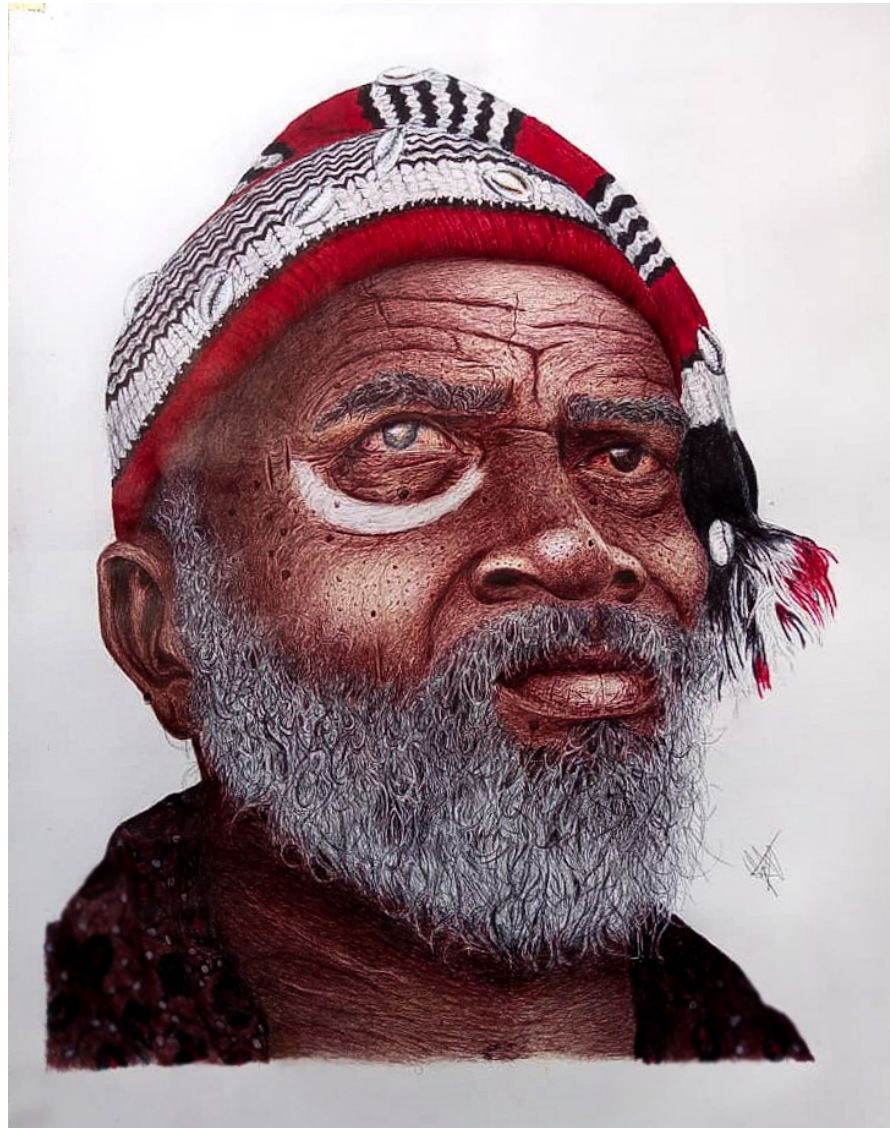


Speaking Truth to Power

an anthology of African Voices calling for justice!



Curated and edited by Dr. Uche Akunebu

EDITOR'S NOTE

The speaking truth to power anthology was borne out of the compelling need to present the powerful poetic voices in Africa that are on the same page of reasoning with Professor Wole Soyinka, the celebrated poet and first African to win a Nobel Prize for literature. Mr. Soyinka opined that "the man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny." Resistance poets also earn comradeship of late Dr. Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine Marxist revolutionary, by trembling with indignation at injustices perpetrated in the continent, in sync with Guevara's exhortation: "If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine."

In threading with the tradition of speaking truth to power as enunciated by writer's like Soyinka, Guevara and others as a way of salvaging a continent battling with underdevelopment, occasioned by flagrant abuses of rule of law, bad governance, lack-luster leadership, tyranny, corruption, injustice, and anti-democratic practices.

The poets in this anthology have risen up to the occasion by taking swipes at those ignoble acts perpetrated by both the leadership and follower-ship on the African Continent, against those who have continued to throw spanners in the works of development.

The anthology is blessed with big names in the world of poetry in Africa, like Dr Alex Akunebu, a prominent Nigerian lawyer and poet who has worn the sobriquet "Alex de Poet" like a garment for decades, known for his top notch poetry that has received both national and international acknowledgements.

Catherine Magodo-Mutukwa, an award winning poet from Zimbabwe, but based in the United Kingdom, also has continued to hug the limelight for some time now for her rich poetic outputs, making her one of the Amazons of poetry on the Continent of Africa.

Emmanuel Douglas Mulomole, the Malawian poet and a bronze categorised member of the largest online literary platform, *Motivational Strips*, also stands out as one of the biggest names in poetry on the Continent.

Tares Oburunmi, the Nigerian poet, who won the Sillerman Prize for African poets in 2022, and one of the most anthologised poets from Africa, also stands out as a big name adorning this anthology.

There is also Sam Ogabidu, the chemist, playwright, poet, and author of *Afriverse*, a collection of poems, whose works have found spaces in respectable literary platforms across Africa and beyond.

Speaking Truth to Power is not only about big names in the world of poetry, as there are emerging voices that have shown tremendous promise, who this anthology has brought on board.

Ruvimbo Jeché, the Zimbabwean poet and bilingual writer also comes with a powerful voice that resonates in the poetic firmament. Thembi Ntahane KaMalangu, the South African writer and poet is another voice who comes with much poetic zeal.

Michael Chukwudi, the Nigerian-Indonesian writer and a fellow of Ebedi International Writers Residency and Imodoye Writers residency, has equally demonstrated that he is a poet Africa should watch out for, as this anthology shows.

Trying to single out the big names and emerging voices in this anthology looks Herculean, as every contributor comes with a distinguished resume: this anthology can be described as a galaxy of poetic stars illuminating the literary world.

With such powerful poetic voices, assembled in one anthology, the *Speaking Truth to Power* anthology can be said to have achieved poetic flourish capable of blowing the minds of literary enthusiasts around the globe.

The powerful poets in this anthology, have provided their treatise on Africa, not through prose as Ali Mazrui, Claude Ake, Patrice Lumumba, Chinua Achebe and other celebrated academics have done, but by adopting the elegant language of poetry, to voice their minds.

As Africa continues to look for solutions to its myriad of development challenges, hearkening to powerful voices in this poetry anthology becomes imperative.

Dr Uche Akunebu
Curator/Editor
Speaking Truth to Power
Abuja-Nigeria
February 2023.

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STORY, STORY.

Rejoice N Victor

Before everything became gory
There was a long story
Once upon a time
Corruption was a crime

Yes, our ancestors had suffered
Many of them were murdered
Imprisoned and caged in
For committing no sin

They weren't caged for stealing
Neither for drug dealing
Not for compromising
But for sacrificing

They were fighting for our freedom
They were endowed and filled with wisdom
Leaders of then, were not filled with selfishness
Neither were they citizens of greediness

They stood up for what we enjoy today
Many of them, their lives they could lay
They passed through the hardship with zeal
For the dream of freedom to be real

They left a role for their successors to play
But it seems their successors had come to slay
Finding freedom should make home sweeter
But everything started becoming bitter

Eventually after the jubilations
And all the congratulations
Freedom was enjoyed for a while
Selflessness was thrown into the Nile

Selfishness was part of democracy
Greed became the companion of aristocracy
Zeal of leadership was waste of time
Therefore everyday there was a crime

Criminals being bailed everyday
Going back to continue the crime at where they stay
Their exposers are hunted down

From midnight till dawn

Bribery is now a business
Sincere graduates are now left jobless
You're looking for a job without money?
Just go back, don't say any story

You won't sign it?
Well joblessness will fit
Just get prepared to leave
Plan how you'll live

You seek justice for your loved one's loss
But in the arena of corruption you met the boss
The lawmaker, left you broken
Because the rich man had spoken

The student wasn't repeating any class
Even though he didn't pass
While others who were even far better
Were given "Repeat Letter"

There are doctors everywhere
But please beware
You don't know how they got in there
For our health they don't care

Corruption became a king
Wounding the just with its sting
We brought in corruption
Perhaps it wasn't our intention

But we can't quench it
As we had brought it
Except it begins with an individual
And then it becomes mutual

STILL LEADERS

Rejoice N. Victor

Fear filled our hearts
We are all afraid of the fiery darts
Which will be thrown at us
So we had to be fibbers by force

Truth has left our tongues
Praising the unjust in all our songs
Complementing the wicked day by day
Careful about what we say

There are ears everywhere
Our opinions we can't share
We have to keep quiet and hear
As we were only left with fear

We loathed evil
We were ready to stamp out the devil
We were living normal
But to truthful leaders we weren't loyal

We preferred an iron hand
We didn't care about our land
We only boasted of politics
While we lost our ethics

Mr. Iron Hand came
After all he had that fame
Staying in the queue for long
Yes, for Mr. Iron Hand we stayed strong

We campaigned with all our zeal
The ballot boxes we couldn't mind to steal
As far as we got Mr. Iron Hand in
We didn't care if we had to sin

We danced till our lungs cracked
Motivational and sweet talks about him we never lacked
We did this till our wonderful leader got in there
We were then prepared to receive our share

We did everything in our power
Even if it means uprooting every flower
Mr. Iron hand was our heart desire

We were ready for the heated fire

But here we are
After going that far
Mr. Iron Hand had the seat
He began to make our hearts beat

He made us all silent
Driven by guilt our hearts were turbulent
But we still had to nod and smile
Even though he asked us to trek a mile

Now we regret ever selecting
Our greed everyday keeps reflecting
We never cared how our people would cope
We never cared if Mr. Iron Hand will give them hope

We were heady and after our benefits
Now they bitterly say it fits
We're all suffering together
Trying to console one another

Though we brought Mr. Iron Hand
But we have no choice than to stand
And watch how he sits down to dine with his wives
And on the hearts of our people, play with knives

We have realized our mistake
But we have eaten our own cake
We hope for strength for some other day
Thus for this, we pray

THE YOUNG JOURNALIST

Rejoice N. Victor

Why are we hunted down?
I thought we were most admired in town
What have we done to deserve imprisonment
I thought we were entitled to enjoyment

Why are we always hiding in corners?
I know we never chose to be loners
Why do our hearts beat when we're asked for?
Seems we're always visited by a foe

The old journalist had told me
Young journalist, you see
The world doesn't want truth again
If you speak the truth, it will bring you pain

He said again
Truth will bring you closer to pain
But if you agree to the condition
You will face no condemnation

What is the condition? I asked
By your leaders you'll be tasked
You can be used as an instrument
Only by that way can you be eminent

You've got to learn not to speak
You must not always squeak
Mute and act like you're a fool
Then you'll be used as a tool

You will be used to win the hearts of people
Just to paint the image of your master so simple
Choose to be an instrument
Or else you want to write to your detriment

Young journalist
Don't get in the blacklist,
Else you'll be hunted everyday
If the truth you try to say

Learn these techniques, he said
Except you don't want to be paid
"Black is white and white is black"

"Lack is enjoyment and enjoyment is lack"

Except you want to be engaged in a fight
Or be hunted day and night
Keep calling the devil a saint
Give his black walls a white paint

The old journalist was sorry
As I was left broken by his story
Now I'm in the room of game
To choose either death or fame

Choosing fame won't make me rejoice
I know it's a selfish choice
But what can I do now as I am standing?
Between the devil and the deep blue sea, thinking

Bio:

Rejoice N. Victor is a young Nigerian writer and a poet, an undergraduate studying Mass Communication under the JPTS scholarship programme, Global Wealth University, Togo. She was born in Jama'a Local Government, Kaduna State. She's a promising young lady with zeal to explore her career in poetry, story writing & journalism.

CORRUPTION

Jessica N. Wesseh

Society has taught us nothing
but corruption as a profession,
It's spreading like an infection
that entices all & has become man's daily meal under the table,
As the sunsets
they get to work, this is real
corruption has become a cancer
transfer from one person to another
some take it openly,
some take it secretly while
others take willingness as their share of benefits

INJUSTICE

Jessica N. Wesseh

My two eyes saw poverty
slips into the lineage of the poor at the periphery of the condition,
I was rebuked for a crime I didn't commit,
If you listen closely to the voices
I have no future
They denied me the favor

MISGOVERNANCE

Jessica N. Wesseh

I am from a place where people strive to win unmerited recognition,
A place without courtesy only controversy,
Misgovernance
has brought discrimination among ourselves
Loss of lives, rape, pain and regret is the siblings we have

Bio:

Jessica N. Wesseh, is a young Liberian, poet, novelist, and practicing journalist. She has works in many literary anthologies in Liberia. The young poet also is studying public health (epidemiology) at the university of Liberia.

CHASING AWAY CORRUPTION

Aminata Talawally

Let us summon the spirit of honesty
To dwell in unity with our bodies and minds
So that we may silence the whispers of the
Creature that has made us feel accustomed
To agonized hungers and sufferings

Let us enslave our hearts to love
So that we may lead the rest with
Tenderness and kindness for it is
The purest way to pull a torrent of
Light in their lives

Let us cling on to the wings of transparency
So that we may plant the seeds of development
In the heart of our economy and let it invoke
Glad tidings

Lastly, let us let loose the grip of corruption
And let it wander around in the forest with
The woods

INJUSTICE IN THE LAND

Aminata Talawally

Dark shadows on the wall
Fiercely gluing themselves to it, not to fall

Reminiscing the tortures over the years
She has had to swim in an ocean of tears

Her children tasted the woes of slavery
It was time to summon the spirit of bravery

She wailed for liberation
But all she endured was oppression

They drew the margin because of her race
And threw hard wrecking words at her face

But the hope in her heart continue to overflow
The trumpet of freedom will soon blow

Today, she has broken the chain of limitations
No more will she interface with aggressions

For, the master that dehumanized
Her has ceased to exist

REFLECTION ON OUR LEADERSHIP

Aminata Talawally

It's written in the holy scriptures
To reign down respect on thou leaders
For leadership is like an act of worship

Bowing to the pleas of the people
Reading the hardship on their faces
And paying heed to them like
Some verses from the holy book

It's a prayer that thou leader
Parcel this in thou heart

Bio:

Aminata Talawally comes from the Madingo tribe in Liberia. She is a product of William VS Tubman High School. An emerging literary voice from Liberia, who aspires to be at the top in no distant time in the literary world.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Abbah Justina

What is power
If not the truth?
Breaking siege
Of unjust Ruth
Speak it, breath it
To adhere justice
Of the mind's crisis
Speaking truth to power.

Cry it out loud
Let black be black
And white be white
Make the conscience
A hero of courage,
A wing of human freedom
Of a societal kingdom.
Call it speaking truth to power.

Sing of it
All that you know
It may come as hit or a blow
For truth is bitter
Yet it empower better.
Truth is a pillar of strength
Truth, a shade of light
Yet! A shadow of death
Luckily, there a room for rebirth
By by speaking true to power.

ECHO OF POWER

Abbah Justina

The echo of Power
Is in the wisdom of the old
Voice speaking truth and justice
That dare to come face to face
With the tyranny that enslaved.

The echo of Power
Is speaking truth to power
A thought for ponder
Words that sparkle light of wonder

A priceless superpower

The echo of Power
Sounding from the hill of Africa
To erase debris
From the hut of our existence
Leading to the stream of fairness.

TRUTH OR DARE

Abbah Justina

I choose truth
And I also dare
So I say it
The way it is.

I do not mind
What is may
Cause me now
I know for sure
The arm of justice
Will give me peace.

I want to give you;
You who's voiceless
Truth is that voice
Speak it to power,
True is what I dare.

Bio:

Abbah Justina is a poet and founder of Nigeria Moonlight poetry platform on Facebook. She is a native of Adim Akpo, Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. She is currently running her HND programme in Mass Communication at the Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

FOR KEN

Sam Ogabidu

Ken when I heard
Of your death I picked up a pen
To write an epitaph
But you only flattered to deceive
Die Ken. Die.
I want to write your epitaph

AND SO NYANZI SANG

Sam Ogabidu

Yo weary Muse Veni
Come to the portal
From which you came
Nyanzi beamed her gaze
And your crimes hidden
And known leapt before
All like a bonfire
You raped your country
You stole her dream
You blighted her vision
You broke her heart
You tore her mind
You mired Uganda in the mud
You spat like a cobra
Into her gaze
You stole her moon
You stopped the shine
Of her sun
You stalled Uganda
Yo Weary Muse Veni
Come to the portal
Nyanzi Sang and let us
Break our yoke laden life
On your head
We anoint you with curses
Nyanzi Sang her way
To the prison house
A tyrant met his match
In the Song of Nyanzi

PIPED DREAM

Sam Ogabidu

The oil is piped into a pipeline
Four kilometers long and hidden
From sight for nine long years
And fed into the belly of thirsty ships
To feed the whale of greed
Far from our coastline
And the cost tightens our waistlines
And bites the hunger in our intestines

And so we came to and too shocked
To see what our eyes are showing
Like screenshots of fake news
Long so long we have lived in a piped dream
No heads will roll here
Because the stain of this audacity stealing

Is too oily to be cleansed with a sentence or jail term
And we know now more than ever
That we do not need to clean
The swamp
It is our conscience that needs
To be cleansed

Bio:

Sam Ogabidu was born in Zaria in '72. He was educated in Mount Saint Gabriel Secondary School Makurdi, and universities in Makurdi and Maiduguri. He is a chemist, poet, playwright, freelance editor, and short story writer. He is the author of *Afriverse*, a collection of poems on African cities and *Arrowflight*, a play. He has co-edited several anthologies including *Bridge for Birds*, an anthology of poems on Local Government Areas in Benue State.

THE GRAIN TRIBUTE

Kabedoopong Piddo Ddibe'st

Here are your sweet beers great ones;
Do not bleat like hungry goats now,
Be quiet and drink your drinks!
Here are your delicious foods;
Steaming blood of bleeding lambs,
And raw blood of crowing cocks;
First fruits of the fertile fields.
Here are your destitute sons and daughters,
We have come to your great clan-oracle
To seek your flaming hidden eyes;
We have come with our shaven heads,
And wearing torn black mourning clothes,
We are at grief the land you left us is no more!
They have grabbed and gazetted the forest,
(They say animals are better than your sons)
The whole big green forest is in flame,
Where you once hunted wild animals barehandedly;
They have found crude oil in your hills,
And your hills are now their hills!
Like stranded monkeys that have seen a pursuing rain
Upon this land your sons squat like baboons,
They forcefully requested them to evacuate
Like waste discharged from Islamic stomachs!
(Trespassers shot; survivors shot again)
Your land that is our land is now their land,
Like steaming malrwa beer,
They draw the crude oil with steel straws
And cook it in a big dark cloud coughing house
And the long hollow metallic snakes of straws
Pass under ground to draw the fat of the land
(Now your sons are mere laughing dry bones)
Their new paths have knocked down your ancestral trees
And the small huts we erected for you
Their prayer warriors have burnt them down
And built huts for the husbands of their grandmothers
The cold bubbling rivers of the land
Which demarcated our land and our neighbor's land
From the North to the South; East and West
Have been diverted and the waters drunk up
And there they empty the stomach contents
Of the groaning hungry coughing steel huts
We are sick at our very hearts
And homes are profoundly unbearable

The war is within our very huts
It is now we on us, bleeding nightly
Do not abandon us your black sons in your wrath
Do not whip us with wrath and crocodile tails
(Whip us with love and kindness)
In your wrath, who can stand before you?
Your eyes that are lightnings
And your voice that are thunderstorms
In your wrath, who can remain alive?
We know we have uprooted the pumpkin
From our abandoned old Homesteads
And now we have roamed the world
And homesickly seek for homecoming;
We know you see over us when we sleep
When we sleep in mournful numbers,
We know in silence you hear us wail
And you know it is twenty-four seven night in this land,
The darkness has covered all our doors,
And we squat under bush waiting for sunrise,
Your great sons are chicken disappearing like exorcised demons...
Oh, Great Spirit of Harambee,
And Spirits of Lagoro and Abayo;
Let Lapono Rock be not angry
Though we know you're hungry;
Here is your sweetest drinks
Our senior wives have fermented it for you,
The sweetest fermented kwete you once enjoyed;
Drink and forget the sins of your sons
The travelers who shall never return home alive,
Death will bring them back alive;
We forget you like chicken forget stepping on bowls of green
That they cannot eat, and walk away...
You Ubuntu, Great Spirit of black Africa
Here are your beautiful bubbling beers
Drink and forget our wrong taken paths
(The paths of the new lead to the graves)
Intercede for us before the Almighty Spirit,
The High Divine Clean Spirit of the Skyland,
We who are unworthy to look at him in the eye;
Intercede for your prodigal sons and daughters,
We who are dirty and cannot sit before his clean face,
Great spirits of our ancestors,
May you guide our restless feet
Into the ancient paths of the old,
The new paths are full of dung
And full of petals of barrels;

When your sons step on the dung,
It cannot go like a chameleon's waste.
And you Great Spirit of Ujamaa,
(Only fools forget your communal face)
May you strangle the serpent Spirit of Carl Peters
Hovering over the land for a return;
Let Bismarck forget his mother's name;
May you whip the Spirit of Putin between the legs
And send it running back without looking behind;
That evil spirit tiptoeing into your new compound!
May you lose the voyage ship
Of Vasco Da Gama in the wilderness of the Sea
And let Stanley drink the soup of his own head.

HOLIDAYS WELL SPENT IN CEMETERY

Kabedoopong Piddo Ddibe'st

Farewell: sleep well, soldier, sleep well
They had led you to the battle edge
And further still across the bridge
Too soon sounded your sudden sullen bell.

What in tempestuous night sunrise
In my fluidy eyes seemingly grandeur
What in molten days mere owl cries
In me your sweet rebirth is splendour.

From the black barracks of God's acres
The Golgotha of this bleeding country
The resting place dug by God's actors
This memorial park they call cemetery.

Farewell in the face of the parting sun
So sad the sweet parting of true friends
Like a monk that married a virgin nun,
Done with the psycho coke armor fiends.

YELLOW LEAVES OF NIGHT

Kabedoopong Piddo Ddibe'st

In the suppleness of the paired buttocks
Are battered dreams,
In the wigs of learning
Are pregnant breasts of the earth,

I cry myself to sleep.
Heavy are tongues of singers
And tired legs of dancers,
The end begins tomorrow
At dusk of the day
In the flowering lips
Of the night
With fabulous masks
And feminine laughter,
In coated blades of tongues
Of the bartered birthright,
Sculptured by the spirits of sleep;
A recipe for disaster
In the procession,
Our procession,
We await our burials tonight
In the withering leaves
Of men.

BIO:

Kabedoopong Piddo Ddibe'st was born in Kitgum Uganda. An Internationally acclaimed poet whose works have featured in several International media platforms and literary anthologies, he is an editor and cultural activist.

THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO DO.

Mirembe Gabrielle Pearl

I want to change Africa with my voice.

Yes, with my words.

I dream of an African country where corruption is non-existent

Where politicians pay taxes

Where even the biggest in the food chain experience equal rights as those who seem insignificant to the country.

I dream of a new Africa where refugees are not afraid to tell their story because their families back home will be harassed for it.

I dream a new Africa where the people who fight for liberation don't resort to killing and raping the people they claim to fight for.

I want to change Africa.

I want to give my people hope,

I want to make it a better place;

A place for all to be proud of - a safe place for our children.

I may not change everything on this list; I may die trying

But I will make it a better place as God has called me.

A better Africa!!

SCRAPS AND GRATEFULNESS

Mirembe Gabrielle Pearl

Hello you,

Yes, you!

I'm talking to you

My master I'm meant to call you

Hmmph

I'm fine being grateful for your scraps

Taking the little you give me and smiling because at least I have been given.

I'm breaking the status quo - taking back my power.

When you remember,

you will remember my power covered in rebellion.

My legacy will be that of an anger - righteous anger.

Scraps and gratefulness were never meant to coexist.

Good bye now

Wait for the war I'll wage.

HAVE YOU SEEN?

Mirembe Gabrielle Pearl

Have you seen their mansions?
Have you seen their vacations - those things they post on Instagram?

Have you seen their convoys - black Mercedes tinted windows?
Have you seen the hospitals?
Have you seen the children
Those that learn in classes without walls?

Have you seen their clothes?
Have you seen where they travel?
Have you seen the security they have?
All paid for with the tax payer's money.

Have you seen them suffer?
Have you seen them starving and diseased?
Have you seen the common man
die in his home - with unfulfilled dreams?
Have you seen the poor man deprived of his social rights?

Because I have.
I see it every day.
I don't know what to do.

BIO:

Mirembe Gabrielle Pearl is a medical student living in Kampala, Uganda. She is poet who believes in using poetry for social change. She is also a seasoned blogger and a youth activist.

PHARAOH'S CHICKEN

Ngozi Ebubedike

They parade the land
With decorated lies
Rulers in power grab
Not leaders in garb
Of Humanity
Rulers whose heels
bruise our heads
Their leashes of power
Excoriating our necks
Their moral putrefaction
A putrefying sore on our hearts
They made Injustice
A national ointment
Brutality
A daily anointment.
And integrity
A showy ornament.

Our national song,
A mantra of
forward never
backwards ever.
In their power-drunk
stupefaction
Our rulers,
Like chicken,
Pharaoh's chicken
pick and peck
Our common dignity
And lead us into desolation.

Baptised in the murky
Water of their evilness
Our stomach bloated
From an overdose of hypocrisy
Our strength made sapless
From the burden of hardship.
The might of their rulership
Drooping our shoulders

We salivate for salvation
From the colony of tyrants
We seek redemption

From their grasping fangs.
Indeed, a black Moses shall arise
To pry us from the talons
Of pharaoh's chicken
Who preys on the land
And pick at the people.

A PEOPLE IN SERVITUDE

Ngozi Ebubedike

In Africa, my fatherland
Our forefathers sang
in the vineyards of oppression
With freedom our voices
are gagged in our soil.
Denied the right to stand
upright as humans

Our growth stunted
Our peace strangled
Our dignity trodden upon
like wine in their presses
Our howl for justice
Fell on ears wax with power.

In Africa, my fatherland
We live in shackles
Our hearts put in shredders
under the shadowing
Acts of untamed power
The brunt of draconian pundit
A festering boil
On our nation's bosom.

In Africa, my fatherland
The whirl of absolutism
Despoil our shores.
A land embroil in imbroglio
Engulf in power struggles
Not to better
But to batter
And to splatter
The mud of vileness
Upon the people.

In Africa, my fatherland
Freedom remains a cavern
in our national consciousness
And until it is won
We remain a people in servitude
To extortioners with vests of power.

POWER POSERS

Ngozi Ebubedike

Africa, the cradle of the black race
But its people, like wandering
birds cast out of the nest.
Like walking shadows on noonday
Wandered through malicious policies.
In a land where evil swirls.
And powers of wickedness swells

Africa, a land where spewers
of atrocities remain, players,
on national pitch
where the baton of power
cuff the people.
With blackened hands.
A land toast in fire of victimisation.
A continent thrust in deep currents
of viciousness.
A people buffeted by whirlpools
of savageness.

How long shall African leaders
Press upon their people?
Until houses are without dwellers
Until the land lies in desolation?
Or
Until the people arise
From their lethargic pose
To fight the power posers
Bedeviling the African continent.

BIO:

Ngozi Ebubedike is a seasoned romance writer, publisher, relationship consultant and poet. She has published many romance novels and books on relationships. When not reading or writing, she loves cooking and creating delectable meals for her family. She presently lives in Lagos, where she writes, blogs and runs a bookshop.

A POET'S LETTER TO AFRICAN LEADERS

Michael Chukwudi

Dear leaders
In a darling continent
called Africa
I, a poet who wield the sword of truth
Humbly write to you from the coven of African Poets

The government of Africa
Was never a family business
Which you run as you so desired
You are chosen amongst millions of humans to represent
For a better Africa to emerge

It saddens my heart
To see what has become of this beautiful continent under your care
Africa is hugely blessed by both human and natural resources
But you choose to siphon them
As though it was individual properties

Because of your selfish desires
Africa has remained yet a developing continent for ages
A third-world continent where poverty, dispassionate
And inhumanity has built its roof
Leaving her underdeveloped like a child without a mother's care

Because of your selfish interests and desire to get
Those natural resources meant for developing the continent
Africans have been in a great deal of pain
And even intimidated by other continents
To the extent of describing Africa as a shithole

Oh dear leaders of Africa
My ink bleeds as I write to you
Africa is not getting any better
It appeared to look like what
They described her to be; so disheartening

You vied for power
As vibrant leaders with a basket full of promises
You made the masses believe you have what it takes
To build that Africa, her citizens will grin wide in excitement to
Call a home

You convinced the citizens with those

Myriads promises of yours
And you trashed them immediately after they elect you
They believed in you to build the African of their dreams
But you failed them

Dear covetous leaders of Africa
From the natural resources
You all have created for your generations
Better homes in the first world countries
Where they'll enjoy while the citizens groan

Nothing is hidden under the sun
It's obvious
How you grabbed and squeezed the inheritance of the people
You claimed to lead

But Igbo Adage says
He who held what belonged to a child
Shall be caused to release it when his hand aches

The eye of my ink
Is watching you as you read this letter

MOTHER AFRICA SOAKED IN TEARS

Michael Chukwudi

A mother will go hungry
For her child to feed
She can even give up her life for her child to keep existing
That's the extent of a mother's love
To her own

As a good mother
Of beautiful African continent
I prayed so hard to the ancestors
To cause nature to favor the lands
Of Africa

I crossed seven seas and into the unknown
Seeking for the betterment of this continent
With the resources that nature provided Africa with
I'm always heartbroken when other
Continents refer to Africa as a third-world

My cloak has soaked in my

Own tears
When I look around and see
My children wander as they have no
Hope left

Out of mother's love, I caused the earth to give you
Everything that
You can hardly obtain from other continents
The gods blessed you with fertile land
Yet, my children look so malnourished

At night, I cannot even close my eyes to sleep
Because, I'm drenched in my own
Tears
When I look at what you have turned into
A hopeless third-world continent

THIRD WORLD INDEED

Michael Chukwudi

With leaders developing the first world
With the resources, I toiled tooth and nail
To set Africa apart

African leaders have
Only
Succeeded in making me
Look like that bad mother
Who cannot take care of her own

They have succeeded in individualizing the resources
Embezzling public funds because no one will question them
Their children get the best education in a first-world country
Then come back
To continue from where their parents stopped

It makes me look like
I asked the gods for everything but forgot
To pray for good leadership to thrive in Africa
All these make me weep bitterly
And gnash my teeth in pain

Those children of selfish desire
Have made me look like a bad mother
I can no longer attend gatherings on other continents

Because, I'll be humiliated for not performing my duties as a mother
Tell me, where have I gone wrong?

Leaders of Africa

Have brought nothing but an ocean of tears to me
I wished they could look up and see how abandoned I have become
For the tragedy, they caused in the beautiful continent
I birthed with resources

BIO:

Michael Chukwudi is a Nigerian-Indonesia-based writer. He is a Postgraduate student of Universitas Jenderal Soedirman University Indonesia. He is a Fellow of Ebedi International Writers Residency, a Fellow of Imodoye Writers Residency, and a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. His undergraduate studies was at Ebonyi State University where he graduated in 2018 with a B.Sc. (Hons) degree in Applied Biology (First Class).

KENYA

Felix Atta Amoakoh

You stand tall from the
mountains among my daughters
I counted your name among
my able noble brothers

Kerenyaga the mountain
with grey hairs Kikuya,
the mountain of wisdom
and purity in all your affairs

I was told you rig the
elections and kill your
blood lines in the struggle
to be a democratic leader

I was told you are the
worse off when human
rights violations are
placed on the table

I checked your books on
accountability on responsibility and
the red light stood on as well
established corruption marble

It's time to do the undo
It's time to go the never go
I was told these predicaments
were born by the slave masters,

but after years of Sovereignty
have you not come of age?
I was foretold that wisdom
is the master key to civilisation,

have you not been renowned
from the edge? I remember back
in the days when you were of your
liberty were you not involved in the

Samburu County and Laikipia
County killings, why do you
blame the coloured bird on

your property? I summon

you, my daughter, to do
what is proper and not what
is right in the eyes of the
bad buds on the oak tree

IN THE RAINS WE ARE THIRSTY

Felix Atta Amoakoh

Could would they work in retrospect
of retrogress for an autocrat to progress
In the respective irrespective of the
democrat demolition of antiques in the
name of democracy for autocracy
In circular nooks screwed with square

hooks mixed feelings with crooks as
a meticulous match at a glee In the,
in we are thirsty in the prime of harvesting
and feasting, we are hungry, in them filled
with satisfaction In arms folded at a chest full
of breasts more of a pregnant woman than

a man in the power of all operations for lives
lost in more than to gain, belt inside within
the abdomen and the protruded belly
In the hot seat of starvation for the masses
dead alive ribs and skulls well labelled at a glance
For no food and no water without a place

to stay or lay the dead In a huge edifice in
service to the services for manipulating
the masses as an office for one or two
In wheels of fortune to steal with a
Steel hot to kill, all was but the power of
a white sheet with black prints voted for

as the notorious among the opposition
becomes indisposition to fight for the
right of the adversary as dangerous as
death pills In the demonstrations on
the street against segregation between
the civilisation of our people we are

rundown with guns with a biological weapon
viruses as curses put upon us by the gods
we are dying and in and out at the end, life is
not fair in our part of democracy or autocracy
In worse cases at the infirmary no cure, as they
flew with wings of metals and hearts of irons

hit higher fast, in the sky to be cured If we are
dealing slowly with dynamics between life and
death all in only at the mercy of the gods
because we and our fathers wronged the gods
In the house of the gods live the same species
of homo politicians as homo religionicians are
birds with the same feathers on flights
For us, we are hopeless, in the living only
in dreamland, for them, that is what is in
their mind For us, what is in our psyche,

in our spirit and physique is the hope of
light at end of the tunnel syndrome for
the masses to present their petition for
injustice in aluuuutaa continually
one they called revolution!!!

THE RUNNERS OF OUR ECONOMY

Felix Atta Amoakoh

The runners in these races
are predestined by the power of money
The participant with the highest bidder
wins the races the masses don't have a say

They will always have their way
The opposition doesn't have much to pay
Where money has no power they
power their guns to kill the majority

who would vote them out and imprison
the leaders lay huge bridges of
promises to cross them over the troubled
waters of the multitude Their children's school

in the best institutions abroad and seek
medical attention overseas when they are
not sick and most of them are drug addicts

at a tender age, they have mental health issues

The state machinery for law and order is made
their private sanctuary The economy of the
nations are sinking yet their wealth in international

banks oversee keeps swelling Don't pig guns

on them Don't throw stones at them
Don't burn your hat for them The sun
will rise tomorrow and
the clouds will fade away

BIO:

Felix Atta Amoakoh is a Ghanaian writer, who has written poems that have been featured in a good number of anthologies. He obtained his first degree in Agriculture Technology in Ghana and presently teaches integrated science and Biology in high school in Ghana.

HUSHED WAILS

Oyewole Oyekemi

There existed an evergreen land,
Flowing with rich milk and honey,
While men from under her thigh cannot afford powdered milk.
Children stare at the pictures of cans of her produce from the magazines,
Honey is a sweet temptation but never free.

There existed an evergreen land,
Flowing with the richest crude oil,
Yet her salts fight to get a bowl when it spills out of the belly of injustice.
Happy faces that long to get a free minute wealth,
Get burnt down to ashes.
She labeled this insecurity and moved on.

There existed an evergreen land,
Her bosom, filled with the hidden truth
And when you sulk from it,
You are a living dead and the next target of another truth that needs to be hidden.
This land is still in existence;
A home of hushed wails.
...and if it could be bought, you'll lose your money before you gather it.

THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

Oyewole Oyekemi

You would not understand why it's far,
Even though it's so close.
You would not see it,
Even though it use to be your footpath.

There are eyes farther than the irókò tree,
They've seen it even before it became a rumor,
While you were still dreaming, they seized it.

And before you realise that it's the road you used to know,
They changed everything.
Beautified it with flowers you've never seen
Cleared the path, neatly trimmed, turned into a garden.
They don't want you to think of the way to freedom,
Or set your foot on it.
Until the likes of them have had enough, and their children's children.

TAINTED HUE

Oyewole Oyekemi

In the land where I live —

Pure rules are boldly written on the walls made of innocent bricks,

Yet, broken in the dark corner forbidden of the fragile hearts.

A heart must be made of rocks,

Decorated with fine stones and imprinted numbers.

It is for a man with promising words but more of a man with the ruler of the said words.

It is full of stained colors splashed on the doors of the sons and daughters of Abraham.

But in the mirror,

Where the true reflection lies,

Good men ascend the throne but get poisoned by the forces of the greyed,

Leaving the legend hearts clueless.

In all,

It takes the greatest strength from the world unseen to emerge a clean heart,

But never with a handful of tint.

BIO:

Oyewole Oyekemi is studying Counselling and Human Development Studies at University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. She is passionate about poetry and her work has appeared in many poetry anthologies.

OF THINGS THAT BURNED US. (XENOPHOBIA)

Catherine Magodo-Mutukwa

It is not the end that haunts us
but
it is always the beginning...
that night,
the sky was ablaze with engulfing
flames of hatred
the ground was alive ~HEAVING!
with the thud-thuds of feet
possessed by demonic spirits
thirsty for blood and destruction
Aah!
the things we can't say in words
but
can only carry inside of us
while in the process of being
broken
the dust of RAGE that would not
settle
it kept rising and its tempestuous waves
drowned everything whole
the sounds of agony that emanated
from the men, women and children
echoing the echoes of betrayal
in this part of the world not so kind
were as loud and devastating
Our brothers forgot how to be human
and treated us as THINGS and evil
triumphed,
the sight of them...
dark souls,
vacant eyes,
chanting things that evoke strong
feelings of cruelty directed at the
vulnerable
ever ready to purge innocent blood
smiting our mothers and assaulting
our sisters
maiming our fathers and brothers with
live ammunition of animosity
Ei!
Of that NIGHT!
may it be written down in history and
never be blotted out of our memory

may we be allowed to grieve,
to mourn the loss of freedom, our
traumatized beings suffered at the hands
of our kindred
MAY WE in the end, be allowed to heal...

THE WAY WE SURVIVE.

Catherine Magodo-Mutukwa

We sit in silence,
watching our fathers weep
for what us, the children can
no longer do for ourselves
Our minds are exhausted
and our mouths will not speak
we close our eyes because
there's nowhere to hide
we've been too strong for too long
Now...
this color of pain and despair
it flashes before our eyes
how then,
do we begin to narrate the
stories of our tears which carry
the burden of broken hope
in the most desperate parts of our
lives and disturbs our peace...
of feelings too difficult to name,
although we learned a long
time ago not to break easily.
I heard, that ours is now a home
where
laughter is no more, a prison of
existence...
only our Fathers weep for the
wasted years and wasted
opportunities.
Aah!
I said,
I'm all out of poetry
Love poetry, Hate poetry and
Protest Poetry...
My Thoughts have no words.
Africa...

The doors of my mind,
there're refusing to open
to uncover the mystery that makes
one understand
this tragedy that has become life at
home.

My HOME is on fire, it is burning...
BURNING I tell you!
Allow me to air my frustration, while
I sit here at the edge of dashed hopes.
Deep in the valley of despondency
where my thoughts remain oppressed and
my opinions suppressed and
all these emotions unexpressed,
"Powerless" needs no translation
the words I carry deep inside there're too
heavy, too heavy for pen and paper.

I can only petition our maker in the eloquence
of my silence.
An attempt to make sense of these agonies
has left so much unsaid
though I feel like shattering, simmering in
anger, struggling to conceal this mental anguish,
I begin to understand the value of my voice
to calm this storm...

SILENCE HUMS

Catherine Magodo-Mutukwa

Despair in the heart
rises to the brain
where I pace the floors of
my locked mind
'n' my pen silent...
searching for the right words.
The earth has bent thy brethren
beneath the heavy load called
life

Oh! Cry my beloved homeland
there's nothing left to write home
about
'cept to cry for the children of thy

motherland
lost in the fog of forgotten
dreams chasing the
'merry~merry' days of
celebrations, whispering silent
prayers hoping to go back and
bask in the glory days of victory,
while running away from the
pained-sting of betrayal
of things perched on the soul...
of half-spoken matters on
emotions too grave to mention.

Still thinking, I could end here,
I remember, the ghastly emptiness
of mothers whose insides
reflect something indefinable
taken out the day they were
forced to spit out farewells to sons
gone to faraway lands...
I wonder about the tyranny of time
the brutality of forced change in
changing seasons
'n' flashes of faces of the fathers
haunt me
whose loins are cursed, whose
seed knows no peace choking on
long strings of disappointment
frothing at the mouth with anger
mingled with bitterness
Ah-h! anger...bitterness...
disappointment...
the legacy left behind for those
who offer no song or prayer to
appease those in the winds.

BIO:

Catherine Magodo-Mutukwa is a Zimbabwean award-winning poet with over 15 years of writing experience. She has authored numerous books. Popular amongst them are *Rendition of the Soul* and *Silent Cries*.

GOVMENT SAY.

Justina Aderemi

They escort me home - boys and girls
filing silently behind in urine and waste flavored air

these 46 pair of eyes nestled in skulls eager to reveal its secrets, they scratch

ripe stomachs and scaly skins
with distrustful eyes they watch

mothers soothe, red-eyed infants bleat and flap whose bodies flies chase in merry dances

why is your child not vaccinated?
pent up scorn flays hiding stubborn tears
govment say dem go help

beggars oozing fetid sores limp after me
flush with promises of corn and moldy
bread, pallor and welts covered voices from green-grimed shed whine pitiful sobs

what is wrong with them?
govment say dem go help

Mangy dogs lice littered fur struggle over
baby's carcass in rubbish heap

dem go die soon, na new sickness, govment say dem go help but we no know when.

MOBILE PEACE.

Justina Aderemi

Africa feeds gluttonous generals -
centered as a planet spinning axis

they store air underneath discovered when
churchyard transit bones

The recipe - unchanged her back still hangs sore
half century flit general heirs

in greedy gold veined flow recruit enemies to gorge her leftover gold.

Backwards hopeful 1960s, honey-tongued snakes

make promises delectable feasts
in dignified slurs they take -

toss scraps at weeping majority
her abundance, useful desert sand.

Forwards toll gate rage proud giant submits naked and burning for all to

witness she cries
"No more!"
In oppressor's employ
bellicose hounds in kins skin
sink teeth in

war against kins.

STAGE PLAY.

Justina Aderemi

Proscenium glows
Curtains rise on the continent dramaturgy
Rapt and eager is the world - it's audience.

Act one:

in pride and a thousand colors
actors claw eager to

show off corruption's iridescence
unity, progress peace staid verbs

generals mocking competence their
ears, tack-ons to weeping subjects

parties celebrating loot after loot
gather firewood, sleep on embers

because prosperity and accountability
are ironyms to boneyard freeze

Act two:

On god's scam pulpit wise men inspire
schizophrenic deliriums to masses claim

vestibules of god's voice whose
syncopation despair stanch'd from tome of lies

Every hebdomadal, squeeze widow's mite masses sigh in respite against oppressive reality
suffer now, mortality is brief but Peter's pearly wrought gates salvation forever.

Act three:

Actors gather three legged degenerate:
shush child, an elder passes hang your head low.

Slimy sponge as is custom binding freely
bartering barbed respect intertwine abuse.

As is custom, chop her sex, vilify his emotions, never mind your feelings!

Another year ends another stage play
actors bow out, the

world rises yet once more a
thousand claps and ten thousand jeers.

BIO:

Justina Aderemi is a poet and a passionate writer who has contributed to many literary platforms in Nigeria. She is presently studying Law at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

WE CAN SEE THE DIFFERENT STATES OF DEPRESSION

Tares Oburumu

The house was white until they turned the lights
on where Lagos sat, pre-colonially; the green history
telling itself a lie held firmly as the mantis holds a dead fly
still alive until the ghost is lost, it was love then, it is now
the making of objects; the maps that will lead you out,
through elsewhere, into the open woods. Above the city
are chandeliers with the bright intention to go off & on,
before it, hands pile on hands, too many bridges built,
concrete over want. As the walls elevate a newfound harmony,
at least, to balance the distance between one mountebank
& the other, the applause colors itself. Everyone is here
to be praised, to say a thing, to be awarded a prize for speech.
The shutterbugs know too much, but not enough detail to go
round the room clean as the faces it holds up for Claymation;
the language they speak is a figure containing mud heavy
as a thought dug in moments of decision. I take off my glasses
to follow the questions as they walk, threadbare, from chair
to chair, whispering *will you elect again, the lord of the flies?*
A housefly keeps buzzing, places my hands over my own scent,
as if the dead, among us, have come to listen to the promises made:
the theories of resurrection, the heavens spread from grass to grass.
As if the cemetery has waited too long at the periphery of power.
I could neither rest my vista nor tunnel my blood through the right vein,
as the house, having a mind of his own, impetuous, interprets itself
in indigo, in hierophants. Someone I have known back in the slave boat
that almost made me a Freetowner, hands me a green microphone.
Answer the diaspora, he says. I turn from him, looking at February with eyes
shut in the things I am seeing.

NOT WITH EYES HEADQUARTERED IN LONDON

Tares Oburumu

Something tells me I will see you again among the mass of breadwinners,
raised by the campaign ground, after the bombing of the funeral
at Font Avenue. Something tells me your son, dressed in his best ghost,
will be grateful to see you in your rural voice, lift up the lord to the Godhead.
Ascension - Today's dream, sweet Tyndale, is still traveling from behind us,
through fantailed fantasies, burnt uproars lying on ash, while we stand on the hill
where love extincts those who survive it. Descent – she carries the country,
like a child, on her back, planting the phlegm thick with the color green.
Then she walks to the sun, the man who owns everything fruitful. There,
at the ridge, she sings Bach's mass in B Minor to make him spend the night in her bed.

He unstraps the baby, places it in his own heart, blurs the love & lights her sleep.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HAPPY BIRDS

Tares Oburumu

Say tramcar.	Drive.	We stopped by our conversations where John Fayette spotted the music of Rex Lawson gathered, like a grand piano, on the treble.
Say jukebox.	Play.	We are at the barroom, not yet ready to inherit a good country.
Say amphetamine.	Drink.	We served ourselves a nation, hollow, & passed the drug from Turkish cigarette to Turkish cigarette, burning free.
Say civilization.	Live.	We left our lives unset on their verges, splattered on the wine becoming rivulets on the floor of the juke joints, as we opened & closed the doors of the worlds unsafe in a box of places.
Say history.	Walk.	John Fayette, again, spotted a park, nestled between a slave ship coming from Charlottesville, Virginia, & the love letters of Sally Hemings cast in bronze, in a mega city in Ada George, Porthacourt. A lady there attracts her own past, rose petals beauty, needing warmth, flowers to have her jeweled. We became her fire, tulips, chrysanthemum, orchard & her Songs Of Solomon.
Say February.	Fall in love.	At the end of so small a month, we, beaming with choices made, came face to face with the beginning starting the end gilded on a dice.
Say happiness.	Say it.	Say ballot. Does a trap make you happy?

BIO:

Tares Oburumu is a poet and analyst. His works have been featured in Connotation Press, Tumpike, Loch Raven Review, Agonist and many others. He is the winner of the Sillerman Prize for African poets, 2022.

OUR HUSBAND HAS GONE MAD

Mathew Edeh Sunday

Our husband has gone mad
He took the children's bread and gave them to the dogs
Our husband is now a dad
His words are like dry bones of woods sleeping in the fire that are set in logs
Burning beauty brilliant bright flames that makes our peacefulness sad.

Our husband has gone mad
He has broken his vows
Where's the dove he promised to set row?
Where's the love he promised to show?
He was low before the bow
But now it is clear that it is thorn in our grain that we've sown.

Our husband has gone mad
He has chosen the "he" over the "she"
He always make her feel like a bird with one feather
Outcast, broken and segregated like an innocent murderer
Yet her voice is a voice among voices that should be heard.

The better we know the faster we move
Has our husband gone mad?
Eating meals that should have fed many mounting managing mouths
He watched and smiled as the hawks kiss the chicks of the mother hens
Like the clapping hands of the clock
He applauds hypocritical the anguish of his blood.

Our husband has truly gone mad
Oh earth! where are the eyes we gave to be our eye?
He was ready to be our ride or die
But now our stream of knowledge is drying everyday
Our markets are emptily filled with people without goods
We are in the center of no progression
Because our husband has gone mad.

CORRUPTION

Mathew Edeh Sunday

I saw corruption
She stood taller than Everest
Her smiles had fooled many to believe she's the only option
With her on our skin can we ever rest?

I saw corruption
Her doors are always opened like the pearly gates
To feed and seal the hearts of men from men
With her on our skin can we have a paly get?

I saw corruption
She was fatter than an elephant
Her hands are always dipping into other's purse
She thinks only about what she can get and gather
With her on our skin can we survive this venomous adder?

I saw corruption
Sitting in every corner
She's like a stamp stamped solidly on all
We've fed her until she has grown tall
With her on our skin can we still build our wall?

THE GREEN STEMS AND THE DRY WOOD

Mathew Edeh Sunday

Paul and Saul are brothers
Separated in the world by the pockets of their fathers
We are all humans after all.

One-day before the sun could grow tall
Paul sent his hand on an assignment inside a mall that took a life out of all
After his hands answered the call
His legs rowed away faster than a kicked ball
He was caught and was set to appear before the scale of justice in a hall
But his father's pocket ended his fall.

The other day as the sun began to lose her sight
Saul was caught at night in a fight
Although his hands were clear and right like the shining armor of a knight
Yet the scale weigh held him tight
Because his father's pocket couldn't produce a tithe.

As the world is aging
Ears are seeing the eyes
Kings appearing ragamuffins
Like an abandoned Fiona in the dragon's castle
Many have sold their dignity into slavery.

BIO:

Mathew Edeh Sunday hails from Utonkun District of Ado Local Government of Benue, Nigeria. He holds a degree in Public Administration from University of Makurdi. He is the author of two poetry books, “Lily of the Nile” and “Milk and Honey”

LIES

Uche Anyasie

They said it
We believed it
It happened

What they said
We saw it
For real

Yes, in a figure
Figurative in Literary Lines
Analyse these things with me.

"Good roads for my people"
We believed it
In reality, it was
good roles for my people.
Tribalism at its peak
Losing the core current.

Again
"Increased monetary Value"
We believed it
It was real, yes.
Increased monetary FADES.
It was a famous tenure, consecutively.

Before, it was...
"Endless promises of security"
Now, it is,
Acquire AMMUNITIONS in your home for your own safety.
Save - our - soul rhymes battles with
Save - your - self

Was this the Truth we never knew?
Who's to blame?
The believing Masses?
The wandering Liars?

Lies be upheld as truth for so long
Let the leaders leave lies
So we can live lustre lines
Let golds be the only shines
Let's uphold a faithful marriage's ring

AMATEUR

Uche Anyasie

Amazing it is.
When the lowly
Be termed Low Lives

And the Major
Be termed Minor
Astonishing, it is.

Old and Exhausted
In knowledge
In strength
In innovations
In ideas
In depths

Sanctimony gave them breath again
Breath of soon coming Death, though.
What the heck?

An old, fagged out, somebody
Aspiring for a mass weight

Where is it done?
Where is it relished?

A name for a meme of a person?
A reputation for a down-to-earth (gravely) aspirant?

Whose opium was it?
In what manner was it obtained?
Why direct its effect on sane humans, the masses

If spade be spade
This is nothing but an insane meme.
Birds of a feather;
Their backers
Their votes and supports included
Those forwarding Amateur Aims
For the Masses
Via Mature Faces

Let the major be reckoned
If justice be just

Let the weight be justified
In the arms of a peculiar person
Period!

CRUEL HORNS

Uche Anyasie

Gamed in great hope to the masses
Reliable and Reckoned
We hailed the tenure
From initial

Milk ran wild in ecstasy
Spring flows crushingly in purity
Released unto us is dew from dawn
We hoped still

From forward, we went..
And went
Till a pitch was peaked
Reality was a new dawn

What was the reality?
Retrogression in real
Rigour in retaining fundamental rights
Rascal wreck of built foundations

Women Cry
Babies Cry
Men Cry
People Cry

Horn raised as the Unicorn's
Once adorned in the finest fills of famous feasts.
Once adored as the hope of the hopeless
Has reached a self - reached reign.

African's Heads of Yore
And of Now
Let it be known and established
That you've done unwell.
If good becomes evil
Evil becomes justice
Unjust Justice
Just as it is.

Let the dew be renewed
O Cruel Horns
Let the Horn's Beauty return to
Couth Horns

BIO:

Uche Anyasie is a writer, who operates within the different genres of literature. He is aspiring to pursue his higher education.

TIME

Chimnemezu Nwaeze

Busy or marrying

Young or dying

In the mean time

Man owns no time

And as blind and kind as time

Time remains friendly and unkind

With good and bad times

To live or die

To merry or mourn

Time is endless

But ends you

It is your beginning and end

Past or present

In your end

What will your time be like?

Good or bad?

Impactful or regretful?

This is the end time

And at this point in time

Don't waste your life time

Everyday is death's time.

A REPLY TO TYRANNY

Chimnemezu Nwaeze

In our county

There's now was in our unity

like 'There was a country'

And now like a corn tree -

Farmers are in charge of the ministries

With Cows as her special citizens

The presider

A religious herder

Taking us to an unknown destination
As sheep, we follow without notifications

And now in the lagoon
We realize He's our doom

We must face the wrath of our foolishness
For the sake of our togetherness

And as humans shun sheepish follower-ship
And begin to captain our ships

To hell with ethnicity, In our city
We don't need it in our unity

It's now war against Religious favouritism
We will favour Humanism

Together we can - build On our differences
And indifferences

We say no to supremacy
For we have woken up to reality

And in all honesty
To take back our land
Of Milk and Honey

FLAGS OF LIFE

Chimnemezu Nwaeze

In the days my father was a boy -
Those days of correctness when men were men
men took the bull by the horn -
Just like Okonkwo before things fell apart -
Men never compromised to evil, men were taught to be brave and pure not evil. Young men 'nd
maidens were taught at moon lights with hurricane lamps on bare floors -
Grand mother Ekwusa never failed to teach us what she taught mother by experience 'nd
experiments -
All exuberance wiped but molded a gold from the slum.

Now here I am
Flying life's five flags -
Grown, brave, correct 'nd not corrupt, all useful like the palm tree of a widow -

I farm in the rainy days 'nd harvest the season after -
For no good thing comes easily -
Even the bad 'nd ugly in their sweet bitterness never speak in the stead of shimmering good deeds -
For manna never falls in Freetown.

We hawked by the sides of our matriarchs and patriarchs -
there in the lands of our fathers and beyond -
She taught us to live like heroes 'nd heroines for they had nothing but everything -
Peace of mind 'nd contentment were like their honey as they worked harder every now 'nd then.

Now, in my gray hair of physicality, reminiscing 'nd massaging my past with today, if I have left a
message in the sands of time before I go beyond 'nd lie -
Recounting my good deeds, I knew I have raised a total child -
My offsprings 'nd Earth's elegance say I am a role model though I never gave them bullion vans
but they remain Gold purified by my finest parenting.

Doors open at the mention of my name 'nd
at last haven on earth I have seen through them.
In them I have written a book 'nd now I am sure to live forever, young 'nd Immortalized even in
my grave -
I shall live in their hearts -
a deity of morals.

BIO:

Chimmemezu Nwaeze is the lead Administrative of the “Wake up Africa Initiative” (WAI). He is also the secretary of Association of Nigeria Authors, Abuja Chapter.

GO HOME

Simon Thaddeus Tsaga

Go home,
Say your prayers,

If you believe in God's time,
Wait for it,

For there is nothing to see here,
Just politics,

Games,
With souls named as pawns,

So go home,
Tuck yourself in bed,

Taste your favorite meal,
And pretend today maybe your last,

This is what happens when a father-land marries a mother-land for fun,

Its offsprings, citizens become responsibilities,
Instead of a blessing,

So go home,
There is nothing to see here,

Just wrinkled children,
Who took the monsters in bed time stories too serious,

Just victims of emotional hunchbacks,
Puppets of uncivilized brains,

So go home,
Dig a six-foot pit somewhere,

It may be your grave,
Or your hiding place,

So go home,
There is nothing to see out here,

Just politics, just games,
Just wars, just hypocrites,

IF YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO GOD LATELY

Simon Thaddeus Tsaga

Tell him to check his inbox,
There is an unanswered prayer from Regina,

But, wait, tell him not to bother,
She is already on her way to meet him,

Tell him to peep through the clouds,
That these smokes are no longer from burning woods to make meals,

But from burning homes,
It is from dissolving bones,

Tell him I know how it is hard to be God,
So many prayers in an hour,

Some for greed and some for pretense,
And those who take him for a merchant,

Sowing seeds for their rewards,
Attempting to negotiate its spoils,

How many times he must have wished to strike Uncle John,
For poking the three year old Anita with a rod,

But that may no longer fit his role,
Because he is God, a forgiving God,

Remind him about Adekaa, who just murdered a cheating man,
if there is a cure for anger, a solution for hate or a method for greed,

And last night a country stabbed a country,
A boy killed a girl, a girl killed a boy,

Tell him slaves enslave slaves,
The blind lead the blind,

Tell him to act his age,
Tell him I am mad at him,
Tell him i am sorry,
Tell him I say hello.

WHEN YOU ASK ME WHAT A COUNTRY IS

Simon Thaddeus Tsaga

When you ask me what a country is,
I wish I could tell you in a language you'll understand,

But there are seasons, tenures,
Events, feelings that cannot be put to words,

And when I look at my own country,
Then these dictionaries lie,

There is no such resemblance here,
With such printed definitions,

If I should tell you by our history,
By how far we have come,

I would choose words like strife, strike, faith,
Corruption, hunger, survival, injustice and crime,

I would speak of our favorite tools for division,
Religious wars, tribal clashes, and the false accusations on the news,

So when you ask me what a country is,
How do I tell it,

Should I tell from the documented lies,
Or make you a sculpture of my country with symptoms of its every flaw,

Or tell by the roles of its instability,
Somedays a country is just a name, a coined illusion made of boundaries,

Some days a country is a battlefield,
Some days a country is a home,

Some days it is a prayer,
Some days it is a wish,

Some days it is a dream,
Some days it is a hope.

BIO:

Simeon Thaddeus Tsaga is from Benue State, Nigeria. He is the author of “God is a victim” and the “Gospel according to life.”

STILL, I BREATHE

Emmanuel Ikuoye

I am the unheard drake in
Life's wilderness, raped
By white marauders
Hurling my chained forebears to sugarcane plantations, left
on the island of sharks
Still, I breathe!

I am the toothless lion
Trampled by preys
Playing mum on my
Roaring striking no
Chord of awe
I am gagged by black
Bones to rot in life's
Jungle till eternity
Still, I breathe!

I am the lamb trapped in
The woven web of
Famished hyenas
My arms dripping rivers
Of blood the world over
Harmless am I but my
Sight a stinging nettle
To armed fiendish friends
Still, I breathe!

I am the gazelle denied
Rose flowers, race
Treated lesser than beast
Battered, marooned on
The desert of hunger
And despair, forgotten in
The rain of misery, in the
Blood sucking sun
Blazing like inferno
Still, I breathe!

I am locked up in
Dungeon for no crime
Save my make-up,
Pushed into the ocean of
Life to suffer the fate of

The Titanic
My rights trapped, my
Mind and future toyed
With like a doll, my body
Panting for freedom
From the weight of scorpions
Always on my neck and Jackboots like Sobibur
Victims slowly giving in
To six feet
But in the horizon beams
The sun rays and rainbow
Thank goodness, I breathe!

SAINTS

Emmanuel Ikuoye

You can't come from my hometown and be tagged a beast even if you bathe in human blood, you are but a saint.

You can't be from my tribe and be dubbed an armed robber even if you bleed the coffers dry, you are the race born to rule.

You can't be from my clan and be portrayed as a terrorist even if you burn down palaces and worship houses, you are a sacred cow.

You can't speak my tongue and be denied your heart desires even if it means burying millions alive but can't try it if you are from the bottom of the Niger.

You can't come from my hometown and be asked to apply for a job, you choose a juicy office even if you can't spell your name.

You can't come from my hometown and be questioned for your actions. Manifold are the whopping benefits of coming from my hometown
Let me not reveal much to the public
We are ermines, you are pigs!

CRY

Emmanuel Ikuoye

I cry
not just for unrequited love but for the time wasted.

I cry
not for the tree hewn down but for the birds left homeless.

I cry
not just for the ragged ones but sometimes the rags of their minds.

I cry
not just for the broken homes but for children left naked.

I cry
not just for spilt milk but over some waiting to be spilt.

I cry
not just for the bleak future but for the careless present.

I cry
not just for the rotten captain of a nation but for the blind youth and followers.

I cry
not just for those denied justice but for justice slaughtered like a sacrificial lamb.

I cry
not just for the precious time consumed but for those waiting for Godot.

I cry
not just for bridges blasted but for those who can't cross over to their paradise.

I cry
not just for the crafty cassocks but for the gullible pews.

I cry
not for unfettered passions but the piteous end of their peddlers.

I cry
not just for fallen heroes but for those who can't step into their shoes.

I cry
not for the arrogant night but for those who refuse to embrace light.

When will my crushed heart heal? When will my soulful cries cease?

BIO:

Emmanuel Ikuoye was born over three decades ago into a humble family of nine at Lagos, Nigeria. He is an essayist, short story writer and poet. A believer in service to humanity and a member of the Association Nigeria Authors, Lagos Chapters.

PEST OF GRIEF

Olatubosun David

Corruption, we know,
Made abode within the heart of the heads,
Where the pigs and vultures sit,
By the pot of broth.

Every home and street turned sour
For the flow of wealth that got stuck
Among the vulturous middlemen.

Disguised in the garb of a loyal sympathizer
Ready to succour our miserable fate
They came -
Those masters of selfish ambition
Singing lullabies of doom,
To lure our hungry souls to sleep.

Truly, a deep sleep, in no time,
Overwhelmed our sombre soul
And corruption, like a reptile, crept at once,
Into the heart of every home.
At its single bite,
Parents turned preachers of woe.
The parents, teaching their wards
To speculate and peculate
In order to succour the home.

Feting its victory,
Corruption crept also at night, to the holy of holies
When fire has burned out on the altar.
Hungry clergies, blessed gift givers without scrutiny
The biggest gift givers, get the biggest clerical blessing
And corruption, from homes traversed
Across every nook and cranny of the state
Feting and feasting
To the very root of its commonwealth.

If we must win this war
Must we admit our laxity
And see ourselves as culprits
For corruption is sweet
Until it hits us in the face.

Let us guide our hearts

With the shield of integrity
And mend our broken walls
Against greed and grief
For corruption is a pest of grief
When allowed to feast upon our hearts.

A LAMENT FOR US

Olatubosun David

Our peace has blown apart
Like the clay pot that fell
From the top of a lofty height
Our peace – a haven of bloodshed
Our peace – our wealth of humiliation

Integrity, not a moral steadiness
Where honesty guides
The heart of the nation
But integrity is maiming the truth
Integrity is inequality and corruption
Integrity now the art of pretence

Democracy, not for equity and fairness
But the manipulation of electoral processes
And the government of the gluttonous high chiefs
Where the masses are held captive
In meanness and meagreness

Three sacred cords bind our souls
Like the fetters of bronze
Freedom that ensnares our liberty
Peace that embraces bloodshed and
Unity that ruins our togetherness

Peace itself is not absence of violence
Where things are in perfect order
Peace is suppression of violence
With shooting and maiming
And jailing of the vanguards of peace
Peace is rape in various forms
Peace is hostility and violence
Peace is destruction and death!

Truly, peace can never be peaceful
If our minds embrace grudges

And our minds mind no other minds
In sharing and caring
Hearts that abhor pardon
But only harbour the sword of vengeance
Never sleep with all eyes closed

Let us mend our pieces of peace
With the fingers of the Potter
That the peace we daily preach
May remain the beacon of our daily peace.

A CLARION CALL

Olatubosun David

There is a land where blessing flows
Freely like the torrent of Euphrates
There in the dawn of day
Love flourished like the rose of Eden
Nourished by the waters of Tigris

A land there is, where the atmo is heavenly
And the glory of its foliage creeps upon the earth
In it is everything radiant and beautiful
In spite of the land's abundance
And the promises of their vision
Their selfish and devilish ambition
Brought them division
And tears their cleavage apart
That their common voice and mission
Are lost on the platters of hatred

My fatherland that once filled with corn and wine
Where milk and honey flowed in torrents
Like the current waves of the River Nun
A land where love was once the bidding cord
Among the folks of the tribe-less tribes
And now the abode of malice and discord
A theatre of war and genocide
A tabernacle of strife and bitterness

Arise, my people, my good people of Aden
The trust and concord that bonded us together
We must have back unless we're doomed
Must return to Babel to break our tower of discord
Must join hands to raze that mountain

Where dwelleth our malice and resentment

Your many children once played together
In the sand and folklore at sunset
But now, they become enemies
Turning bloody swords against swords
Fighting for power and positions
Stealing their own share of inheritance
Oppressing, enslaving their clans and kinsmen
For power, for freedom that enslave others
Professing to be faithful, loyal and honest
Upholding your honour and glory
With hearts of stone and blood of poison

Time it is to go in search of one love
And speak with one voice in one tongue
Let us return to the land of honour
Before the foundation of confusion
Let us return to our dawn of honour

BIO:

Olatubosun David is a Nigerian writer and poet. A member of PEN, Nigeria Centre, he currently works in Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

STONE FOR A HEART

Chinedu Vincent Okoro

Nothing ventured, nothing gained
A proverb says and that's true
For when I was a kid I shook like a leaf
And my silhouette frightened me even in the noon
And every empty room emptied my heart
Of every courage and boldness.

My mother threatened me, that
If I cried, a masquerade would appear
And flog my body till it bled
And I dared not whimper,
For the ugly thing scared me numb

My father scolded me for being
A mischievous coward
And would say that I would die a pauper
That I had no will to last a week
For how could a mate beat me up
And I would be served a plate of chicken?

My aunt hated to see my smile
Especially, when I just cried over
A plate of rice
She mocked me for being a glutton
And said that epicures like me end up hungry

As for my uncle, he sulked to have me near
Once, he joked that I have a splodge of pap
Where once sat a tender and bold heart
This made me groan and moan with self-hate

But today, I fear not
Oftentimes, I begged myself to see my shadow
For I sit alone in my large office
Never having the opportunity
To peep at the busy world outside
For I myself, am busy each second
Out of fear for the Devil's mischief

But today, I cry for how deplorable
Our society had become amidst treasures
The masquerades cease to appear
For our leaders, our avaricious leaders

Need to be whipped till they wail

But today, the bold are discriminated
Talk of National Assembly, the coward smiles
Many times he would remain tight lipped
Even when plans are being made to
Kidnap his father's grand daughters
Still, they last a decade
Stashing our political chickens into strong rooms

The tears of the oily rivers in the Delta
Well up each second, and oil moguls
Pay millions to lick them up
No one dares call them gluttons
But they are applauded for having business sense

And for our struggles, they swore to leave us not
In the midst of abundance, we wallow away
In the abyss of ruin, rejection and negligence
When we revolt, they curse that we have
Stones where our hearts once were

DEAR BORNO,

Chinedu Vincent Okoro

The gods of the land
Might even call for my head,
If I say, you have suffered.
My ink will evaporate
And time die in my hands
If I talk how mesmerized you are.

In you, the invisible Sambisa forest
That swallowed the Chibok maidens
And nobody can tell the fiction
Behind the whereabouts
Of these vision-full maidens.

In your sister, Dapchi girls were captured.
Leah, the tagged stubborn infidel, held hostage
As others were unchained to their loved ones.
And so I heard on the channel and social media,
Of Leah's conversion and a life gift
A tyrant commander gifted her.

In you, wasted lives and properties.
People with different titles:
The parent-less, sibling-less
And the refugees.

In you, many NGOs flaunted.
Like the flow of water fountain
Foreign aids drench their banks
Who knows how far these aids
Have been felt in you?

Borno my friend, you will get over
From the hands of men politicking
With the souls and destinies in you.
You will smile again!

BRIBE

Chinedu Vincent Okoro

You are the venom that our just lords saw,
and Lady Justice's eyes unfolded.
Today, justice is double-crossed
in the hands of the highest bidders.
You have enslaved all the vital institutions of our land,
that the weakling masses's decisions
are now at the mercy
of the highest bidders.
In the corridors of power,
you have elevated kleptomaniacs.
The populace is left to gorge themselves on their destruction.

Bio:

Chinedu Vincent Okoro is a social change activist, writer, poet and educationist. He has published poems and short stories in both national and international anthologies and magazine. He is the author of "The Stinging Hat."

CRIES OF THE UNBORN CHILDREN

Antreka Tiadi

I see their eyes,
Their ocean deep eyes
That have seen all evil until
They ran out of tears.

I hear the silent cry
Of unborn children;
Crying for a home
They'll never have,
Crying for a bright African sun
They'll never see.

They cry for the future
That will never be,
For a continent that dances
To drums of gunshots,
They cry for their father's land
That echoes a chorus
Of wailing and lamentations.

They cry for their mothers;
Who carry bundles upon their heads
Quarrelling their way across borders
With all the hopes of a continent
Ravaged by conflicts,
They carry the dreams of a continent
Struggling to wake from a nightmare
That echoes cries of its unborn children.
Oh Africa! Will you come through?

NOT A NIGHT OF SLEEP

Antreka Tiadi

This city doesn't sleep,
Its music will keep you awake -
The sirens will wail
In your dreams,
Its cars will honk until
The morning comes.

The curtains will flash in reds and blues,
Keeping the emergency personnel on their toes

The gunshots are no longer frightening,
The screams in the shadows
When a woman is knifed
Or robbed
Have all become part of the stars.

Every morning I had to count
The heads of my family
And friends
And pray that none is missing.

AZANIA; THE FADING RAINBOW

Antreka Tiadi

The rainbow that held
The storms away is fading
And now dark clouds gather
To cast the land in shadows.

It's in those shadows
Where we hear gunshots;
A woman screaming -
Or a corpse lain in silence.

It's in those shadows
Where young men trot barefoot,
Back and forth, jobless and hungry;
Hoping for the re-emergence of a rainbow.

BIO:

Antreka Tiadi was born and raised in Jane Furse, a small town in the northern part of the Republic of South Africa where he received his education and currently reside in. His poems have been published in local and international Journals.

LIPSTICK IN GOVERNMENT

Emmanuel Douglas Mulomole

We are dumb in our own,
Region or state or province
Nothing we speak
But we see with an evidence
That, the government has a lipstick
Lipstick of corruption,
Gluttonousness and oppression,
Bribery and nepotism.
We are blind in our own,
Country or society or community
Nothing we see
But we hear with a true actuality
That, the government has a lipstick
Lipstick of callousness,
Lipstick of evasiveness,
And lipstick of desperateness
We are the learners in our own nation
Nothing we can show the action
But we deeply learn the something
That, the government has a lipstick
Lipstick of the worrying signal
Signal from our leaders
For planning to change the constitution
In order to stay longer in power
As to gleam their self-interest.

DIFFICULT TO TRANSLATE

Emmanuel Douglas Mulomole

Apparently difficult to translate
This and that language of pure corruption
A language that nobody greatly appreciates
Always brings to our living a poor reflection
Profoundly difficult to translate
Every letter from this word of oppression
Cooking our strongest feelings to ululate
In our life, increasing the voice of affliction
Verisimilarly difficult to translate
This language of wicked injustice
Holding the things of us in unfairest plate
Setting a judgment of killing our real voice

Completely difficult to translate
A truly commonest language of nepotism
Overtly making our skillful abilities be so blate
Strongly inveigling our aplomb into cynicism
Evidently difficult to translate
This famously abbreviated word of greed
Ruthlessly burying our welfare with its hate
Taking all things of us and self-interest it feeds
Seriously difficult to translate
These languages, discrimination & segregation
Openly demolishing our harmonious debate
Debate of promoting togetherness as one people in one nation.

MANACLE IN THIS NATION

Emmanuel Douglas Mulomole

Manacle is ringing
In this nation
Nation of corruption
Nation of political kerfuffle
Nation of despoliation.
Manacle is seeking
In this country
Country of retaining nefarious thelves
Country of retaining callous people
Country of retaining abductors
Country of retaining butchers.
Manacle is listening and reading
The nation afflicter
The words of assault
The songs of tears
The books of facade trepidation
Manacle is verbalising
"You have endured enough of atrocity"
"Today is to rise an impunity"
To all guiltiers
"Today is to divulge the nefarious actions
And extirpate Justice's blind fold"
"The veridicalities shall unfold."
And punish the nefarious thelves, sweep terrorism
spread welfarism
Manacle is snaring
The gigantic fishes,
All are the pure criminals

They will soon be in jail.
Seeing the wall of burning hell.

BIO:

Emmanuel Douglas Mulomole was born on 8th December. He is from southern Africa, Blantyre, Malawi. He is a poet, Freelance writer, Quote developer, Peace activist and short story writer. He is a bronze categorized member of the largest platform literary group *Motivational Strips*. Some of his poems have been featured in *Brave Voice Poetry Journal* (Zimbabwe).

THE DREAM HE BOUGHT

Thembi Ntahane Kamahlangu

I watched my father walk in
Knuckles bursted, bruised and bleeding
Sweat glistening on his face
His hard work dripping from the back of his neck
He walked indolently or exhaustedly
I know not no more
I wished I could embrace him
Hold him in my tiny arms and tell him
Daddy all will be well.
But the look on his face is not
Of someone longing for an embrace.
His eyes sunken in his sunburnt face.
My father!
The breadwinner of our home,
The king to our castle.
Promised empty dreams bare of value,
Education is not the key after all.
I hold this degree in hand
Proud,
Pride tainted with sadness,
Sediments of misdirected anger.
Memories of my father's sunburnt face
Flashes before my eyes each time
I look at this piece of paper.
A useless key, a dream he bought
Invested his blood, sweat and tears
Oh father!
I know not your hugs
I know not your love
I can only remember your tired eyes
Piercing through my retina
I can only make out the sound of your voice
As you bid goodbye to my mother.
I wish you hugged me
Spent each moment telling me you love me
I wish you spent your time investing in me
Instead, of investing in a half baked dream
Now each time I look at this piece of paper
My degree, I grieve.
I am sitting at home with it
Decorating walls with peeling paint
It was supposed to be my way out
Or my way in through the locked doors.

At least that's what they told you.
The doors are locked now
And the key is too small to fit.

THE WORLD ORDER

Thembi Ntahane Kamahlangu

With technology they unite us,
In just one stroke you can discuss
Travel to Spain and England all at once.
An opportunity that comes only by chance.
This journey began long ago
When they came into our land to grow
And introduced us to a white God
We gracefully accepted with just a nod.
They taught us he died for our sins
This journey begins
When they gave us the bible,
A constitution to live by
Through the window our traditions we threw
Forgot our roots too.
The same Bible,
A constitution we are called to live by
Teaches us to call our parents demons
When they depart, why?
This institution is designed to separate
Us from ourselves, we're desperate.
Each Sunday we raise our hands in church
To worship a white Jesus, let's search
Within ourselves our ways
Lost with hands we raise.
We know God, we knew God
Way before their feet even touched our grounds
That's not odd
Their white God just came in rounds
The father, the Son and the holy spirit.
They sold us dreams and aspirations
We never pondered the implications
Got us aspiring to be called a bride
Instead of umakoti and stand before the altar
Exchanging vows we're probably going to break
The moment we awake
We set our own values aside
Just to wear the values that alter
Now we aspire for a wedding instead of umendo

A ceremony that leaves us drowning in despair
This journey started long ago
This journey continues, so go
Go find yourself amid a jungle of confusion
Don't even bother to fight for inclusion
For assimilation is the destination
Only if there is accommodation.

EVOLUTION

Thembi Ntahane Kamahlangu

Human evolution the new revolution
Instant messaging the new obsession
Cuffed to a device just to stay connected
But you do not realize you're entangled

You find pleasure in these handcuffs
That gives you a glimpse to the world.
You think you are connected,
You hold the world in the palm of your hand.
What an illusion!

How simple this life has become
Watching the world through screens
Feasting on carefully edited knowledge
Just for their benefit.

They gave you this device to make life easier
You gave them real power
To show you the world they want you to see
Not everything is what it seems you know.

In all honesty aliens are not found in space
Aliens walk this earth, created by humans
Invading their bodies as hosts
In a form of a programmable device

Biology and technology fused
Intertwined into symbiosis
Humans creates technology
To depend on it
A relationship that works

One cannot live without the other
The other cannot be without the one.

Humanity, a race transforming into machines
Yet we live in oblivious bliss.

Humans playing God fast tracking evolution,
Natural has no place on earth no more.
The human brain has played its part too
Soon it shall depart.

Soon the alien species will be carved deep
Into the human body
There will be no telling one from the other
Soon!
It's only a matter of time.

BIO:

Thembi Ntahane Kamahlangu is a South African writer and poet. She graduated from the University of Withwatersrand in 2019. The author of the Novels *He Saw The Storm* and *After the Flame*. She won the African Honorees Authors award in 2021.

THE JOURNEY OF THE OAKS

Sunny Ibeh Jnr

Slowly, he walked!
Not being too sure of his fate
Along the rigorous valley of life
Like a frustrated husband of a nagging wife
So light and weightless
Like the Egyptian papyrus!
Looking forward to kiss the lips of death
And to romance the illusion of a new world
Suddenly;
His spirit leaped up again,
With sheer dexterity and determination
Commanding might and valour.

His quest was for the nebulous treasure
A treasure which could only be described by him
In him! And for him!
Before the gaze of some wicked spikes and thorns
With a glut of anxiety pouring like a waterfall
With an unheard noise right inside his heart
Beating the drums of wars and violence
In the four walls of his soul.

It was brought to our notice,
That his, was a median adventure
A rare journey that has never been embarked by anyone
The deposition of refined courage made the difference
On the altar of terrestrial uncertainties
Like a mad man who never understood the mystery of life
He journeyed yonder, towards of oaks of his dream.

THE MAGICAL YEARS

Sunny Ibeh Jnr

Having come and gone
Like a sweet tornado of wan
At the late-dawn hours
With colourful smiles
That struck our bone marrow
With sweet sense of expectations
To hope and wait in one ball
Like an expectant pregnant woman.

Only to go to the exile of no return
Leaving us with tattered hopes and littered fortunes
To battle with fate on the altar of want
Where our hopes are frequently slaughtered
For so many unjustifiable reasons
We cherished your presence together
Expecting you to spend more time with us
But you left us with a subtle promise
To come back before our old age.

You came with better days and times
That have left remarkable memories
In our hearts with a glittering slate of love
You gave us the arrows of war
And durable shields of defense.

It would have suited us well to see you again
But time and events have proven us otherwise
Do extend your sweet kisses of affection to us
Let's have a feel of what we have missed
Your good memories linger in our hearts
To tell the tale of a sweet couple of years
That we may never see again.

ECHOES OF HARD TIMES

Sunny Ibeh Jnr

Dubem leave me alone
Allow me; let me go and rest
The calamity of this world burns me
The gory, pillage and massacres
Are now becoming pills of everlasting sorrow.

I want to go to the world beyond
Let me try my luck there too
Since fortunes have failed me here
I will cross the rivers of iyi-eke
And the seven mountains of ahuda
So I can get to the other side of the world.

The gods have truly been unfair to us
They have chosen to treat us like aliens
In our own paternal abodes
The burnt of sorrows are all over our bodies
The hurricane of life has left us homeless

With our children becoming destitute.

We have become prey in the hands of the brave
The roofs of our thatch houses
Are in cold war with termites
Weeds have taken over the track roads to our huts
Life itself has become a disaster to us
Now we have been held down in the cottage of poverty
For innumerable decades and uncountable years.

When I get there,
I will ask our ancestors a thousand of questions
I want to know why they have been so callous to us
And to our kinsmen in the countryside
Look after my wife and children
For I have made up my mind to go.

BIO:

Sunny Ibeh Jnr is Nigerian writer, journalist, poet and socio-political activist. His works revolve around the beauty of nature, the metaphysical world, the essence of love, politics, pan-Africa and life. He is a graduate in History from the University of Benin, Benin, Edo State, Nigeria. His works have received wide publication in journals across Nigeria.

PRETTY VULTURES

Alo Solomon Alo

There are these creatures
Who appear in human form
Those that left our parliament in fracture
And welcomed their predecessor to continue the torture

Multicoloured as the anoles
Dynamic at every given point
Preying on the innocent souls
Leaving the masses heartbroken

Shameless and whimsical
Ruthless and ill-gearred
Same wickedness they all shared
With fake promises

Bridges, railways and roads in our hearts
Electricity and innovation in our eyes
Pipe-borne waki in our mouths
Schools and hospitals in our hope

BATTALION OF THIEVES

Alo Solomon Alo

Parliaments are occupied
By talks who pilfer government funds
Talking their loots out of cut shores
And giving citizens peanuts
Our oil well becomes their assets
Private sector rises to lead
With government agencies lying moribund
Leaving graduates waiting for jobs.

As our economy nose-dives
Their private economies enlarging like the coast
Making us a mockery of the world
As we curse them to high heavens.

QUENCH THE FIRE

Alo Solomon Alo

The came as saviours

Promising us safety
Mounting poles
At every corner of our state

Things changed all of a sudden
We began to hear different stories
Witness unclear scenes
Unlike their promised paradise
As we became prisoners in our land

Bloodshed and hunger surrounds
Cries and weeping everywhere
Agitators with their flags
Seeking the coming of justice
But no one seems to be paying attention.

Who will save us?
Who will heal this land?
Who do we run to?
Who will quench the fire?

BIO:

Alo Solomon is a native of Izzi, in Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. He is a prolific writer and poet with many articles, poems, and quotes to his credit. His hobbies are writing, promoting works of art, and traveling.

THE MULTI HORNED BEAST

Ruvimbo Martha Jeché

The multi horned beast hails from the north,
Faster than the speed of our light of hope.
He comes with fire,
Burning down our dreams.
He comes with so much energy,
Taking away our dearest hope.

They become his angels,
Our very own brothers!
They dance with him,
Dust rises.
They try to hide it in the wide sky of our pain and lack,
And say,
The beast won't harm you,
We will fight him off
Yet with him they chuckle all night long,
And their laughter sweeps our souls' joy,
It even weakens our unrewarded zeal.

Our togetherness has been robbed,
The fight to build our land has become an old song.
They have been sullied by the beast,
Now it's their own desire to build their little mansions,
Where they house the beast.
A silhouette rage now sits in us.
Their walls may reverberate with pain from our cries,
That won't help still,
For they have been bribed by the beast into forgetting us.

The beast has eroded our economy,
We will fight him,
It is our fight!
This they have told us countless times
But he is a friend of them
For he has brought them life's finest jewels
While we wallow in poverty.
Selfishness now wreathed in false mantras!
The beast has eroded our vision,
Dreams and prayers.
The beast who treads our land freely,
Hard hitting every corner!

NOTHING BUT JUST A DRUMMER

Ruvimbo Martha Jeché

How beautiful is the sound of life,
When in different rhythms its verses are played?
I play my drums in pounds so true,
As I hear them from afar.
Making music that hits all sides of this little land
Is a passion
Yet in their cups,
They scuffle my music.
Drinking it with their lame arrogance,
Trampling on my art and passion
Because I am just but a drummer,
Not of their craving
Yet of the people's spirit.

How beautiful life is,
When in diverse words its bars are inscribed?
With my drum,
I pen my voice in words so real,
Paging words that bring life to all,
Yet in their ears,
They rid their meaning,
Acting cool in black shades
When all should dance to words ever true.
They shun it all
Because I am just but a drummer,
Not of their style,
Yet of their blood.

How beautiful life can be,
When written in song,
A song so true and real.
It can be beautiful and dear,
When written by all, in any voice.
But I am just but a drummer,
One that they may not want to have people listen to
Yet it is the song that should be told.

I shall be just but a drummer,
Even when my music shall not hit their ears,
At least in heaven it shall be heard.
Shirk me my people on the grand stand,
I shall shake not my drum.
I will with boldness play the drum even through the midnight.

In my heart I will carry the warrior's song,
It shall beat in my heart eternally,
Claiming words and defying woes
Even when I'm just but a drummer!

THE MAN FROM YESTERYEAR!

Ruvimbo Martha Jeché

I am your own!

His yearly song
But our yearly cries are our own,
Not known to his heart!

Run with me!

His usual song
As if he knows our own race,
His pace a selfish man's!

He is the man who sees us cry in poverty
And promises to take us out of it
Yet yearly he takes our joy and pride
Feeding it to his personal goals.

On the grand seat he sits
Saying all good things
All beauties we would wish for
As if he means them.

We melt in the sun listening to his same old song.
Our hearts melt in anticipation too!
We forget it is the same story told of yesteryear,
His battle jingle.

We forget completely.
We hope,
We believe again,
Like fools we hallucinate over.

The race is run,
He is number one,
He forgets even his own cheerleaders,
Even his trail song becomes ancient.
We remember,
He is the man from yesteryear,
With that one song that never comes to life,

A meaningless song from yesteryear!

BIO:

Ruvimbo Martha Jeche is a Zimbabwean author and poet who writes in English and her native language, Shona. She has a huge fan base in Zimbabwe, which has been a tonic to her writing.

SECOND CHAIN

Dr. Alex Akunebu

The stagnant rule
Of a festering mood
making us brood
for brazen misrule
Of falsehood
foisted by bigots of impunity
lavishly Feasting on our blood
what a tragedy

Another apocalyptic declaration
for a second term in chain
for another stagnant change
in this endless rage

For he who can pass as our ancestor
to be our everlasting tormentor.

OFFICIAL CRIME

Dr. Alex Akunebu

Between
Faces of citizens
Of indigent Indigenes

Wrinkled
Not by tribal marks
But by scars of failed promises

Poached:
by merchants of death
of stolen mandates

Deflowered
Innocent trust
On the altar of perfidy

They belched
and farted
bloated by looted
treasuries and
gloated in goatish conceit

Voluptuous pervasions
debauchery and chicanery
endemically foisted

Light fingered mammons
in high places
superintending a majestic heist.

THE UNCOVERED MASK

Dr. Alex Akunebu

I shall smash the mucous
Of my egghead
On the shrine of resilience

To reproach your lustful offer

I will relax
In the cold comfort of the Seabed
I will resent your brutal benevolence

The hungry rumble
Of my stomach
Is allergic to your sumptuous meal

Forget it:
I will rather the loop
Of my own suicide
Than the rope of your rescue.

Pardon me:
What I miss in optimist comfort
I make up in pessimistic confidence.

For I refuse the fool you wish me.
The vague, void, misty, capriciousness
The legend, that has become your lies.

BIO:

Dr. Alex Ogueri Akunebu, Notary public of the Supreme court of Nigeria, Knight of Molumba of the Catholic Church, and a practicing lawyer in Nigeria, is also a poet of the finest breed, with works appearing in local and international anthologies such as the Random Voyage, ANA Review etc. He is the author of the *Turbulent Tranquility*, a collection of poems.

CORRUPTION

Ito Gabriel

Power corrupts
Absolute power corrupts absolutely
Where's the lie?
Our eyes sees none
What's democracy?
Our mouth says scum

Our leaders are pot-bellied termites
Infesting our future with fear
What of the tower which the righteous run to?
It's an enterprise of inhumanity sewn in yours of God

The medicine man smiles each day
Each dawn brings new pay
The streets are home to the future generation
Who have had nothing for breakfast
But frustration fueling depression
Yet they were the ones who yelled "Twale Baba"

Power! Power! Rats the wild
Power! Corrupts
Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

GIANT OF AFRICA

Ito Gabriel

O! Giant of African
Are you still a giant?
What does your pride root in?
Corruption? Population? Depreciation?
Are you still the blessed one with natural resources?
Are you not the laughing stock now?

Giant of Africa!
You were great
All nations herald you as the face of Africa
Your past blossomed
But present booms
Giant of Africa!
How do you get it wrong
What happened?
Your leaders abandoned you

Your leaders are now your predators
You're the world's scapegoat

Giant of Africa!
Wounded lion arise and gloat
Let the ends of the earth feel your awakening
Rise again and take your place amongst nations of the world
Redirect your ways, oh! Giant

Giant of Africa!
You are Nigeria

INJUSTICE

Ito Gabriel

Just as a dry leaf
Lola fell from top mothers arm
The water she went to wash herself with
Washed poison into her

The men in baggy trousers with yellow helmets
Poured chemicals into the water
The children jumped in innocently
Poor Lola fell victim

The hospital had no drug to administer for her
The map of anguish was drawn on the staff's faces
Who hadn't been paid for a half noon

There was nothing to do
Lola was taken home
On her mother's arm
Lola breathed her last

BIO:

Ito Gabriel is a Law undergraduate of University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. She is a poet, whose poems adorns several online poetry platforms. She is also into photography and graphic designs.

WORN NATION

Chukwuemeka Victory Oluchi

Oh! patriots
Africa my fatherland
The hero of the ancient times
That name imprinted for prosperity
Please get up with your vision and vitality
The land weeps.

Our leaders are mapped -
They couldn't even grant us security
We die in self-realization
Upon our righteousness
We strive to remain faithful

We fight for survival
The ruthlessness of the enemies within
The injustice we suffer forgoes
Does the fact that we are black make
Any difference or make us inferior?

Emotionally inflicted pains
Fury of our enemies
Oh! Defenseless people
Defense of the fatherland.

Protection of the children,
Our skies turned blood
The iron grip of pain and sorrows
History under mystery.

MAMA AFRICA

Chukwuemeka Victory Oluchi

When a mountain gets razed to the ground
Another unfolds on its own
The cry of a helpless mother
Oh! mother of age, take justice
The sword of power
Your children have become orphans in the world
Blessed by nature
Blessing more like a curse upon the world
Blessed by nature
Blessing more like a curse upon us

Our fruits taken away forcefully
Injustice prevailing
Our mouths are sealed
The fuel of pain
Rope and killings
Cold blooded slaughter of the innocent
Mama rise up,
With your boundless energy
Show the world you can
And have always been a super Woman.

FREEDOM

Chukwuemeka Victory Oluchi

Pains, agony, struggle
Shows and misery
Have children died helpless!
The red sea full of innocent blood
Torture,
Our leaders are torn to our flesh,
They sold us for power and fame

Our mouths are tied we are drooling
Our hands are tied, no help came
We died of hunger and fate.

We became slaves in our land
Our mothers ripped and tormented
Lying tired seeing children suffer
Freedom ran for away.

BIO:

Chukwuemeka Victory Oluchi is a Nigerian writer and poet based in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

BULLION VAN OF CARROT STICKS

Ishmael Ogbeche

Eight years of eroded economy
Yet the bullion vans kept loading
Securing self-indulging leaders
Leaders growing in belly and pockets
Followers stunted by greedy sockets

As their glides to its end
With power charging hands at the pills
Now they share their bullion van

Bullion van of carrot sticks!
Our eyes, we sanctify
To stall its glittery allure
And our nose we purify
To ward off its fading scents

Ancient mouths licking carrot soups
Old jaws munching its roots
Flinging remnants to tender jaws

Tasty carrot sticks
Secured to hungry young bellies
Tips stained with blackberries
Offering fruits of entrapment
Gluttonous mouths devouring
Stomachs leaping in fluffy bliss
To be rumbled by ravaging bacteria

Bullion van of carrot sticks!
Our eyes we sanctify
To behold its poisoned fruits
Our noses we purify
To perceive its simple birth
May we not sink in carrots deep
May we find a new path
To satisfy our hungry souls
Choosing leaders without their carrots

JUSTITIA

Ishmael Ogbeche

Hello! Lady Justitia
Why are you adorned with a blindfold?
Why do you have a scale and a sword?
Could this be the why we ask why?
You didn't see justice your son beaten
Nor your daughters Justina maimed
Nor even your husband justice chained

Hello! Justitia
Can you kindly discard the blindfold?
Flick it off thy face, that you may see
For Justina is being lynched now
And Justus couldn't help her out
Justice just juggled up, and you saw not
Now Justina is murdered and burnt
Oh! Justitia, you failed her as a mother.

THE BILE EDUCATION

Ishmael Ogbeche

In a land so acid
Blowing hot winds of worry
In this fiery sand of fury
My naked body lies in trance

Barbecued with the spicy
Condiments of stale intelligence
Arch rodents burrowing with pomposity
Into our common sacks

Feasting upon our ailing grain
The grain of education
Which lie comatose in ICU

My heart goes to these men
Skilled in their art and lost in it
First humans, before teachers
With two drumbeats
But our nations hear beat

Pushed behind the doors by the very child they groomed
Forced to labour and delight

With no incentive to recover

BIO:

Ishmael Ogbechie is an educationist, mathematician, poet and Fiction Writer. He teaches mathematics at ATSS, Port-Harcourt, River State, Nigeria. He has a strong passion for poetry, and has contributed in many poetry anthologies in Nigeria.

GRUESOME POLITRICK-CIANS

Raphael Grace

Who tricks us with words to get into power
And kills us with this sword
As soon as they sit on their beautiful tower

They made us promises
But end up with compromise
Sabotaging our revolution
And shutting their eyes to progress.

They promise us democracy
But never cease to pet us crazy
As the innocent splatter the streets
To protest our rights and lives.

NIGERIA!

Raphael Grace

Land of nobles
Which ought to flow with milk and honey
While we make merry and enjoy our money
Has been eaten by corruption

NIGERIA!

Now full of many troubles
Hunger, strife, starvation
Kidnapping, theft, robbery, bombing
And all the vile and vices

THERE WAS A COUNTRY

Raphael Grace

Behind in freedom, peace and unity
But now anarchy patrols its streets
Once upon a time
The labours of our heroes past was protected
Now, it has been transformed to vanity

When trouble looms
The patriots like the scared bias
Fly away to distant lands
In search of secured and better life

With absence of consequence
They sent to us insurgents
Who maim and kill our people
While raping our girls

The truth hurts but I'll speak it
Even if my voice shakes
For to be silent is cowardice
We must act with boldness
So one day, humanity will live in unity.

BIO:

Raphael Grace is a Fashion Designer and poet based in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. She has written a good number of poems online.

CUP OF CORRUPTION

William Warigon

Time hands out the Chalice of corruption
And all eagles such to partake
In an unholy alliance that brings destruction
In corruption we drink, we eat the cake

Watery leadership
Thrusts into muddy halos
Bad anchoring ship
Bleak future as we're sick in gross.

The cup of corruption pots fatter
While the conscience of patriotism
Sets thinner in the nations platter
Forgotten is struggle for nationalism.

ROPE AROUND THE NECK

William Warigon

The bondage
In this age
Is like a lame perpetual ticking clock
That's driven us to a state of shock.

The waves of sorrow sing of tomorrow
In today's bitter hardship that roars repeatedly
Drums have lost their sound. We borrow
Tears dragging as the rope chokes delightful

No more happy bays
For our exuberant spirits to relay
There are but task days
That have come to impede out way.

THE TYRANT'S TRYST

William Warigon

The terrible tyrant through the time
He burst into national conscience
Is holding us by the balks
He squeezed the breath out of our feeble selves

Choked, we still ululate to erect his ego

Cut eyes are veiled with thick fear,
Our future is mortgaged
So our children cannot dance into their shimmering fate
Our backs are bending
Like the old shrubs praying to eternity

The tyrant, like a tyrants
Thinking to be in the his pride
Builds to dynasty of young turks at night
To rebuild the legacies of his loins
It's the trysts he has with his ilk.

In the peering cycle, he makes men maniacs
To mirror his face and mind
In the arena of justice, closing door of equity
Raining hails of draconian laws
To suit whims and caprices.

We must reject being blessed by this tyrant
Our silent voices must come loud
To protest and free our balls
We were slaves once,
We shall be slaves no more.

BIO:

William Warigon is a Legal Practitioners authors, poet and Human Right Activist from Adamawa, Adamawa State, Nigeria. He is passionate about writing and has received international recognitions for his poems.

Cover image by Ifeanyi Godswill Ojinigbo, Nigeria

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