

TIME by Yonas

Since life is in time, since life is in seconds, minutes and hours, this means that to waste time is to waste life. To lose time is to lose a life so don't waste time!

I left my home in an East African country which I prefer not to name and claimed asylum upon arrival at the UK airport back in 2002. I have been waiting now for 18 years for the Home Office to make a decision. Meanwhile my case is still "pending".

Waiting all those years has been the worst experience of my life. No one in authority has taken the trouble to explain why there has been such a delay, no apology offered for making me live in limbo all this time.

My experience has made me doubt the UK which I'd always believed was a place where human rights were protected. I want to say, thank you for accepting me coming to this country, but please don't make my life worse than the one I had before, facing persecution in my country. I don't understand why the UK immigration system is so wrong and gives so little thought to its human consequences. My life has been put on hold, I'm being forced to live in uncertainty, there's no movement. Now I'm being treated for anxiety and depression as I struggle to survive on little over £5 a day, prevented from working or studying. I feel hopeless, isolated and excluded.

In my own country, I was a university student and studied Biomedicine. But I'm not allowed to continue and work here. My education is being wasted along with my mental and physical health. Time and my life are disappearing.

Then, in 2017, I started out with a plan to join Write to Life in pursuit of my passion for writing and to improve my writing skills. I'm happy with the progress I've made, but I know there's still a lot of work left to do and I need to want it enough to motivate me ready for each fortnight's new challenge.

If writing gives you pleasure it is never wasted time. Never – because everything I write should make me happy as writing fulfils something inside me. Everything I write also makes me a better writer if I pay attention. I have completed writing four or five stories and I'm very pleased with them. At the root of everything I write is myself. When I struggle with my writing it is always because I'm worrying – not about the stories but about their reception in the outside world. Again, it was easier in the old days just to write in the privacy of my own head and it's much harder now that I find myself anticipating people reading and reacting to the words I'm setting down.

Back then, during the "wasting time" period in the UK, I wrote solely to please myself. I wrote stories I wanted to read. But that's not at the root of why I started writing and why I continue to write. I write because, no matter how hard it may be at any given moment, deep in my heart it delights me to be writing stories.

To some extent I now feel I have a little control over time, over my life. It's not complete. I'm still waiting for the Home Office to make a decision. But I'm continuing writing and engaging in it to make my life better, to try to grasp time in my hands.