

# RE-IMAGINING DEMOCRACY: IN SEARCH OF SILENCED VOICES

## **“Was it ever real?”**

*By Mzungawi Mizo Maclean*

In a town so peaceful you'd hear a needle drop on the sidewalk was a girl, who every evening would sit on the window seal of her room. A voice so angelic it cannot be compared to any other terrestrial being. In front of her window seal was a high wall where her reflection of her on the window seal appeared. Between her and the wall was a sidewalk. No one knew how she looked, the only glimpse they caught of how she looked was of her shadow. Neighboring her was a boy who'd every time stand in front of his window to listen to her sing. The boy knew the time and the pattern of her schedule. Day after day, the hours passed, he grew fonder of this shadow with a heartbeat, day after day he fell in love with this shadow with a voice.

Every day, every evening, as people of the town made their way home, passing the sidewalk would listen to her. It was a day just like any other day but more beautiful, the boy ran upstairs to his room, pulled a chair and sat in anticipation, preparing his ears to be pleased by the celestial-like voice, seemingly off was an unusual feeling, there was no shadow reflecting on the wall. The lights of her room were off, the window closed. Day after day, time went by, the sidewalk seemed rather lonely, quieter, filled with a negative presence of tranquility. Curiosity grew by the minute inside the boy's head, wondering where she could be, “she moved?” “Is she okay?” His heart was heavily troubled, he daily went to stand in anticipation in front of his window, hoping that her shadow would appear. She just wasn't there. He never lost hope, daily he went to take his stand and wait for her, staring at the wall. A still evening, the lights went on, he jumped out of his seat, his upper body out the window, with an ineffable joyful face, he looked with an attentive attitude, a shadow walked towards the window, but the shadow had an unusual body posture, the back was bent a little too forward, head seemed like it was bowed as that of a woman showing respect or sending condolence. The shadow slowly approached the window, placed something on the window seal, something that looked like lilies, orchid plant, gladioli, hydrangea plant, carnations, chrysanthemums, roses, daffodils and tulips all wrapped up in one bunch.

Drowning in his unanswered question, he just couldn't get around it, where was she, what could've happened? The side walkers were at unease, like a child missing a piece of an incomplete puzzle the boy didn't feel whole. He daily kept strong with patience, some nights were easier than others, eyes dammed with water, one blink and his cheeks would have a river flowing down. Where could she be, wall... where could she be?