

Book Review

Title: *The Language of Me*

Author: Musa E. Zulu

Publisher: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004

Cloth, ISBN: 1 86914 00370, 116 pages

Cost: \$24.95

Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

The Language of Me is an appropriate title for this book. Zulu combines typical autobiographical writing with his own poetry and artwork. The book is divided into two sections. The first, "Life After the Storm," describes his early life and his auto accident in his early twenties. After the accident, as a paraplegic, lying in his hospital bed he wondered how he could possibly ever fit into the world he knew. "I was very lonely in that hospital ward, a stranger in a strange world—isolated from my own identity and the vital energy of society" (p. 23).

But Zulu learns how to reclaim his life:

"Tragedies take away from us, but they also present us with new opportunities and abilities....It forced me to write a different life story from the one of my early ambitions, allowed me to rediscover that I am an integral part of the human family, and not just an independent and self-serving individual" (p. 52).

Zulu is a black South African who has become a well-known motivational speaker in his post-accident life and his book sometimes reads like a motivational speech. But more often the author discloses many aspects of his life and thought. He does discuss how his color has an impact on his life, but for those of us who recall apartheid, it may seem a minimal part of his story.

The second section of the book, "The Scrapbook of My Soul," is exactly that: writings, drawings and more poetry sharing Zulu's own take on his life. I found the most fascinating part of this section to be his discussion of the symbols he uses in his pencil drawings and why he draws in pencil in the first place.

The short page count is misleading. One reason is the style of Zulu's writing, which packs a lot of information into each sentence. The other is the lack of white space in the book. Each page is packed with text. Overall, this is an intense, reflective book well worth reading.