

Creators of Justice Awards 2021

Poetry

HONORABLE MENTION

Ojo Blessing (Nigeria): *Song Men Sing*

Kelly Kaur (Canada): *The Justice of Death*

Miriam Ojekwe-Ikwueme (Nigeria): *The Piece of Glass
in My Left Hand*

Song Men Sing

By Ojo Blessing

I

The gathering of men is that of bees and young girls are their hives.
A colony is many boys ripping a girl into bits.
When you see boys gathered somewhere,
you can tumble to the song on their lips.
A closer look at them blows the lyrics into names
of girls moaning in the impervious corner of their rooms.
The truth is: the world has its way of making a young girl believe
her frame is of copper wire, or something easily broken.
Tune your radio and listen to the teary voice of a lily.
Peruse the pages of our nation's newspaper
for how a father made a wife out of his daughter,
how an uncle morphed into a sea urchin to sink his flesh.
It's strange these days for a maiden to flower
without thorns tasting of her petal.

II

I heard that my coming birthed a rancid song in my father's mouth.
How do I convince him that a child is a child irrespective of its gender?
Even now, he is still singing. But I know that I am beautiful.
Each moment, I think of everything aesthetic about my body,
but something would tickle me, a symptom of the unbalance state of matter.
In my parents' wedding anniversary photo, I stood metres away
from my father because my brothers' space is next to his heart.
Home without my father's shadow is a world devoid of grief.
And Lord, this is my own paradise.
No matter how you preach repentance to my father,
I will still be a rejected poem in his archive.

Blessing Omeiza Ojo – Nigerian poet, teacher and author – is a Best of the Net Nominee. His works have appeared in Split Lip Magazine, The Deadlands, Parousia, Olney, Cón-sciò, Roughcut Press, ArtsLounge, Wax Poetry Journal, Lunaris Review, Last Girls Club, Artmosterrific, Trampoline, Praxis and elsewhere.

The Justice of Death

By Kelly Kaur

On his deathbed
he murmurs

Can I have a real doctor

Not a foreign doctor

I stare at him caringly
empathy expands for his pain

His grief immeasurable
His fear insubordinate
His death imminent

There is no medicine
for ignorance

It seems not even looming death can dye color

I swallow my words
let my heart magnify
greater than it can

Compassion bids sweet farewell
his final exit
colorless

Kelly Kaur is a writer who has had poems published in anthologies in Singapore and Canada. Her poems have also appeared internationally in journals in Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Singapore, United States, and United Kingdom. Her work has been published in Understorey Magazine, WordCity Literary Journal, Poet of the Republic, BeZine, Anak Sastra, the Calgary Public library dispenser, heard on audio jukebox and on CKUA radio and appeared on Blindman Session Beer cans. Her novel, Letters to Singapore, Stonehouse Publishing, will be available April 2022.

The Piece of Glass in My Left Hand

By Miriam Ojekwe-Ikwueme

It dropped again,
On my worn, tan coloured slippers
I smeared it around, hoping it will not dry out
The woman with the steel bones inside of me spat with potent venom 'At what cost?'
Silence was never a better friend now, when at this time, all I really wanted was a pair of
iron clippers

But they were seated, seething, snarling, perched like metal locusts,

Unbridled malice waiting to be unleashed for the umpteenth bout

The Preacher as he rang the bell always began

'From whence does my help come from!'

Yesterday, help wore two garments as the unbearable stench came from a plastic drum

Tranquillity and slothful calm became bedlam, sounding an uncommon alarm

As the plastic drum pushed and twisted and vomited blood sinewy as gum

The man was found inside, curled up, eyes wide open, mouth agape, and tongue pointed
at 4' o'clock, looking glum.

Helter Skelter went eager hands and anxious feet save for the lone, lean figure that
stood mum.

She did not talk, refused to plead, rejected a bargain,

Amid the deafening and frenzied cries of alu! alu! which rend the suffocating air

She sat still, straight, stoic, hands folded over knees, showing little fear
Knowing very well that it would be so long a time before she would ever walk the land
free again

Her gaze unmoving, fixated as if in a trance, her eyes remained bright and clear

Like the sentence I promised to give one silly brown goat, condemnation hung thick in this lair,

And while the village council convened to pass a verdict without trial, vile grew fat in the assembly of men.

Their love had once made the earth tremble

Until the girl with extravagant hips moved into town and his libido became treble

His trysts with extravagant hips became unhidden knowledge

And the love of his life was mortally wounded, even as he flaunted it to his advantage

His stamp of malice, a long scar on her back, the memento of a love turned gloom.

She ran to escape the hands on her throat, the hands which once loved her, which now sought to send her to her doom.

She swung; still running, not knowing, not looking to see the plank that hit his neck as he tumbled into the plastic drum

She would be given a murderer's shame

To walk the land tame

The death of her husband forever her bane

It will never end

To begin with the piece of glass held in my left and as I shaved off her luscious hair

I asked the woman with the steel bones inside me whether this was right
It dropped again and I knew this time, the tears were mine.

Miriam Ojekwe-Ikwueme, is a national of Nigeria from Onitsha Anambra state, who is currently a resident in Lagos. She is a lawyer in private practice and an astute mediator

with competencies in family mediations. Writing has been a secret passion of hers. She has been published twice on Petals Magazine, a lifestyle and information journal which is published annually in Lagos. Her twitter handle is @ikwuememiriam and her instagram account is @ojekweikwueme.