

The legacy you leave, is the legacy you live...

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*In life everything has a beginning,
Every beginning has to come to an ending,
An ending that brings with it meaning,
A meaning that gives us a reason for a new beginning.*

Life is nothing more than a story that we are actively involved in writing. But how often do we reflect on what kind of story we are writing about ourselves? How will your story read after all the chapters come to an end? After your beginning comes to an end; what meaning will there be in that ending and will that meaning be reason enough for a new beginning?

In her last months on earth, my late grandmother, Epiphania Shawa Ngonyani, suffered a tragic stroke that took away her speech and her ability to swallow solids; relegating her to a status that represented everything that she was not at her peak in existence. If you knew anything about my grandmother, you knew about the power of her soft spoken voice; a voice that drew the attention of anyone who cared to listen. In these last days, you could still hear her voice even in its chilling absence. The loss of this voice and her subsequent and untimely death marked the end of an era.

Apart from this final curtain call my grandmother suffered many other disarming events in her life but fought on. Not too long ago, during what was at one time

considered a low point in her life, she found pause and penned her life story. The more than one thousand pages she penned down gave a rare window into the mind and heart of a woman who gave so much of herself for the good of others.

Born the daughter of a chief, meant she was destined for great things, as our African traditions would lead us to believe. Yet hers was a humble story still from beginning to end; a village girl that never really left the village; a town girl that never really arrived in town. She had nothing, in the sense of the materialistic world we now live in, but gave everything, in the sense of a world that we are yet to understand let alone deserve to live in. She met and wed my grandfather, a teacher at the time, at the young and tender age of 16 and over a marriage that lasted more than sixty-four years made a good man even better. She had little formal education of her own but became a true master of her environment non-the-less and made an effort to educate anyone who crosses her path. From her roots as a social worker to becoming a prominent and pioneering female politician chairing the female wing of CCM, UWT in Ruvuma region, for a good portion of 20years, until the date of her death, she never forgot the party (CCM) she helped found and what it really meant to her and those it served.

At her peak, my grandmother, commanded the audience of Presidents and senior ranking officials of the state. But in her ailing years, she could only command the attention of the common-man, whose connection to her was deep rooted in shared experiences and values that made her the political asset she was at the time of her peak. A time when innocence was her only asset and her passion her biggest liability, unlike now when the opposite was arguably more true. Yet, as she was laid to rest in her home village, multitudes lined up to see her off. As the Bishop spoke, church bells chimed, priests lined up in dozens alongside the thousands who turned up to pay their respects to the late Epiphania Shawa Ngonyani, it was evident that an era had come to

an end in as much as its [the era] legacy was just becoming evident. In a funeral that was just as stately as it was homely, my grandmother was laid to rest in a manner that evidenced the depth of her legacy.

We get so entangled in the realities of our current situations we are in that we forget what really matters after the dust settles. Years back, I quipped (in honor of our mothers across the planet who often have so little but give everything) that a *father's love is power, while a mother's love is powerful* and I dare say that it is only now, in the passing of my grandmother, that I truly understand what this meant.

Michael Jackson, like my grandmother, had lost his power to influence what media and mainstream power brokers reported about him but is powerful still, even in death. On receiving word of his death, Michael Jackson fans and foe alike across the world reined in on the internet and whatever media outlet they could get their hands on in a way that the modern world had never witnessed before; crashing every site and search engine that stood in its wake; forcing the same media and power brokers that publicly lynched him not too far back to declare Michael Jackson officially the King of Pop, albeit posthumous.

All of our stories will come to an end and all that will remain will be those who read it in our absence. In many cases, the end of a chapter in our life can give us a window into what really matters and we should expect after all the chapters will be written. At his lowest point Michael Jackson still had legions of fans both latent and dormant. Will your legacy survive your current position or do you need your position to dictate what people say about you in life. When we lose the power that comes with the positions we have, are we still powerful or are we crippled by the grim realities that become our manipulative and often opportunistic nature as human beings. My

grandmother connected with the grass-root to make her claim to power and not the other way around as is often the case in this era of manipulative tactics, where we invest more in power than the people who give it to us and as a result her legacy will most likely survive her passing. The legacy she leaves is the legacy she lived so genuinely; a life of investing, often tirelessly and relentlessly, in what mattered enough to give her ending a meaning that gives us a reason to keep her legacy around, God willing, for a new beginning.