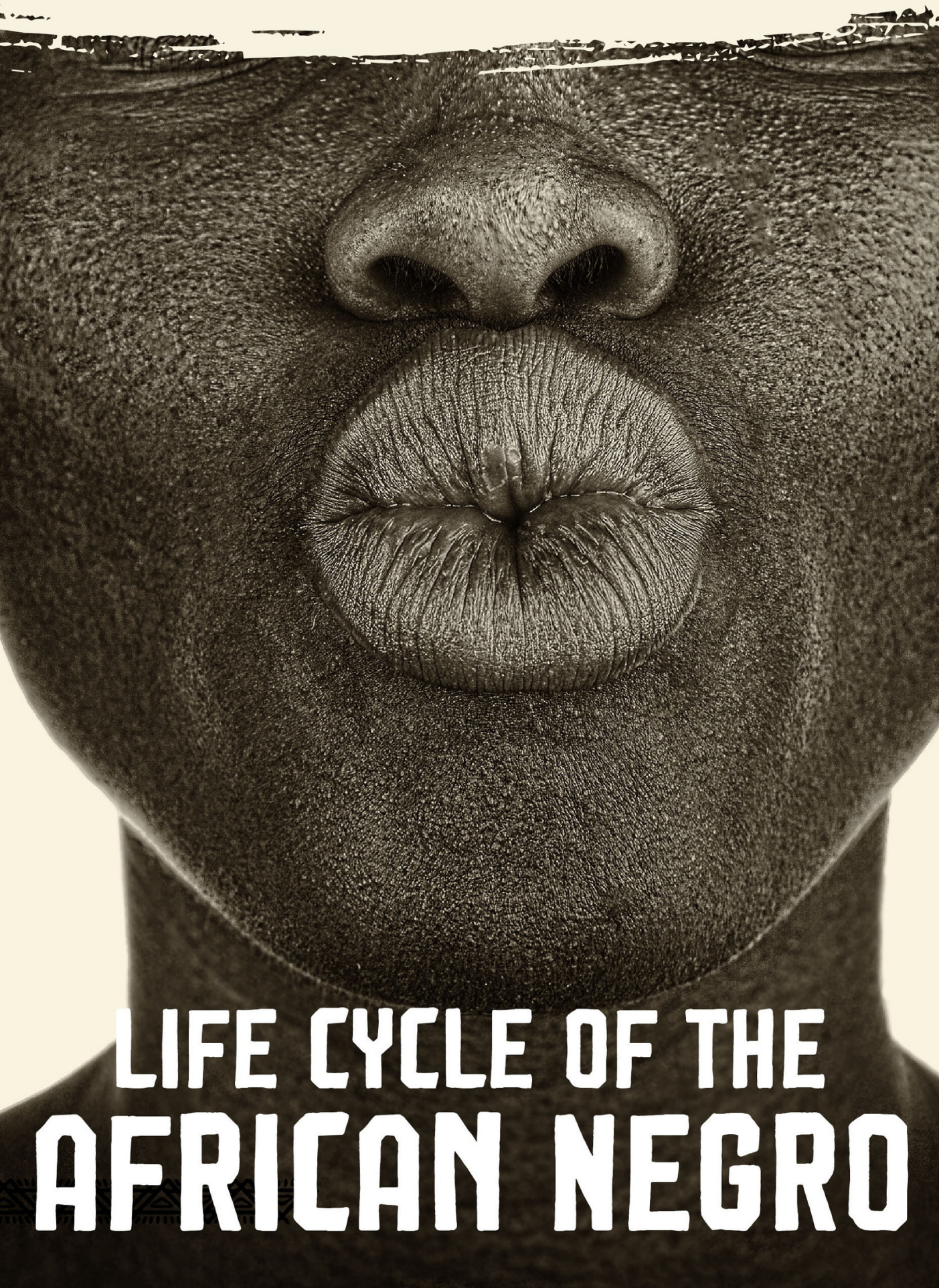


AUGUSTINE LUNGU



LIFE CYCLE OF THE
AFRICAN NEGRO

AUGUSTINE LUNGU

Life Cycle of the African Negro

Poems



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For Leniah.

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I

REINCARNATION

/rinkne(ə)n/ |noun|

the rebirth of a soul in another body.

Psalms and Offerings 1/34

To the woman who carried me for nine months
and then carried me for twenty five more years
without dropping me once,
I learnt that she will carry me
until her last breath.

To the man who
planted a seed in my mothers womb,
I know that seeing it germinate gave you purpose,
purpose you lost in waiting fifteen years to see it bloom.
From you I learnt nothing
but your demise taught me everything.

To the brightest star in my galaxy,
you taught me that age is truly just a number,
because nine year old you, teaches me more
than twenty five year old me can teach myself.

To the first treble I broke
Heart-Virginity-Trust, I learnt that;
A man who tries to fix what he has broken
must not be trusted
because if he broke it once then he meant to,
and he will do it again without hesitation;

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A man who tries to fix what another man has broken
is also quite broken inside;
But a man who finds a wreck
that he doesn't dare to fix is dangerous,
he will deplete your youthful desire to heal
and then pretend not to notice.

To the greatest ruler
this land locked genocide still mourns,
you kicked the bucket,
but the knowledge that poured from it
still irrigates the millennial garden.
From you I learnt to grace this garden with trees
whose shade my grandchildren
will someday seek shelter.

To the red on the flag,
you are a reminder of
the strength in my scars;
To the black,
I vow to make woke a people who
lack the wisdom to embrace you;
To the orange,
forgive us, we failed you;
To the green,
you taught me that
the only direction was forward;
And to the eagle,
your majestic wings
persuaded my thoughts to soar.

To the wisdom locked behind this hard covered prison,
to the ink that remains cuffed on this paper,

and to the scribes chained behind these bars,
they crave to find freedom in your thoughts.

To the voiceless,
may this food for thought feed you the courage
to spell freedom with your own mouth.
To the homeless,
I pray you use this block of words to build a home
on your foundation of thought.
And to my seeds,
may you evolve with the audacity
to embrace all the things they teach you not to.

To the man who recited the first poem I ever heard,
to the folks who applaud my poems,
and to the woman who walked up to me, said nothing,
hugged me so tight that I felt every word she needed to say
and then walked away in tears
after the open mic at the Poet Spring,
I want you to know that I almost gave up writing that evening.
Your solicitude inspired this opus.

Necromancy 2/34

It is said, that when African girl pours out of womb
she is not the only thing that leaves,
it is said that her ancestors' blood and tears will follow.
Not only for herself, but for an entire generation who's dreams
have been buried underneath this land
where the ancestors lay woke and watch.

It is said that they shed a tear.
It is said that those tears march down Kaleni Hills
in an army that sings Zambezi,
parade before a man-made Kariba you call dam,
where they pour out the tears that power up this city
so you and I don't have to live in the dark anymore.

It is said that two years ago they almost gave up.
It is said that they almost cursed the generation that they took into vain
all the ancestral bloodshed that falls from the sky.
It is said that the rain muted.
It muted against an era which is stuck
between you can't get experience without a job
and you can't get a job without experience.
It is said that their tears deserted a people who were born free
yet act like they didn't need saving in the first place.

It is said that when African girl pours out of womb
she is not the only thing that leaves,
her ancestor's blood and tears must follow,
if not for herself, then for her generation.
She chooses it, hoping someday it will choose her back.

Blink! 3/34

There's a sport,
a form of skydiving in which the diver
throws their parachute out of the airplane,
waits, and then jumps after it.
To be successful,
the diver must secure the parachute first,
strap it onto their back in mid air, open it,
and then glide to the projected landing zone,
this is called Banzai Skydiving,
I was 15 years old when my father passed on.
I always thought he died before his time,
like he lived a little
Blink! Now he's gone.
Yet some claim he died because he lived "too much",
as though his life could be compared
to a sport where living beings felt so safe
they invented new ways to kill themselves,
I figured why not?
This summer I'm going Banzai Skydiving.

Blink!

Remember the scars,
back when your fist was rock solid,

back when the only time it bloomed
was when you needed to slap his face instead of punch it.
Remember the stars,
the night he told you he spent an entire night counting them
then looked at your eyes like two of them were missing.
Remember when he knelt down before you with his scar
and then reached inside his pocket for the biggest star,
he asked himself as he held your wrist,
how do you put a ring on a fist?

Blink! Now he's gone.

Remember that one time, in that one place
you said that one thing, to that one person,
whose stomach dropped in twisted knots
because your opinion hit the exact spot
were her swarm of suicidal thoughts built a hive.
Do you remember?
The ocean of tears on her mothers face
when they found her body
hanging from a ceiling the next morning.
Do you remember?
When their opinion informed you of the right to hold your own,
but ignored to tell you that human rights
were only designed to make certain humans right,
because the thing about anxiety is,
that when it hits the ground,
it echoes like tongues in room full of Pentecost, but then you...
Blink! Now she's gone.
Now she'll never live to see her grand children born,
She'll never sit at a fire and tell them poems about her youth,
She'll never tell them stories about us,
how the way she smiled gave me an itch,

and the only way to scratch it
was for her to kiss me.

Blink!

You spend too much time
breathing yet refusing to live,
wanting the things you need and then
needing the things you want.

Do you realise, that 45 million people die every year,
that's 125,000 today,
5,000 within the last hour,
258 since the beginning of this poem,
and 5 every time you
Blink! Now you're here.

Alive, healthy, breathing.

So live like there's no tomorrow,
make love before you say hello,
because only when death flashes before your eyes,
will you realise,
that all you had was a blink!

The Voice 4/34

This voice is for the infected

footsteps that refuse to walk in society's shoes,
this voice is for the affected
shadows mourning abducted bodies,
this voice is for neglected children
forsaken to positive lives in abusive homes,
this voice is for orphans
fresh fruits on a dead branch,
untaught that they were seeds dispersed by funeral music
in search of new life.

This voice is for street children

whose only glory hallelujah is a bridge for a home,
this voice is for the traumatized
bundled up like bamboos in orphanage walls,
this voice is for the stigmatized
deteriorating in ARV collection queues,
this voice is for the still-borns
innocent heart beats stilled by wayward wits.

This voice is for the widow, the widower,

deserted hearts mourning abducted bodies,
this voice is for disgraceful slurs,
tongues too slippery to hold an opinion,

this voice is for graveyards,
six feet treasure chests of abducted narratives,
this voice is for deceased; husbands, fathers, uncles,
may their names never be dropped.

This voice is for the condomiser
packed up like safety in a pride of lions,
this voice is for the abstainer
virgin power virgin pride,
this voice is for survivors,
branches of life that refuse to be uprooted by the wind,
this voice is for the raped, the defiled, the undocumented
and the casualties to a soulless soulmate,
your bodies are more than just a question mark
which has been craving an answer.

This voice is sponsored by compassion
not with gold or paper money but with humility,
this voice is freedom from a disease
that shouldn't colonise your body to begin with,
this voice is crippled clay left on the floor
pick it up and mould it into something more,
this voice is a hole on your favourite jeans
yearning to be stitched up along the seams.

It will be heard in every corner of the earth.
From the pouring thunders of Mosi-o-tunya
to the snow peaks of Kilimanjaro,
from the flowing stems of the Amazon
to the ears on the faces of mount Rushmore,
From the tsunamis in the east
to the hurricanes in the west,
from the melting ice capes in the south

to the scramble for Europe in the north,
this voice will be heard.

And we will speak it until a one night stand
is anything but a one night death wish,
until the apple in the middle of her garden
is no longer a bargaining chip to Anti Retroviral Slavery,
until my vocal cords win a tender to rebuild your eardrums
into a road that leads a way to the cure,
until our sons and our daughters aspire to be more
than just a statistic in a research lab,
this voice will be heard.

From the barefoot visionaries
moon-walking on garbage in bauleni streets,
to the wayward adolescents
smoking bostick under the manda-hill bridge,
from the skies to the oceans,
from our mouths to their ears,
from Cape Town to Cape Verde,
this voice will be heard.
Until our bodies cease to be a concrete slab
where HIV builds a home for itself yet breaks another.

Do you realise,
that this voice is what it sounds like
to have courage removed from your body,
to have it flow through your eyes,
do a romantic walk on you cheeks,
and then walk past your lips
to kiss 7 billion other footsteps.

Do you realise,

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that your tears are an ocean's worth,
even when they feel like a drop in the ocean.

You are a Nemo.

And if anyone makes you feel like
you're the only fish in the sea,
remember that you are,
remember that the sea never
deserved you in the first place.