

GOOD *VIBES* *and* BUTTERFLIES

an Invitation for the Seed
to **Die**



Steven
Bernardus
Harageib

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to **Die**

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Good Vibes and Butterflies : An Invitation for the seed to die
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I am also grateful for those who have confided in me and taught me to lead with grace and kindness. I am humbled to have many exceptional teachers, both local, global, young and grown who mentored me knowingly or unknowingly. Most of whom are unaware of the seeds that they have planted.

A special shout out, a dear friend of mine for inspiring the name of this book “Good Vibes and Butterflies”. To my family, both chosen and given, I love you dearly. I wish I could give you the world.

Preface

Taking the steps to choose yourself and to decide to pursue the yearning that is in your heart is difficult. There are expectations to conform to a way of life, to toe the line in the way things are done. We are creatures of habit which incentivises predictability. Therefore, change demands that the internal dissatisfaction outweighs the external factors that may scream otherwise.

I could never shake the feeling that there we were to live consequential lives. At the point of being a youth pastor, I believed I had it all - fulfilling work, amazing community, and clear direction. Whilst I was on the fast track in the community of faith leading in various capacities, I internally could not shake the feeling that there was more.

The singular event, the passing of my grandmother, was a catalyst for me to have a very frank and candid conversation with myself. That authentic conversation allowed me to ask myself the purpose of life. As I thought through the purpose of my existence, the following questions were constant companions: What is my purpose here? Why am I here, why am I doing what I'm doing and where is it I see myself?

Suddenly, the squeaky clean answers to the complexities of life as provided by my community of faith seemed shallow. It felt like my whole being exploded into a million pieces and answers for answers' sake were no longer enough.

Case in point, the following questions and the lack of thoughtful responses ultimately led me to expand the scope of my search. I had an existential crisis of faith, which I fondly termed my quarter life crises. I asked fundamental questions about the meaning of life, morality, injustice, pain and suffering in the world. These questions unravelled my meticulously created identity and deconstruct that existence. The feat was scary, exciting, and challenging, because there was no way of knowing where this path would lead.

This book is a culmination of amazing, authentic, difficult, and sometimes silly conversations I have had over the years with myself, and many incredible humans I met on the quest for self-actualisation and the process of dying to what I knew, to be born again, again. It aims to unpack, in a conversational style, some prevalent issues that we are facing as human beings and collectively as communities. I invite you to take a chance on yourself because amazement awaits you on every corner.

“The origin of dreams and enigmas expressed through the broken duality in a constant evolving cycle of love and hope.”

- SBH

“One fine day, it will be your turn. You will leave homes, cities, and countries to pursue grander ambitions. You will leave friends, lovers and possibilities for the chance to roam the world and make deeper connections. You will defy your fear of change, hold your head high and do what you once thought was unthinkable: walk away.

And it will be scary. At first. But what I hope you'll find in the end is that in leaving, you don't just find love, adventure or freedom. More than anything, you find you.”

- Isa Garcia

Defying Gravity

For a long time, I could not articulate the internal workings of my heart. However, when I heard defying gravity, I was, for the first time, able to put words to my experiences. I kid you not.

I have a jukebox in my head. I have a song for any circumstance. I have been singing since I could remember. I was in several music ensembles and there is nothing as glorious and transcended as music. I taught myself to play keyboard in the piano rooms on campus (UNAM).

Those were some of the best times for jamming with friends. Human beings are wired to respond to music. I have always been intrigued by the power of music to connect us as human beings. When I hear and sing the national anthem, the commitment and patriotism I feel is renewed and singing it alongside other Namibians ties us in a way I cannot explain.

Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent. Victor Hugo

We sing songs at protest and marches because they articulate our grief and frustration that we cannot utter. Love songs fill us with passion and desire for another, particularly African spiritual songs connects us to spirit. At concerts such as Joyous Celebration, I would sing my lungs out for six to seven hours, though I did not understand a word I sang I would come from there renewed and revived.

Songs are often a time stamp into our history. Songs can trigger memories that seem to take us back in time or remind us of pasts and loves we have yet to know. Songs especially, the 90s hits (for my generation) are woven in with the people we met, loved, and did life with as well as the milestones in our lives. Do not silence the music or reject the memories music allows to surface no matter how painful. Music is the balm that heals and provides a community to create new memories.

“ Something has changed within me, Something is not the same

I’m through with playing by the rules of someone else’s game

Too late for second-guessing, Too late to go back to sleep

It’s time to trust my instincts, close my eyes and leap!

It’s time to try

Defying gravity

I think I’ll try

Defying gravity

Kiss me goodbye

I’m defying gravity

And you won’t bring me down

I’m through accepting limits ‘cause someone says they’re so

Some things I cannot change but ‘til I try, I’ll never know!

Too long I’ve been afraid of losing love I guess I’ve lost Well, if that’s love, it comes at much too high a cost!

I’d sooner buy

Defying gravity

Kiss me goodbye

I’m defying gravity

I think I’ll try

Defying gravity

And you won’t bring me down

*Unlimited (unlimited), My future is (future is)
unlimited (unlimited)*

*And I've just had a vision, Almost like a prophecy
I know it sounds truly crazy. And true, the vision's hazy
But I swear, someday I'll be...*

*Flying so high! (defying gravity)
Kiss me goodbye! (defying gravity)
So if you care to find me
Look to the western sky!
As someone told me lately,
"Everyone deserves the chance to fly!"*

*I'm defying gravity!
Source: Musixmatch*

Letter to my 18 year old self (2018)

Dear Steven,

Be Unapologetic, Travel Wide and Be Kind to Yourself

Walking through those corridors, life currently seems like a vast universe of possibilities and that you are but an insignificant figure. I know choosing a career can be daunting considering all the things that you want to do.

However, I want you to know that things will work out. Your biggest challenge has been to be true to yourself, own your voice and experiences because they make you uniquely you.

Make sure to enjoy your time on campus, study hard, play hard and build a wide network. Don't be afraid to try new things. You come in as a blank canvas, paint and colour it with a wide variety. The four years on campus are going to fly so quickly, though it feels like it will never end. You are going to miss your friends as each of you pursue different paths but remember that those relationships are deep enough that time and space will only strengthen them. You are rich with authentic and deep relationships. Your life is going to be unconventional. Do not prepare for

mediocrity or the easy; choose the seemingly difficult path, that is where you will grow. You will lead young people; you will lead peers and even those much older than you. Though you may feel like an imposter, thinking you do not deserve to be in these spaces, do it afraid. Many opportunities will open up that are beyond your scope, study and diversify your skill. Realise though that life is a winding road, though it feels like you have it figured out, prepare to be pleasantly surprised.

In 2018, when you celebrate your 30th birthday, you would be so proud of all that you have achieved. Looking back on your life, you would have realised that you had lived a full life. Your inquisitive nature and desire for travel has seen you in over 41 countries to date in the last ten years. You got lost a few times walking about in foreign lands, but you learned more than you bargained for and came back a story teller. It's all good, get lost, ask a stranger for help and be adventurous with food.

You not only met your heroes President Barack Obama and Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan. You are serving in various national and international forums with people you never thought you would meet. Those nerves before you speak unfortunately are going to follow you but do not worry, because with them you have addressed thousands. You sure love to talk for a shy guy.

You are a social activist, doing advocacy and policy development work in youth development, gender based violence, sexual reproductive health rights, transitional justice, education access, communications, human rights, civic engagements, elections and governance to name a few.

You regret nothing and you are not afraid to change when necessary. You embrace uncertainty; you are bold, articulate and an inspiration to your family and those around you. Though you have achieved so much, you realise you are on the cusp of possibility. You are absolutely spoiled for choice.

As you read this letter, give yourself a hug. Slow down and take stock. Do not let anyone own you but, craft your own space. Love people generously. Continue to listen to that voice within telling you to be your truest fullest and most authentic self. Be daring dude, do not play small nor apologise for

the amazement that is YOU. Embrace the uncertainty, keep your optimism, for it shall reward you, and laugh abundantly, for that is where healing lies and baffling contentment.

You dude are a WORLDCHANGER...

*"Empathetic people - dreamers and idealists - have this sort of accidental power. Most spend their early years ridden with self-doubt, insecurity, and people pleasing habits. But their journey is inevitably derailed when this comfortable life gets uprooted by an unexpected darkness. Suddenly their trusted methods no longer seem to bring them happiness. At first this depression convinces them that they might never feel joyful again. But ultimately, it sets them on a quest for something more - for love, justice, and wisdom. Once this adventure begins, there is no stopping a dreamer. And when dreamers unite? Well, that's how we start to change the world." - **Unknown***

Hello You

Before you meet the world, have you met yourself? It is a constantly evolving exercise. We introduce ourselves over and over as we learn more about ourselves, unlearn and grow. Part of introducing yourself means offering self in our fullest, most authentic and unadulterated form.

We only reveal to the world that which we are comfortable to know about ourselves. Whenever I am asked to introduce myself, I get a mental block for a few seconds. I have lived a full life. How do I summarise ME in 100 words? What should I highlight, what is unnecessary? In the same way, all of us have to filter, sometimes unconsciously, by reading the room, which version or part of ourselves we choose to introduce.

This loaded question “Who are you?” seems simple initially, but is layered with depth should we seek to engage. We are not merely reactive, we can make choices. We create and amend the world around us. We take on and move between roles based on contexts.

The understanding of the self-concept came full circle when I learned

about the Johari Window developed by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955. It is a tool used in counselling, communication and self-help industries for improving self-awareness and understanding your relationship with others. The four quadrants in the tool represent an individual. Two of these quadrants represent self and the other two represent the parts of ourselves unknown to self but known to others.

Open/self-area or arena—Here, the information about the person, his/her attitudes, behaviour, emotions, feelings, skills, and views will be known by the person and by others.

Blind self or blind spot— This is information about yourself that others know in a group, but that you are unaware of. The blind spot is reduced through seeking and receiving feedback from others.

Hidden area or façade— This refers to the information known to you but unknown to others. This can be any personal information which you feel reluctant to reveal.

Unknown area— This is information which both you and others are unaware of. This includes future capabilities, talents, tragedies and so on.

As we grow older, we need to re-evaluate what is important. We seek relationships that are real; we want quality and depth in our interactions. Through consistent self-awareness and feedback, I am actively increasing my open arena and reduced the blind spots. Sometimes, light and exposure are scary because it may look better in the dark.

Above all, knowing self and building authentic relationships is a lifelong adventure which should be approached with grace, kindness, and a lot of curiosity, and that is what Johari's Window taught me.

Side Bar: The person you think of as “yourself” exists only for you and even you don't know that you completely. You should also be aware that there are thousands of versions of you created by the people you meet, work with, live with, etc.

“Be around the light bringers, the magic makers, the world shifters, the game shakers. They challenge you, break you open, uplift and expand you. They don’t let you play small with your life. These heartbeats are your people. These people are your tribe.”

-Danielle Doby

“Admit it. You’re dope. Stop pretending you’re less than you are to protect someone else’s ego. Be unabashedly aware of your fresh.” -

-Felonious Munk

An Existential Crisis of Faith

Faith has been part of my life since I was a young boy, I wanted to be the first black pope. I would follow grandma to the prayer meetings, choir rehearsals and sing in a super high soprano. Faith has been a significant anchor for my family.

In 2001 at thirteen I became a born-again Christian, left Catholicism, and became a charismatic Christian. I had an awakening like I never knew, felt like I was seeing in colour for the first time. I immersed myself fully in every part of the ministry and had a community that supported me throughout. I was an usher, intercessor, worship leader, and youth pastor. I taught some bible school classes, hosted connect groups (bible study sessions) ran camps and so on. Some of the most memorable road trips were had during this time. I can say I was a bit of a poster child for the movement. I read the bible cover to cover three times, when I was fourteen years old.

After almost 15 years, I left the ministry. I did not know at that point what that was. It was the scariest moment of my life, but my resolve was clear.

The more I grew, questioned, understood and learnt about myself, the world and the people around me, it became more difficult to reconcile the discrepancies in what the scripture was supposedly saying, what the church was teaching and the lived realities around me. Suddenly, I became something that I was not used to. I became a 'spiritual police officer'. Many times, I would get calls to speak to someone to change their behaviour.

My philosophy of creating a safe and authentic space for people to "be" could no longer reconcile with expectations of speed and the metrics used to measure "growth" within the church.

I sought to understand the relationship between euro-centric Christianity as it interacts with my African blackness. The more I became aware of the fact that Christian Catechetical teachings are in direct conflict with African traditions, a question of identity crept in. "What does being a Christian mean for me as a Damara/ Nama man and as an African? Does embracing the Christian faith become a matter of "either... or" and what are the effects thereof?" These questions then raised another, which was whether the Christian Bible and faith I was preaching were incompatible with the experiences of the people I was preaching to. What that meant for communities I was engaging, which some were drained of their essence, lands confiscated, the erasure of artistic creations and the trauma of being seen and treated as less than.

So, I took a break for a year. I chose not to declare myself a pastor or Christian or any label. I was just going to be a citizen of the world.

This immediately broke a barrier I had built. It allowed me to engage with whoever was on my path. I engaged with friends that are Muslim, Atheists, Christians, Spiritualists, Traditionalists, Humanists, Buddhists, and Agnostics. I went about learning about different ways people live and have made sense of life, what they're going through and how they're trying to understand their purpose in life. I prayed in a Buddhist temple in Thailand; I prayed in the Catholic Churches both at home and abroad, prayed in Pentecostal churches, etc. It reaffirmed a long-held belief that has been under threat, which is that we are all spirit.

How we describe or demarcate our spirituality and try to make sense of it may look different, but fundamentally we are the same. We find meaning, community and purpose in different forms and it glorious. That liberated me to understand, celebrate and learn from unique experiences. I could no longer go back to what I thought I knew. I would be a fraud pretending to be someone that I was not- something in me had shifted. I died.

It felt fitting to go on a journey, to explore, and make sense of what was going on in my heart, in my mind, and then decide. In the end what I reached is this: I believe I am a spiritual person and I don't prescribe myself necessarily to one form of deity. I believe we experience faith in different and magnificent ways, so I do not name and make sense of it. I allow for light, love and life to flow through me and to affect the world.

It became apparent to me that though I was not necessarily in the traditionally Christian spaces anymore, my experience of connectedness deepened. What I thought was exclusive, I was equally expressing and enjoying, underpinned by a level of authenticity I could not fathom.

I don't see Christianity in a negative light; I have a healthy respect for it and the people that practice it, as I do with all religions. I still maintain my relationships with a few whose friendships could transcend my shifting reality. I am grateful for the life-changing experiences I had before I embarked on this journey of unlearning. If you ask me today whether I still am a Christian I would probably say no, because I do not identify with the preconceived notions, therefore. So, I have gone through this deconstruction and by all measurements have found authentic connection and let go of bigotry, fear, shame, misogyny, racism, homophobia, conformity, transphobia, and constructions that advance them.

I have heard many people say there are different ways to practise your faith, and though I remain open, I am at peace. Lots of things help people change their lives, not just one version of a deity. Christianity, like any other religions, has pros and cons.

I am reminded that the miracle is never in what you lost but what u have remaining. When you value what you have, it propels you forward. Those who value what they have lost look only in the rear-view mirror. I want to

encourage us today to not let the handling of dead things curb what is available. Let us wash off that stench of death. Though weeping may endure for the night, joy comes in the morning. Our best days are not behind us, they are yet to be spoken, created, and lived.

It was an amazing ride; I am not blind anymore; I am wide awake.

May you live in this world awakened and alive so that you may not waste the invitations which wait along the way to transform you.

- SBH

"Blessed is this earth, because my people lie beneath it. Blessed is the rain because it moistens their faces. Blessed is the wind because it carries their names back to us," I can't measure these days in flags and armies. Only in the ones that I'm missing."

Roots

He is essentially good; not only good, but goodness itself: the creature's good is a super-added quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature's good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him' God is summum

How Are You, Really?

We have been enraged by violence both on a continental and structural level, but intimately on the individual level as well. That is why I am passionate about raising a generation of people that become safe spaces to one another - an army of healers that can respond to the various forms of violence and affirm the lived experiences of all.

A part of that work is through de-mystifying mental health struggles and making mental health services accessible. Mental health support is normally seen as a glorified, euro-centric, unattainable form of complaints with no bearing on outcomes. Furthermore, generally, in the African context, a person seeks mental health services primarily because they are deemed sick or mentally ill.

Now, more than ever, the case is obvious for revolutionary investment in mental health worldwide. Mental health and wellbeing are shrouded in medical jargon, which can act as a barrier. During my studies, I would consistently push back against certain theories in class because of their tone deafness to the black and African experiences.

Our world has become fast paced, we have access to social media and therefore believe that we know how the other is doing. We are no longer taking the time to connect deeply and meaningfully. Our aim primarily as mental health practitioners is to allow people to articulate their feelings and their challenges. Our work is primarily to remove barriers for people to feel safe to speak. It is hearing and listening to the unsaid.

One myth around mental health and counselling is that you need to keep talking and if there is a level of silence, then it is a reason for concern. As a young counsellor, I used to freak out if my client got quiet because it clearly meant I wasn't doing my job properly. However, what I learned is that counselling is about hearing and sometimes silence provides the best way to hear what the person is saying. Also, after speaking for 20 or 30 minutes, the person may need silence to hear themselves think as well.

I am encouraged by the number of people seeking support and prioritising their mental wellbeing. However, I cannot stress enough that we cannot expect to address, in 45 minutes, 15 or 20 years of abuse and trauma. We need to embrace the process and the journey of healing. The world may demand of us to be strong without taking the time to ask if you're ok. It is time that we ask ourselves, are you ok? I remain a vigorous advocate for mental health and wellbeing to be streamlined in our communities. We have normalised pain, suffering and surviving to our own detriment.

"Just because you don't understand it doesn't mean it isn't so."

- Lemony Snicket,

Not All Tired is Created Equal

Burn out is real. More and more we are wearing burnout as a badge of honour. Burnout simply happens because of our internal resource not having the capacity to deal with all the external demands of life.

Having experienced burnout in a job I enjoyed. I had the most amazing time engaging and speaking to people. I had the honour and privilege to be invited into people's lives, into people's worlds. Because of burnout, I did not want to lead. The burden of leadership felt high. I noticed I was alienating myself from work-related activities. Physical symptoms included chronic stress and fatigue. Emotionally, I was exhausted and felt drained, with very little energy.

Because of burnout, I spent the first couple of weeks after resignation literally just sleeping. I would be invited to different activities, but all I wanted to do was sleep. Some symptoms of burnout can be significant dissatisfaction with work and changes in your emotion and physical behaviour. I didn't realise that part of the cause of my burnout was just working on high optimum levels, Monday to Sunday non-stop, week in and week out.

I had justified my work as a service without consideration for my wellbeing. If you are seeing some of these signs in your own life, slow the train down. You don't have to save everyone, you can still change the tide today. It is important to realise that it is both natural and necessary for leaders, especially young leaders, to prove themselves by doing everything they can.

A lesson I learned later in leadership is that the less you do, the more you can get accomplished, although it sounds counter-intuitive. I realised I needed to use my strengths to be a better leader and recruit those who are strong in the areas I am weak.

We cannot and should not normalise suffering. Taking a break to recuperate seems to be frowned upon but is one of the few remedies for burn out.

There are two forms of exhaustion that I gauge because the remedies may be different. Physical exhaustion, this usually happens because of lack of sleep, working long hours, not eating well and little to no exercise. Usually, a hearty meal, delightful conversation with loved ones and a good night's sleep does the trick.

Emotional exhaustion or what I call "my soul is tired" unfortunately is not solved through sleep. You wake up and are still feeling tired. This level of exhaustion results from disappointment, being jaded, feeling unfulfilled and lack of purpose and direction. This one needs you to rediscover your why question. Why am I here, what am I supposed to be doing and am I making the impact that I had envisioned and if not, why? To deal with this level of exhaustion, I go back to the activities that make me come alive, the things that awake my soul. I immerse myself in one or all the following: music, travel, silence, and solitude. Be attentive to what level of tired you are experiencing because leadership and service should not be a death sentence because we seek to be saviours.

"We simply have to let go, to make room, trust, and allow what's ours to find us."

- SBH.

The Pain We Bear.

Grief is one of the most destabilising periods in a person's life. As a mental health practitioner, I see grief often and have dealt with grief personally. I have sat with mothers who lost their children because of miscarriages. I've sat with people that have lost loved ones in car accidents. I've engaged others who have lost jobs, lost hopes and dreams, and who did not know where to go. It can be a paralysing period, and different people deal with grief differently.

Unfortunately, for mental health practitioners and people in the care space, we are quick to help others and not themselves, and I was no exception - I also fell into this trap. I did not realise my level of undealt with grief that I was carrying.

When my grandmother passed on, I felt relief because her pain and suffering had ended, but the feelings of loss, disappointment and regret overwhelmed me. I would ask myself, was it selfish for me to ask God for her to die to relieve her pain and suffering?

It was hard for me to see someone whom I had known all my life to be

independent, suddenly lying on a bed unable to move in and out of hospital for months on end and living in constant pain. I remember the fateful night when the doctors called and told us to come say our goodbyes. After this, she had barely passed on and I'd immediately gone into logistics and administration.

I could not stop time to grieve because in my mind if I started I may not have been able to stop, and if I allowed myself to break down and fall apart, I could not stitch myself back together again. So, I pushed those feelings aside and justified my behaviour in the name of getting stuff done. Seeing what my family was going through made it even harder for me to grieve, as I had to be the adult in the room. It was not explicitly said, but it was expected. It was affirmed by sayings such as "you are strong", "grandma is in a better place," without acknowledging the loss I was feeling at that point.

After several months, a song triggered an avalanche of emotion and a series of decisions. I wept for three days non-stop; I felt like I was going to be torn apart, and it looked like there was no end in sight. I wept for the lost dreams of wanting to give her the world. As her firstborn grandchild, beloved apple of her eye, I wept for the childhood dreams of building her a mansion as soon as I could afford.

I wept for the smile and proud looks on her face that I would never get to see. I wept for the decision I was to take to resign as pastor. I wept for the relationships, friendships, and experiences. I would lose because of my decision. I wept for the disappointments and confusion on the faces of people that I cared about. I wept for the life I could have had should I have stayed as a pastor. I wept for the death of the life I had known for the 15 years leading up to this point in the evangelical world as it came crushing down.

Much as it was painful, I'm grateful for that difficult moment, as the tears washed anew my vision and cemented my resolve to take a chance at re-birth. To reintroduce Steven to the world and the world to him. I was shedding my old life, behold the new had come.

Death and grieving are complex, cataclysmic, difficult, and scary phenomena as they remind us of our finite state. It may feel random with no reason-

able explanation. Although the pain of loss remains, the promise remains that weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning. The joy is that we can remain and live with this pain without it paralysing us.

*You would know the secret of death.
But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart
of life?
The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind unto the
day cannot unveil the mystery of light.
If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open
your heart wide unto the body of life.
For life and death are one, even as the river and the
sea are one.*

*In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent
knowledge of the beyond;
And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart
dreams of spring.
Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to
eternity.
Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shep-
herd when he stands before the king whose hand is to
be laid upon him in honour.
Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that
he shall wear the mark of the king?
Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?*

*For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind
and to melt into the sun?
And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the
breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and ex-
pand and seek God unencumbered?*

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you

indeed sing.

*And when you have reached the mountain top, then
you shall begin to climb.*

*And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall
you truly dance.*

- Kahlil Gibran

Pain that is Seared.

Trauma can take place because of a single experience, or enduring repeated or multiple experiences, that can overwhelm the person's ability to cope. Regardless of its source, trauma is always unexpected, the person always unprepared and unable to do anything to stop it. The experiences and reactions of the person determine the trauma and not the event itself necessarily. Trauma is destabilising and the impact of traumatic events does not simply go away when or because they are over. Traumatic experiences can change the way we see ourselves and the world.

Sometimes the impact of the trauma is not felt until weeks, months or even years after the traumatic event. Trauma happens to people of all ages and across all socio-economic strata in our society. However, the gendering in the socialisation of our communities has a direct impact on how we deal with trauma. We tell men to be strong and not show weakness; we tell our women to continue business as usual. Children are seen, not heard, not spoken to, only instructed.

We reproduce who we are in our children, and the stories of our today become the lived experiences of tomorrow. The social issues cannot be

separated because they are so closely interwoven. One issue triggers the other. Violence and the residue of its effects are ironed into our social fabric. We are the wounded leading the wounded. This is further evidenced by intimate partner violence and violence against children as seen in our communities, further amplified by economic injustice and social unrest.

We see a lot of the intergenerational trauma showed in our day-to-day lives, and it is important for us to identify patterns and the surrounding issues that contribute to the environments that are conducive for violence to thrive. The past remains present if we do not deal effectively with the atrocities thereof. The lack of processing trauma means it is ever present, as if it happened today, though the incident may have been many years ago.

Historical trauma has been defined as “The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma” by Yellow Horse Brave Heart. The impacts of trauma as we celebrate days such as Cassinga, Day of the African Child and Independence, need to become normalised in our national dialogues otherwise we pass on unresolved issues to the next generation.

People who were forced out of their homes, those who fled and others who were sexually assaulted in our history, suffered devastating effects of trauma. The suffering was further compounded by a curriculum that stripped us of our native languages and culture. This caused additional feelings of alienation, shame and anger that were passed down to children and grandchildren.

The impacts thereof are further seen in our societies today: loss of connectedness with language, tradition, and cultural history; limited control over land and resources; breakdown on social safety nets; dampened initiative and innovation leading to apathy as a nation; dependency on others; normalisation of violence and a general sense of disempowerment, to name a few.

Social challenges are criticised in our societies without interrogating the underlining factors that drive them. It cannot be separated because they are so closely interwoven, one triggers the other.

The national trauma we faced in the birthing of a new nation needs to be spoken about, addressed, and embraced. Memorials can serve as spaces of healing. However, they should not only be politicised, but that is also removed from the lived experiences of the people. We need to address not only the structural inequalities that resulted from our past but explore softer issues that are nuanced in perception and experiences.

We can only facilitate national healing by engaging those affected, including communities, by addressing concerns in an open, honest, and heartfelt ways. For people living in closely knit communities, reacting to the surface events of harm without addressing the dynamics that led to it is neither logical nor practical.

The realities of connectedness suggest that hurt is not an isolated event; it comes from somewhere, and because of connectedness, it affects many if not all people in the community. Justice of course should aim always to be a forward-looking, preventive response that strives to understand harm done in its social context. It challenges us to examine the root causes of violence and harm in order that these cycles might be broken. Healing is crucial not just for victims or survivors, but also for offenders.

There is still hope, even though we focus on the impact of trauma, we must spend equal time on how people survived the experience. What are the strengths they have developed? We need to unpack how that resiliency has helped or will help in our national recovery. The language we use when speaking with or about people who have experienced trauma should also reflect resilience. We cannot pretend that the national violence we suffered is over because we deny it. We need to provide safe spaces for true reconciliation. Healing can be painful; it is a process that is sometimes messy and illogical, but that should not scare us from confronting the demons in our national house. The absence of war does not mean peace.

When we face collective trauma, we need to facilitate collective healing as well. During my travels, as I engage with young people in various parts of the world, a scarlet thread of national or collective healing seems to

echo. There are various mechanisms within which collective healing efforts play out. Healing can take many forms based on the context of the community receiving recompense and the extent of the violations.

Balancing peace, justice and reconciliation, which may seem mutually exclusive, is critical for us to experience healing as a community. There is a clarion call to the restlessness in our hearts as our continent is at war with itself. I reflect often about the African youth who need to remain at the centre of all our efforts as they are the inheritors of the Africa we leave behind.

Many a time, young people tokens for agendas where their contributions are erased. Moreover, though young people are the direct victims of conflict and authoritarian rule, they do not feature as much in the reconstructive work.

Additionally, we cannot handle justice in isolation without the consideration of the socioeconomic issues that surround young people. Youth are sometimes second or third generation victims who may not have suffered direct violations but are carrying the scars because of the victimisation of the parents. Lastly, the needs of young people who are displaced because of conflict need to be addressed as they face several levels of stigma and trauma.

The wellness and wholeness of people are neglected subjects in policy conversations. Therefore, it is imperative that we employ and strengthen the psychosocial mechanisms by holding safe spaces for healing. Healing must not only be on the individual level, must be communal and societal. Healing on different levels means engaging perpetrators for better social cohesion. Finally, as Africans, we need to institutionalise wellness within our systems for us not to bleed out. Only once we are healed and whole can true peace, justice and reconciliation take place amongst the fields of gold.

***“Africa is restless! The enemy is no longer unknown,
the enemy is within. We are at war with ourselves”
-Nomfundo Mogapi***

The Pain that Binds.

I would never have imagined that I would stand on the very steps Martin Luther King Jr spoke from on 17 May 1967 at the Sproul Plaza, at the University of California-Berkeley, speaking to a community of people that had suffered significant trauma. The hub of free speech from the time of Martin Luther King Jr, fifty something years later, still mourns the injustices against black people.

The atmosphere was solemn as last preparations were being done. Students, faculty, community members and allies were all gathered for a vigil to honour those that had suffered under police brutality a few weeks prior to that day. The resounding storyline was that the shootings were nothing new. It was only the videos and social media that had brought light to the ferocity of the violence.

Mothers were afraid for their sons. Many worried if their sons would get home safely night after night. The increase of police presence did not calm the situation and put people at ease but increased the fear and anxiety within the black community.

To Protect and Serve; the foundational slogan upon which the police department is built on is still, today, met with scepticism and sometimes repugnance. One of the African fellows at UC- Berkeley mentioned he was afraid to stay out late, fearing for his life because he was not immediately distinguishable from the locals.

I could not help but realise that the Black Lives Matter movement is but part of a larger ongoing story for justice. Back to that day at UC-Berkeley, the vigil began with a short formal programme acknowledging the University and the Cal Black Student Union for ensuring that the event took place.

Thereafter was an open mic for anyone who wanted to share words, songs or chant for catharsis. There were messages filled with encouragement, positivity and others full of pain, anger and frustration. However, this was a safe place for us to feel, speak and be. Hearing our voices, singing, being together was healing. Considering our Namibian history of apartheid, I felt connected to the stories being shared. For centuries black people have suffered and today, still carry that trauma. It is difficult to “just” get over it.

One of the student speakers made a profound statement, “we are always fighting, never healing”. It is sad to see how inequality has been hemmed into the very fabric of our history and society. The blood of innocent young men and women cries for justice. How long until our narrative changes from suffering to thriving? How long and how often do we forgive and turn the other cheek until it is enough?

I, for one, had to examine my heart to look into my prejudice and interrogate and speak against the systems that proliferate inequality. My silence speaks to the normalisation of injustice. As a Namibian, I cannot help but wonder if we have truly reconciled. Are the playing fields equal in access and opportunity, or shall we too have our day of reckoning?

“This heart is not your own, Each sigh a different octave from yours. You are unaware of its quiet strength, And the shades of all its flaws. These tears are not yours, Visible and invisible. For sadness or for

joy, No drop is dismissible. My fears may not be familiar, But don't call them unfounded. Congratulations on your bravery, Some of us are not that grounded. These prayers are not your own, Though needs often coincide, Each finds their way to God's Throne."

-Unknown

Becoming a Safe Space

Are you a safe space? Whose responsibility is it to be an emotional host? As we address not only the structural inequalities that result from our past, let us not forget to explore softer issues that are nuanced in perception and experiences. We further need to have honest conversations about the real and perceived inequalities and not be quick to dismiss someone's experiences, no matter how far they go from our own.

We need to become safe spaces for each other. We may not change someone's situation, however, we can allow each other to be weak, to struggle and not have everything figured out.

We can normalise the process called life, that sometimes things do not work out and that is ok. Understanding that healing can be painful, it is sometimes messy and illogical but that should not scare us from confronting the demons in our lives. We do not confine ourselves to our world of experience – we should not.

I struggle to reconcile the responsiveness to physical ailments vs mental aches. As a nation, we need to ask ourselves what the psychological make-

up of the people is. What does economic and political liberation mean for someone caught in cycles, mazes, and prisons of poverty, domestic violence, poor education, access to basic needs?

We need to institutionalise and normalise wellness and mental wellbeing for all of us to slow down, take time to hear someone out, sit a little longer and JUST BE. To breathe with another, to see another and be moved by another.

Hopefully, we can strengthen our connectedness in our pain, prosperity, and power, not just as individuals but ultimately as world changers who continue to live authentic inspired lives reciprocating courage one to another.

Regardless of where we are, keep the main thing the main thing... Our reward is justice, improved lives, and safe spaces for all. Though the form changes, substance should always remain the same.

"It is cruel, you know, that music should be so beautiful. It has the beauty of loneliness of pain: of strength and freedom. The beauty of disappointment and never-satisfied love. The cruel beauty of nature and everlasting beauty of monotony."

-Benjamin Britten

Our Hope

We are calling for youth participation but have not defined who the youth are. Is it defined by age, socioeconomic status, gender and access? Who are the youth that need a seat at the table? If young people are the powerhouse, should we not create our own tables instead of being on the outside looking in? Have we become pacified revolutionaries who are satisfied only with resolutions? When we call for action and implementation, who shall drive the groundwork? Are there any revolutionaries that would change the course of history for this generation?

We see youthful ideologies, participation and investment taking precedence. Let us build programmes that represent our youthful demographic and responsive to their lived experience. Let us amplify the work and the voices of this diverse community. There is a window for us to add value to the development agenda.

To all the youth workers, partners, and patrons, thank you for your tireless efforts that have brought us this far. Let us innovate, uncover cutting edge solutions and rebrand our continent. Let us not only change the narrative but create our own. When you have a seat at the table, use your power to lift us all up.

When leaders refuse to cede power, opportunities for youth to emerge are dampened, causing many to become jaded and leave. Men and women of integrity, we implore you to occupy decision-making spaces. I hope that the heterogeneous African Youth demographic can occupy spaces to not only solve current issues, but problems beyond our present imagination. This way we can rewrite the African narrative and brand.

We understand that the youth populace is a very diverse, heterogeneous and contextually specialised demographic. Thus, wide and comprehensive youth perspectives are needed to justly represent the youth demographic.

Youth are branded as primarily as rebels, instigators of conflict, pawns, tokens, impatient radicals let me not forget irresponsible. The narrative around African youth must change. There are youth civic leaders heading up social movements. These are the unsung heroes of the youth movement that need to be celebrated. I need to clarify that the youth is marked with a certain unrest towards positive disruption and there needs to be space for youth to interrogate and strengthen systems.

In the civil rights movement, we had both Rev Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X. Their leadership styles were different, yet beneficial to the movement. We need the activists on the streets and policy makers in the boardroom simultaneously. It is imperative not to confuse having youth wings as having a youth agenda. There are groups of jaded and dissatisfied group (s) young people that are not seeing or experiencing mobility. The space for youth engagement is and has changed.

I want to reiterate that the African continent has some of the strongest legal frameworks, however, these frameworks are primarily seen as monuments that do not translate into movement.

All of us must take the responsibility of civic education and institutionalise it where necessary. The youth bulge that is often spoken of needs to translate into meaningful and effective leadership that reflects the youth electorate. Harnessing the demographic dividend and creating the Africa we want demands that spaces are created for youth lest we carve our own.

"Let history judge kindly those who shout, against the corrosive drift of conformity."

-SBH

"Comfort the afflicted and terrify the comfortable"

Unknown

"In the end, I began to understand," Mr. Achebe later wrote. "There is such a thing as absolute power over narrative. Those who secure this privilege for themselves can arrange stories about others pretty much where, and as, they like."

The Loves of our Lives.

“The beginning of love is the will to let those we love be perfectly themselves, the resolution not to twist them to fit our own image. If in loving them we do not love what they are, but only their potential likeness to ourselves, then we do not love them: we only love the reflection of ourselves we find in them”

-Thomas Merton

I was a counsellor long before I studied in the field. This is consistently one topic I reflect on and get a lot of questions. At the onset, relationships are hard. Simply because people are complex, I do not say that lightly, human beings are trying to figure out how to do this thing called life. I have a few reactions for consideration.

Authenticity, honesty and transparency are difficult but necessary for individuals to learn as they get into relationships. There is beauty in relationships. A relationship can be a beautiful reflection of two human beings

falling in love, being able to grow together daily, seeing each other truly, fully, even when not pretty.

Undealt with childhood trauma and attachment can form and inform our view of relationships. Often, our relationships mirror our experiences, history, and aspirations. If I felt abandoned when I was younger, then fear of abandonment may be projected into the relationship. Whether consciously we try to recreate our childhood experiences, both positive and negative, in our relationships.

Fear and love can never co-exist they are mutually exclusive. Perfect love casts out all fear. When we are afraid, we cannot offer ourselves fully. Fear shows we do not feel safe to be ourselves and therefore cannot love fully.

Romanticising building walls to keep others out means we are also keeping ourselves from amazing experiences. When confronted by your worst nightmares, there is a need to fight, fly or stand. Although we hope to find strength to stand sometimes beside ourselves, we run. And that's ok. When you find the strength to come back and face your fear head on – do it. Do not allow your self-doubts, fears, and past rejections to hold you back from exploring the world and its opportunities.

I have seen different relationships; some monogamous, others poly-amorous, long distance, open, fluid, arranged, same sex and have concluded that relationships take their own form and the magic is in the people that make it work.

It is also worth noting as Marija Mandic stated, “we may not always end up with the loves of our lives, the ones that spark that all-consuming love that you are completely smitten that you cannot believe it is happening in this planet kind of love. A kind of love that erupts into an uncontrollable blaze and then simmers down to embers that burn quietly and comfortably for years. Sometimes we meet the loves of our lives, but we do not get to keep them because in actual life, love does not always win.”

The external challenges such as our professional and personal pursuits, black tax, socio-cultural influences, bigotry, sometimes chronic illnesses, faith, and beliefs, and ever evolving self, can place differing degrees

of pressure on relationships. Though some of these can be ironed out in the relationship, we may not always have the luxury of time and reflection to do so. As I mentioned before, when highlighting Johari's Window, we do not know what the future holds and therefore must remain nimble to change or brittle and break.

A relationship ending does not and should not disqualify or discount the experience in that moment because it's easy to become cynical and say what was the point of being together? These experiences are priceless. As they reveal unto us a little more about ourselves. We are not our possessions, but we are the accumulation of everything we have seen, the things we have done, people we have known and the places we have been.

A case in point is the supposed "fellowship curse" where one partner moves to study for fellowship or work in a different country and upon completion of their term, no longer wants to come home and the other partner who is local (or back home) is not ready to move internationally.

It is important to acknowledge that it was a beautiful and awe-inspiring relationship while it lasted. It can also be true that you may not have ended up together as you had both hoped – because of where you were both at in your lives. And then maybe, just maybe, with that perspective, we can grow more appreciative that the relationship taught us a little more about ourselves.

We should not see people we were in a relationship with as enemies that broke our hearts but allow for a fresh perspective of their value add. Their presence in our lives made us better people. The person not being in your life any longer is not a demonstration of failure. See the relationship as an engagement that you can gain and learn from. Love allows the ones we are with to be fully themselves. It is not for us to twist them and mould them into the images we have crafted for ourselves. If we do that, we do not love them, we only love the reflection of us that we have constructed in them.

The complexity of relationships is that no one-size-fits-all solutions are available. However, the tenets of respect, care, trust, cheer must remain steady regardless of the fluctuations of passion and the drunkenness of emotion. Our only desire should be to love so deeply, so passionately and

genuinely.

In relation to abuse in relationships, abuse is never acceptable, nor should it be excused. Should you find yourself in an abusive relationship, though it may be difficult, leave, seek professional help through counselling and rebuild your life.

Final thought, no one human being can fulfil all your desires, needs and aspiration for affection. Create opportunities for you to thrive without your partner and equally provide that for them. You may not always enjoy or like doing the same things that are totally fine. Have a full life even when you are in relationship – go out with friends, tick off stuff on your bucket list, start new ventures, study, do not allow yourself to be defined by a relationship or lack thereof.

Side Bar: Infatuation is love's shady cousin who is always borrowing money and cannot hold down a job.

When love beckons to you, follow him,

Though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you, yield to him,

Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him, though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden. For even as love crowns you, so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth. Like sheaves of corn, he gathers you unto himself. He threshes you to make you naked. He sifts

you to free you from your husks. He grinds you to whiteness. He kneads you until you are pliant; And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast.

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart, and in that knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart. But if in your fear you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure, then it is better for you that you cover your nakedness and pass out of love's threshing-floor, into the seasonless world where you shall laugh, but not all of your laughter, and weep, but not all of your tears. Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself. Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; For love is sufficient unto love. When you love you should not say, "God is in my heart," but rather, I am in the heart of God." And think not you can direct the course of love, if it finds you worthy, it directs your course. Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself. But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires: To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night. To know the pain of too much tenderness. To be wounded by your own understanding of love;

And to bleed willingly and joyfully. To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving; To rest at the noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy; To return home at eventide with gratitude; And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart and a song of praise upon your lips.

- Kahlil Gibran

Recognising our own Toxicity

Normally, at the end of the year, we would post on social media how we are removing toxic people from our lives. We can all agree that's a great idea. But what happens when that toxic person is you? We all have toxic habits and patterns. Most of the time we feed into them unknowingly. It's easy for us to normalise and justify our toxic patterns, even as far as saying "it's my personality". These patterns are hard to unlearn because we use them as coping mechanisms.

Now I am not saying that as humans we won't have negative experiences. The point I am making is that it is easier to deflect. However, what will bring true growth is confronting our own toxicity, especially when it is keeping us from improving our lives. One of the biggest traits I have observed is negativity.

I know many good people who are relentlessly negative. They cannot see anything good, have hope, or possibilities for change and different outcomes. I got to know them because they would always comment "Steven why are you always so happy", "stop smiling so much" or "one day you will

see the world for what it is, f***ed up". This kind of attitude pushes people away from you.

Just to be clear, I am not justifying toxic or abusive behaviour there is no excuse. We need to be honest about all our shortcomings. We must seek to learn, grow and do better.

When our toxic traits are confronted, it may be instinctive to defend ourselves and label it a personal attack. Understanding we all have blind spots, feedback is critical for us to see our shortcomings. Once we see that blind spot reflected back to us we have the option to take responsibility or deflect. When we take responsibility we invite help and support to do and be better.

"The truth is that the uninspired sleep in and find it hard to wake up because they are just cruising through life without any direction or passion. These same zombies are the ones that spend their whole day complaining, and telling people why they feel tired even though they just slept for twelve hours"

-Tim Danning

The Roles we Play

Harmful masculinity is one of the ways in which patriarchy is harmful to men. Particularly, as it refers to the socially constructed attitudes that describe the masculine gender role as violent, unemotional and so forth. The socially constructed toxic masculinities continue to be harmful not only to the girl child but to the boy as well. The upsurge of the phrase toxic masculinity has given us a peek into the culture and mood.

Disrupting the patriarchal tendencies and healing wounded masculinities is the deep work needed to speed up healing. Harmful cultural and societal norms continue to define manliness through a limited lens of violence, aggression, hyper-sexuality and status.

Sex is measured as one component of how, in everyday culture, your status as a man is reinforced and/or taken away. Your manliness is often based on the number of sexual conquests or lack thereof. This measuring rod is further disguised in humour to “minimise” the stench. Harmful gender norms including tradition, penalise vulnerability in men, telling them to be strong, not to cry and/or behave like girls.

It is imperative that we do not minimise the power of language to shape culture, power and identity.

Language blends into the background precisely because of its ubiquity. We find that there has been a more nuanced view of gender and language in the last few years. This viewpoint recognises that most men do not spend their time scheming about how to dominate women. However, men are still active in partaking in a system of social practices that privileges them. The gendered-ness of language uses some aspects of femininity to minimise manhood, e.g. “you speak like a girl”. Thus, gendered insults continue to shape part of regular discourse.

There are common factors that continue to reinforce toxic masculinity. Media, both new and traditional, continue to implicitly amplify some of the negative behaviour. The TV shows, movies and entertainment that we engage, overtime normalise and sometimes legitimise different forms of toxicity. We justify the violence that we see on television as only entertainment without interrogating the psychosocial impact in shaping the world-views of children, both girls and boys.

We need to expand the conversation to engage the contexts within which children find themselves, specifically the family context. What is the level of violence that the child grows up in and observes on a day-to-day basis?

We will have to talk about the socialisation of the repressed feelings of young boys. Examples include the infamous ‘boys don’t cry’, which is laced with gendered insults like ‘don’t be a sissy’. Socialisation from the formative years already shapes how girls and boys absorb the world and their roles in it. Socialisation is primarily done within a family context, mothers, who are the primary care givers, act as a first reference and lens through which children experience the world.

Girls and boys are taught how society expects them to conduct themselves, and children are reprimanded if they do not reflect the norms taught. This can directly further reinforce patriarchy and other harmful norms without realising it.

Human beings are multidimensional, complicated and undeniably intense.

The issues we face are not singular but layered. The environment we are in is equally dynamic. Thus, it is incumbent on us to recognise our own prejudices in framing issues of violence with men and boys exempt as victims of a system they may benefit from. Introspection is important to recognise how much of society influences our worldview and parenting.

Our internalised prejudice and lenses through which we view the world seldom address narratives such as men cannot be victims of gender-based violence and men cannot be victims of rape. When I say men, this includes men and boys whose victimisation has long since gone unaddressed, so that is the conversation that we need to expand on. Harmful masculinity continues to disenfranchise young boys from seeking help. We have to acknowledge and recognise that these young boys and girls are equally vulnerable to abuse and to exploitation, and that when they do speak up, we should be able to hear and believe them regardless of their gender.

This is the journey of introspection - realising our own level of toxicity as a community and as individuals and then secondly exposing language that is gendered and that is toxic in nature. We need to call out and teach children what violence looks like and not sanction violent behaviour in any form in our communities.

Side Bar: Though violence affects women and girls disproportionately, we understand that gender-based violence is not discriminated to violence against women and girls' only, GBV, results from violence because of somebody's gender beyond the hetero-normative lens.

Additionally, we need to call out the violent language for what it is. We must be ready to face and manage the backlash because of the disruptive change. The systems, as they are, benefit some, thus, when we disrupt said systems, this is sure to destabilise the status quo. We can no longer pacify the oppressor, for the violence by the oppressed is for liberation.

"The biggest lies hide right out in the open. They are so pervasive that we simply do not have eyes to see them. Our brains are hardwired for novelty and difference – so we filter out common things like the nose that is always in our line of sight. No one has to conceal these things because our minds do the work for us."

-Joe Brewer

Courage - RISKS

Courage is spelled as risk, and that has been a norm in my life.

It is imperative to affirm the deep-seated questions that can reveal of our fears. Questions such as - how sure am I that I am doing the right thing? Am I making the right decision? Can I leave my job? Can I leave this relationship? Can I buy this car? Can I get this book? We need to affirm the anxieties that we feel about making major decisions.

However, when we are asking these questions, we do not have the luxury of foresight. We only have history as our vindicator, after-the-fact. People will congratulate you on taking the risk because they see the positive results – remember, after the fact. But, should the decision have negative consequences, you may become the poster child for that decision and a warning to others not to attempt whatever road you took and ‘supposedly failed’ or crushed and burned. How we understand or perceive history is important, as it is sometimes a fabulous amalgamation of subjective and objective realities. There are many stories and examples about somebody

who may have left a job to pursue their entrepreneurship dreams or others who dropped out of school and became multi billionaires. However, there is a flip side to the story where other people who have done the same thing ended up losing everything and had to start from the ground up again or completely fell off track, never to rise again. Two people can take the exact decision and have polar opposite results. Therefore, we cannot use a single story as a template for an outcome.

Whenever I am to make a life altering decision that would change the trajectory of my life or career, I have made the conscious decision that if things did not work out, and I could retrace my steps and start again. Additionally, I was ready to take responsibility and live with the perceived sense of shame, guilt and fear of starting over should my life have turned out differently. I am honest with myself to take whatever consequences would come with my decisions, good or bad, and have the humility to admit I made a mistake. Frankly, I was comfortable with the sense of humiliation that would ensue should things have gone a certain way.

The result of this internal struggle freed me from the real and perceived opinions of many. It eased the burden of expectation that I put on myself. I experienced internal freedom, which became a buffer as it de-weaponised any external pushback.

There's no moral equivalency when you are considering whether to pioneer something. I have huge respect for people that innovate and pursue impossible or crazy dreams at all costs. I equally respect others who may choose not to. There are no silver bullet answers or solutions, as every circumstance is nuanced.

Every person who leads change, whether that means study, work, entering a new relationship, leaving a decades long relationship, starting a political career, or a side hustle, whatever it may be, is deserving of the opportunity to try. I celebrate the people that actually throw themselves into the deep end to change their lives. It's most important to show up; to try to fail. Because coming up short is better than never having tried at all.

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."

-Theodore Roosevelt

"The lust for comfort murders the passions of the soul."

-Kahlil Gibran

Have a Second Look

Our worldview impacts us more than we think. It informs the perspective through which we approach our lives and determines the outcomes of our lives. If you engage the world from the perspective that there are limited resources and the more you give, the less you will have, self-preservation wins the day. If you are of the opinion that there are more than enough resources to go around, your place of departure is that of generosity. I understand that the more you give, the more people you share with, the greater the returns. The more you try to hold on to, the less you have. This principle is showed often in the simple things and for me, for example, it's in things like eating with my cousins on the farm.

When I was younger, during the week, I would eat a lot with my cousins. Grandma would make a big black pot of pap (porridge) on the fire with sour milk and sugar on the side. She would normally serve the pap in one plate for all eight to ten of us. That plate of hot porridge would be cleared in a matter of seconds because the last person must wash the dishes. The trick to eating the pap so fast? "Don't chew, just swallow". Sunday was the only day we got individual plates of food and Sundays were exciting because of

the colourful Sunday dishes (pasta, beetroot salad, corn, meat and potato salad). We could not wait for the pastor to finish preaching and rush home for Sunday lunch. Additionally, there was a long-standing tradition where community members would share plates of food. Grandma would always have several extra plates of food to share with neighbours who would do the same. This tradition allowed us to taste different foods and recipes, and it also created and sustained a sense of belonging and community which I miss living in the city.

Reflecting on my formative years, these experiences later informed how I would engage the world. An observation I made was that I would not be as filled and satisfied eating alone on a Sunday as I would when I ate with my cousins. It felt like I was full because of the show of community, even when we were competing to eat the fastest because nobody wanted to wash the plates.

The sense of community made me fuller, not just physically but emotionally. Additionally, a small gesture such as sharing our Sunday lunches as a community in a small dusty town meant that our individual opulence was not divorced from our collective prosperity.

This idea was further shown in the walks to and from school, sometimes up to 10 km daily with friends and schoolmates. I never felt unsafe, alone or isolated because of the shared struggle. That understanding was instilled, that even when you have little, that little you must share with your community or your tribe. This went beyond just food, it included you sharing your dreams, passions, knowledge.

I am glad to be part of platforms such as Namibian Opportunities for travel for scholarship with other young people because I understand there are enough opportunities. Someone else getting awarded an opportunity doesn't mean that I'm losing out, it just means that there may be another opportunity for me somewhere else or at another time.

I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does

***food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or
favour to the learned; but time and chance happen to
them all. Ecclesiastes 9:11.***

The idea of time and chance empowered me to be an exceptional cheerleader for the people in my life and around me. I can be their biggest cheerleader because I'm not competing for limited resources, I understand that there's more than enough. I am absolutely convinced that we will each have our moment in the sun several times over.

As I grow older, it is no longer just enough for me to win by myself; I need others to win. It is not enough that I travel to so many countries; what is more rewarding is that other Namibians can travel as well? Where possible, I'll transfer opportunities to other young people to go in my stead. I recognise that in them winning, I win too and so does our country. We are all the richer because of it.

For example, if I get to Silicon Valley and discover another young Namibian who has also been to Silicon Valley and maybe two or three others with a shared experience, our voices are much more powerful and more audible when we ask for reform back home as opposed to a lone voice.

Ultimately, there is nothing like seeing your friends succeed and be amazing... Today I am celebrating and raising a glass to your courage and faith to shatter the glass ceiling of mediocrity. I celebrate the chance you gave yourself to dare dream. Daily defying comfort for the passions within to bring a bit of colour to the world.

The Person Next To You*

Look around you...

Who are the people sitting next to you?

The people next to you...

***are the greatest miracles you will ever meet at this
moment***

- and the greatest mysteries.

*The people next to you...
have an inexhaustible reservoir of possibilities,
which have only partially been touched.*

*The people next to you...
are a unique universe of experience
seething with necessity and possibility,
dread and desire, smiles and frowns,
laughter and tears, fears and hopes –
all struggling to find expression.*

*The people next to you...
... are surging to become something,
... to arrive at some destination,
... to have a story and a song,
... to be known and to know.*

*The people next to you...
... believe in something,
... stand for something,
... count for something,
... labor for something,
... wait for something,
... wait for something,
... run from something,
... run towards something.*

*The people next to you...
... are more than any description,
... are more than any explanation,
... are more, much, much more.*

*The people next to you...
are searching...
... for meaning,
... for inner-peace,
... for self-esteem,
... for something they already have*

*... they just have to realize that.
The people next to you...
have problems and fears,
... just like you,
... are often undecided,
... but are endowed with great toughness in the face of
adversity
and are able to survive the most unbelievable
difficulties and challenges.
The people next to you...
... are combinations of people
met during all of their lifetimes.
The people next to you...
have something they can do better than anyone else
in the world,
have strengths they do not even recognize,
need to talk to you about those abilities,
need you to listen,
but do they dare speak them to you?
The people next to you...
... need a friend,
... want to be a friend,
... can comfort you,
... care for you,
... understand you,
... and love you.
Isn't that what you want?
It's what they want.
The people next to you...
are special human beings
... and so are you!
You will want to get to know these people.*

-Unknown

Travel Hacks

The road to the airport is always filled with mixed emotions. There is the notable exhilaration of the unknown for the traveller and feelings of sadness for the people staying behind. My journey began with some baggage drama that I could not check in two pieces of luggage as per my ticket. Between having to call the travel agency and trying to negotiate with the airline crew, I realised I was fighting a losing battle and time was not on my side, so I caved. I bought a duffle bag, repacked quickly and boarded the flight. I just needed to get to my destination.

Side Bar: Be polite to service providers and you find they are much more helpful.

As I boarded the flight, I said goodbye to all that I know and am familiar with to begin the journey into the unknown. The flight was pleasant sitting by the window, looking over the bronze landscape of Namibia as the sun set.

Knowing I had only 45 minutes, I knew I had to race across the airport. My first point at passport control had already passengers waiting to get through. I jumped the queue to the very front. Figured it's better to ask for forgiveness than it is permission. After clearing security whilst getting coffee, I heard the dreaded call "last boarding call for flight..." I looked at my boarding pass to verify and indeed it was my flight. My flight was at gate 14 I was close to gate 2. I started my sprint race across the airport with coffee in one hand, my duffel bag and my laptop bag hanging on for dear life. I almost tripped myself, bumped into someone, and almost ran past my gate. My chest was burning as I narrowly escaped missing my flight.

As we prepared for our 11-hour journey to Frankfurt, I was more than happy to have a window seat, which meant I could sleep leaning into the side. The cabin crew was very generous, kind, and helpful. Halfway through the flight, as I dozed off, a baby started shrieking relentlessly behind me. The mother was trying to comfort the little one, to no avail. Expecting that I may not get any sleep, I resorted to catch up on some movies. I empathised with the mother, trying to make appease the little one and with the disgruntled looks of the surrounding passengers.

Finally, we landed in Frankfurt after reconvening with my travel mates, we set out to get breakfast. Being at this airport for the first time, we had no clue which way to go next. Note to self: "Don't panic, read and follow the signs". We had to take a train to a different terminal where we were met with security.

Airport security seems to always make one feel guilty, even though you have done nothing wrong. Had to take off shoes, belts and empty pockets and get a full body scan before we could then continue. Beyond the security lies the wonder world of duty-free shopping and free Wi-Fi. The airport is HUGE!!! I located my gate and then went exploring, being offered many bargains from perfume, wine and other paraphernalia. By the time I left, I smelled like a confused garden.

There are so many coffee shops with an assortment of eateries after careful consideration, I settled for a big Mac at McDonalds. I know don't judge me. It is funny how we always seek the familiar, even in our desire for the

unknown. After a lekker (nice) greasy brunch, I felt human again. I was overcome with some existential questions of human existence, the value of each life and the stories behind each face.

The four-hour layover passed by fairly swiftly and I was ready to get on my last flight, which was almost 12 hours long. I prayed for a more relaxed flight and lo-and-behold the plane had some empty sits which meant I could sleep on three seats 'happy dance'. Time travelling 8 hours backwards was surreal, meaning I enjoyed a 32-hour day altogether.

I must mention that having travelled three continents in about 30 hours including lay overs, the only thing on my mind was a shower and a bed. After a smooth security and passport check in the airport doors open reading "Welcome to San Francisco"

Wide eyed and butterflies in my stomach, I braced myself for all that lies ahead the journey into the unknown. I recognise that the journey to get you to the destination is filled with all kinds of adventures, stimulating conversations and wild turns. There are occasional delays, babies and sometimes-unseemly security. However, all these fade in the colour of the new and unexplored. It is amazing how you can shut your eyes on one continent to wake up on the other side world.

Getting out of the San Francisco airport in June 2016, the first thing that popped into my head was "Hello it's me, I am in California dreaming about who we used to be." Adele, How did this happen? Am I dreaming? What could a young boy from a dusty town such as Karibib be doing in the United States of America? All these questions flooded my mind, mixed with feelings of excitement, fear and uncertainty. I can assure you it happens all the time. Every time I land in a different city like a jukebox, a song breaks out in my mind... with choreography and all. When I travel, the conversations are thought-provoking and stimulating, covering a wide range of topics in coffee shops, parks, conference halls - trying to figure out how to save the world. We grapple with issues around 'Good Governance, Climate Change and Environmental Preservation, Gender, Politics, Diversity, and Collaboration between Public/Private Partnerships'. Conversations also lead to life-changing dialogues and debates about sex, intimacy, relationships, phi-

losophy, you name it.

Apart from strict learning and networking, making time to goof around and getting lost in a foreign city is second to none. The best way for me to travel and get immersed in the culture is to meet the locals and/or walk around aimlessly throughout the city.

The day and nightlife of cities are amazing to observe. The local food is worth trying, because you are spoilt for choice. I seek local restaurants and eat local cuisine; I am of the opinion that if people are alive after eating a certain food, then it must be safe. Some of the best surprise meals? Tarantula fried in oil, sugar and salt in Cambodia – very crunchy, to Tortoises in Namibia, or Mok Huak (tadpoles) in Thailand. There was always a party in the mouth because of the fusion of these international flavours.

Home is where the heart is, they say. The comrades in my travels became a family in such a short time. We disagreed, we cried together; we shared meals and stories of our countries. Many of the locals opened up their homes and hearts to me. Some of them would drop me brownies and many goodies randomly at the hotel, others would pick me up for unplanned adventures through the city. With others, we would make amazing music in their homes, playing and singing for days.

As Robin Hobb says “Home is people not a place, if you go back there after the people are gone, then all you can see is what is not there anymore.”

We understand that life isn't meant to be lived in one place anymore. We live in such a globalised world now. We travel as far as we can for as long as we can and then just maybe we can consider staying put.

I particularly enjoy couch surfing and hostel stays as they allow for a faster and fuller immersion into the city. If you asked me what my hobby is, I

would genuinely say travelling, because I am officially a TRAVEL ADDICT. Travelling has become a drug ever since my eyes were opened to the world of independent travel and backpacking in 2012 -learning about hostels and cheap means to travel suddenly made the impossible seem possible.

Some quick hacks,

- ***Scan your passport and itinerary and email them to yourself;***
- ***Ensure that you have a pen before leaving home;***
- ***Use guidebooks sparingly, instead meet locals;***
- ***Attempt the local language as much as possible;***
- ***Eat local food only;***
- ***Get out of your comfort zone;***
- ***Walk, walk, walk;***
- ***Team no sleep average 4-5 hours only; and***
- ***If you don't want to travel alone, give 24 hour notice.***

I spend hours browsing travel blogs and websites looking for travel deals, and I usually plan my next trip while on another trip. I just came back from my recent trip, but the “travel bug” is nagging again. I look at the map and think of all the places I haven’t been to. All the places I would like to see. I tell myself that life is short and I need to cram in as much as I can. There is an entire world to explore. There are places to go, people to see, and memories to be made. I have discovered that you don’t need a house to be at home. I value experiences and connection more than material investment.

Strive to be a storyteller because your life was filled with adventure

- SBH

"You will never be completely at home again, because part of your heart always will be elsewhere. That is the price you pay for the richness of loving and knowing people in more than one place."

- Miriam Adene

Learning Together

Mentorship is a fascinating activity. I have had many mentors, and I have mentored many people. Some people call that discipleship. Discipleship is similar to mentorship it is someone whose experience in the subject can facilitate learning.

When I was younger, I was under the leadership of the most amazing lady, my English teacher in high school, who was also a Christian lady. She helped me to make sense of the journey and created a community in which I could thrive. My mentorship sessions with her were the blue print of what my mentorship journey would later look like.

After the mentorship sessions, I genuinely believed that the world could be better. I positioned myself as a facilitator more than an expert. My job was simply to create a safe space for people to experience, ask questions, and seek an understanding of a particular matter or life area. Having mentored hundreds of people from different backgrounds and from unique experiences, particularly men, I believe my mentorship was not necessarily the most exceptional because of what I taught, but because of the affirming

community they found.

As human beings, we seek validation - to be seen and completely accepted. Mentorship provided that for me and for the people I was mentoring. As I have been growing, I have had to confront my need to feel needed and my need for wanting to save everybody.

The complexity of one person requires that they have multiple sources of mentorship input, which relieves the mentor of a saviour complex. No single individual can provide mentorship and inputs to the entirety of one person's life.

Another key lesson I learned was mentorship relationships that are transcendent are mutually beneficial. Mentors should resist the urge to be the objects of someone's aspirations. But should seek to humanise their experience through vulnerability.

"I have the deepest affection for intellectual conversations. The ability to just sit and talk. About love, about life, about anything, about everything. To sit under the moon with all the time in the world, the full-speed train that is our lives slowing to a crawl. Bound by no obligations, barred by no human limitations. To speak without regret or fear of consequence. To talk for hours and about what's really important in life."

Unknown

Imposter Syndrome

Imposter syndrome is the term I could finally use to articulate years of an uneasy, unknown feeling. It described my feelings of inadequacy whenever I stepped into a room. Imposter syndrome tells you, “You are a fraud, you don’t belong here.” And what the voice within tells us is that eventually we will be exposed.

For most of my life I have been first... I mentored others before I was mentored, I have been the youngest person in the room, I’ve been the first ethnic minority in the room, only black person in that space, I would often be the youngest in different spaces and it was that way for a long time.

I would often feel the pressure not to bring disrepute or take away an opportunity from another because of not fully showing up every day. I constantly had conversations with myself to reassure myself that I belonged in the space and that I should assert myself in that space.

One interesting example is whenever I went to a conference, part of my effort to assert myself in the space was to ask the panel a question, know-

ing full well that I had the answer to the question I was asking. Though my questions were profound, they were also a necessary means to an end. I remember how I would feel when somebody would come up to me after the panel and say well done for that thoughtful or inspired question and how that would affirm my perceived sense of value.

So, the imposter syndrome manifests in different ways. One way I dealt with this syndrome when it raised its head was to acknowledge the feelings instead of fighting them, denying them or pushing them aside.

“Beware, my body and my soul, beware above all of crossing your arms and assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of griefs is not a proscenium, and a man who wails is not a dancing bear”.

- Unknown

The Art of Taking a No

As a young man who is passionate about youth development, I would seek after different opportunities to grow, travel and meet other young people in similar spaces. There would normally be a high volume of applicants for a few spaces. There were opportunities I applied for, staying up through the night to strengthen my application because I knew the stakes were high. I would apply for opportunities where I knew I qualified, I met the criteria, and it would crush me when I would get an email stating “we regret to inform you...”

For every nine NOs there would come one YES. Most of the time they would not provide the reasons it was a NO, which left me emptier since I did not know where I could improve for next time. When I stopped taking the rejections personally and celebrated the wins, it awakened a confidence I never thought I had. I saw every NO as a door shut because it may not have been the right one for me. This attitude produced a different type of generosity within me. Instead of hoarding information and opportunities for myself, I would openhandedly share with friends and colleagues, trusting that whoever got it deserved it and I could gladly celebrate with them.

My advice to young people who are searching for scholarships, conference opportunities, fellowships and jobs would be to live from a place of abundance. Once you understand that there is more than enough to go around, you can revel in someone else's success.

I will not downplay the disappointment that comes with NOs, where you feel unworthy or question yourself. However, what I can say is that once that YES comes, you forget about all the NOs, the late nights and the work. I used to only celebrate my wins and YES's and those around me got a warped view that everything I do or touch turns to gold. This is not the case. I am, therefore, sharing some of my struggles so that you understand the story behind the journey. I celebrate and publicise my wins because the rejections were many. I don't take any YES for granted. Once an opportunity opens up, I grab it with both hands and make sure I bring a meaningful contribution to the table. I have seen over 50 countries through fellowships, youth conferences and speaking engagements. Most of the multiplier opportunities were because of my contribution to a specific event. Remember, your work is amazing and valuable, and so are you even if no one affirms that, though it feels good when they do.

The answer is always NO if you never ask. World changers are those who DARE to ask difficult, impossible and outrageous questions.

"It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing...It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from fear of further pain."

-Oriah Mountain Dreamer

Ten Leadership Lessons

The journey of leadership begins with an understanding of self. The power of our full experiences, the impact of the people in our lives, the challenges we were exposed to and the losses we suffered, all culminate to define our leadership style and our life stories or what I'll call 'your/our narrative'. Leadership is not an abstract, farfetched idea. Leadership is a living organism showed through the people that dare believe and put themselves out there as the answer for the issues, questions and concerns of the day. The demands of leadership in this era are for a more dynamic, diverse and authentic group of people taking the helms. Leaders that we need are not perfect but can engender trust and can connect with the people.

1. Authenticity

The complexity of challenges leaders are facing demands authentic offering of self. The ability for leaders to recognise and admit their shortcomings is limited that is why authenticity is needed for leaders to be real and

human. It is worth mentioning that we do not all live authentically all the time. That is why self-awareness and emotional intelligence become critical. Authenticity allows leaders be to better empathise with those around them. These make leaders contagious.

2. Status Quo

There is culture, a way of doing things in any organisation or community. As we navigate that space, it is important to remember that we are not removed as contributors to a toxic, unproductive, low performance culture. We all share the collective responsibility of the problems we identify. We contribute passively or actively to keep the status quo. Leadership requires a level of self-awareness to recognise and change your role before asking that of others.

3. Vantage Point

As in any community or organisation, people naturally form into pockets. A leader is not there to police people's movement but to be aware of how that can impede change. The tension of leadership demands that you have insight into both the details of the work and the big picture. To see the wider scope, leaders need to consistently change their vantage points. It can be tempting to choose to remain in the extremes of these two ideas- to either remove yourself from the realities in the name of being a strategist or get involved in the trenches in the name of being present. Both are important and necessary to can gain a clearer view of reality and some perspective on the bigger picture, so you must find balance.

4. Incentives for Change and Vested Interests

Change is hard and sometimes scary. Although we recognise the need for change, many times we have tied ourselves to the challenges and problems we face and though we complain about these issues when the call comes

for change, sometimes dysfunction is considered better than the unknown. People will make the sacrifice if they understand the 'why' and can see the benefits, so as leaders we need to articulate that continuously.

In relation to vested interest, the older I get, the more I realise vested interests exist across the spectrum of work and life. There are individuals and/or groups who may have a special interest in defending or endorsing a specific agenda that is to their own personal advantage. Or, there are those to benefit from the existing way of life who would resist any calls for change, and as a leader it is important to be aware of these dynamics, although my serial optimist mind cannot fathom.

5. Learnership

One of the most empowering life lessons I learned was to always take the posture of a learner. Learning means you don't have everything figured out. You are only teachable to the people that you submit yourself to. If I don't recognise my limitations and the potential need for somebody else to close the gap, then I'll let pride and ego stop me from learning. Having worked globally for several years, I've learned quickly that though you may be the first at something, it doesn't mean that you will be the last. And that there are younger and brighter, more intelligent people all around. Therefore, if I'm going to have an attitude, viewing myself as if I am the one who knows everything, the one always there to teach, I am only robbing myself of the opportunity to grow. Lack of feedback does not always mean agreement, therefore a leader should probe widely for clarity.

6. Power

Power or the pursuit thereof is normally seen as a negative laced by examples of abuse and corruption. Power is neither good nor bad, it only acts as a mirror or amplifier of a leader's nature. That is why guard rails are put in place to temper a leader's power. The corrosive nature of power is unfortunately revealed when the leader manipulates the system of checks and

balances to further their own agenda. The seduction of power –Power can seduce leaders into believing their own hype. Leaders may use authenticity to gain power however, that authenticity is diminished or replaced by the idea or form of power without substance. As leaders, we begin to believe the perceptions and aspirations projected unto us, which is not necessarily who we are. This rapidly reduces the number of people that can hold leaders accountable. Without feedback, leaders become inflated. Therefore, leaders need to actively facilitate spaces for accountability amongst peers, which can call leaders out. It is important to note that power is one of the most useful tools to facilitate meaningful systemic and structural change.

7. Trade-offs

Leadership is not easy, though it is rewarding. As leaders, we are daily given choices to be made. We are a culmination of those decisions. There are no easy answers or choices to be made in leadership as there will be trade-offs - the social impact vs increased profit margins, being global vs staying local, innovation vs scale, staying small vs expanding teams, excellence vs perfectionism. By leaning on one, we position ourselves to gain something and equally lose something. The leader has the tough call to weigh the costs. Furthermore, leaders must help the team navigate perceived sense of loss, overcome potential resistance, and instil confidence in what is coming. I am of the opinion that we should strive for both and more approach rather than either or which sometimes is a luxury we cannot afford.

8. Saviour Complex

It began with me confronting my saviour complex, the belief that I am better than others because I help people selflessly. As a result, for most of my career, I had depleted a lot of myself under the guise of nobility. The challenge is that trying to “save” someone takes away their agency and sense of responsibility, limiting any change to only be temporary. I am not saying that I have completely overcome the saviour complex, but being more conscious of it, I can manage it better.

9. Contagious Energy

Energy is all around us, and leaders can harness energy and direct it for change. The way you show up sets a tone for creating organisational culture. The energy of the leader is directly seen in the performance of those around them, during meetings, and the meetings after the meeting. Leaders are contagious and therefore have to intentionally and actively facilitate environments for high performance. Additionally, energy fluctuates, leaders with strong emotional quotients can read the room and respond accordingly. Part of strengthening the EQ is through self-awareness and self-care. Powerful leaders are able to care for themselves and are aware of the energy they carry and how that energy changes the surrounding environment.

10. Build a Tribe

Relationships in leadership are critical to building longevity in the journey. It is almost counterintuitive to be authentic as a leader and to mask our insecurities, fears and internal battles. When you are consumed with savourism, it is difficult to let others in. You are always the strong one, the one that everyone looks to for counsel, and this can lead later to compassion fatigue. I had the scariest pleasure of sharing some of my journey with a fantastic group of diverse leaders from the SADC region. This fellowship allowed me to invite people into the crevasses of my soul to build honest and authentic connections. They have become my counsellors, friends, cheerleaders, tribe and, above all, mentors. Get in the arena of leadership, take the risk and get a team of people alongside you. We do not have the luxury to be complacent. As you identify challenges, feel unrest in your soul, maybe even anger at the status quo, begin educating yourself on the issues, build alliances and be the answer even in the smallest capacity. We need a tribe of authentic, ethical and transformation leaders in the public sphere, private sector and civil society. Leadership is a risk but a worthwhile risk. It becomes me. There is an impact that can and should outlast me that is changing lives.

“Clarity came when I realised that my knowledge, experiences (good and bad), values, energy, passion and personality were forging me into the leader I should be.”

-SBH

“Leadership is the offering of the whole self to a cause bigger than yourself.”

-SBH

Enigmatic Tribe – ǀNǀ-ǀHOǀ (Damara People)

Thought it would be a sweet treat to introduce to you my people the ǀNǀ-ǀHOǀ, which literally means “Black people.” origins are a mystery to anthropologists particularly because we are dark skinned but differ from other people of Bantu descent and speak Khoe-Khoe gowab.

There are four clicks namely, ǀ, ǁ, ǃ and ǂ. The Damara people are made up of groups or clans and identify themselves based on specific areas using geographic references in Namibia.

The Damara consist of 11 clans:

1. The ǂAo-daman used to live in the settlements of Outjo, Kamanjab, and Khorixas.
2. The Ao-guwun; their home settlement is Sesfontein.
3. Dâure Daman (English: Brandberg Damara after Dâures, the Khoekhoe name for the Brandberg Mountain)

The Wide Spectrum of Mothering *By Amy Young*

To those who gave birth this year to their first child—we celebrate with you. To those who lost a child this year—we mourn with you

To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stain—we appreciate you

To those who experienced loss through miscarriage, failed adoptions, or running away—we mourn with you. To those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, tears, and disappointment—we walk with you. Forgive us when we say foolish things. We don't mean to make this harder than it is

To those who are foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms—we need you. To those who have warm and close relationships with your children—we celebrate with you. To those who have disappointment, heart ache, and distance with your children—we sit with you

To those who lost their mothers this year—we grieve with you. To those who experienced abuse at the hands of your own mother—we acknowl-

edge your experience

To those who lived through driving tests, medical tests, and the overall testing of motherhood—we are better for having you in our midst

To those who have aborted children—we remember them and you on this day

To those who are single and long to be married and mothering your own children—we mourn that life has not turned out the way you longed for it to be

To those who stepparent—we walk with you on these complex paths

To those who envisioned lavishing love on grandchildren, yet that dream is not to be—we grieve with you. To those who will have emptier nests in the upcoming year—we grieve and rejoice with you.

To those who placed children up for adoption—we commend you for your selflessness and remember how you hold that child in your heart. And to those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising—we anticipate with you.

This Mother's Day, we walk with you. Mothering is not for the faint of heart and we have real warriors in our midst. We remember you.

"With Love to all the mothers- You are Queens"

-SBH

To the world unknown

Change is inevitable, but we can be deliberate participants. For us performance driven folk, it is important to enjoy the journey as it unfolds. Wholeness does not come from fulfilling everything you have set out to do but celebrating the milestones along the way. I do not have answers to all of life's challenges or questions, and that is liberating as the journey to learn opens new and incredible possibilities.

I will gladly embrace loss, uncertainty and being misunderstood for the spectacular chance to learn. Be kind to yourself and extend grace to others. Unless the seed falls and dies, it cannot bear fruit. I had to die to the life, dreams, comforts, and relationships I knew to transition and bear fruit. I feel like I am born again, again. I do not recognise the "old Steven" I would actually love to meet him one day, but I have tremendous respect and admiration for him. No one warned me that coming into your own also includes grieving the life you were conditioned to believe you wanted. We need to use the energy of failure, loss, pain, frustration you may feel about life and channel it to let go of false imagery we have created and let it rather make us complete, humble and generously compassionate.

As I conclude, I often daydream as I jog. Joggers are fascinating beings. We have different starting lines, pit stops and finishing lines. We run for different reasons, at differing strides and pace. Sometimes we run in groups, other times we prefer to go at it along. We meet along the way and nod – acknowledging that I see you and we are part of the community, though I may not know your name, history or may never see you again. We are only connected by this one activity running, and all we get to see is usually a snapshot of a runner's journey.

For a long time I always thought of destiny as something, somewhere I will one day be, once I have gained what I deemed to result from success. I therefore failed to embrace every day as a moment in destiny. That it is not something to come but what “is” at the present moment. One of the greatest enemies in us not realising our full potential is fear. Therefore, we always procrastinate to tomorrow. However, tomorrow is not promised to anyone we only have today, this moment, right now. Every day, every moment is an invitation to greatness to fulfil the highest, most truthful expression of yourself. We have nothing to lose but the moment we have been given.

Do not be afraid to start over. Run your race generously, fearlessly, and courageously. At the end of it all, when you go to bed, are you at peace with yourself?

***Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world.
All things break and all things can be mended. Not
with time as they say but with intention. So go. Love
intentionally, extravagantly, and unconditionally. The
broken world waits in darkness for the light that is
you.***

-L.R. Knost

GOOD VIBES *and* BUTTERFLIES

an Invitation for the Seed to Die

Good Vibes and Butterflies is directed towards those who have chosen to live bold, daring and remarkable lives. This book is a culmination of amazing, authentic, difficult and sometimes silly conversations I have had over the years with myself and many incredible humans I met on the quest for self-actualisation and the process of dying to what I knew, to be born again, again.

It aims to unpack, in a conversational style, some prevalent issues that we are facing as human beings and collectively as communities. I invite you to take a chance on yourself because amazement awaits you on every corner.



Steven Bernardus Harageib is social activist advocating for the mainstreaming of youth, mental health, and gender-based violence issues into the development agenda. He is an award winning international speaker. His public service to influence transformational change is informed by his more than 10 years experience in the non-profit sector, public sector and educational background in social work. As a mental health activist, he believes wellness should be highlighted and integrated into the continental development

agenda. He is a serial optimist with a strong curiosity for life and understanding. He seeks to create spaces for amplifying emerging and new voices to enrich the conversations and dialogues about development. As an inspirational speaker he continues to tap into the lived experiences to unmask the hidden treasure in each person.