

Thoughts for Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is celebrated annually on February 14. We seek opinions on how this day ought to be celebrated.

BY DAPHINE NAKABIRI

Valentine's Day, celebrated annually on February 14, has over time evolved into a global expression of love, affection and connection. Traditionally associated with romantic partners, the day has expanded to embrace friendships, family bonds and self-love, taking on different meanings across cultures and generations.

Rooted partly in Christian tradition, Valentine's Day is often linked to St Valentine, believed to have been a priest who lived during the third century in Rome and was martyred for performing secret marriages.

For many Ugandans, Valentine's Day was once a quiet and almost private affair. The day has evolved under the influence of global media and changing urban lifestyle. Back then, celebrations were modest, marked by handwritten cards, a stalk of a red rose or simple flowers, and shared meals. This was often limited to a small section of the urban population.

Today, social media has turned the day into a public display of love, where experiences and gifts are carefully curated and shared online.

Yet as expectations rise, and so do disappointments, prompting many to wonder whether love should be measured by the price of a gift or the glamour of a date.

Others wonder whether the day should be reserved only for couples or broadened to celebrate all forms of meaningful relationships. Thus, different people share their views on Valentine's Day and reflect on how they believe it should truly be celebrated.



Gloria Asimwe

Gloria Asimwe is a social media influencer and proprietor of Tagz Gifts Ug in Kampala. Asimwe believes Valentine's Day serves as a gentle reminder that love does not have to be loud, extravagant, or expensive to be meaningful. As a florist, she says every flower tells a story.

"Flowers carry emotions that words often fail to express. Through different colours, scents, and arrangements, flowers can communicate gratitude, forgiveness, devotion, hope, appreciation, care, and presence, making them powerful symbols of genuine affection," says Asimwe.

"In a world increasingly shaped by social media, where Valentine's Day is often glamorised and measured by public displays and costly gifts.

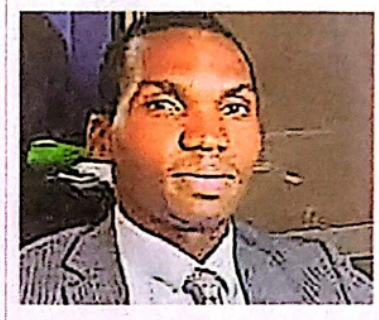
"I believe that true love is found in simple, thoughtful gestures. While many people feel pressured to perform their relationships online, they tend to forget that love is deeply personal and does not need an audience to be valid," she adds.

She believes Valentine's Day should be celebrated by honouring love in all its forms, that is, between partners, within families, among friends, and even through self-care. Whether expressed through a small bouquet, a handwritten note, shared time or quiet time together, what matters most is the intention behind the gesture.

"People need to understand that love is not about impressing the world, but rather genuinely connecting with the people who matter most in your life."

Isaac Buwaso

Isaac Buwaso, a lawyer at Kafuko Ntuyo & Co Advocates in Kampala, approaches Valentine's Day with wit, reflection, and a touch of legal humour. Accustomed to arguing cases rather than expressing affection, he admits that this does not exclude him from the day's narrative.



To him, Valentine's Day is neither merely a cash grab nor a commercial bonanza. Instead, it is a bold reminder that love is the ultimate contract, binding, meaningful and at times, requiring amendments when irreconcilable differences arise.

"In a way, love is the strongest agreement two people can make. It thus demands patience, compromise, and consistent effort," he explains.

He adds that the day is about pausing the daily grind to honour the small sparks that make life less stressful and less 'litigious'. Whether it is whispering sweet nothings or simply choosing not to lose one's temper in Kampala traffic, Valentine's Day offers a moment to say, "You are worth the extra effort."

He believes that when celebrating this day, simplicity is key, and this can be through offering a small gift, a box of chocolates, a bouquet with a pleasant scent, or even a warm hug as this can speak volumes.

Buwaso notes, "It does not have to be commercially draining, because meaningful gestures matter more than expensive displays."

He also encourages those who usually ignore the occasion to give it a chance.

"Lighten up this time," he advises. "Even lawyers know a good plea bargain when they see one."

Valentine's Day is an opportunity to embrace a little vulnerability and remind loved ones that appreciation, when sincerely expressed, strengthens every relationship.



Margret Nantongo

Margaret Nantongo, a businesswoman and lounge owner, views Valentine's Day through an entrepreneurial and emotional lens.

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