

This report is about the unethical conduct of Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki. Using it to harass anyone, including its subject, is itself unethical, and serves only to silence other victims. Its intended purpose is to inform those seeking information of some of the reasons Ekpeki is being accused of unethical conduct, and to support the other people exploited by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki if/when they choose to share their stories with others.

I have done my best to remove all unrelated names and titles from this report, but if I have missed some-- that is not permission to question or harass them for comment.

What follows is my comprehensive report which originally included references to information that I became privy to but is not at this time public, or whose sources requested I keep their information private. As such, I have redacted those sections.

Overarching evidence of his bad faith in dealings with the writing industry, and the way he believes it does and should work begins on page 8.

My name is Erin Cairns.

I am reporting Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki for unethical practices. He submitted a story entirely written by me into a black voices magazine without my name on the byline. He lied about who he knew and how well he knew them. He obfuscated information about publications and editors and manipulated me to such an extent that I still struggle to trust myself and others.

We have never met or spoken outside of emails or twitter DMs. My first interaction with Ekpeki was in late 2018 when I posted on twitter that I had won a writing award. We interacted on twitter for a while, exchanging stories for critique which I had done many times before. But this gradually shifted into me editing stories, which at the time I did not know was for his co-edited anthology: **Anthology D**. When he told me a story I'd worked on was going to be *in* the anthology, I questioned him about what I'd been doing. He told me that for my help and work, my name would be in the acknowledgments of the book.

When the book was released, I bought a copy, and my name was nowhere to be found. Those messages about credit in **Anthology D** were sent from a twitter account which later that year was suspended for what he told me was political statements. He resumed contact with a new twitter account in 2020. I also had started a new twitter account I had been planning on using to promote my writing and focus more on the writing community. [1](#)

None of the work I did for Ekpeki has ever been publicly acknowledged. The extent has been that he included my name in a 'writer's boost' once or twice (a tweet with a list of writers usernames). This was fine-ish. It was a lot of work, it was hard work, and sometimes it was work I did not believe in, but there were no contracts. I knew I should say no when it became clear I wasn't going to get credit, but I didn't. I tried once, but he sent me a story anyway, and I did it. By that point it felt like a firmer 'no' was going to cost me a connection in the writing world I had already poured a ton of time and work into.

Much later, in 2021 he said: "I really wish you hadn't gone off the radar around when I was doing **Anthology D**," as a way to say he would have published my work in that anthology. But I was on the radar, editing a story *for* **Anthology D**. I did not submit to the call (though I had been sent the submissions link by a friend, and did not know I was at that time editing a story in said anthology) because the submissions guidelines said "white South Africans need not apply," and I am a white South African.

He hadn't been transparent with me about his involvement with **Anthology D** when it was being put together, even while I was editing for it. And when I asked about the other stories I was critiquing or editing for him, he would give me vague answers like he wanted it to be a pleasant surprise. [3](#)

When the conversation about co-authoring began [2](#), I assumed maybe he was asking me if I would like to put a story in a new anthology. [4](#)

He listed markets that had solicited him for manuscripts, among them, a prestigious publication run by **Editor S**. [5](#) So I thought perhaps he was asking me about burnout and how to keep productive. [6](#) I told him it was a good problem to have and congrats. He suggested that we co-author so he could keep up with the demands on his time. [7](#)

In the same conversation he brought up the issues of some my stories perhaps not being publishable because they are told in an African style. [8](#) I am a white South African, and moved to America with my parents when I was young. What he was saying made me feel uncomfortable, but I explained the red flags away to myself as this was justifying good changes and contributions he could make to a manuscript. [9](#)

But it embedded itself in my consciousness as a rebuke, that I should not have written these stories and that they did not belong to me.

He said he had no time to write and could we change one of the stories I'd already written. I said yes, and sent him some options, he chose "The Mask of Our Demon" and we discussed the changes he would make.¹⁰

Specifically that he would change the story to reflect a more own-voice context, and give it more Nigerian spiritualism and culture, but distance it from the real world inspiration I'd had for the story (a Makonde mask I'd seen in the Dallas Museum of Art).¹¹

Under his direction, I search-replaced the names in my story to names that he said would be better¹² and I sent the manuscript to him to make the other changes. [I found out much later that he'd made no changes.³²] I had started to get a bad feeling. The timing between his messages was strange and I thought once or twice he'd sent a story out while we were still discussing them.

Looking back, there were a lot of red flags. I started to feel them, but I didn't want to think about them. I had already invested a lot of time and work into his stories and his success finally felt shared. About a week later, he sent me a different story to critique and the names had been obviously search-replaced.¹³

He told me that our story was being sent to **Editor S** for consideration to be published in **Market 1**¹⁴ He knew that I had admiration for them and that market and from the moment we started talking, I was under the impression that we (me and Oghenechovwe) were working with **Editor S**. He showed me screenshots of his DMs with them talking about me.¹⁵
¹⁶

I had still not seen the revisions he had done to the story, but that he was willing to change a big conflict in it when speaking to **Editor S**, I figured he had it handled.

I was in and out of the hospital from September of 2020 to February of 2021 so I did not keep up with what was happening with the story. I told him I felt cut out of the loop and to let me know if/when we were accepted or rejected.¹⁸ Because he had the solicitation requests, and he was sending it with 2 other stories I was not involved with, I thought it made sense that he was in control of the submission process.¹⁷

Sometime between December 1st and December 19th, the story was rejected from **Market 1** But I was not informed.

On December 19th, **Editor S** solicited the story for **Market 2**, a Black voices magazine. On the same day, Oghenechovwe submitted the story to that market. I was still not informed. I know these dates from screenshots he sent me later.¹⁹

On December 31st, he told me the story had been rejected from **Market 1**.^{21 18}

He sent me a screenshot of **Editor S**'s email to him enlarged. It is dated Dec. 19²⁰ But was only sent to me on the 31st, over a week after he had already submitted my story to the solicitation.

Because I thought **Editor S** knew who I was from the screenshots¹⁶, I didn't question this. I was also, as you can see from the next few screenshots, not in the best place to question anything that was happening, and I trusted him.²² I still don't know what 'mouthed' means.²⁴ I assume from context it means something like 'ownvoices' though later he refused to acknowledge that this magazine was ownvoices.⁵³ I only saw these messages now, while going back through the screenshots. Still, I said yes on the understanding I'd be put in contact with the editors and magazine²³, which never happened, though he kept promising it.²⁵

I would like to note that as time went on, he started to offer payment, especially as he started to rise in popularity, but I always refused. In this exchange I missed that he'd offered payment again.²³ I would have refused again if I had seen it. I refused it again when next he offered it. Money never exchanged hands. Whenever he offered it, it was always far past the time I'd done the work and that always felt odd to me. So I insisted he also worked hard on the stories he sent me and declined the sudden offers of payment again and again.

For the next 2 months I was engaged with health concerns, and he then contacted me on February 25th²⁷ to tell me that the story "the Mask of Our Demon" had been accepted²⁶ on February 5th and that I should do the rewrites that day²⁸ because **Editor S** was 'cranky' and he didn't want to disappoint them.³³

This was really the first time I had feeling. I looked back upthread. He had contacted me on the 5th, and said nothing about the acceptance.²⁹

I immediately got a bad feeling and started to realize how disconnected I was from the magazine, the editors, the story, and anyone that could tell me what was going on. I was

clearer-headed after the surgery and now anxious, angry, and confused. I asked for contact info. He sent me the story, but not the editor's contact info. [30](#)

He sent me 'the most recent version'. I did not see anything changed except the format of the byline. I did a 'compare' of the document I had sent him and the document he sent back to me, and there were no changes to the document except formatting around the byline and changes to the Standard Manuscript Format [32](#)

[the '6000 words' is just the wordcount of the story added to the top right of the front page as per SMF]

He did not send me **Editor S**'s contact info as I asked, but reiterated that any delay was potentially upsetting and disappointing to them. [31](#)

I asked again. [33](#)

And again. [34](#)

And again. [35](#)

Each time, he quite deftly and adeptly deflected and distracted me.

Eventually he cc'd me into a submission portal, which does not cc me in on anything except a defunct, dead address with no information, and I realized something was very, very wrong. After he'd done nothing but change the format of the story out of standard Manuscript format, I suspected from the changes to the byline that he had removed my name. I tried to get in contact with **Editor S** myself. They did not follow me on Twitter and I had no email address and almost no connections to them in the writing world, so I had to email them through a portal on their website. Because it was through a portal, I don't have a copy of the email I sent, but I received an email from them pretty quickly. [36](#)

And then almost immediately, I heard from Oghenechovwe. [37](#)

Now knowing that **Editor S** was not as involved as I had been led to believe, [38](#) I looked into

Market 2 and realized they probably didn't know I was attached to the story.[39](#) [40](#)

I raised my concerns with Oghenechove.[41](#) He explained, for the first time, that the situation was 'tricky' and that he was trying to be the 'face' of the story. He offered to drop the story rather than introduce me into a conversation with the magazine, which only raised my alarm that something unethical was going on.[41](#)

He said he was only doing this for the sake of my story and that **Market 2** was not a paying market, so he wasn't doing any of this for money. He was just exhausted and that's why it had slipped out of control. [42](#)

He refused to give me contact with the market, saying it made no difference whether he or I was talking to them. He said he understood that I was used to doing things 'by the letter' but he didn't have that 'luxury'.[43](#) He sent an unconnected author's email to me in an effort to show how connected and busy he was. [44](#)

He asked me to chill out and trust him, because this was how he worked.[45](#)

In response. I told him I had no evidence that the magazine knew I was working in good faith [46](#)

He sent me a screenshot of him telling the magazine that I was attached (after the story had been accepted), but they had never responded. To me, this meant it was likely he had removed my name from the byline of the manuscript. [47](#) *[Please note that in screenshot 47, this is an email chain he could have cc'd me into, not the submittable address he eventually did cc me into. Also that he informed them of my existence upon acceptance, (Feb 5th) not submission. (Dec. 19th)]*

He reiterated that **Editor S** knew who I was and had still solicited the story.[48](#) [49](#) But still refused to give me contact with them.

He told me no one else wanted to publish this story, but he wanted it to be seen. He told me he'd been on so many panels about race and publishing, he had the experience to know this was the only way my story would be published. [50](#)

I didn't know how to even answer all of that, so the conversation became about whether or not Market 2 was a Black voices only magazine. I said it seemed like it was black voices only from everything I could see. He insisted it wasn't explicitly stated. [51](#) [52](#) [53](#)

In the meantime, I reached out to Market 2.

I have the email I drafted to **Market 2**, but because it was sent through a website portal I don't have a sent record. Just what I drafted in a word document. I tried to be non-accusatory, but after realizing that **Editor S** wasn't involved in the story's selection, and this was a black voices magazine, I was panicking. Here is the message I sent to them, (I recollect that it is very similar to the one I sent to **Editor S**)

Dear **Market 2** editors,

*My name is Erin Cairns, your magazine is publishing a story I co-wrote with Oghenechovwe Ekpeki called "The Face of Our Demon". I only learned about this recently, and I'm feeling a little out of the loop. Oghenechovwe has been understandably busy these past few months, and while he's passed on some of your communications in recent days, I can't help but feel that some lines of communication have been crossed for a while. I did not understand that **Market 2** was a primarily, if not entirely, black voice magazine. I am a white South African, and if I had known, I would first have asked through this portal if a contribution from me would have been welcome. From what I understand, the story was accepted mid-December, but you did not know I was attached until early February. This leaves me a little unsure about whether my name will make it to the byline, or even if you still want to publish this story. If not, I completely understand, and I would immediately withdraw the story with sincere apologies. If there is to be more communication about 'The Face of Our Demon', could you please cc me in on the emails with Oghenechovwe so that we both have the information? He's cc'd me in on his last email, the one with the revisions, but it was in response to a submittable reply that I cannot see or follow.*

Thank you for your time and patience.

Erin Cairns

I did not receive a reply from them, instead I have confirmation that they received this email through Oghenechovwe himself [56](#).

When **Market 2** did not respond to me, but alerted him to my email, I understood that to mean that they did not believe me and Oghenechovwe had somehow communicated to them that I was not who or what I said I was. I told Ekpeki to pull the story. He wanted me to

talk it over with him, although at this point, he was just leading me in circles about how experienced he was, and how I should just trust him. [57](#)

I felt as though I was in a precarious position and as if I had done something wrong. [58](#) He said that me trying to contact **Editor S** and **Market 2** had put him in a bad light, and I was betraying him. [59](#)

I asked him outright why they weren't willing to talk to me. In response, he abandoned the pretense of the market being open to a submission from me and told me 'It's an African exclusive space' and the 'politics of white Africans is complicated'. [60](#) But he'd just spent months obfuscating this issue between me and the magazine. He said he was 'trying to make sure things went smoothly till publication' [60](#) though what me or the magazine were supposed to do in the rough waters *after* publication would then likely be up to me and the magazine, with me looking like I was a part of hiding my own involvement in a story I'd written in its entirety.

I reiterated that I wanted him to pull it and he could say it was entirely my fault. **He said 'arrangements and attitudes and submissions are overrated'** [61](#) Which is an attitude he has displayed ever since in every interaction I have heard on him having with someone he has power over.

He told me again that I was hurting him and his career. [61](#)

I told him that what was occurring was not fair to me or the magazine.

[62](#) is so infuriating to me. If you don't look at any other screenshots, look at that one. **He belittles my misgivings and desire for an ethical industry. He implies that I am beneath him. He says that working in "uncomfortable environments" is the only way to get published.** [62](#)

When I stood my ground, he said he'd respect my feelings and wishes. He said 'It looks like I tried to steal and got caught' [63](#)

Because I still wasn't allowed to talk to the editor or magazine, all I could do was accept responsibility for his unethical behavior. It was the only control I had over the situation. [64](#)

He wanted to know who I would talk to this about. [65](#) I'd tried to talk to the magazine and

the editor, but from my point of view, both had just sent Oghenechovwe to silence me himself. At that time, I was not planning on reaching out to anyone again, though as these events were unfolding, I had contacted a few friendly writers to ask for advice. [66](#)

I still didn't know what was happening with the story. I had to ask him at least twice if he'd pulled it. [67](#) Finally, he sent me a screenshot of the story as 'withdrawn' [68](#)

For most of 2022, I couldn't get on twitter for all the events, promotions, and campaigning Ekpeki was doing. I focused on writing novels and did not interact with the writing community. He had made it clear to me many times how well-connected he was and how trusted he was by people and institutions that I respected and trusted, and would send me evidence that he worked well with other authors and that I should trust him the way they did. When he offered me contacts or money after this experience, I could only take it as threats and bribes, but whether it was meant that way or not is a matter of perspective.

A few months later, I heard from Ekpeki again. He had been removed from a project due to ethics complaints against him, and he resumed contact to tell me, again, not to talk about what had happened with **Market 2**. He sent me screenshots of someone outing my complaint, which made me even more afraid to speak out.

It is my opinion that if he has a position of power, then he has a much larger pool of aspiring writers to draw from and an even stronger power dynamic to use against them.

I believe his preemptive defense in case I or anyone else ever came forward is that he is beset by racist trolls that refuse to believe he writes his own work.

Those trolls and their comments are awful. Their rhetoric is despicable, and their actions inexcusable. I personally believe Ekpeki uses them at least to some extent as a smokescreen.

Please look at the evidence I have provided and make your own judgment.

Appendix

1



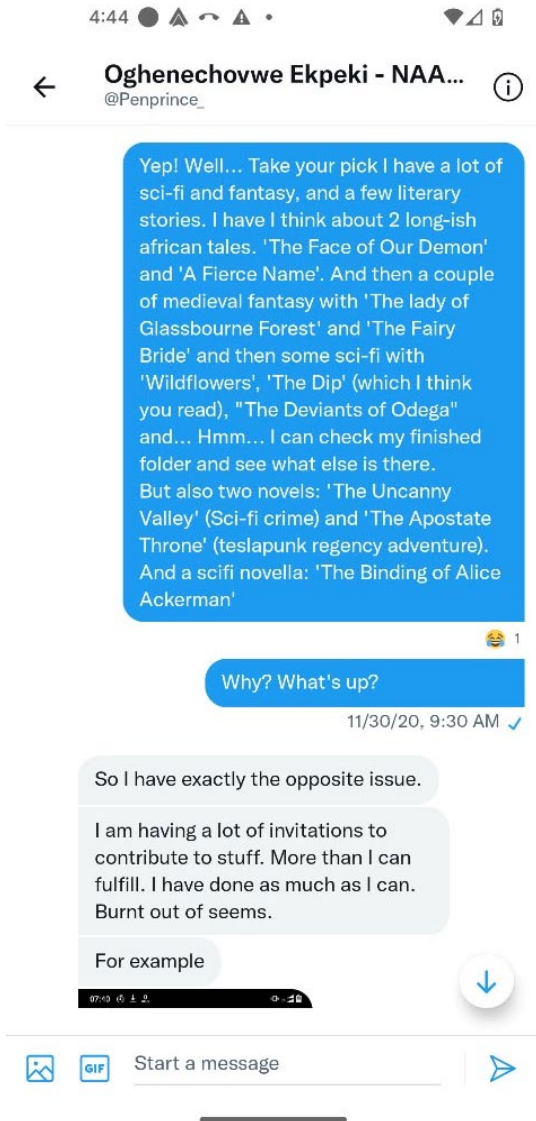
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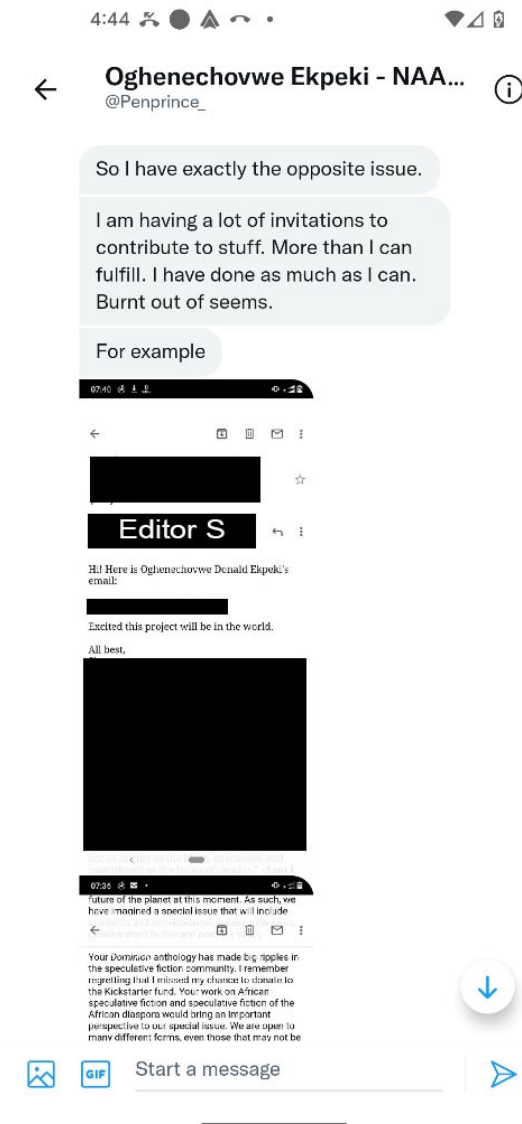
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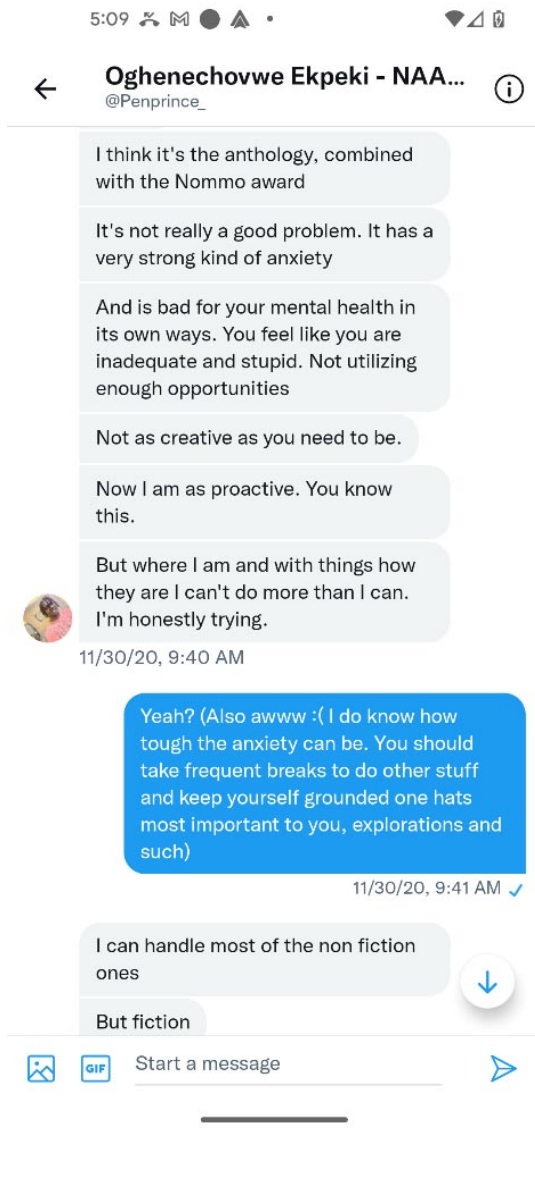


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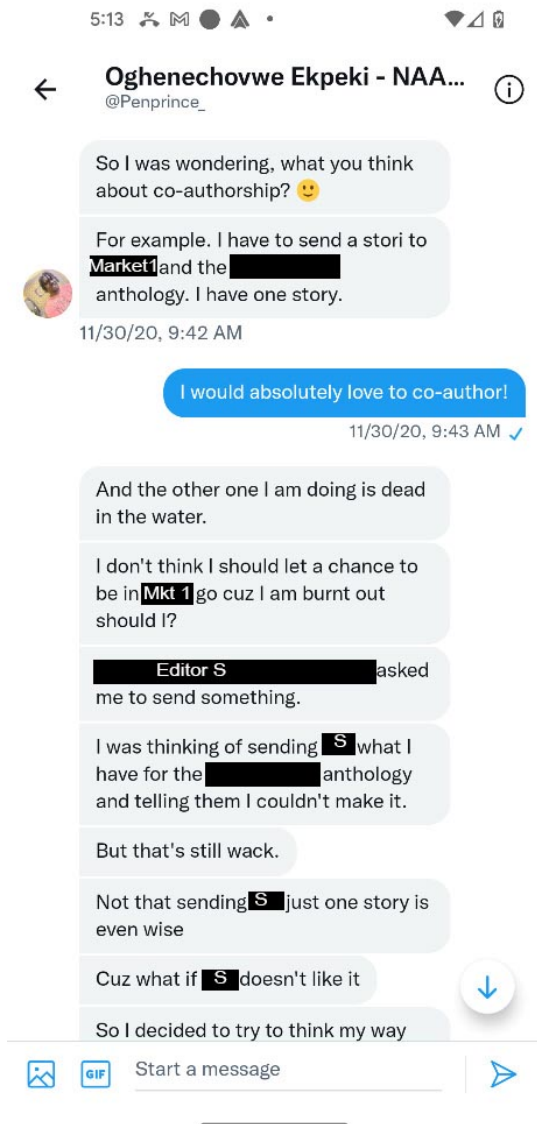


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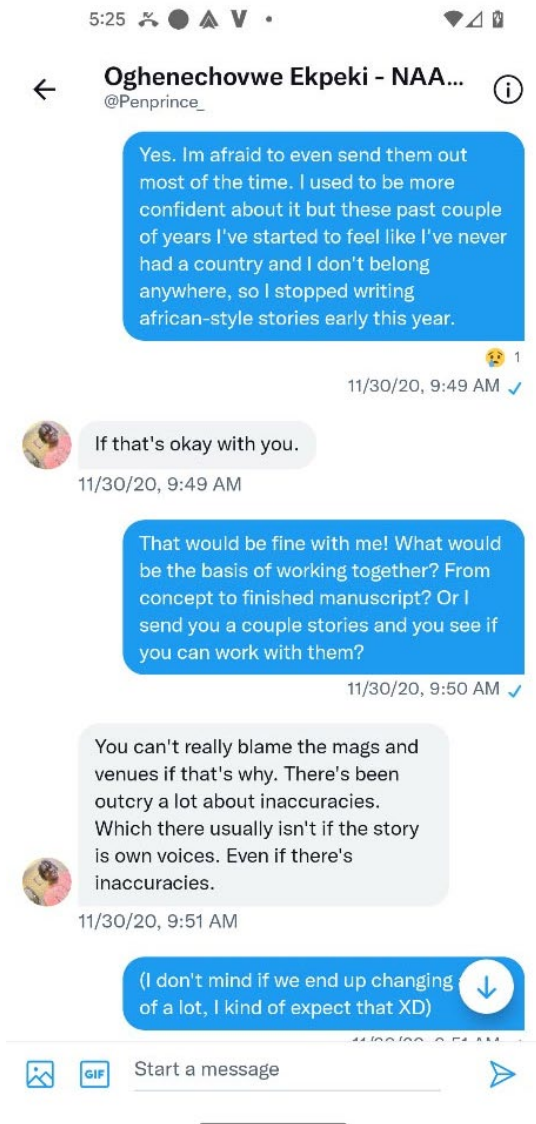


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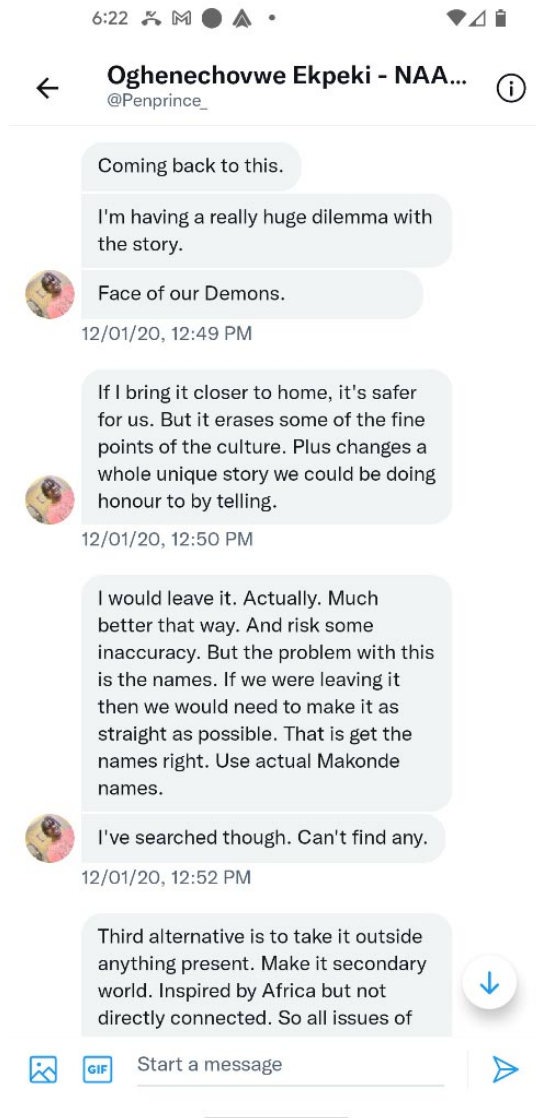




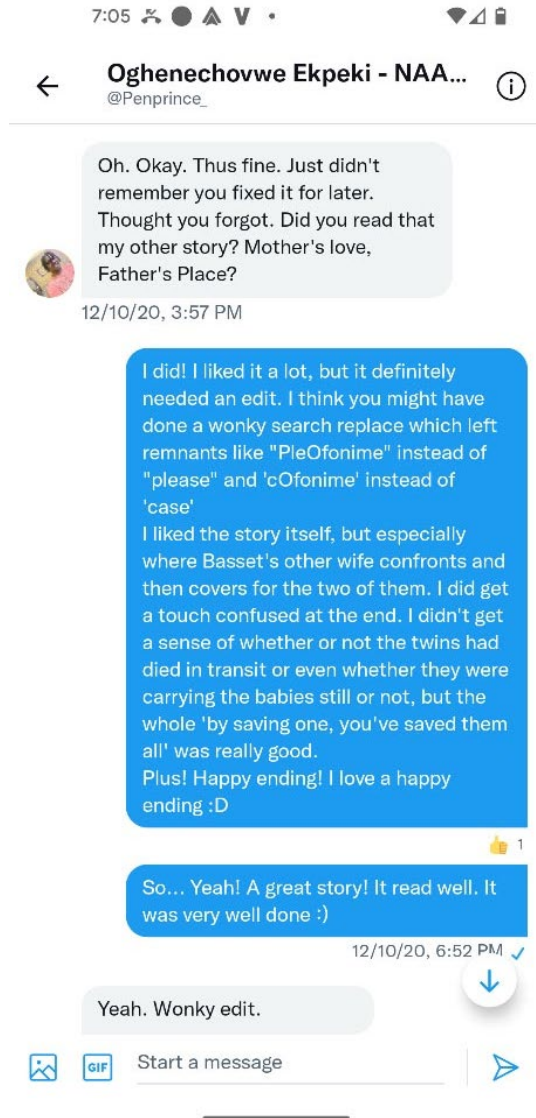
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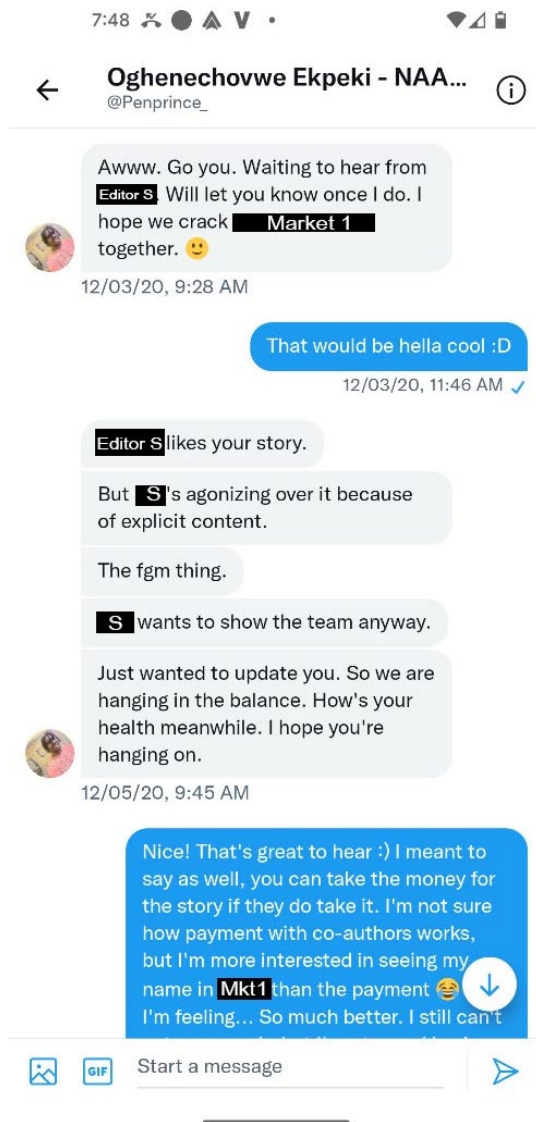


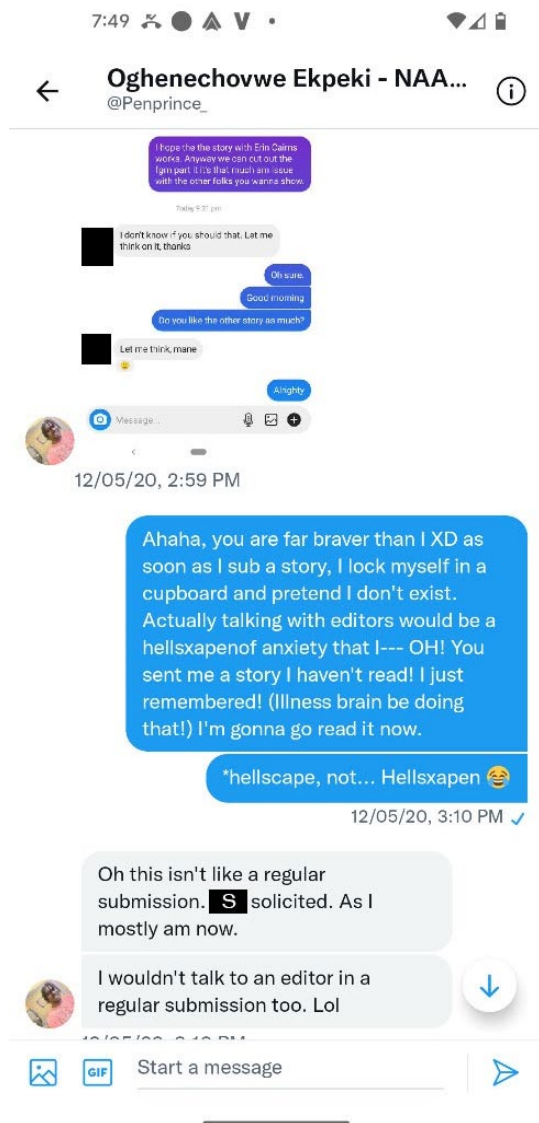


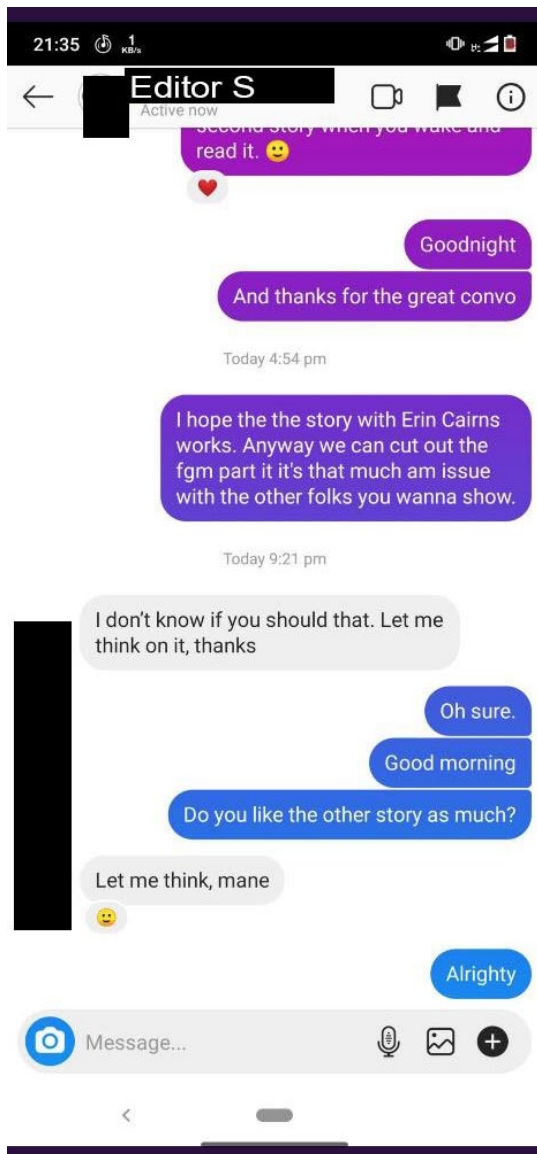


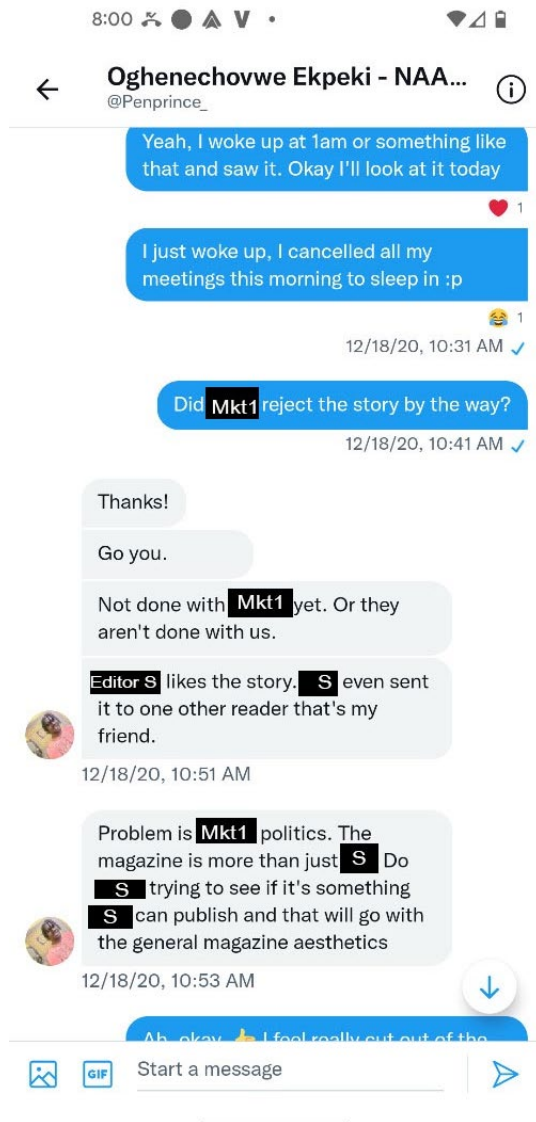


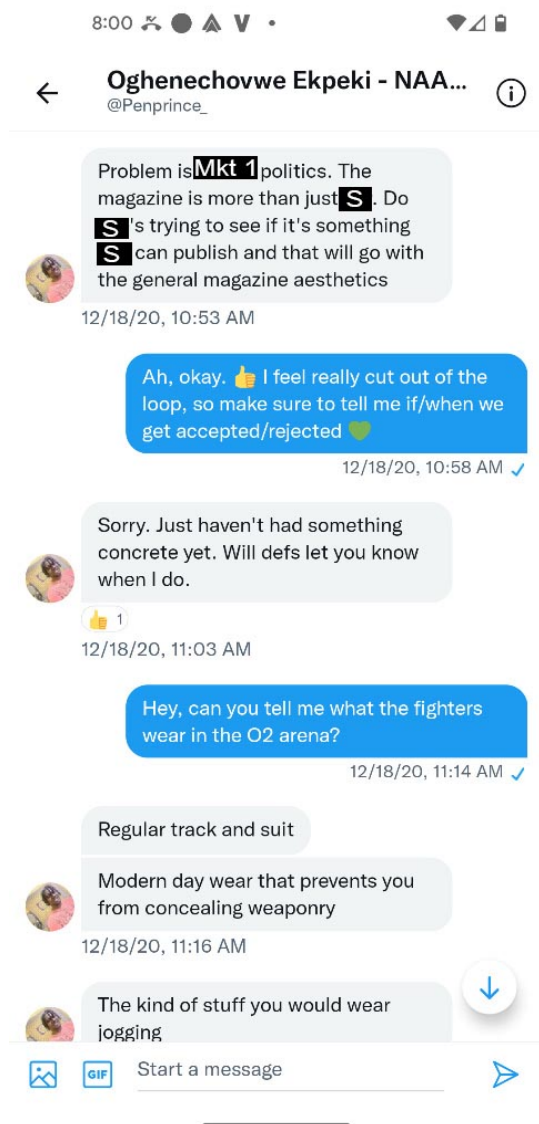


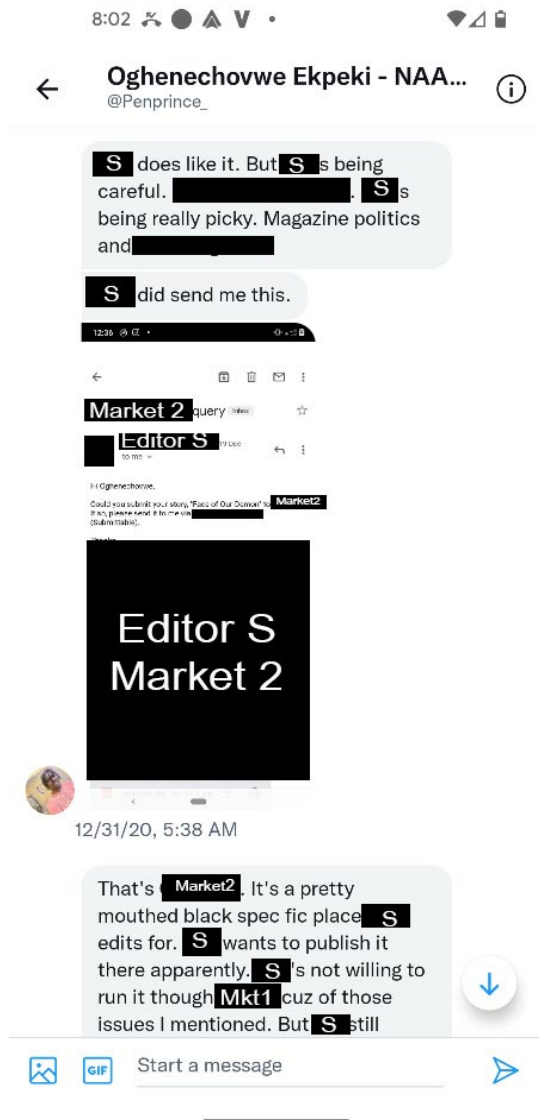


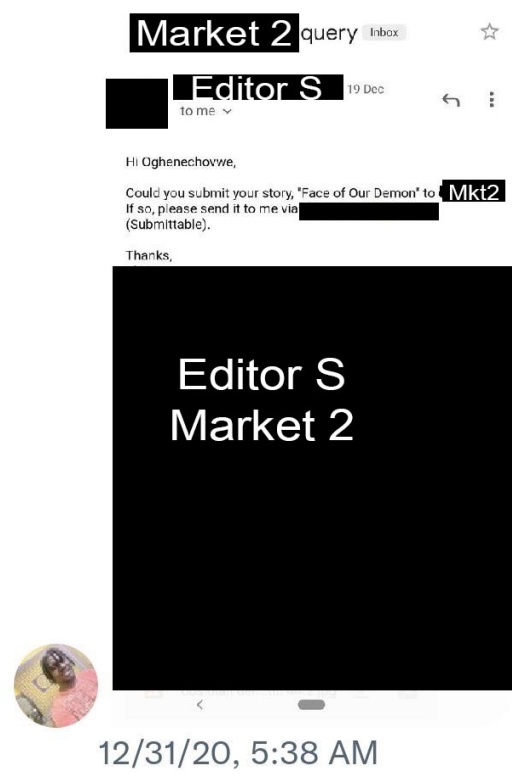






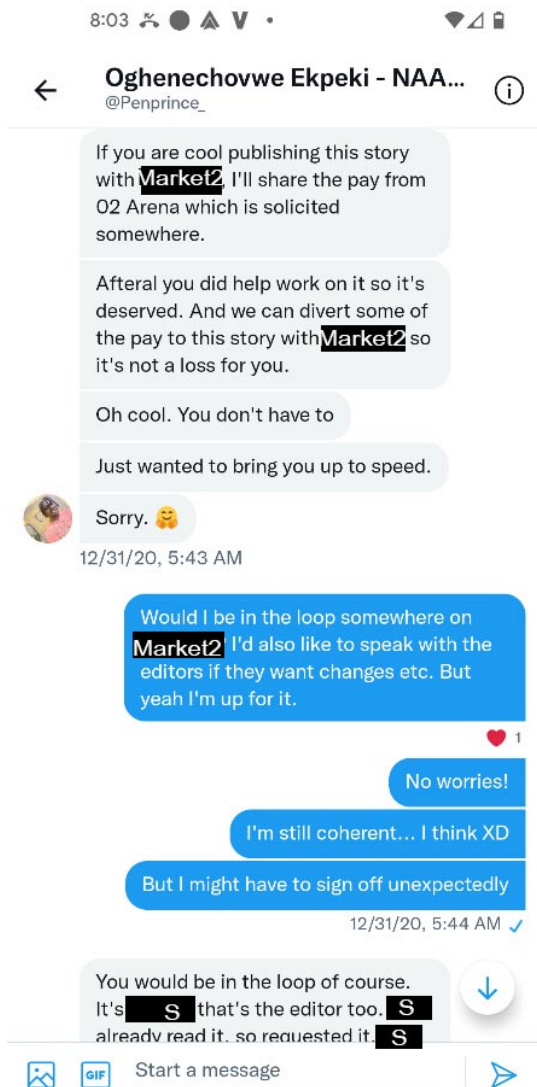




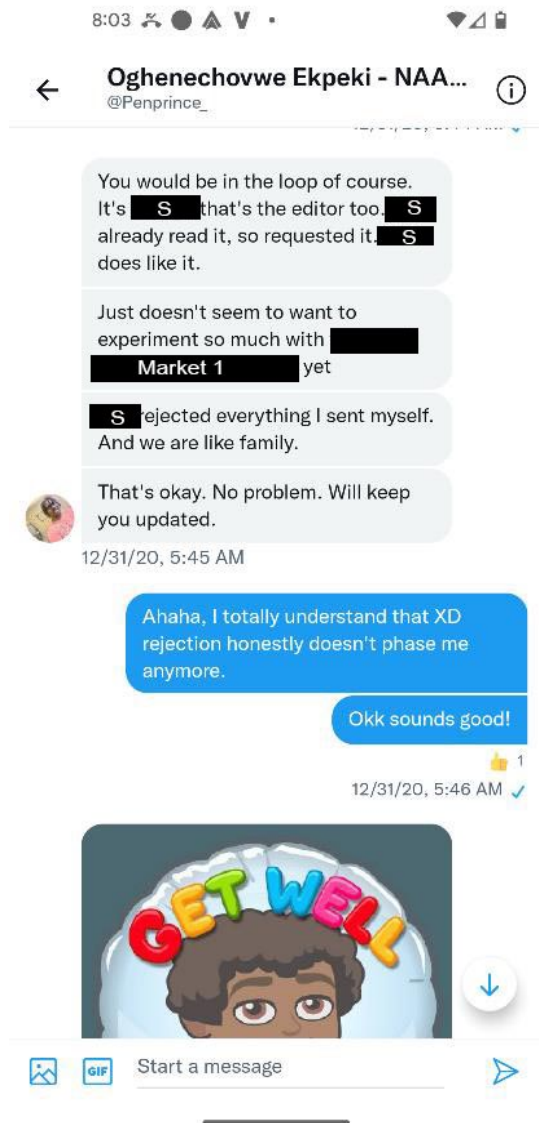


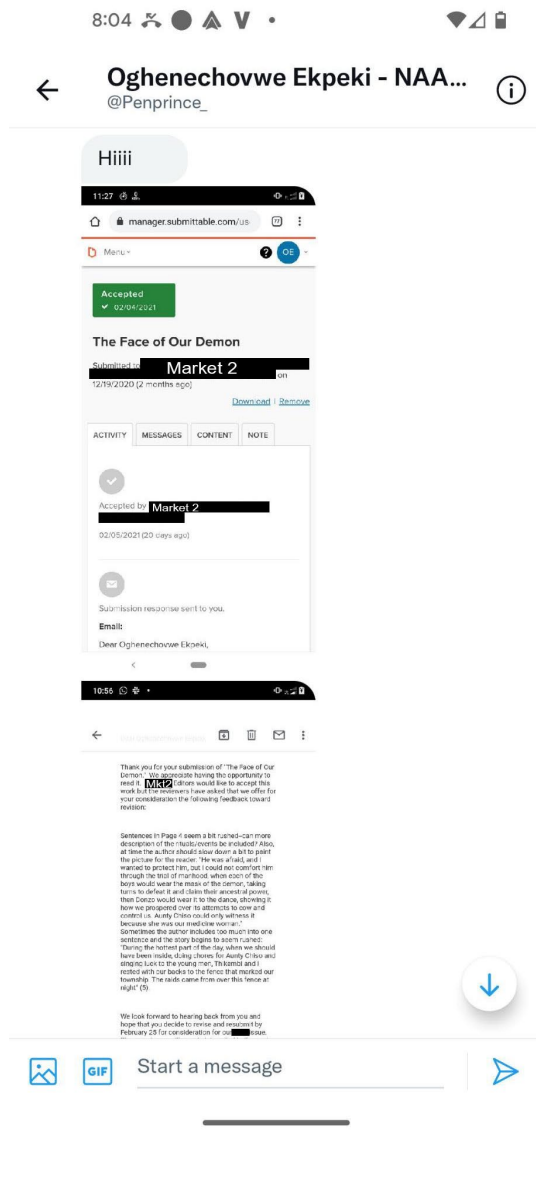












①

WUO MUSIC, WITH THE HELP OF THE LITERARY JOURNAL *Granta*, is to be set in film and given the national premiere, then *Concave* would want it to be dance, showing it how we prepared our art to attract to its own and control it. As *Auntie Claire* can't do it only without it because she was our maddest time war!"

Sometimes the author included too much in the one sentence and the story begins to seem rushed:

"During the hottest part of the day, when we should have been inside, doing chores for *Auntie Claire* and *ding-dong* to the young men, Thibault and I reacted with our bodies to the forces that marked our township. The end came from our own little world at night" (5).

We look forward to hearing back from you and hope that you decide to revise and resubmit by February 28 for consideration for our journal. Please note, we will remain interested in the work in the event that you are unable to meet this deadline.

Sincerely,

The Editors

Market 2

02/25/21, 4:33 AM

02/25/21, 7:14 AM ✓

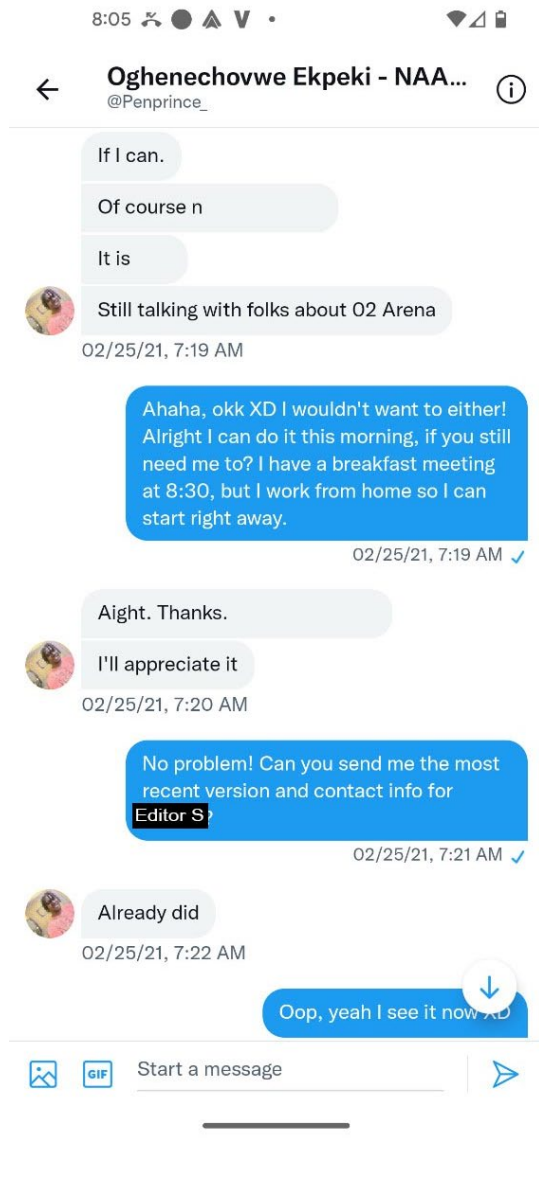
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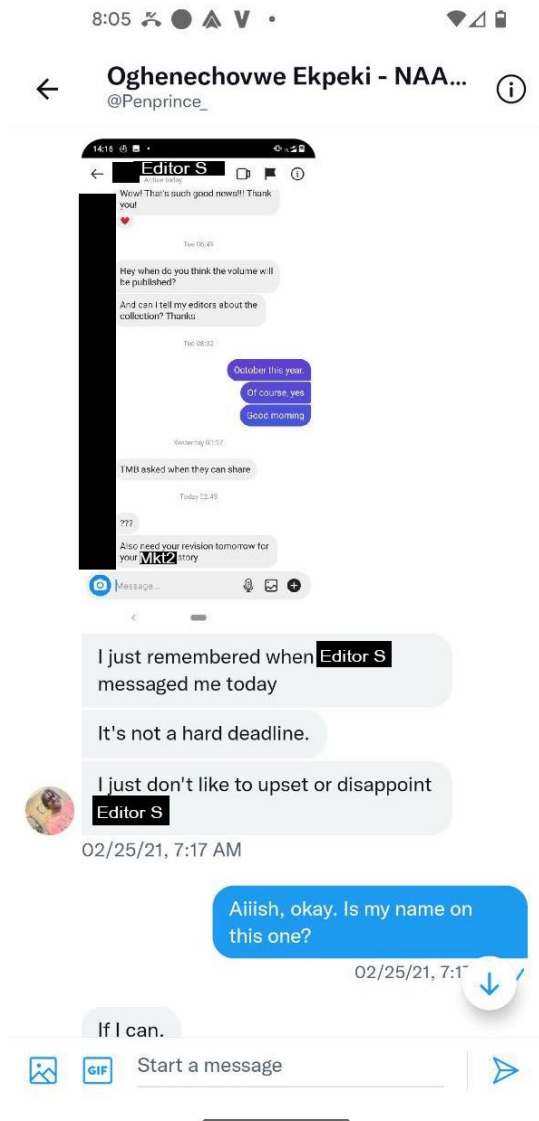
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Revisions

21 revisions

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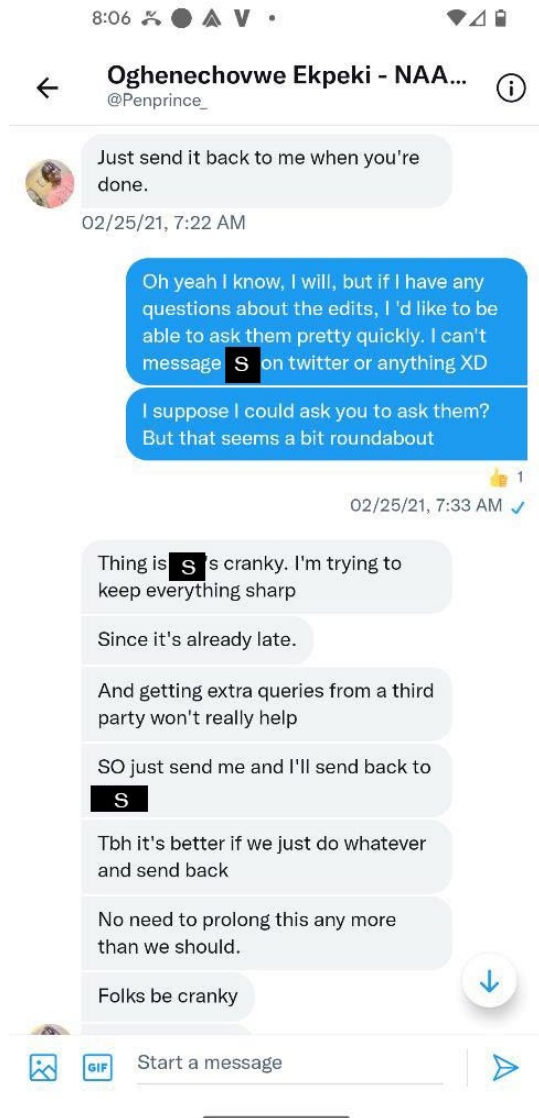
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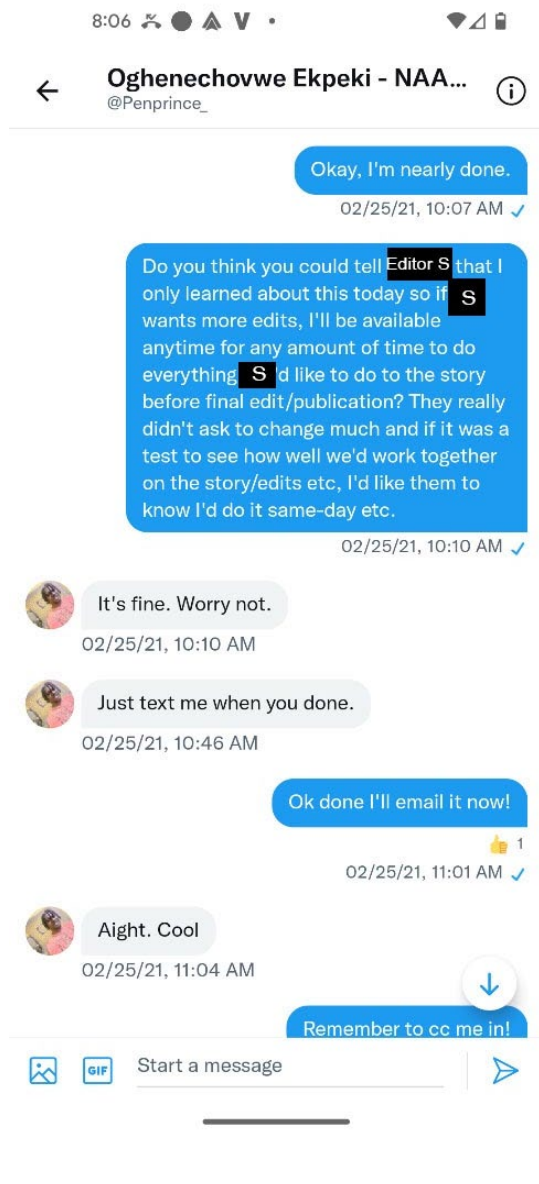
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36

Editor S

to me ▾

Hi, please contact **Market 25** managing editor. Oghenechovwe has their contact email. Thanks

sent you a new message ▾ Inbox x

Thu, Feb 25, 2021, 11:48 AM

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Reply

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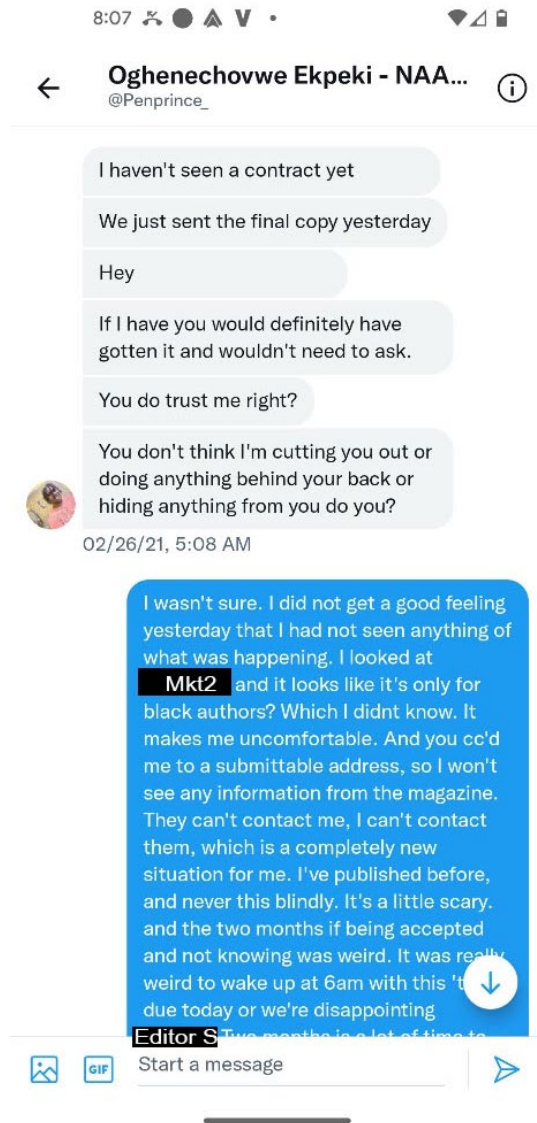
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↩ Reply

➡ Forward







8:07



Oghenechovwe Ekpeki - NAA...



black authors? Which I didnt know. It makes me uncomfortable. And you cc'd me to a submittable address, so I won't see any information from the magazine. They can't contact me, I can't contact them, which is a completely new situation for me. I've published before, and never this blindly. It's a little scary, and the two months if being accepted and not knowing was weird. It was really weird to wake up at 6am with this 'this is due today or we're disappointing

Editor S Two months is a lot of time to get the story polished and take notes from the editors if they wanted more to change. I'm really not good with last minute stuff, especially when the note I got was 'these sentences feel rushed'. I've generally got the contract on acceptance? But different magazines work differently.

So I don't know. Everything is through you, completely through your control. I don't feel like a co-author. You called me a third party when I asked to be introduced into the discussion--that didn't feel great. It was... A lot was happening. I spent most of the day trying to work and then just spiralling on how I didn't know what was happening with this stuff and honestly nothing got done.

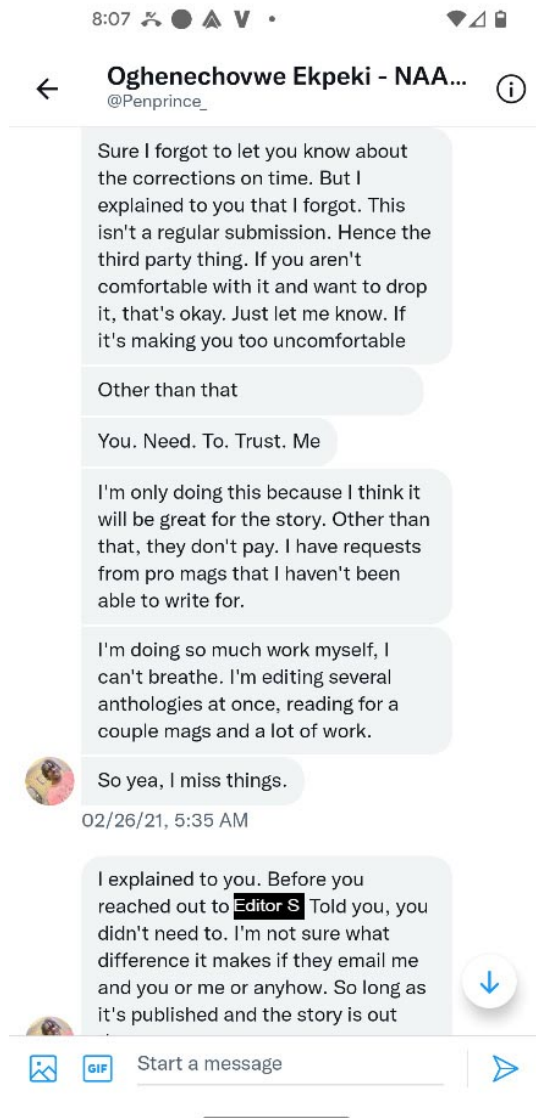
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Start a message

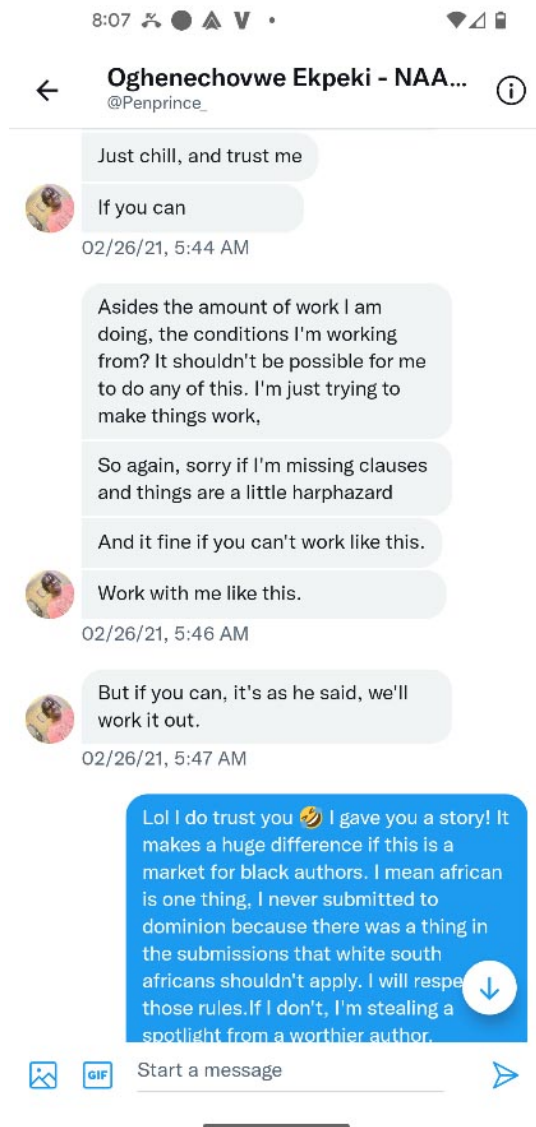












8:08



Oghenechovwe Ekpeki - NAA...



@Penprince_

Lol I do trust you 🤔 I gave you a story! It makes a huge difference if this is a market for black authors. I mean african is one thing, I never submitted to dominion because there was a thing in the submissions that white south africans shouldn't apply. I will respect those rules. If I don't, I'm stealing a spotlight from a worthier author.

I explained why I reached out to **Editor S** and it makes sense to me. I'm not sure if what I did was wrong? You aren't publishing one of my stories in an anthology, you're publishing it with someone else. I have been working with you! I'm not sure what I've done to indicate otherwise. But you have to agree that this is a weird situation, it's not an author sending a story to you to publish. Though obviously I would have been fine with that. This is my reputation as well, that you've got in your hands and I have no evidence that **Market 2** knows that I've been acting in good faith. I have no idea what they know about me, and that's down to a problem with communication between me and them. I've been working really hard in adverse conditions too, it's easy for nobody in this business. It sucks. Do you think I don't have sympathy.

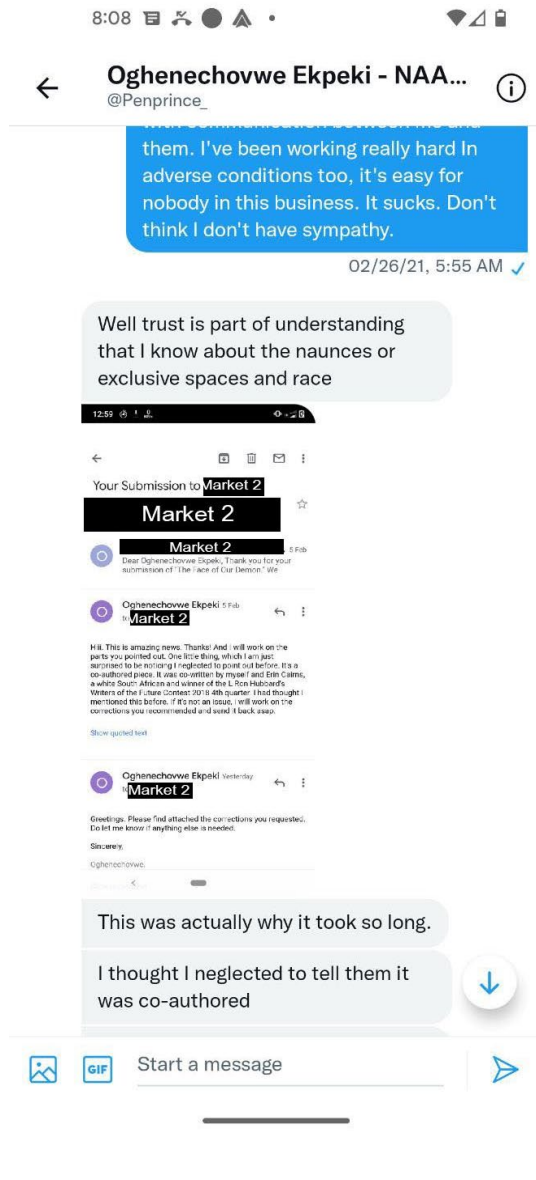


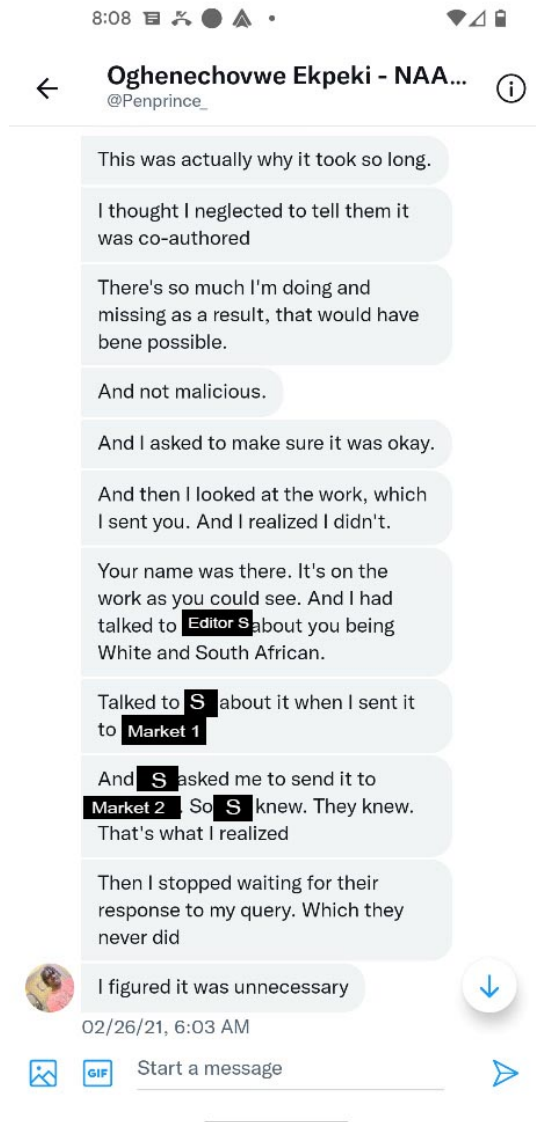
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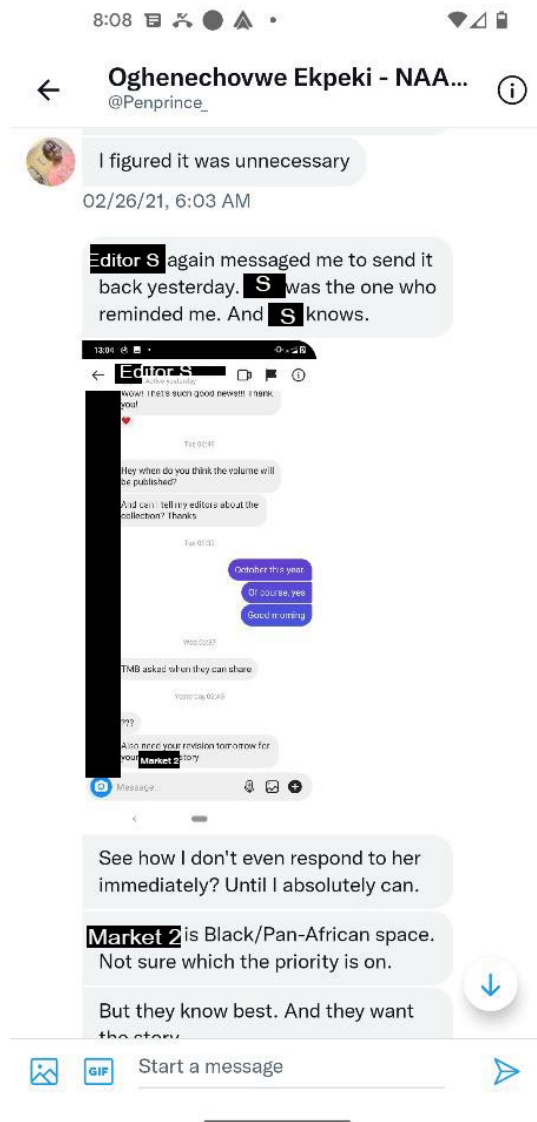


Start a message

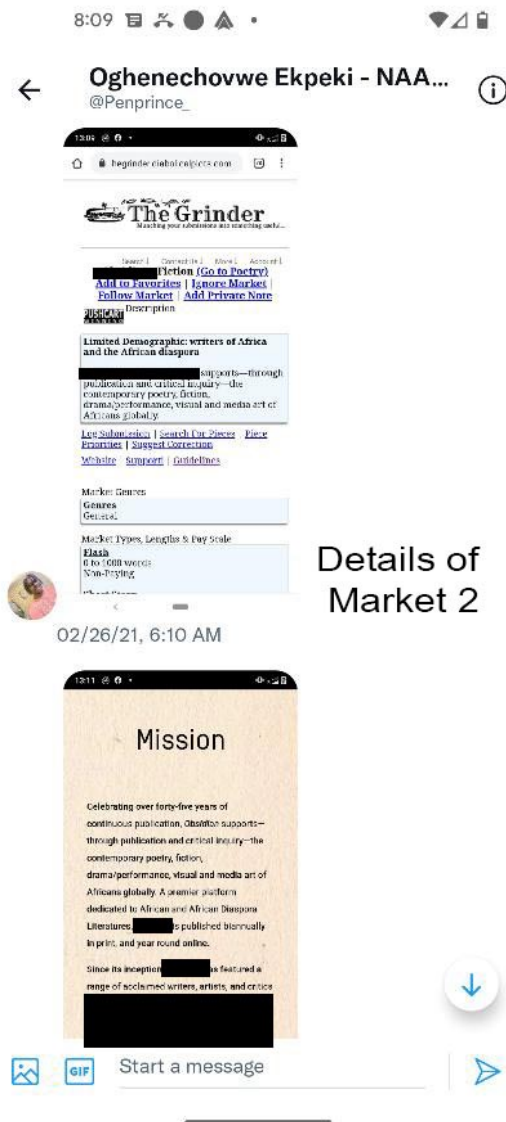












Details of
Market 2





