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The **Epitome** */I'pitəmi/*

Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch

Unleash the epitome of creative writers

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SYNOPSIS

The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah branch is proud to present the first issue of its e-magazine, The Epitome, as our focus to highlight our commitment to contribute to the areas of creative writing.

THE EPITOME aims to provide a platform for writers, educators, academicians, poet, and researchers to share their ideas, findings, knowledge, and experience, particularly on various creative writing genres - personal essays, poetry, short stories, songs, movie scripts, plays, and innovative projects in four different languages (English, Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Arabic).

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure and immense pride that we, the Academy of Language Studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah branch, extend our warmest welcome to all writers and readers to honor all 127 artistic masterpieces. This is indeed a tremendous achievement to commemorate our debut.

We are privileged to offer the platform for the writers to show their talents in creative writing in this magazine, which serves as a testament to our commitment to the area of personal essays, poetry, short stories, songs, movie scripts, plays, and innovative projects. Their invaluable contributions and unwavering commitment to academic excellence have played a vital role in shaping this magazine.

Thank you.

Best regards,

Editorial Board



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GO BACK TO AFRICA!

Norliza Che Mustafa

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Here in Malaysia, you can see people smiling everywhere, every day. It was not a novel phenomenon in this multicultural country. A smile is a gift we give to others—family, friends, and even strangers. You could say that smiling is our daily routine. Maybe the smile that we give can lighten up the life of the receivers, elevate their mood and make them happier. We never know, right? What I want to write about is an incident caused by a smile that I encountered a long time ago.

The incident happened when I was studying abroad. I was still green at that time; still young. I just finished my secondary education and enrolled at a university thousands of miles away from home.

It was winter. The day was cold and sombre. I was walking to the university for my morning class. When I arrived at the entrance of the university, I saw an old lady waiting to cross the street. I assumed she was on her way to the market because I saw her holding a small basket. I glanced at her and saw that she was looking my way. I smiled as a greeting, like I did in Malaysia. But little did I know that my small action triggered her. She got angry and pointed her finger at me and shouted, “What are you smiling at?” “Go back to Africa!” Why Africa? Well, only she knew. I had no idea.

To say that I was stupefied was a euphemism because, like I said, I was still quite young at that time. My mind was blank. I couldn’t believe what I just heard. This was the first time in my whole life someone said that to me. And I did nothing. I continued to smile despite feeling shocked and sad at the same time. Luckily, there were no other passers-by around since it was still very early. Nobody saw her getting mad at me. I was thankful for that.

I kept thinking about the incident the whole day. After that, I thought, maybe I shouldn’t smile. Maybe in this country, a smile meant something else. I guessed it was a cultural thing. The things I did in my own country were not necessarily accepted in this country.

And rightfully so; I found out later that in this foreign country you only smiled at someone close to you, either your family or your friends, and not at a stranger. Here, you smiled at a stranger in two different cases. One, if you wanted to flirt with him or her, and two, when you were being sarcastic or making fun of someone. And so the old lady had the right to be angry because she thought I was making fun of her. Without knowing it, my small action hurt her feelings.

In Malaysia, smiling at someone is considered a gift, whereas in this country it was something else. So, on that cold winter morning, I learned about cultural differences. It really opened my eyes. I won’t make the same mistakes again, and I won’t assume all behaviours are equally acceptable around the world. A lesson learned. Not the hard way, but I felt hurt, nevertheless.

What would you do if you were in my situation on that cold winter morning? Would you smile?



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