

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Teen Writers Add to the Growing Canon of Anguillian Literature

November 3, 2016, The Valley – Two weeks after the launch of the book *Chapter 5: a compilation of stories we didn't want to write* on October 19, 2016, high praise continues to pour in about this literary feat by twenty-eight teenage writers from the Albena Lake-Hodge Comprehensive School in Anguilla.

What was originally envisioned as a keepsake publication for students and parents has become a sought-after treasure by the public at large. It is a historic publication, the first of its type by an English class from the Albena Lake-Hodge Comprehensive School. *Chapter 5: a compilation of stories we didn't want to write* is written by the students of 5A Band 1 English A (who have recently graduated), from which the pseudonym for the authors Ban-waun Fivae was derived (Band 1 5A).

Chapter 5 is the culmination of three major projects that students undertook in class over three years under the tutelage of their teacher Maris Edwards. Their first project, a human rights symposium organised and executed by the students, thrust students into the public domain when they publicly spoke up against human rights violations in their society and around the world. The second project was inspired by the students' reading of their literature text, *Things*

Fall Apart, a novel that celebrates Nigerian Ibo culture. Students, who were divided into clans governed by elders, were tasked with executing a *uri* (an Ibo celebration that takes place after the bride price has been decided). For this, students had to fundraise, research Ibo foods and dress for the event, and write folktales to compete in a 'village griot' competition, with the intent of developing the students' appreciation of an aspect of African culture.

Now the final project: a book. Literary critic, poet, writer and Deputy Principal of ALHCS, Rita Celestine-Carty, in her congratulatory remarks at the book launch ceremony commented that this "book is aesthetically pleasing and good to hold. [The] expression is ...fresh, honest and direct – each voice unique, but the group bond undeniable." The title, *Chapter 5: a compilation of stories we didn't want to write*, betrays the jadedness and cynicism that could sometimes be a part of adolescence when "hardcore experience has slithered into the paradise of childhood and dreams", explains the write up on the back cover of the book. There are myriad experiences that jolt memory, the heart, the conscience: "...he was waiting for me to sink in fear. I was waiting for me to drown in fear. I waded past the pain" from 'A Warm August Breeze Blew In' by Nakia Webster. Janique Fleming in 'The Lemonade' writes, "The sparse light glistened on his bald head. Standing beside him was the silhouette of David. Fear ran through the open door and seized me as prey". There is the struggle with the environment: "Stories of this house that Johnny had told me danced in my head. A group of kids came here once and never returned home for dinner. This house was no ordinary house", 'That House' by Christoph Pradel. The future too offers some interesting sci-fi details when Tori McDowall shares in '2030' that "many humans and robots had intimate relationships" and Xavielle Edwards in her story

'2050' wonders at the people of the future: "Their attire was changing! They could moult their clothes!" There is also the theme of love, though twisted and thwarted, it can be refreshingly tender and true as depicted by two of the male writers.

The charcoal book cover, reminiscent of a blackboard and designed with chalk-like text and graphics, evokes the classroom culture from which the book was birthed. A closer scrutiny of the cover, however, reveals that this book is no child's play: "Wonderful work by talented young writers! ... a bold demonstration of vivid imaginations and impressive creative writing skills," writes Dan Brown, author of #1 bestselling novels including *The Da Vinci Code*. Other blurb writers of this publication are Stephanie Stokes Oliver, author of *Song for My Father* and former editor of *Essence*, Krista Bremmer, author of *A Tender Struggle*, and Deonna Kelli Sayed, contributor to *Love, Inshallah: The Secret Love Lives of American Muslim Women*.

Two weeks after the launch of *Chapter 5*, the publishers are preparing to print more copies to meet market demand. *Chapter 5* is a not-for-profit publication; the profits from this book will be used to continue to finance similar writing projects by students. The Department of Youth and Culture is the Platinum Sponsor of *Chapter 5*.

For more information, contact the editor, Maris Edwards, at maris.edwards@doe.edu.ai. Visit their Facebook page *Chapter 5 Ban-waun Fivae*.

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