

### Why Do I Write—Part 3

At that young age, with the story-telling, I realized writing was a weakness among our people. This is not a criticism, nor is it intended to provoke a plethora of excuses for people from the Caribbean to explain away or rationalize the reasons. It is my observation.

I wish my mother wrote the many stories she told us at night to put us to bed.

People have maintained unpublished interesting diaries of their activities. It remains a weakness in the Caribbean. Apart from the inability to handover the story from one generation to another, the verbal version can differ from the written version as you have seen in my mother's tale of the Three Sillies.

Here is a concise version of another one of my mother's bedtime stories. I have heard several versions of it, depending on the story teller. I have not found a written version to verify the real story.

A cow goes missing in the village. Days pass, the cow remains missing. One man in the village accused of stealing the cow. The man protests his innocence. His accusers insist on his guilt.

A cow was a significant animal. The animal took many years to gain maturity and to reach slaughtering age. Butchering a cow was ceremonial event in the village. Children crawled out of their beds before dawn to see the butchers at work. One cow produced enough meat to feed the entire village.

The authorities arrive at the village to investigate the matter. The information they gather point towards the accused man. They suggest an arrest is imminent. The accused man protests his innocence to the authorities. They treat him with scant courtesy.

The accused man hangs himself.

Seven days after it went missing, and one day after the suicide, the cow emerges from the bushes.

My mother told us this story several times. Every time she saw an injustice being committed she referred to it as the curse of the cow. She used it to show the danger of false information, bearing false witness against one's neighbors, the power of hatred in a society, the extent people will go to crucify others, the lackluster nature of the authorities sometimes and even if one tries to stay away from trouble, it finds you wherever you are.

This man kept to himself. He did not get involved in the daily gossip and rumormongering of the village. Still, they entangled him in a web of deception and lies, depressing him, and driving him to suicide.

I learnt at an early age to avoid these pitfalls in life. As I grew older, I encountered occasions where these valuable lessons were vital to my survival.

It's a pity my mother did not write and publish them.