

Here's to you, Esteri Apolot Tebandeke. Till we meet again

The funeral service became a gathering of fond memories recounted by those closest to her.



**Just
Saying
with
Janet
Napio**

I was going to write about a candy/gum sold in certain school canteens called Vampire Blood Gum, but then Esther died.

I first saw Esther Apolot Tebandeke at Iganga Secondary School. I saw her for all the years I was in that school, but we were never really friends. I do not even remember talking to her. I do not recall many things; partial amnesia is a coping mechanism.

I was not a very social person back then, and I am still not, but adulthood forces you to interact with people. After all, how else are you going to ask for money or gossip about others to reassure yourself that there are those with bigger problems? Even phone loans require some level of interaction before you can get that all-too-regrettable cash.

I first truly met her more than six years later, after university at the National Theatre. At that time, I was a night radio show host. Work started at 9pm and went on until midnight, so I had all day to do as I pleased.

I chose to spend my evenings before work dancing at the National Theatre. I joined a dance class with others like myself. For about two hours each evening, we would meet in a back studio to dance. Among us were those who were already trained dancers, such as Sam Ibanda, Jonas Byaruhanga, Sam Lutaaya Tebandeke, and others, who taught the classes free of charge.

Sam Tebandeke was also the one who ended up being Esteri's husband, the same one who later gave her one of his healthy kidneys to replace her failing pair. And no, God did not put him into a deep sleep first; it was entirely his own choice. Then there is the rest of us, who cannot even share a land title for a bush miles

away from civilisation, but I digress.

It was during those classes that I realised my big toe does not lie. It will never let my ballet dreams be valid; it cannot point to save its life.

So, we danced contemporary African dance, salsa, cha-cha, jive, and many others. They named our dance group Stepping Stones. I think we even had a show or two in the main auditorium. For those two years, I spent every evening with those young people, including Esteri and Sam.

But as life would have it, I got a day job and entered another season of life. The honest truth though, is that my second left foot, which I had tucked away for so long, began to grow again. It refused to die quietly. So, I left the stage for those who were naturally more talented performers, such as Esteri, Sam, and a few others.

Many years later, last Thursday, I caught a glimpse of her in that casket at the All Saints Cathedral in Nakasero, and it was obvious she was not there anymore. She was gone, done with this side of creation.

Yet all the things she did, said, all the people she met, and those who met her were still present. All the memories remained alive; they never really die. The funeral service became a gathering of fond memories recounted by those closest to her.

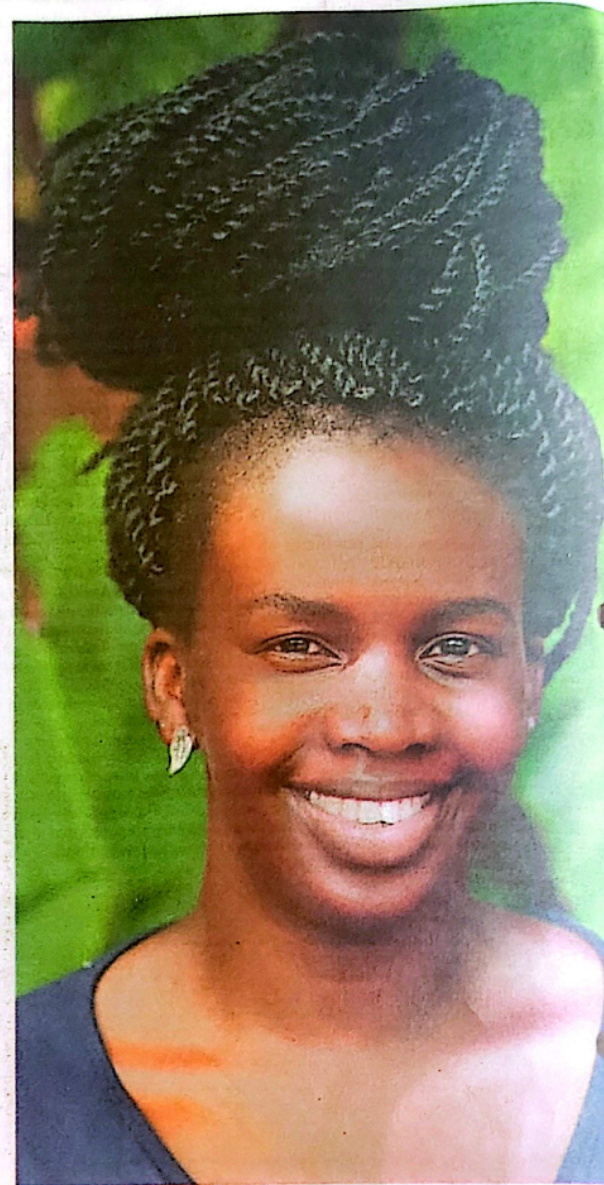
This is not a tribute, I have no right to write one for her. It is just a shell of my minimal but precious memories of a soul that once walked this earth.

It is an acknowledgement that she was here, and I witnessed at least part of it.

Dear Sam, may God hold and comfort you as only He can. The real flood usually hits when the speeches and ceremonies are over. So again, may God hold and comfort you as only He can.

Dear Esteri, thanks for being and becoming. Until we meet again...

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BONE DENSITOMETRY