

## **Lost African Childhoods: Two Narratives of War and Slavery from Africa in Mende Nazer's "Slave" and Senait Mehari's "Heart of Fire"**

Odhiambo, Tom

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### **Abstract**

Are human rights discourses adequate to address instances of rights abuses in Africa? Would human rights discourses and practices address inadequacies of state governance or even in situation where the state is complicit in the abuse of individual/group rights? Can war be justified, under any circumstances? This essay, through a textual analysis of Mende Nazer's "Slave" and Senait Mehari's "Heart of Fire: from Child Soldier to Soul Singer", proposes that there is an urgent need to highlight and privilege individual narratives and stories of human rights abuse and their impact on lives, especially those of children and women, in a world that is increasingly afflicted by cases of genocide. This is even more pressing for Africa today. These stories reveal what statistics, news headlines and commissioned reports on war cannot bear witness to: the everlasting, heartfelt experience of the victim. If necessary, such stories need to be told repeatedly.