

YOU CANNOT FREEZE WHAT'S IN MY HEART

By Blossom Larynoh



When the Church first came to Ghana in 1978, the government didn't really understand it and its practices. That led to a lot of rumors. As the Church grew over the next 10 years, so did the rumors. I remember hearing people say that the United States was sending men to spy on our government. That, combined with all the anti-Mormon literature being circulated, made the government very suspicious.

The Freeze

On June 14, 1989, the government closed our Church buildings, sent the missionaries home, and outlawed all official Church activities. We call this time “the freeze.” But as an 18-year-old girl, all I knew was that one day it was announced that we couldn't go to church anymore. There were even soldiers guarding the buildings to make sure we stayed away.

Since we could no longer meet in our chapels, we got permission from Church leaders to have sacrament meetings in our homes. If you didn't have a priesthood holder in your home, you were encouraged to go to a home that did have one. It was a confusing time but also a

very special one. We shared our testimonies, and it brought us closer together.

How Can You Call Yourself a Mormon?

At one time during the freeze, I had to leave my home to go to a boarding school. When I got there, one of the teachers heard that I was a Latter-day Saint. He singled me out to talk negatively about the Church to me. He had so many harsh words to say. I often wondered, “Why are you picking on me and saying these things? I believe in the teachings of the gospel, but I'm still a person.”

One day he asked me how I could call myself a Mormon anymore. Didn't I know about the freeze? Now, in our culture, we don't talk back to adults. So the fact that he was a teacher meant that I couldn't challenge him. But in that moment, I realized that I really had a testimony. I don't know how these words came out of my mouth, but the Spirit came to me, and I stood up and said, “The Church is in my heart. And nobody can freeze what's in my heart.”

And after that he left me alone.

In November 1990 the government ended the freeze and said our Church members were free to

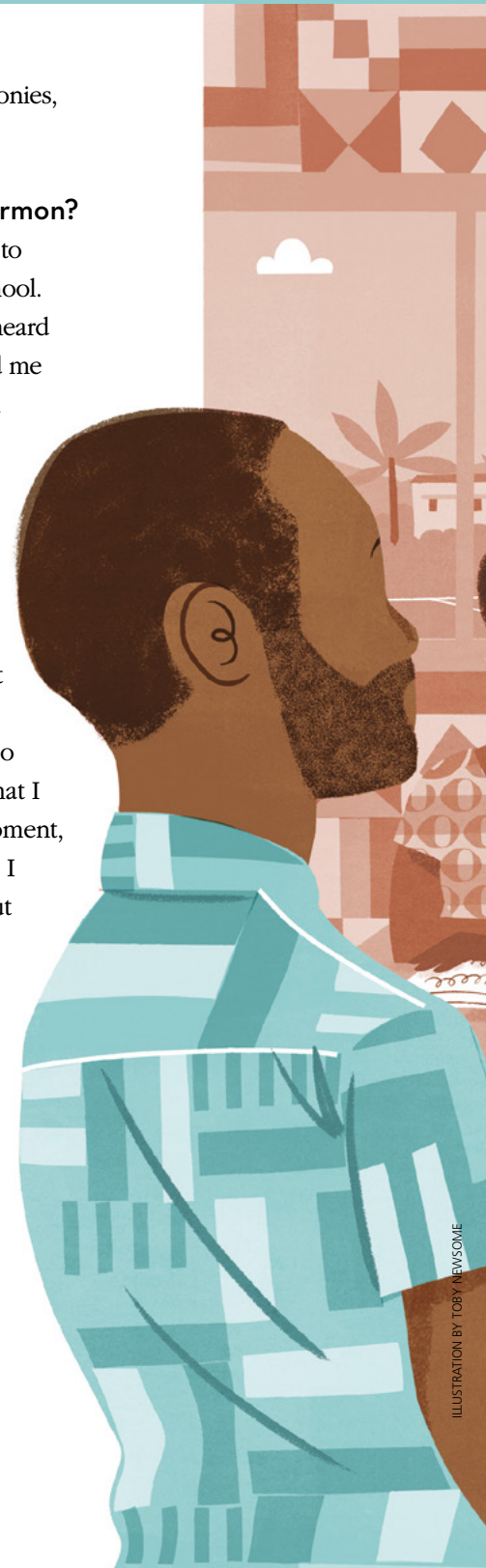


ILLUSTRATION BY TOBY NEWSOME

THE FREEZE IN GHANA

On June 14, 1989, the Ghanaian government banned The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All Church buildings were closed, but the 6,000 members were permitted to hold services in their homes. On November 29, 1990, the government lifted the ban and permitted the Church to resume all activities. Today there are over 72,000 members, a missionary training center, and a temple in Ghana.

Blossom was a young woman in Ghana when the government banned LDS Church meetings.



worship again. We didn't have radios or televisions on school campus, so I only found out because that teacher heard and immediately sent someone to get me. When he saw me, my teacher said, "The ban on your Church has been lifted! You can go to church again."

He was happy for me.

They Cannot Freeze What's in Your Heart

Those who stayed in the Church and worshipped together during the freeze created stronger bonds. We became real brothers and sisters. Even now, when we have all traveled separate ways, if something happens to someone else, we all hear about it. We feel like we are pioneers.

I like to tell people that if you know your beliefs are true and you have a testimony of them, you can have trials but your faith doesn't have to be shaken. If you know something is true and you believe in it, nobody can take that away from you. They cannot freeze what's in your heart. ■

The author lives in California, USA.

MORE ON THE GHANA FREEZE

To learn more about the ban and how Ghanaian Saints continued to worship, you can watch the video "Our Homes Became the Sacrament Hall: Sabbath Day Worship During the Freeze" on LDS.org.