

LEAVE IT TO NAASU by Naasu G. Fofanah

REVIEW by Augustine Sorie-Sengbe Marrah

There are those who write stories and there are ones who tell stories from the heart. “Leave it to Naasu” is a fractional autobiography that belongs to the latter category.

The book is a beautiful read of the author’s resilient and fearless life which defied the imperatives of the myriad limitations in her childhood, marriage, career and political life. The plot is a sublime contrast of her early days in the twilight of the old-world order when human rights, especially women’s rights were prominent but only in the footnotes of our political and social conclaves and her steel resolve to stand up for her principles and navigate the terrain filled with landmines for women and girls.

The contents of this book speak to overarching themes of gender, feminism, sexual and gender-based violence and political power. This is not just about how the author viewed the world some thirty/forty years ago but how the prism of her thoughts and world-views have so progressively evolved with the global paradigm shifts on the said themes. The author did not shy away from her controversial position on the Bondo society’s rites, reaffirming about the rituals as follows:

“There was a lot of emphasis on community leadership, fostering sisterhood, caring for family and respect for authority. One key element was raising our self-esteem as a Bondo woman. We were constantly told that nobody should put us down and that the society would always be our support system in time of need.”

“Leave it to Naasu” tells the integral story of a woman whose core value, since adolescence, has always been “fidelity to self”. Trapped between a seeming father’s rejection and a mother’s non-validation, the author tells her story of how excitedly she chose education to overcome her early familial obstacles. The book is unashamedly harrowing yet authentic about the author’s dark episodes of suicide attempt, near-paralysis, sexual abuse and divorce. She lifts the lid on many topics in our conservative society which were once only loud in our collective silence. The author speaks of rape as a patriarchal expression and utility of power.

Enrolled into university at 31, the author's academic journey is a compelling citation of "age is not an excuse for not being educated".

This book is also thoroughly witty and exhilarating. While the author considered enlisting into convent because of her brief time at St. Joseph's Secondary School, her later beautiful love stories, dispersed in different stages of her life, are shared in an incredibly funny yet revelatory manner. I am still trying to figure out who the "Prince of Foindu" was. Or why the Portloko Prince and not a Kabala Prince?

Naasu's writing is exceedingly clever and impressively simple. She has not written only for the educated but she has written her life-story as a means of education for all gender, ages, tribes, nationalities and peoples. To be candid, "Leave it to Naasu" is a tell-it-all about the mountains, valleys and oceans of difficulties and barriers in and around the way of women. But it also inspires hope to all generation of women that one can always emerge from the dark alleyways of mistakes and abuse, to the light of freedom and the absolute agency to take charge and go for what you want even in the jungle of partisan politics.

"Leave it to Naasu" is a proven story that Women will not only win but they are already winning bigly.

"Leave it to Naasu" is not only a powerful life-story, it is also a rich literature resource. And I recommend its reading!