

# #HASHTAG

FEBRUARY EDITION, 2026



CITE YOUTH  
NETWORK

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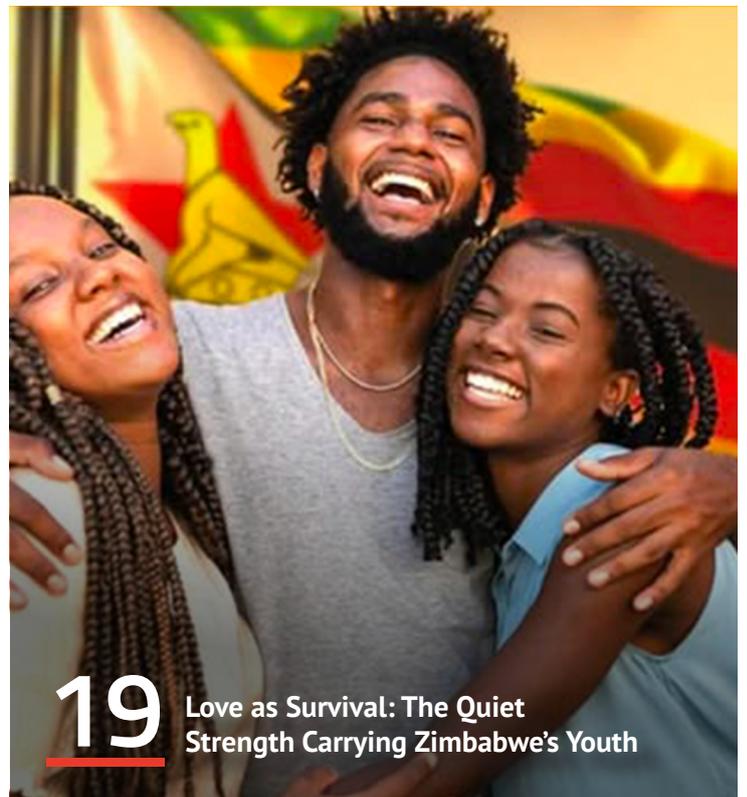
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# Editor's Note



**Melinda Ncube**  
CITE Youth Network Coordinator

February is often wrapped in symbols, roses, hashtags, celebrations, stages, and soundtracks. But beneath the surface, this issue asks a deeper question: what are we really celebrating, and who gets to define it?

In these pages, love is not reduced to romance. It becomes survival in *Love as Survival*, sisterhood in *Valentine's Day: Reclaiming Love through Friendship and Sisterhood*, self definition in *More Than Roses*, and historical evolution in *Valentine: History's Most Persistent Name*. We trace February 14 back to Pope Gelasius I and the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer, while also acknowledging how figures like Alexander Graham Bell and platforms such as YouTube have reshaped how connection is expressed and performed in modern times.

Beyond love, this issue amplifies the energy of youth in motion. From the powerful gathering at National Youth Day in Bulawayo to the digital transformation of journalism students at the National University of Science and Technology, we see young people refusing to remain passive observers. They are creators, critics, storytellers, and innovators.

We also confront tension. In *The Sound of the Streets*, we explore how Amapiano dominates speakers while local artists fight for space, reminding us that culture is both influence and identity. And in *Pressure to Have It All at a Young Age*, we unpack the silent competition shaping our generation's mental health and sense of worth.

What ties these stories together is a single thread: intention. Whether it is how we love, create, celebrate, build careers, or support one another, this generation is questioning inherited narratives and redefining them on its own terms.

As always, this magazine is more than content. It is a reflection of youth realities, honest, layered, and sometimes uncomfortable. It is a space where celebration meets critique, and where storytelling becomes a tool for clarity.

Thank you for reading, reflecting, and growing with us.

Happy February and enjoy the read.

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## Youth Voices Amplified: Inside CITE's National Youth Day Celebration



By  
**Lethokuhle Mpofu**

**C**reativity and civic purpose collided on National Youth Day in Bulawayo, where the CITE Youth Network transformed Isilwane Youth Centre in Old Pumula into a hub of expression, dialogue, and action.

The celebration demonstrated how young people are turning storytelling, performance, and digital media into tools for accountability, engagement, and social impact.

The event brought together approximately 120 young people from across Bulawayo to showcase youth-led initiatives, creative media projects, and community-driven solutions. Participants engaged in interactive quizzes, explored exhibitions, recorded live podcasts, and created digital

content while performances and sports punctuated the day. The programme was designed to highlight inclusivity, collaboration, and active youth participation in governance, accountability, and civic engagement, providing multiple ways for young people to contribute ideas and express their perspectives.

Highlights of the day included the Creative Media and Civic Engagement panel, which emphasized the ways youth are shaping civic discourse. Happy Mpofu, a leading figure in Pumula's arts scene, showed how performance and media can tackle issues from climate change to unemployment while strengthening community cohesion. Shaun, performing as Umnikazi Wempuphu, illustrated how comedy, music, and digital storytelling can make complex civic concepts relatable and engaging for young audiences. Chidaiso

Mbazo offered a multimedia perspective, demonstrating how poetry, storytelling, and broadcast media can elevate marginalized voices and widen the frame of civic conversation. Together, they emphasized that media and creative expression can amplify youth perspectives and translate attention into action.

The day was packed with interactive experiences that brought civic engagement to life. Quizzes challenged participants' knowledge of governance and accountability, while spoken word performances and dance pieces made issues like environmental advocacy and youth empowerment tangible. One dance performance used recycled plastic regalia to dramatize climate awareness, while another showcased the challenges and triumphs of young people navigating Bulawayo's social landscape.

Sporting activities soccer and netball were more than games. They reflected the principles of teamwork, leadership, and shared responsibility central to the day's objectives, showing how collaboration and engagement can extend beyond discussion into action.

Content creation ran throughout the event, with participants recording live podcasts, capturing short-form videos, and documenting exhibitions. This approach demonstrated that civic engagement and media production are intertwined: story-

telling, performance, and documentation are all tools to shape dialogue and influence community action.

Networking, informal discussions, and exhibition exploration allowed participants to connect across sessions, performances, and sports. Prize giving, results announcements, and group visuals celebrated achievement and reinforced the sense of agency and accomplishment felt throughout the day.

National Youth Day in Bulawayo proved that civic engagement thrives when creativity, media, and collaboration intersect. The CITE Youth Network's celebration showed that young people are not just observers of governance they are active participants, storytellers, and leaders shaping the future of their communities.

# Youth Day: Celebration or Commitment?



By  
Ruvarashe Munyoro

Every year, Youth Day arrives wrapped in celebration, music, speeches, and social media posts reminding young people that they are “the future.” But beyond the excitement and hashtags, many youths are still navigating unemployment, limited opportunities, and silent struggles that rarely make it to the stage. To unpack whether Youth Day is truly transformative or simply symbolic, we got a chance to interview the Co-Founder of Save Africa Foundation, a media personality and radio presenter who is also a passionate mental health advocate. Beyond the microphone, she serves as Treasurer for Know Your Worth Foundation and works as a peer educator, empowering young people with knowledge, confidence, and practical support. Her voice carries both influence and responsibility and her perspective reflects the realities many young people face today.

**Question 1.** When Youth Day arrives, what does it actually mean to you, and do you think it reflects the real lives of young people today?

(Answer)

For me, Youth Day is about celebrating and acknowledging that we are young people with purpose. It’s a reminder that we are driven, ambitious, and filled with dreams we are still working to achieve. It gives us hope and motivation to keep pushing forward. However, while the message is powerful, it doesn’t always reflect the true reality of most young people. Many are struggling to find employment, access opportunities, or even receive proper mental health support. The celebration highlights potential, but often overlooks the daily battles young people fight quietly.

**Question 2.**

In your opinion, has Youth Day brought real change for youth, or has it become more of a symbolic performance than a platform for progress?

(Answer)

Youth Day hasn’t yet brought the level of change that young people truly need. It raises awareness, yes but awareness alone is not enough. We need real empowerment. There is still room for improvement. Youth Day should not just be about gathering and celebrating. It should lead to job creation, funding opportunities, mental health support systems, and skill-building programs. Young

people need tangible change, not just motivational speeches.

**Question 3.** Who do you feel is truly being celebrated on Youth Day, and which young people remain unseen or unheard?

(Answer)

Often, Youth Day celebrates the already empowered those with platforms, education, and visibility. These are young people who can stand confidently and share their achievements. But many young people, especially those in rural areas or underprivileged communities, remain unseen. They may not have access to business funding, mentorship, or exposure. Their voices are quieter, but their potential is just as powerful. Youth Day should amplify those voices too.

**Question 4** How much responsibility do you think young people themselves must take in shaping their future, instead of waiting for leaders to act?

(Answer)

Young people must take initiative, but empowerment is essential. They need safe spaces, entrepreneurial opportunities, mentorship, and access to information. When youth are supported, they innovate and lead.

We cannot wait entirely for leaders but leaders also have a responsibility to create enabling environments. Change is a shared responsibility.

**Question 5.** If Youth Day is to matter beyond the celebrations, what commitments should it demand from youth, leaders, and society as a whole?

(Answer)

Youth Day should demand real commitments like more job opportunities, accessible business funding, mental health awareness and support, policies that genuinely prioritise youth development among other things. For young people, the commitment should be to stay engaged, proactive, and resilient. From leaders and society, the commitment must be action not just applause.

Youth Day should not only celebrate young people it should invest in them. Because celebration without commitment is just performance.

## The Sound of the Streets—Is Amapiano Drowning Out Local Talent?



By  
Brandon Ncube

**W**alk through the City Hall taxi rank or hop into any kombi heading to Luveve, and you'll hear it: the deep, vibrating log-drum of Amapiano. It is the undisputed heartbeat of Bulawayo's nightlife and the soundtrack to every session. But as the South African wave continues to flood our speakers, a quiet tension is rising in the local recording booths.

Bulawayo has always been the cultural capital, the

"City of Kings and Queens" that birthed legends in Jazz, Kwaito, and Imbube. However, today's landscape is different. To get a crowd moving at a local chilling spot, a DJ often feels forced to play a "SA-only" set. For local producers, the pressure is immense: do you create the music in your heart, or do you "duplicate" the trending South African sound just to get a spin?

"It's about survival and visibility," says one producer based in Magwegwe West. "If I drop a 100% local house track with a unique Zim rhythm, the floor clears. The

ears of the youth are tuned to a specific frequency right now, and if you aren't on it, you're invisible."

This "cultural takeover" isn't just about the music; it's about the economy of talent. When we only consume imported hits, the "booked and busy" slots go to visiting artists, while our own creators struggle to pay for studio time or data to upload their tracks.

But there is a silver lining. A new crop of Bulawayo creators is refusing to just copy-paste. They are "localizing" the log-drum—infusing

Amapiano with Ndebele lyrics, local street slang, and traditional percussion that you won't find in a Jozi studio. They are turning the trend into a local tool for storytelling.

The Vibe Check: We are more than just consumers; we are creators. The question for February is: are we ready to invest in our own stars? Supporting local talent isn't just about patriotism; it's about ensuring that the "Bulawayo Sound" doesn't become a ghost in its own city.

**By Brandon Ncube**



**Scan here**

**Visuals only! Forget letters and numbers match the emojis to solve the grid. Can you spot the pattern before the time runs out?**

# Trace the Roots: A Brief History of February 14th



By  
Brandon Ncube

**W**hile we see the red roses and heart-shaped cards everywhere today, the story of February 14th is a journey through ancient history, originating far from our own borders. Here are the documented facts on how this day came to be:

-Ancient Rome (496 AD): The date was first established by Pope Gelasius I in Rome. It was intended to honor a Roman priest named Valentine who had been martyred over two centuries earlier during the reign of Emperor Claudius II.

-The Legend of the Rebel Priest: According to historical lore, the Roman Emperor had banned marriages for young soldiers, believing single men fought better. Valentine, a priest in Rome, performed secret ceremonies in defiance of the Emperor's law to keep families together.

-The British Connection (1382): For a long time, the day was purely a religious feast. It wasn't until the Middle Ages in England that it became associated with romance. The famous English poet Geoffrey Chaucer was one of the first to link the day to "love" in his writing to honor the engagement of King Richard II.

-The French Influence: In 1415, the Duke of Orléans, a Frenchman, wrote the oldest

known "Valentine" poem to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. This started the European tradition of sending written "valentines."

-Mass Production (1840s): The holiday shifted from a small European tradition to a global one when Esther Howland, an American woman, began mass-producing lace-paper cards. This turned the day into the commercial season we recognize today.

The Bottom Line: From Roman decrees to English poetry and American factories, February 14th has evolved over nearly 2,000 years into the global event it is today. History matters--know the facts.

# YOUTH DAY

Celebrating youth activism, media innovation, and civic leadership





# Pressure to Have It All at a Young Age



By  
Ruvorashe Munyoro

**F**or many young people today, life feels less like a journey and more like a competition. Everywhere you look, someone your age seems to be achieving something major: graduating with distinction, launching a business, travelling overseas, getting married, buying a car, or announcing a new job. Scroll through social media for five minutes and it can feel like the world is moving forward without you. The pressure to “have it all” before 30 has quietly become one of the biggest burdens young people carry.

This pressure does not come from one place. It comes from family expectations, societal timelines, peer comparisons, and the constant visibility created by social media. Many young people were raised believing that edu-

cation would automatically open doors. The promise was simple: work hard in school, get a degree, and success will follow. But for many graduates today, that promise feels delayed or even broken. Instead of stepping into stable careers, they find themselves navigating unemployment, internships that do not pay, or side hustles that barely cover expenses.

At the same time, online platforms amplify unrealistic standards. Social media rarely shows the years of struggle behind success. It shows the highlight reel: the promotion announcement, the business launch, the engagement photos, the travel pictures. What it does not show are the failed interviews, rejected applications, debt, sleepless nights, or emotional breakdowns. As a result, comparison becomes constant and often unfair.

The danger of this pressure is

not just emotional; it affects mental health, self-worth, and decision-making. Some young people rush into careers they dislike simply to appear successful. Others enter relationships before they are ready because they feel “left behind.” Some take financial risks they cannot afford in order to maintain a certain image. The desire to meet society’s timeline can lead to burnout, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy.

But the truth is simple: life is not a race, and success is not one-size-fits-all. Economic realities, background, opportunity, and timing differ for everyone. Some people build early; others build slowly and steadily. Some discover their purpose later in life. There is no universal clock that determines achievement.

Redefining success is essential for this generation. Success might mean securing your first stable income, even

if it is not your dream job yet. It might mean improving your mental health, learning new skills, supporting your family, or simply surviving in a difficult economy. Progress does not have to be dramatic to be meaningful.

Young people deserve space to grow without feeling rushed. The twenties are not a deadline; they are a foundation. Instead of chasing the illusion of “having it all,” perhaps the focus should shift to building sustainably, learning continuously, and defining personal milestones that reflect individual realities.

You do not have to have everything figured out right now. Growth takes time. Stability takes effort. Purpose takes discovery. And success often looks quieter and slower than what appears on a screen.

# Valentine's Day: Reclaiming Love through Friendship and Sisterhood



By  
Amanda Ndlovu

For generations, Valentine's Day has been positioned as the ultimate celebration of romantic love. From films to social media timelines, the message is often loud and clear: love is about being chosen by someone else. Yet, for many young women, some of the most meaningful, enduring, and transformative relationships in their lives are not romantic at all. This is where Galentine's Day steps in not as a rejection of romance, but as a redefinition of love itself.

Galentine's Day is a celebration of friendship, sisterhood, and the deep bonds formed between women who choose one another every day. It honors the friends who have witnessed our growth, our failures, our healing, and our becoming. These are the people who stay when life feels uncertain; who

remind us of our worth when confidence runs low, and who love us without conditions or expectations. In many ways, these friendships form the emotional backbone of our lives.

At its core, Galentine's challenges a long-standing narrative that places romantic relationships at the top of the hierarchy of love. Society often measures success through partnership that you're dating, when you'll settle down, and whether you've found "the one." Galentine's disrupts this thinking by affirming that love is not singular. It exists in community, in friendship, in shared experiences, and in the quiet support systems we build over time.

For young women navigating a fast-paced, often demanding world, friendships become sacred spaces of safety and truth. They are where vulnerability is met with understanding rather than judgment. Where tears are allowed without

explanation. Where laughter becomes medicine and silence becomes comfort. In these spaces, women learn to speak freely, to dream boldly, and to heal collectively. Galentine's Day gives recognition to these often-undervalued forms of emotional labor and care.

There is also a powerful act of self-love embedded in celebrating Galentine's. For those who are single, the day becomes an opportunity to reject narratives of lack or loneliness. Instead of viewing Valentine's Day as a reminder of what is missing, Galentine's reframes it as a reminder of what already exists: meaningful connections, chosen family, and love that does not depend on romantic validation. It reminds women that their lives are full, whole, and worthy as they are.

Beyond individual friendships, Galentine's speaks to the importance of solidarity among women. In a society that often encourages competition over

beauty, success, relationships, and social status choosing to celebrate one another becomes a radical act. It is a commitment to uplift rather than compare, to support rather than undermine, and to recognize that another woman's success does not diminish your own. Galentine's becomes a moment to intentionally practice sisterhood in a world that does not always make it easy.

Celebrating Galentine's does not require grand gestures. It lives in the small, intentional moments: shared meals, thoughtful messages, honest conversations, inside jokes, and time spent together without distraction. These acts, though simple, are deeply meaningful. They reflect a form of love rooted in consistency rather than spectacle—a love that shows up even when there is nothing to post or prove.

Ultimately, Galentine's Day invites us to broaden our understanding of love. It reminds us that love is not limited to romance, nor is it defined by relationship status. Love is found in the friends who grow with us, challenge us, and stand beside us through every season of life. These relationships deserve recognition, celebration, and gratitude.

In celebrating Galentine's, we acknowledge an important truth: friendship is not a placeholder for romantic love; it is a powerful, complete love story of its own. And perhaps, in learning to value these connections more deeply, we begin to build a culture that recognizes love in all its forms.

# More Than Roses: What Valentine's Day Really Means to Us



By  
Amanda Ndlovu

**E**very February, Valentine's Day arrives carrying a set of expectations. There is an unspoken idea of how the day should look, who it should be shared with, and what it is supposed to represent. Yet for many people, real life does not fit neatly into these narratives. Valentine's Day can feel joyful, ordinary, reflective, or even complicated sometimes all at once. Rather than accepting one definition of the day, many are quietly choosing to shape its meaning for them.

Curious about how people truly experience Valentine's Day, we asked a few individuals what the day means to them and how they choose to celebrate it. Their responses reveal a deeper understanding of love one that

extends beyond romance and centers on intention, connection, and presence.

For Ntokozo (23), Valentine's Day has shifted from expectation to appreciation.

"There was a time when I thought Valentine's only mattered if you had a partner," she says. "Now I see it as a chance to appreciate the people who are consistently in my life. I usually spend the day with friends or doing something simple that brings me peace."

Her experience reflects a broader shift among young people who are redefining celebration on their own terms, without pressure or comparison.

Siphiwe (26) describes Valentine's Day as a moment of self-awareness rather than performance.

"I've learned not to measure my life against what I see online," she explains. "Some years I celebrate

quietly, other years I don't do anything at all. For me, love looks like choosing myself and protecting my emotional space."

This perspective challenges the idea that love must always be visible or shared publicly. Instead, it highlights the importance of self-love as a foundation rather than an afterthought.

For Thabo (27), Valentine's Day is closely tied to family and gratitude.

"I don't separate love into categories," he shares. "For me, Valentine's is about acknowledging the people who raised me and supported me. Sometimes that means spending time with family or simply reaching out to say thank you."

Across all these perspectives, one truth stands out: Valentine's Day means different things to different people, and that diversity deserves space. Love is not limited to

romantic relationships, nor is it defined by a single day or gesture. It is expressed through consistency, care, and the ways we show up for one another.

What these conversations reveal is a quiet but powerful shift. More people are moving away from inherited definitions of love and choosing meanings that reflect their real lives. Valentine's Day, in this sense, becomes less about expectation and more about intention. Perhaps the most important takeaway is this: love exists in many forms, and all of them matter. Whether found in friendship, self-care, family, or community, love shows up through action. And when we allow ourselves to define it honestly, Valentine's Day becomes not a measure of what we lack, but a reminder of the connections we already hold.

**CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE**

Taken together, these reflections reveal something important about how love is being redefined, especially among young people. Valentine's Day is no longer seen as a moment that demands performance or proof. Instead, it is becoming a space for honesty a day that reflects where people are in their lives, rather than where they are expected to be. What is striking is how many people spoke about love as something quiet and intentional. Not grand gestures, public displays, or carefully planned moments, but love expressed through consistency, emotional safety, and presence. This shift challenges the highly commercialized version of Valentine's Day that often suggests love must be visible, expensive, or externally validat-

ed to be real.

There is also a growing resistance to comparison. In an age where social media amplifies curated relationships and idealized versions of love, choosing to celebrate Valentine's Day differently becomes an act of self-awareness. It is a refusal to measure one's worth against timelines, relationship status, or online narratives. For many, redefining the day is about reclaiming agency deciding what love means without external pressure. Beyond individual choice, these perspectives highlight the importance of community. Love, as described by those we spoke to, thrives in shared spaces: friendships that offer grounding, families that provide support, and circles that allow vulnerability. These forms of love often go unnoticed,

yet they are the ones that sustain people through uncertainty, change, and growth. In this way, Valentine's Day becomes less about a single type of relationship and more about connection in its many forms. It becomes a reminder that love is not something to wait for, but something to practice daily through listening, showing up, and caring without expectation. Ultimately, these stories invite a broader understanding of love one that is expansive, inclusive, and rooted in action. When Valentine's Day is viewed through this lens, it shifts from a day of pressure to a moment of reflection, encouraging us to recognize love where it already exists and to honor it in ways that feel genuine and meaningful.





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# CITE Youth Network celebrates National Youth Day in style



By  
Lisa Dube

**C**ITE Youth Network marked National Youth Day with vibrant discussions, creative performances and interactive activities aimed at strengthening youth activism and civic engagement.

The commemorations were held at Isilwane Youth Centre under the theme “Celebrating Youth Activism, Media Innovation and Civic Engagement,” bringing together young people from different communities.

The theme encouraged youths to speak out on social issues, use creative media responsibly to raise awareness and take up leadership roles in their communities.

Proceedings began with an interactive quiz on civic engagement and media literacy, which saw participants actively engaging and testing their knowledge on governance, rights and responsible media use.

A panel discussion on creative media and civic engagement followed, with speakers sharing practical ways young people can influence conversations and decision-making processes in their communities.

“One use of creative media is sharing information through reels on social media platforms to reach a wider audience,” said one of the panelists, Chidaiso.

Content creator Umnikazi Wemouphu said skits can be used to raise awareness on issues such as gender-based violence and other pressing social challenges affecting communities.

Another panelist, Happy, encouraged the use of art for development, highlighting how edutainment content can be designed to educate while entertaining audiences.

Through these approaches, the panelists said, young people can use creative media as a tool to raise awareness and drive positive change.

Beyond the discussions, the event also created a platform for networking and skills development, with participants practicing public speaking and engaging respectfully in civic conversations.

Teamwork and collaboration were further promoted through netball and soccer matches. Organisers said the sporting activities were designed not only for recreation but also to instill the importance of working together towards a common goal.

The Pumula Junction dance crew added flair to the event, entertaining the audience while showcasing artistic expression as a form of youth voice.

One of the participants, Zoleka Tshabangu, said the event reminded young people not to succumb to negative peer pressure.

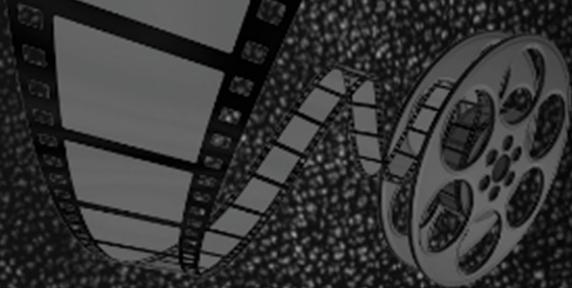
“As young people, we don’t have to conform to negative pressures. Instead, we can unite, build businesses, uplift our communities, and choose growth over self-destruction,” she said.

Another participant, Bradley Sibanda, said more still needs to be done to address gaps in community development for young people.

“You can see that certain structures and systems are really important for communities. There is less exposure to certain aspects of life, and a clear distinction between uptown and downtown areas,” he said.

“There is still an educational gap, as well as limited economic pathways and opportunities. What I learned is the importance of exposure and the need to host more events like this for young people to network.”





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# Love as Survival: The Quiet Strength Carrying Zimbabwe's Youth



By  
Tafadzwa Gumunyu

If you walk through the streets of Harare, Bulawayo, or any Zimbabwean town this February, you will see the usual signs of the “month of love”, roses being sold at traffic lights, couples taking selfies, restaurants advertising Valentine specials. But behind those bright images, many young Zimbabweans are living a different kind of love. It is not loud. It is not glamorous. Yet for many, it is the reason they keep going.

For 22-year-old college student Nyasha, love is not about romance right now. It is about her roommate who shares groceries when money runs out and classmates who send notes when she misses lectures. She laughs softly and says, “Honestly, sometimes love is just someone making sure you don’t quit.”

That feeling is echoed by many young people navigating tough economic realities, academic pressure, and uncertain career paths. Support systems among

friends, families, and communities have quietly become survival tools.

Kudakwashe, a young entrepreneur trying to build a small tech hustle, says his biggest motivation is not profit but the people behind him. “My friends believed in me before I even believed in myself,” he explains. “When things get hard, I remember I’m not doing this alone.”

These experiences reflect something scholars and writers have long said about love and community. Cultural critic and author bell hooks once wrote, “We can begin the process of making community wherever we are... by doing a kind deed or acknowledging kindness offered to us.” That idea, from her book *All About Love*, speaks directly to what many Zimbabwean youths are living daily and love expressed through action, not just words.

Across Zimbabwe, informal support networks have become normal. Friends share rent. Families combine resources. Young creatives collaborate instead of competing.

These small acts rarely make headlines, yet they hold lives together.

Some youths say mental health struggles are easier to manage when they feel supported. Tinashe, a university student, says WhatsApp groups with friends often become safe spaces. “Sometimes we don’t even solve anything,” he says. “We just remind each other that we’re trying, and that helps.”

This reflects broader thinking about community and human resilience. South African cleric and human rights icon Desmond Tutu famously explained the African philosophy of *ubuntu* by saying a person becomes fully human through others and the idea that “my humanity is caught up in yours.” That philosophy still shapes how many African societies view love: not just romance, but shared existence.

Family also remains central. Many young Zimbabweans say parents or older siblings provide encouragement even when finances are limited. Sometimes it is just a phone call or advice that keeps some-

one steady.

Digital life has added another layer. Online communities now provide emotional support, business connections, and creative collaboration. A young photographer in Bulawayo says most of his opportunities came through social media encouragement. “People I’ve never met push me more than people I see every day,” he says. Yet despite these positive networks, challenges remain. Economic uncertainty, migration pressures, and academic stress still weigh heavily on young people. That is why, for many, love has become less about celebration and more about endurance.

Bell hooks argued that love is not simply a feeling but something people practice through care, responsibility, and commitment. That perspective resonates strongly with Zimbabwean youth who are learning that survival often depends on collective strength rather than individual success.

So while February is often marketed as a season of romance, many Zimbabwean youths are quietly redefining what love means. It may be a friend who helps you revise for exams, a sibling who sends transport money, a mentor who encourages your dreams, or a community that refuses to let you struggle alone. And perhaps that is the deeper story this month. Love here is not always about flowers or fancy dates. Sometimes it is simply the courage to show up for each other again and again until everyone makes it through.

Because for many young Zimbabweans today, love is not just something to celebrate. It is something helping them survive.

# Valentine: History's Most Persistent Name



By  
Lethokuhle Mpfu

**V**alentine is a name that has carried centuries of stories, some messy, some mysterious, all layered with human desire. Every February 14, we celebrate or think we celebrate Valentine, but the truth is far from the roses, chocolates, and Instagram-ready bouquets we associate with the day.

Saint Valentine is not one person, but likely several martyrs, said by historians to have been executed in the 3rd century under the Roman Empire. The most persistent account suggests one Valentine secretly performed marriages at a time when the state discouraged them marriage meant emotional attachment, and attachment made unreliable soldiers. In this origin story, love was quiet resistance, a private defiance under the shadow of empire.

An important detail to note, there is no contemporary record linking Valentine directly to romance. That association emerges centuries later.

By the 14th century, Valentine's story had transformed. Geoffrey Chaucer imagined mid-February as a time when

birds paired off. Nature itself became a metaphor for human desire, and Valentine shifted from martyr to symbol, from secret defiance to poetic inspiration. What had once been clandestine and risky became ritualized, metaphorical, and eventually marketable. Literature rewrote history, and society followed.

On February 14, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell filed the patent for the telephone. Distance no longer kept hearts apart longing could travel over wires, and whispered confessions could be heard across cities and countries. Valentine's Day evolved again, moving from symbolic or poetic love to something immediate, tangible, and audible, a connection you could speak and hear in real time.

Fast-forward to February 14, 2005. On this day, YouTube was founded not with hearts or letters, but with a platform that transformed how the world shares experiences. Anyone could record a moment, a thought, or a confession, and release it into a space where millions could watch, replay, and respond. Connection became visible, permanent, and performative, shaping perception as much as feeling.

For the early-2000s generation playfully nicknamed AmA2K, YouTube made Valentine's Day a stage. Skits, dedications, reaction videos, and posts turned affection into content, where likes, comments, and shares measured the reach of desire. The day became louder, faster, and public but the impulse remained the same: to connect, to be seen, and to matter.

And in the end, Valentine is not a single person, a single story, or a single meaning. Valentine is a name that has carried centuries of human desire, risk, and imagination from secret marriages under imperial rule, to Chaucer's poetic flights, to voices crossing Bell's telephone lines, to digital streams shared with millions. Valentine's Day is not about roses, chocolates, or curated posts. It is about the human need to reach beyond oneself, to make feeling tangible, to connect, and to be witnessed.

Valentine, then, is less a historical figure frozen in time and more a mirror of how we love, communicate, and remember across generations. Whoever they were, the name lives on in every gesture, every message, and every act that dares to be seen.

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