

## **Short Writings from Bulawayo II**

**reviewed by Philbert Khumalo**

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It is quite heartening and inspiring to readers and authors alike to witness committed publishers – albeit a few – producing some of the best books penned by Zimbabweans despite the high cost of publishing.

*Short Writings from Bulawayo II* is the latest offering from 'amaBooks Publishers. Just like its predecessor, *Short Writings from Bulawayo* which won the hearts of many readers and book reviewers, *Short Writings from Bulawayo II* is also a collection of short stories and poems describing the beloved city of Bulawayo through the voices of a cross-section of writers scattered around the city and the country at large.

*Short Writings from Bulawayo II* is a product of seasoned and budding writers. Among the groups of accomplished authors are the likes of Pathisa Nyathi, John Eppel and Catherine Buckle, to name just a few. The bulk of writers in this collection of short stories and poems are predominantly budding authors. This is very encouraging because the publishers are dedicated to become the cradle of authorship in Zimbabwe.

*Short Writings from Bulawayo II* is an anthology which transports the readers around the sprawling townships of Bulawayo, its precincts and the distant rural areas associated with the city. The book also brings to the fore the reflections of struggles inherent in the lives of people and the impact of cultural expectations in their everyday living.

One of the experienced writers in the exciting anthology, MzanaMthimkhulu, gives a graphic account of the impact of cultural expectations in people's daily lives in his educative-cum-humorous short story *Everything is Gonna Be All Right*. The short story gives readers some insights into the African (maybe both Shona and Ndebele) culture where a widower requests for a second wife to replace his late bride. This aspect of traditional culture is now mired in controversy due to the advent of the deadly HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Addelis Sibutha's piece *Between Two Men* reveals quite a lot about township life and socio-economic struggles affecting residents. Thus people are experiencing abject poverty and a rising crime rate, which threatens the usual peace associated with Bulawayo. Amid the poverty and growing unemployment, people fall prey to criminals who rob and at times severely assault them. The female folk are wantonly raped by criminals right in the eyes of their hapless husbands. What a sorry sight!

However, the poem also tells many a story full of pathos. For instance the poem *Hope* is characteristic of numerous people who are struggling to survive abject poverty, unemployment and disease. For their hopes and dreams have been shattered to smithereens.

Not all the poems depict pathos, some of them reverberate with life and hope. For instance, *Illuminating Flames* by Pathisa Nyathi is full of the poet's reminiscences of childhood. The poem also gives reflections of the poet's father and 'the golden flames of wisdom', which the father imparted to his children.

*Short Writings from Bulawayo II* is a must read for all those people who cherish the humour and beauty of the written word. The book is written in the language of the common man, which makes it accessible to many readers.