

The Standard

UCU COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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Our view

Have faith in the university authorities

The university community last week woke up to a chilling account of a student who committed suicide. It was the fourth time that such a thing has happened in recent years if we include a former student who hanged himself in the University Police cell. It is said the student, Lucy Sunday Adjambo, left campus to return home where she had the audacity to tell family members that she was having her last meal with them.

Obviously, the family members could not have taken her threat seriously because they probably did not understand her state of mind. The death of Adjambo and Appollo Kweteisa in a police cell poses serious questions about our ability, as a university, to help students with psychopathic problems. It is our indictment for failing to assist those in distress.

It is impossible to imagine that Adjambo, for instance, could have gone through agony unnoticed by colleagues in her class and hostel, lecturers, tutors, relatives and parents. There is no doubt that by returning home she was not searching for a better place to die from but for help.

Kweteisa who hanged himself had dropped out of university in the first year after his guardian stopped paying his university fees because he (Kweteisa) diverted the tuition fees to other uses.

There is no evidence that he was ever helped out of his dire situation.

Fortunately, every dark cloud has a silver lining. The death of the students should now trigger off action as it is crystal clear that we need to do more to help such students. We should, as a community, constitute ourselves into whistle-blowers to keep keen eyes on potential victims. We should be our brother's (and sister's) keeper.

Because most of our students are too young to deal with the rough tides in relationships, they are easily swept away into committing suicide. Besides, because of this university's moral standing, some students find it hard to disclose their immoral relationships. This is a mistake because Jesus' mission was to liberate the sinners. We advise all students to always have faith in the university officials to handle their predicaments, no matter how mucky they may appear to be.

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Opinion Opinion Opinion Opinion Opinion



Recent drama around two suicides included the false identification found on one victim, which originally led parents of a living student to believe that he had died.

What suicide can teach us about facing fear and living freely

THOMAS FROESE



Suicide is a shabby and shameful business, something that nice people don't get mixed up in, yet here they are, two suicides in our university family, two young people who in separate incidents have left us with nothing but a disturbing 'good-bye.'

And while the original meaning 'God be with you' disappeared into the phrase 'good-bye' many years ago, this also is what we're now left with, this disturbing 'God be with you,' a strange sort of prayer that the Divine will somehow be with these two souls.

Somehow because Lucy Sunday Adjambo lost all hope and Appollo Kweteisa, often called Don, lost all faith. This is why it's not easy to really see God in the picture. Suicide brings that much shame, so much that the Church used to commonly teach that it sent you straight to hell.

But, then again, shame has been with any of us from the very beginning. It's our sorry heritage from Eden, from the time our first parents tried to hide and cover-up in the garden.

This is what makes these deaths so hard to talk about. Not the details. There's been "talk" about the details: Lucy, the broken romance, then the fire that took your life; and Don, the stolen identification and alleged crimes, then the bed-sheet around your neck that took yours in a UCU police cell.

It's the sort of chatter shared matter-of-factly at the lunch table. What's harder to talk about is the why. Why here, why in our university home where excellence is our motto and where we do such a good job making that point?

One answer is that suicide can happen anywhere. I know because a long time ago someone in my own immediate family took her own life. Other than this we only have questions to wrestle with.

Questions and grief over the loss of two lives created with dignity and honour in God's image, created, as the Scripture puts it, just a little lower than the angels.

There is something else, though, and it is opportunity, the opportunity to ask what matters most, at least what should matter most to anyone here at UCU.

What matters most, you say, is that you get a good education, your money's worth, anyway, to make the university and your family proud and, with any luck, get a decent job and the other good things that can follow such scholastic success.

But what if this is just the academic version of gaining the world while losing your soul, a subtle covering-up of that inherent human shame? What if there is something more?

What if you are here to, in fact, find your humanness and your brokenness and your commonality with all the other broken people around you?

And what if, through these two disturbing 'good-byes,' this is now more possible for you to explore?

Then you would be involving yourself in something sacred. And you would better understand the paradox of what Jesus called living in the Kingdom of God.

Family is most itself when it's at home with its shadows, the dark corners in any of us, and when it allows failure. Because failing is part of being alive and it gives us the freedom to learn and become who we're meant.

Family is also most itself when we trust each other; when we share our secrets, including that big secret that is hardly a secret, that we tend to put up façades.

Yes, it's especially easy to put up false fronts in religious environments, like this one, where shame and guilt can be so feared that they're avoided at all costs.

This, if nothing else, is what Jesus also taught, that there's another way to live, a way of honesty and freedom.

For one reason or another, Lucy and Don didn't understand this. They were overwhelmed by their fears and their hurts and their shames. But we all know that they're not the only ones.

Now the question is, how might these two lost lives help others?

Author and journalist Thomas Froese is a Standard founder. Read him at www.dailydad.net and www.thomasfroese.com