

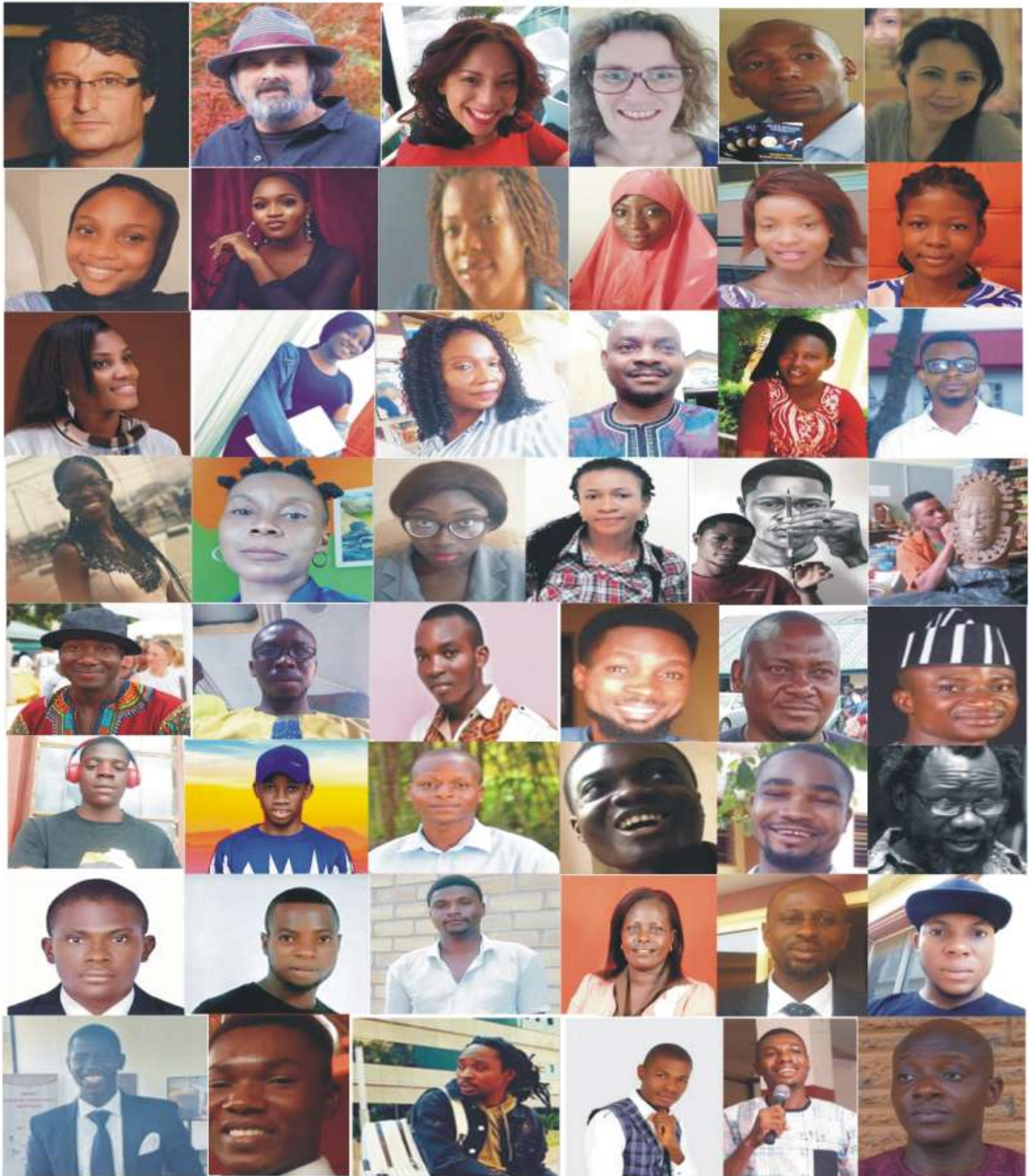


INSIDE IHRAF AFRICA



Compilations of Interviews from the African Chapter of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF): February - December 2021

BOOK 1



INTRODUCTION

This book is a compilation of interviews from the stable of the African Chapter of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF) from February 2021 to December 2021. It contains 48 interviews. The interviewees are human rights activists, artists, writers, NGO workers and journalists. Five of the interviewees are foreigners (Non-Africans) while the remaining 43 interviewees are Africans from Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Gambia etc.

The five Non Africans whose interviews were featured in this interview anthology are: Tom Block, Michael Rothenberg, Jael Uribe, Heike Phelan, Brenda Muhammed and the Filipino Poet, Irish Susa.

Tom Block is the founder of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF).

Michael Rothenberg is an American poet, songwriter, editor, artist, and environmentalist. In 2011, Rothenberg and his partner Terri Carrion co-founded 100 Thousand Poets for Change. 100 Thousand Poets for Change is a global poetry and arts movement with an emphasis on peace, justice, sustainability and education.

Jael Uribe is a writer, storyteller, poet and painter. She is the creator of the female poetic foundation named Women Poets International. She is considered the initiator of the Woman Scream International Poetry and Arts Festival, a chain of events celebrated by poets, artists and cultural associations worldwide, to honor women and against women violence during the month of March.

Heike Phelan has spent her working life in tourism, traveling throughout Europe with groups from all over the world. She is a writer. She has a BSc in transport and logistics management from Huddersfield University and is a qualified transport manager for both freight and passenger.

Brenda Mohammed is the author of the popular, multi-award-winning, bestselling book titled “How to Write for Success”, She has won several literary awards in the USA, Peru, Kazakhstan, Seychelles, Nigeria, India, Argentina, and the UK, and made headlines in several newspapers around the world.

Irish Susa is a Filipino Poet who has worked in Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates. She studied Business Management at the Saint Louis University Baguio City, Philippines and also worked in a Chinese/Japanese Restaurant in Bin Hendi Ent. Dubai, UAE. Some of her poems have been published in Bharath, an online poetry platform.

The purpose of this project (IHRAF Interview Series) is to interrogate, document, archive and share the experience and activities of those contributing meaningfully to the world of knowledge, human rights and humanity.

Wole Adedoyin
Director
IHRAF African Chapter

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IHRAF

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IHRAF FOUNDER, TOM BLOCK



Feb 16

IHRAF Nigerian Secretariat President Wole Adedoyin sat down with Tom Block to ask him a few questions about his path as an activist artist, and founder of the International Human Rights Art Festival.

ADEDOYIN: YOU ARE THE FOUNDER OF IHRAF, WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF IHRAF?

TB: We live in a world of strife, and the artist-activist often chooses a path of offering more strife — with oppositionality, righteous anger, creative expressions of disgust and other artistic means which, while morally just and often factually accurate, do little — in my opinion — to actually change behavior and legislation. I desired to create a forum where the gentle but powerful forces of beauty and engagement might make inroads into the halls of power. As Lao Tzu said: "There is nothing more soft and yielding than water, but for dissolving the inflexible, there is nothing more powerful." We base our work on connecting creative change-makers to decision makers, and expand the circle of "us" who is fighting to make the world a better place.

ADEDOYIN: HOW IS IHRAF USING ART TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WORLD?

TB: The IHRAF uses a variety of strategies to advance the cause of human rights around the world. They are:

- Providing transparency and safety to artists and activists on the front lines of the struggle for human rights. Often, artists-at-risk have said that one thing that can help secure their safety in more repressive situations is a wide audience, and one that helps protect them from government thugs and security forces who might otherwise act with nefarious purpose, if they thought they could act without witness.
- Providing an international forum to artists and activists who might otherwise be overlooked.
- Partnering with government officials, politicians, non-art activists and other NGO's to create a spirit force, and infiltrate it into the highest echelons of power.
- Support youth voices through a growing series of initiatives to empower these rising leaders as they prepare to become tomorrow's leaders.

ADEDOYIN: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF IHRAF?

TB: Working directly with great activists — those who raise their belief in the highest human ideals above their concern for their own safety. The IHRAF has partnered with Omoyele Sowore (Nigeria), Wei Jingsheng (China), Mbizo Chirasha (Zimbabwe), Razack Buwaso Ibrahim (Uganda) and even an American, Reality Winner. As I have noted, words such as human rights, justice, freedom and democracy are sounds that can just as easily be uttered by a Donald Trump, Yoweri Kaguta Tibuhabwe Museveni (Uganda) and Xi Jinping as Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela. These words only become *real*, when one of these great activists is willing to risk their safety to bring them to life.

ADEDOYIN: TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS ART?

TB: I have nearly three decades as an activist artist. I began my work by exploring spiritual thinkers from the three great Abrahamic paths through painting, back in the 1990s. Then, I explored how these ideals might if applied to the real world — that is to say, what happens to people who operate in the social and political worlds with the passion, faith and determination of great mystics. This led me to paint a series of portraits of human rights defenders around the world, working in conjunction with Amnesty International. This body of work became the [Human Rights Painting Project](#). This allowed me to see the power of art to infiltrate and affect the social and political worlds — as I worked with major organizations such as Amnesty International and the AFL-CIO national labor union. I also met many activist artists who had passion, talent and creativity, but not a lot of audience. So I got the idea of founding the International Human Rights Art Festival, to concentrate all of this positive energy working for the common good.

ADEDOYIN: HAS THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS CHANGED USING ART?

TB: An article in the New York Times ([Why Authoritarians Attack the Arts](#)) noted: “Artists play a distinctive role in challenging authoritarianism. Art creates pathways for subversion, for

political understanding and solidarity among coalition builders. Art teaches us that lives other than our own have value...Authoritarian leaders throughout history have intuited this fact and have acted accordingly.” That is to say, a human right might be most visible when it is taken away. As the founding director of the International Human Rights Art Festival, I have worked with numerous people who have had their creativity truncated and their lives threatened due to their art. Zimbabwean poet-in-exile Mbizo Chirasha has moved clandestinely around southern Africa, sometimes actively pursued by the Zimbabwean security apparatus due to his writings. Ugandan poet-in-exile Razack Buwaso Ibrahim watched his editor beaten and arrested, and then fled Uganda to Kenya where he was jailed (his relationship with us helped get him released) and then he moved to Tanzania. Chinese democracy activist Wei Jingsheng spent 18 years in jail due to his creation of the “Democracy Wall” writings, and since his release due to international pressure, has said he will always work with artists, due to the fact that in his darkest hour, they were the only ones standing by him. And we worked on many occasions with Nigerian writer and activist Sowore Omoyele, who was tortured as a college student and has since spent his time fighting for human rights in his home country. Artists lionizing him and his activist work, he assured, helped him rebuild his sense of self after being tortured in Nigeria and watching some of his best friends killed.

I think art moves beyond being a “human right,” to being a central aspect of the human character, the one human act which points to the spirit of every human soul, and not just a believer in this or that political or religious system.

ADEDOYIN: IN WHAT WAY IS IHRAF CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA?

TB: We are fortunate to have an expanding footprint in Africa. Not only have we initiated the IHRAF Nigerian Secretariat, but we have supported poets-in-exile Mbizo Chirasha (Zimbabwe) and Razack Buwaso Ibrahim (Uganda). Additionally, we participated in the SOTAMBE International Film and Arts Festival (Kitwe, Zambia, 2019) and have partnered with other groups in Burundi, Tanzania, South Africa and around the continent. We hope to bring the IHRAF to Africa when we are past this Covid pandemic!

ADEDOYIN: AS A FOUNDER AND PROMOTER OF ART IN HUMAN RIGHTS, WHAT KINDS OF OBSTACLES DO YOU FACE?

TB: Building a large, international human rights/art organization is a tall order. We face the usual structural concerns of person-power, funding and the like. We are fortunate in that — so far — we have met with little or no political or social resistance.

ADEDOYIN: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

TB: We have been fortunate in that as our profile grows, we have many groups approach us, from the Lawyers for Human Rights group in Paris to UNESCO-RILA in Glasgow, Scotland. Additionally, as we meet more and more like-minded activist creators, they often introduce us to new potential partners.

ADEDOYIN: WHAT ROLE DO WOMEN PLAY IN IHRAF?

TB: Women have a unique role and power in the arts and human rights world. We have sponsored several “Celebration of Women” live performance events; most of our Board, Staff and Volunteers are women and we highlight the power of women through our IHRAF Publishes literary magazine and other platforms on a regular basis.

ADEDOYIN: IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE GREATEST NEEDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ART?

TB: I think there are two great needs: one is exposure and audience, and the other is access to those in power. Politicians are not known to be often swayed by art, but I think there is a strong possibility to change that, and to use art — through a growing constituency — to change legislation, support marginalized people and create a stronger platform for real social justice.

ADEDOYIN: HOW WOULD YOU BOLSTER HUMAN RIGHTS ART LITERACY?

TB: Through classes, workshops and hands-on engagement. The best way to learn is by doing, and involving school children in activist-art projects would open a new and important world to them, and affect them throughout their lives.

ADEDOYIN: HOW DO YOU PRIORITIZE MULTIPLE PROJECTS WHEN THEY ALL SEEM EQUALLY IMPORTANT?

TB: The IHRAF is very fortunate in that — as the Hasidic Rabbi Mikhail said — I have found that I never needed something until I already had it. For instance, our IHRAF Publishes Literary Magazine is getting very important, and too large for me to handle, so just at this point, we had a wonderful Editor appear, who is taking over and growing that as its own initiative. In the same way, you came to me and suggested beginning the IHRAF Nigerian Secretariat, which is amazing, as Nigeria is the country with out single largest number of Facebook followers! So, as we grow, we are finding that projects attract passionate people at just the right time — and so, we don't have to “prioritize”. We do them all at the same time!

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/interview-tom-block>

ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE CO- FOUNDER MICHAEL ROTHENBERG



Feb 26

Michael Rothenberg is an American poet, songwriter, editor, artist, and environmentalist. In 2011, Rothenberg and his partner Terri Carrion co-founded 100 Thousand Poets for Change. 100 Thousand Poets for Change is a global poetry and arts movement with an emphasis on peace, justice, sustainability and education. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him full details about his movement, 100 Thousand Poets for Change (100TPFC) and his writing career.

TELL US ABOUT 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE (100TPC.org)

100 Thousand Poets for Change was initially conceived by Michael Rothenberg and Terri Carrion in March, 2011, as a worldwide set of events to take place simultaneously on September 24, 2011. Literary event organizers volunteered to host associated events in their own cities or schools. On September 13, 2011, the city of Santa Rosa, California, declared September 24, 2011, to be "100 Thousand Poets for Change Day," and Stanford University offered to archive all documentation and audiovisual records of the event posted on the 100TPC web site.

Ultimately, 700 events in 550 cities in 95 countries took place on September 24 of 2011 in conjunction with 100TPC, and the event was described by Stanford University as “the largest poetry event in history.” Considering the series of events to be a success, Rothenberg and co-

founder Terri Carrion decided to pursue non-profit status for 100 Thousand Poets for Change and establish an annual event in September of each year.

In 2018, 100 Thousand Poets for Change added a literacy initiative, "Read A Poem To A Child." A .pdf of children's poetry collected by Florida State University Libraries was made available as a free download. The poems in the .pdf were selected from The John MacKay Shaw Collection, which consists of books, works of art, manuscripts, catalogs and ephemera related to childhood. The collection includes bibliographies, biographies, literature, poetry, and criticism. Over 2,000 individuals and organizations permitted in this initiative.

Although the worldwide 100TPC event is scheduled for the last Saturday of September each year, it currently takes place year-round. "Read A Poem To A Child" runs for the week up to and including the global day to allow for school participation.

TELL US ABOUT TERRI CARRIÓN, CO-FOUNDER OF 100TPC. WHAT IS HER ROLE IN ALL THIS?

MR: The creation of 100TPC was a true collaboration with Terri Carrion. The creation of the movement would have been impossible without her. Terri has been a key force in formulating the ideas of the movement and defining our mission. Terri works actively on social media reaching out to new organizers. Terri also maintains the 100tpc.org website facilitating documentation and posting news of events, also expanding the poster gallery which is one of the most inspirational features of the website. The logo design we have all become familiar with is Terri's creation. Also, important to note that Terri is bi-lingual, her first language is Spanish, and she has made it possible for 100TPC to communicate with Spanish-speaking literary communities in the early years of our creation; and along with Pilar Rodriguez Aranda, one of our earliest organizers in Mexico, Terri has initiated communications with organizers in Central and South America. You really should interview Terri.

WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE 100TPC.ORG MOVEMENT?

MR: Things were pretty depressing around the world. We had two wars going on and a heartbreaking oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. I grew up in Florida, on the Gulf Coast. I spent most of my formative years there, around the Everglades, so it really hurt me. I had this sense of personal death. Terri and I were doing many benefit readings for the Louisiana Bucket Brigade. We helped organize poetry and music events around Northern California and Los Angeles but the overall response to that was very weak. I thought everyone's attention would turn to the Gulf Coast oil disaster, so I was extremely depressed when the national response was just as weak and the whole country did not rise in protest of the policies that led to this disaster.

Then, Fukushima. It seemed the message was clear but still everyone went back to doing whatever they were doing. Business as usual. There was the Arab Spring; there was Madison. There were some good things happening, signs of hope, but I was really feeling down. Did we need more major disasters to prove that things had to change? I mean, the Gulf oil disaster was the worst environmental disaster in the history of the United States, where was the outrage? I was saying to someone on Facebook, “there ought to be 100 thousand poets for change,” and the person said, “that’s a good idea.” It was almost like a challenge. *Oh yeah, right. It’s a good idea.* The chance of getting poets engaged really seemed hopeless. But I said to myself, *okay one more challenge. I’m gonna put down the gauntlet.* I set up an event page on Facebook and it read, “Do you want to join other poets around the USA and across the planet in a demonstration/celebration of poetry to promote serious social, environmental, and political change? And I invited all my Facebook friends. I honest to God didn’t think anybody was going to respond. But they did.

100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE, WHAT KIND OF A CHANGE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

MR: The first order of change is for poets, writers, musicians, artists, activists to get together to create and perform, educate and demonstrate, simultaneously, with other communities around the world. This will change how we see our local community and the global community. We have all become incredibly alienated in recent years. We hardly know our neighbors down the street let alone our creative allies who live and share our concerns in other countries. We need to feel this kind of global solidarity. It will be empowering.

And of course there is the political/social change that many of us are talking about these days. There is trouble in the world. Wars, violation of human rights, ecocide, racism, genocide, gender inequality, homelessness, the lack of affordable medical care, police brutality, religious persecution, poverty, censorship, animal cruelty, the list goes on and on.

It appears that transformation towards a more sustainable world is a major concern and could be a global guiding principle for 100 TPC events. Peace also seems to be a common cause. War is not sustainable. There is an increasing sense that we need to move forward and stop moving backwards. But we are trying not to be dogmatic. We hope that together we can develop our ideas of the “change/transformation” we are looking for as a global community, and that each local community group will decide their own specific area of focus for change for their particular event. All we ask is that local communities organize events about change within the guidelines of peace and sustainability.

CAN YOU SHARE WITH US THE STRUCTURE OF 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE?

MR: 100TPC was founded in Guerneville, California but, most organizational tasks are done by individual organizers of local events. Event organizers in individual cities volunteer to create an event in association with 100TPC. Then we publicize the event through the web site, social media outlets, and conventional press releases. The relationship between most local organizers and the 100TPC headquarters remains informal, conducted primarily through e-mail. Organizers do not become officers or employees of 100TPC. Organizers can communicate with each other through the 100 TPC Organization & Communication Hub, a Facebook group available to 100TPC event organizers, where they are encouraged, but not required, to work together and to learn about each other's events to help develop event ideas. Local organizers, then, have full control over the style and structure of their events—their only obligation is to register their event with the main 100TPC web site. Some event organizers have free events; others charge an entry fee and donate proceeds to charity that is determined by the local organizer. The Hub is also an important place to make creative contacts for international translation and publication. Most 100TPC events take place in September. Each year, the last Saturday in September is named "100 Thousand Poets for Change Day" and publicity is focused on that date. Some organizers choose to create 100TPC events on different days throughout the year and 100TPC will register and publicize those events regardless of when they take place.

The concept of "Change" in the name 100 Thousand Poets for Change refers to social change, but is otherwise broadly defined and dependent on the definitions of individual organizers or poets. 100TPC events do not necessarily share political or philosophical orientation. The 100TPC web site describes the "change" as having only to fall "within the guidelines of peace, justice and sustainability."

AS THE CO-FOUNDER AND PROMOTER OF 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE, WHAT KINDS OF OBSTACLES DO YOU FACE?

MR: First of all, there are a lot of things going on in people's lives, I understand. We are worried and busy. There's the economy and jobs. There are activities, organizations and things people are already involved in that take their attention. There is just so much any one of us can do. But what I'm suggesting is that people look at 100TPC as a way of organizing a coalition that has an arts base to it; that pulls all the other local concerns together under one international umbrella. That together we can do what we are already doing but have the impact of community strength. And some people ask me, "Where is PEN? Where is Poets & Writers and where is the American Academy of Poets? Why aren't they supporting 100 Thousand Poets for Change in a more aggressive way?" I don't know how to answer these questions. Everyone can't do everything. But we do look to our more prominent poetry organizations to connect with this movement. We should be building alliances not empires. Of course, maybe they don't know about 100TPC. We always need to do more outreach.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT OF 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE (100TPC)?

MR: The very fact that anybody cares about this movement is an empowering achievement. The very fact that we have gathered in global unity is a major achievement. The very fact that your group, Society of Young Nigerian Writers is talking with us about change is an achievement.. We have brought mimes, musicians, painters, photographers, dancers, ecologists, teachers, students from around the world together to share their energies, their creativity, their work, their translations, their books, their visions, their dreams, this is an achievement. Have we changed the world? I think this sharing is change and is a catalyst for expanded awareness that facilitates change. Poets and artists from around the world are getting to know each other like never before and do not have to rely on huge corporate institutions to facilitate exchange. 100TPC is a cultural exchange platform available to everyone, free and unhindered, this is an achievement that I am grateful for, Every time someone writes me and says they want to participate, I am empowered and grateful. Over the years people who didn't participate in previous years sign up so the community expands. The successful addition of "Read A Poem To A Child" as a 100TPC initiative shows that we are growing and expanding perspectives and functions we had not imagined. We hope Society of Young Nigerian Writers can be a force to lead the way towards expanding perspectives and opening more channels for sharing of creative inspiration.

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT POETRY AND CHANGE GO TOGETHER?

MR: When I first moved to California from Florida in 1975, I opened a tropical plant nursery and got very involved in the environmental movement. I worked with other organizers to get both Sweeney Ridge and Mori Point included in the national parks system. I served as a planning commissioner in my town as a result of my activism. That didn't last very long because I wasn't comfortable working within the system but I was willing to try anything. I had a mentor, Amy Meyer, who worked for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. She taught me a lot about activism. But prior to moving to California, I already believed that being involved in the world was part of my job as a poet. I learned from other poets as I was coming up. When I was in high school Allen Ginsberg was running around protesting war, and obviously I was of that protest generation. I understood from the poets of my day that poets knew all about the world and cared all about the world. This was the language of a great deal of poetry of my day and I never questioned it. Poets have been willing to go to jail for survival of the planet, to end war, to defy censorship, to speak about human rights. This made sense. The very act of creating poetry transforms reality, even when it isn't overtly political, and therefore by its very transformative nature poetry *is* change. Michael McClure was very influential to me. His *Meat Science Essays* opened my eyes immensely to nature and ecology and the multiplicity of expressions possible through poetry. Lawrence Ferlinghetti was outspoken and spoke clearly about the world in an eye-opening way, his voice was for me a clarion call when I was a young man. And I loved the

Romantic poets and they were activists, they were engaged poets, there is a tradition of engagement in poetry so 100TPC is part of a tradition.

As poets, we're supposed to be well read. Reading expands the mind and that expansion is change. We're supposed to know all about rocks and stars, about nature and culture, about many languages and many countries and peoples and existences. That awareness is change. We're supposed to know about all of the arts, all kinds of artists, all kinds of schools of artists, not just our own. Awareness of a multi-cultural, multi-generational, global art is change. Poets are supposed to know about many things. Knowing is change. At least that is what I was taught growing up as a poet. For me, this is what it's about to be a poet. Change is what a poet does. Poets get involved.

TELL US ABOUT THE ARCHIVING PROJECT AT STANFORD. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT?

MR: One of the goals of this movement is to tell the story of the planet today. How we write, how we create, how we see the world. And what we dream and what we desire. There needs to be a record, a history. Stanford came along and volunteered to archive everything—the blog, the website, everything, through the LOCKSS program. They felt 100TPC was an historical movement and had a history worth saving. They got the Archive Foundation involved. And so all the text, video, audio, posters, comments from individual event location blog pages on the 100TPC is archived.

There is a story of world poetry that has been told to-date through 100TPC. If you sat down and read it all, you might have the most complete record compiled of world poetry ever. Where else will you see 500 cities represented, through poetry, posters, community reflections all in one place? And there is the 100 TPC YouTube Channel where there are hundreds of videos of poetry readings and other events from all around the world, from September 24th, 2011 and beyond, available for viewing! For a historian, for an academic, for a librarian, anybody who is interested in the history of the world, this is huge. I've always found the libraries to be very cool. In recent years, Florida State University, where I am the Florida State University Libraries Poet in Residence, has stepped up to expand our archiving capacity and recently put on an exhibit which discussed a lot of what 100TPC is about. The story continues.

WHAT DOES IT REQUIRE TO ORGANIZE AN EVENT FOR 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE

100 Thousand Poets for Change will help organize by local region, city, or state, and find individuals in each area who would like to organize their local event.

If you are an organizer for your community this means that first you will consider a location for the event and begin to contact people in your area who want to participate in the event. Participation means contacting the media, posting the event on the web, in calendars, newspapers, etc., reading poems, doing a concert, performing in general, supplying cupcakes and beer (it's up to you), demonstrating, putting up an information table, inviting guest speakers, musicians, etc., organizing an art exhibit, and documenting the event (this is important, too), and cleaning up, of course.

Organizers and participants will create their own local event as an expression of who they are locally. Do they want a concert or a jam session, candlelight vigil or a circus, a march or a dance, poetry reading in a cafe or on the subway, do they want absolute silence, a group meditation on a main street; it's up to the local organization.

However, groups should try to hold some part of the event, if not all of it, outdoors, in public view (not required). The point is to be seen and heard, not just stay behind closed walls. It is also important that the event be documented. Photos, audio, videos, poems, journals, paintings! Documentation is crucial. The rest of the 100 Thousand Poets for Change want to hear what you have to say about change and enjoy your creativity too! The documentation will be shared through our 100TPC blog/website where groups can share and announce event information on their own blog page, as well as post photos, videos, poetry, art, and thoughts. But an event doesn't have to involve tons of people. It can be just you (the organizer) and your pet, on a street corner, with a sign. Just let me know what you are planning! Every effort counts!

Each local organization determines what it wants to focus on, something broad like, peace, sustainability, justice, equality, or more specific causes like Health Care, or Freedom of Speech, Homelessness, or local environmental or social concerns that need attention in your particular area right now, etc. Organizations will then come up with a mission statement that describes who they are and what they think and care about. When the whole event has taken place all the mission statements can be collected from around the world and, I hope, worked together into a grand statement of 100

Thousand Poets for Change. In 2020, organizers from 100TPC have gotten together to discuss compiling a history of 100TPC through the gathering and publishing of essays by participants and organizers, hopefully this book will continue to spread the word of 100TPC and peace, justice and sustainability.

Thank you to International Human Rights Art Festival for joining with us!

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/ywz77e087s2vgghsw7bjwceygs2ymj>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS JAEL URIBE - WOMAN SCREAM FESTIVAL FOUNDER



Feb 22

WA: YOU ARE THE FOUNDER OF THE WOMEN POETS INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT, WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MOVEMENT?

JU: It was my own personal quest to find talented women writers all over the world that were using words as a healing process. Being confined in bed, years ago, due to illness and using poetry as a means to exorcise pain, I developed curiosity and started to seek for those female writers that were dealing with similar processes and that were sharing their poetry online seeking for an audience, just like me.

First, I created a page on Facebook to share these talented women's work. Then, I started making poetry calls and contests, then we made our first anthology. What was meant to be just a page, became a movement due to the great support of women that joined in Europe and Latin America. Then we reached abroad when we created the Festival Grito de Mujer (Woman Scream Festival), a place where all these women that became part of the movement, could emerge as cultural leaders and coordinators of their own physical poetry events, serving as platform to showcase female talented poetess on their own cities, instead of just one page.

WA: HOW IS THE WOMEN POETS INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT USING ART AND POETRY TO ADVANCE WOMEN DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD?

JU: In 2011, we created the Woman Scream Festival not only as an open door to women poets but also, as an event with a sense of cause and a social mission beyond our own personal interests to become the voice of abused and mistreated women and families destroyed due to domestic violence. We decided to educate and advocate through arts. Instead of just making a poetry reading, we chose to communicate and deliver a message to those in moments of need: Women with low self-esteem, women of talent who didn't really realize their own inner value. We encouraged them to write, to create, to show themselves, to speak up, as well as helping on their international promotion through our collective projects. We have also incorporated through Woman Scream Festival all genders and all arts, as means to target a bigger audience. In time men and children were incorporated in the cause, making our work more inclusive, reaching all other communities.

We believe only by uniting, we can reach the violence's free society we seek for, especially the one affecting women, girls and families all over the world. We welcome anyone with any special talent to support the cause in any way they can and to help us spread our message further.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE WOMEN POETS INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT?

JU: The Woman Scream Festival (Grito de Mujer) is our pride and joy. Being recognized by the world, awarded internationally and having been able to share our vision with people in around 70 countries, celebrating over 1,000 events worldwide, uniting volunteers and institutions in solidarity with our cause, has been the most amazing achievement we have ever conquered so far. We are coming for more!

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN WOMEN ART AND POETRY?

JU: I've been writing since I was 10 years old. Motivated by long hours reading the books my father kept on his many bookshelves. I never knew what poetry was all about, until I encountered it at school, then decided to take it seriously before graduating from college. I began getting involved in cultural events a few years after I began creating my projects and ever since, poetry has been the only language I know. I have achieved some poetry awards and recognition for my involvement in human rights advocacy through the projects I've developed. There is very little time to create when you get involved so much to help others find their expression, however, poetry has always been my drawing board and so has art.

Having faced a very hard transition to adulthood, poetry saved my life "literally", shaped the harsh, rebel and dark young girl I was and turned her into a Phoenix. That was exactly the type of experiences and expression I started looking for when I found my movement, getting to know women who were creating due to traumatic experiences and turning them into any form of art. I wasn't in contact with female arts or poetry before that, I was facing my own personal process of understanding my own poetry and my own artistic expression as a designer, painter and artisan.

The work of women in poetry came later on, after I began to work with the Women Poets International Movement. I met women in arts two years later, after I started Grito de Mujer

(Woman Scream Festival). Being a leader and creator of such a movement, gave me the impulse to improve and become a better poet and moreover, a better artist as I encouraged other women to do the same.

WA: WHERE IS ART AND POETRY TODAY IN TERMS OF WOMEN DEVELOPMENT?

JU: There's so much we have achieved as women in arts and poetry compared to the past! but I certainly believe it's still not enough. The path of women in any stage of society has been literally paved by the blood of those who fought and gave their lives to make these changes happen and I feel women haven't yet taken full advantage of the enormous space there is, men are still ahead and they are usually the most on any list. Until we reach at least half of the names highlighted not due to a quote but, as fruit of our talents, there will still be a lot we'll need to do. I admit there is more openness of space for female expression nowadays, thanks to feminist movements such as mine but, the women names reaching an international level of recognition in art, poetry or any other, are still too little to consider. It's time to change that!

WA: HAS THE SITUATION OF WOMEN CHANGED USING ART?

JU: If you mean by change, that women have achieved anything by expression themselves using art, I must say: YES! We haven't changed as many laws as we should, we haven't stopped women violence nor have changed the mind of abusive men but hey! How many sleeping consciences have we awakened? How many women have been saved? How many deaf ears have we unclogged ever since we all began screaming louder? We have made a difference in the world, and I mean all female movement around the globe making pressure to make this change occur. Yes, we have opened our eyes. Yes, we have regained self-esteem, respect and we have moved some important walls and yes, there is much more we can and will achieve if we remain united raising our voices.

WA: IN WHAT WAY IS THE WOMEN POETS INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF WOMEN DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA?

JU: The same way we have done for women in every country we take our mission: this is an opportunity! We open an international door through collective projects but it's up to women to cross. Woman Scream is just a platform, it is just the base that seeks to make them strong enough to raise their voices. There are many other resources out there for women to further advance, what happens later and what they do with the support given, it's up to them.

WA: AS A FOUNDER AND PROMOTER OF WOMAN ART ACTIVISM, WHAT KINDS OF OBSTACLES DO YOU FACE?

JU: A lot. You might think it is monetary, as this cause is only sustained by volunteer's love but no. It is the tendency to sabotage and the lack of moral support that should not exist in such a beautiful art world. Sadly, many of these obstacles are imposed by women themselves, those we seek to reach. We do this to add a little more to the feminist fight around the world, to open a space in art for women of talent to grow, to be known however, we've encountered women

sabotage each other sometimes, diminishing their own sisters, who only want to build their own path to shine. How can we grow, seek for equality and change, if we dig a hole for other women to fall as we walk the freedom path?

Sometimes, we find more support in men that are part of our cause and more resistance among our own womankind. It's sad! That behavior only draws all female movements advances back.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE HALLMARK OF YOUR TENURE AS THE FOUNDER OF THE WOMEN POETS INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT?

JU: I believe the use of modern technology into the promotion and growth of our project that began in the Dominican Republic and spread all over the world thanks to nowadays tools.

WA: YOU ARE AN EFFECTIVE FEMALE LEADER. WHAT DRIVES YOU?

JU: I believe results speak for themselves. I believe if I had inspired any other woman with my dreams to achieve hers, that makes me an effective leader. There were only 400 women poets in our database when I began the Women Poets International Movement, now there are over 10,000 artists, women and men. We were only 200-300 followers in our Spanish fans page when we began, now there are over 20,000 plus, the thousands of followers in our festival's pages. Our festival was only "Grito de Mujer" in Spanish in 201 now, it is translated into English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch and others (Woman Scream, Cri de Femme, Grido di Donna, Grito de Mulher, Schrei Der Frau, etc.,).

Not everything is about how much you make but about how much difference you can make with what you do, how many others you can inspire. What are you doing to be the change you wish to see in the world?

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNGER WOMEN AND GIRLS?

JU: We have had many events throughout the years focusing on young women and girls. They always have been my favorites. As I have been called to share my poetry for girls on poor communities, my message to them has always been the same:

"Study and learn. Do not depend on a man to call you a princess nor to build a castle for you. Build your own castle, be your own queen. Don't wait for no one to show you you're valuable, you're pretty and should know your own worth. We, as women have a harder job in this society, we need to be the example for those who will come after us, may our lives serve as an example of strength and courage, may others see you as the girl who conquers now, the woman she will become."

WA: AS SOMEONE WHO HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMBINED FAMILY LIFE AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT, WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED?

JU: -I have learned that nothing is easy: Even to convince your family that what you're doing

benefits them too it's hard to achieve. I did and do my part to predicate my example of courage and fight in spite of rough times.

-Nothing comes for granted: I have fought hard to conquer everything I have set as a goal for me and still wonder what's next for me.

-Never stop and never remove your eyes from your goal: No matter how cloudy the sky might seem, stars are there, no matter if you can't see them.

-Love yourself: Never stop believing.

WA: WHAT DOES THE WORD FEMINIST MEAN TO YOU?

JU: It is just a word. I'm a womanist, I believe in the fight for our rights as women and I believe no word should define who we are but women. Some words are vandalized by the minds of those who seek to put us down, those who think we haven't earned our place so far. I am a woman, I guess I'm more drawn to that word.

WA: WHAT IN YOUR LIFE HAS BROUGHT OR GIVEN YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION OR FULFILLMENT?

JU: Knowing that I've achieved most everything I wanted in life and conquered old fears. Being proud of being me!

WA: LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO AGAIN?

JU: I would have stopped worrying for unimportant things, paying less attention to those who tried to stop me and at that, at some point threatened to stop me from advancing in my goals.

If I have to sacrifice myself to build what I've built, like I've done all these years, I would have done it again!,

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE CULTURAL HEROINES? WHAT APPEALS TO YOU ABOUT THEM?

JU: Any feminine figure that throughout history has conquered a better place for us women, is my favorite heroine. I believe the role in society of all of them has been key to reach the spot in which we are now. It is hard to pick a side!

Jael Uribe is a writer, storyteller, poet and painter. She is the creator of the female poetic foundation named Women Poets International. She is considered the initiator of the Woman Scream International Poetry and Arts Festival, a chain of events celebrated by poets, artists and cultural associations worldwide, to honor women and against women violence during the month of March. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, President, Nigerian Chapter of the International

Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF), she shared with him some facts surrounding her life, art activism and literary career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-jael-uribe-woman-scream-festival-founder>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS HEIKE PHELAN: A GOOD EDITOR IS A WRITER'S BEST FRIEND



May 2

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING

HP: When I embarked on writing a book, I doubted I had the patience or the literary skill to write anything worthy of reading. It was my husband's life in a Texas maximum security prison which inspired me to write about that. My first book *Child Convict* was published in May 2018. It took me two years to write whilst travelling around Europe, working 70+ hours a week. That was the first in my 'Convict series'. The second one, *Career Convict* was published in March 2020. The third one, *Convict Code* was written during COVID lockdown and released in December 2020. Eventually there will be five books in the series. I will also be releasing a book of associated short stories shortly.

I am currently writing about women in an ICE detention centre, and the way undocumented immigrants are treated in America. It will be released towards the end of 2021.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

HP: I like a certain amount of escapism, the opposite extreme to what I write about because the prison system is an emotionally draining subject. There are certain authors I re-read periodically because I am inspired by their literary style. I like uncomplicated with a wide array of descriptive terms. Elizabeth Peters in her *Amelia Peabody* series is an example of that.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

HP: My favourite author is Agatha Christie. Her knowledge and use of psychology in her books, written at a time when psychology was viewed with great skepticism is inspiring. I love the action and flawed characters in the books of Andy McNab and Chris Ryan, clearly written from their experiences in the SAS. Elizabeth Peters writings about Amelia Peabody are entertaining, the audible versions are superb. John Grisham, Lee Child and Mick Herron. I am part of a group called Promoting Yorkshire Authors. We have many fantastic authors and I am working my way through them.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

HP: Just sit down and write. Don't worry about spelling or grammar initially or writing in correct order. You will edit and rearrange later. Just write.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

HP: My husband is my inspiration. He provides all the stories and gruesome detail of what happens in prison. It was my desire to let the outside world know the reality of life behind bars that keeps me writing. There is still much to tell.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

HP: Before COVID, I would have to write whilst working my day job, in tourism. Any time I had a couple of hours I would write. It was not ideal. It was difficult to focus sufficiently, and as soon as I became absorbed and the writing flowed, I would have to stop. During COVID, unable to work, I could focus on writing. I made that my daily routine. I had read an interview at some point with Lee Child and his writing methods. He said he writes 1500 words a day. That seemed to be a manageable goal, so that is what I do. If I write more it's a bonus. If I write less, I'm annoyed with myself.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

HP: It was my husband who encouraged me and even pushed me to start writing. I hadn't thought of it before he mentioned it. It was 2016 when I began writing Child Convict. I had spent months hounding the prison administration to give my husband life-saving medical treatment which they had denied him for years. It was my outrage at the negligence of the prison system administration towards the inmates and in particular my husband that inspired the decision to write the books.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

HP: Child Convict in May 2018. It was nerve-wracking. Working on that book was a huge learning curve in how a book is written. Maybe not my best work, but I am proud of it regardless.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

HP: I focus on writing about the Texas prison system from the perspective of the inmate and the families. The negligent and sub-standard care of the inmates and the exploitation and profiteering from the inmates and their families are particular issues of concern for me.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

HP: Each book that I publish there is a huge sense of achievement. I learned the hard way that in promoting my books, I had to put myself out there. I have always been very private, but there is always huge interest in ‘my story’, that story being how I met my husband, given that he is an American in a Texas prison and I am from Ireland/UK. The media love the story, and I have to be very careful how I present myself in interviews as the media like to portray certain stereotypes, of which I don’t subscribe to.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

HP: The ideas for my books are all stories and experiences from my husband’s life behind bars. Also from my own experiences having a husband in prison and dealing with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in all its forms.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

HP: Child Convict was picked up by an Independent Publisher in America, Koehler Books. I had submitted the manuscript to several publishers in both the UK and America. Career Convict and Convict Code, I self-published with Ingram-spark which allows the books to be sold in book stores world-wide. My current work I am considering submitting to a publisher, but I’m not sure yet.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES/S.

HP: There is huge fascination over ‘my story’. On the whole I receive mostly positive responses and receive quite a lot of supportive messages. As is to be expected with the subject of prison, there are always those who feel the need to be rude, ignorant and nasty. I generally ignore those attitudes; life is too short and too interesting to get caught up in keyboard warrior negativity. People are always surprised that I would write about a subject like Texas prisons, particularly as I am European. People are always surprised I don’t fit the media’s stereotype of a ‘prison wife’.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

HP: There are numerous articles, interviews and appearances by me in mainstream media, although the content isn’t always entirely accurate. I have a Facebook page and a website. I will be attending literary festivals once COVID lock-downs are over and they are allowed to take place. There is also a plan in motion to visit different prisons and do talks with the prisoners.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITER?

HP: Keep at it. Set small goals and keep writing. Read plenty to help with language usage.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

HP: Over-thinking. Worrying about the end result. A good editor is your best friend!

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

HP: The book of short stories I am working on. The subject of prison life, particularly as it is about someone I love living that life is emotionally draining. It can become all consuming since dealing with the prison system and advocating for my husband is a large part of my everyday life too. I can write them in and amongst working on a longer book. It helps bring perspective back to change focus occasionally.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

HP: I didn't have much confidence in my writing. I had no idea how many words an average length novel was. I didn't know about formatting and I was far too reliant on the publisher's advice, particularly when it came to the differences in words that the British and Americans use and say differently. I was clueless about the publishing process. It was a huge learning curve in a very short space of time.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

HP: Prison life. Institutional violence, abuse, corruption, neglect and exploitation.

WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

HP: www.heikephelan-author.com, <https://www.facebook.com/heikephelanbooks>

Heike Phelan has spent her working life in tourism, traveling throughout Europe with groups from all over the world. She has a BSc in transport and logistics management from Huddersfield University and is a qualified transport manager for both freight and passenger. In this special interview with Wole Adedoyin, the author of "Child Convict" shares full details about her life and writing vocation.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-heike-phelan-a-good-editor-is-a-writers-best-friend>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS BRENDA MOHAMMED: WRITERS MUST LEARN TO MARKET THEIR BOOKS



Apr 23

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING.

BM: I started writing in the year 2013. I was a former bank manager and a Financial Advisor. Cancer struck and I survived miraculously. I wrote a memoir to relate my experiences and to advise readers that cancer is not a death sentence. It became a best seller. That encouraged me to keep writing and to date I have published 36 books. My last book, a psychological thriller, was published on March 10th 2021, so I have not yet decided what will be my next topic for my 37th book.

I love to dabble in every genre and have written memoirs, romances, science fiction, mysteries, thrillers, children's literature, self-help, and poetry. I have also compiled poetry anthologies and started a quarterly magazine for the "How to Write for Success Literary Network" of which I am the Founder.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

BM: Writing which is well expressed and filled with emotion excite any reader. I am excited about such writings.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

BM: One popular writer whose books I enjoy, is Stephen King. His writing style is easy to read and his books are thrilling. I have also read many books by not so famous writers, whose writings are compelling to read.

I would like to mention that one of the first books I read that inspired me for life was, *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

BM: They should be patient and hardworking. I wrote a book especially for new writers, and it is also for seasoned writers. The name of the book is *How to Write for Success*. It is the book that inspired me to establish a Literary forum with three sub-forums and growing membership in excess of 11,000 members.

This bestselling book received a five-star review from Readers Favorite one month after it was published in December 2017. In August 2019 it topped all the books in the Non-Fiction category of Connections E-magazine Readers' Choice awards and won the gold medal in the category of non-fiction. It also placed second in all categories and won the silver medal. It is remarkable that my romance novel, *STORIES PEOPLE LOVE* placed first in all categories, and also won the gold medal in the romance category. It was a quadruple win.

The merits of the book *HOW TO WRITE FOR SUCCESS* were featured in a review in the Ethiopian Herald Sunday Edition on February 16th, 2020. Alem Hailu of the Ethiopian Herald surprised me with this detailed review which he published.

<https://www.press.et/english/?p=19103>

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

BM: I receive my inspiration to write from everyday life experiences. I observe a lot about what is taking place in the world and around me.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

BM: I have a comfortable library with a computer and all writing accessories. I spend most of the day there when I am not shopping or in the kitchen. My husband is very supportive of my writing and he cooks lunch on many days and serves me in the library. That way, I can spend many hours writing with no time limits.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

BM: I always loved writing from school days and topped my class in essay competitions. I graduated with a distinction in English language. When I worked at the bank, my superiors were always impressed with my writing and financial acumen. I was promoted to the Credit Department to prepare financial proposals for business customers, and many of my proposals were approved by Head office officials without question. I was later promoted to Managerial status and assisted in the business growth of the bank's branches and towns to which I was assigned. I still did not think of writing as a career until my bout with cancer as I mentioned

above.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

BM: The first book I published was *I am Cancer Free* and it became a bestseller.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

BM: Yes. I do. In many of my books you will see that I have addressed issues such as love, heartbreak, suicide, domestic abuse, revenge, kidnapping, life's purpose, retirement, and others.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

BM: To be honest, I was very scared. I was scared that readers would not like my writings. I was so wrong. I received many five-star reviews, awards, and accolades. Many books achieved Amazon bestselling ranking No 1.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

BM: For the fiction books, I used my imagination. For the memoirs, they were all my personal experiences.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

BM: I self-published all of my books on Amazon.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES.

BM: I won several literary awards in the USA, Peru, Kazakhstan, Seychelles, Nigeria, India, Argentina, and UK, and made headlines in several newspapers around the world.

I was inducted into the Indie Author's Wall of Fame in the USA in January 2020.

In 2018, I received two awards from Readers Favorite International in Miami for two of my books- *Zeeka Chronicles* and *I am Cancer Free*.

Three of my books won gold awards in Connection EMagazine Readers' Choice Awards - *Zeeka Chronicles* (2018), *Stories People Love* (2019), and *How to Write for Success* (2019).

Several of my books received five-star reviews from Readers Favourite International, topped the charts of Amazon and attained Amazon bestselling rank No 1.

I was recognised in newspaper reports in Trinidad and Tobago Newsday on 7th November 2018, 16th October 2020, and Trinidad Guardian and Worldnews.net on 20th September 2020.

News of my success reached as far as Ethiopia where a journalist by the name of Alem Hailu interviewed me online on 17th November 2019 for the Ethiopian Sunday Herald. He also published a glowing and detailed review of my book *How to Write for Success*.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

BM: I am on Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

BM: I will suggest that new and aspiring writers read my book, *How to Write for Success*, and join my *How to Write for Success Literary Network* on Facebook, to learn tips, tricks, and what it takes to become a bestselling author.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

BM: Many writers believe that after publishing their books they can sit back and relax and readers will rush to buy their books. If readers do not know about their books how can they buy them? Writers must learn to market their books to forums and places that are frequented by readers who are looking for good books to read. They must also be prepared to spend money on book promotions. Another mistake that writers make is to only publish the paperback version. While it is a known fact that paperback sales exceed those of kindle, kindle sales can cause your book to top the ranks on Amazon, become a bestseller, and pave the way for your paperback sales. It is always advisable to do both paperback and Kindle versions. The third mistake writers make is in determining categories. Some writers are using categories that do not match the content of their books. For instance, a poetry book described in the blurb as romantic poetry, or, an Anthology of adult poems should not be categorized as Children's Literature. There could be repercussions if a parent looks at the category only, and buy such books as presents for their children, only to realize they are for adults. Amazon has a section below each book to report such issues. Read all about this in the award-winning and best-selling book *HOW TO WRITE FOR SUCCESS* available on Amazon.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

BM: I enjoyed writing all 36 of my books, but the one that has a special place in my heart is *Zeeka Chronicles*. Here is the book description:

If you have not yet read Zeeka Chronicles, a futuristic thriller and award-winning novel inspired by the scare of the zika virus, you will be unaware of what can take place in the minds of mad scientists who try to use a virus to control lives. Dr. Stephen Sharpe, kidnapped as a child and raised by an evil man nicknamed Zeeka, who tried to use science for revenge, attempts to restore sanity to the island of Gosh, even if it means throwing his fiancé into the arms of his brother, who never knew him. It is a complicated tale where zombies and robots take center stage.

ZEEKA CHRONICLES: REVENGE OF ZEEKA. written by multi-award winning and bestselling Author Brenda Mohammed, comprises five thrilling episodes set on a beautiful fictitious island named Gosh in the year 2036. This futuristic thriller was an award winner in the Category Young Adult Thriller in Readers Favorite International Awards 2018, winner in Science Fiction in SIBA Awards 2017, winner of the gold award in the category science fiction in Connections Emagazine Readers' Choice Awards 2018, and winner in the top ten finalists for science-fiction in the Author Academy Global Awards 2018. Readers Favorite International gave it a five-star

review. Take a futuristic journey into the year 2036 with this mind-blowing, bold, and original 'other world' book, that will capture your imagination and keep you spellbound.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

BM: As I said before, my first published book was *I am Cancer Free*. It was an emotional journey writing that book, as I had to recall the whole traumatic experience including the financial expenses involved.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

BM: The key theme of the book is *,Cancer does not have to be a death sentence.*

WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

BM: My Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/brenchri/>, My website is <http://allauthor.com/author/brenchris>, I am on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bcmohammed>, I am on Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/mohammedbrenda>. My Twitter handle is mirroe.

Brenda Mohammed is the author of the popular, multi-award-winning, bestselling book titled “How to Write for Success”, She has won several literary awards in the USA, Peru, Kazakhstan, Seychelles, Nigeria, India, Argentina, and the UK, and made headlines in several newspapers around the world. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her life and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-brenda-mohammed-writers-must-learn-to-market-their-books>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IRISH SUSA: DON'T FOLLOW OR IMITATE THOSE WRITERS YOU ADMIRE, FOLLOW YOUR HEART



Sep 17

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING.

SUSA: I don't have any writing background or training in making my poems. Actually I prefer calling it my "Connecting Words" instead of saying it to myself or to others "My Poems". I connect my words with what I see and feel from my Facebook timeline. I have written many and posted them all in my Irish Daily Life Page. I connected my precious life with the beautiful nature that God has given us. Every day, I write an uplifting piece that makes people realize how precious our lives are and whatever happens we must remember that life is still beautiful.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

SUSA: What excites me in making and connecting my words are those pictures of our nature especially the Sun, how beautiful it is in each morning rise. Those colors that it shows up in the

sky and how the clouds are playing up in the sky. I don't know if people notice those beautiful things but for me I can describe them a million times.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

SUSA: I don't really have a favorite author but I admire Stephanie Meyers. I love her because I love mystery and action; it makes me excited in every episode of her books.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

SUSA: Simple advice is that they should not follow or imitate those writers that you admire, follow your heart and look for inspiration that can make you smile or transform your writing career. Explore your imagination. I guess that would help you a lot.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

SUSA: I'm a nature lover, that's who I am. With all I have written, I have a nature picture and I am always with it and I don't know but whenever I look at it, it seems I'm always hypnotized by its beauty. I can't stop my hand to write all those words coming out.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

SUSA: I don't have a routine in making my connecting words; I just need to post everyday for my Page. No time or place. I just sit down with my laptop or my phone to search for a muse or sometimes I have good friends that are sending me beautiful pictures of nature for my muse.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

SUSA: I started to make my connecting words when Covid-19 started.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

8) I haven't published any of my poems yet. But I've published some in Bharat Web Vision. It's a poetry group and I am a member of the group.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

SUSA: Yes, I deal with Life and Nature.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

SUSA: Afraid & excited? Because I don't know what people would think about my writing. But they appreciated it and that kept me going.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

SUSA: Like I said above, from life and nature

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

SUSA: Ive not published any of my manuscripts, so I don't have a publisher yet.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES/READERS.

13) Different kinds of responses I am getting everyday with my everyday post. All are great. They are uplifting words. One of my readers gave me my nickname, Pearl, so I connected it with my Shiri, so now it became Shiri Pearl. Others call me: Moon, Princess, Poetry Queen, Nature enthusiast, Poetry Goddess.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

SUSA: I have a Page called Irish Daily Life Poem. You can read my latest poems from the page or at my wall Irish Susa.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

SUSA: Just follow your heart, don't rush or get upset if you can't find words for your Poems. Relax, take a deep breath. Listen to music that's inspiring. Stop, then start again for some time.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

SUSA: New writers sometimes rush in doing things they must not do. They just write without sense anymore because they just wanted to be known by others. Be yourself and love your

works, very soon people will recognize You by your Creativity.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

SUSA: Ive not published yet.

Irish Susa is a Filipino Poet who has worked in Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates. She studied Business Management at the Saint Louis University Baguio City, Philippines and also worked in a Chinese/Japanese Restaurant in Bin Hendi Ent. Dubai, UAE. Some of her poems have been published in Bharath, an online poetry platform. In this concise interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-irish-susa-dont-follow-or-imitate-those-writers-you-admired-follow-your-heart>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ALEX NDERITU: A WRITING CAREER IS MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT



Apr 17

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING.

AN: My writing journey truly began when I was a teenager. My high school essays were often read out to the rest of the class. I was always destined to be a writer. I was literally born on UNESCO's World Book and Copyright Day/Shakespeare's birthday; April 23rd. At the age of 22, I released my first novel, *When the Whirlwind Passes*. It was Africa's first e-novel. I have since authored three more books: *Kiss Commander Promise*, *Africa on my Mind* and *The Moon is Made of Green Cheese*. I have also penned numerous poems and articles over the past two decades. They have been published and translated all over the world. One poem, *Someone in African Loves You*, has been broadcast by the BBC and translated into several languages. I also write stage plays, the most recent being a biography of Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai. It's titled *The Talking of Trees*. Wangari Maathai and I hail from the same region of Central Kenya and she's a major inspiration to me.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

AN: Style, mostly. But also unique ideas and high concepts. I want to be taken on a mental

journey and, hopefully, learn a thing or two.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

AN: This is actually a more difficult question than one might assume. I have been an avid reader since childhood. My preferences in genre and authors have changed over time. I also write in different genres, and I have ‘heroes’ in each one. But when I first resolved to be a novelist, my inspirations included Ian Fleming, Frederick Forsyth, Agatha Christie, Mary Higgins Clarke and Robert Ludlum. As you can see, those were bestselling authors in the crime/espionage genres. I love espionage books and films. There are two spy tales in *Kiss Commander Promise*, which is a collection of short stories.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

AN: Read widely. Research thoroughly. Dare to be different.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

AN: Emotive issues. Inspirational people. Big ideas. Injustices around the world. Beauty. It’s a whole range of things. Writing is my favourite method of communication. I’d rather write down a message than express it verbally.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT’S SPECIAL?

AN: When you write for a living, it’s hard to be choosy. Apart from my own writings, I am also a professional editor and ghostwriter. I write at home, in the office, and sometimes on my phone when I’m travelling. I mostly write at night, when the world is quiet and the temperatures are cool. Copious amounts of coffee are consumed when I’m writing at home!

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

AN: When I was around 14, I created my own comic strips inspired by such graphic characters as Flash Gordon, The Phantom, Modesty Blaise, and Batman. I created the characters, drew the cartoons with a pencil or biro, and wrote the text. They were quite popular amongst my classmates. When I was in secondary school, I started writing poetry, mainly inspired by the books such as *Adventures in Poetry for African Schools*, *Song of Lawino*, and *Poems From East Africa*. I was about 15 years old.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

AN: I believe it was a poem titled *The World is Upside Down* which was published in the *East African Standard* in the early 2000’s.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

AN: I do my research and look for creative ways to bring the message home. I rarely write just for the sake of writing; there's usually something I'm trying to say or an issue I'm trying to highlight. It's not merely entertainment. I keep wondering if I'm getting the message across. A recent short story of mine, title *A Body Made For Sin*, was published online by IHRAF Publishes. It was inspired by a true-life murder mystery of a Nairobi campus girl. In the real-life legal drama, the culprit(s) got away scot free. In my version, just was served. Alice Walker once said, 'Activism is my rent for living on the planet.' Ditto that. I pay a lot of rent by addressing real-life injustices through my writings. *Live From Garissa*, another short story, was published in the UK by One Million Project. *Harvest of Blood*, one of my favourite tales, was about the Rwanda Genocide and was published in Israel by IFLAC. I am currently working in two more collections of short stories, 10 tales per book. I hope this doesn't come off as arrogant but my current mission is to say in a short story what other writers say in an entire book.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

AN: Excited and a bit nervous! Luckily, my first review – for my first novel – was a great one. A few years later, I discovered a global writers' hub called Authorsden.com. This was way before social media sites like MySpace and Facebook came into existence. On Authorsden, one would post their poems, short stories or book excerpts and receive comments from peers all over the world. The vast majority of comments were positive and very exciting to read!

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

AN: A very wide range of places – nature, people, incidents, news items, other books, music, film, television series and so on. Some probably come from what Carl Gustav Jung called 'the collective unconscious'; a mental repository that all humans share the same way we share our ancestral DNA. Maybe some people are better at tapping into this vast ethereal sea than others. Don't get spooked. I am a very grounded guy. I don't believe in crap like money rituals and miraculous healing. But I don't close my mind to whatever knowledge might be out there. I like to explore ideas.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

AN: I started with self-publishing. As I grew in the industry, I started submitting various writings to publishers calling for entries in various genres. Now I have an agent who resides in New York so in future I will submit manuscripts through him.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES\ READERS.

AN: I receive generally positive feedback from critics and generally enthusiastic praise from fans. In fact, just this morning, a reader posted a copy of herself holding a copy of *When the Whirlwind Passes* and describing me as ‘the greatest author of all times.’ Some years ago, an aspiring writer posted on Facebook that he read my non-fiction document, [‘Changing Kenya’s Literary Landscape’](#) ‘pole pole (slowly slowly) like The Bible’ because he ‘didn’t want it to end’. It was the best compliment I had ever received.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

AN: I am on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Wattpad](#) and [Twitter](#). A large number of my writings are available on smartphones globally via the Worldreader app which is freely available on Google Play.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITE?

AN: Start writing as early as possible. A writing career is marathon, not a sprint. Utilize the Internet and especially social media in order to find writing opportunities. Seek an agent through whom you can submit your manuscripts to publishers.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

AN: Self-published writers tend to cut out editors and cover designers in order to reduce costs. Published work should always pass through an editor.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

AN: *When the Whirlwind Passes* was the easiest to write. Everything just clicked. The moon is Made of Green Cheese contains some poems that I am very proud of. My favourite play is *Hannah and the Angel*. It has a lot of humour and elements of Hip-Hop culture, which I like.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

AN: In 1998, I read a *Daily Nation* newspaper article about an Italian fashion baron who was murdered in cold blood. The trial of his murder suspects exposed the soap-opera-type lifestyles of the rich and famous and the constant machinations that take place behind closed doors. I felt it was a great story and it inspired me to write a similar family saga based in Africa. It’s titled *When the Whirlwind Passes*. I published it online first, having heard about emerging e-book

trends in the West. It became Africa's first purely digital novel. It is now available as a paperback and has gone through 3 editions, complete with cover changes. The *Daily Nation's* Saturday magazine described it as 'brilliantly written.'

WA: What is the key theme and/or message in the book?

AN: I would rather readers figured that out for themselves.

WA: Where can we find you online?

AN: www.AlexanderNderitu.com

ABOUT HIS LATEST BOOK:

In 2001, *When the Whirlwind Passes* became Africa's first purely 'digital novel'. Over the next decade or so, it remained the continent's most-downloaded e-novel. Inspired by a true story, the novel follows the life of a ghetto princess who marries a wealthy fashion baron, and the circumstances that turn their whirlwind romance into the murder case of the decade.

ALEXANDER NDERITU - DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF PEN KENYA CENTRE

Alexander Nderitu is a Kenyan writer, poet, playwright and critic. He is the Deputy Secretary-General of PEN Kenya Centre and a Regional Managing Editor for the global news portal TheTheatreTimes.com. He has authored four e-books: *When the Whirlwind Passes* (novel), *The Moon is Made of Green Cheese* (poetry); *Kiss, Commander, Promise* (short stories); and *Africa on my Mind* (YA novel). In 2017, *Business Daily* newspaper named him one of Kenya's 'Top 40 Under 40 Men'. In 2020, he was a finalist for the Collins Elesiro Literary Prize. In this chat with Wole Adedoyin, Alexander Nderitu talks about his life, writing and latest book.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-alex-nderitu-a-writing-career-is-marathon-not-a-sprint>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OLOMIDE FATIHA: WE CAN ALWAYS GROW TOGETHER BY BEING OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER



Dec 24

WA: YOU ARE THE FOUNDER OUR FUTURE IS NOW INITIATIVE, WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INITIATIVE?

OF: It has always been a thing of concern to me seeing children roaming the streets when they should be in school. Why would some of us be driven to school while other children our age are hawking and roaming the streets aimlessly. Such would become a huge threat to us in the future. We can always grow together by being our brother's keeper. This is the spirit in me that I felt needed to be expressed through this project. The main focus of the initiative is to see children of school age off the streets and back to school. Other areas of our pursuit include building and sharpening professional, moral and leadership skills in teenagers.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR INITIATIVE?

OF: It is yet to come. This would be when the number of out of school children reduces to the barest minimum. I've made some attempts in the past like leading a walk involving about 500 students against the out of school syndrome in Ibadan, taking the campaign to the doorstep of my state Governor and various media houses. I plan to build a team of like minds to build a great future for our mates on the streets.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN AND ADVOCACY

OF: I just finished my Senior Secondary Certificate Examination from The International School, University of Ibadan. I desire to be a successful legal practitioner championing the course of the less privileged and the down trodden. I started the campaign 2 years ago. I want to make it an African project because what affects us in Nigeria also affects them in other African countries.

WA: IN WHAT WAY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND READING CULTURE IN NIGERIA

OF: The fact that I'm creating awareness to children, parents and the government to see children of school age off the streets and back to school is my way of contributing to the development of the society. No one goes to school without reading so my effort is taking care of all of the interests raises in the question.

WA: WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU FACING IN YOUR FIELD OF WORK

OF: I don't want to tolerate any challenge. This is a project I so much believe in, every child on the streets must go back to school.

WA: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN EXPERT IN LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

OF: It takes courage, determination, patience and a lot of sacrifice

WA: AS THE FOUNDER OF OUR FUTURE IS NOW INITIATIVE, WHAT KINDS OF CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?

OF: The existence of these children on the streets is the only thing I consider a challenge and that's why I remain determined to be part of the drive to see them off the streets and back to school.

WA: HOW AND IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU THINK OUR FUTURE IS NOW INITIATIVE AND THE IBADAN BOOK CLUB CAN COLLABORATE

OF: I plan to lead a campaign for the formation and upliftment of reading clubs in secondary schools and Ibadan book club would be a great collaborator in this project.

WA: WHAT ARE THE THEMATIC AREAS OF THE OUR FUTURE IS NOW INITIATIVE

OF: Seeing children off the streets and back to school, building and sharpening professional, moral and leadership skills in teenagers and also improving the reading culture.

WA: WHATDRIVES YOU AS THE TEAM LEAD AND VISIONER OF OUR FUTURE IS NOW INITIATIVE

OF: The desire to be a champion of positive change in the society through education.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

OF: This is yet to come but I'm happy to see it making impact day in, day out.

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO TEENAGERS LIKE YOURSELF

OF: They need to come out of their shells and appreciate the fact that their future starts now. They should make efforts to impact positively on their generation.

WA: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR INITIATIVE?

OF: Ordinary efforts would produce ordinary results, great efforts would produce great results.

WA: WHAT IN YOUR LIFE HAS BROUGHT OR GIVEN YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION OR FULFILLMENT?

OF: Being able to make a positive impact on my generation.

WA: LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO AGAIN?

OF: What I'll have done differently is to have started this project earlier. What I'll do again is to pursue this project with more vigour.

Olomide Fatiha is a 16 year old girl. She just finished her Senior Secondary Certificate Examination from The International School, University of Ibadan. She's the convener of Our Future is Now project. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin she talks about her passion for building and sharpening professional, moral and leadership skills in teenagers.

<https://www.ihrf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-olomide-fatiha-we-can-always-grow-together-by-being-our-brothers-keeper>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS PEACE OKPALANMA: YOUNG WRITERS SHOULD NEVER GIVE UP WHEN THE JOURNEY GETS TOUGH



Dec 17

WA: MAY WE MEET YOU?

PEACE: My name is Peace Okpalanma

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

PEACE: I write to Impact and to inspire. I believe that I can influence the world positively through writing.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

PEACE: I admire Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Wole Soyinka.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AN ASPIRING NOVELIST?

PEACE: I would advise every aspiring novelist to be teachable, commit themselves to learn the processes and never give up even when the journey gets tough.

WA: WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW? ARE THERE ANY AUTHORS (LIVING OR DEAD) THAT YOU WOULD NAME AS INFLUENCES?

PEACE: I am reading Zikora by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR 10 FAVORITE BOOKS —AND WHY?

PEACE: Rich Dad Poor Dad by Robert T Kiyosaki
We should all be feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
Things fall apart by Chinua Albert Achebe.
48 laws of power by Robert Greene

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

PEACE: Marshall
A time to Kill
Overcomer
Lion Heart

WA: IF YOU HAD A BOOK CLUB, WHAT WOULD IT BE READING — AND WHY?

PEACE: Inspirational books and books on personal development, self-worth and self-discovery. This is because I write more of such books.

WA: GIVE US THREE "GOOD TO KNOW" FACTS ABOUT YOU. BE CREATIVE. TELL US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WRITING.

PEACE: Whenever I write, my ink flows from the stream of my thoughts, without obstruction. I possess the ability to think critically and write down my thoughts clearly and concisely. I have always loved articulating my thoughts and bringing my imaginations to life. My writing prowess is one of my abilities that I'm proud of, I arrange my words in a manner that makes it unique.

Inspiration for my writing:

My life has been built by a conscious desire to impact people's lives.

I get my inspiration from God.

I get my inspiration from issues that people encounter daily.

I get my inspiration from books, movies and my daily experiences.

WA: WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW? CONSIDER HERE YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES, YOUR INTERESTS AND HOBBIES, YOUR FAVORITE WAYS TO UNWIND — WHATEVER COMES TO MIND.

PEACE: I am teachable, I like learning a lot.
I like it when respect is given equally to everyone, irrespective of gender, status or age.
I have interests in leadership, volunteering, Public speaking and Law.
My favourite ways to unwind is to watch intellectual and law-related movies.

Peace Okpalanma is a Creative Writer, Essayist and a content creator. In this concise interview with Wole Adedoyin, she shared with him some brief facts surrounding her writing career and reading habit.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-peace-okpalanma-young-writers-should-never-give-up-when-the-journey-gets-tough>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OKEKE AKUDO NKEMJIKA CHRISTIEN – A.K.A - KEMJY XTIAN: LIFE IS DIVERSE AND ONE GENRE OF LITERATURE CAN'T CAPTURE IT ENOUGH



Dec 11

WA - Why do you write?

KEMJY - Two reasons: to make my world better through words AND to be a better person by unleashing and refilling myself.

WA - Which novelists do you admire?

KEMJY - China Achebe

WA - Describe the route to your first novel being published...

KEMJY - I had a manuscript which went through the editing process and then the planning and projecting, for the interest of the readers, after which it went to the publishers who did the finishing part and became a book

WA - How has having a publisher helped you?

KEMJY - It has helped me build a better bond with books and also has aided me to channel my ideas about books in a better direction

WA - In what ways do you 'service' your books?

KEMJY - Sales and investments in people through gifting them

WA - What advice would you give to an aspiring novelist?

KEMJY - Have an imagination, believe in it, trust your abilities to achieve it no matter how tough the journey is and rest on God for He alone can bring it to pass by giving you life and finance

WA - Why do you write?

KEMJY - Because I love to play with words. I guess because words love to visit me.

WA - Which novelists do you admire?

KEMJY - Chinua Achebe, Dr. Wale Okediran, Kukogho Samson, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim.

WA - What are you reading right now? Are there any authors (living or dead) that you would name as influences?

KEMJY - I am currently reading The Farmer's Daughter (poetry) by Funke Awodiya.
Influences: Pablo Neruda, Chuma Nwokolo, Rose Adaure Njoku and Chinua Achebe

WA - What was the book that most influenced your life and why?

KEMJY - Two books: the Bible- it's my life manual Long walk to freedom by Nelson Mandela- built me up to see people beyond their flaws and still do my best for them.

WA - What are your 10 favorite books and why?

KEMJY - Long walk to freedom, Things Fall Apart, Beyond Dialogismos, The Ghost of Sani Abacha, Who shall I make my wife?, Bring our casket home, The triumph of the water lily, The Mayor of Casterbridge, What can words do?, Oil on water

WA - WHY?

KEMJY - They inspire me to think on how to put my world on a clearer path to excellence.

WA - Favorite films?

KEMJY - James Bond series, Colombiana, Roots.

WA - Favorite music?

KEMJY - Don Williams, All Gospel songs in line with the scriptures.

WA - If you had a book club, what would it be reading and why?

KEMJY - Would read all forms of literature because life is diverse and one part of literature can't capture it enough.

WA - What are your favorite books to give and get as gifts?

KEMJY - Detective novels and poetry books

WA - Give us three "Good to Know" facts about you. Be creative. Tell us about the inspiration for your writing.

KEMJY - I am positively crazy because I could write anywhere and on anything once a word ticks; I LOVE books, all the way; nature is the mother of my words so when I watch her, it all flows.

WA - What else do you want your readers to know? Consider here your likes and dislikes, your interests and hobbies, your favorite ways to unwind whatever comes to mind.

KEMJY - I am a go-getter, I am your fairy godmother if what you seek is within my reach, if you hate improvement then hate me in advance.

Nkemjika is a graduate of English from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She has attended the Fidelity Bank Creative Writing Workshop, the Garden City Literary Festival Workshop and the Ebedi Writers Residency. She is the author of Amazon bestseller, Beyond Dialogismos. Her poem, Addiction's Affliction, translated into a movie flick was nominated for an award at the Eko International Film Festival. She has been nominated for poetry writer of the year by the Nigerian Writers Award crew. She organizes creative writing workshops for young people in secondary schools and is the anchor of the Words, Twists and Influence word competition which holds every Saturday on Facebook.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-okeke-akudo-nkemjika-christien-aka-kemjy-xtien-life-is-diverse-and-one-genre-of-literature-cant-capture-it-enough>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS SAKINAH YUSUF: I ALWAYS WRITE WHENEVER I HAVE A STORY TO TELL



Dec 3

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

SY: I write because I have a story to tell, to unburden my thoughts and create a world from my imagination.

WA: WHICH WRITER DO YOU ADMIRE?

SY: The author I admire is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

WA: WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW? ARE THERE ANY AUTHORS (LIVING OR DEAD) THAT YOU WOULD NAME AS INFLUENCES?

SY: I am currently reading "The thing around your neck" Authors that influence me are Paul Coelho and SE Hinton.

WA: WHAT WAS THE BOOK THAT MOST INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

SY: The book that influenced me was "The Alchemist" by Paul Coelho because it educates us about following our personal legend "our dreams" and by trusting our hearts, we can achieve it.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR TEN FAVORITE BOOKS AND WHY?

SY: I have a difficult time choosing top ten favourite books but here they are; The Outsiders, The Pelican Brief, Then She Was Gone, The Diary Of Anne Frank, The Couple Next Door, The Fault in our Stars, Getting away from murder, One of us is lying, Things a Brother Knows and lastly, Night by Elie Wiesel

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

SY: My favorite films ranges from my tribal films, horror, Korean and Indian: Hunger Games, The curse of Illarona, It, The Exorcist, The shining, Vagabond, Quiet Place, Five feet apart Midnight sun, While I was sleeping

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

SY: My favorite music goes to Maher Zain collections

WA: IF YOU HAD A BOOK CLUB, WHAT WOULD IT BE READING — AND WHY?

SY: If I had a book club, I would chose Zayd Ibn Isah's upcoming book "We are all book". With the way things are going In this country,it captures ideas to Ponder On. It is a satire.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS TO GIVE — AND GET — AS GIFTS?

SY: My favorite books to give out are books by Sarah J Mass and Agatha Christie and my favourite books to receive as gifts are self help books

WA: GIVE US THREE "GOOD TO KNOW" FACTS ABOUT YOU. BE CREATIVE. TELL US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WRITING.

SY: I love books, movies and food. During my primary school days, I was inspired by my headmaster in school then. He would forced us to buy "Ralia; the Sugar Girl", by then I hated reading. I loved watching movies more than anything other thing. But the way he would read each chapter and describe it to us with passion made me to be interested in the book and reading generally. He made that book sounded like I was watching a movie. My dad also inspired me. I remembered he would gift us books and compelled us to summarize them. I like being engrossed in a good book and feeling satisfied by the ending.

WA: WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW? CONSIDER HERE YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES, YOUR INTERESTS AND HOBBIES, YOUR FAVORITE WAYS TO UNWIND — WHATEVER COMES TO MIND.

SY: I like meeting people who I can discuss deep issues such as books, movies, politics and nature. I dislike junk foods, noisy eating, laziness and idle talks. My interests include learning new recipes, history; that's why I love visiting museums and reading historical facts. I also love

researching a lot about Nature and psychological issues. My hobbies include cooking, writing and watching basketball games. My favorite place to unwind is a quiet secluded place surrounded by nature wonders; perfect place to deep think and unwind.

Sakinah Yusuf is an essayist and children's literature writer. She is currently the Coordinator of SYNW in BUK (Bayero University).

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-sakinah-yusuf-i-always-write-whenever-i-have-a-story-to-tell>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS
ONATUNDE RACHAEL: UPCOMING
POETS SHOULD BE ORIGINAL AND
READY TO LEARN FROM SUCCESSFUL
POETS –**



Nov 26

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

OR: As driving a bus makes one a Bus Driver, in the like manner the first thing that makes me a Poet is when I write continuously. Also, I love putting my thoughts, feelings and things around me into an conceivable writings. I am a Poet because I think into the past, present and the future.

WA: WHAT WRITERS DO YOU ADMIRE?

OR: I love the Late Buchi Emecheta's "The Joy Of Motherhood,". The work makes me admire her so well. I love the way she made the book so real and imaginable. Also love some works written by Prof. Femi Osofisan. His play titled "The Women Of Owu." is one of my favourites plays.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

OR: I get inspired by the things happening to me and in my vicinity.

WA: TELL US ABOUT A NORMAL WORKING DAY...

OR: Before the pandemic, my normal working day used to be teaching, but now I majorly write, read and sew sometimes.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

OR: Whenever I have an idea or inspiration, I put it down immediately so as not to forget such idea, and review it later by arranging the words in lines and stanzas properly.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS BEHIND A POEM?

OR: It depends on my own level of knowledge about the message I want to pass, also I always thought of what message or point will the piece I am about to put down pass to the readers' minds and how can this message make or blight them.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...

OR: For now, I don't have a published work of my own but ive been published in some notable anthologies.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO AN ASPIRING POET?

OR: My advice to aspiring poet is to continue writing and never ceases to write, knowing that "quitters never win, and winners never quit." To become a winner, we have to continue writing, writing, and writing until people start to write about us. We have to continue building ourselves until we become the best.

WA: FINAL QUESTION (PROMISE!): DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR THE YET-TO-BE-PUBLISHED WRITERS READING THIS?

OR: A part of the scripture says "...despised not the days of little beginning..." a yet to be published writer should not despise the days of writing a "nonsense" because out of it will still be a little "sense." We are to know that a drop of water makes an Ocean. We are to take the right nutrients literally so as to grow just as a baby that takes the right nutrients will grow normally. We should seek to know so as to be known, we should continue reading, reading, and reading until we will be read.

WA: TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR WRITING ROUTINE; WHAT'S A TYPICAL WRITING DAY FOR YOU?

OR: I write my rough works anywhere and at anytime but I do the proper works in a serene and conducive environment majorly very late in the night, around mid night or very early in the morning.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

OR: I write from Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State to be precise.

WA: ON THIS TOPIC, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO BUILD A PLATFORM AND GAIN READERSHIP?

OR: I'm still studying, reading, observing and learning from the established writers. I also participate in any open anthology.

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

OR: The Mount Zion Movies.

WA: BEST PIECE(S) OF WRITING ADVICE WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED?

OR: I wish I had started writing early than now however it is not too late for me. So to everyone out there never think it is too late or too early for you to write. Also, writing entails having passion, if you are not passionate you can't write, as writing requires dedication and commitment. Writers also must be original, be known for your style of writing, don't try to imitate another person and loss your uniqueness in the process.

WA: SOMETHING PERSONAL ABOUT YOU PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED TO KNOW?

OR: I am a Fashion Designer

WA: WHAT'S NEXT?

OR: Growing better and bigger.

Onatunde Rachael is a Graduate of English/French from the College of Education Osiele Abeokuta Ogun State Nigeria. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, the current State Secretary of the Society of Young Nigeria Writers (SYNW – Oyo State Chapter) speaks on her life and writing.

<https://www.ihrf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-onatunde-rachael-upcoming-poets-should-be-original-and-ready-to-learn-from-successful-poets->

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ONYINYECHI IHEANYI: UPCOMING NOVELISTS SHOULD NOT BE IN A HURRY TO PUBLISH



Nov 19

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE

OI: I write because I want to impact positively in humanity. I can't get across to everyone at the same time or within a space of time, but my books can

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

OI: I admire Chimamanda Adiche, Woke Soyinka, Nora Roberts, Kenneth.E.Haggin, the late Dr Chinua Achebe, the late Dr Gabriel Okara, Dr Wale Okediran, Prof Femi Osofisan, Dr Tim Lahaye and a host of other authors

WA: DESCRIBE THE ROUTE TO YOUR FIRST NOVEL BEING PUBLISHED

OI: I've not published yet, I'm currently working on my first project

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO AN ASPIRING NOVELIST?

OI: I'll always advice novelists to never be in a hurry to publish and they should always have it at the back of their minds that they are not just writing for themselves but for their audience too

WA: WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING RIGHT NOW?

OI: I'm currently reading "Emotional Intelligence" by Daniel Goleman.

WA: ARE THERE ANY AUTHORS (LIVING OR DEAD) THAT YOU WOULD NAME AS INFLUENCES?

OI: I've been influenced positively by Mr Wellington Nwogu, Kenneth.E.Haggin, Dr Tim Lahaye and a host of other authors.

WA: WHAT WAS THE BOOK THAT MOST INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

OI: Well in my 20 years on earth, I would say the book titled "Why You Act The Way You Do" by Dr Tim Lahaye. For me, it was the start of a new beginning, a new start and a different perspective on life, managing weaknesses and strengths.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR TEN FAVORITE BOOKS AND WHY?

OI: "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage" by Kenneth. E. Haggin, that book opened my eye of understanding to know God's will, His purpose for His children maritally

"Emotional Intelligence" by Daniel Goleman, it has helped me become astute emotionally, I can now control my feelings, actions, reactions and responses towards situations and people, effectively and positively.

"Heartbreaker" although I can't really remember the name of the author, I like it because it's a crime, romance and suspense filled novel, I like anything involving action, perhaps if things were different, peradventure, I would have become a security agent or a secret agent

"Purple Hibiscus" by Chimamanda Adiche, I like it because it reveals the orthodox life of contemporary Catholic families

"Things Fall Apart" by Chinua Achebe because it portrayed beforehand what not just Nigeria but Africa is currently undergoing

"Second Class Citizen" by Buchi Emecheta, I like it because it tells and reflects a typical African marriage where women have no say over how their own lives or the life of their families should be run and it also shows how racism has eaten deep into the fabric of societies all around the world

"The Bronze Horseman" I really like that novel, while reading it, it's as if you're teleported back

in time to the period of the world war 2, that book gives an insight to what citizens of affected countries suffered and how countries, states, families etc had their whole self tilted on the wrong axis

"Romeo and Juliet" by William Shakespeare, I like romance drama, in that book, Shakespeare tells a story of a love, a union that couldn't be because some important figures held onto the prejudice of the past

"The Captives Diary" I'm a lover of anything Christian, anything that has to do with being Christ like, it made me reflect on my life and relationship with God, it stirred up a deeper hunger in me to know God more

"Birds Of Different Feathers", although it was never mine, it was my youngest brothers own, I liked the novel, it gives insight into how people are wired differently, even if they shared the same placenta

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

OI: I'm a movie freak, I can't say I have a favourite movie

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

OI: Nope, I'm a lover of Christian music

WA: IF YOU HAD A BOOK CLUB, WHAT WOULD IT BE READING AND WHY?

OI: If I had a book club, I would encourage and support the reading of novels and documentaries because reading such genre increases wisdom and also improves vocabulary in an interesting way

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS TO GIVE AND GET AS GIFTS?

OI: I'll love to give out "Emotional Intelligence" by Daniel Goleman and "A Time To Kill" by John Grisham, an awkward title, yes, it's not actually as it's named, it's a good book, you can't read A Time To Kill and remain a dullard, it stretches your thinking capacity beyond your imagination. And I'll like to be gifted "Half Of A Yellow Sun" by Chimamanda Adiche

WA: GIVE US THREE "GOOD TO KNOW" FACTS ABOUT YOU

OI: I'm fun to be with, I easily forgive when provoked, I'm a loyal friend

WA: TELL US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WRITING

OI: I can't really recall what sprouted my interest in writing, I can only remember my early days of writing as at 8 years, when I'll just pick up a pen and a book and scramble away on it

WA: YOUR LIKES, DISLIKES, INTERESTS, HOBBIES.

OI: I like good food a lot, you can say I'm a foodie, I like fashion, dressing beautifully, I like sightseeing, I like swimming etc. I dislike dirt, it irritates me, I dislike nosy behavior. My hobbies are singing, cooking, strolling, dancing, reading etcetera etcetera. My favorite ways to unwind are strolling, dancing, listening to music etc.

Onyinyechi Iheanyi is a novelist and essayist. She is currently a co-coordinator of SYNW in FUOTUOKE (Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State). In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, she shared with him some facts surrounding her life and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-onyinyechi-iheanyi-upcoming-novelists-should-not-be-in-a-hurry-to-publish>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OLUWADARASIMI OYEYEMI: WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW, WRITE WHAT YOU LOVE, BUT DEVELOP YOUR WRITING SKILLS TOO



Nov 13

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

SIMI: Initially, I started writing after I took a sight of an orator's definition of talent, "What I find easy to do while others do not". Before then, I had always thought dancing is my talent until it became clear to me that it was just an hobby, not even anymore, I think I now feel as heavy as Chief Ade Amaka. Writing as a freelancer because I love to, I see writers as advocate for obscure minds, most importantly utilization of talent, then I imagined been paid for what I love doing.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

SIMI: George Elliot, Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, Richard Wright, Bayo Adebowale, John Graham.

WA: DESCRIBE THE ROUTE TO YOUR FIRST NOVEL BEING PUBLISHED?

SIMI: My first book, 'Expensive Cost' was published while I was away from home, I mean I usually do not get fully involved in the publishing process since my printing press got registered. My mom do not wish to have me feel the onus of publication process, so once I present my manuscript, I leave the rest to her, by 'the rest', I mean the body constituting the publication process i.e Acquisition, Pre-Editing, Editing, Publishing, Approval, Distribution and Marketing. Note, that anything printed and disseminated can be described as publication, I had been an HIP publisher since the establishment of our agency, SWA team, Nigeria because I have to publish each member daily submission online.

WA: HOW HAS HAVING A PUBLISHER HELPED YOU?

SIMI: I own a registered printing press and Yes, it is open to publication offers.

WA: IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU SERVICE YOU BOOKS?

SIMI: By 'service', I would interpret your question to insinuate how I market my books? Like I have implied earlier, After Publishing, the most important step to take is Approval, once you get the government to approve your book, distributors would rush you.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ASPIRING NOVELISTS?

SIMI: To avoid writer's block, I'd love to appeal to all aspiring novelists to avoid the fear of incompetence, that feeling could massacre one's future.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

SIMI: Bayo Adebowale, Chinua Achebe, George Elliot, Richard Wright, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Frank Ogbeche.

WA: WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

SIMI: Adichie's *Zikora*

WA: WHAT WAS THE BOOK THAT MOST INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

SIMI: Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* . I did not understand fully, the significance of this novel until the last Lekki Toll Gate Massacre. Ezendu to Okonwo: *That boy calls you father, do not bear a hand in his death!* We call them leaders, Yet they had their full hands in our death. I resist the urge to go further.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR 10 FAVORITE BOOKS —AND WHY?

SIMI: i) Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe: Its relevance to my present societal predicament

ii) Widows might: Showcasing the possible resilience of African widow's is a whole big deal to me, prolly because my mom is one.

III) The Gods are not to blame by Ola Rotimi: Sincerely, I love everything about this book, Adaptation is my thing from time, I see Odewale as a victim of ill fate in the play

IV) Native Son by Richard Wright: This American novel gave me thrills and doldrums subsequently.

V) Othello by William Shakespeare: Male Conscience and Psychology, I think a whole lot of African Men needs to read it, believing your own friend than your wife is the worst mistake you could ever make.

VI) Our husband has gone mad again: I laughed my ass out when I read this book. As a satire, It depicts the excesses of Nigerian politics, The Western Catholic woman could not tolerate the stress of Polygamy and this is why trouble struck

Vii) Mill on the Floss: This book is something to brag about, Mary Ann Evans (Victorian Era) successfully expatiated on the Women roles and Social pressure.

Viii) Refugees of the great Lakes by Doyin Aguoro : This is one play that I am yet to fully comprehend and relate with. Even at that, I love its themes of religion and ethics, I think there's a touch of horror though.

IX) Faceless by Amma Darko: I enjoyed reading *Faceless*, the thought of Street life, Violence, Parental norms, theft, poverty and all that plus the important of NGOs in our modern society, MUTE saved FOFO.

X) Zikora: Adichie, my role model, She successfully explores the identity of women in their different roles.

WA: FAVOURITE MUSIC?

SIMI: I do not have a favourite, that depends on mood oscillation.

WA: FAVOURITE MOVIE?

SIMI: V for Vendetta

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS TO GIVE — AND GET — AS GIFTS?

SIMI: Gift me Achebe's series, would you love to read my 'Expensive Cost'?

WA: GIVE US THREE "GOOD TO KNOW" FACTS ABOUT YOU. BE CREATIVE. TELL US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WRITING. WHAT ELSE DO YOU

WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW? CONSIDER HERE YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES, YOUR INTERESTS AND HOBBIES, YOUR FAVORITE WAYS TO UNWIND — WHATEVER COMES TO MIND.

SIMI: Neil Gaiman once said, 'I do not know myself, where these ideas really come from, what makes them come or whether one day, they will stop. However, I am sure that is the latest you want to see right now, so I'd tell you something: My inspiration deals with psychology, whether I am conscious or out of my mind, I write. The content differs though, Writing while I am fully conscious may birth write ups on prevailing issues be such as Rape, Bad Governance, Sexual Slavery and others, See 'Mr Lecturer' by me on our website, www.Simipen.com. Well, I agree with the poetic license idea, It is the deviation from facts for artistic purposes. I love to adhere to rules while writing to birth well constructed write-ups but I do not want to be restricted. A funny fact about me is the high feeling of being competent to handle tasks no matter how impossible it may seem. When I divided my agency into two: 'Give me poetry' and 'Fiction, my advocate', My audience enquired about the initiative which birthed that but I could not figure it out.

Oluwadarasimi Oyeyemi aka Simipen, is an undergraduate of Federal University, Oye Ekiti, Currently Studying English & Literature (double major). In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, the author of Expensive Cost shared with him some facts surrounding her life and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-oluwadarasimi-oyeyemi-write-what-you-know-write-what-you-love-but-develop-your-writing-skills-too>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS
AUGUSTA MOLOKWU: IN THE COURSE
OF WRITING, I DISCOVERED THAT I
HAVE WILD IMAGINATION AND A
KNACK O PLAY WITH WORDS**



Nov 7

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

AUGUSTA: The urge to document my thoughts inspired my writing.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

AUGUSTA: I have been writing since secondary school.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

AUGUSTA: I started writing in 2011.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

AUGUSTA: Yes

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW WRITER, SOMEONE JUST STARTING OUT?

AUGUSTA: The advice is: be original. Be resilient.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN? WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

AUGUSTA: I have written several unpublished books. I have lost count now but they cannot be up to 20.

WA: WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOK(S)?

AUGUSTA: In the course of writing, I discovered that I have wild imagination and a knack to play with words.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

AUGUSTA: My favourite character is Okonkwo in "Things fall apart", by Chinua Achebe.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE CHARACTER THAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN? IF SO, WHO? AND WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL.

AUGUSTA: My favourite character which I have depicted is a combination of different personalities that have created an indelible impression in me. So, when I depict characters, I reflect Resilience and Empathy.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

AUGUSTA: I believe my inspiration is from the above dwelling in the innate.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

AUGUSTA: Direct from the author or distribution network and or representatives.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

AUGUSTA: Not yet on the internet. Contact the author.

WA: HAVE ANY OF YOUR BOOKS BEEN MADE INTO AUDIOBOOKS? IF SO, WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN PRODUCING AN AUDIO BOOK?

AUGUSTA: Not yet

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

AUGUSTA: All Gave Me The Aderaline Rush

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

AUGUSTA: The journey to publishing my first book was fraught with financial constraints. Secondly, it was a learning lane that I was trailing as a novice.

WA: WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?

AUGUSTA: Originality

WA: WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR OF ALL TIME? YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY THEM?

AUGUSTA: Hardley Chace

WA: ARE THERE ANY SECRETS FROM THE BOOK, YOU CAN SHARE WITH YOUR READERS?

AUGUSTA: Secrets? I particularly like the twists in the story.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

AUGUSTA: The inspiration to write this book came from the urge to impress on learners the need to focus, be attentive and determined especially as it relates to their studies.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

AUGUSTA: The key theme is resilience and tenacity.

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

AUGUSTA: Determination

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

AUGUSTA: The title of the book is to attract the interest of a reader. Not necessarily to point to the theme of the book.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

AUGUSTA: Yes, I believe books can influence and change lives. I can't readily point to a

particular book that changed my view on certain issues.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

AUGUSTA: Not particular

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

AUGUSTA: Not really.

WA: WHAT AUTHOR (WHO IS STILL LIVING) WOULD YOU DEARLY LOVE TO MEET?

AUGUSTA: I would love to meet Wole Soyinka.

WA: DO YOU LIKE TO DISPLAY YOUR BOOKS ON A BOOKSHELF OR KEEP THEM IN A VIRTUAL LIBRARY?

AUGUSTA: I don't mind displaying on a book shelf or virtual library.

WA: DO YOU PREFER FLASH FICTION, SHORT STORIES, NOVELLAS, OR NOVELS?

AUGUSTA: I have preference for real life stories.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

AUGUSTA: Things fall apart by Chinua Achebe.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

AUGUSTA: As a researcher, virtual library is a regular place to visit.

WA: HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CRUSH ON A BOOK CHARACTER?

AUGUSTA: Never had a crush on a character.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER MADE YOU LAUGH OUT LOUD?

AUGUSTA: Yes, several books have made me laugh.

Augusta Molokwu received special training in Special Education and Guidance counseling from the University of Ibadan and is currently a lecturer at Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo state, Nigeria. A strong advocate for exceptional children and educational equity for every child, irrespective of gender, religion, abilities, race, social and economic status. She involves her students in activities and projects related to community services that reflects love of humanity. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her works and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-augusta-molokwu-in-the-course-of-writing-i-discovered-that-i-have-wild-imagination-and-a-knack-o-play-with-words>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS
MARCUS OVIE UGBODUMA: IF YOU
WANT TO BE A GREAT WRITER, START
BY READING MORE –**



Oct 29

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

MOU: I got inspiration to start writing, after reading the book on Patrice Lumumba I was about 9 years old then, it was one of the books my father borrowed from the National Library in Lagos then. That book drew tears from my eyes and since then I wanted to document stories like his.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

MOU: My writing dates back to my days in secondary school, especially in letter writing and essays, I never failed any Examination in English Language, thanks to my late Mother who made it compulsory to write compositions weekly and my father now of blessed memory who exposed us to reading widely and marking those compositions strictly.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

MOU: By 1990 I had discovered my potential to write, but then since I was a singer and rapper, my skill was channeled to songwriting, in 1994 I began writing for the screen, that year I wrote only God know, double crossing , the letter and Aisha

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

MOU: I've always wanted to be a film producer. That prompted me to writing for the screen, but life kept drifting me away from my desire, I lost my admission to the Nigerian Film School, Jos, because my parents wouldn't sponsor me, my father wanted me to be a chartered accountant.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW WRITER, SOMEONE JUST STARTING OUT?

MOU: My advise to new a writer is that he or she should stay focused no matter the challenges he or she may face, consistency in your writing matter, the truth remains that If you want to be a great writer, start by reading more, so reading is key. A day without reading is a wasted day.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

MOU: Ah! As for me writer's block stays as long as it last, I don't attempt forcing myself to write, my book "the masquerade would not dance" took four years to complete. I've had series of writer's block in the past, one was when my laptop was stolen I lost four book and over 70 poems and personal quotes, then came the block it lasted over 2 years. The latest block came in September 2020 when my mother passed on, I was currently writing " The pregnant Virgin" three months later my father passed on too, I began a recovery process in August this year 2021, by reading some of my old poems especially the ones I wrote on my mother titled "my Pillow" and "Nneola". Having read them over and over again I got inspired to write yet another poem in memory of my mother titled MOMO. She was dear to me.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN? WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

MOU: I've written over eight books, but only one has been published. The next is presently being proof read by a fellow writer Amadi Arua, it's titled 'The masquerade would not dance' it's setting is Igbo land

WA: WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOK(S)?

MOU: The most suprising thing when writing my books is how inspiration breeds knowledge, writing becomes crisper, and I begin to marvel at what I had written, ideas just keep flowing, as you write you begin to realise how much experience you have garnered from life experiences and reading other writer's works.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE CHARACTER THAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN? IF SO, WHO? AND WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL.

MOU: Some day I hope you will read if my favorite character Aminat in my yet to be published book 'Koronu' Aminat was a character scarcely loved by anyone, many, thought her to be mentally derailed, or simply an imbecile, her condition was borne out of her condition as a sickle cell anemia status. She was highly undermined, hated and discouraged, but she saved the day when it mattered most, when her aunt was to be jailed for a crime her husband committed.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

MOU: My inspiration comes first from God's words, from reading books, newspapers etc and also my imaginative thought process and most times by dreams. My poem on Stella Obasanjo was revealed in a dream on a journey from Lagos to Abuja to see my parents. I immediately woke up and began writing in the bus, line by line I wrote down as I was inspired, yet I did not know what I was writing about until the news was aired how in circumstantial manner, the mother of the less privileged lost her life in a failed surgery.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

MOU: Readers who need my books can contact me personally but you can read a handful of my poems online, just type my name (Marcus Ovie Ugboduma) in your browser.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

MOU: I am almost unknown; as there are many established writers but anyone wishing to know me more can email me on marcosdivine2@gmail.com. I'll be willing to speak with him or her

WA: HAVE ANY OF YOUR BOOKS BEEN MADE INTO AUDIOBOOKS? IF SO, WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN PRODUCING AN AUDIO BOOK?

MOU: I've not considered an audio book but I've one made my own on a rough video, the poem titled "On June 12 we stand, I'll put that rough video on you tube soon and probably others

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

MOU: I'll give it to "The masquerade would not dance", writing the book really broadened my knowledge base, sharpened my knowledge of culture and really corrected some notions about the African Culture.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

MOU: It was a road too rough but worthy to trod, I handled all publishing myself, from typesetting to running the impression and then book binding and marketing, thanks to the Mokola Community in Ibadan where I lived as a young man. The community houses a thousand printing press and as we all know publishers don't want green horns except you are willing to sell your books outrightly, this I couldn't risk, but truly a good book will sell itself.

WA: WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?

MOU: Planning, organising, purpose, clearness, your audience in mind always and coherence. But most of all I believe anyone who wants to succeed in writing must consume poetry because poetry makes your prose and plays crisper.

WA: WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR OF ALL TIME? YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY THEM?

MOU: My favourite authors of all times are Chinua Achebe and his Things Fall Apart. And James Ngugi Wa Thiongo and his book Weep Not Child.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK, CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK

MOU: It's a story about the Ekpe Masquerade common among various tribes of eastern Nigeria, Odili a fresh medical doctor and returned from Europe was selected by his age grade to adorn the garb of the masquerade and perform during the new yam festival. He thought it fetish for his personality, fate had its way someone else took his place unknown to all, at a point an ever cheerful masquerade would not dance..... This particular masquerade represents a young man about to be married, the masquerade has its drummers, one who guides it's path known as Onye Udo Ekpe, and Ekpe wields. To explain this, the Ekpe is the young man about to be married, the Onye Udo Ekpe is the wife to be who literarily guides him from making errors, the drummers and dancers are his family and kinsmen who follows him to seek his brides hand in marriage, the cane he wields is the rod of correction which he uses to correct erring children. The moment a man disconnects from his wife, he stops making progress, that results in the difficulty for the masquerade to dance, until he reconnects with his wife.

WA: ARE THERE ANY SECRETS FROM THE BOOK, YOU CAN SHARE WITH YOUR READERS?

MOU: None! Except that every African Culture has significant meanings, we should never see our culture as barbaric

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

MOU: My parents had a successful marriage, which lasted over 50 years, that inspired me in writing this particular book, when my mother passed on. Old man became too lonely, and then the real theme of the book came to life and when I got my groove from the block suffered I completed this book by telling African stories the African way

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

MOU: Marriage is a key factor in life, not being married creates limitations here in Africa and keeping a successful marriage requires sacrifices of both parties

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

MOU: Everything! from hard work to luck, determination resilience and positive thinking, stop every discrimination against people's culture

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

MOU: The significance of the title is to point to the fact that there's is always an underlining reason to every human behaviour, respecting the views and decision of others is a key to a happy society

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

MOU: Yes several books did, most from the African writer's series, "Roots" by Alex Harley, The rise and fall of the Third Reich, and several collection of poems, but one poem shaped my love for poetry, it was in our Macmillan text book in Primary 4, it was titled the Ugly Vulture, the Author was unknown, but here are the wordings

The ugly Vulture flaps and hops
Peck at scrap and walks and stops
Flies to a tree and looks around,
For Rotten rubbish on the ground.
He likes dead things and pecks them clean,
He's horribly ugly, dull and mean,
Hunchy shoulders, old bald head,
He likes me better if I were dead.
But look at him in the high blue sky,
Round and round you see him fly,
Higher and higher he turns and swings
Climbing the air with unmoving wings.

Thanks to that Teacher who compelled us to memorize those lines. And to my father who analysed the poem. Since then my desire for poetry grew.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

MOU: I love poetry most, every one should love to write poems too, every one born is a natural poet, the discovery of self is usually the problem, If we all understand that poetry has so many rules and no rule at all, then we are good to go. It's simply expressing our thoughts in fewer and only necessary words

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

MOU: I do not dislike any genre, I just wished I had a foundation in literature. My back ground is Accountancy and Purchasing and Supply.

WA: WHAT AUTHOR (WHO IS STILL LIVING) WOULD YOU DEARLY LOVE TO MEET?

MOU: A handshake from Prof Wole Soyinka, would really inspire me, but there are a number of others such as Prof Catherine Ezenwanebe, Author of Shadows on Arrival and Dr Saka Aliyu (Sakky Jojo) author of Afonja, The works of both playwrights have endeared them to me, we keep in touch but are yet to meet, I hope someday, we shall meet.

WA: DO YOU LIKE TO DISPLAY YOUR BOOKS ON A BOOKSHELF OR KEEP THEM IN A VIRTUAL LIBRARY?

MOU: Book shelf is traditional, virtual is modern, both suit me as long as books are preserved and can be received at any time and as long as it's accessible to my readers

WA: DO YOU PREFER FLASH FICTION, SHORT STORIES, NOVELLAS, OR NOVELS?

MOU: I would prefer short stories and novels because I want to concentrate on writing for children and teenagers

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

MOU: I would recommend you read my book ' The masquerade would not dance when it Grace's the shelves,

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

MOU: I use the library often because I work in a school with a good and functional library, thanks to society of young Nigeria writers who supplied us with E books some time ago, these books are on our computers, My last visit to the library at Dugbe was last month at the Ibadan book club September reading

WA: HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CRUSH ON A BOOK CHARACTER?

MOU: I can't remember any, but I think Okonkwo's character really caught my fancy,

Marcus Ovie Ugbooduma is one of the founders of Ibadan Book Club and a member of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW). He holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Education from the National Teachers Institute Kaduna. He is a professional member of the Certified Institute of Purchasing and Supply Administration of Nigeria. Marcus is a Teacher, Creative Thinker, Writer and a custodian and promoter of the African Culture. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career and works

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wode-adedoyin-interviews-marcus-ovie-ugbooduma-if-you-want-to-be-a-great-writer-start-by-reading-more->

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS BERNICE ADEBIMPE OYELEKE: YOUR LITTLE IDEA IS THE SEED YOU NEED TO GROW YOUR WRITING SKILLS



Oct 22

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

BAO: I am not a real poet in the true sense of it, I do poetry as I draw inspiration from life itself.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

BAO: Rhythm poet, I think

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

BAO: Life

WA: TELL US ABOUT A NORMAL WORKING DAY...

BAO: Goes to office as a civil servant, from office to pick my two kids from school at about 4pm. return home into domestic chores. Sleep. But I do stay awake at midnight to complete some brain work.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

BAO: I write as I get inspiration.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO AN ASPIRING POET?

BAO: Rapport with life, and when you get idea, sit and work on your idea. Idea comes in pieces.

The whole comes together through hard work of focused thinking. Yet that little idea is the seed you need to grow.

WA: FINAL QUESTION (PROMISE!): DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR THE YET-TO-BE-PUBLISHED WRITERS READING THIS?

BAO: Writing is thinking and thinking is tough, don't think that it will come easy, so when its tough is when it is forming

WA: TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR WRITING ROUTINE; WHAT'S A TYPICAL WRITING DAY FOR YOU?

BAO: I realize that committing myself to be accountable helps in writing. Otherwise, one may give up. For instance, the only novel I wrote, I announced on my facebook page that I was going to write per day throughout the month of June, then I achieved that and it became a book. The fact that there were people waiting to read me each day instills discipline and consistency. So also in my Deaf Nigerians profile publication, it is weekly and I know there are people waiting to read it.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

BAO: My home in Ibadan

WA: ON THIS TOPIC, WHAT ARE YOU DOING THE BUILD A PLATFORM AND GAIN READERSHIP?

BAO: I have a facebook page called Deaf Nigerians Profile and Luminous Deaf Scholastic Initiative, so also my personal facebook page from where I share my write ups. Occasionally, I look for online news platform to publish some of my works

WA: WEBSITE(S)?

BAO: None

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

BAO: I don't have favourite

WA: BEST PIECE(S) OF WRITING ADVICE WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED?

BAO: I don't know

WA: SOMETHING PERSONAL ABOUT YOU PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED TO KNOW?

BAO: I am Deaf

WA: WHAT'S NEXT?

BAO: Maybe starting a school or taking my Deaf advocacy to another level.

Bernice Adebimpe Oyeleke became deaf while awaiting the junior WAEC through the illness , Meningitis, she suffered from in June, 2002. In 2014, she took up a Federal government appointment as Education officer under Federal Ministry of Education. She serves as National Treasurer of Deaf Teachers Association of Nigeria since 2015 till date. She also serves the same association in the capacity of Chairperson of School Competition Planning Committee. She initiated the Deaf Nigerians Profile in September 2019, a medium through which she enlightens people about deafness, deaf education and sign language awareness through publishing interviews with people who are deaf but successful. She writes for Inclusive news network on people with disabilities issues. She is the author of the novel, LUMINOUS, an eBook available for free download via selar.co/luminousbk.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-bernice-adebimpe-oyeleke-your-little-idea-is-the-seed-you-need-to-grow-your-writing-skills>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ADESEGUN ADEFEYINTOLA ADEJOKE: POETRY IS LIFE AND WORDS MAKE IT MORE THRILLING –



Oct 15

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

ADEFEHINTOLA: First, I will say it is about the Expression, there are so many things I come across in my daily activities- right at home or anywhere I go to, so being a poet stems from expressing my thoughts about things that happens generally. Poetry is life and words make it more thrilling.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

ADEFEHINTOLA: Well, literature is diverse and gives room for exploration of different concepts. So I mostly read randomly and find some development that fascinates me but I love those of Maya Angelou

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

ADEFEHINTOLA: Everything inspires me, environment, my life and especially music too.

WA: TELL US ABOUT A NORMAL WORKING DAY?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I am still a student of University of Lagos, Department of Philosophy. So I stay at my mum shop now due to the strike. I am also an active online user and spend time downloading novels and music.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I write anytime muse comes, most times, my poetry is defined by what I am thinking about and there are times I might start a piece and leave it for sometimes before I continue and other times I usually call it " The Midnight Snack" I get most of my ideas at night.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR THOUGHT PROCESS BEHIND A POEM?

ADEFEHINTOLA: There is a specific form of expression that strikes when I have an idea for a poem and the next process is defining what the poem is about before I find words that convey the actual intent and they are most times difficult to find. It is what makes Poetry distinct.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED

ADEFEHINTOLA: I am not yet published. The first thing a poet should recognize and do is building an audience- very important, and internet has made it easier to submit your works to different online literary magazines.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO AN ASPIRING POET?

ADEFEHINTOLA: Making money should not be your first priority. Write and be consistent with it even if it can be frustrating and always let your readers connect with your work.

WA: WHAT (IF ANY) SORTS OF EDITORIAL CHANGES DID THE MANUSCRIPT GO THROUGH? DID YOU WORK THROUGH YOUR AGENT AND /OR EDITORS WITHIN THE PUBLISHING HOUSE?

ADEFEHINTOLA: No I didn't go through any of this means, but I have friends who are also poets and writers (Expegbue Stanley"leystan" and Olarinoye Jamiu" epiphany") and also Akinola Tosin, who has a flair for Arts who I usually send my poems to for reviews.

WA: FINAL QUESTIONS (PROMISE); DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YET TO BE PUBLISHED WRITERS READING THIS?

ADEFEHINTOLA: Well, all I can say is that just keep Writing and Reading and never relent. Consistency is key.

WA: TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR WRITING ROUTINE, WHAT'S A TYPICAL WRITING DAY FOR YOU?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I write anytime as long as the place is quiet enough for me to Pierce through every muddled thought. Sometimes I use WPS on my phone to save ideas, makes use of creative writing apps and I also have a book where I write my poems.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I write from anywhere I am. Either at home, shop or school just about anywhere that is comfortable for me to do so.

WA: ON THIS TOPIC WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO BUILD A PLATFORM AND GAIN READERSHIP?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I share my works on social platform like Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram.

WA: WEBSITE?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I have a blog on which I haven't really posted much. It can be located at <https://ww181428069.wordpress.com>

WA: FAVOURITE MOVIE?

ADEFEHINTOLA: My name is Khan, the fault in our Stars, Like stars on Earth, Titanic and currently Clouds.

WA: BEST PIECE(S) OF ADVICE WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED?

ADEFEHINTOLA: There are times when we might not have inspiration to write even when we want to, I recommend that the best thing to do is take a stroll, listen to music or sleep- whatever catches your fancy. Poets should also enter available competition.

WA: SOMETHING PERSONAL ABOUT YOU THAT PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED TO KNOW?

ADEFEHINTOLA: I am very shy and mostly quiet

WA: What's next?

ADEFEHINTOLA: Right now, I am looking forward to graduate and getting my works published.

Adesegun Adefeyintola Adejoke is a budding poet. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, the author of an upcoming collection of poems titled “Love’s Encore” shared with him some facts surrounding her life and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-adesegun-adeyintola-adejoke-poetry-is-life-and-words-make-it-more-thrilling->

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS FOLUKE SIJUWOLA FALAYI: BOOKS ARE MEANT TO CHANGE LIVES



Oct 8

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

FSF: I will just say it is providence, to cut a long story short.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

FSF: I have been writing since my secondary school days, informally anyway.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

FSF: I started writing officially over a decade ago. My debut book was published in 2008. I started writing that particular book in 2004.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

FSF: No, initially, I didn't want to. I was afraid I won't be able to make a living out of it.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW WRITER, SOMEONE JUST STARTING OUT?

FSF: If you desire to be a writer, you must have passion for the art. It is the passion that will propel and keep you going before any proceeds. You must also master the craft, writing is a craft. You must be an avid reader. Know the genre you are writing about.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

FSF: I take time off.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

FSF: I have written over twenty books.

WA: WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOK(S)?

FSF: The more you work on your manuscript the finer it gets. Never rush your work.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

FSF: I have favourite characters not just one.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE CHARACTER THAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN? IF SO, WHO? AND WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL

FSF: I love Tonye, a female character in Sam Goes to College. I love Atikah, a little female Hausa girl in Repose- they are prototypes of what is right, what every female should be. They stand for equality, they are knowledgeable and frown at any form of relegation.

Reverend Moses/Obinna in the Reverend's Daughter exemplifies fairness, integrity, reformation and discipline our society needs.

Sanni, in The Headmaster's Boy, Tomobi in Unbending Steel, Ete in A Night at Edet's House- they are male archetypes of patience, hard work and endurance. Nothing comes cheap in life.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

FSF: I get inspirations anywhere and everywhere. God, the giver of all gifts lavishes it on me without restrain.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

FSF: Through me and our marketing team.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

FSF: Through our website and email

address: jedsweetha@gmail.com. <https://jedidiahweetha.com.ng>

WA: HAVE ANY OF YOUR BOOKS BEEN MADE INTO AUDIOBOOKS?

FSF: We are yet to make audio books.

WA: IF SO, WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN PRODUCING AN AUDIO BOOK?

FSF: We have not gone into that, therefore we have not experienced any challenge in that line.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

FSF: I find all my books pleasurable to write perhaps for the passion I have for it.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

FSF: My first book was published in 2008. It is entitled Bond. It raises a question of time healing old wounds. It tells a story of love, grief, repentance, restoration and forgiveness. It has many literary elements for a first time author which made reviewers in different states, ministries of education approved it to be read for years.

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

FSF: The journey has been interesting, exciting and full of encounters just like any other profession.

WA: WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?

FSF: Study the grammar of the language; word classes, figures of speech and the rest. Study your genre and understand the point of views.

WA: WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR OF ALL TIME?

FSF: I have favourite authors not just one author possibly because of my first course of study; English and Literature, the themes, imagery and symbols inherent in some of the books I studied in school. The books I read as a university undergraduate was innumerable; Nigerian Literature, African Literature, American Literature, European Literature and other kinds.

I will mention some of my authors and books of all time: Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, *A Play of Giants* and others. Femi Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel*. I read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a little girl. I remember, I read it over and over and proceeded to read his, *No Longer at Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Arrow of God*. Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard*, Niyi Osundare's *Selected Poems*, Festus Iyayi's *Violence*, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, Zaynab Alkali's *The Still Born*, Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The Grain of the Wheat*, *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, these are some of my favourite works and authors.

Foreign works and authors like- Samuel Taylor Coleridge's, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Jane Austen's -*The Pride and Prejudice* and the first English Literature Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. I celebrate these authors, the dead and those who are still living.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED "REPOSE", CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK.

FSF: My latest work is entitled- *Repose*. It promotes female education. It talks about gender equality. Female children must be educated. They have right to education.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

FSF: I got inspired while I studied and prepared for my postgraduate exam in Feature Writing. There was an article I read and I couldn't go on reading until I made a sketch of flashes coming to my mind on a little brilliant Hausa girl. She loves education, doing well in school but her father has another plan; to give her out in marriage due to ignorance and financial gain.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

FSF: Female education and a child's right to education.

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

FSF: Shun ignorance and embrace knowledge. Education is light; get it for it is a candle that shines into what you do. Be determined to succeed. Refuse to stay in darkness. Be an agent of positive change in your sphere of life and everywhere you find yourself.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

FSF: After a man's desire or goal has been met there comes a rest, repose.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

FSF: Yes, books are meant to change lives.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

FSF: The three genres of Literature, I love them.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

FSF: No.

WA: WHAT AUTHOR (WHO IS STILL LIVING) WOULD YOU DEARLY LOVE TO MEET?

FSF: Any of the authors I mentioned earlier who is still alive.

WA: DO YOU LIKE TO DISPLAY YOUR BOOKS ON A BOOKSHELF OR KEEP THEM IN A VIRTUAL LIBRARY?

FSF: Both are okay by me.

WA: DO YOU PREFER FLASH FICTION, SHORT STORIES, NOVELLAS, OR NOVELS?

FSF: A writer must be versatile without any preference.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

FSF: I will recommend Born for the Riverside and other Radio Plays by Ayodele Ojurongbe.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

FSF: I was there in year 2020. Every author ought to have library at home.

WA: HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CRUSH ON A BOOK CHARACTER?

FSF: Yes.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER MADE YOU LAUGH OUT LOUD?

FSF: Yes, a couple of times.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-foluke-sijuwola-falayi-books-are-meant-to-change-lives>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OLUWATOBILOBA GRACE LAWALSON: I WRITE IN ORDER TO BRING SOCIETAL PROBLEMS INTO ATTENTION



Oct 1

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

OGL: My name is Oluwatobiloba Grace Lawalson, I was inspired to write because it is a good way of bringing attention to societal problems. Also a medium of educating little children.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING? WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

OGL: As a legal practitioner, I started writing in secondary school as an art student

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

OGL: From the inception, I did not want to be a writer but I later decided to write because it helped bring attention to society problems and besides the excruciating intellectual rigor and joy it brings

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW WRITER, SOMEONE JUST STARTING OUT?

OGL: To someone who wants to start out, I know it may sound cliché but read widely and write everyday

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

OGL: For writer's block, try discipline (like a regiment- even if one line a day) and go back to the things that inspire you

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN? : WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOK(S)?

OGL: I mostly write short stories, and what surprised me the most is the time investment. Expressing your thought in few words is as tasking as long prose, if not more because you are limited to certain words and must do your characters justice.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE CHARACTER THAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN? IF SO, WHO? AND WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL.

OGL: My favorite character would be Sekhukhune, who shows that showing others love and empathy goes a long way to bring healing and bring our society together

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

OGL: It is about to be published alongside other stories in an anthology

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

OGL: I can be reached via social media @Tobiloba Lawalson.

WA: HAVE ANY OF YOUR BOOKS BEEN MADE INTO AUDIOBOOKS? WA: IF SO, WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN PRODUCING AN AUDIO BOOK?

OGL: I haven't produced an Audio book

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

OGL: I enjoy the writing process and my first was in a competition I was selected. Writers should try to participate in competitions

WA: WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?

OGL: Every aspect of writing is important. I think showcasing and developing your characters is

the most important.

WA: WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR OF ALL TIME? WA: YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY HIM?

OGL: I don't have a favorite author; I think I read rather widely.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK, CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK. WA: ARE THERE ANY SECRETS FROM THE BOOK, YOU CAN SHARE WITH YOUR READERS?

OGL: It is on raising awareness on sexual abuse and trafficking

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

OGL: The inspiration for my last story was to create awareness on the societal issues bordering trafficking and sexual abuse especially gender induced types.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

OGL: As a society, we gloss over these issues as if they are not important. Themes to be found in the book are humanism, resilience and hope

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

OGL: The major purpose I wanted the book to achieve is to make us aware as a society and to double our efforts in putting end to sexual abuse, violence and trafficking

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

OGL: The title 'breaking the shackles' was to show hope that despite what you have been through, you can break the shackles

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

OGL: Yes, several not only stories

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE? ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

OGL: I don't hate any genre but my least favorite would be poetry, no matter how hard I try, I can't write it.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

OGL: I read a lot virtually so it has been a while I physically visited a library

WA: DO YOU PREFER FLASH FICTION, SHORT STORIES, NOVELLAS, OR NOVELS?

OGL: It depends on my mood and the time I have

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

OGL: Lots so I won't make recommendation

WA: HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CRUSH ON A BOOK CHARACTER? HAS A BOOK EVER MADE YOU LAUGH OUT LOUD?

I have had a crush on a book character and laughed out loud when reading good books.

Oluwatobiloba Grace Lawalson is a legal practitioner called to the Nigerian Bar. She is also a short story writer, Content Creator and a Member of Akure Book Club. In this concise interview with Wole Adedoyin, she shares her writing experience and what readers must know about her latest book.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-oluwatobiloba-grace-lawalson-i-write-in-order-to-bring-societal-problems-into-attention>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS CYNTHIA CHUKWUNENYE MADUEKWE: AS A WRITER, NEGATIVE INSULTS SHOULD STRIVE YOU TO DO BETTER AND GAIN POSITIVE RESULTS



Sep 23

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING.

CYANAHPENS: I have written a book titled "The Delayed Journey" and am currently writing another book "The Story No One Knows".

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

CYANAHPENS: The flow and rhymes of a piece of work attracts me to it

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

CYANAHPENS: Prof Wole Soyinka, Late Sir William Shakespeare, Late Sir Chinua Achebe Chimamanda Adichie, Miss Amanda Gomans, All their works inspires and impresses me to do

more

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

CYANAHPENS: It's your passion so it needs more compassion and consistency to drive and derive from it

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

CYANAHPENS: When writing I follow the procedures of options through motions

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

CYANAHPENS: No I don't have a specific place, I just write anywhere at any time the word calls or when the spirit moves

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

CYANAHPENS: I started writing from my kindergarten age with the help of my family but I started with pencils with the help of people around me. I started writing/poetry fully during the pandemic outbreak.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

CYANAHPENS: Mental Health/Peace. The book is an internationally published anthology.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

CYANAHPENS: Yes I do

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

CYANAHPENS: Feelings of Hope and criticisms come in.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

CYANAHPENS: From positive and negative issues around the society. Music also inspires me to write more. The story I hear and see also motivates me.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

CYANAHPENS: All thanks to social media

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES/READERS.

CYANAHPENS: Sometimes Corrections, criticisms and compliments of encouragement and praise

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

CYANAHPENS: Facebook: Cynthia Maduekwe, Instagram and Twitter: Cynthia @CyanahPEN, Gmail: maduekwecynthia@gmail.com, YouTube: Cynthia Maduekwe

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

CYANAHPENS: It's a world full of writers who write, it is left for YOU to make it right through learning and earning. Keep reading always because readers are leaders.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

CYANAHPENS: Accepting corrections/criticisms. NOTE: Negative insults strives you to do better and gain positive results.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

CYANAHPENS: THE DELAYED JOURNEY (WHEN WE MET)

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

CYANAHPENS: The Delayed Journey is an ebook about the COVID19 (Lockdown situation) and how things got slowed and demoted. The journey wasn't easy but all thanks to God it was.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

CYANAHPENS: The Story No One Knows is all about an introvert abnormal girl who struggles out to become an absolutely normal person.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

CYANAHPENS: Surprisely The Story No One Knows will turn The Story Everyone Knows when it's out..**REASON:** Sophia never knew her story will be used as testimony or motivation to the world.

(CyanahPENS) hails from Osina, Ideota North L.G.A Owerri in Imo State, Nigeria. She was born in Calabar, Cross River State and finished her both primary and secondary education in the same state. She is currently a 200 level student, studying Electrical and Electronics Computer Engineering and Technology at the University of Calabar. Cynthia is an ambassador and co-founder of Writers Society (WS). She is a poet and novelist. She has featured some of her articles in the Vanguard and This Day Newspapers respectively. She shares her writing experience with Wole Adedoyin in this short interview.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-cynthia-chukwunyenye-maduekwe-as-a-writer-negative-insults-should-strive-you-to-do-better-and-gain-positive-results>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS GLORY OLUTAYO — UP AND COMING WRITERS SHOULD CREATE AND DEVELOP THEIR OWN WRITING STYLES



Sep 10

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING

G.O: After having read a lot of children's books and getting fascinated, my imagination became really active and I started writing little fictions at the age of 8. I've written a couple of story books, poems, two dramas and a novella. I'm currently writing more of poems for the meantime.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

G.O: I love Chimamanda Adichie and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o because of their special ways of recreating historical events.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

G.O: Love yourself and pick a style that would be peculiar to you. Up and coming writers should create and develop their own writing styles.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

G.O: Discovering that I can make a good piece using my state of mind as a leverage, I realized that any environment and condition can help me build a good piece of art. It is the possibility of this diversity in my writing that inspires me to write, coupled with the fact that I find it easier to express complicated feelings in writing.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

G.O: I don't exactly have a writing routine and I find it comfortable to write in any cool, quiet place, occasionally with the accompaniment of soft music.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

G.O: I started writing at age 8 because I had a lot of stories boxed up in my imaginations and I wanted more people to read those stories.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

G.O: A children's book titled "The Right Choice"

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

G.O: I write a lot about the feminine gender, but this does not cut across all my works.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

G.O: I felt I was finally fulfilling a purpose.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

G.O: Many weird things.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

G.O: I got my publisher through a writer's platform.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES\READERS.

G.O: At this moment, I should say, delightful ones.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

G.O: By reading more of my works and through my social media.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITE?

G.O: If you ever feel like taking a break while writing, don't hesitate to.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

G.O: Getting frustrated too early.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

G.O: Virtually all my books gave me a new type of joy.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

G.O: It was almost unexpected, because when I met my publisher (who publishes children's stories for schools), he was almost done accepting manuscripts for publications. It was a swift process, all I had to do was re-edit an old story of mine, and reading something my younger self wrote made me understand certain things about who I had always been.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

G.O: Nothing is impossible if we're determined.

WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

G.O: You can find me on LinkedIn or Instagram @Glory Olutayo.

Glory Olutayo is currently the financial secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Osun State Chapter. She is also a student of English and International Studies at the Osun State University. Glory is an author, a prize winning debater and a poet. She is also a lover of music. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing experience and her first publication titled "The Right Choice"

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-glory-olutayo-up-and-coming-writers-should-create-and-develop-their-own-writing-styles>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ADELEKE HATTRICK OLUWAFEMI: YOUNG ARTISTS SHOULD BE ORIGINAL AND DO MORE RESEARCH IN ORDER TO EXPLORE MANY UNTAPPED AREAS OF ART



Sep 2

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

AHO: Adeleke Hattrick Oluwafemi sees his world as a blank canvass, hence turning it to creative work of Art (Painting) which he mastered in the last one decade as full time studio artist is what delights him the most. Growing up as a child in a plural society, intrigue with the desire to make his world enliven by passing the message of hope through art inspired him to adopt art which he sees as a simple tool in solving the complex endemic challenges in his immediate society and world at large, as his art represents the dialogue between the voice and the myth in many of it aspects, the stand point of view from the philosophical perspectives and metaphysical perception in relation to our contemporary life that correlates and compliment but simplifies

the promptness which inspires his creativity in discovering a set of problems, of course he ensues them with creative solutions through his works, may be because he studied Art and Culture at Ifa Heritage Institute, he simply represents the fast growing hope in the art world as a result of his honed skills. Hattrick has presented Papers at the African Union fora, where he represented Nigeria youths, he pitched about the needs for the world leaders to adopt art as a creative means in solving the endemic unemployment among youths, he has gotten supports/Grant to train young Africans, Women and the refugees the art of surface textiles design and the sustainable ways of making money through the crafts both within and outside his country, the training which over two thousand people benefited directly and indirectly from. He trained youths in the slums who are into substance abuse and refugee camp the healing process from the abuse using Art, he took part in many art exhibitions and he has his work collections across the continents, he also speaks with over 1000 High School students in art and area life situations.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT ART IN YOUR COUNTRY?

AHO: Art in Nigeria is growing faster than most African countries, with many young talented Artists, but the artists are suffering because they lack support with little or low patronage and bad Government policies.

WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE?

AHO: No.

WA: HOW ARE ARTISTS USING ART TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

AHO: It is not so common for artists to engage I'm such works in my country because of the low awareness about the power of Art in bringing about positive change but some do through exhibitions.

WA: WHAT THEMES DO YOU PURSUE?

AHO: Towards ending the endemic unemployment globally through the creative economy.

WA: WHAT ART DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

AHO: Realism.

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES THE ARTIST HAVE IN SOCIETY?

AHO: It has a social role by bringing different people together, information role, educational role, economical role, mind healing etc.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ART WORK?

AHO: Paintings, the new style I created, Reabstraism.

WA: WHAT JOBS HAVE YOU DONE OTHER THAN BEING AN ARTIST?

AHO: Photography, Farming and Acting.

WA: Why art?

AHO: Because it is my calling.

WA: WHAT IS AN ARTISTIC OUTLOOK ON LIFE?

AHO: It is the only face of hope.

WA: WHAT MEMORABLE RESPONSES HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR WORK?

AHO: Encouraging feedback, patronages and support for my new style.

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

AHO: Making Art looks like a competition.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

AHO: Uniqueness, originality and touch of Africa.

WA: SHOULD ART BE FUNDED?

AHO: Yes.

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES ARTS FUNDING HAVE?

AHO: Keep the few standing Artists going, helps in preventing them from partial extinction, makes the sector more attractive to younger generation, to aid and support new insights in Art world and to improve economy, it will aid in telling the world about a particular country without speaking a word and it will help in showcasing the good imagery of a Nation that fund creative sector.

WA: NAME THREE ARTISTS YOU'D LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO.

AHO: Leonardo Da vinci, Salvador Dali, Micheal Angelo.

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

AHO: To keep going and never back out because I had invested more in Art than to back out in the middle.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS?

AHO: To use my Art as the agent of change in my society and world and to have tuition free Art Schools.

WA: YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE TO UPCOMING ARTISTS.

AHO: They should be original and do more research in order to explore many untapped areas of Art, focus is important and work to make a change not what to eat alone.

Adeleke Hattrick Oluwafemi is a professional artist currently based in Ibadan. A member of Aza Artists and Writers Movement and an alumnus of Ifa Heritage Institute. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his artistic experience and his efforts in promoting the profession.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-adeleke-hattrick-oluwafemi-young-artists-should-be-original-and-do-more-research-in-order-to-explore-many-untapped-areas-of-art>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS JUBRIL ABDULSALAM BABATUNDE: I ALWAYS EXPRESS MYSELF THROUGH MY ARTWORKS



Aug 27

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

JAB: My name is Jubril Abdulsalam Babatunde. My artistic name is @adisartz. I am from kwara state in Nigeria.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT ART IN YOUR COUNTRY?

JAB: Nigeria has an artistic tradition that dates back thousands of years. While much of the country's early art had a religious or spiritual significance, many of the traditional arts and crafts evolved over time to include practical and decorative items. Many of the local arts and crafts are regional, but most large markets in the major cities sell items from all over the country. Like. Styles, rock art, wood carving, sculpture, drawing and painting, history etc

WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE?

JAB: No this is the first time, but it's sound great to hear

WA: HOW ARE ARTISTS USING ART TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY.

JAB: By making art to express the mind of the people, using art to pass a direct message across for total eradication of the abuse. I always express myself through my work.

WA: WHAT THEMES DO YOU PURSUE?

JAB: I don't have a specific theme, I work on a theme according to the way my spirit leads me.

WA: WHAT ART DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

JAB: Pencil drawing (charcoal)

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES THE ARTIST HAVE IN SOCIETY?

JAB: Nothing but extra ordinary

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ART WORK?

JAB: Pencil artwork

WA: WHAT JOBS HAVE YOU DONE OTHER THAN BEING AN ARTIST?

JAB: Musician

WA: WHY ART?

JAB: I'm talented in it and it's what I love doing, it's my hobby

WA: WHAT IS AN ARTISTIC OUTLOOK ON LIFE?

JAB: It expresses the great works of the world/life, great people, style, originality, and creativity. Art is life

WA: WHAT MEMORABLE RESPONSES HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR WORK?

JAB: Memorable response I always remember is that many of my Art lovers always tell me my artwork makes them happy

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE ART WORLD?

JAB: Nothing

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

JAB: Nothing but I keep working harder, I never see myself as the best, nobody is perfect, I always see my art like I can do better than this

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

JAB: It's realistic

WA: SHOULD ART BE FUNDED?

JAB: Yes

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES ARTS FUNDING HAVE?

JAB: To promote art, and to motivate artist to do more

WA: NAME THREE ARTISTS YOU'D LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO.

JAB: Stanley Arinze, Kelvin Okafor, and Fatola Israel

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

JAB: That I should keep up my good work, I should not relent

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS?

JAB: To be known across the world as one of the best artists and also to have an impact in the life of the upcoming artists by achieving their goals of becoming great artists in life.

WA: YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE TO UPCOMING ARTISTS

JAB: If you have a dream, work towards the dream and never give up. Art is all about consistent gradual practice, so my advice for the upcoming artists is, never give up but keep practicing and doing your best

Jubril Abdulsalam Babatunde is currently a student of Kwara State Polytechnic in Nigeria. A pencil artist whose goal is to promote art and groom upcoming artists to become greater in the future. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his works and experience as an artist.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoy>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS AKANNI KEHINDE JAMES: ART GIVES MEANING TO OUR LIVES AND HELP US UNDERSTAND OUR WORLD



Aug 20

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

AKJ: I am Akanni Kehinde James, from Saki, Oyo State. A graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, fine and Applied Arts. A potter by profession.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT ART IN YOUR COUNTRY?

AKJ: Art has been a fundamental part of Nigeria, from the historical time till this present time. Art has been a powerful tool in describing cultures, history and tradition in the time past. And now art has taken a strong stand in our contemporary time, because it is evident in every aspect of our lives.

WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE?

AKJ: No

WA: HOW ARE ARTISTS USING ART TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY.

AKJ: Art is use to promote human right in Nigeria because it so a powerful tool to express ourselves. From poster designs, sculptures or as deemed fit by the artist to express his mind in promoting human right.

WA: WHAT THEMES DO YOU PURSUE?

AKJ: The themes I try to pursue in my works are themes from the Yoruba traditional concepts, Social theme to address things going on in our society and also biblical themes.

WA: WHAT ART DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

AKJ: As an artist I associate myself with all types of art, but with my profession, I identify myself more with pottery/ceramics arts and sculptures inclusive

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES THE ARTIST HAVE IN SOCIETY?

AKJ: An artist role in society helps to promote our cultural heritage. They also take a large role in beautification of our environments; artist could also be mouth piece of the people in speaking against bad issues in our society through our works. They can reshape our world into a better place, where once again freedom of thought and real communication can be disseminated through art

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ART WORK?

AKJ: My favorite art work is one of my works titled "Expectation"

WA: WHAT JOBS HAVE YOU DONE OTHER THAN BEING AN ARTIST?

AKJ: None

WA: WHY ART?

AKJ: Because I love freedom and I love to express myself.

WA: WHAT IS AN ARTISTIC OUTLOOK ON LIFE?

AKJ: An artistic outlook on life is the way art view life and its expectation, which is to give meaning to our life and help us understand our world.

WA: WHAT MEMORABLE RESPONSES HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR WORK?

AKJ: Satisfaction and encouragement from people.

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE ART WORLD?

AKJ: I dislike the fact that most people don't tend to appreciate the hard work put into efforts by

artist to create work, the creativity, efforts, time, money and the likes. Also dislike the fact that some dead artists are celebrated than living artist.

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

AKJ: Low patronage

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

It gives me joy when creating and that I put in all my best which always come out nice at the end.

WA: SHOULD ART BE FUNDED?

AKJ: Yes

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES ARTS FUNDING HAVE?

AKJ: It gives younger artists the opportunity to practice and it aids more exploration when the funding is available

WA: NAME THREE ARTISTS YOU'D LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO.

AKJ: Djaou Kassi and Jon Puzzuoli

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

AKJ: Never to give up

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS?

AKJ: To promote creativity by establishing a ceramic school for training students and to perform excellently as a pottery artist to live a clear legacy in the history of Nigeria arts.

WA: YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE TO UPCOMING ARTISTS

AKJ: To make best use of every opportunity they have to learn, be conversant with social media and never to give up

Akanni Kehinde James hails from Saki, Oyo State in Nigeria. A graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University. He is a pottery artist. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him his experience as a potter and what he hopes to do to promote his profession in the future.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-akanni-kehinde-james-art-gives-meaning-to-our-lives-and-help-us-understand-our-world>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ABDOUL-GANIOU DERMANI: SOCIETY SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE MESSAGE SENT BY THE ARTIST THROUGH HIS/HER ARTWORK



Aug 13

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

DERMANI: To start this interview, I would like to thank IHRAF for giving me this great opportunity. My name is Abdoul-Ganiou Dermani, I am a visual artist from Togo living in Stuttgart, Germany. I studied Art at the Collège d'Enseignement Artistique et Artisanal – CEAA (College of Arts and Crafts) in Kpalimé, Togo. My artistic practice encompasses painting, drawing, photography and video. My work has been shown in more than 50 countries in the world, including, USA, Germany, Italy, France, UK, Nigeria, Morocco, South Africa, South Korea, China, Cuba, Venezuela, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. I received the Artfacts Performance Award 2019 and 2020 in Berlin, Germany.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT ART IN YOUR COUNTRY?

DERMANI: I'm from Togo, a small country of 7 million people located in West Africa, bordered by Ghana to the West, Benin to the East and Burkina Faso to the North. It extends South to the Gulf of Guinea, where its capital Lomé is located.

I can't talk about art in Togo without starting with the famous Togolese artist Paul Ahyi (born 1930 and died 2010). Ahyi was painter, sculptor, architect, interior designer and author, who designed the flag of Togo. He was known for his monumental outdoor artworks, reliefs and sculptures, including the Independence Monument in Lomé. Paul Ahyi was named UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2009.

Togolese art lives through several forms, both on Togolese soil and in its diaspora. There are many talented artists in Togo, but often unknown because of the difficulties encountered to show in art galleries and contemporary art fairs in Europe and abroad. Togolese contemporary art is focused on painting and sculpture, now there is a new generation of artists exploring other horizons, such as performance art, photography and video art. In April 2017, the Presidency of Togolese Republic, willing to promote Togolese artists, inaugurated the long mosaic mural "Le chemin de la paix" (The Way of Peace). The long mosaic mural created by eight Togolese artists, starts from Lomé Airport to the city center.

Togo has opened its new major National Art Gallery "The Palais de Lomé" in November 2019.

WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE?

DERMANI: No, I have never heard about IHRAF before, but thanks to your interview invitation, I just got to know the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF).

WA: HOW ARE ARTISTS USING ART TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

DERMANI: Artists in Togo are using painting, sculpture, photography, performance art and film to promote Human Rights. Performance art is mostly used to address violations of Human Rights.

WA: WHAT THEMES DO YOU PURSUE?

DERMANI: Seeking to build a better world through art, I work on various social issues, African cultural identities, the search for peace among people, and also human physical communication in the age of new technologies. I follow a strong approach against racism and exclusion. We are all living in challenging times of the coronavirus pandemic, I use my work to address this situation.

WA: WHAT ART DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

DERMANI: I am a multidisciplinary artist working with painting, drawing, installation, photography, digital art, video performance and video art.

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES THE ARTIST HAVE IN SOCIETY?

DERMANI: The artist, in my opinion, is the mirror of society. The duty of artist is to reflect on issues related to society. I am convinced that the artist can play an important role in providing solutions to our problems. The artist is a visionary who sees danger coming. Society should take into account the message sent by the artist through his/her artwork.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ART WORK?

DERMANI: I love all my works; it is difficult for me to choose my favourite artwork. My work which conveys a strong message is my painting "Peace in the world". This painting is a patchwork of colour which forms a human figure, whose head is a terrestrial sphere. The arms are a show of force while the chest of the figure is made up of two white doves, symbolizing peace. In their beaks, the doves hold a golden plant to signify the preciousness of their burden. People should think about the world and promote world peace. Each individual is able to seek peace.

WA: WHAT JOBS HAVE YOU DONE OTHER THAN BEING AN ARTIST?

DERMANI: I work as a Teacher and continue to give art workshops to schools. I trained art instructors in Sokodé (Togo) in May 2017.

WA: WHY ART?

DERMANI: I was already drawing when I was 7 years old. In my childhood, I reproduced pictures from my school books and from my mother's cosmetics. I had very good marks in drawing. I especially had a talent for doing portrait in black and white; this made me earn money very early on. So I quickly understood that art will be my profession. Art is my passion; it allows me to freely express my thoughts and ideas.

WA: WHAT IS AN ARTISTIC OUTLOOK ON LIFE?

DERMANI: Art is very important for humanity. Art can connect, heal and make people happy. Art can change human life. I have experienced extraordinary moments in my life and met

important personalities through art. Art can contribute to the economic development of a country or a city, so it is a development factor that should not be overlooked.

WA: WHAT MEMORABLE RESPONSES HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR WORK?

DERMANI: People admire my work everywhere, this is to tell you that I receive encouragement, thanks and congratulations from the audience. The curators regularly invite me to show my work. I have earned numerous prestigious awards for my works, including the Commendation for Graphic/Photography/Video at the 5th International Biennial “Marko KrstovGregovic” 2021 in Petrovac, Montenegro; New York City International Prize 2020 in New York, USA; Leonardo Da Vinci International Prize 2020 in Florence, Italy; Artfacts Performance Award 2019 and 2020 in Berlin, Germany; Giotto International Prize 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal; Finalist at the Global Art Awards 2018 in Dubai, UAE; Best Video Art Prize at the 17th International Film Festival „Zoom-Zblizenia“ 2014 in Jelenia Gora, Poland.

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE ART WORLD?

DERMANI: The art world is a closed circle and too elitist.

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

DERMANI: What I dislike about my work is when I haven't achieved the expected result. Sometimes there is a nasty surprise in the creation process.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

DERMANI: When it makes people happy. I asked a question to a collector who wanted to buy my work, to find out why he wanted to buy my work? He replied that this work calms him down when he looks at it.

WA: SHOULD ART BE FUNDED?

DERMANI: Yes, I think it is very important to support art and artists. Art is an important and vital sector in society. Without art there is no life. Art counts in the life of a nation, therefore financial support from public and private institutions is needed. Art and artists should never be neglected. Each profession deserves a salary, art is a profession and artists should be paid for it, to enable them to live with dignity.

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES ART FUNDING HAVE?

DERMANI: Personally, I have never received an art fund. I work with my own means; I finance my creation and pay for my trips to participate in my exhibitions. I would like to have the art fund which could help me in my artistic career. I take this opportunity to launch an appeal to the public or private institutions that would like to support me. The art fund helps the artist to produce and exhibit his/her work.

WA: NAME THREE ARTISTS YOU'D LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO.

DERMANI: I don't like to compare myself with other artists, because I believe that each artist is unique. I have great admiration for Ghanaian artist El Anatsui, Chinese artist Ai Weiwei and German artist Gerhard Richter.

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

DERMANI: Never give up.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS?

DERMANI: My main goal is to bring something positive to humanity through my art. I am very pleased to inform you that I have been selected to participate in the OSTRALE Biennale 2021 in Dresden, Germany. I am representing Togo for the first time and the only artist participating from the African continent in the 13th edition of the OSTRALE Exhibition in Dresden, which runs from July 1 to October 3, 2021 at Robotron Kantine.

The OSTRALE Biennale in Dresden is the third largest international exhibition of contemporary art in Germany, which took place every year from 2007 on during the summer months and was changed into a biennale in 2017. The 2021 edition presents 140 artists from 34 countries including Togo, the only participating country from Africa. I am showing two video works "How to make a better world?" and "Afrika". The first video "How to make a better world?" is shot next to a window, with the artist saying the words: "love", "tolerance", "solidarity" and "peace", as a reflection on values that help to build a better world.

The second video "Afrika" is about Africa, a huge continent which has 54 countries.

The video shows the map of Africa made of banknotes changing colors, symbolizing its economic potential. The African continent is extremely rich in natural resources like gold, diamonds, oil, uranium and coltan, but most of its people live in poverty. "Africa is rich", saying the artist in different languages. <https://ostrale.de/en/Archive/OSTRALE-O21.html>. I am participating in the IV Bienal del Sur, Pueblos en Resistencia in Caracas, Venezuela.

The exhibition runs from August 4 to November 29, 2021. You can visit the exhibition on this page:

www.bienaldelsur.gob.ve

WA: YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE TO UPCOMING ARTISTS

DERMANI: Today we are fortunate to have the internet, social networks like Facebook, Instagram and Youtube. To succeed in making your art known, you have to promote it through these platforms. You have to make videos about your work and post on Youtube or other channels. Create your own website where people can see your work.

In 2019, I have participated in two exhibitions in China, one in Beijing and the other in Guangzhou thanks to Youtube. An artist and curator discovered my work posted on Youtube and invited me to participate in these two exhibitions. In 2014 and 2015, I was invited to participate in two exhibitions in South Africa through Facebook.

You have to develop your own style and be yourself. Work hard and above all be patient.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF ABDOUL-GANIOU DERMANI

Abdoul-Ganiou Dermani was born in Togo and currently lives in Stuttgart, Germany. Graduated from the College of Arts and Crafts in Kpalimé (Togo), his artistic practice encompasses painting, drawing, mixed media, photography and video. His work deals with African identities, as well as social and global issues.

His exhibitions include the Ostrale Biennale O21 in Dresden, Germany (2021); 17 th Asian, African and Mediterranean Art at Qingdao Museum of Contemporary Art in Qingdao, China (2020-2021); 26 th FIAV in Casablanca, Morocco (2020); Lagos Photo Festival “Home Museum”, Lagos, Nigeria (2020); 7th International Biennial of Performance in Bogota, Colombia (2020-2021); Over The Real Video Art Festival in Lucca, Italy (2020); “Africa Now” at Open Art Exchange in Schiedam, Netherlands (2020); 16 th Athens Digital Arts Festival in Athens, Greece (2020); London Art Biennale in London, UK (2020); 23rd Encounters Traverse Video in Toulouse, France (2020); the 22nd Postcards from the Edge at Bortolami Gallery in New York City (2020); 13th Havana Biennial/ FIVAC Festival in Cuba (2019); WNDX Festival of Moving Image in Winnipeg, Canada (2019); Open Source at Los Angeles Center for Digital Art in Los Angeles (2019); 1st International Video Art Forum in Dammam, Saudi Arabia (2018); 18th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh in Dhaka (2018); NSK State Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale in Italy (2017); Time is Love.10 at ZKM Museum in Karlsruhe, Germany (2017); Ephesus Video Art Program at Pera Museum in Istanbul, Turkey (2016); “Protest” at Hazard Gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa (2015), among others.

He has earned numerous prestigious awards for his work, including the 1st International Painting Biennale Award 2020-2021 in Kaunas, Lithuania; New York City International Prize 2020 in New York, USA; Leonardo Da Vinci International Prize 2020 in Florence, Italy; Artfacts

Performance Awards 2019 and 2020 in Berlin, Germany; Giotto International Prize 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal; Finalist at the Global Art Awards 2018 in Dubai, UAE; Best Video Art Prize at the 17th International Film Festival „Zoom-Zblizenia“ 2014 in Jelenia Gora, Poland.

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Artfacts: <https://artfacts.net/artist/abdoul-ganiou-dermani/409928>

Web links:

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<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-abdoul-ganiou-dermani-society-should-take-into-account-the-message-sent-by-the-artist-through-his-artwork>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS MUSONDA MWAKAAN: AN ARTIST CAN LEAD, FOLLOW, UPLIFT OR PROVOKE WITH THEIR WORKS



Aug 6

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

UTA: My name is Musonda Mwaka but my brand and artistic name is Unruly T Art, I am from Lusaka, Zambia. I was born on 9th day of October 2002, now 18 years old. Currently, I am the Public Relations Manager at Brazenartsmedia.com and also doing my secondary school education at Ahmaddiya Muslim school in Kanyama Lusaka.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT ART IN YOUR COUNTRY?

UTA: Many people love art in my country especially when you draw them, they love it because they use it to show love to their family members, friends and their loved ones.

WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE?

UTA: No I didn't.

WA: HOW ARE ARTISTS USING ART TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?

UTA: Zambian Artists are currently using art as a form of self-expression by reflecting on their lives and what they observe. It is constantly being influenced while observing and monitoring societal events. As an artist and graphic designer, I believe that the use of imagery influences societies, helping raise awareness of social and political issues.

WA: WHAT THEMES DO YOU PURSUE?

UTA: Freedom and social change.

WA: WHAT ART DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

UTA: Portrait Pencil drawings.

WA: WHAT ROLE DOES ARTIST HAVE IN SOCIETY?

UTA: The role an artist plays in society is largely dependent on the personality of the artist and on that artist's chosen subject matter. An artist can lead, follow, uplift or provoke with their works. Art is often a reflection or extension of personality. ... The artist provides society with emotions, color, and texture.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ART WORK?

UTA: Pencil work.

WA: WHAT'S JOBS HAVE YOU DONE OTHER THAN BEING AN ARTIST?

UTA: Nothing.

WA: WHY?

UTA: Because am still schooling.

WA: WHAT IS AN ARTISTIC OUTLOOK ON LIFE?

UTA: With a personality as vibrant as the art hanging on the classroom walls, I am trying to inspire the next generation of artists.

WA: WHAT MEMORABLE RESPONSES HAVE YOU HAD TO YOUR WORK?

UTA: It was when I drew a realistic portrait for one of the Zambian Celebrities and it was well recognized by people, I can't forget that day.

WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE ART WORLD?

UTA: Art is good. Dislike comes when you put up your work for sales and buyers fail to come.

WA:: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

UTA: When I run out of art materials.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR WORK?

UTA: When I draw something and the outcomes come out the way I wanted them to come out.

WA: Should art be funded?

UTA: Yes.

WA: What roles does arts funding have?

UTA: Art funding provides the space for artists to take risks and make the leaps that challenge us to think differently – which is exactly what great art should do. Of course, it isn't all one way. Funding the arts is an investment, an investment that reaps huge rewards.

WA: NAME THREE ARTISTS YOU'D LIKE TO BE COMPARED TO?

UTA: Cosmas Tembo Arts, innocent C Arts and Thomas Mulenga Arts.

WA: WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

UTA: Continue practicing hard.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR FUTURE GOAL?

UTA: To be the best like these big Artists in the world.

WA: YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE TO UPCOMING ARTISTS?

UTA: Continue practicing, and don't forget to check out on my Facebook page "@Unruly T Art's " for any help or more Arts works.

Musonda Mwaka is an upcoming Zambian Artist. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his works and vocation as an artist and human rights activist.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-musonda-mwakaan-an-artist-can-lead-follow-uplift-or-provoke-with-their-works>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS EDU EDEH: MOST OF MY POEMS ARE REVOLUTIONARY



Jul 30

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING.

EDU: I discovered I've the gift of writing while in junior class back then in secondary school. Though I hadn't read much in times of literary works then but I saw the passion of creativity in me.

My first work to be published was a poem "Call to Mother Africa" which was published online. Though I've a number of poems I've written but not yet published. As I was growing up and advancing in my career, I discovered that my calling into the field of writing is to save humanity and that has been my watch word and scope.

Currently, I'm working on my poems - The unknown me, The Bruised soul and a dirge in a commemoration of those who lost their lives during the END SARS protest in Nigeria. Most of my poems are revolutionary. I'm also working on my novel which is a classical novel and I believe when I'm done with it, it will go along way in re addressing the most problems Africa is facing in the global world.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

EDU: It is a clarion call to save humanity and that's one of those things that excite me about writing.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

EDU: Prof. Achebe, Chimamanda Adiche, Prof. Soyinka..... The reason is because of their style both in diction and in plots. They use simple sentences in the course of their narrations.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

EDU: My advice to every aspiring writer which I'm inclusive is keep away the issue of money aside and always believe in themselves no matter what they face in the hands of publishers.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

EDU: A lot of things inspire me to write but the current situation of Africa both politically and economically is one of those things that inspire me to write. A called writer is like a prophet who can see tomorrow. He could appear as a prophet of doom or good depending on the scroll given to him (writer) by the supreme God.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

EDU: Yes- preferably a very cool environment.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

EDU: I started writing when I was in junior class then in secondary school. I started it because that's my destiny.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

EDU: A call to mother Africa - poem.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

EDU: Yes.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

EDU: I felt good because I believe we can heal the world with the power of our creativity (writing).

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

EDU: Inspirations come from God. So, my ideas are from God as most of my works are gotten in the dream.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

EDU: I engaged my publisher via online.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES/READERS.

EDU: Positive response.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

EDU: Still working on myself.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

EDU: Don't put money as a reason to write but see it as a clarion call to save humanity.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/Common MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

EDU: Of course there are so many mistakes young writers and bound to make. Mistake on the plot development, mistake on the diction.....

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

EDU: A call to mother Africa (poem)

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

EDU: It was an online publication, so after submitting my poem some weeks gone by and I didn't get any reply and I thought it wasn't all that good for the audience but few days later, I got an email congratulating me for good work. The journey of young and aspiring writers getting published is a very tedious one today and I think that area should call for concern because some gifts are wrecking off.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED 'HER QUESTION PILLS' CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

EDU: it's a classical novel which its themes are centered on corruption, brutality, in fact exposing who our real enemies are.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

EDU: The theme of Brutality, selfishness, inhumanity.....

Edu Edeh is a Nigerian Poet, also a human rights activist. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing vocation.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-edu-edeh-most-of-my-poems-are-revolutionary>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ISABOKE NYAMWEYA: A WRITER IS THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS, THE EAR OF THE DEAF, THE EYE OF THE BLIND, AND THE WATCHDOG OF JUSTICE



Jul 23

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING.

IN: I would like to link the foundations of my art of writing to the influence of my dad. My father, the late Cosmas Nyamweya Onkundi, was a primary school teacher with much passion in English grammar and literature. He always encouraged us to master the parts of speech and to read storybooks. It reached a point where my teachers could suspect that I was cheating in my composition writing because they just couldn't imagine how I could manage to express myself in such an artistic flavour. The truth is that I had gained a lot of skills in the many storybooks I read.

Later, while in form two, at St Catherine Iranda Mixed Day Secondary School, I emerged the first runners' up in the Amnesty International Essay Writing Competition. I won a shopping voucher of around Ksh. 5000. My teachers branded me 'Wole Soyinka'. They claimed that the essay was argumentative. I was advised to take Law after my high school.

However, after high school, I joined the major seminary (Order of the Discalced Carmelites) to be a Roman Catholic Priest. I could write several poems during the feasts and solemnities, during the birthdays of my brothers in the community and of course, on other themes of practical importance. I had an Amazon Kindle account in my phone whereby I had a library of around three hundred books of literature. I used to read them during my leisure time, other than philosophical books because I was pursuing my degree in philosophy at the Philosophical Centre of Jinja.

Feeling that I would be more fulfilled in realizing the blueprint of my life in the secular life than in religious life, in 2019, I left the seminary intentionally. I had already graduated my degree in philosophy. I applied to do a degree in Law at the University of Nairobi. Before joining law school, it took me the first three weeks of my life in the secular world to finish my work of poetry: *The Nile, Our Neither/Nor*(2019). It treats the theme of nature and environmental pollution. This was self-published in Amazon platform.

I was admitted in Law School at Parklands, The University of Nairobi in September 2019.

Before joining law school, towards the end of July, I submitted my second manuscript that later turned to be my first novel to be published: *Peeling the Cobwebs*. It took around three months to get the publisher's review report about my work. Like any other great book, it was first rejected. The review was good, but it was not good enough to have my work published. Several good things were highlighted just as a great deal of issues were raised concerning the structure and character development.

In December 2019, during the holiday, I rewrote the work pursuant to the suggested changes. At the dawn of January, when I tried to resubmit the new version, the publisher wrote back that they were busy at that moment and were not receiving unsolicited manuscripts. This was the same feedback from all the major publishers in Kenya that I had visited.

Bearing in mind of the difficulties I faced previously as an upcoming author in the Amazon platform, I chose rather to submit my work now to the Mkuki na Nyota Publishers in Tanzania. Yet, before I could receive their feedback, covid-19 came. Schools were closed. I met Anne

Achuka, a high school friend of mine. She linked me with the Writers Pen Publishers in Eldoret. There was a poetry anthology that was being compiled: *Shackles of Pain*. My poem: *Burning White Masks*, was featured therein.

Moreover, I revoked my decision to publish with the Mkuki na Nyota publishers since I learnt that the book treats the theme of tribalism which is rampant in Kenya as opposed to Tanzania. The review report was positive. I worked with the editors to polish further the manuscript. At last, it was out. More than 500 copies have been sold across the country. A Kiswahili version of it is ready: *Kuzitandua Tandabui*, by Kelvin Motuka. A Luganda version is almost ready, notwithstanding other versions like the Chichewa, Ahmaric, French, and Kinyarwanda that are in the pipeline.

While at home, I spent the first few days as the lockdown came to write my second novel: *Her Question Pills*. It was published last year December. This treats feminism and African womanism. Catherine Bosibori, a literature student in German, has used this novel in her Doctoral thesis. It is the novel that I launched last week in the Heroe Book Fair Mombasa. Currently, I am also a student at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa pursuing my Masters in Philosophy. I have written several short stories and this year, one of my short stories has been selected by the Pan African Writers Association for publication. It will be out soon. Several of my poems have been selected as well for international and local anthologies, the latest anthology being: *Musings During a Time of the Pandemic*, compiled by Dr. Christopher Okemwa, notwithstanding the West Oakland to East Africa Poetry Exchange where I am a participant as well.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

IN: I always relish the vivid impression each story imparts, and of course, the totality of each expression in the story as a building block of the whole story, to render it in a unique experience to enhance my experience as person.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

IN: Wole Soyinka is my most distinguished writer of admiration because of his seasoned poetry and works of drama. Ngugi wa Thiong'o is my favorite writer when it comes to novels. Oscar Wilde too. To be frank, I strictly find it incommensurable regarding which author is my favourite. In poetry, in short stories, in novels, in essays, I have several writers who motivate me intensely.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

IN: Writing is like playing the piano. A lot of practice must be done. A great deal of listening is necessary to learn from those already in the field. Attempts to learn more by reading more is my grand advice.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

IN: Many things contribute to my urge to write. They include, the societal vices like corruption, tribalism, patriarchy, and of course, the ambitions deep in our African dream to make Africa better, respected and prosperous.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

IN: Oh yes. Writing is one of the things I do as my hobby, being a law student (LL, B.) and a Masters student in Philosophy. Sometimes an idea about the poem or story that I'm working on comes when I'm in class. I jot it down at the margin of the book. Still, while in a meeting or asleep at night, the same happens. It is contagious. Each time I write, I feel an insatiable appetite to write more. Each time I plan to write, I am tempted to read first, a great deal of books related to my theme of interest and style of writing. I don't have therefore a special place of writing as such.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

IN: Born in 1997, I wrote my first poems while in form two (in 2012), just for leisure. In form three (2013), I wrote my first play that was never published because I joined the seminary and placed aside my interest to have it published after high school.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

IN: *The Nile, Our Neither/Nor* (2019).

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

IN: Yes, I do. As aforementioned, my first work of poetry, *The Nile, Our Neither/Nor*, treats nature and environmental pollution. My second book, which is my first novel: *Peeling the Cobwebs*, treats the theme of tribalism in Ricafa, one of the countries of the United States of Africa. *Her Question Pills* treats feminism and African womanism.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

IN: It was a great joy I must say. I felt fulfilled. I remember last year when Dr. Okemwa invited me to talk to his literature students at Kisii University who were doing my novel: *Peeling the*

Cobwebs. I was humbled by their generous remarks about the book as full of pathos and well written. When I met with my mentor in the field of law, Professor PLO Lumumba and gave him a glimpse about *Peeling the Cobwebs*, he was very happy about it and took his copy instantly. Moreover, I met the former Prime Minister, honourable gentleman Raila Amolo Odinga and he was delighted to have a copy of my novel. Later, I was featured in an interview with Sorobi Moturi, in the *Ekioge Program* of Egesa FM, where I was talking about the art of writing.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

IN: I read a lot of books. Moreover, I follow what is happening in our society. All these influence my thoughts.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

IN: As aforementioned, my friend Anne Achuka linked me to the Writers Pen Publishers.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES/READERS.

IN: Many readers of my book: *Peeling the Cobwebs* have told me that this book will be done by the high school students. That it will be sprinkled in our Kenyan curriculum someday. Several of my friends in the Creative Writers Association of Kenya have promised to have it done in their various universities. In my village, Mr Asiago, when he read his copy, he invited me and slaughtered a huge cock for me as a kind of appreciation for the publication of a wonderful novel as he called it.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

IN: I am in social media: Bonface Nyamweya (Facebook and LinkedIn). One can reach me via email: bonface.isaboke.nyamweya@gmail.com, for those interested to place an order for a copy of any of my books. Each of my novels cost just Ksh 500.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

IN: Read African novels. Read novels by authors beyond Africa as well. Be conscious of what is happening around us. Examine your life each moment. Have some time of solitude to contemplate about ideas and to write. Remember that a writer is the voice of the voiceless, the ear of the deaf, the eye of the blind, and the watchdog of justice. Thus, we don't primarily write for the sake of money. Make friends because they will be your first clients once your book is out.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/Common MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

IN: The temptation to compete. Avoid this. Each author as each story is unique. Don't compare yourself with other authors. Just focus on improving your writing skills by reading more books and by interacting more often with experts in literature. Also, don't be satisfied too easily with one mode of expression or one genre. Read, consult experts in literature, and repeat this till it is your habit.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

IN: All of them.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

IN: As early mentioned, my first book was self-published. I was just an upcoming author. Very few of my friends were familiar with Amazon. It was costly ordering a book. I remember paying Ksh 5,400 to get a copy of my book. And yet I am the author. I remember in a whole year selling not more than ten copies. It was a big challenge, but it never killed my spirit to write more. However, I considered now publishing with a publisher domicile in Kenya in my work that followed.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED 'HER QUESTION PILLS', CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

IN: Absolutely! It is a novel written by a narrator character. The event is happening just now. Reading it sounds like watching a movie. It is spiced with many other minor themes, other than feminism and African womanism that is the major theme. For instance, it touches surrogate motherhood. Chapter 1 is entitled: *The Opium of Nonsense*. This is how it begins:

“My father died yesterday. Perhaps, he died today. I am not sure about the fine details. I have just woken up. It is 6 a.m. My sleep has been terrorized by the screams from Bichibichi hills.

From the cracks of the Riamoiro Caves Prison where I am, I can see several Bichibichians shouldering their way through the Ricafa Super Highway, circling the St. Sakawa International Hospital with a monotonous insistence of sullen whisperings:

“Uuuuuuuuu...Sokoro is asleep...Uuuuuuuuu...Sokoro is no more! Uuuuuuuuu...”

Her Question Pills, p. 2.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

IN: It is about gender issues. The theme and message can be summarised in the words of Nyorita, one of the characters, that,

“...humanity is a square whose adult males, adult females, male children and female children, form the four equal sides...let no person pretend to be superior to another. We are all equal.”
(*Her Question Pills*, p. 5).

Isaboke Nyamweya is a Kenyan poet, playwright and novelist. Currently, he is a law student at the University of Nairobi. Also, he is pursuing his Masters in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Aside, he published his first book in 2019: *The Nile, Our Neither/Nor* (2019). This work of poetry treated the problem of environmental pollution. His poem: *Burning White Masks*, that treats racism, was featured in the anthology, *Shackles of Pain*. Moreover, he recently published his first novel: *Peeling the Cobwebs* (2020).

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-isaboke-nyamweya-a-writer-is-the-voice-of-the-voiceless-the-ear-of-the-deaf-the-eye-of-the-blind-and-the-watchdog-of-justice>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS
MATTHEW ALPHA KAMARA: ONE HAS
TO POSSESS LOTS OF QUALITIES AND
GOOD ATTRIBUTES TO BE A
SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AND A
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
CAMPAIGNER**



Jul 16

W.A.: YOU ARE THE FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMUNITY WATCH INITIATIVE, WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INITIATIVE?

M.A.K.: The decision to set up the Community Watch Initiative organization was borne out of the desire to address heart burning issues that have been affecting the people and the society, and to advocate and support the development of the various communities within Sierra Leone. Also to advocate and promote human right and issues related to fundamental human rights of all through advocacy and other human rights events. We also help the suffering orphans who have lost their parents in the deadly Ebola disease and the civil war. We are also poised to promote human right and good governance. We have been working with women and children, including vulnerable people and youths.

W.A.: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE COMMUNITY WATCH INITIATIVE?

M.A.K.: Our organization's biggest highlight over the years is to restore the hope and dignity of the people we serve

W.A.: TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN, ADVOCACY, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION.

M.A.K.: For more than a decade now, I have been working in the field of advocacy, community development, reproductive health, and many other issues. With the level of experience have garnered both as a human rights activist and somebody who had undergone similar circumstances of neglect and marginalization, also coming from an impoverished and neglected community. I believe I am well placed to talk of issues regarding that.

W.A.: IN WHAT WAY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE?

M.A.K.: Community Watch Initiative has contributed quite a lot in the area of advocacy, community development and also on issues relating to sexual and reproductive health. We have supported many vulnerable orphans and kids from poorer backgrounds through their education. We had been able to help many schools by donating educational materials to neglected schools

in the communities and we have also been organizing seminars and workshops where we educated people about sexual and reproductive issues.

W.A.: WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU FACING IN YOUR FIELD OF WORK?

M.A.K.: Presently, one of our major challenges is capacity building, funds and materials to implement our activities and major programmes which has greatly affected our capacity to robustly advocate and fights for the rights of the people that we are working for. So our biggest challenge has been funding to carry out some of our key projects.

W.A.: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN EXPERT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN, ADVOCACY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

M.A.K.: One has to possess lots of qualities and good attributes to be a successful community development and a reproductive health campaigner. The skills and knowledge one have to acquire are many, but not limited to advocacy and networking skills, the rest are; excellent communication; interpersonal and team-building skills; good listening skills; research and report-writing skills; and the ability to interpret or present data, knowledge and understanding of community and social issues, a non-judgmental and positive attitude.

W.A.: AS THE FOUNDER OF COMMUNITY WATCH INITIATIVE, WHAT KINDS OF CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?

M.A.K.: Putting the right team in place to execute specific tasks with limited resources and also the stress to always perform and produce a well balance and accurate result.

W.A.: HOW AND IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU THINK COMMUNITY WATCH INITIATIVE AND THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART FESTIVAL CAN COLLABORATE?

M.A.K.: We are looking forward to working and partnering with International Human Rights Art Festival in order to implement and execute programs that champion any of the following thematic areas which are advocacy, education, human rights issues, support to orphans and the less privilege, food and agricultural support, advancement, reproductive health issues, maternal child health, physical and mental disabilities and human development and humanitarian affairs.

W.A.: WHAT DRIVES YOU AS THE TEAM LEAD AND VISIONER OF COMMUNITY WATCH INITIATIVE

M.A.K.: Passion for the works we are currently executing and the love for the Sierra Leoneans

and humanity in general.

W.A.: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?

M.A.K.: Our greatest accomplishment came through last year, when we were able to send over 30 children back to school and also supplying some schools good numbers of usable books. Also the launching of our agricultural programme to feed the underprivileged and vulnerable.

W.A.: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ORPHANS AND THE LESS PRIVILEGED PEOPLE?

M.A.K.: Even though they might think all hope is lost, and that there is no one out there to care for them, I will like to assure them that there is someone out there who is working tirelessly to reach out to them and that all hope is not lost, help is on the way, they should be hopeful and be confident of a better future.

W.A.: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR INITIATIVE?

M.A.K.: To not given up on your dream, remain calm and stay focus, patience is the best moral recipe.

W.A.: WHAT IN YOUR LIFE HAS BROUGHT OR GIVEN YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION OR FULFILLMENT?

M.A.K.: Doing what I think is the best thing and working for the good of mankind, not to pursue and strive towards the satisfaction of oneself.

W.A.: LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO AGAIN?

M.A.K.: I have no regret in what I am doing, although I am not perfect, but all I strive for is the best outcome. So I will not be left with regret, for that I am very much grateful.

Matthew Alpha Kamara is the Executive Director and Founder of the Community Watch Initiative, a local non-governmental charity and human rights organization based in Sierra Leone, which has been in existence for more than a decade. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, Matthew Alpha Kamara shares his experience and gives full details of what his organization is into.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-matthew-alpha-kamara>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IZUNNA OKAFOR: EVERY LITERARY PRIZE HAS A PROSPECT OF GROWING BIGGER, MOST ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT ARE OPEN TO UPCOMING WRITERS AND NEW WRITING



Jul 9

WA: FROM YOUR AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY COMPETITION EXPERIENCE, WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A JUDGE?

IO: Being a judge is like being the Rhadamanthus of Crete, or a knowledgeable examiner, who scrutinizes the works of the students and impartially awards them marks based on merit and certain criteria. Four major things stand out here — knowledgeable, impartial, merit and criteria. To explain this a little more, a judge must be adequately knowledgeable on what he is judging (possess adequate knowledge of the field), be impartial, and consequently awards marks meritoriously, while also doing so based on certain criteria. So, what it is like to be a judge is to

possess these qualities and act accordingly.

WA: EVERY YEAR THERE SEEMS TO BE MORE LITERARY PRIZES APPEARING: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS? DO WE NEED SO MANY?

IO: Yes, I agree with you that more literary prizes spring up yearly. It shows that literary art is growing and that more people, groups/organisations, etc, are becoming interested in the field. It would be interesting to note that none of these new prizes flips over without applicants or entries. It simply shows that writers and literary enthusiasts are ever interested in them, even the yet-to-be-introduced prizes. As people would always want to taste and test new things, literary enthusiasts would also want to taste and test new things, literary prizes, books, and publication opportunities inclusive.

As to whether we need many of such literary prizes, I would say yes, owing to their benefits and importance in advancing and promoting the literary art and creating more opportunities for writer to be recognized, rewarded and respected for their pen-craft. However, care should be taken not to bastardize, demean or even abuse it. Such would be out of it.

WA: AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN A JUDGE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANYONE SUBMITTING AN ENTRY TO A PRESTIGIOUS ESSAY COMPETITION? ANY FAUX-PAS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

IO: Most writers are always in a hurry to submit their works during competitions; and as such, they make some avoidable but costly mistakes. As an award-winning writer who has also been privileged to judge, co-judge or head the jury of many essays competitions both within and outside the country; I would say that the commonest among some of these avoidable but costly mistakes include punctuation mistakes, spelling mistakes and contravening or going against the competition rules and submission guidelines.

To learn and master punctuation and punctuating, essayists (and in fact every writer) should study punctuation guide at: <https://www.thepunctuationguide.com/top-ten.html> , <https://www.thepunctuationguide.com/> or <https://www.julian.com/blog/punctuation> . These sites and many more would be of great help, even in clearing certain doubts the writer may have about punctuation.

As I said earlier, most writers and competition entrants make these mistakes, probably as a result of deadline and time factor, as a result of lack of concentration/uncarefulness, as a result of nonproofreading of their works or having a trusted third party look into the work(s), and more regrettably, as a result of ignorance of the mistakes (not knowing that those things are mistakes).

Before any good judge starts to judge any (essay) competition, he must first consult the 'Call for Submissions' with which the essays were called for, to see the competition rules and the submission guidelines stipulated there. Thereafter, he would draw out his marking scheme/criteria, in line with the competition rules and submission guidelines. The sum up of the marking scheme will equal 100%. A typical example is:

1. Content (including accuracy of data and the general message of the work): 35%
2. Organization (including unity of thoughts, flow of discussion, adherence to competition rules/word count, etc): 35%
3. Style (originality, creativity): 20%
4. Mechanical Accuracy (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc): 10%

Total: 100%

It is against these judging criteria that every essay is judged and scored. Although I read every essay material I'm to judge up to two times or more before I start scoring the entrant, some judges may not. They score and award marks as they read the content for the first time.

Now, going back to what I was saying above, you may see an entrant who has written a wonderful essay (which, going by the marking scheme above, earns her a maximum of 35); but because she crossed the stipulated word count by few words (which is against the competition rules), or because of few spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, and other such minor errors; at the end, after summing the person's total mark, he may end up scoring something far below the average mark required to be shortlisted. And the person will be very surprise when he didn't make it to the shortlist or when he sees his mark. Some of them may end up attributing it to something too far from reality, without actually knowing how it came about.

It important to reveal here that some strict judges deduct marks for entrants for each spelling mistake, grammatical or punctuation error he committed in his work, most especially in a highly competitive essay/writing contest. Although I don't support that, and I don't support/allow people to use it each time I head or I'm part of a jury.

In some competitions also, some people who wrote beautiful essays may even end up being disqualified, because they passed the word count, wrote un-thematically (outside the given theme/topic) or because they submitted their works as an attachment, where it was said to be written/submitted in the body of the mail, or vice versa. That is why it is important for entrants to comprehensively study the competition rules and the submission guidelines and ensure their

works conform to them before applying or submitting for any contest.

In a competition where word count is given, it is advisable for entrants to stop at 10 to 30 words below the given word count, in case of mistakes. For instance, if the competition rule says that the essay SHOULD NOT BE MORE THAN 500 WORDS, I advise the entrant to stop at 490 words below. Just make your point and drop pen. Some judges are even happy when you make your points in few words than writing a lengthy but incoherent epistle.

It is called word count, but that does not mean that you should start counting the words with your bare mouth after writing. After writing your work, copy it and visit www.wordcounter.net in your browser. You will see a box where you paste your work, and the word count will be automatically calculated and shown below the box.

Always go straight to the point and avoid 'thunderous' but irrelevant and incoherent vocabulary each time you're writing for a competition. Be as concise as possible. Most judges don't like to be delayed or distracted by your 'I too know' grammar and vocabulary; what they need is your point.

I would also advise that essayists to always ensure that they pattern their essays in such a way that they will have introduction, body, recommendations and conclusion, which may not necessarily be obviously categorized under subheadings.

Also, while applying for writing a competition, the applicant should try as much as possible to read previous winning entries of the competition, to see what the organisers are actually expecting. Doing so will help him write better work that is fit for the competition.

I also recommend that entrants always reach out to the judges (if they can) after at the end of any competition they apply for, to get the judges feedback on their works, with respect to why they won or lost, where they did well or not in their writing, and other such relevant enquires. This will help them to know where to buckle up, what to uphold or dump in their writing, etc, so as to do better in subsequent writing and competitions.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY COMPETITION OUTSTANDING ESSAYS?

IO: To, me, all the entries are outstanding in their own ways.

WA: WHICH BOOK ARE YOU READING AT THE MOMENT?

IO: Heart of the Brave, by Anthony Ughenu

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT AN ESSAY THAT WOULD MAKE YOU INSTINCTIVELY SWITCH OFF FROM READING IT?

IO: Not at all; and never to be.

WA: WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES YOUR HEART SOAR A LITTLE WHEN YOU READ AN ESSAY?

IO: 'Show, don't tell' technique, flawless sentence construction/word flow, and good points.

WA: WHILE JUDGING AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY COMPETITION WAS THERE A TIME YOU DIDN'T READ BEYOND THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF AN ENTRY AND DISMISS IT IMMEDIATELY?

IO: Not at all; I read everything, to give every entrant a tantamount footing.

WA: WHICH PRIZES HAVE YOU SEEN EMERGING RECENTLY THAT YOU THINK WILL HAVE A BIGGER PROMINENCE IN NIGERIAN LITERARY SCENE?

IO: Every literary prize has a prospect of growing bigger, most especially those that are open to upcoming writers and new writing. It depends on the organizers, the nature of the prize itself and its repute, acceptability and dearness to people.

WA: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THOSE ENTERING COMPETITIONS ARE INFLUENCED TOO MUCH BY THEIR IDEAS OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE JUDGES AND WRITE TO THE DETRIMENT OF THEIR ESSAY?

IO: Yes, to some extent. But every essayist should write thematically. The only condition under which I would hail such influence is when the writer has a belief that the judges are experienced enough to detect any act of plagiarism, and then the writer dumps his earlier intention to plagiarize someone's work, and writes originally and creatively on his own, probably to prove to the judges that he is a good and unique writer. However, in as much as the author may attempt to please the judges, he should write thematically, and not to the detriment of his work/entry.

WA: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU AS A JUDGE TO FIND A NEW VOICE?

IO: Very important! I always watch out for new ideas and new voices in any group of entries I judge. In fact that is why "Style (originality, creativity): 20%" is always part of my marking scheme. Indeed, I love to find a new voice; and I have found some over the years I have been privileged to judge competitions.

WA: DO YOU IMAGINE THAT READING LOTS OF ESSAYS FOR A COMPETITION LIKE THIS WILL HELP WITH TEACHING ESSAY?

IO: Of course!

WA: ANY ADVICE FOR ESSAYISTS HOPING TO WIN FUTURE PRIZE?

IO: They should always be very creative, write something new, comprehensively study the competition rules and submission guidelines, and always crosscheck their works two times or more (or possibly have a third party look into it) before submitting.

They should also study what I have said earlier about applying for competitions.

WA: TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND

IO: My background and my profile could be viewed at

<https://9jabooks.com/profile/484>

<https://pmexpressng.com/young-nigerian-writer-journalist-izunna-okafor-clocks-26/>

<https://9jabooks.com/post-10152>

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

IO: Most new poets tend to hide under the so-called 'poetic license' to go against the rule of concord in their poems; while in actual sense, they don't know the correct expression. I loathe and condemn that with every seriousness in me. We are no more in King James era.

The only place I don't frown at such is where the poet compromises necessarily to maintain the meters of his poem, as you can see in some hymns in the Ancient and Modern hymnbook, the meters of which must be maintained, because they are usually sung as songs. In a situation like that, such compromise is justifiable, as it is obviously deliberate, and not a mistake, as many new poets make.

Again, most new writers are always in a hurry to publish their work, which most times may end up being dead on arrival, because of mistakes, typographical errors.

In addition to the above, most new writers have money as their primary motive for writing; but I guess passion should be the driving force.

Aside these three I can remember now, other mistakes I earlier mentioned also count.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING AND WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SINK?

IO: As I said earlier, the creativity and uniqueness of writer, flawless sentence construction/word flow, good points, and ultimately the message the piece carries along.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

IO: Having read many Nigerian and foreign authors of different genres, and having read many upcoming writers as a judge and literary coach, I always find it difficult to name some as favourite writers and leave some, because different things interest me in different writers' works and writing style. So, every good writer is my favourite... Don't tell me you don't know who a good writer is.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

IO: I currently have three upcoming books. That's all I can say now. Others will unfold quite sooner in their best footings. And interested fellows will see or hear them through the various media and online platforms, as they manifest.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

IO: Aside what I have said above, I advise new writers and in fact every writer to read authors' interviews, have mentors, and join writers communities/associations, both online and physically.

Reading other people's works is very important. We have many writers and few readers today. And that is bad. I would advise an emerging writer to read ardently and write ardently too. Passion and creativity should drive his pen, interest and aspiration. He shouldn't write to be called a writer; rather, he should write because he is a writer.

Again, writers (especially burgeoning ones) should not always be in haste to publish their works, so as to minimize chances of errors and mistakes of any kind associated with writing and publishing. They should always work, re-work, and re-re-work on their manuscripts, and ensure it passes through third party(ies)/editor(s) before publishing it. And they should always be open to and ready for criticism.

Also, no writer should be a writer primarily to win awards or recognitions. Passion and intent to positively impact society and humanity, should be the driving factor behind their writings. Awards, recognitions and other such incentives are good, (of course I have won some); and I would advise writers to submit their suitable works for any if opportunity calls. Of course, it is one of the ways a writer appraises the worth/quality, acceptability or impacts of his penwork and literary products. They (awards and recognitions) are desiderata, but should be seen as appendages, incentives and appraisal factors, not as nitty-gritty of writing.

WA: HOW SHOULD OUR MEMBERS APPROACH YOU IF THEY WANT TO?

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Phone: +2348163938812
Facebook: Izunna Okafor
Location: Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Izunna Okafor is a Novelist, Poet, Essayist, Journalist, Publicist, Columnist, Editor, Igbo Language Activist, and Public Affairs Analyst. He is the author of: *Ikem's Adventure*, *Ajo Enyi*, *The Faithful Children*, *The Curse of A Widow*, *Nzúzù M Egbuo M*, *Educated Illiterate*, *African Blood*. He was one of the judges of the African Human Rights Essay Competition, 2021 and editor of “*The Malady and the Remedy*”, an International Essay Anthology on Human Rights Abuse in Africa. He has published in several other literary anthologies. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing and experience as one of the Judges of the recently concluded African Human Rights Essay Competition.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-izunna-okafor-every-literary-prize-has-a-prospect-of-growing-bigger-most-especially-those-that-are-open-to-upcoming-writers-and-new-writing>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS PETER
OLUDE SUNDAY: THE TITLE OF MY
POEM ‘ENDSARS, LAWMAKERS OR
LAWBREAKERS’, WAS COINED FROM
MY ATTEMPT TO ‘SOROSOKE’ (SPEAK
OUT)**



Jul 2

WA: YOUR POEM “END SARS, LAW MAKERS OR LAW BREAKERS” CAME THIRD IN THE END SARS NATIONAL POETRY CONTEST, TELL US ABOUT THE PROCESS FOR COMING UP WITH THE POEM.

OP: Thank you very much for this. Factually, I found this question unveiling the curtains of my mind. This beautiful thing all came up from the title and the title came up in form of a trance, all at once. The process was light, I mean, for someone like me, who dines among the people of this colour,(Let me say Non-Bloody Civilians) I’ve bore the sacrosanct knowledge of how black their shortcomings are to the ‘denizens’, and in no time, I found myself leaving this world and getting few opaque bloods on my palms. I even got surprised that even the poem has fine-tuned itself into a specific style, all the while I was busy immersing myself into their wicked water.

WA: CAN YOU GIVE US SOME INSIGHT INTO WHAT MAKES THE POEM

SPECIAL?

OP: Wow. This question sounds neighbouring to the first, and I found out that I've hinted much of the answer above. To me, of my poems, this has become one of the best since I wrote it. I found out I had evoke so much poetic charms, foresights and panache that took after intense imageries, like "the shadows of the innocent ones hurrying home before their bodies". The style that birthed the first and second stanza whole, has attested to mean something in the deepness of writing & being detached from it, before looking back at your whole piece, like an artist painting & shifting back to check his work of art after an hour.

WA: HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE SUBJECT OR THEME OF YOUR POEM?

OP: Like I earlier said, I dine among the people of this colour, so it came like this contest emerged to unbolt a nut inside of me. So I fitted myself in their shoes, "SARS Shoes", and I began with what lives in their mind that pushed them into the bad hunting of men, "I am the tickling talks of the town/ black bullets on the lips of gory guns". And of their shortcomings that had dawn into my eyes, I say, "I sting the groups I guide/ and vaunt the voice of virtuous denizens into rotten reverberations".

WA: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WRITE IN YOUR PARTICULAR FIELD OR GENRE?

OP: If this is to mean poetry, I actually write on the other few genres, prose to be exact. On prose, my tummy is a curly one, filled with plots both smooth and Medias res. Perchance, because I'm an introvert, the man who sits back and watch people, watch boys, watch girls, watch man and watch woman display their natures silently or loudly. I mean my nature of reading/studying people plus tiny things daily has filled me with so much experience that my Non-fictions come out earthy, I mean, LIFE and even my Non-fictions; so I have found the prose genre raw. On the other side of poetry, "I found myself tossing into a smoke without flesh". When I refuse to write a poem that pleads to be out there, I bore the feelings of a WANTED soul.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

OP: I started writing since I was a kid, apparently 15 years ago, but I'd say it began 7 years ago, because seriously, I could say that even my literary sister, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie now has only her fresh manuscripts in town.

WA: WHAT KIND(S) OF WRITING DO YOU DO?

OP: On the few genres that I write, I write Fictitive and Non-fictitive stories plus fantasy and horror. I actually write Drama too, (unpublished). Like in the Caffeinated Anthology I was, I write poems to live.

WA: IS WRITING YOUR FULL-TIME CAREER? OR WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?

OP: Writing is not my full time career, I'm a typist lining at the back of *Felicity in 'Arrow'*, an Hyper-realistic pencil artist talented in High resolution Pencil Portrait plus Painting (House painting, Human painting, Landscape painting, nature painting, Photoshop painting and other paintings), a graphics designer, lyrics video maker, Cartoonist and everything art. However, writing has risen to shroud the better-half of my career.

WA: ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WRITING?

OP: I spend the least of 3 hours on writing on a typical day.

WA: WRITING CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AND STRESSFUL PURSUIT. ANY TIPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

OP: I would advice my fellow writers to get drenched in the draining, only that could make them dry. The emotions that arise with writing are what complete that story we are writing. Many times, a writer would always feel the pain first before the readers. I sometimes have to step out of my office for some minutes to gift myself a break to grieve over losing a character and the problems that ensues. It calls for a time to practice creative self-care, to give yourself a time to work on your feelings and sigh out loud. So, to lose the big emotional weight, let the winds bear of it. Go look at the vulture for a while and the flying bird before dashing back on that story or piece of poem. It doesn't get you detached, the plots are inside of you. We have to acknowledge that we sometimes bear the burdens of the people or characters we care to tell their stories. So, at times, a Physiotherapist needs to go through a therapy to control the emotional weight of his/her work. The beauty in bearing all the feelings meant that your story is significant to so much realism and to individuals imbibing, impactful.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LITERARY CRITICISM?

OP: Of all my years in writing, I've only come across one, and here is how I handle it. I sat back and sipped a drink, decided to bounce back and use it in improving my craft. Because I had come to understand that even though criticism could sometimes be critical, harsh or negative, it is just one person's opinion. If you let criticism embalm or you overwhelm yourself with it, it might wound your literary idea. So shifting back and sipping a drink is an idea of detaching yourself from the critique. Laura van den Berg says, "*A bad review hurts, no doubt, but I try to remember that even though negative criticism can, at times, make me feel small and wounded and afraid, it will only paralyze me if I let it.*" Another thing I do is that I ascertain whether the criticism is useful depending on where it's coming from. Is it coming from an experienced editor giving me feedbacks on how to improve my craft? Or from a casual reader? These questions make it necessary to be wary of critiques that are too specific, makes it cautioning to self-impulse, of things to be taken and not be taken on board. Neil Gaiman once said, "*remember: when people tell you something's wrong or doesn't work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong.*"

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

OP: Thank you for this question. Much of my inspirations come from books. Reading is always

meant to be the best part of a writer. My favourite fictive writer is ‘Harlan Coben’, however much of my inspiration on the genre of poetry is drawn from this space, drawn from “THE UNSERIOUS COLLECTIVE”. Their works are as catchy as Justin Bieber’s ‘As long as you love me’.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR WORKS?

OP: Many of my works has found its space online while others are forthcoming. Readers can track them on Caffeinated Journal Anthology, Hayden’s Ferry review, Kalahari Review, Erogospel magazine, African writers, Parousia magazine, Poemify, Madswirl Magazine and Eskimo pie for a few.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR POEM?

OP: The inspiration for this piece was online. Online was filled with too much happenings at the time of the End sars protest, that even when the protest is on its high-key, Police brutality still ensues, as they spilled hot water on ‘virtuous denizens’ and ‘gash bruises on the skins of their sheep’ at **Abuja**. Another key inspiration came from a Tweet of ‘Adedayo Adeyemi Agarau’, where dim-witted questions thrown at him from a personnel of the SARS were followed by a fiendish smack. It was drawn from their perpetual action that beckons before the protest, “for like goliath’s fall: I have proven to be”.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE POEM?

OP: Thank you. Permit me to link the messages in this poem with an art I drew and its forthcoming in *Hayden’s Ferry online and print issue of the Arizona State University*, which would be out by March. Grab your copy and experiment to get the full messages has hidden in the art.

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS POEM?

OP: I would like my readers to take these lines to their left palms. “for if my brutal bones be mixed with mercy/i will exploit thousand livers and lives alive/& even fly far to hunt the peace of the souls i have slain”, so whenever or what century or decade voices like this so arise again to tamper their rights or peace of existence, they’d be of good courage and rise, into another peaceful protesters, and save our land from wolves ‘in fine suits, to secure’

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

OP: The title of my Poem ‘Endsars, lawmakers or lawbreakers’, is coined from my attempt to ‘*sorosoke*’ and also pitch high the voices of bawling victims and citizens of Nigeria, that has been swallowed or not by this Squad of the Police Force.

WA: WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WRITING THIS POEM?

OP: Firstly, the key challenges I face was on the first and second stanzas of this poem. I found out that the second stanza is buying the style of the first, so I had to pause the third stanza and revisits the duo to polish them into a twin, and lastly, swimming towards the end of the poem's shore, I began having bloods on my palms like a delinquent SARS Personnel due to the first persona style I've used in developing the poem, so, I had to dash out of my office for two minutes or more, breathe out, and come back hunting as a peaceful protester.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WRITING?

OP: This is a very thrilling question to me. When I'm not putting a pen on paper, I'd either be drawing a human figure in a realistic form, tending the frame of a finished portrait, painting a commissioned human picture in Photoshop, composing a Pop song, researching on putting more effect on a face in pencil drawing, streaming and tending to messages on Instagram, creating a lyrics video, I could be designing a flyer or switching from Rema to Brymo's song. To be exact, when I'm not in the writing of art, I dash into other arts.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR AND WHY?

OP: My favourite author is 'Harlan Coben', one of the best New York Writers/Novelist. Why? That guy creates too much of overconfident plots and terrific scenes. He coils his whole themes into real-images that speaks the truth throughout his books, and has this style that suits my ink. His works are hard to criticize.

WA: WHAT BOOKS OR AUTHORS HAVE MOST INFLUENCED YOUR OWN WRITING?

OP: His books, Wole Soyinka's, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's, read "LUCKY YOU" and more of Chapbooks from "THE UNSERIOUS COLLECTIVE".

Olude Peter Sunday is a 21 year old Hyper-realistic Pencil Artist, Writer and Poet from Nigeria. His Poem titled "END SARS, Law Makers or Law Breakers" came third in the just concluded END SARS National Poetry Competition. In this inclusive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him some facts surrounding his writing career and his winning poem.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-peter-olude-sunday-the-title-of-my-poem-endsars-lawmakers-or-lawbreakers-was-coined-from-my-attempt-to-sorosoke-speak-out->

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS DOMINIC OIGO MAINA: ANY NEW WRITER SHOULD TRY TO READ AT LEAST 100 BOOKS BEFORE STARTING TO WRITE



Jun 25

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WRITING

DOM: I am Dominic Oigo Maina, Kenyan citizen aged 24 years. I am finalist in one of the top Universities in Kenya- Kenyatta University in the school of Education where I am pursuing Bachelor of Education in Kiswahili Language and Religious Studies. I started writing at the age of 13 where I used to write short essays and poems. Although I was not published from age 13, it was when I joined college that I was first published. My two books, written in Kiswahili language were published when I was a first-year student. Since then, I have continued to write a number, published 8 books in Kiswahili language and the first English story I wrote is on Science Fiction which is soon being published by a publisher in New Zealand.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

DOM: What excites me in a piece of writing is the suspense I create when writing, vividly knowing what I intend to write but keeping it a secret from my readers.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND WHY?

DOM: My favorite writers are many but just to mention, I like writers who try to write about African experiences. With this regard, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from Nigeria comes first then said Ahmed Mohammed of Zanzibar comes second among many others like Ngugi wa Thiong'o of Kenya.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

DOM: My advice to every young writer is to have a purpose and never to compare themselves with another writer. They have to be themselves and make the best out of them

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

DOM: I found that I live in a society surrounded with issues. I find it better to write about these issues and in one way, someone somewhere may end up changing or getting hope from what I write.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

DOM: Yes. I have a routine. Try to write at least 500 words of any fiction work daily. I spend most of my time in the library.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

DOM: I started writing after reading a book by Meja Mwangi called *Kill Me Quick*. I was 13 years old.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU HAD PUBLISHED?

DOM: A Kiswahili novel "SIRI YA TISA NA SITA" "The Secret of Tisa and Sita."

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS ANY PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

DOM: Not really. I am a general writer.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT TO THE WORLD?

DOM: The feeling was nice. I remember when I was first published. I did not take supper that night. I was too happy to learn that every lucky individual will read my work and critique it.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

DOM: I get my ideas first from primary sources that is the society and then secondary sources that is books.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

DOM: I got my publisher through my mentor.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSE YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES / READERS

DOM: A positive and encouraging response. Every one inspires me to keep on writing until I reach to the peak.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND MORE ABOUT YOU?

DOM: Social media platforms. Facebook; maina dominic dommy; twitter; @Dominic Maina 77

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS THAT YOU PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS

DOM: Always work hard and they should ensure they become their own in terms of creativity.

WA: ANY TYPICAL MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

DOM: Rush. Many new writers rush into writing. Other start writing without reading other works. For me, any new writer should try to read at least 100 books before starting to write.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

DOM: A Kiswahili novella; Hatima ya Musa. "Musa's Destiny"

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK. WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

DOM: I really cannot recall everything but I remember I wrote the book using a smartphone which had a cracked screen, and I made it.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED, CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

DOM: My latest book is a Kiswahili decodable children story where I used literature to teach phonics and sound.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

DOM: Importance of conserving the environment.

Dominic Oigo Maina is currently a final year student of the Kenyatta University. He is currently pursuing Bachelor of Education in Kiswahili Language and Religious Studies. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-dominic-oigo-maina-any-new-writer-should-try-to-read-at-least-100-books-before-starting-to-write>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS KWAGHKULE, AONDONENGEN JACOB: THE HASTE FOR FAME HURRIES MANY WRITERS TO PUBLISH UNWORTHY PIECES



Jun 18

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND - WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING

KAJ: Apparently, I have to confess that I had escaped my mother's womb with writing in my name. Although, I didn't know I could write until as recently as two years back when I penned my first poem. Actually, I must have to applaud my coursemate KASIM, Shalom who doubles as the C.E.O, In-House P-Initiative for my exposure into the realm of Poetry. Since then, I couldn't dare to wash my hands with spittle while standing at the riverbank. Therefore, I fathomly delved into Poetry and today my pen can dance to virtually all rhythm of literary genres.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

KAJ: My ecstasy about a piece of writing gets filled when I achieve a particular desired effect which I have in mind before picking up my pen and paper to explore such a hidden reality. In fact, as a writer I make sure my audience are not misinformed. I write devoid of sentiment and dogmatism as well as burying all the mere mumbo-jumbos and stereotypical beliefs in the grave of universal truism. I am happy when my work gets concretized in the hearts of my audience.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

KAJ: Seriously, it is not easy for me to fairly mention all my favorite writers here. Because every writer I read is substantially good in one way or the other. This notwithstanding, I cherished so much the works of Chinua Achebe, Niyi Osundare, David Diop, Ajio Aondo-aver, Uzer Moses, Biachi Ndidi Anointing, Terseer Sam Baki, just to mention many but a few.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

KAJ: An adage says, when we gather at the village square during moonlight, it is not because of the moon, because everyone can see it from his compound, but because it for an upliftment of the spirit of our oneness and togetherness. An upcoming writer who is willing to go further in this tedious journey of writing should always read the works of accomplished writers and possibly join clubs and associations like PIN, ANA, SYNW and the likes which can help to get him or her improved in certain areas of difficulties. No man is an island of knowledge. It is however, a pity that successful budding writers sometimes think they need no tutor...

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

KAJ: I am inspired by the pains of my daily life struggles. The futile and fruitless forms of aborted dreams. The sorrow and sadness of my people. The vision of the promised better tomorrow which seems never to come, and to right the wrongs that have stylistically become legalized in our society.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

KAJ: As of now, I don't have any special writing routine. I use Facebook platform to sell my works to the world. But surely, if one googles my name, one will definitely have one or two tales to tell about me.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

KAJ: Like I have established earlier, I was borne to write. But I discovered the poet in me about two years ago. It became imperative for me to write because I felt as a citizen I have my quarter to contribute to Nation building. The society unconsciously evoked the consciousness in me and I was left with no option than to express the angered me in a way that authority won't come hunting for my neck. Of course, we have freedom of speech, but we have no freedom after speech. And Poetry served as my backup to this. Above all, a huge thanks to Covid-19, because the year 2020 really exposed my writings to the walls of the world's ears.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

KAJ: I have had some other publications before now. But until my poem about Covid-19 titled "Sing Us a New Song" was published by Praxis Magazine, I had not called myself a poet. Truly, the publication of this poem confirmed my poetic status.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

KAJ: Yes. I am a pure Pan-africanist Poet. Also, corruption is one of the prominent themes in my works. Though a man, I strive to create a balance between man and woman in a patriarchal African society, and by this many of my friends call me feminist. I uphold dreams, visions, aspirations, life, pains, sadness and sorrows through my writings.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

KAJ: I felt very excited. In fact, the euphoria of recent publication still wears my soul like a soothed roasted yam. I was mad when I uploaded my poems on a public site called Internetpoems.com and they were accepted. To me, that was the beginning of a merciful journey into the world of poetry. To cap it all is this singular fact that my late father's name keeps going to places his own legs couldn't carry him while alive.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

KAJ: A common adage has it that experience is the best teacher. And whatsoever that doesn't kill a man only makes him stronger. Therefore, I write from my flaws. I also write from heartbreaks and the experiences of friends and family.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

KAJ: The world has gone globalized and everything now happens in a jiffy. We no longer carry our legs from here to there in search of Publishing Houses. Facebook is one of the platforms that has so far helped me a lot in my writing career. I come to know most of the 'call to submissions' via it.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES\ READERS.

KAJ: The responses are not too bad as of now. Many people who have read my works encouraged me to do more. In fact, some even shower unnecessary eulogies, but I promise myself not to be drowned in the pool of their excessive praises because the best in me is yet to be explored.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

KAJ: I have an itching song on the tip of my tongue and when I sing the sweetness of such a

rhythmic tone, the world shall chorus the lyrics of a young poet like me.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

KAJ: Yes. Whatever that is worth doing is worth doing very well. And whatever good thing one does do today, does pay one tomorrow. It is obvious that not all dedicated writers are successful but all successful writers are dedicated writers. Play your role and leave the rest for God to handle.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

KAJ: All new writers (myself inclusive) are fond of using both American and British spelling interchangeably in a single write-up which is wrong. Aside that, the haste for fame hurried many writers to publish unworthy pieces.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

KAJ: It is important that I state categorically clear that I have written up to three poetry collections. Although, none is published due to financial challenges. The latest among the collections is "The Caskets of Breathing Carcasses" which I personally enjoyed writing.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

KAJ: My first published book is an eBook published on Wattpad by Poetry Abilities as a reward for winning her Poems of Lights, 2020 Anthology Contest. My book is titled "Gentle Tides", a collection of Love poems. The journey was smooth like a maiden silk.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED "THE CASKETS OF BREATHING CARCASSES" CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK

KAJ: My latest Poetry book is "The Caskets of Breathing Carcasses", it is a collection that expresses the agony of a people who are dead long before they are born. The poems are so fascinating that everyone may like to read it.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

KAJ: The Central idea in the book is inhumanity vs humanity; the cause of our curses and courses of our national retrogression.

Kwaghkule, Aondonengen Jacob is popularly known by his pen name "Mr Kvip". He is a poet and a short story writer. His poems appeared or are forthcoming at, Praxis Magazine, The Best of Africa Magazine, Poemify Magazine, Sub-Saharan Magazine, Active Muse, My Woven Poetry, Nantygreens, Eboquills, Ninshart Art including many local and international anthologies and elsewhere...

He is a Top-Ten Winner of The League of Poets' Covid-19 Relief Competition, 2020. Contributor, Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (BPPC) 2020 Anthology. Entrant, Society of Young Nigerian Writers' Achebe: A Man of the People 2020 Anthology. Joint-Winner, PIN 10-Day Poetry Challenge (Feb.2021). His Chapbook "To Our Lads & Lasses" made the longlist of Pengician Poetry Chapbook Series/Prize, 2021...

"To Our Lads & Lasses" expresses the agony of war as masterminded by corrupt leaders. And while the innocent die in warfronts like chickens, the initiators of blamed war enjoy the coolness of their luxurious seats at home. It comprises tales one will not wish to have performed physically. But sadly, everyday we dance to the sounds played by fire-vomiting bamboo sticks. It is high time we changed the narrative. Let us sheath our swords and hug Peace, Unity, Love and Progress

Currently, Kwaghkule Aondonengen Jacob is a penultimate student of English and Literary Studies at Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. He is also the Secretary and acting Press Secretary of In-House P-Initiave, Director of Tiv Magazine and Regional Administrator (for Africa) at One World Writers Movement.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-kwaghkule-aondonengen-jacob-the-haste-for-fame-hurries-many-writers-to-publish-unworthy-pieces>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS FRANK KALIATI: IN MALAWI, POLICE ARE SHIELDED WHEN THEY ABUSE HUMAN RIGHTS; THEY HAVE BETRAYED THEIR ASSIGNED DUTY



Jun 14

WA: YOU ARE THE AUTHOR OF THE WINNING POEM “STATE ARMED ROBBERS SQUAD”, WHAT WERE YOUR GOALS AND INTENTIONS IN THIS POEM

FK: My goals and intentions when writing the poem 'State Armed Robbers Squad' were that being an African and learning the incidents of police brutality in Nigeria I was filled with anger since the very same thing happens in Malawi whereby the police are shielded when they abuse human rights such as by rape or mercilessly kill the defenceless innocent. I really wanted to denounce those evils through my poem.

WA: HOW WELL DO YOU FEEL YOU ACHIEVED THEM?

FK: I believe I achieved the goals of denouncing police brutality since my poem has crossed borders and being in second position this will attract more people to read the message and have a clear picture of the abuse of the law by the so called law enforcers.

WA: HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE SUBJECT OR THEME OF YOUR POEM?

FK: As stated in point one I became involved in the theme of police brutality after witnessing several cases of disregarding birth rights done by the people that we expect to be our defenders.

WA: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO WRITE IN YOUR PARTICULAR FIELD OR GENRE?

I prefer poetry simply because one can easily express their feelings greatly but in simple and few words.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

FK: I have been writing prose and poetry for thirteen years now.

WA: WHAT KIND(S) OF WRITING DO YOU DO?

FK: I do poetry and prose fiction such as short stories.

WA: IS WRITING YOUR FULL-TIME CAREER? OR WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?

FK: Writing is not my full time career but I intend to make it so since the passion has been growing with the years.

WA: ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WRITING?

FK: I spend all my free time each day writing on any theme that comes to my mind.

WA: WRITING CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AND STRESSFUL PURSUIT. ANY TIPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

FK: To aspiring writers, all I can say is that never give up, good ideas come when you are stressed or in bed and before that idea disappears same way it came write it down and one day it will grow into something big.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LITERARY CRITICISM?

FK: I entertain Literary Criticism, this makes me to polish up wherever need be and this allows me to add more ideas to my pieces of writing.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

FK: I have always had my inspiration from the genius, William Shakespeare, his writings live with any generation and he is always relevant in any scenario one can think of. His simple and humble beginning sparks determination in me that nothing is impossible.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

FK: Readers can find more about me and my writings through my Facebook account username, FRANK O'JOSELVES KALIATI or through my email address, Frankkaliati@gmail.com.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY IN YOUR POEM?

FK: The inspiration for the story in my poem was that I had to share heart breaking crimes done by the police even here in Malawi, for instance, a village was raided in Malawi by the police in 2020, out of vengeance that one police officer was killed, the police attacked the village by arresting the men and raping the women up to this day no arrest has been made.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN YOUR POEM?

FK: Readers should have a clear picture that police brutality is real and no matter how much the men in uniform will try to intimidate us justice will always find its way home.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

FK: The title was a mockery to the original meaning of the acronym SARS, this was done to expose that the officers have betrayed their assigned duty.

WA: WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WRITING THIS POEM?

FK: The only challenge I face even after writing this poem is that I wanted all Malawians to read it and see the evils done by the police but I have not had a wide coverage of the audience towards this poem here in Malawi.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WRITING?

FK: When I'm not writing, I love teaching literature especially creative writing and analysing some genres of literature such as poetry, prose or drama.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR AND WHY?

FK: My favourite author has always been William Shakespeare, simply because all of his writings make one to think deeper in order to deduce meaning, I always want my pieces of writing to be in such a way that the reader should be influenced into thinking deeper towards the meaning or message in my writings.

WA: WHAT BOOKS OR AUTHORS HAVE MOST INFLUENCED YOUR OWN WRITING?

FK: The Shakespearean sonnets and Jack Mapanje's poems have always influenced my writing.

Frank Kaliati is a 28 year old writer of poetry and prose fiction from Malawi. His Poem “State Armed Robbers Squad” came second in the just concluded END SARS National Poetry Competition, in this interview with Wole Adedoyin, the author of “The Four That Matter”, shared with him some facts surrounding his winning entry and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-frank-kaliati-in-malawi-police-are-shielded-when-they-abuse-human-rights-they-have-betrayed-their-assigned-duty>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS GODSTIME AKUBUEZE NWAEZE - MY POEM “BERMUDA TRIANGLE” RESONATES AROUND THE DEATH OF JIMOH ISIAQ DURING THE END SARS PROTEST



Jun 5

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

GN: Thank you very much for this question. I had many things going on in my life, and ideas in my mind with very few ears to really listen, so I found a friend in writing. Specifically, it was solitariness that inspired me to start writing especially poems as a means of emotional transmutation. Today, the pen is my closest pal.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

GN: I started writing when I became much aware of my existential realities. My first poem was in 2017, and reading it now makes me cringe, but my first publication was in 2019 in the anthology of top one hundred poems of Nigerian Students Poetry Prize.

WA: YOUR POEM “BERMUDA TRIANGLE” CAME FIRST; CAN YOU TELL US THE SECRET BEHIND IT?

GN: There's no secret, really, but I kept reviewing the poem for weeks, and even had three friends read it too; each of them made a significant contribution and gave me different perspectives which developed the quality of the poem.

WA: WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?

GN: In my opinion, the most important elements of good writing are thematic relevance, great imagery, structure and word mastery or wit.

WA: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE TITLE TO YOUR WINNING POEM?

GN: The title was inspired by an image I saw on Facebook; it was an image of a Police station of the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). It had the shape of a rectangle, and I was quick to relate it to Bermuda triangle. I thought "Bermuda Triangle" would make some sense bearing in mind the irregularities of SARS and its familiarity with the stories of the place known as Bermuda triangle.

WA: CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE POEM?

GN: The poem is actually a true account I had while traveling, and it explores the fragility associated with being a young man especially in some neighborhood where young boys are wantonly hunted by the defunct SARS.

WA: IS WRITING YOUR FULL-TIME CAREER? OR WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?

GN: I would like it to be, but second to law practice.

WA: ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WRITING?

GN: It depends on my schedule and the nature of what I'm writing, but I could estimate the time to be about three hours. And usually, I always have to read whenever I'm writing. On some weird days, I could sit at my desk throughout the day, or night. However, from the moment I pick an inspiration to write a poem or an essay, it takes a week or more, depending on the deadline if I'm writing for an entry, to brainstorm, gather ideas or facts, write, edit, rewrite and finally finish it.

WA: WRITING CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AND STRESSFUL PURSUIT. ANY TIPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

GN: Well, whoever is writing should define their purpose of writing; learn to manage time because of other tasks they'd be involved in- this would help to reduce mental and physical stress. They should also see rejections as part of the craft, and use it to their advantage, but very importantly, writers should read the works of others and be consistent in writing. As it is with every job, take a break sometimes.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LITERARY CRITICISM?

GN: Literary criticism is a vital element of growth for me; it gives me perspectives and help heighten the quality of my works. So, I welcome it with gratitude, and I hope to get more critics in my circle.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

GN: My inspiration comes from the observation of day to day activities. I also pick ideas from having conversations, and serenity.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

GN: I'm most active on Facebook (Godstime Nwaeze) where I share my publications, but the best place to find me is one on one; I'm generally not very expressive on social media. So, say 'hi' when you see me.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY IN YOUR POEM?

GN: "Bermuda Triangle" has been living in my mind but only came alive with the EndSARS protest, then I thought it was the best time to produce the poem.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE POEM?

GN: The key message of the poem is Police brutality and extortion, and it resonates the death of Jimoh Isiaq during the EndSARS protest.

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS POEM?

GN: I would like my readers to reach the resolve that even as unsafe as it could be, we can demand institutions of government to serve us accordingly.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

GN: As a place, Bermuda Triangle is said to have experienced the disappearance of ships and aircrafts under mysterious circumstances, and this significantly captures some of the activities of the defunct SARS reported to have masterminded the death of some victims even without the knowledge of their relatives. Others were wantonly captured into cells until they're bailed. So, I think the title is significant to these ends.

WA: WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WRITING THIS POEM?

GN: When I decided I was going to bring forth the experience I had while traveling as a poem, I really didn't know what structure and style I would adopt. So, while I had the idea in my mind, it

was difficult to produce it. And because of this, it became the first prose poem I wrote; I thought it would best be presented as a narration.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WRITING?

GN: When I'm not writing, I read, I play/watch football games, have conversations, listen to songs, or enjoy silence.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR AND WHY?

GN: This is a difficult question because I have many of them, but I go with C.P. Varkey. His works have had the most profitable influence on me as a person.

WA: WHAT BOOKS OR AUTHORS HAVE MOST INFLUENCED YOUR OWN WRITING?

GN: There's Chinua Ezenwa Oha-eto, Taiye Ojo, Chiwenite Kingsley, and many other good guys. I'm always on the lookout for their latest.

WA: Okay! Thank you Godstime for your time, and congratulations once again.

GN: Thank you very much for having me.

Godstime Akubueze Nwaeze is from Izzi in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. He is a poet and an essayist. Nwaeze won the END SARS National Poetry Competition. In this comprehensive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him some facts surrounding his writing career and his winning poem tagged ""Bermuda Triangle".

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-godstime-akubueze-nwaeze-my-poem-bermuda-triangle-resonates-around-the-death-of-jimoh-isiaq-during-the-end-sars-protest>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS AFRICAN ESSAY CONTEST THIRD PRIZE WINNER TUNDE OSHO: MY ESSAY SEEKS TO MANIFEST HOW INALIENABLE HUMAN RIGHTS ARE DISRESPECTED IN AFRICA



May 28

WA: WHAT HAS YOUR EARLY WRITING CAREER JOURNEY BEEN LIKE?

OT: My early writing career journey has been quite taxing and interesting at the same time. The growth process demands so much of me, while it gives me the joy embedded in it.

WA: HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY COMPETITION?

OT: I heard about the competition through a Facebook post made by Mr. Wole Adedoyin on his wall.

WA: WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO TAKE PART IN THE CONTEST?

OT: The topic of the contest motivated me. I love to talk about our rights as humans, the flagrant violations and how we have been betrayed in this corner of the world by the systems that should protect and keep us from tyrannies.

WA: CAN YOU PROVIDE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUR WINNING ESSAY?

OT: My Essay seeks to manifest how inalienable human rights are disrespected here. How the women in Africa are daily subjected to beatings, rape, coerced marriage, and dehumanized in the name of traditions. There's no effect without cause; the colonial history, insignificant traditional principles, weak judiciary and justice system, timid press and other factors have to be discussed to hit a potent direction. It is unfair how people do not talk about that here. The violations have led so many to unripe grave, some have died even while they breathe. The damage is beyond repair. As you read, the news of rape and murder is soaking our national dailies in Nigeria. My work contends that all the viable structures already on ground to safeguard and promote human/women's rights should be more effective and faithful to their callings. This is the time NGOs, civil societies, human rights activists and other gadflies should be most functional.

WA: WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE SUBMISSION PROCESS FOR THE COMPETITION THAT MIGHT HELP OTHERS TO SUBMIT?

OT: The submission process taught me patience. First, I tried to meditate on the subject. I studied the contest prompts like a course. I was careful with words and reference materials deployed. I allowed the work at every stage to sit before continuation. I did much re-readings and re-writings. I was an early bird, so I took my time. More importantly, I had only my android phone with few internet subscriptions and consequently gained limited access to materials. But I didn't allow that stop me. I realized after submitting, that I was the only one that could stop me. Here I am.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE THIS ESSAY?

OT: I have always sought a platform through which I can raise my own voice against the incessant human rights abuse and violations bedeviling my place. I was glad on seeing the title. I always want to talk about how I always sleep and rise into a space where a poor girl is raped and abandoned, denied education and forced into marriage, where a widow is treated like some criminal, where a wife is kissed with a plethora of fists by the man who swore to love and cherish her in front of the world. Many of these women die in silence. I carry these scars about as if they were mine. I want to talk them away.

WA: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE THIRD PRIZE WINNER?

OT: It feels so great. Though I didn't expect I would win. It reminds me that consistent diligence has its reward. I feel so happy that my voice would be heard, that someone will feel the pain I feel and scream with me.

WA: HOW DID WRITING THE WINNING PIECE GO?

OT: Like I said earlier, I tried to have a good understanding of the theme. I read related materials online and offline even though I encountered much limitation. I walked down memory lanes; i chose inviting words and allowed my imaginations flow orderly. The whole process went slow,

tiring and steady.

WA: TO WIN AN ESSAY CONTEST, WHAT DO YOU THINK WRITERS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO?

OT: Writers should focus on the theme. The prompts given by the organisers are a key to the door. Open and walk in. No unnecessary deviations. Read the instructions and digest them. Let them lead you to light.

WA: APART FROM ESSAY WRITING, WHAT OTHER THINGS DO YOU WRITE?

OT: Aside Essay writing, I write poems. I use poetry to bear witness for the happenings within my body.

WA: WHAT FOR YOU MAKES AN ESSAY CONTEST ENTRY OR SUBMISSION STANDS OUT?

OT: For me, an Essay stands out by the great understanding of the topic it shows, which informs in depth analysis, awesome organisation of thoughts, creative use of words and solutions oriented outing.

WA: WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN AND WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO WRITE THIS ESSAY?

OT: My interest was sparked when a thirteen year old girl somewhere in Nigeria was raped by three overripe men. When the news told me a woman was beaten to death in Ghana. When I watched a little girl who should be in school hawk on the streets so that her parents could fund her brother's education. When I discovered most of the culprits do not go to jail nor pay damages. All these pains pushed me to write the Essay-- They yearned to be dragged into other people's body.

WA: HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF- FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

OT: None yet.

WA: WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

OT: To write and see the impact. This is possible when it informs and educates, when it pricks and caresses and makes a shift.

WA: DO YOU GOOGLE YOURSELF?

OT: Yes I do.

WA: WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU GIVE UP TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

OT: Pride

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY JOURNALS?

OT: Rattle, Praxis, Conscio, Palette and Agbowo.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD BOOK?

OT: Creative Use of Time by Lekan Fashina. How it made my life!

WA: WHAT AUTHOR(S) DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT GREW INTO?

OT: Prof. Wole Soyinka. I used to dislike poetry.

WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU TO BE A BETTER WRITER?

OT: Ololade Olatunji of 'The Nation's reality bites' , for his bold truths and intellect. Jonah Obajeun for his essays that read like poetry. Gilbert Alasa for his creative use of words. DM Aderibigbe writes about the themes of my interest. He once told me during our chats on Facebook messenger that " We all have beauty in us expressed differently".

Tunde Osho's works have featured in various magazines and anthologies such as Praxis, Conscio, Erogospel, The Quills etc. His essay titled "Human Rights Abuse and Violations in Africa: Gross Domestic Violence Against Women" came third in the just concluded African Human Rights Essay Competition. African Human Rights Essay Competition is an initiative of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF), USA aimed at promoting human rights values in Africa and to positively influence the betterment of the human rights situation in the continent. In this inclusive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him some facts surrounding his writing career and his winning essay.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-african-essay-contest-third-prize-winner-tunde-osho-my-essay-seeks-to-manifest-how-inalienable-human-rights-are-disrespected-in-africa>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS AFRICAN ESSAY CONTEST SECOND- PRIZE WINNER CHARLES IORNUMBE: MY ESSAY TRIES TO EXPOSE THE EVIL PERPETRATED AGAINST THE GIRL CHILD IN A TYPICAL AFRICAN SOCIETY



May 21

WA: WHAT HAS YOUR EARLY WRITING CAREER JOURNEY BEEN LIKE?

CI: I had, right from my secondary school days, been a consistent reader of Literature books. The more I read, the more the desire in me to be a writer grew stronger. From reading, I began to develop vocabulary which I had compiled in a jotter. It'll interest you to know that even at this stage; I still go through the jotter to peruse what I did at an elementary stage. I also developed skill for writing articles, short stories and poems most of which had been published in anthologies, journals and local tabloids.

I use this opportunity to give credit to some of my Literature Teachers: Madagu LC, Dennis Ernyi and Augustine Isho who at different times ignited the writing spirit in me.

WA: HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY COMPETITION?

CI: As a current National Ex-Officio executive of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA),

and immediate past Chairman of the Association in Benue State, I am privileged to belong to some of the Literary body's main social media platforms eg, WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram where most of IHRAF's activities are publicised. So, to answer your question directly, I saw a publication about three months ago calling for entries which I entered and by God's grace, today, I've been adjudged to be one of the winners of the International Human Rights Essay Competition for which, I remain eternally grateful.

WA: WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO TAKE PART IN THE CONTEST?

CI: The coinage of the topic and my personal interest in issues of human rights especially as they relate to Girl Child molestation and abuse motivated me to take part in the competition. Ultimately, I had a ready script which I wrote to commemorate the 2019 International Day For The Girl Child entitled: Teenage Sexual Molestation: Rethinking the Havoc on The Girl Child. There is also a short story crafted with scenes, characters and roles assigned to them.

WA: CAN YOU PROVIDE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUR WINNING ESSAY?

CI: The essay 'Teenage Sexual Molestation: Rethinking the Havoc on the Girl Child' tries to expose the evil perpetrated against the girl child in a typical African Society. In this clime, teenage rape and molestation are on the high scale because, they're a daily occurrence. The people who rape teenage girls live in our midst; some are our friends, colleagues and acquaintances who, for various reasons, commit the crime with impunity. It's sad because they commit these atrocities without them being arrested. It's funny but painful in the sense that, that little girl who is raped and deflowered carries a social stigma on her name and reputation so long as she lives. The family of the rape survivor is first and foremost not ready to make a case with the rapist for fear of the unknown. The police man would like you who had rushed to their station to report a rape case to prove whether or not, the family of the rape survivor is willing to go to court. The NAPT official would knock you out for bringing the rape survivor late to their office for examination. The journalists are helpless to conclude their investigations on a rape case because all the aforementioned parties have made the situation cumbersome. In the end, the matter lies low and dies a natural death. So, my essay ex-rays this scenario and plays up the challenge one encounters in trying to expose the criminality.

WA: WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE SUBMISSION PROCESS FOR THE COMPETITION THAT MIGHT HELP OTHERS TO SUBMIT?

CI: The process was smooth. It took time to mature. I believe it was also transparent. I first received a mail acknowledging receipt of my entry and that was followed shortly by a certificate of participation. Few weeks after, twenty names were shortlisted followed by thirteen names and eventual release of winners of the competition. Initially, I was wondering how and why I didn't emerge overall winner but got convinced after viewing the profile of Master Anadi who came first. Master Anadi had sent me a friend request on Facebook. I viewed his profile to be sure before confirming. I noticed he is an extremely good writer who has a long way to go if he keeps writing. Honestly, I was impressed after reading him. I would like to meet him some day. I wish to submit that one's age and status do not have a special place in writing. Though, Anadi a

younger person than me floored me in the Essay competition, I am still proud to hold onto my position as second winner. After all, this is my first attempt at literary competition in my life.

WA: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE SECOND-PRIZE WINNER?

CI: I feel extremely happy about the outcome of the competition.

WA: HOW DID WRITING THE WINNING PIECE GO?

CI: I wrote the essay two years before the competition. It's a coincidence that the topic became relevant in an International competition of this magnitude. While writing, I established myself in the situation; that as a father of two daughters, God forbid though, how would it feel to hear that someone rapes either of them? The essay tells my personal experience as a Journalist who got entangled carrying out an investigation of an alleged rape case in my community. I felt passionate about the ugly trend believing that someday, Africa would overcome it.

WA: TO WIN AN ESSAY CONTEST, WHAT DO YOU THINK WRITERS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO?

CI: One should pay attention to developing one's subject matter in the manner it's understood by the reader. There should be unity of thought, clarity and coherence of ideas. The script should demonstrate mastery of the issue/issues being projected by the writer.

WA: APART FROM ESSAY WRITING, WHAT OTHER THINGS DO YOU WRITE?

CI: I write poetry, radio commentaries, short stories, reviews and biographies.

WA: WHAT, FOR YOU, MAKES AN ESSAY CONTEST ENTRY OR SUBMISSION STAND OUT?

CI: Honestly, this is my first time of participating in a literary competition so I might not give you exactly what you're asking of me. I can only deduce that what is looked out for, in an essay competition, might not be far from the opinion expressed in your question 8 above.

WA: HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

CI: I have about 8 unpublished works which I usually don't like disclosing because they are in the hands of the Editors undergoing editorial work. But to satisfy your curiosity, I'll mention just three: 'The Power of Reporting and Disaster Management', 'Of Grace and Fortune' and a poetry collection 'Grim Reaper and Other Poems'.

WA: WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

CI: It's fulfilling my brother. It makes one feel on top of one's World. That's exactly how I am feeling now after being listed second winner of IHRAF International Essay Competition.

WA: DO YOU GOOGLE YOURSELF?

CI: Yes, I do. You can't be a good writer without knowing how to Google.

WA: WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU GIVE UP TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

CI: I would like to sacrifice my comfort. This comfort means the outings, the sleeping and any other thing that could discourage a writing enterprise.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY JOURNALS?

CI: Yeah, the ones that readily come to mind are: Auroras & Blossoms Poetry Journal, The Alaska Quarterly review, The Antioch review and of course, our revered ANA review.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD BOOK?

CI: It was Charles Dicken's 'Oliver Twist'

WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT GREW INTO?

CI: I don't want to use the word 'dislike' as you put it. I rather prefer to say I was not interested in someone like reading Ngugi 'thiongo a Kenyan writer and Thomas Hardy in England.

WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

CI: I can't call someone like the Nobel Laureate Professor Wole Soyinka as a friend. He is a father, mentor and a teacher. Prof Soyinka is the man who has influenced and inspired my life in many ways. We are lucky to have him living and kicking on with life. I pray God to grant him long life and continually keep him safe. I also see Ayikwei Amah from Ghana as another writer that has given me a direction in life. Lastly Professor Chinua Achebe is one Nigerian I would have loved to meet if he were alive. Of the three, The Nobel Laureate's use of language is unique.

Charles Iornumbe is a broadcast journalist, researcher, creative writer, cultural enthusiast and academic. He has worked with Radio Benue Corporation, Makurdi for over a decade and risen through the ranks. He also had a stint with Radio Nigeria, Globe FM, Bauchi, Bauchi state. His essay "Teenage Sexual Molestation: Rethinking the Havoc on Girl Child" came second in the just concluded African Human Rights Essay Competition. African Human Rights Essay Competition is an initiative of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF), USA aimed at promoting human rights values in Africa and to positively influence the betterment of the human rights situation in the continent. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him some facts surrounding his winning entry and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-charles-iornumbe-my-essay-tries-to-expose-the-evil-perpetrated-against-the-girl-child-in-a-typical-african-society>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS AFRICAN ESSAY CONTEST WINNER UGOCHUKWU ANADI: GAY PEOPLE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO EXIST IN NIGERIA; I WROTE TO CHANGE THAT



May 14

WA: WHAT HAS YOUR EARLY WRITING CAREER JOURNEY BEEN LIKE?

UA: I do not think that I have gotten what can be rightly referred to as a writing career; I'm still at that early stage. I started writing during the COVID-19 lockdown as schools were closed and students were home. It was something I did to keep myself busy, then I fell in love with it. I have always been a reader though, and I think that was the major thing that made me consider writing. I went on to take a paid Beginner's Poetry course at Pendullum Poetry Academy. That course exposed me to poetry, and from poetry, I started writing both short stories and essays.

I was just writing and posting on my Facebook wall before I joined some groups for writers, still on Facebook. It was in those groups that I heard about publishing in Literary Magazines for the first time, and since then, my email inbox has been a deposit of rejection letters. You know, because I want to be published, and because I have people telling me that I write so well on Facebook, I will just write and send to Magazines. And trust editors, they never failed to reject those trashes, most times in sweet languages, but in few instances, in a mean and brutally honest way.

One instance I can never forget: I submitted some poems which I believe were Haikus. The

editor not only rejected it but told me point and clear that what I wrote cannot be qualified as Haiku. The editor went ahead to send me a beginner's guide to Haiku in a PDF format. I was pained, but looking at those poems today, I sincerely do not think they even qualify to be called poems. It was just some random scribbles and truly, I was disappointed in myself for writing that in the first place. I mean, this was someone who was the valedictorian in his Beginner's Poetry Class and he's writing what cannot be qualified to be called poem, not to talk more of Haiku.

But on the other side, it can be said to be good. I have published a story titled Nneka with Nantygreens Magazine and just yesterday, my essay, ON THE LIBERALISATION OF SEX was published by Literary Yard Magazine. I was the third runner-up in the Hon. Dozie Nwankwo Essay Writing Competition, which was a competition organized by the same person the competition is named after annually, in 2020. And now, I'm the winner of the African Human Rights Essay Writing Competition. This is my first major win and I'm so happy about it. My inbox since the results were announced has been flooded with congratulatory messages and I never knew that they were people who thought I sell soaps. The congratulatory messages often come with requests that are exactly in this way, or with a little variant: 'cut soap for me o'. (Laughs).

The journey has made me a more serious reader though. You cannot write without reading. There's no magic to that, and that has helped me grow my library. But above all, it has taught me, and continues to teach me: patience. I now know that I can send a piece of writing to a literary magazine, wait for 8 months before I will get a reply, and the reply will come out to be negative. And you know what, at that moment, the earth doesn't stop spinning; the universe doesn't even notice you. It's as if nothing happened, absolutely nothing, while your heart is on fire.

WA: HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY COMPETITION?

UA: The first place I saw the call for submissions was in the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) Official Facebook group. I mentally took note of it, but I later forgot about it. Two days to the deadline, a reminder was sent in the Society of Young Nigerian Writers, Anambra Chapter's WhatsApp group. I remembered that I promised myself I would enter for this contest but due to procrastination, I didn't up till then. It was then a do or die affair for me. Since I didn't have a laptop and typing with my phone has always been very tiresome and slow for me, I almost gave up.

Thanks a lot to my very good friend, Nnam Onyebuchi Darlington, who availed me his laptop for the writing. I was able to finish everything about the essay: writing, editing and submitting in a night.

WA: WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO TAKE PART IN THE CONTEST?

UA: Human Rights issue has always been something I do care about: deeply. Seeing pictures of old women murdered, or paraded in the most inhuman way on the basis of accused witchcraft; seeing videos of men stripped naked and beaten, sometimes to death, for being homosexuals;

seeing young people like me lying in their own blood because a uniformed man with a gun was annoyed, or because they went out to protest for their rights and life; remembering that Mubarak Bala is still under unlawful detention, and just like him, many others who have been accused of blasphemy, a crime I sincerely do not think exists, a crime I believe to be an insult on the human minds and intelligence, these and many other things pushed me into being interested in human rights issue. So when I saw the call for submissions and saw that it was coming from a well recognized Human Rights organisation, I knew that I had to take part in the contest. That was my little way of fighting human rights abuse and violations in my continent.

WA: CAN YOU PROVIDE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUR WINNING ESSAY?

UA: The winning essay which I titled Human Rights Abuse And Violation in Africa: It's a Crime to be Happy in My Country, was centered on the happenings in my own country, Nigeria. I made a word play on the topic. Being gay can be defined as being happy and then, it's a criminal offence to be gay in Nigeria. So I simply read being happy as being gay.

So it was centered primarily on how the criminalization of homosexuality in Nigeria was and continues to remain one of the worst move by any government in Nigeria; how it has been a tool through which state-sponsored homophobia has been carved into a giant momentum; and how it has enabled the citizens to display the monstrous part of them -- that part of them angry with the society and how it functions -- on the innocent members of the LGBTQ+ community, as if somehow, the gay boy is their problem.

The essay went on to establish how this anti-gay law of 2014 has continued to put many of our citizens in the gas chamber; how it has sucked out happiness, forever, in the lives of many Nigerians and the need to repeal it. The essay maintains that the law is an abuse and violation of human rights, is counterproductive and is generally useless. I also lamented, I think, on how when we talk of human rights activism, we do not consider gay rights as part of human rights, you know, the selective activism of a thing. That's why you have somebody like Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a former president of Nigeria, who's acknowledged globally for his respect for human rights, being the one that signed the Anti-gay bill into law, and we still see him as a human rights icon, because gay rights isn't human rights.

WA: WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE SUBMISSION PROCESS FOR THE COMPETITION THAT MIGHT HELP OTHERS TO SUBMIT?

UA: The submission process is an easy one. You have a limited word count you should work with, and then two email addresses you should forward the essay to. You have a font, font size and format you should work with and it is that easy.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE THIS ESSAY?

UA: I think I have answered that under what motivated me to take part in the contest. But what made me choose this particular topic, as against writing about witchcraft persecution or the continued detention of the president of Humanist's Nigeria, Mubarak Bala, or any other human rights issue in the country, is the feeling that many do not consider gay rights abuse as part of human rights abuse. That's to say, we have lesser and lesser people speaking about this, even

those people who're convinced that homophobia is wrong. And the reason is not far-fetched, in a country like Nigeria, supporting Children's Rights makes you a child in the same way that fighting against homophobia makes you gay. And no one would like to be identified as gay in a space as homophobic as Nigeria; not even a gay person would want that for himself.

So, already, you know people are going to write about gender inequality and how society has continued to abuse women; about Children's Rights; about Police Brutality and many of them, and these are all valid cases of abuse and violations. But the gay boy and the lesbian girl needs a voice. The transman and the transwoman needs a voice. The gender non-conforming person, they/them, and all queer people needs a voice. I simply decided to be that voice. Gay people are not allowed to exist in Nigeria; I wrote to change that.

WA: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE FIRST-PRIZE WINNER?

UA: It feels very good. In fact, it was an euphoric experience for me, especially seeing those moments my classmates kept on saying that they're proud of me. And while I'm not a person who seeks audience's validation, getting it doesn't actually hurt me. What this prize actually does for me is that it tells me to continue writing. It tells me that my works are worth reading. It simply tells me that yes, you're a writer.

And another thing it does for me is to show me that they are actually people who are open-minded. At a point after submitting the essay, I considered withdrawing it and writing another. Reason? I felt that since this is an 'African' thing, that the essay might be disqualified, not on the basis of not being good, but on the basis of being against the 'African culture', an argument which some self made custodians of African culture always use to support their homophobia, but I decided against it, and now this. (Smiles)

WA: HOW DID WRITING THE WINNING PIECE GO?

UA: Like I said, I wrote it in a night. I was awake the whole night. I had to leave my place to go to Darlington's place to use his laptop to write. The essay flows easily; I never forced it. The only difficult part was editing it, when I had to cut out some parts of the essay because I exceeded the maximum word count required. It was like a mother being forced to mark out, by herself, one of her four children for sacrifice to the gods. Removing some sentences and changing the structure was like committing murder to me, but I did it (maybe I'm now a murderer, who knows). (Laughs) But apart from that, it was an enjoyable process.

WA: TO WIN AN ESSAY CONTEST, WHAT DO YOU THINK WRITERS SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO?

UA: Number one is theme if it's a themed contest. You cannot be asked to write on human rights violation and expect to win the contest with a piece on the dangers of alcohol. No matter how wonderful your piece on the dangers of alcohol is, it cannot win the contest.

Secondly, guidelines. You know those little things like font and font size and spacing. They really matter, and then keeping to the deadline.

Thirdly, write what you know; what you're passionate about. If you're taking part in a contest, let it be a theme you're in love with. What that means is that you do not end up copying others. You simply write from within and with that, originality is retained. That doesn't mean you're not to consult other writings on the same issue. No. Definitely not. Like I said earlier, if you do not read, you cannot write. What I'm trying to say here is that you do not copy in a non-creative way. Know what works for you, improve on it and work with it

WA: APART FROM ESSAY WRITING, WHAT OTHER THINGS DO YOU WRITE?

UA: I also write poems and short stories. I run a Facebook page by name Ugochukwu Anadi: The Pen's Blood where I write on issues I consider worthy of my time and energy. Leaving the Literary World, I'm an engineering student and I do write Arduino Codes for Embedded Systems and Control Systems. I'm also a drone enthusiast and I hope to build my own drone one day. MQ-9 Reaper remains my favourite drone.

WA: WHAT, FOR YOU, MAKES AN ESSAY CONTEST ENTRY OR SUBMISSION STAND OUT?

UA: I think it's originality. Someone who's judging any writing competition is always one who has swam through a very vast ocean of Literature. Such a person can identify a copied work even without knowing where the work was copied from. That's how serious and easy it can be.

Then, stylistics. How do you present your points? Your grammar and punctuation? Those things really matter.

WA: WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, AND WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO WRITE THIS ESSAY BASED ON THIS INTEREST?

UA: I think I have answered this question when you asked why I entered for the contest and what motivated the essay writing. It's the realization that things are not the way they're supposed to be, and that they can actually be better. The realization that the most effective way to erode hate is to implant love; to change the mindset of people. And Literature has been the best way to enlighten people.

WA: HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

UA: None. I have only considered writing a book but have not started writing any. I just write short stories, poems and essays, submit to literary magazines and read my rejection letters while taking soaked garri.

WA: WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

UA: It's a fulfilling experience. You know, the feeling that you're capable of winning something at a continental level. It comes with euphoria. It paints a picture of a general returning from a very dreadful war victorious, without losing anyone in his army.

WA: DO YOU GOOGLE YOURSELF?

UA: Are there people who don't? Hmm, I've always thought it's a general thing. Yes. I do Google myself and see my published story, NNEKA pop up. Now that you asked, I think I'll Google myself right after this interview so that I'll know whether my recently published essay will pop up too. (smiles)

WA: WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU GIVE UP TO BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

UA: Procrastination. I procrastinate a lot. Then social media, but the problem now is that I get to know of most writing opportunities through the same social media, so giving it up is not that easy, you see (smiles).

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE LITERARY JOURNALS?

UA: I do not read stories based on journals. I belong to so many writing groups and when people post links to their works, I read them and if they're okay to me, I'll check out the whole journal for it means that they publish things I love reading.

But recently, I'm drawn to Nantygreens Magazine definitely because they were the first to give my writing a home, then Kalahari Review, Literary Yard, Nnọkọ, Brittle Paper and Commonwealth shortlisted and prize winning stories. I also discovered The Shallow Tales Review recently.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CHILDHOOD BOOK?

UA: I read a lot as a child, but I sincerely cannot remember which was my favourite then. I can remember reading Eze Goes to School, Chike and the River and A Dance with the Princess though.

WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT GREW INTO?

UA: Wole Soyinka. Mehn, I disliked his writings when I started consciously reading then. I read one of his poems, slept over it, and didn't understand anything. Then I heard people say that he doesn't write in a way he could be easily understood. That he's a grammarian and all that. So I boycotted his books.

All that changed after most of my writer friends on Facebook started talking about how Prof is their best writer. Consistent amongst these people is Ayegba Samuel who runs the Facebook page, Alcove of Letters. Dude dedicated many of his poems, essays and random musings to Soyinka, and being someone I adore his writings greatly, I felt I was missing something.

So, one day, I entered a bookshop and bought many of his books. After reading The Lion and The Jewel, and his prison notes, The Man Died, my impression about Prof changed. I went on to

read his poems anthologized in the West African Verse and in the Poems of Black Africa. Even his play *The Madmen and the Specialist* and his novel *The Interpreters*. I do not understand anything that happened in *The Interpreters* though (smiles).

Today, he is one of my favourite authors with the likes of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Chinelo Okparanta.

WA: What other authors are you friends with, and how do they help you become a better writer?

UA: I do not have author friends, in the real sense of the world 'friend'. But I have many writers who Facebook has allowed me to follow their writings: Ola W. Halim, Samuel Ayegba, Chibueze Darlington, Prof. Mark Nwagwu, Vincent Anioke, Stanley Umezulike, Femi Philip Morgan, Jude Dibia and many others. I consider any writer whose works I love as a friend, even if it's only virtually.

So I become friends with writers through their works, and one specific way these people have influenced my writing is the fact that theirs makes me to always want to improve mine. I also consider them courageous writers. They write what they want to write, not minding who might want to rant.

Ugochukwu Anadi is a student of the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Anadi is a 20 year old essayist who discovered his love for writing during the COVID-19 lockdown. He has gone ahead to write short stories, poems and essays and has been published in Nantygreens Magazine. He also came fourth place in the Hon. Dozie Nwankwo Essay Writing Competition, 2020. Anadi won the just concluded African Human Rights Essay Competition with his essay titled "Human Rights Abuse and Violations in Africa: It's a Crime to be happy in My Country". African Human Rights Essay Competition is an initiative of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF), USA aimed at promoting human rights values in Africa and to positively influence the betterment of the human rights situation in the continent. In this comprehensive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him some facts surrounding his writing career and his winning essay.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-african-essay-contest-winner-ugochukwu-anadi-gay-people-are-not-allowed-to-exist-in-nigeria-i-wrote-to-change-that>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS NWOKEABIA, IFEANYI JOHN: I SEE MY LITERARY PIECES AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MYSELF ON DIFFERENT SOCIAL ISSUES



May 8

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND- WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WRITING

NIJ: I have written poems published in different online and offline magazines. I had written opinions on education published on Opinion Nigeria. I write reviews too, for published books. And currently, I have different unfinished works; short stories and poems etc. that I'm trying to complete in time not far.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

NIJ: The message, with its accompanying style, interests me in a piece of writing.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

NIJ: It's always hard to pick a favourite writer because every writer writes with his/her uniqueness. And the uniqueness of a writer makes a writer special in their respective literary works. But I will love to appreciate two writers among others; Chinua Achebe and Isidore Okpewho on the role they played in exposing me to rich African literature. The simplicity of their styles served me best in my early days in the literary field.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

NIJ: well, we are all writers starting out, so I will advise us to keep our head straight, and discover our God given ingenuity. There's not entirely a new story, rather style has ways of recreating originality. Discover a style that will stand unique, and you will watch yourself excelling. In other words, carve a niche for yourself.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

NIJ: I really do not have a special inspiration whenever I set out to write. Every mood, every environment, my life experience etc. are much inspiration to me. But one thing stands out as an inspiration, which is my inability to engage in verbal argument, so I see my literary pieces as an opportunity to express myself on different social issues.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A PLACE THAT'S SPECIAL?

NIJ: No, I don't have a writing routine. I write at will. No time, no day, no particular place. Whenever I receive the message, I open my notepad, and write.

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

NIJ: It's in 2011 when I was a student of Federal College of Education. As a student of English Language, we wrote intermittently on Students' Days to perform it for fun. But in the year 2014, I became more serious with writing. This change was caused by the attack of a suicide bomber to our school, which took a life away. My eyes were opened to see that a writer is a social crusader. So, I began to write more often.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

NIJ: Immortal Words (A Collection of Poems) was the first published by me. Although before its publication, I have had other online publications in different magazines.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR THEMES OR ISSUES IN YOUR WRITING?

NIJ: Being a product of the society, I write on different societal issues. I write on politics, morality, love, peace and other issues that our society is in search of.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

NIJ: It's not easy. I had been my worst critic. I will always tell myself that my work is not good enough. So, each time I planned to send a work out, I will feel so uncomfortable. Sometimes, I do paint a mental picture of where people finished reading my work, and started making mockery of me and my piece.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

NIJ: Classroom. As a teacher, whenever I'm in class teaching, I see myself through my students as a child growing up in the village. So, through that, I get striking topics I could research on, and equally come up with best words to give them life. That's why I always tell people that I'm a writer who navigates the world while in the classroom.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

NIJ: Social media have been a veritable tool. My Publisher has been a facebook friend. So, I had always seen his advertisements from time to time. When I prepared my manuscript for publication, I sent it to him, after due consideration, he notified me of his company's acceptance of the work for publication.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES\ READERS.

NIJ: So far, it's been beautiful responses.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

NIJ: I'm on facebook@Nwokeabia Ifeanyi John, twitter@Nwokeabia_John, and WhatsApp. Further information on me can be seen through google too.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

NIJ: Every dedicated worker must receive a wage. It may not flow in easily, but once heads are bent, and candles are continuously burnt, one day, reward must follow suit. Don't compare your success to another; it may lead you to depression. Just keep doing your work happily, and believing in yourself. Never lose hope!

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

NIJ: Some of us want quick success in our writing career. If you are in this group of over desperate writers, please stop being too hard on yourself. Writing alone is energy sapping, then imagine when you add over thinking to it. Not every writer will win an award in his/her under twenty or twenties. Success is success no matter when it comes.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

NIJ: Immortal Words has been the only published one, so, it's still the most enjoyable.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

NIJ: Immortal Words is my first published book. It was published by Poemify Publishers, Aba. The journey was not easy. Its energy sapping because sometimes you will wake up to a message demanding your immediate attention, some corrections made or about to be made on your work. But the joy of getting your work out there for the wider audience surpasses every stress.

WA: On your latest Book titled “Immortal Words” Can you share with us something about the book

NIJ: Life loses its immortality once breath is cut off and buried or cremated. Before conception,

a foetus sign bilateral agreement with death - to live & die once. But Immortal Words is a gentle reminder to humans that the power of words can always dare and defeat the power of death by sitting comfortably on the pages of a book.

The collection goes on to ramble through the labyrinth of life, throwing up love, happiness and morals for eyes to eat and transport genuine change to the hearts of humans. It serves as a catalyst to reawaken humans' spirit towards seeing possibility for positive change in society. Immortal Words reaffirms that life does not end in death, rather it's a beginning to immortality.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

NIJ: The key theme is immortality. This immortality depends largely on humans given words life that can outlive them just as we are still reading the words of great poets like Christopher Okigbo, Ikeogu Oke etc and novelists like Chinua Achebe, Chukwuemeka Ike, Cyprain Ekwensi and others.

Nwokeabia, Ifeanyi John is an alumnus of Federal College of Education, Kontagora, Niger State and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. He has authored a collection of poems titled “Immortal Words” (2021). He was shortlisted for the ENDSARS poetry competition organised by the Society of Young Nigerian Writers in collaboration with International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF) USA, 2020. His poem also appeared in the anthology 'The Best of 2020 Poet of the World', a publication by Inner Child Press, USA. His other works are published in different online platforms like Poemhunter , voicesnet , The Shadow Tales Review , AceWorld , calseriesblog , qwenu , opinion Nigeria, SYNW Blog etc. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-nwokeabia-ifeanyi-john-i-see-my-literary-pieces-as-an-opportunity-to-express-myself-on-different-social-issues>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS KENYAN WRITER GRACE SUGE: “IHRAF MOTIVATED ME TO PUT MORE EFFORT INTO MY WRITING”



Apr 10

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF

SUGE: My name is Grace Suge, a Kenyan writer currently based in Eldoret Town.

WA: HOW AND WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT IHRAF AND IHRAF PUBLISHES?

SUGE: I had written several short story pieces and was exploring ways to get them out there. So I subscribed to submittable and that was where I got to know about IHRAF.

WA: WHAT IS THE TITLE OF YOUR WORK THAT GOT PUBLISHED ON IHRAF PUBLISHES?

SUGE: Two of my pieces have gone on to be published on IHRAF; i. Tessellated woman; ii. Laibon’s prophesy

WA: DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN IHRAF’S LAST YEAR END SARS COMPETITION

SUGE: No

WA: DOES WRITING ENERGIZE OR EXHAUST YOU?

SUGE: Writing energizes me and it is my greatest stress reliever.

WA: WHAT ARE COMMON TRAPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

SUGE: Expecting that their works would get accepted for publication the few times they submit. In reality, one would get a lot more declines before their works would get a home. Also expecting considerable financial returns at the beginning of their careers which is not always the case.

WA: HAVE YOU EVER GOTTEN READER'S BLOCK?

SUGE: Yes, especially when I was a full-time banker and a young mother. Getting myself to concentrate on reading a book proved futile.

WA: DID YOU EVER CONSIDER WRITING UNDER A PSEUDONYM?

SUGE: No. I express my individuality in my writing so I don't find it necessary to hide my true identity.

WA: DO YOU TRY MORE TO BE ORIGINAL OR TO DELIVER TO READERS WHAT THEY WANT?

SUGE: I try to be original and artistic in my writing. I have learned that writing what comes from within me will always find an audience out there.

WA: DO YOU THINK SOMEONE COULD BE A WRITER IF THEY DON'T FEEL EMOTIONS STRONGLY?

SUGE: No. We harness our emotions to come out with a great piece of writing. In other words, we have to relate with what we write for it to appear realistic, for us to create relatable characters and the readers will ultimately get to relate with the characters as well.

WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

SUGE: I am a fairly new author and I haven't made that many physical friends in the industry. But I am literary friends with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, and many African writers whose books I have gotten to read and enjoy. As I said earlier, a piece of work always captures the writer's individuality. You can most certainly get to interact with a writer through her/his works and ultimately get better in yours. Currently, I am best friends with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. We are nearly of the same age and we tackle nearly the same

themes in our writing. She preceded me in the industry and my having read her books partly motivated me to write my first novel 'Maasai in red' which I have published on kindle. More is to come.

WA: WHAT WAS AN EARLY EXPERIENCE WHERE YOU LEARNED THAT LANGUAGE HAD POWER?

SUGE: When I was in primary school, aged 10-12 years, my *insha* (Swahili word for composition) writings were always the best in my class and they would be read out in front of the pupils as a sample of what they ought to have written. I mastered my *Kamusi* (Dictionary) and from it mined some peculiar literary words which I would creatively use to come up with unique *Insha* pieces. My teachers nicknamed me 'mhenga wa Kiswahili' which means 'a sage or ancestor' of the Kiswahili language. In other words even my teachers believed I was trusted to give sound advice even though I was just but a child. I became one to fear.

WA: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT MAGAZINES FOR WRITERS TO SUBSCRIBE TO?

SUGE: The New Yorker, Granta.

WA: HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

SUGE: One

WA: WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

SUGE: As a fiction writer, I concoct stories that capture what is in my heart, what comes to my mind, what I read, and what I experience in my interactions with others. When these stories radiate with someone else out there, I count myself successful.

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO MARKET YOUR BOOKS?

SUGE: Online and through organizations like IHRAF

WA: WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU DO, AND HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND RESEARCHING BEFORE BEGINNING A BOOK?

SUGE: I do extensive research on a subject before I put pen on paper. Before I wrote my first novel 'Maasai in red', it had taken me six months to research and read numerous books about the Maasai people, about the advent of colonialists and the Christian missionaries in Kenya before I gained enough confidence to write. It also helped that I lived for some time with the Maasai in Narok town.

WA: DO YOU VIEW WRITING AS A KIND OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE?

SUGE: Yes. When I am stressed and depressed, I write to enable me to heal.

WA: FINAL ADVICE FOR IHRAF PUBLISHES

SUGE: Mine is only to thank IHRAF for promoting new writers like me. ‘Tessellated woman’ was my first piece of writing after a long while and getting it published the first time I submitted it to IHRAF motivated me to put more effort into my writing. Now I have a book, one year on.

Grace Suge, a Kenyan writer currently based in Eldoret Town. She is the author of ‘Maasai in red’. In this chat with Wole Adedoyin, she shares details about her writing career and her latest book.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-kenyan-writer-grace-suge-ihraf-motivated-me-to-put-more-effort-into-my-writing>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS
DESMOND KOFI AKWAAH: MANY OF
THE PROBLEMS TROUBLING OUR
PEOPLE ARE PREVENTABLE AND CAN
BE SOLVED VIA THE RIGHT
EDUCATION - DESMOND KOFI
AKWAAH**



Apr 2

WA: YOU ARE THE FOUNDER OF THE EAGLESWORLD INNOVATIVES, WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INITIATIVES?

DESMOND: I grew up in a society where you find a lot of social problems confronting the people which most of them are as a result of ignorance. You find many girls drop out of school

because of teenage pregnancy. Misconception about HIV and AIDS, and other social, environmental and health issues. With my passion to help solve these problems in my community, I attended workshops and seminars when I was at the university. When I completed university and after my national service, my passion in social entrepreneurship grew. I started developing innovative educational materials on HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) to educate the people, especially, the youth. I realised this vision must be formalized thereby formally registering Eaglesworld Initiatives.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE EAGLES WORLD INNOVATIVES

DESMOND: It was a SRH education for forty (40) senior high school students in Ashanti region of Ghana. It was in partnership with DKT International Ghana. The project was dubbed, " No Yawa, We dey for you". (No Yawa means No Problem. We dey for you is the response). Twenty (20) of the schools had drama in addition to the verbal education and 20 had no drama.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN HIV/AIDS EDUCATION AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

DESMOND: Actually I read Agriculture at the university but my quest to help solve these health problems in our society, I learnt a lot about HIV, SRH via seminars, workshops, training programs and reading wide on the subject.

WA: IN WHAT WAY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF HIV/AIDS EDUCATION AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION IN GHANA

DESMOND: Apart from the fact that my organization engaged in projects directed by Ghana AIDS Commission, we have been developing practical and innovative HIV, SRH educational materials that captures the attention of the youth thereby perfectly sensitising them on the subject.

WA: WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU FACING IN YOUR FIELD OF WORK

DESMOND: The challenge has been seeking partnership with likeminded organizations and

funding.

WA: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN EXPERT IN HIV/AIDS EDUCATION AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION

DESMOND: I know people have gained higher educational certificates in health courses related to HIV and SRH. But I also believe that anyone with the passion for it and ready to learn through books, workshops and seminars can also end up becoming expert in the subject.

WA: AS THE FOUNDER OF EAGLESWORLD INNOVATIVES, WHAT KINDS OF CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?

DESMOND: My challenge as a founder has been not being able to convince organizations (funders) to support a project that I believe will have a positive impact on the lives of many disadvantaged people when executed.

WA: HOW AND IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU THINK EAGLES WORLD INNOVATIVES AND THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART FESTIVAL CAN COLLABORATE

DESMOND: At Eaglesworld Innovatives, we are good at developing innovative educational materials to educate people on a subject, therefore, IHRAF being experts in Arts, we believe we can learn a lot from your outfit and also add value (professional) to the works we develop.

WA: WHAT ARE THE THEMATIC AREAS OF THE EAGLESWORLD INNOVATIVES

DESMOND: Now, Sustainable Development Goals- innovative ways by which the knowledge of the SDGs will get down to the grassroots so that no one will be left behind to advance the United Nations (UN) vision of "Decade of Action".

WA: WHAT DRIVES YOU AS THE TEAM LEAD AND VISIONER OF EAGLES WORLD INNOVATIVES

DESMOND: The fact that many of the problems troubling our people are preventable and can be solved via the right education.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

DESMOND: The SRH education for forty (40) senior high school students.

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO RAPE VICTIMS AND HIV/AIDS PATIENTS

DESMOND: My advice to a rape victim will be to admonish her to let the law deal with the matter if it is accessible, not to allow the pain of rape to destroy her life by being slave to it and do well to encourage other rape victims to live above the pain of rape.

WA: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR INITIATIVE?

DESMOND: I have learnt that the things the enlightened ones see as simple are not that simple for the illiterate folks. Also, I have learnt that to be a good social entrepreneur and to be able to help solve some of these societal problems, you must continue to learn everything including the cultural behavior of the people you want to help, and avail yourself for new ideas that emerge on daily basis.

WA: WHAT IN YOUR LIFE HAS BROUGHT OR GIVEN YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION OR FULFILLMENT?

DESMOND: Before I registered my organization, I realized the need for the youth to be educated on HIV and AIDS. Since I did not have any job to raise money to fund my passion, I would seek a job as a labourer in construction, raise funds, print some of the HIV educational materials to do the education. One of such passionate works happened at sports stadium when there was inter schools athletes' competition. I will go to the stadium, distribute the educational materials and verbally educate them. I was always happy when I saw how they were eager to listen and learn. I felt satisfied doing this.

WA: LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY? WHAT WOULD YOU DO AGAIN?

DESMOND: I would have searched for the right network of organizations that are also in line

with our purpose. Seek for every capacity building that came my way. Now is about continuing to learn and to be creative and innovative as much as I can.

Desmond Kofi Akwaah is the founder and Executive Director of Eaglesworld Innovatives, a nongovernmental organization based in Ghana. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his activism, experience and efforts in promoting sexual and reproductive health education in Ghana.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-desmond-kofi-akwaah-the-founder-and-executive-director-of-eaglesworld-innovatives-a-nongovernmental-organization-based-in-ghana>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS TERSEER SAM BAKI



Mar 27

WA: FROM YOUR ENDSARS EXPERIENCE, WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A JUDGE?

TERSEER: Being a judge for a literary contest in the caliber of Society of Young Nigerian Writers, SYNW, and the International Human Rights Art Festival, IHRAF's ENDSARS National Poetry Competition had been many things to me. It had been one of the most fascinating and exhilarating experiences I've had in recent times. Being a judge of that prestigious competition of such magnitude was to me an irresistible opportunity to feel the creative pulse of the Nigerian youths in their expression of literary and creative energies. Having watched the youths come out in their numbers, defiling ethnic, religious and political differences to speak out in one strong and unequivocal voice against police brutality, assault and battery, I was sure to find a rich and solid collection of literary pieces among those entries. Nigerian youths were clearly passionate, well coordinated and articulate about their resistance to the human rights abuses perpetuated by men of the Nigeria Police, and we all know that poetry thrives better on such powerful emotional issues. Their determination to ensure that their voices were heard loud and clear was unmistakable. It was therefore, a rare privilege and honour to be one of the first readers of that epoch making collection of poetry. Most importantly, reading those power laden entries with the

intention of picking out the best among them entailed that one had to do an intensive reading of those entries, paying close attention to every printed word, expression and so forth. Finally, I wish to add that as a serving security officer, reading those entries provided a firsthand opportunity to get direct feedback and an assessment of how the security and law enforcement agencies are generally perceived by the average Nigerian tax payers whom all security agencies are meant to serve. At the end of the day, a fraction of the entries was published. Not everyone had the opportunity to see all the poems that were received, but I was privileged and honoured to see and read everything sent to the organisers of the competition. That alone is not something to take for granted.

WA: EVERY YEAR THERE SEEMS TO BE MORE LITERARY PRIZES APPEARING: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS? DO WE NEED SO MANY?

TERSEER: In my opinion, the proliferation of literary prizes in Nigeria in itself should be a good development. The population of Nigeria has grown significantly from less than fifty million people to more than two hundred million people from post independent Nigeria to the present day Nigeria. Secondly, the level of awareness and education has also grown tremendously. Therefore, one should naturally expect an increase in the number of things like this. If the objective and the standards set by organisers of such literary prizes are for quality and the advancement of literature reading and writing, I have no problems with that. But if the intention is for the manipulation and exploitation of vulnerable upcoming writers and literary enthusiasts, then I have a problem with that. Literature is a veritable tool for liberation of a people, firstly, from ignorance and secondly, from oppressive and suppressive tendencies. Therefore, the closer that the literary art is brought to the people, the better for us all.

WA: AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN A JUDGE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANYONE SUBMITTING A POEM TO A PRESTIGIOUS POETRY AWARD? ANY FAUX-PAS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

TERSEER: My advice to anyone submitting poems or any other literary work for a contest that would lead to the award of a prize, is first of all to understand what literature or creative writing is all about. Again, one must first of all aspire and strive to be a creative writer. One must read widely as well as study all relevant concepts, theories, conventions and principles surrounding each genre of literature. In addition, every organiser of literary contest have their entry or submission guidelines clearly spelt out in their advertorial or call for entries. And so, the beginning of the journey into success or failure sometimes starts from adhering or neglecting those entry requirements as publicised by organisers of each competition. Having said all of this, I wish to add that venturing into creative writing with the sole aim of winning literary prizes and awards is perhaps one of the biggest mistakes anyone could ever make. I advice people who wish to take up creative writing, especially the younger ones, to do so because they have great love

and passion for the art of writing. Write because you have the flair for writing. Don't write because of the financial benefits that come with winning writing contests and selling your publications. That's not to say that making money from one's art is totally wrong. Winning competitions and making money should be the last things to think of after every other important thing I've earlier mentioned here is in place. So, read, read and read have a good grasp of the art and craft of writing before embarking on putting pen to paper.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE END SARS OUTSTANDING POEMS?

TERSEER: Hmm, they're many. It's a difficult choice to make, honestly. It's like asking a mother to pick her favorite child. The level of creative dexterity demonstrated by Nigerians and of course, non-Nigerians who sent in over a hundred entries for the EndSARS Poetry Competition in 2020 was simply amazing. There is Chukwu Sunday Abel's "Split Green Flag", Nwokeabia Ifeanyi John's "How our Lights were Put Off", Godstime Nwaeze's "Bermuda Triangle" and a whole lot of others. As a matter of fact, all ten shortlisted entries and many others not on the shortlist actually won my heart and can favourably be tagged my favorite EndSARS outstanding poems because anyone of them at that level could have emerged the overall winner.

WA: WHICH POETRY COLLECTIONS ARE YOU READING AT THE MOMENT?

TERSEER: There are tons of poetry collections currently on my shelf, waiting for me to devour, and I'm very eager to. I'm presently and regrettably not reading any literary pieces now, not because I don't like to. This is because of my academic work. At the moment, I'm deeply engrossed in putting together my dissertation as one of the conditions I need to fulfill to the Benue State University's department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, for the award of a Masters degree in Language Education. Amongst those collections I've mentioned are people's unpublished manuscripts I'm meant to edit for publication and so forth.

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT A POEM THAT WOULD MAKE YOU INSTINCTIVELY SWITCH OFF FROM READING IT?

TERSEER: Yes. If the first few lines of anything worth calling a poem fail to grab my interest poetically, I lose interest in it. The truth is that any piece that fails to deploy language appropriately isn't worth the name of a poem. Poetry is not prose, and so, poetry must be rich in devices like metaphor, figures of sound such as rhymes, rich diction, and originality of ideas and so forth. In all of these, any piece of poetry must be sensible, linguistically fresh and enticing and must have a message for its readers.

WA: WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES YOUR HEART SOAR A LITTLE WHEN YOU READ

A NEW POEM?

TERSEER: If and when a poem appeals to any of my senses and/or emotions. You see, a good poem must make the reader feel something through the poem's effective deployment of words and language. Instead of getting me irritated by its lack of depth, penmanship and lack of good craftsmanship, anything worth calling a poem at all should either create some mental pictures in me or evoke some emotional stir in me. The presence of any one of these is okay, but the absence of all of these is certainly unacceptable by me and I believe this applies to all true poetry enthusiasts and artists.

WA: WHILE JUDGING ENDSARS POETRY COMPETITION WAS THERE A TIME YOU DIDN'T READ BEYOND THE FIRST LINE OF AN ENTRY AND DISMISS IT IMMEDIATELY?

TERSEER: That terrible urge to dismiss some entries just after I started reading the first few lines was certainly there. But people are gifted differently, and so, in order to ensure fairness and justice, I made sure I read everything to the end, no matter the nightmare in it. I do this with the hope that perhaps, some contestants would prefer to save their best for the last. That's why the job of a judge of a literary contest is such a difficult one. The judge passes through psychological torture sometimes in attempt to read some poorly written entries to the last lines.

WA: WHICH PRIZES HAVE YOU SEEN EMERGING RECENTLY THAT YOU THINK WILL HAVE A BIGGER PROMINENCE IN NIGERIAN LITERARY SCENE?

TERSEER: The thing with literary bodies and literary contests and prizes is not really in the level of media gimmicks adopted by their organisers. It's not about the level of what I refer to as 'whitewash' arrangements. The staying power lies on the soundness of the foundation upon which such literary prizes stand. We have seen many platforms offering one from of literary prize or the other fizzle and peter out every now and then. But like the saying goes, by their fruits, we shall know them. In Nigeria, some individuals, obscurity, rode to some level of prominence on the benevolent wings of the Association of Nigerian Authors, ANA. For some selfish and unclear reasons, some would hurriedly dump the Association to set up some mushroom literary bodies touting one literary prize or the other. These are the sort of mushroom literary bodies you see on and off every now and then like the phenomenal Nigerian NEPA. But that is not to say that there are no promising literary prizes with genuine intentions and high prospects of bigger prominence in the Nigerian literary scene. A few of them actually come to mind, such as the recent collaborative efforts between the Society of Young Nigerian Writers, SYNW and the International Human Rights Art Festival, IHRAF who successfully organised the 2020 EndSARS National Poetry Competition.

WA: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THOSE ENTERING COMPETITIONS ARE INFLUENCED TOO MUCH BY THEIR IDEAS OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE JUDGES AND WRITE TO THE DETRIMENT OF THEIR POETRY?

TERSEER: True, that possibility cannot be ruled out completely. In a desperate attempt to seek to impress judges, contestants are sometimes misled into overstressing themselves artistically. You see, art is meant to be a free expression of one's creative and imaginative ideas and impression about any given subject matter. One is supposed to be as real to oneself as possible. Seeking to impress unduly leads to disastrous consequences. There's tendency to put oneself under an undue pressure thereby putting one's natural poetic flow in serious jeopardy. It is always better to write at the dictates of one's heart than in an attempt to please a judge.

WA: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU AS A JUDGE TO FIND A NEW VOICE?

TERSEER: Besides being a judge of a literary contest, I've been actively involved in managing a literary organization, the Association of Nigerian Authors, ANA, through which literary awareness, reading and writing campaigns have vigorously been pursued. These campaigns are generally aimed at among other things, the discovery of new talents in creative writing. As a judge I found myself doing same thing in a different manner. You see, the harvest is much, but the labourers are few. There is still so much to write about. So many gaps to fill in the literary space and few writers are available to carry this out. Again, there are many more budding talents to be uncovered and brought to limelight. The Nigerian literary scene still yearns for new voices to take over from the established giants of the older generation of writers. So, as a literary enthusiast, I'm elated whenever I come across a promising young writer with the potential to redecorate Africa or Nigeria on the world map of literature.

WA: DO YOU IMAGINE THAT READING LOTS OF POETRY FOR A COMPETITION LIKE THIS WILL HELP WITH TEACHING POETRY?

TERSEER: Reading lots of poetry as a judge of a poetry contest actually provides the opportunity to directly assess how well the contestants understand what poetry entails. Instead of requiring them to answer questions on aspects of good poetry, they turn in pieces of poetry for a direct assessment. This form of assessment is very useful in the teaching and learning of poetry. It serves both as an assessment of learning and an assessment for learning. It provides a good opportunity to know areas of strengths and those of weaknesses of the learners (contestants) which puts the teacher (judge) in a better position to know what next line of action to adopt.

WA: ANY ADVICE FOR POETS HOPING TO WIN FUTURE PRIZE?

TERSEER: I would ordinarily not advice anyone to take up winning of literary prizes as a goal

or an objective to pursue. I would rather strongly advice aspiring writers to take time to hone their creative skills by being voracious readers of good texts. It is only through serious reading of literary texts that one gets to understand the basics of what good writings are. Aspiring writers also need literary appreciation skills to understand some of the literary concepts, conventions, theories and principles of literature and creative writing. When one has gotten a good grasp of these, only then can one think of indulging in creative writing. If one decides to enter for a writing competition, one should do so to seek for validation or assessment of one's writing. In summary, setting out to write to win prizes is what I seriously discourage writers from indulging in.

WA: TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND

TERSEER: Well, I hail from Ikurav-Tiev 1 in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. I grew up partly in urban areas and partly in rural areas. My primary education wasn't stable as I attended about five primary schools at different points in time across three states of Nigeria, namely, Benue, Imo and Ondo. My love for the literary Arts started as far back as when I was in primary five. Before I finished my primary education, I had already developed a strong love for reading stories. At that time, I didn't even know there's something called literature whose preoccupation was nothing other than stories. I got to secondary school and was excited to find out that there's a subject that dwells squarely on stories, and since then, my love of stories has never dwindled. At a point in time, I would stay indoors and read all day and night till all of me hurt. I'm presently in my mid forties. There wasn't much of the television for me to spend time watching while growing up and so, most children at that time got their entertainment through hardcopies of books. That helped a great and I guess that's what has shaped the most part of my life. I get confused whenever people say literature is difficult. I don't see the difficulty in reading and enjoying stories around the world. Fast forward, I'm professionally trained to teach language and literature. I'm the award winning author of "Euphoria of Sophistry", a poetry collection approved by the Benue State ministry of education for use in senior secondary schools. I write, I edit and counsel people on the art and science of reading and writing. I'm a senior public servant with the federal ministry of interior who is happily married with five beautiful children.

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

TERSEER: I think the commonest mistake that new and emerging writers make is to set their minds on winning prizes. The second is being in a haste to publish. The third is trying to copy others' style of writing. Of all these common mistakes, I think rushing to publish is the worst of them all and should be avoided if one intends to come out of press in the grandest of styles.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING AND WHAT MAKES

YOUR HEART SINK?

TERSEER: I'm usually spell bound by any piece of writing if the style of the writer is so captivating and I am also able to relate to the events of the story and there is so much suspense such that I find it difficult to eat until I've finished reading the very last page. My heart sinks when characters that I admire or have pity for in stories are made to suffer untold hardship from beginning of stories to their end without any form of compensation. A good example is Abu Bakir in Cyprian Ekwensi's "An African Night Entertainment."

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

TERSEER: I have read so much such that it's hard to say exactly who my favorite writers are. I love Suemo Chia, Isidore Okpewho, I love Ayi Kwei Armah, Chuma Nwokolo, Peter Abrahams and Wilbur Smith to mention just a few. All these writers have left indelible marks on me and they all have unique styles that are just peculiar to them.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

TERSEER: I'm a public servant at the moment and so there are a lot of things I wish I could do but I just can't do now. I hope to retire into full time literary engagements. I hope, wish and pray that I have time to complete many of the manuscripts, mine and those of others that I had started work on but I've been compelled to abandon for years, I hope to start a literary agency and publishing outfit. I hope to be able to assist people live their dreams of writing and publishing with less hassles.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

TERSEER: Read widely, know the basics of the art, join literary groups, don't ever be caught without a pen and a writing pad, keep a diary and make entries in it daily, be true to yourself, believe in yourself, tell yourself that you are the best and believe that to be true, write from your heart and don't be in a mad rush to publish.

WA: HOW SHOULD OUR MEMBERS APPROACH YOU IF THEY WANT TO?

TERSEER: I blog and I'm very active on social media, especially on Facebook. I blog at <https://terseersambaki.wordpress.com> my email is terseersam@gmail.com. You can tweet at me on @baki_ter and on Facebook, I'm **Terseer Sam Baki**. I also run the Facebook page "Pen & Pad Africa." Anyone can reach out to me through these platforms.

Terseer Sam Baki is a great lover of the Arts, a passionate poet, editor and all round writer. He is the author of the celebrated poetry collection, 'Euphoria of Sophistry' (2nd Runner up, ANA

Poetry Prize 2015). He was one of the judges of the EndSARS National Poetry Competition, 2020 and a coeditor of the EndSARS Poetry Anthology. He has published in several other literary anthologies. Terseer Sam Baki is the immediate past General Secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors, ANA, Benue State chapter. He holds a bachelor's degree in English Education and is presently researching for a master's degree in Language Education, all at the Benue State University, Makurdi. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing and experience as one of the EndSARS National Poetry Competition Judges.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/ihraf>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IHRAF AFRICA OUTREACH COORDINATOR MBIZO CHIRASHA: YOUNG AFRICAN WRITERS SHOULD READ, WRITE, LEARN AND STRIVE TO BE SUCCESSFUL



Mar 22

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND, WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU 'RE CURRENTLY WRITING

MC: I have been writing for the past 27 years. I am intrigued by the panorama of hills in my country, the mismatching of seasons, the poetry slam of birds in the mornings and the jam session of rock rabbits and mother-monkeys at country dawn, quite compelling. I was later attracted to the bustling and hustling in city squares, the echo of slogans and hushed beat of election campaign songs and again the nerve-tilting presidential speeches. Wail of motorcade sirens, hushed suffering of the masses under the grind of poverty as the ruling elite got possessed by seven legions of corruption, nepotism, tyranny and political violence. Nevertheless, despite

those and other ailments, Africa boasts of geographical, natural and mineral abundance, the ambiance brought by the flora and fauna. The sweetness of dialects from Xhosa, Kamba, Karanga, Kikuyu, Igbo and more. Africa is the home of Nyiragongo, Inyangani, Kirinyaga, Kilimanjaro, White Nile, Blue Nile, Nzere Rivers, Garurep, Limpopo. So my writings are dipped in my experience from the country dawns of my umbilical cord to the hustle of Harare City Squares, to the political landscape and up to the African traditions and cultures. I am a born griot who graduated into Spoken Word Poet, Page Poet, Author, Anthologist and Literary Activism Diplomat. As of now, I am writing my 800 paged Memoir, I call this process, a revolutionary adventure and I have experience much at my tender age that have to be read, archived and learnt by all students of life..

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

MC: I am excited by the change my writing can bring to any reader, the beauty of realizing the value of pen, word and paper. The gift of educating my readers, my people and global community at large through written words that speak differently than everyday talk but circling around ideas, processes and thoughts that are in reality of our daily lives.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND WHY?

MC: I have loved a lot of writers from Russia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, British, Irish Writers and more. I have to mention Famished Road by Ben Okri, there are some great stuff there, I loved how the author used powerful lyrical expression and bold verbiage to depict African Myth, the paradox of African tradition, the engaging drama of Africa wizardry and witchcraft written in beautiful and flowery taste.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW WRITER STARTING OUT?

MC: The most important aspect is writing what you know best, writing things you are familiar with, read voraciously to be able to find and master your voice, that voice that shapes you into the writer you become. Read, Write and keep focused.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

MC: I am inspired by several things, village life, country side terrains, village rituals, festivals, politics, political history, African kingdoms and anthropologies

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE?

MC: Not exactly, I usually write great pieces when I am staying alone than living with crowds, so I always write in my closet. This is very important because you are able to listen to the voices coming to your writing psyche. It's a place that's special?

WA: HOW, WHEN AND WHY DID YOU FIRST START WRITING?

MC: I listened to my father's stories, he was a great storyteller, I read a lot of Shona and English

folktales/ stories at tender age, I started writing readable messages 27 years ago

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?

MC: I can't remember, they are many and I have done a thousand of things, I remember publishing short opinions in the Gweru Times as back as 1996, some poetry in the Motto Magazine and some poetry in the Writers Scroll, a budding Writers Association of Zimbabwe journal. Quite a while.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?

MC: I was happy. It was a beautiful and wonderful step. It changed my mind set. It gave me that energy and strength to forge ahead.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

MC: Some of my publishers approached me while I wrote to others. Everything we do must be guided by faith, determination, tenacity, focus and due diligence. Social media is enabling people to access each other quickly and collaborate in various creative/ book writing projects.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES\ READERS.

MC: Responses from my readers are always brilliant and encouraging; I have so far built a very vibrant writing and reading lovers' community.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

MC: <https://miombopublishing.org/mbizo-chirashainternational/>

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITERS?

MC: Read, Write, read, write and focus. Learn and strive to achieve positive results

WA: ANY TYPICAL/COMMON MISTAKES THAT NEW WRITERS TEND TO MAKE?

MC: Hurry editors, hurry and bring on half baked writings, hunt for fame

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

MC: My forth coming memoir

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

MC: Good Morning President (2012)

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

MC: The writing journey requires a lot of hands on, determination and it's always steep like any other process.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

MC: Political Poetry, Human Rights Matters, Protests Poetry

WA: TELL US ABOUT THE POETRY EXCHANGE BETWEEN GIRL CHILD CREATIVITY CONCEPT OF ZIMBABWE AND THE SOCIETY OF YOUNG NIGERIAN WRITERS (SYNW)

MC: That was great; such projects have to be done always to promote diversity and integration among writers of different nations.

Mbizo Chirasha is a Zimbabwean poet, an internationally acclaimed Performance poet, Writer and a senior fellow of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF). In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him facts about his life, writing and literary activism

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/interview-with-mbizo-chirasha-young-african-writers-should-read-write-learn-and-strive-to-be-successful>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IHRAF PUBLISHES WRITER AND AFRICAN OUTREACH COORDINATOR CHUKWU SUNDAY ABEL



Mar 11

ONE WHO ASPIRES BECOMING A WRITER MUST HAVE THE EMOTIONAL MUSCLE TO WITHSTAND SEVERAL "NOS" FROM PUBLISHERS - CHUKWU SUNDAY ABEL

Chukwu Sunday Abel is a fiction writer, a journalist and an on air personality. He is also the first Prize Winner of the 2020 Creators Of Justice Literary Award organized by the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF). In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him details about his life and writing career.

WA: PLEASE, KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF.

CSA: Chukwu Sunday Abel is a journalist and a writer; the 2020 Creators Of Justice Literary Award First Prize Winner, a Runner up in the Victoria Literary Festival, Canada. My Literary works have appeared in anthologies and magazines across four continents.

WA: HOW AND WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT IHRAF AND IHRAF PUBLISHES?

CSA: I heard about IHRAF through a newsletter. The newsletter was delivered to my email. Among the items of news in the newsletter was call for submissions from IHRAF for its 2020 Creators Of Justice Literary Award. This award, my short story: "Less Human" eventually won the first prize.

WA: WHAT IS THE TITLE OF YOUR WORK THAT GOT PUBLISHED IN IHRAF PUBLISHES?

CSA: It's "Less Human"; it won the first prize for 2020 Creators of Justice Literary Award for Short stories category.

WA: DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN IHRAF'S LAST YEAR END SARS COMPETITION?

CSA: I did participate in IHRAF ENDSARS National Poetry Competition. I was happy that my poem: "Green Split Flag" made the shortlist and later designated "Notable Contribution" as well as published in the anthology alongside with other beautiful collections.

WA: DOES WRITING ENERGIZE OR EXHAUST YOU?

CSA: Writing is an inexhaustible forte to me. I am always motivated to write, to make my voice heard; I write to right, this is evident in so many of literary works published in magazines and anthologies across four continents.

WA: WHAT ARE THE COMMON TRAPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

CSA: The most common trap for emerging writers is “not a good fit for us” from Editors of magazines. This tends to make aspiring writers discouraged, consequently, lazy. Also, prioritizing monetary gains at the expense of making one's voice heard is another pitfall for emerging writers.

WA: HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED READER'S BLOCK?

CSA: In have not experienced reader's block.

WA: DID YOU EVER CONSIDER WRITING UNDER A PSEUDONYM?

CSA: I have never considered writing under a pseudonym.

WA: DO YOU TRY MORE TO BE ORIGINAL OR TO DELIVER TO READERS WHAT THEY WANT?

CSA: Most of my literary works are reflections of the past or unfolding events in my home country and the sociological, political and environmental issues affecting Africa. My writings are tailored to right; hence, I consider myself a satirist who writes to right rather than to entertain.

WA: DO YOU THINK SOMEONE COULD BE A WRITER IF HE DOESN'T FEEL

EMOTIONS STRONGLY?

CSA: Becoming a writer is hugely dependent on the will to do so. One who aspires becoming a writer must have the emotional muscle to withstand several "No's" from publishers.

WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

CSA: Popular Nigerian authors such as Chika Unigwe, Helon Habila have been a great influence on my development. Chika Unigwe in particular has been pivotal in my growth as a writer.

Sometime ago, when my manuscript received a traditional publishing deal from Europe books, she advised me on how to go about it.

However, the writer whose literary works have greatly impacted me is late Buchi Emechata.

WA: WHAT WAS THE EARLY EXPERIENCE IN WHICH YOU LEARNED THAT LANGUAGE HAD POWER?

CSA: My mum was a profound story teller. She told us simple stories that were compelling because of her choice of words. I will say she taught me the immeasurable power inherent in language.

WA: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT MAGAZINES FOR WRITERS TO SUBSCRIBE?

CSA: No magazine is actually less important than the other. It depends on the writer's or reader's interest and liking. I will recommend IHRAF publishes, Granta, Afreada, the Preachy, Brittle paper, Strange Horizon, The Sun Magazine, etc.

WA: HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED BOOKS HAVE YOU FINISHED?

CSA: At present, I have two completed novel length manuscripts. Of the two, one is forthcoming 2022.

WA: WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE TO YOU?

CSA: Literary success to me is the gratification that comes from one seeing one's literary works in worthwhile places as well as getting commendation; this to me, is Literary success.

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO MARKET YOUR BOOKS?

CSA: I am not interested in self-publishing, hence I have not thought about marketing my books without the assistance of the publisher.

WA: WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU DO, HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND RESEARCHING BEFORE BEGINNING A BOOK?

CSA: Every writer has his niche of writing, the aspect he thinks his literary skills best fit in. I am a fiction writer and fiction writing is hugely dependent on the writer's creative inventions and instinct. There is often little researching in fiction writing.

WA: DO YOU VIEW WRITING AS A KIND OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE?

CSA: To me, writing depends on one's imaginative and creative ability. I don't think it has something to do with religiosity and spirituality.

WA: FINAL ADVICE FOR IHRAF PUBLISHES.

CSA: First, I have to commend IHRAF Publishes for its notable contribution in fostering human rights globally. Its increasing presence in Africa is not only timely but long awaited.

I enjoin IHRAF not to relent in giving voice to the voiceless.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-ihraf-publishes-writer-and-african-outreach-coordinator-chukwu-sunday-abel>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IHRAF DIRECT ACTION RECIPIENT BUWASO IBRAHIM RAZACK



Mar 4

Buwaso Ibrahim Razack is a Ugandan poet-in-exile, also a Spoken Word Artist. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him few facts about his writings, project and human rights struggle.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET STARTED AS A POET?

BIR: Unnnhh , maybe the same way I started calling out mama and dada when I was a toddler hahahaha, I started by speaking what's on my mind without fear or favor, believing I am the best and greatest of all times, standing on the truth. Also I write and practice every day. Practice makes perfect. Writing needs constant practice. This takes me where I am today.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET INTO SPOKEN WORD?

BIR: Nature got me into spoken word; I can also say it's a calling. Calling to show the world lightness, truth, honesty and transparency. I have already made a name through it. My desire to fight for human rights, speak the truth to the people in power and my thirst for a better world got me into Spoken Word.

WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE MISS IF THEY ONLY READ POETRY, DON'T HEAR IT SPOKEN?

BIR: They miss out a lot, they miss seeing the real images, action, hardness, softness, sweetness, rhyming, rhythms that always accompany every delivery while rendering such lines. Poetry is life and my life also depends on it. Everything about me is poetry. Spoken Word makes poetry lively. It makes it interesting and meaningful.

WA: DID YOU HAVE TO TRAIN AT ALL TO GET THE FLOW OF SPOKEN WORD POETRY?

BIR: Hahahaha, I did not attend any Spoken Word training school and there is no such where I am presently. My spoken Word talent is natural. I did not go to any school to learn it. I practice every day and through that I became a Spoken Word Master. My Spoken Word rendering style actually makes me unique among my colleagues.

WA: HOW DO YOUR POEMS DEVELOP? PLEASE GUIDE US THROUGH THE STAGES OF A POEM

BIR: As I mentioned above, poetry is what I do every day. It's a day to day affair. I write whenever I feel like writing. I can write about anything and my writing depends on tones. The tones can be hard, soft, revolutionary and lyrical. I always follow some rules and guidelines whenever I'm writing a poem. The rules always help my Spoken Word rendering.

WA: I HEARD YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON A REFUGEE REHABILITATION PROJECT; CAN YOU SHED MORE LIGHT ON THE PROJECT?

BIR: Yes, I am the Founder and currently the CEO of the International Refugees Rehabilitation Initiative which is basically into Refugees Rehabilitation and Management. Also into care and maintenance of refugees in camps, organizing vocational training for refugees, orientation for resettlement, and an extensive tracing service to find lost relatives. We hope to work with human rights lawyers, writers, NGOs, business and religion institutions in order to achieve some of our aims and objectives.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE SO FAR?

BIR: I can summarily say the freedom of the masses is the basic reason why I'm into activism. Millions of Africans are suffering due to bad leadership and negligence by their elected leaders. Though they always blame their failures on Mistakes. Majorly, mistakes committed by them while they were in power. I have been able to use poetry to address this and other issues affecting the growth and development of Africa and Africans in general.

WA: WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH IHRAF?

BIR: IHRAF has been at the forefront of making silent voices heard to the whole world through her IHRAF Publishes. The platform has helped to make many voices heard and known to the rest of the world. It has really helped me in person in making my struggle known to the world. IHRAF is my pathfinder.

WA: HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO FIT WRITING IN WITH OTHER DEMANDS ON YOUR TIME?

BIR: Like I said, writing is what I do every day. Though I have some specific hours which I have set aside for writing. Writing is my passion. I write anywhere I found myself. I am always with my pen and paper. Whenever the ideas come, I put them down on papers.

WA: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A SPOKEN WORD POET?

BIR: It takes nothing but being real, being you and believing in yourself. Constant practice is another vital element which must be taken into consideration as a Spoken Word Artist.

WA: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FIRST TIME PERFORMING

BIR: It was quite funny and a lovely time. I was five years old then. You know being a kid; my act was very funny and humorous.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE LIVING POETS?

BIR: Shonda Buchanan. Shonda Buchanan is an award-winning poet and educator. She is also the author of *Who's Afraid of Black Indians?* and *Equipoise: Poems from Goddess Country* and editor of two anthologies, *Voices from Leimert Park* and *Voices from Leimert Park Redux*. She has been my mentor and a literary friend.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE INTERESTED IN PERFORMANCE POETRY?

BIR: Upcoming Spoken Word Artists should believe in themselves. Their watchwords should be transparency, honesty and truth. They should continue writing and face any challenges that confront them.

WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

BIR: I have social media handles and currently building my own app where all my writings and social activities will be found. My current social media handles are:

*Rich kidd thats facebook

*BlackboyGu thats Twitter

*Blackboy __ivyoffical

WA: HAVE YOU, OR WOULD YOU, DO AN ALBUM?

BIR: Yes like any other Spoken Word Artists, I have a couple of Performance poetry skits but yet to be premiered for public consumption.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-ihraf-direct-action-recipient-buwaso-ibrahim-razack>

WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS IHRAF CREATORS OF JUSTICE LITERARY AWARD WINNER, CHINEDU VINCENT OKORO



Feb 19

Chinedu Vincent Okoro is a poet and a member of Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). He has a published work in IHRAF Publishes Anthology. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, President, Nigerian Chapter of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF), he shared with him comprehensive details about his writing career and his contact with IHRAF.

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF

CVO: I am Chinedu Vincent Okoro. Born in Aba, Abia State. I have a twin brother (non-identical). I'm also an educator and a social change activist. I write plays. I write short stories. I'm still learning how to write poetry. I read Educational Management and Political Science (B.Ed) from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Nigeria. I also have Nigerian Certificate in Education (N.C.E) in Political Science and Social Studies from Institute of Ecumenical Education, Thinkers Corner, Enugu State. I'm the president of St. Vincent Literary Forum (SVLF), Nigeria, Consul, Movimiento poetas del mundo (Abia State) and a member of Association of Nigeria (ANA). I'm an ardent lover of Virgin Mary - mother of Jesus Christ. I'm single and looking forward to hooking up with my FRESH ROSE.

WA: HOW AND WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT IHRAF AND IHRAF PUBLISHES?

CVO: I got to know about IHRAF and IHRAF Publishes for the first time on the facebook handle of Mbizo Chirasha - a great bard I cherish so much. And I have never regretted getting connected with the organization.

WA: WHAT IS THE TITLE OF YOUR WORK THAT GOT PUBLISHED ON IHRAF PUBLISHES?

Dear Truth.

WA: DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN IHRAF'S LAST YEAR END SARS COMPETITION?

CVO: Of course, I did. I was among the 20 poets longlisted for the END SARS National Poetry Competition from over 100 submissions across five countries.

WA: IF YES, WHAT IS THE TITLE OF THE ENTRY YOU SUBMITTED?

CVO: Till our voices and hands dine with the zenith

WA: DOES WRITING ENERGIZE OR EXHAUST YOU?

CVO: If you want to drain me out, take away pen, book, phone or any other material that can aid my writing in a day let alone days or weeks. I find solace in writing.

WA: WHAT ARE COMMON TRAPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

CVO: Problem of originality. Most of the aspiring writers want to copy the writing styles of established writers without creating theirs. Also, being too quick to publish their books even when there are lots of assignments to be done in the book.

WA: HAVE YOU EVER GOTTEN READER'S BLOCK?

CVO: I can read any book or piece anytime and anywhere so far as the book or piece is interesting, entertaining, educative and not against my moral standard. The only thing that can make me lose interest or feel tired reading a book (especially voluminous one) is when the message is too complex to comprehend

WA: DID YOU EVER CONSIDER WRITING UNDER A PSEUDONYM?

CVO: No, I didn't think of that.

WA: DO YOU TRY MORE TO BE ORIGINAL OR TO DELIVER TO READERS WHAT THEY WANT?

CVO: If you have read any of my works, you would see that there is no pretence. I'm very raw. I pour my heart to show my readers the way I feel about any subject I write.

Pertaining to what the readers want, it is imperative that a writer should be acquainted with the happenings in his/her local community. This will help the writer to carry the readers along. For instance, no home-based writer needs to be told that many Nigerians even children are fed up with inept leadership in the country and are yearning for genuine change and not 'one chance change.' In this situation, writers should use their inks to project the people's yearnings and also discredit other things that eat up happiness and safety of the common people in the country such as terrorism, religious extremism, poverty, etc. So, I must say that inasmuch as I try to be original, I do take into consideration the needs of my readers.

WA: DO YOU THINK SOMEONE COULD BE A WRITER IF THEY DON'T FEEL EMOTIONS STRONGLY?

CVO: And I ask, how can one be a writer without having strong emotions for writing? I don't think it's possible. It is a public knowledge that writing is not a lucrative venture for emerging writers in our contemporary society. It takes a young writer who has strong emotions for writing to be glued to it. And I must confess that it is the emotion that keeps people like us going.

WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER WRITER?

CVO: Mbizo Chirasha and Nnane Ntube are two writer friends who have affected my writing career tremendously. I must say that most of my works featured in/on international magazines, anthologies, etc. are all kudos to the literary opportunities these two precious souls brought to my doorstep. I will not forget Olatubosun Eniloluwa David, a writer friend turned brother and Dr. Ikechukwu Egbuta for their continuous encouragements and supports. In fact, during my long break on Facebook last year, they were there supplying me with literary opportunities and information from Facebook that uplifted my writing career last year.

WA: WHAT WAS AN EARLY EXPERIENCE WHERE YOU LEARNED THAT LANGUAGE HAD POWER?

CVO: The day I spoke up and challenged the young man who had always threatened and insulted my parents. Before then, I feared talking back at him whenever he threatened or insulted them. Believe me, after the encounter, he didn't threaten my parents again. I was in SS 2 then.

WA: WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT MAGAZINES FOR WRITERS TO SUBSCRIBE TO?

CVO: Bakwa magazine, Black Orpheus, Miombo publishing, Rage Cage zine, Brittle Paper, Prairie Schooner, ActiveMuse, Transition magazine, Libretto, Parousia magazine (for Christian writers), the Republic, Different Truths, Kalahari Review and many more.

WA: HOW MANY UNPUBLISHED AND HALF-FINISHED BOOKS DO YOU HAVE?

CVO: Let me say fifteen now.

WA: WHAT DOES LITERARY SUCCESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

CVO: If a writer writes a book or piece that motivated and inspired his/her readers. I see it as literary success.

WA: WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO MARKET YOUR BOOKS?

CVO: I promote my book, 'Now I know,' on my social media handles and sell on Just Fiction, More Books, Amazon, African vivre, etc.

WA: WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU DO, AND HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND RESEARCHING BEFORE BEGINNING A BOOK?

CVO: I do a lot of researches and most of them are asking from the right source. For instance, if I'm writing anything related to law or medicine, I do visit prominent practitioners in the fields to get first hand information from them. Though, I don't carry out any research prior to the commencement of most of my literary works, due to the nature of my calling as a writer. I only do so, after my first drafts.

WA: DO YOU VIEW WRITING AS A KIND OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE?

CVO: Based on my personal experiences, writing is more of spiritual to physical practice. I can be inspired by the physical issues or situations in my environment, but will not have a clear picture on how to put them down. I get more clarified on how to write them through dreams in the mid night and whispers during leisure period or in a quiet environment. Apart from that, writing has become a daily ritual practice (sacred tradition) to me. And spirituality is incomplete without observing the sacred tradition.

WA: FINAL ADVICE FOR IHRAF PUBLISHES.

CVO: First and foremost, I salute Comrade Thomas Block and entire management team of IHRAF Publishes. You guys are doing great work. The Igbo man would say, "Onye agwala jide nke o ji, ya mara na nke o ji di mma." All I'm saying is that you should keep up the good work you are doing for literature and humanity. Daalu.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/zirygoat7bkp0i4wt1gv344ym0we9f>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS
ADEKOLA EMMANUEL ADEBOWALE:
A GOOD LITERATURE WILL MAKE
YOU FEEL YOURSELF MORE AROUND,
MORE REAL AND MORE VIVIDLY
THAN YOU'VE EVER FELT**



Jan 3

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

AEA: I can't pinpoint one particular thing that inspired me to write, but I know that I had a lot of tumultuous ideas and recurrent sparse events in my head. I usually tried to arrange them chronologically and tell them to my friends; I didn't even know I could write until I read a particular novel, *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda N. Adichie. Though I had read few other writers before her—Sophocles, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka—but I found *Purple Hibiscus* more contemporary and closer to one of the storylines in my head so I thought I could also find expression in writing.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

AEA: Wow! If I can still rely on my memory, I believe it's about eight years now of mindful

writing. Yes, eight years.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

AEA: Hmm, I started writing quite a long time before I could say I had really started writing. That's the difference I draw between mindful and unmindful writing. I started when I was in primary school; I started with some picture stories that a class friend of mine, Taiwo—I can't remember his surname—and I usually did. We would use different paintings alongside short explanations of the event at each scene to narrate stories. However most times ungrammatical, our other mates found them very hilarious, and of course, we were just 'green' kids!

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

AEA: The answer is simply no. I wasn't always wanting to be a writer. I actually wanted to genuinely defend my country but I knew I would hold fast to my writing skills, and I would write about many other events in the military, the gory and the glorious ones.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW WRITER, SOMEONE JUST STARTING OUT?

AEA: If I'm truly fit to offer any advice at all, I would rather the new writer picked up good books and read. To be a writer, you must be a reader first. And to continue being a writer, you must be an active reader. Reading opened and opens my world, reading made me realize the materialization of the ideas in my head few years ago. A good literature will make you feel yourself more around, more real and more vividly than you've ever felt. A good literature will open your mind, take you out of yourself to places, yet you're just in your conducive study or comfortable room.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

AEA: That's a giant one. I was even barred by this for few months without knowing what it was. The quest to break it led me to reading dictionaries. I read Chambers and Collins dictionaries completely but I still realized that even my large word bank could still fail at a point. One Mr Taiwo, a then master's student in UI later told me what it was and that by listening to people, making research on topical writings and reading both academic and non academic writings, I would overcome it. In addition to these ideas, I got a thesaurus. In it, it is easy for me to locate a word's synonymous form that fits properly in a particular context.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN? WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE?

AEA: I have written five books sir. In the order of their creations, they are: Our Buffalos, Who's Olukubu?, Dual Paradigms of Now, a Humane Robber_ and Songs of Hope through a Penitent's Journey. The last one is poetry. Though copyrighted, they aren't published yet. Among all, my favorite remains Dual Paradigms of Now.

WA: WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOK(S)?

AEA: I was just surprised that I could do better than my first draft of a book titled, The Clowns but now, Our Buffalos. It was surprising how writing challenge could help me grow that fast. Because one Rev. Ismaila who pastors at my church had challenged me some time ago, in 2013, with a deadline for rewriting after reading my very first draft that reeked of errors of all kinds. I'm just grateful he guided me and didn't kill the vibe.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

AEA: My favorite character is in my Our Buffalos; his name is Victor. I like his willful power and surviving spirit that finally gave him a victory.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

AEA: Hmm, my inspiration is actually derived from meditation on God's ways and His glorious empyrean. Aside that, I don't think anything else brings me better inspiration. There's a serene conduciveness in magnifying Him or just praying, believing that He hears me and staying silently in His presence for some moments. I get refreshed and renewed and filled up with some inner joy that is unexplainable.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

AEA: Like I said earlier, my books aren't published yet due to some financial incapacibilities. But I hope that by God's grace, next year, I shall get, at least, one published.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR BOOKS?

AEA: Well, finding out more about me is not a problem. My Facebook profile, Emmanuel Adekola, speaks, as well as my Facebook page, Wale Adekola's Literary Space. People can also find more about me and my books via my personal WhatsApp contact:

<https://wa.me/+2349060283962>

WA: HAVE ANY OF YOUR BOOKS BEEN MADE INTO AUDIOBOOKS? IF SO,

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN PRODUCING AN AUDIO BOOK?

AEA:No, any of them hasn't been made into audiobook.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WERE THE MOST ENJOYABLE TO WRITE?

AEA: The most enjoyable to write among my books is Dual Paradigms of Now simply because I enjoy the make up of its verisimilitude and the nexus created between two different worlds.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

AEA: I haven't had experience with a published work of mine. I have only accrued experiences in how tedious it may be to try to publish.

WA: WHAT, IN YOUR OPINION, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?

AEA: Ah, in my opinion, I strongly believe that three major elements are much more important as far as good writing is concerned. The first one is clarity, its communicative essence; two, a good command of the language of communication. And then truth. Not in the general or traditional sense but in accordance to the world created in the book. That is, the work should have verisimilitude. Don't tell us, for example, in your writing, that someone got reduced in height while walking without giving us the basis of the Gravitational Pull of the Earth that might have caused it, if you're writing a science fiction. That is my opinion.

WA: WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR OF ALL TIME? YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY THEM?

AEA: Choosing a favorite author, for me, is somehow difficult because I literally enjoy all authors I've come across. I've appreciated all their works being unique and aesthetic in their different styles. But to answer this question, I'll rather give a ranking to showcase my level of liking for each. First is Femi Osofisan, Ola Rotimi then Wole Soyinka, followed by Chinua Achebe, even though he's dead. Next is Chimamanda N. Adichie and then Camara Laye then Remi Raji, plus many others. Meanwhile, none of them really owns a position; there's constant interchangeability of the levels in my mind. My favorite books of these authors in respective order are: Who's Afraid of Solarin?, Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, The Lion and the Jewel, Things Fall Apart , Half of a Yellow Sun, African Child, Gather my Blood Rivers of Song.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING

ABOUT THE BOOK

AEA: My latest one is a collection of poems titled Songs of Hope through a Penitent's Journey. It simply comprises of different lyrical poems yet telling a story of a person's spiritual journey with God and his experience with Ifá and other religions.

WA: ARE THERE ANY SECRETS FROM THE BOOK, YOU CAN SHARE WITH YOUR READERS?

AEA: I will share no secret but this particular one. In that poetry book, there's a secret, among many others, about our unreasonable and outrageous religiosity in Africa, and what piety truly means versus what God really wants.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

AEA: The inspiration was gotten from silent prayer to God like I said the other time. He has taken me through long spiritual, physical, emotional and alluring journeys, then He laid it so strongly upon my heart to write what could serve as an eye opener to our unrighteous righteousness in Africa and lots more.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND/OR MESSAGE IN THE BOOK?

AEA: I have already answered this earlier. Nevertheless, I will be more explicit. The major theme is a presentation of God's mind purely through His words. Another theme is the evil being religious, but not pious, does to us as a people in Africa.

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

AEA:Relief. I hope they will take relief. Rest and peace and freedom from the shackles of human-hyped religiosity as well as a confidence of the mind in their approach of the spiritual. And also, fresh innovative mind.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

AEA: Songs of Hope through a Penitent's Journey. The significance of this is that the songs are the different lyrical poems one will come across in it, and it is through a journey because it narrates through the penitent's life. In a world so corrupt, hardly can one find 40% of men who are still very rational. The penitent therefore hopes for a better day. He hopes that one day, the darkness will be over, light will come and he will witness it.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

AEA: I won't say yes neither will I say no. The change came before the book. Manifestation of the change is the book. The book is a representation of experiences. Glory be to God for surmounting.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

AEA: I like all the three major genres of literature. Among the sub-genres, I think I enjoy fiction and high comedy so much and also narrative poems.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

AEA: As far as literature is concerned, I hate no genre. Though I can say I don't really enjoy autobiography.

WA: WHAT AUTHOR (WHO IS STILL LIVING) WOULD YOU DEARLY LOVE TO MEET?

AEA: Oh, my God! There are a number. I would love so much to meet Okùnrin ogun, Prof. Wole Soyinka, Prof. Femi Osofisan, Chimamanda N. Adichie and Oke Ndibe.

WA: DO YOU LIKE TO DISPLAY YOUR BOOKS ON A BOOKSHELF OR KEEP THEM IN A VIRTUAL LIBRARY?

AEA: I don't really like virtual books or soft copies. Even if what is available is soft copy, I'll print it out. On a bookshelf, yes, that's where I like to display my books.

WA: DO YOU PREFER FLASH FICTION, SHORT STORIES, NOVELLAS, OR NOVELS?

AEA: I prefer both short stories and novels to others.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

AEA: Hmm, I can gladly recommend to you _Dream-Seeker on Divining Chain_ by Okinba Launko if you don't have it already anyways.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

AEA:That's this past November. I visited KDL, Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan.

WA: HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CRUSH ON A BOOK CHARACTER?

AEA: Smiles... Yes, I've once had a crush on a book character and that's Kambili of Chimamanda's *_Purple Hibiscus_* .

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER MADE YOU LAUGH OUT LOUD?

AEA: Oh, yes! Who's Afraid of Solarin? did. Gbonmiayelobiojo and his cabinet members' reactions on realizing that the person who took so many things from them was just an imposter and that the real Solarin, government's inspector, had just arrived made me laugh so loud. Another one is the dancing home of the soldiers before realizing they had already reached the barracks and that they had left their guns behind in Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*.

Wale Adekola is a literary scholar and teacher; he has trained several pupils and students at various academic levels: primary, secondary and A'level schools such as: First Class Prevarsity, Idi-ape, Teekay tutorials, Owode, Al-aleem Model College, Olunde, Real Educational Consult (REC), UI, etc., and he currently teaches A'level classes at Winners Academy, Olorunkemi, Ibadan. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he takes you to his literary world and the things that inspire and motivate him.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-adekola-emmanuel-adebowale-a-good-literature-will-make-you-feel-yourself-more-around-more-real-and-more-vividly-than-youve-ever-felt>