from their suffering. A fine read.

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