



INTERNATIONAL  
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MOVEMENT

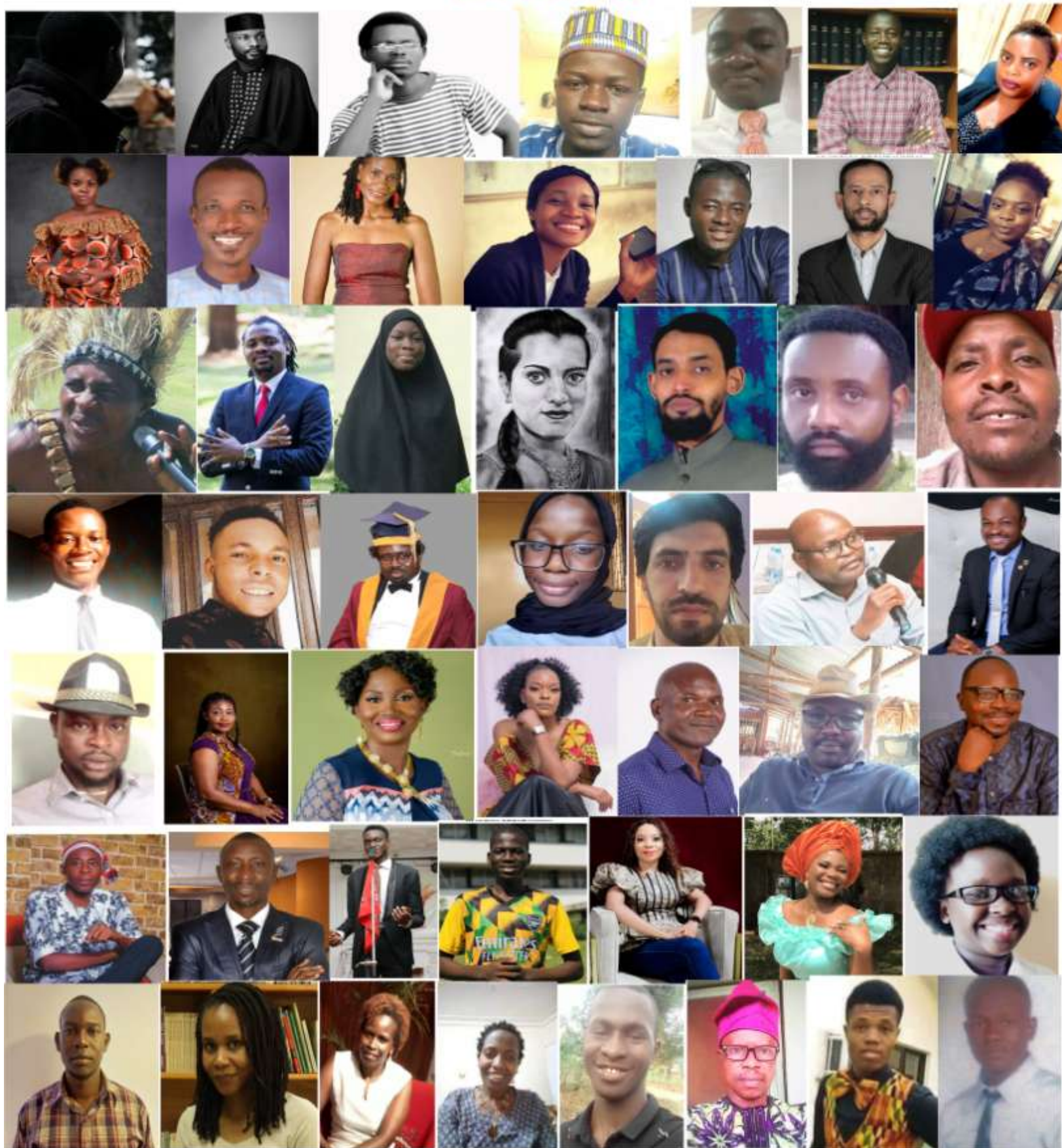
# INSIDE IHRAM AFRICA

## IHRAM INTERVIEW SERIES



Compilations of interviews from the African Chapter of the  
International Human Rights Art Movement (IHARAM): January - December 2023

### BOOK 3



## INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic realm where art and human rights converge, the International Human Rights Art Movement (IHRAM) embarked on a groundbreaking initiative in 2021—the IHRAM Interview Series. This ambitious project aimed to provide a platform for both African and non-African creators to share the intricacies of their creative processes and the challenges they surmount in their quest to bring impactful content to the world.

The underlying mission of the IHRAM Interview Series is rooted in a genuine desire to understand the journeys undertaken by these creators. By delving into the depths of their experiences, the series seeks to uncover the nuances and inspirations that shape their artistic endeavors. It serves as a conduit for creators to express the hurdles they face, the triumphs they celebrate, and the profound insights they gain along the way.

The inaugural year of the series, 2021, saw a compelling engagement with 48 diverse creators from various disciplines. The overwhelming response prompted a continuation into 2022, where 54 more creators were interviewed, expanding the series' scope and impact. The year 2023 marked another milestone, with 50 creators sharing their stories, adding to the rich tapestry of voices that define the IHRAM Interview Series.

Heading this transformative initiative are three visionary Directors, each hailing from different corners of Africa. Mbizo Chirasha, the Director of IHRAM African Secretariat in Zimbabwe, Grace Suge, Director in Kenya, and Wole Adedoyin, Director in Nigeria, collectively spearhead the series. Their commitment to amplifying the voices of creators and fostering a global dialogue on the intersection of art and human rights is evident in the diverse array of individuals featured.

The interviews conducted in 2023 were a melting pot of creative expression, featuring poets, novelists, artists, human rights activists, and more. Each conversation offered a unique glimpse into the multifaceted world of these creators, shedding light on the ways in which art becomes a powerful tool for advocacy and social change.

As we navigate the pages of the IHRAM Interview Series, we invite you to embark on a journey of discovery—an exploration of the creative minds that shape our world. Through this series, IHRAM not only celebrates the individual stories of these creators but also seeks to build bridges that connect us all through the universal language of art and human rights.

Wole Adedoyin  
Director  
IHRAF African Secretariat

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International Human Rights Art Festival (African Chapter)

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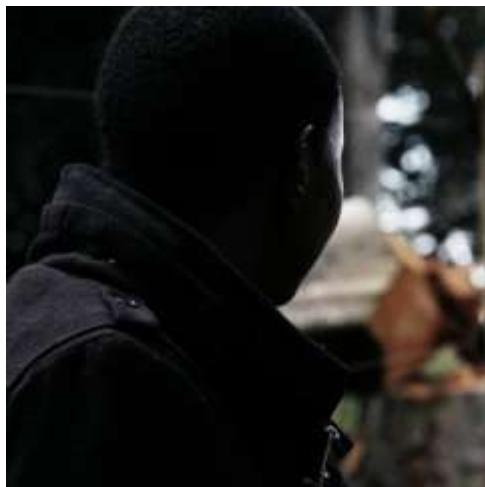
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**INTERVIEWS CURATED BY MBIZO CHIRASHA, THE DIRECTOR OF IHRAM  
AFRICAN SECRETARIAT, ZIMBABWE**





## **MBIZO CHIRASHA SPEAKS TO POWERFUL KENYAN POET DOUGLAS KAKA WANYAMA**



**MC:** Who is Kaka Wanyama and what mark has she made in the Kenyan creative industry?

**Kaka Manyama:** I am a young man from Western Kenya, three time 1st runner up Kenya National Drama Festival-Western Kenya-Narrative category (2006, 2009 & 2010). I have had the pleasure of being the 1st AD for the 'Yes Mwalimu' TV show that ran on KUTV between Sept 2015-Feb 2016, that sought to bring the plight of Kenyan teachers to the fore using humour. I also served as the second editor of the Campus Diary Magazine where I gave a platform to rising voices across Kenyan Universities and colleges to sharpen their creative skills and earn a decent wage while highlighting their issues. Early this year through the 'EnvironMENTAL Wellness-35 letters' creative campaign I sought to raise awareness on mental health issues and managed to bring together creatives, activists, health stakeholders and the political class together for a tree planting initiative and cycling for mental wellness and using creative arts to cope with mental challenges.

**MC:** You are a poet and story teller, how do you divide your time and what inspires you?

**Kaka Manyama:** It is a tricky balance especially with a full time gig on the side and as such I always dedicate my morning and evenings to my creative endeavours and weekends that I have no engagement. My inspiration comes from many places especially when I'm alone with nature. Also the belief that my elementary teacher Madam Sophy had in me growing up kinda drives me. It is like she resides somewhere in my head.

**MC:** How has been your experience since you started writing?

**Kaka Manyama:** Writing has been a rollercoaster ride for me, sometimes I have this great ideas in my head when resting and once I try to put them down everything goes. Being undervalued for your creativity has also been somewhat of a headache. I have been betrayed also by people in this creative journey, I once worked on a project and submitted it for review only to come across it under somebody's name weeks later. I have gotten a family from writing, people I've never met or seen who just held my hand and guided me, supported me and it's beautiful.

**MC:** What's lessons have you learnt so far since you started and how you would like to improve the Kenyan creative arts scene?

**Kaka Manyama:** The greatest lesson I have learnt is patience, there are stories that took me years to finish, others a few minutes. I have learnt to take in criticism in all its forms. To improve the Kenyan creative industry we need more forums and trainings on how to turn creative works to income generating activities and not side hustles. We need to empower the artists and not exploit them in the name of platform and opportunity.

**MC:** How many books have you written so far, are they published yet?

**Kaka Manyama:** I have written three books 'Finding Millie', 'Facing Mecca' and 'The preacher from Migori' that are yet to hit the shelves but will hopefully be in bookstores early 2024.

**MC:** Are your writings carry the messages of social equity, creative justice and human freedoms, if any which one are those

**Kaka Manyama:** Human freedoms is the main message I try to carry. Embracing and owning our personalities and speaking truth to power

**MC:** What do you think of Kenya's political situation?

**Kaka Manyama:** We have made steady strides since independence, we have made some gains but still have a long way to go. We still need to address issues of kidnapping by state organs, we need to give freedom to minority interest groups that are still taboos in our cultural setting. We must work hard to ensure that we don't have films being banned because they touch on certain topics or because they offend moral crusaders.

**MC:** What is your take on the human rights environment in Kenya, do you think human freedoms are upheld in Kenya?

**Kaka Manyama:** Yes, 'the preacher from Migori' is a collection of poems that delve into the question of cultural beliefs and norms, the tug of war between what is acceptable or African enough. It explores the probability of certain roles and acts frowned upon because of religious beliefs and what it means if the context is switched, what is good for the goose hasn't been good for the gander and the poems seek to ask this in a cheeky but blunt way.

**MC:** Where do you see you in next five years, I mean with your writings and artistic endeavors

**Kaka Manyama:** I see myself at the heart of the next creative revolution, it is my hope and dream to resuscitate the African folklore as we were told by our grandparents. To own the African story and tell it the African way.

**MC:** What is your parting shot to your contemporaries?

**Kaka Manyama:** No art is bigger, no one is greater than the other. Chinua Achebe wrote 'Let the eagle perch and the hawk also perch.' We can only be strong if we embrace positive criticism and lift each other up. The cake is big enough for all of us to share.

Douglas Kaka Wanyama is a prolific young Kenyan Poet , Writer, Editor and Advocate of Artist and human rights. He writes versatile yet powerful verses touching deeply on African culture, traditions, tribes, spirituality, corruption, love of humanity and other social-cultural-human concerns.

**IHRAM WRITER MBIZO CHIRASHA SPEAKS TO MULTI-TALENTED  
ZIMBABWEAN ARTIST LINGIWE PATIENCE GUMBO**



**MC:** Who is Lingiwe Patience Gumbo and what mark has she made in the Zimbabwean creative Industry?

**LPG:** Lingiwe Patience Gumbo is a multi talented creative artist; singer-songwriter, poet, writer and voiceover artist. So far she has made small footprints in the creative industry mainly through poetry and music which she uses as tools for awareness and entertainment at varied events. Numerous voice overs for documentaries on matters affecting humanity have also been done.

**MC:** You are a multi- Disciplinary artist and an arts administrator, how do you divide your time and what inspires you?

**LPG:** Art is part of my life and I enjoy learning from, interacting and networking with artists of all genres. I understand the need for a strong psycho-social support system for artists to nurture talent and maximize growth. My time is divided according to my availability to assist, if I can I will. If I can't I will refer to other fellow creatives, that way I am not overwhelmed. I am inspired by my faith in God, nature, love and life experiences.

**MC:** You have been adjudicator for some powerful artistic interventions like Hear Me Zimbabwe, what was the experience?

**LPG:** I realised the enormous talent that Gweru and surrounding areas possess. It was amazing; breath taking and very entertaining. I am convinced that the music industry is in safe hands.

**MC:** What's lessons have you learnt so far since you started and how would you like to improve the Zimbabwe creative arts scene?

**LPG:** There is need to develop more spaces which inspire creativity in communities. When a talent is discovered proper and adequate nurturing is vital for maximum growth. Artists must be knowledgeable about topics which help them appreciate their own art, and understand processes



of marketing themselves through seminars and workshops. This will definitely improve the creative arts scene.

**MC:** How many books have you written so far, Are they published yet?

**LPG:** I have written close to 10 books but I have published one so far. It is a poems collection of 20 titled Words of Life (2019).

**MC:** Do your writings carry the messages of social equity , creative justice and human freedoms , if any which one are those?

**LPG:** My writings focus on social equity and all aspects of life such as mental health wellness, child abuse, early marriage, drug and substance abuse, love and motivational.

**MC:** What is your take on the human rights environment in Zimbabwe, do you think human freedoms are upheld in Zimbabwe?

**LPG:** The issue of freedom of speech and expression is tricky in Zimbabwe and this restricts an artist's creativity.

**MC:** Are your songs, poetry and stories on themes of gender equity , cultural and religious tolerance, give us examples?

**LPG:** Yes they are and more. On the literate scene is an upcoming fiction book titled Good For Nothing based on gender equity and empowerment. It spells the plight of a girl child; discrimination, abuse and early marriage. Another is Matters of the Heart which tackles issues surrounding mental health and gender based violence. A song titled Ndine Ronda speaks against gender-based violence.

**MC:** Where do you see you in next five years , I mean with your writings and artistic endeavors

**LPG:** I envision myself having produced my second Album titled Rebirth and published at least 5 books. I have a dream of establishing a vibrant centre for arts and creativity in the Midlands Province which will become a home for artist nurturing and mentorship from level.

**MC:** What is your parting shot to your contemporaries?

**LPG:** It's never too late to pursue your goals and dreams. It all depends on how bad you desire it. That will be seen by the efforts you put into it. So Live fully, Love deeply, Dream with your eyes open and Shine unapologetically.

Lingiwe "Miss Patience" Gumbo is a Zimbabwean based in Gweru. She is a multi talented creative; a versatile singer-songwriter, vocalist, poet, writer and voice over artist. Miss Patience is passionate about identifying, nurturing and showcasing talent and skills in the community and the world over. Her passion for coaching and mentorship inspired her to develop a personal development program for individuals and groups while incorporating art expressions. She is the Executive Director of a Creative Artists hub called Own Your Words whose objectives are to Interact, Network and Collaborate. Miss Patience is conscious about the environment, the effects of gender based violence as well as drug and substance abuse and through her poetry and music advocates for these. Miss Patience is a recording and performing artist with an 8 track album Worthy of all my praise (2017) and 8 singles to date. She is also a published author of a book, Words of Life poems anthology (2019). Her writings are found in womawords,

girlchildcreativity, gourdsofconsciousness as well as online magazines which are MyAfrikaMagazine and The Wardrobe Magazine. She is inspired by her faith in God, nature, love and life experiences.

**IHRAM WRITIVISM INFLUENCER MBIZO CHIRASHA SPEAKS TO MALAWIAN WRITING PROFESSOR WESLEY MACHESO**



**MC: Who is Wesley Macheso?**

**WM:** I am a Malawian writer, editor and academic, currently working as an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Literary Studies at the University of Malawi. I hold a PhD in English Studies from Stellenbosch University where I am also a Research Associate in the English Department.

**MC: There have been great writers out of the great Malawian country that include Jack Mapanje and Frank Chipasula. What is their influence on you or you got your own influence from outside Malawi.**

**WM:** As a scholar of literature, I must say that I read widely and such reading has exposed me to so many good writers, from Malawi to Latin America. As such, my writing is influenced by a variety of praxis. I am inspired by different writing practices and styles that inform the canon of world literature, and I cannot attribute my creative muse to Malawian literature and authors alone. But I must mention that I admire Jack Mapanje and Steve Chimombo's appropriation of myths in their telling of contemporary stories. This has partly influenced my work.

**MC: You are an all-rounder, Editor, writer and an educationist, how do you dangle / walk about or do about these roles in your daily basis?**

**WM:** Well, I don't necessarily see myself as an all-rounder, per se. You may agree that the work I am engaged in falls in the same field – literature. I edit, I write, I teach literature. I work with words, and that somehow situates me in one place. This makes the “juggling” easy because the different roles that I take up speak to and complement each other.

**MC: How is Writing, the book industry and poetry received in Malawi?**

**WM:** Writing in Malawi, and the book industry, in particular, faces a lot of challenges. The environment is not enabling enough for writers. The publishing industry barely supports creative outputs in preference for text books that are used in schools. It is the text books that make them money, and creative writing is thrown to the dogs. One cannot survive on writing in Malawi and that, coupled with a dwindling and poor reading culture, has been a huge block.

**MC: What are prominent creative writing, literary arts and book life experts like do to promote, represent and safeguard the literary arts constituency in Malawi?**

**WM:** I must say that more needs to be done. Many are times when the art's sector in Malawi (be it through government initiatives) has overlooked writing and literature. When most people speak about the arts, they are mostly talking about music and other such fleeting pleasures. There is need to construct public perceptions and carve a place for writing.

**MC: How many books have you written and published so far, if any way you list them?**

**WM:** So far, I have published two books: *Akuzike and the Gods* (2017), and *A Masquerade of Spirits* (2020). I also have stories and poems that appear in other books such as *Water: New Short Fiction from Africa* (2016), *Voices that Sing Behind the Veil: Anthology of Short Stories from Africa and the Diaspora* (2022), *Wreaths for a Wayfarer* (2020), and *Beneath Humanity* (2022). Then, of course, I have academic outputs in various scholarly journals.

**MC: Have you received any artistic, literary, creative and book accolades?**

**WM:** I am a recipient of the 2023 International Writing Program (IWP) Fall Residency at the University of Iowa. My children's novella, *Akuzike and the Gods* (2017), won the Peer Gynt Literary Award for fiction in Malawi and one of my short stories, "This Land is Mine" was longlisted for the Short Story Day Africa (SSDA) prize in 2015. I was also twice shortlisted for the Miles Morland Writing Scholarship in 2020 and in 2022.

**MC: You are currently one of the resident fellow at Iowa. How does this feel? What activities are you doing there and what are you to bring us back to Africa and what's your post Iowa activities as well?**

**WM:** It is a great honor for me to be one of the residents in the International Writing Program (IWP) at the University of Iowa. This is the home of literature, and to be recognized and given a chance to work with some great writers here speaks volumes on the potential that literature from the continent has. I am using my stay here to complete my manuscript – a novel I have been working on for quite sometime now. I also have the opportunity to engage in panel discussions, readings, and other talks about literature. The residency is an amazing experience and it offers rare networking skills that will work in the service of world literature in the coming years. I can assure you of that.

**MC: Do you write anything to do with gender, human rights and creative justice?**

**WM:** My current research in academia mostly focusses on gender, human rights, and creative justice. I am interested in representations of queer gender identities and sexualities in African literary and cultural productions. I have published a number of academic articles on this, and one of these articles, "Vulnerability and the (im)possibilities of Becoming: Transgenderism in Contemporary South African Life Writing", published in *African Identities*, was an Honorable

Mention for the Queer African Studies Association (QASA) Prize (2022), for Best Published Scholarly Essay by a Junior Scholar.

**MC: Are you a member of any Writers organization in Malawi?**

**WM:** I am a member of the Malawi Writers' Union. As the Head of the Department of Literary Studies at the University of Malawi, I also serve as the patron for the Writers' Workshop at the university. The workshop is where most prominent pioneer Malawian writers like Mapanje, Chimombo, and others found their voices. The spirit lives on.

**MC: What do you think the Malawian government should do to help grow the literary arts, book and creative writing community in Malawi?**

**WM:** The government must create an enabling environment for writers. We need support for publishing creative work and for other important engagements such as literary festivals, indabas, book fairs, and platforms where the creative sector in Malawi can interact with the international community. As we speak now, Malawian writing lacks the visibility that may see it attract interest on the world stage.

Wesley Macheso is a Malawian writer, editor, and academic. He holds a PhD from Stellenbosch University and he is an Associate Professor of at the University of Malawi. He is a recipient of the International Writing Program (IWP) Fall Residency at the University of Iowa. He was longlisted for the Short Story Day Africa Prize in 2015, and his short story "This Land is Mine" is published in *Water: New Short Fiction from Africa* (2016). He won the 2015 Peer Gynt Literary Award for his children's book *Akuzike and the Gods* (2017). Some of his poems are anthologized in *Wreaths for a Wayfarer* (2020), and his collection of poetry, *A Masquerade of Spirits* was published in 2020. His latest short story appears in the anthology *Voices that Sing Behind the Veil* (2022). He was also shortlisted for the Miles Morland Writing Scholarship in 2020 and in 2022.



## MBIZO CHIRASHA INTERVIEWS DUMISANI NDLOVU



**Mbizo:** Dumisani Ndlovu, you have been in the creative, media and literary arts sector for a long time and you have done a lot of stuff in these areas, who is Dumisani Ndlovu?

**Dumisani:** Dumisani Ndlovu, is a proactive, interactive, dynamic and thought provoking arts administrator, actor, anthologized poet, film maker, public policy advocacy, analyst, activist and accredited award winning artists and journalist who has gotten his shows on prime time-provincial and national television and radio stations more than 100 times. Ndlovu produced more than 50 radio dramas and poetry, 3 Doc style features, dozens of educational films and 10 doc style commercials working every size budget. He is a policy and rural development advocate, people's rights activist and founding member of the Dorset Development Association. His uncompromising arts and humanitarian news reporting is typically charged with community development and social order promotion.

**Mbizo:** You hail from one of the most downtrodden rural communities of Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, how you have mastered the art of organization, coordination and arts projects leadership?

**Dumisani:** I had humble beginnings and rough starts to life that ended up shaping my perspective. Overcoming adversity developed qualities that humans often look to for guidance and leadership. Education and opportunity needed to be accessible for disadvantaged youth really shaped my life before achieving the goals mentioned above that are necessary for me to become a leaders in the community or in Zimbabwe. Most of the time, the burden of poverty proves too great for me, despite my father, a polygamist had a good job. Thanks my mom who stood resolute fending for me and my three siblings. Through creativity, ingenuity, endurance, education and other factors, my works, became a recognized influencer not only in Midlands Province but Zimbabwe in general. Growing up in a remote, rural community inspired me to rise from poverty to fame. It also influenced divergent thinking in my life, drove my utmost zeal to use arts as an effective tool that advocate for equal opportunities and help youth to come out of their shell and become inspiration towards the process I call creativity. This manifested to spontaneous burst of new ideas, and the formation of many arts and culture development

programs, while pushing the boundaries of art during his time. As one of the artists fast gaining famous in the 20th century, He vowed that he will never rest until victory is in his hands. Ndlovu received training from Amakhosi Theatre Productions under the national theatre program, University of Zimbabwe Theatre Department, Midlands State University and Amnesty International Zimbabwe (Theatre for Human and People's Rights) among others.

**Mbizo:** You carry the DNA of determination, tenacity and creative resilience, where do you draw your inspiration from and where do you tap your creative driving force from?

**Dumisani:** I am inspired by my personal urge to correct many wrongs that are present within our imperfect society. Experience is a good teacher, it taught me resilience and now every time when tragedy strikes, I come out stronger and better than before. The critics and support I received from skillful arts organizations showed me the wonders of proper arts administration. The support I get from, I get from few individuals, from National Arts Council of Zimbabwe and Ministry of Sport Arts and Recreation, Honour Muvango, Kumbirai Kupfavira and Reward Shockson certainly opened my world to art.

**Mbizo:** List your most important publications, profiles and writings that includes in newspapers, journals, magazines and books?

**Dumisani:** As a multi-lingual author who believes in unity of purpose I feature in the following Shona, English and Ndebele poetry and short story anthologies:

- The Bleeding Tree
- Pariah in paradise
- Mhere yenduri
- Izinkondlo ezinhlobonhlobe
- Kalivikwa
- Mhere yenduri
- Yorira ngoma yenhetembo
- Gangaidzanwa

As a renowned journalist, I authored an award-winning Journal of Alternatives for a democratic: Zimbabwe Thinking from beyond in consultation with YAAYEDU WORLD INITIATIVE. The opinionated story under the theme: DIALOGUE-A PANACIA TO THE ZIMBABWEAN CRISIS. The opinion titled 'Who defines and sets the agenda?', which advocated for a broad-based and inclusive National Dialogue to rescue Zimbabwe from the precipice and avert its implosion even in the face of continuous deteriorating socio-economic and political environment was featured in Media Institute For Southern Africa (MISA) Volume 1, Issue 28 Journal and Magazine.

Ndlovu is media personnel with deep belief in factual and ethical reporting. The journalist who believes in fair and objective reporting has freelanced for the following various local regional and international media publications: The Chronicle Midlands Addition

- The Sun Newspaper - January
- The Zimbabwean Newspaper (UK)
- Midlands Monitor News

- National Arts Council of Zimbabwe News Magazine
- The Times
- Hericom Media (Australia)

The scribe is highly ethical with a strong aversion to "yellow" slanted journalism and very proficient with all word processing programs and platforms.

**Mbizo:** You have won a number of artistic, literary and media accolades, if this is true, name the most awards that matters?

**Dumisani:** Media Institute of Southern Africa Magazine and Journal-DIALOGUE-A PANACIA TO THE ZIMBABWEAN CRISIS. The award winning opinion was titled ‘Who defines and sets the agenda?’ and the Midlands Media Awards Arts and Entertainment Reporter of the year 2021.

**Mbizo:** You are known to be a fighter /defender for creative justice and art rights, do you think arts and creative sectors are respected in

Zimbabwe and what do you think should be done to improve the reputation of creative sector?

**Dumisani:** Art is a form of expression, truth telling, yet in Zimbabwe is not given the respect it deserves. Freedom of speech has become a pipe dream for most young people, chiefly this election season, where some artists are labeled enemies of the state. In times like this, most people look to influencers, musicians and artists to be their voices, to speak truth to power or to create content that speaks to their lived experience.

Art is an escape for most people and due to the growth of the internet, access to multiple forms of media has become easier with just one click of a button. However, in a country like Zimbabwe a simple song, play or skit that speaks honestly to the day-to-day experiences of young Zimbabweans is seen as a blatant attack on authorities and results in continuous harassment from state agents. Bulawayo visual artist Owen Maseko and veteran poets Mbizo Chirasha just to mention a few of the artists who once got it thick after their artworks mirrored the society in which they lived.

Over the years, creatives have played a crucial role in sending messages of hope and inspiration and unity to the masses. From traditional ceremonies, religious services to political rallies; music, visual art and dance have been used to tell stories, teach lessons and capture history, hence arts should be given the respect it deserve.

In the 1970s, music played a crucial role in rallying citizens against the white minority rule in Zimbabwe.

Chimurenga music was popularised by artists such as Thomas Mapfumo and Comrade Chinx who became the faces of the genre itself. Post independence,, the genre evolved as did the artists’ opinions on the messaging they portrayed.

A great example of this is Thomas Mapfumo who eventually fled to the United States of America after continued conflict with the then ruling party around his strong opinions on the state of the nation in his music.

Thomas Mapfumo’s music was also banned from national radio and television stations. Leonard Karikoga Zhakata also fell victim, victimized left right and centre, the latest yet still fresh is Wallace Chirumiko, Winky D's music where got introuble for singing against corruption, abuse of power, poverty and so on.

Other Chimurenga artists such as the late Comrade Chinx, became the face of Zimbabwe’s ruling

party and he mostly featured at public celebrations such as Heros Day, Independence Day, Unity Day among other public events.

Because of its importance and its contribution to the national fiscus, the arts sector must be allocated specific funds on the national budget.

**Mbizo-Hodzeko Arts and Cultural Association** is one of the biggest project you are spearheading currently , What have been your experience as an arts association , what's your experience on working with a myriad arts sectors?

**Dumisani:** Selling art in Zimbabwe is proving to be difficult for most emerging talents, hence administering an arts association under such a difficult economic environment is quite challenging. Some arts entities have since died but as Hodzeko Arts and Culture we are surviving by the grace of God. In most cases I and my colleagues end up using our income and resources to pay for office rentals and bills, as sponsorship for art projects has all dried up, yet the number of art graduates released by learning institutions continues to rise.

The creative and cultural industries, particularly our individual and group affiliates and minorities artworks often struggle to access funding. In fact, at this juncture it's not uncommon to see affiliate so under-capitalized that they have to make significant cuts. As a result, these myriad of multi-discipline affiliates regularly miss out on opportunities to explore new projects or take new risks, and this traces back to the Covid-19 pandemic where a multitude of shows, screenings, festival, digital launches, and many cultural events was canceled. Not only that but many cultural spaces had to permanently or temporarily close to financially sustain themselves. To date post COVID-effect is being felt in some of our survived affiliates. Hence there is need for the government recapitalize arts association by coming up with arts administration grants or reintroduce arts revolving fund.

**Mbizo:** Zimbabwe International Disability Inclusion Arts Festival is a new initiative under your belt- What is the future of the project and what is inspired this great initiative of global stead?

**Dumisani:** Zimbabwe International Disability Inclusive Arts and Culture Festival strives to inspire moderate to severe People with Disabilities (PWDs) of all ages through training and participation in the visual and performing arts, cultivating avenues of self-expression, personal achievement and life enrichment that come with mastering art techniques.

The program which designed to promote national and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is under the guidance of former Midlands State University [Vice-Chancellor](#), Professor Ngwabi Bhebhe, Midlands State University-Zvishavane Campus Director and Chairperson of Department of African Languages and Culture, Chairperson of Department of Film and Theatre Art, Professor Advice Viriri, Great Zimbabwe University Director Postgraduate and Publications at Great Zimbabwe University- Professor Vongai Z. Nyawo, Former Permanent Secretary of Natural Resources and Tourism Ministry in Zimbabwe and former UNESCO Education Advisor and Representative for various African Countries, Frank Frank F. Mbengo, Provincial Medical Director Mary Muchekeza among others is expected to be officially launched by High Ranking Disability Expert.

It is set to be one of the nation's largest and first ever disability arts festivals in Zimbabwe, celebrating the artistic excellence of both abled and artists with disability across all art-forms.

The festival program works will be produced as part of the Zimbabwe Disability Inclusive Arts and Culture Festival (to be facilitated by Hodzeko Arts and Culture) alongside other work by

leading Disabled People Organisation (DPOs) and artists with disability. It will feature performances, exhibitions and talks. The festival predominantly showcases Zimbabwean artists and Disability Organisations and associations, with some international representation.

**Mbizo:** Whats your message to other experts in the creative sector?

**Dumisani:** I urge fellow arts practitioners to use their arts productively by using arts as a tool for social and economic development. It is possible to perform any type of live performance, whether spoken word, comedy, music, or dancing. Rather than crying about piracy and other arts development hiccups caused by technology they should think outside the box, professionalize and monetize arts through digital arts.

Every person that creates art can become a digital artist. As such, here is a list of a few of the professions that can send their content to the world. These include but not limited to the following:

- Graphic Designer.
- Copywriter.
- Architect.
- Actor.
- Journalist.
- Marketer.
- Crafter.
- Writer.
- Printer.

All of these professions and more can create content for art lovers and sell it online. Making money with digital art ensures financial freedom. That's the main reason why one should monetize his or her craft. It doesn't matter if you start selling digital prints or any digitally created artwork.

There must be in the know that this will not be an easy task. The digital world is volatile and unpredictable. One has to make a name for him or herself and try multiple ways to make money selling product before finding the perfect strategy.

**Dumisani Ndlovu** is a published poet, arts director, playwright and widely published Journalist who possesses dogged determination to find the story and deliver it to the public. Flexible and willing to work long hours in the name of writing, if need be. He has authored award-winning Journal of Alternatives for a democratic -Zimbabwe –“Thinking from beyond” published by the Media Institute for Southern Africa. He is an anthologized poet, veteran theater for human and people's rights director/filmmakers/producer/ content creator/ and distributor. Ndlovu is founder of the newly established the Zimbabwe International Disability Inclusive Arts Festival (ZIDIAC), Dorset Performing Arts, Midlands Poets, High-voltage Poets, Dorset Performing Arts, Midlands Poets Association, Midlands Arts Rights Board, all being affiliates of Hodzeko Arts and Culture Association where he is the board's Information and Communications Manager.



**MBIZO CHIRASHA INTERVIEWS WILLIAM KHALIPWINA MPINA, A MALAWIAN  
POET AND FICTION WRITER**



**MBIZO: You are wonderfully active in the literary arts scene of Malawi, Tell us more about William Mpina?**

**William Mpina:** I am a Malawian writer who is passionate about using words to tell the stories of my country. I believe that my writing can be a force for change and hope, and I am committed to capturing the full spectrum of the Malawian experience, from joy to pain.

I grew up with a deep connection to the land and the rural people of Malawi. I saw the challenges that my country faced, but I also saw the resilience and hope of its people. I knew that I wanted to use my writing to make a difference, so I set out to tell the stories of Malawi that needed to be told.

I have written short stories, poems, and essays that explore the many facets of Malawian life. I have written about the challenges of poverty through personal experiences, but I have also written about the beauty of my country and the strength of the human spirit.

The other face of me is that of an Economist and Data Analyst for the tax collecting body in Malawi.

**MBIZO: How many books have you written so far and how are they received in Malawi, Africa, and beyond?**

**William Mpina:** I have authored seven books, including titles like "Mooning the Morning" (2022), "Princess from the Moon" (2020), "Shattered Dreams" (2019), "Blood Suckers" (2019), "Shadows of Death and other poems" (2016), "Namayeni" (2009), and "Njiru" (2003). I am proud of my accomplishments, but I also feel a sense of sadness. The vibrant reading culture that once thrived in Malawi has ebbed away, and my books are now primarily read by fellow writers and academicians.

I yearn for the day when the flame of curiosity and imagination will be rekindled and my tales will again find resonance in the hearts and minds of a revitalized reading community. I believe

that literature has the power to connect people and make the world a better place. I hope that one day; my words will once again be embraced by a diverse audience.

**MBIZO: You are a member of Pen International Malawi Chapter, what are the activities and programs of Pen International Malawi?**

**William Mpina:** Yes, I am an executive member of the PEN International Malawi Chapter. PEN is an organization that promotes and defends freedom of expression, literature, linguistic diversity, and mutual respect and tolerance across borders. Our strategic priorities are to create new spaces for literature, language, debate, dialogue, ideas, and opinion; improve the situation of writers at risk who are imprisoned or otherwise persecuted, address structural threats and barriers to freedom of expression for all groups, strengthen the institutional capacity and sustainability of PEN.

We are actively prioritizing approaches to ensure that PEN becomes truly representative and fully inclusive, relevant, and more influential as a human rights-based movement and organization globally. We at PEN Malawi are busy with civil society programs, where we engage with primary and secondary school learners through literary-based interventions around invisibility, diversity and inclusivity.

**MBIZO: Have you won awards in literary arts, if any list the most accolades at your heart.**

**William Mpina:** I haven't won any awards, but I did have a major accomplishment in 2008 when my short story, *The Ntcheu Girl*, won fourth place in the Malawi Writers Union/First Merchant Bank Short Story Writing Competition.

**MBIZO: What is your latest book of poetry, give us a brief summary of the collection.**

**William Mpina:** My latest book is "Mooning the Morning," a collection of poems that explores the full spectrum of human experiences and emotions. The poems are carefully curated to create a symphony of pace and rhythm, and they defy easy categorization. Each poem is a thread in the intricate narrative fabric, and together they contribute to a symphony of human experience. The poems in "Mooning the Morning" embrace a kaleidoscope of themes, from the introspection of solitude to the crescendo of love. They eschew a singular central focus in favor of a rich tapestry of perspectives. This multifaceted approach ensures that each reader finds a resonating chord.

Despite the absence of a distinct central thrust, the collection's arrangement masterfully maintains a harmonious tempo that guides readers through the uncharted labyrinth of the untold "Story." As one turns the pages, a symposium of emotions and ideas unfolds, bridging the chasm between author and reader, and fostering a shared journey through the intricate pathways of life's diverse moments.

**MBIZO: Do you think writers, poets, artists and creative thinkers are given their due respect in Malawi and what should be done to improve the rights of artists, writers and poets in Malawi?**

**William Mpina:** Artists, writers, poets, and creative thinkers are not given the respect they deserve in Malawi. They are often seen as unimportant or irrelevant, and their work is not valued as much as it should be. This is due to a number of factors, including the lack of a strong culture of literature and the arts in Malawi, the low levels of literacy, and the economic challenges that many people face.

There are a number of things that can be done to improve the rights of artists, writers, and poets in Malawi. These include investing in education and literacy programs, creating more opportunities for artists to showcase their work, and providing financial support to artists. In particular, the Malawi government should move quickly to establish a National Arts Council to promote and support the arts, as well as to fund arts education initiatives in schools and communities. Private enterprises should support arts organizations and events. Individuals should contribute to arts groups or purchase artwork from local artists.

**MBIZO: Is the Malawian government willing to promote the book publishing, and writing culture, which are designed programs to shape the book culture industry in Malawi?**

**William Mpina:** Honestly, no. The publishing industry is not recognized as a contributor to the economic development of the country, starting at the ministry level where book publishing is treated as a sideshow. However, some stakeholders like UNESCO are willing to motivate the government to promote book publishing and writing culture through the introduction of the National Book and Reading Policy (NBRP).

**MBIZO: As one of the greatest poets in Malawi, where do you draw your driving force?**

**William Mpina:** I draw inspiration from a multitude of sources, including personal feelings and experiences, metaphors and symbols from nature, spirituality and philosophy, dreams and imagination, cultural and historical heritage.

**MBIZO: I know writers like Jack Mapanje and Frank Chipasula hail from your country, how did they influence your writing and creative thinking?**

**William Mpina:** Jack Mapanje and Frank Chipasula are two Malawian writers who have had a profound impact on my writing and the literary landscape in Malawi and beyond. Mapanje is a poet and human rights activist who is known for his powerful poetry that addresses social and political issues. His work has inspired me to use my voice to speak out against injustice. Chipasula is a poet, editor, and literary critic who has explored themes of identity, migration, and the African diaspora. His work has encouraged me to explore my own cultural heritage and engage with global themes.

Both Mapanje and Chipasula have influenced my career in several ways. They have championed freedom of expression, explored identity and heritage, crossed boundaries, and engaged in intellectual inquiry—both writers have engaged with literary criticism and scholarly pursuits, inspiring me to not only create art but also critically analyse it.

I am grateful to Mapanje and Chipasula for their work and for their impact on my life. I am proud to be a Malawian writer, and I am committed to continuing their legacy of using literature to challenge unfairness, explore identity, and connect people from different cultures.

**MBIZO: Do you think it is important to write on human rights, artists, and creative justice, do you some of your writings in synchrony with these themes?**

**William Mpina:** Literature and creative expression can be powerful tools for raising awareness, inspiring change, and giving voice to marginalized perspectives. They can shed light on human rights violations, injustices, and the struggles faced by marginalized communities. They can also inspire readers to act, spark discussions, and lead to social and political change. They can give a voice to those who may have been silenced or oppressed, document history, foster empathy and understanding, challenge norms, inspire dialogue, preserve cultural heritage, promote artistic

freedom, influence policy, and advocacy, and create lasting impact. Surely, some of my works are on human rights, and creative justice.

**William Khalipwina** is a Malawian Poet and Fiction writer. His work has appeared in international journals and magazines, and he is a co-editor of the bilingual poetry anthology "Walking the Battlefield" on COVID-19. Mpina studied Economics and Sociology at Chancellor College, the University of Malawi. After graduating, he worked as a teacher and freelance writer before joining the Malawi Revenue Authority as a data analyst in 2021. His first book of poetry, "Shadows of Death and Other Poems," was published in 2016. He has since published three more books of poetry, a short story collection, and two children's books. He is a member of the Poetry Association of Malawi, an executive member of Pen International Malawi Chapter, and the treasurer general of the Malawi Union of Academic and Non-Fiction Authors. Mpina's work has been praised for its lyrical beauty and unique exploration of the human condition. In addition to his writing, Mpina is a passionate advocate for the arts. He is a co-founder of the Ntcheu Poetry Club; a club which mentors young writers and artists.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA IN A CANDID CLOSE UP WITH MESMERIZING ZIMBABWEAN GOSPEL MUSICAL ARTIST, ADAMSON JEKETERA**



**Mbizo: Who is Adamson Jeketera and when did you started singing gospel music?**

Adamson: Adam Jeketera was born on the 24 November 1968 in Matsai area, Bikita district Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. Jeketera is a gifted lead vocalist, composer, song writer of Contemporary Traditional Gospel Music with **The Amazing GRACE**. Amazing GRACE specializes in Contemporary Traditional Gospel Music and our music is Multi-cultural, motivational, restoration focused, deformational & Character Transformational. Adamson Jeketera is also a theologian, marketing agent and an entrepreneur

**Mbizo: How do you see Zimbabwe going forward with the Arts Industry?**

Adamson: Zimbabwe has to make arts an Industry first. Professionalism and integrity have to rule the roaster. Talent identification and scouting have to improve. Yes artist have to be educated on seeing opportunities in all the gaps. The more we see opportunities the more we become positive and confident.

**Mbizo: How many songs have you recorded so far?**

Adamson: I have three albums at the moment namely a),The Final Battle with 9 tracks b).The Comfort of A Secret Court with 10 tracks c).Restoration Guides with 10 tracks. I also have done Eleven (11) Advertising and marketing.



**Mbizo: Are your songs touching on girls and women rights?**

Adamson: My songs are touching on real life issues: A holistic approach pertaining all aspects of life. But, I can compose any song that is specific to any subject that can redress or address any form of injustice in our society.

**Mbizo: Are Artists rights respected in Zimbabwe and how can be that improved?**

Adamson: Artist rights in Zimbabwe are respected on paper. Yes, we have ZIMURA, but I don't know why we still see people still selling music on the streets illegally. Maybe the Zimbabwe Music Rights Board is overwhelmed with the increasing numbers of illegal dealer's day in and day out.

**Mbizo: How is your music received in Zimbabwe?**

Adamson: Our music is received in Zimbabwe so well: Though we still need to be known by at least 1 million people.

**Mbizo: Are you grooming other young musicians at the moment?**

Adamson: Yes, am actually mentoring and coaching young artists in almost all districts of my province and others from outside.

**Mbizo: Who is your greatest inspiration in the area of arts?**

Adamson: Jonah Moyo, Simon Chimbetu, Fanuel Banda, My rural community people

**Mbizo: Does your music angling to human rights and creative justice at any point?**

Adamson: Some of my songs urge people to shun corruption because it is violation human rights. Justice is attained when people castigate underhanded and dirt deals

**Mbizo: What is your parting shot to other musicians in Zimbabwe?**

Adamson: Let's be united and learn to support each other. I think we should focus on complimenting each other rather than competing.

**Adamson Jeketera** was born in Matsai area, Bikita district. Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. Jeketera is a is a gifted lead vocalist, composer, song writer of Contemporary Traditional Gospel Music with The Amazing GRACE. Amazing GRACE specializes in Contemporary Traditional Gospel Music. Amazing Grace is a Multi-cultural, motivational, restoration focused, deformational & Character Transformational. Adamson is also a theologian, marketing agent and an entrepreneur. He is a holder of two diplomas in: International Trade and Transformational Leadership.

**IHRAF WRITIVISM LAUREATE MBIZO CHIRASHA IN A CANDID  
CONVERSATION WITH MULTIDISCIPLINARY LITERARY VOICE, PUBLISHER,  
EDITOR AND AUTHOR FAITH MUDIWA CHIPANGURA**



**MBIZO. Who is Faith Mudiwa Chipangura and for how long have been in the creative sector?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Faith is a village girl who reigns from the dusty streets of one Mgevu village outside Plumtree in Mangwe in the province of Matabeleland South Zimbabwe. She has grown to wear many hats as a multi award winning publishing coach, social entrepreneur, publisher, author, speaker and the founder of a publishing house known as Phoenix Publishing based in Harare and a social enterprise known as Woman to Woman.

**MBIZO .How many projects have you published so far?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Twelve (12) to date but working on the 13th.

**MBIZO. Have you ever created some writings on gender rights and if so which are those projects?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Yes I have. In 2018/19 I participated in a short story writing competition for a woman led advocacy organization addressing issues to do with GBV and I won but I haven't written anything along those lines since.

**MBIZO. Do you believe that writers and artists could speak for human rights in Zimbabwe and abroad?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Yes I strongly believe so, however the challenge with that is the absence of actual freedom after the freedom of speech and addressing those issues to do with human rights.

**MBIZO. What do you think should be done to improve creative justice and human rights in Zimbabwe?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Guaranteed liberty after the freedom of expression in creative justice would be a starting point. Many creatives reserve their thoughts due to fear and for that reason, we don't have many voices in that sphere. It's not because creatives don't have anything to say, it's just that there is a lot of sensitivity surrounding that area.

**MBIZO. As a publisher, editor and writer, how many books have been published under your stable and how are they received by your community of readers?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Quite a handful, around 14+ authors in the one and half year since we started operating. The response has been encouraging because it has cultivated a need for more good content which in turn has made us up our game in promoting a reading culture and encourage our writers to dig deeper for more.

**MBIZO. Do you think the book industry is respected in Zimbabwe and what do you think should be improved?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Definitely. People appreciate it and have respect for it. On the improvement side I would say perhaps a fair playing field would be good. There hasn't been any major platform that recognises writers at national level. The national body which does it only recognises 4 categories and for so long that was the case until we thought (Phoenix Publishing) it would be good for writers if we created a platform that recognised writers for the hard work they put in through annual awards that recognise 16 categories and the response was welcoming and encouraging. This recognition has seen writers take their craft seriously and become more deliberate and diligent in their writing.

**MBIZO. Who is your best inspiration in the book and writing industry?**

**Faith Chipangura:** The reader. Their commitment and support through investment through purchase and reading of our work makes it worth the while for me. The industry in itself without readers would be redundant and for that reason, readers are my first inspiration. The second would be the unknown writer. Somewhere in the corners lurking behind the screen putting in the work for the entertainment, education and inspiration of the reader. These are the countless people who made me come up with the publishing house concept whose design is about quality and innovation that serves, nurtures and helps them gain rewards out of their gifts and skills.

**MBIZO . Where do yourself in 5 years as a publisher?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Uhm dominating the industry locally and regionally. Contending and earning our spot in the publishing industry and making sure that quality work is deliver by our writers to the readers.

**MBIZO. Whats your parting shot to other writers, aspiring publishers and editors?**

**Faith Chipangura:** Stay the course and believe in your vision. Put in the work and be disciplined to show up even on days you don't feel like it. When you see something not working

out, be innovative and find a way around it. And remember, no one is coming to save you. You are the one you are waiting for!

Faith Mudiwa Chipangura is a renowned Zimbabwean author of 12 books (to date), an award winning social entrepreneur, an award winning publishing coach, podcaster, self-mastery coach and keynote speaker. Chipangura is the founder of Phoenix Publishing a Harare based publishing house and Woman to Woman a social enterprise which advocates for women empowerment employing the UN SDGs 1,3,5 & 10 to drive change in the community. Her message is encouragement and she drives it through her role as a writer and speaker. She is vocal about positive change for women and she pushes her agenda through voluntary leadership and coaching of upcoming authors under the age of 30 and women from all walks of life.

## **MBIZO CHIRASHA INTERVIEWS RUVIMBO JECHE**



**MBIZO:** Who is Ruvimbo Martha Jeché?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** Ruvimbo Martha Jeché is a poet and writer from Zimbabwe who writes in English and her native language Shona. She is an ex Honors Degree in Administration and a Master of Public Administration graduate. She is a wide reader and fan of governance, public policy and woman issues debate.

**MBIZO:** How did you discover your writing voice?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** As a child I spent most of my time at a local municipal library and I read everything. I didn't do friends and as an introvert I found myself penning down my emotions, thoughts and feelings in poems and stories I created. So I got to a point I realized that I had a lot of work that was interesting and could be shared. I then identified myself as passionate with writing even as I later on realized that I found comfort and satisfaction in writing.

**MBIZO:** Which are your major thematic areas?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** I'm passionate about all things that concern the woman, and leadership. I love to see the woman's represented, I love it when the woman's voice read and heard. So mostly I am highlighting women's sufferings, pains, aspirations, strengths and achievements. I also desire a people based leadership at every level thus my poetry tilt towards governance matters.

**MBIZO:** Are you a published writer and are your books appreciated locally?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** I have written a poetry collection titled the Midnight Haul and have co-authored in the Dear Married Man and Jongwe neSheche poetry collections and the response to these is good and even promising

**MBIZO:** How are your poems received by your peers?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** My poetry is celebrated by my peers but they urge me to write a novel or a collection of short stories at least, I've written a few short stories.

**MBIZO:** Do you write poetry and again do you write short stories, what's your best genre?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** Yeah I write short stories and poetry but I can't point out my favourite or best. With poetry, my feelings, attitude and perceptions are raw, I pen them down as they come and this gives my work a richness to attract uniquely diverse perspectives. With short stories I can live the world in different bodies (as my characters) and this allows me to see the world and circumstances in different lenses.

**MBIZO:** Do you write for human rights and human freedoms?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** Yes and it is my desire to see the right of the human self as a citizen, youth, employee and member of society respected and honoured

**MBIZO:** How are human rights defenders and writers for human rights in Zimbabwe accepted, appreciated and treated?**RUVIMBO JECHE:** I will say human right defenders and writers do so with caution and I feel this thwarts the idea of creativity. It's at times not easy pointing out where even the basics of rights are being dishonoured when you need to protect your career or evening your own self. I then at times feel it's a long way to go as long as we are not ready to read from, learn from and listen to human rights artists and advocates

**MBIZO:** Is the publishing and book sector thriving well in Zimbabwe, what do you think should be done to resurrect the book/publishing industry in Zimbabwe?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** The book industry is struggling and is not as popular say as the music or comedy industry. We need to effectively market it as with any other career and book clubs, expos, public reading sessions will come a long way in popularizing the industry and fostering the reading culture

**MBIZO:** Have you won any accolades in arts and what are there?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** I have won none so far

**MBIZO:** What's are parting shot to other rising writers/poets and artists?

**RUVIMBO JECHE:** To a fellow writer I would say write it passionately, as it is the way you want it to show in the world and you have the different story the world is waiting for!

**Ruvimbo Martha Jече** is a Zimbabwean writer who writes in English and Shona. She is a BSc Honours in Administration and Master of Public Administration graduate from the University of Zimbabwe. She writes for all humankind, that is, the man and the woman as a religious species, psychological being and importantly as a citizen to be appreciated and included. She advocates for inclusion of the civic and human rights in public policy and governance processes. Her work has been featured in *The Newsday Zimbabwe*, *News Hawks*, *Bold Dialogue Magazine* and the *Queensdale Report* courtesy of the *Gourd of Consciousness Poetry*. She has published a poetry collection titled *The Midnight Haul* and is a co-author to *Dear Married Man* and *Jongwe neSheche* poetry collection.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA REFLECTS ON ARTISTIC/CREATIVE DIVERSITY WITH  
KENYAN MULTI-DISCIPLINARY ARTIST FILMMAKER/AUTHOR/POET CYNTHIA  
ABDALLAH**



**MBIZO:** Who is Cynthia Abdallah, your birth land, your tribal traditions and your creative /artistic work?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** Cynthia Abdallah is a Kenyan author and film maker. She was born in Western Kenya, and writes enthusiastically about her cultural heritage in her poems and short stories. Her films also highlight the important aspects of Kenyan culture. I speak Maragoli and Tiriki, my parents language and my stories borrow heavily from these two Luhya dialects. My first film, Inyumba Yu Mulogooli celebrates the maragoli community heritage and is shot in the dialect as well. There is a lot of heritage in western kenya, very many stories to tell. However, I have my new home in Kajiado Kenya, where I mingle with the Maasai community and tell tales of these arid spaces and its cultures. It is a good mix of everything Kenyan and I am excited about telling more tales and growing my tribal palate.

**MBIZO:** You are famed as a filmmaker , poet, writer and educator , how do you juggle your time to fulfill your creative , family and artistic ends? the creative work I engage in? Sometimes it's difficult to manage time?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** Both creative ventures can function in the same space ( filmmaking and writing). For example, to produce a film, I must write a script. The writing part is the easy part as I know the story I am trying to tell. It is when the time comes to produce the film that it gets a bit tricky because my team is in Kenya and I have to trust them to bring my vision to light. It takes a lot of dedication outside of school hours to get this done. Quite a lot of whatsapp messages and zoom calls to achieve desired results.



You must be very dedicated and passionate to do this.

I remember last year, I attended two workshops online. With the 7hr difference between Kenya and Venezuela, I was up at 3am most nights, attending these workshops in order to enhance my writing and filming skills.

It is demanding, but my passion sees me through. I like to grind and see results, and I am not very good at quitting anything.

**MBIZO:** How many awards have you won since you began your literary/artistic journey?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** This year I won the Itanile writer's award for my poetry chapbook *The Author's Feet*. It was quite an honor as it represents a personal milestone and success. Of course I'm looking forward to many more accolades and believe that my work will be able to traverse many spaces and win a few more awards. Film wise, this year I have been nominated for the Best Producer documentary award by Women in Film awards, Kenya. It is such an honor to grace the nominees list with other talented women. I am excited. Last year, two of my films were nominated for the Kalasha awards. These are prestigious awards that recognize the best films in the Kenyan film industry. Even though we did not win the grand prize, being nominated felt more like a win.

I am looking forward to more nominations and wins this year.

**MBIZO:** Who are your best filmmakers, authors and artists, where do you draw your inspiration from?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** For Best film makers, the likes of Martin Scorsese, and producers like Jerry Bruckheimer, have always been favorites of mine growing up. Writing wise, Chinua Achebe takes the mantle. The man's ability to recreate Africa with words is phenomenal. I love his books and especially his storytelling abilities. Of course his protege Chimamanda Adichie is very inspirational to me as well. I read and teach her books in all my Literature classes. I have a huge bias towards Chimamanda.

I also do my best to read authors from other continents. Right now, Elif Shafak is really exciting to me. I love her books and her style of writing as well. I keep discovering more writers and more stories.

**MBIZO:** You have a couple of published book collections and some of them are sold on Amazon, how is your experience?**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** It is a one stop shop for many authors even though at the moment I am not really making any money from it. However, it is a good resource as readers from all over the world can find your books at any given time. That is very important.

**MBIZO:** How do you tackle human rights issues in your creative/artistic projects and is the theme of human rights received in Kenya?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** I try to tackle issues in all my writing and film work. We have recently released a film on gender based violence, highlighting the importance of speaking up against this monster and we are looking forward to taking it around the world to various festivals to spread awareness.

On the other hand, I try to be subtle with my writing when it comes to such matters. I do not want my readers to feel overwhelmed with information, so I try to weave simple stories with poignant issues layered in between. I hope this works.

**MBIZO:** You are Kenyan born and currently based in Venezuela, what are your experiences of both countries, a country of birth and a new home base- artistically, culturally, economically and politically?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** The Spanish culture in Venezuela is quite similar to our Kenyan culture. However, I have been able to use some Spanish words in my poems to elevate the messages I am writing about, in a different setting. However, Kenya has always been my go to place when I am creating. As a Kenyan, I feel that I have a role to play in elevating my country of birth so everything I do is in the realm of making a mark on the Kenyan literary and film space.

**MBIZO:** Briefly tell us of festivals that cultivated your career as an author and filmmaker?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** My films have been gracing quite a few festivals around the world. We were recently in Paris, Abuja and around Kenya. I am looking forward to other festivals this year and hope that these opportunities will continue to showcase my ability to tell good stories on human interests.

**MBIZO:** Besides the book collection, which other spaces have published your writings, also tell us a little bit about your new book *When Rivers Say Goodbye*?

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** *When rivers say goodbye* is the culmination of all these poems that have made a mark in three continents. It ties the first collection together beautifully so that readers can find all the 50 poems in one space.

It is exciting to have this collection out and to have a publisher backing me. It can only get better.

**MBIZO:** Where do we see you in the next five years and What is your parting shot to fellow artists, filmmakers, writers, creative, human rights defenders and poets in your country and other African countries.

**CYNTHIA ABDALLAH:** I see a lot of success in 5 years. The vision is to occupy a space in the film industry and drive conversations on matters affecting our society. We intend to influence more female creators to take up their space on the table and help us tell stories to improve our Africa.

With my writing, I am currently working on 2 books. I hope that I will be able to release something new in 2024 and another one in 2025.

To all aspiring creators, I would say, stop aspiring and start doing. Write that poetry book and publish it for free on amazon, then send it to many writing journals as frequently as you can. My poems have been published in the US, Japan, Nigeria, Ghana and in different spaces in Kenya.

This is something I did even before I got to this point in my life where I can afford to publish my own book.

Publish on amazon, it is easy and free of charge.

For aspiring filmmakers, write that script and seek out upcoming filmmakers for collaboration. Or better yet, shoot your little film using your phone and send it to many film competitions. You will be surprised just how many avenues there are out there.

**Cynthia Abdallah:** Abdallah is a Kenyan author, poet and filmmaker. Her work has appeared in numerous online magazines and in print. Poems: in *The Tokyo Poetry Journal*-

*Japan, Kenya, Ake review, Kwani Uchaguzi edition 8– Quailbell Magazine-USA, Bodies, and Scars anthology by Ghana Literary Journal. Short stories: Kalahari Review-Kenya, Nalubaale Review-Uganda, Active Muse-India, IHRAF, Women narratives on power USA, 2021. Author of When Rivers Say Goodbye.*

**MBIZO CHIRASHA INTERVIEWS ANDREW KARIMI, PROLIFIC KENYAN POET  
AND LITERALIST: DANCING TO CULTURAL POETRY**



**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Your poetry depicts on important matters of Kenyan /African cultural practices – What is your inspiration?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** I draw my inspiration from values that exist in beauty of our culture. In past, as I grew up, I have learnt a number of values that I feel are slowly becoming extinct among the current generation. These values, if left to extinct will be forever forgotten prompting a bred of a generation without authentic culture. Though with rise of modernity many have different perspectives of things, I believe we can borrow from both world to nurture an all-round African child.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** How do you find out your themes? And have you published your poems in book form?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** I don't have a defined ways of establishing my subjects. I find some from daily interactions, and others in self reminisce. I'm yet to publish a book.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** What are your challenges in the creative/arts/literary career?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** Since I prefer writing on cultural developments, some topics are hard to find right and reliable sources of knowledge and information. Sometimes cultural practices vary from one place to another and one has to make a choice on which practice is broader.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** How does the Kenyan government support the creative/arts industry?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** Government has offered its support through sponsoring of symposia

especially inter-school competition and other organized cultural events. We may need more than these though if we are to be at par with the global art society.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Are artists/writers/poets like you appreciated/respected/supported in Kenya?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** Yes. Some poets have gained foothold in Kenyan art and are slowly attracting appreciation. However, some feel poetry doesn't pay and is a thing for leisure hence little attention. I advise our people to take poetry heartily since mostly, are voices hidden deep in hearts of people—poets speak for the voiceless, they speak that which is well hidden in hearts of people though hurting them from inside yet they can't speak it for either fear of judgment or low self-esteem.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Have ever been to any poetry event, festivals, book /reading festival?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** Not yet.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** How are your writings received by your peers inside/outside literary communities?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** My peers have been receiving my writing cheerfully. They have been so supportive on social media platforms. I wish to take this chance to thank them especially those that have been sharing my posts on Facebook and interacting on my page "Poetic Andy" in different ways. I'm gradually growing, not only because of my good content but also the backup I have had from my peers, and others across the age. Thank you guys.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Do you belong to any writer's association /book club or anything creative?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** Yes, I recently joined Poetry Society and African Poetry Forum.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Who are your best authors – young and old?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** There are many that I find inspiration from. Among them Kahlil Gibran, my mentor Carol Scamman, Mbizo Chirasha among others. The list is long to mention in one breathe. In a nutshell, I appreciate good content.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Do you regard yourself as a young /published/established poet?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** I'm yet to be published. I believe I have a lot of potential to make it to the list of the globally revered poets.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA:** Where do we see you in the next five years, I mean with your writings?

**ANDREW KIRIMI:** In five years' time, I will have published at least five books and gained regional recognition as a poet. I believe I will have started earning from poetry then. Best wishes to myself!

\*Once again, thank you for giving me this platform to be heard and seen globally. I believe this is the beginning of my global/regional recognition\*

Kirimi Andrew, a Kenyan Cultural and Social Activism Poet. Karimi is a teacher of English and Literature by profession (Bed, Arts, Kenyatta University). He has since taught at Akithi girls

(Meru) and Machungulu Secondary. Andrew also later joined Tigania East office staff under Parliamentary Service Commission till end of contract, August 2022.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA INTERVIEWS DR. GERALDINE SINYUY: TALKING IHRAF AND CREATIVITY WITH A CAMEROONIAN LITERARY POWERHOUSE**



**MBIZO:** You have been recently appointed as the 2023 International Fellow of IHRAF, how are you going to fulfil your fellowship activities?

**DR. SINYUY:** I have a lay out for my yearlong activities and I have already started campaigns and calls for contributions for the poetry anthology which I am curating. I'm already contacting the Internally Displaced Persons in my community whom I intend to interview for the documentary I'm doing as my major project for this one year. I need to squeeze out time from my tight schedule (mother of three, wife, full time teacher, humanitarian volunteer, gardener, writer) in order to attain the goals for my IHRAF Project.

**MBIZO:** Where does the international accolade place you as Dr. Geraldine Sinyuy as a Creative, Cameroon as a country and Africa as a continent?

**DR. SINYUY:** I must confess that my recent appointment as an International Fellow for IHRAF is a turning point in my career as a writer, not just a writer for writing's sake, but a writer with a cause. I find myself on the spot light and I want to leave eternal footprints there first as an individual human rights activist through writivism, second as one who has pioneered this position with respect to my country Cameroon, and finally someone who projects talents originating from the heart of Africa as a continent. Although I'm a Cameroonian, I see myself as one who stands for Africa as a whole and I'm for any reason going to let Africa down. I need to proof to world that Africa's got talent and people of substance.

**MBIZO:** What is your IHRAF Fellowship Calendar?

**DR. SINYUY:** This is how my IHRAF calendar looks like:

Project One

Topic: Telling the Untold: Agonies of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the North West Region of Cameroon



## Project Two

Topic: Voices in the Storm: An Anthology

### Important Dates

- January 15 2023, campaigns for interviewees and announcement/call for poems and short stories begin.
- January 20, 2023 Planning for interview meetings begins
- February- April 2023 Documentation of some data or information collected so far
- May- July 2022 First Draft of the books
- August-September 2022: Second Draft of the Books
- October – November 2022: Proofreading and **Submission of final copies**

**MBIZO:** How do you define arts for human rights?

**DR. SINYUY:** Arts for human rights for me is arts for life, the voice of the voiceless, and the best weapon against all forms of violation of human rights.

**MBIZO:** Cameroon is suffering under the grind of civil war and human rights abuse and What interventions is the art industry doing to prevent further national brokenness?

**DR. SINYUY:** As I earlier said, arts for human rights is the voice of the voiceless. Artists in my country are very much at work in their various spheres castigating any form of violence in the society. It may seem to be a slow process, but gradually their artistic works which range from popular culture, paintings, drawings, writings and films are gradually doing the ground work in the fight against the violation of human rights. I want to add here that writers' concern is not only the physical civil war, there are other wars which are invisible and I personally write poems regarding them. As human beings, we have waged war against ourselves by polluting the environment which in turn becomes very dangerous for us. As an eco-artist, I write poetry that calls the attention of man to the dangers of environmental pollution, encouraging them to practice good behaviours towards nature and the environment.

**MBIZO:** How are Human Rights Defenders viewed/ appreciated/treated in Cameroon?

**DR. SINYUY:** This is a field that I am not versed with.

**MBIZO:** You have been writing a lot of thought-provoking articles to different journals globally and how are your writings received internationally?

**DR. SINYUY:** My academic articles are well appraised by the academia and I am encouraged to keep on feeding the universe with my knowledge in that regard. The more knowledge I share; the more knowledge I gain. I'm always delighted to see notifications of how many mentions I have had via Academia Edu. and Research Gate. When it comes to research paper writing, I am very flexible and so I have co-published a paper in the field of Public Health and have also taken part in international panel discussions regarding Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns (AP-GC) one of which was based on "Why the Oppressed Must Be Protected? Artists Respond to the Question".

**MBIZO:** Your appointment is a signal of more and more accolades to come, what does the future holds?

**DR. SINYUY:** This appointment is a stepping stone and as well a booster for my future writivism and prowess.

**MBIZO:** What are your greatest achievements and What is your greatest inspiration?

**DR. SINYUY:** My greatest achievements so far have been my PhD degree in Commonwealth Literature and my many publications.

**Dr Sinyuy Geraldine** is a creative writer, resident in the North West Region of Cameroon. Sinyuy trained as an English Language and Literature in English Teacher in the University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon. She earned her PhD in Commonwealth Literature from the same university in 2018. Dr Sinyuy started writing poems in her teens and most of her poems and folktales were read and discussed on the North West Provincial Station of the Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) Bamenda where she was often a guest writer for the programme: Literary Workshop: A Programme for Creative Writing and Literary Criticism.

**MBIZO CHIRASHA INTERVIEWS AWADIFO OLGA KILI, UGANDAN  
WRITER/POET/HUMANRIGHTS ACTIVIST/LAWYER**



**MC:** Why is it important to write on human rights in Uganda and Africa?

**AWADIFO:** Writing on human rights in Uganda and Africa is like learning more about human rights. Human rights are basic rights that belong to all of us simply because we are human. They are key values governing our society for example fairness, respect, equality and dignity. Contributing towards the human rights system in Uganda and Africa through Literature can positively influence an improvement of the human rights situation in the continent. However, widespread human rights abuse still prevail in many areas of the continent. Most of the violations can be associated with political unsteadiness (as a consequence of civil war), ethnical intolerance, conspiracy, post-colonialism, economic scarcity, thoughtlessness, ailment, religious bigotry, debt and bad financial management, monopoly of power, lack/absence of judicial and press autonomy, and border conflicts. So, writing human rights Literature is an important means of protection for us all, especially those who may face abuse, neglect and isolation.

**MC:** Who is your greatest inspiration?

**AWADIFO:** My inspiration in Literature is Chinua Achebe (May He continue to sleep on in the Lord's bosom). Achebe sought to escape the colonial perspective that framed African literature at the time and drew from the traditions of the Igbo people, Christian influences, and the clash of Western and African values to create a uniquely African voice. As the "father of modern African Literature", his examples we seek to emulate are that African Literature can be a tool to address human rights and social justice concerns with a cuddle fist of a mother, a fist of resistance.

**MC:** How do people respond to your latest version of the human rights literary collection?

**AWADIFO:** My latest version of the human rights collection is titled "Stains on a Cowrie Shell", a book in which I used fiction to call the world to attention to the need to cease and discard any tradition and custom ruining people's lives concerning human rights.

With inner thoughts carefully to bring out a sense of connectedness between all the cords of the creation and how, though the world was initially a pure Cowrie Shell, human practices have continued to stain it with their actions, customs, beliefs, ruling methods and other inhumane actions they hold dear.

I have received kind yet uplifting reviews from readers and other reviewers like Fr. Ruffino Ezama in North America whose reviews appear on the back page of the book and every other reviewer.

**MC:** What are your best African authors /playwrights who write on the same subject matter?

**AWADIFO:** My best African writer who writes on the same subject matter is Mbizo Chirasha. He is an acclaimed Author, Performance poet, Writer, Creative/Literary Projects Specialist, and Advocate of Girl Child Voices and Literacy Development.

You involve girlchild issues in your writing interventions, why do you think that is important?

Well, my second book "Echoes of Wails" was described by the South African writer Ms Beulah Kleindvelt as a universal language of the struggles of teen girls. I accept her review with a grateful heart. I think that the most important thing about writing concerning the plight of girls is that it helps them to overcome barriers and get educated, equipped with knowledge and skills and empowered to speak up for the realization of their rights.

**MC:** What is your latest book reading selection and you are instrumental in promoting literacy /reading culture in schools, how are schools/students responding to your writings, books and human rights projects?

**AWADIFO:** In 2022, I visited five schools in the West Nile region - Uganda during their career days on the invitation to speak to the students. It was also a chance to enlighten them about literacy development as a vital part of their overall development. Literacy is the foundation for doing well at school.

**MC:** What are your greatest achievements so far and how do hope to continue, do we need to expect more books/stories/poetry from you?

**AWADIFO:** First and foremost, I believe that the biggest achievement in my life is the ability to decrease and let God increase.

I count the books, the book readers and reviewers, as part of the fresh fruits in my basket.

As long as I am above the earth, the pen will continue to be my sixth finger.

Awadifo Kili is a Ugandan Lawyer and Author. She is the Author of the books "Victorious Tales," "Echoes of Wails" and her recent book "Stains on a Cowrie Shell," a book crafted in an African narrative that presents the extent to which some traditions and customs are a barrier to the promotion and protection of human rights. Kili is passionate about human rights, and her literature is around domestic, regional, and international human rights law and perspectives.

**INTERVIEWS CURATED BY GRACE SUGE, THE DIRECTOR OF IHRAM AFRICAN SECRETARIAT, KENYA**



## GRACE SUGE INTERVIEWS PHILIP PUYAKA



**Grace Suge:** You are a creative poet, a wordsmith, and a literacy, quality education, and empowerment advocate in Kenya. In addition, you have recently expanded into the publishing industry. For the benefit of our readers, please tell us a little about yourself and your journey in the literary field et al.

**Philip Puyaka:** Thank you for having me for this interview. Yes, as you say I am a poet, wordsmith, University Lecturer, a literacy and empowerment advocate. I am from the pastoralist community of the Pokot of northern Kenya. I was born, grew had my formative schooling there. Since childhood and ever since my uncle taught me how to write my name, the love for writing became my forte. I became the best in languages in school. I immersed myself into books; reading and reading. I won several awards in school for the best written composition and poems.

Fast forward to University for my undergrad, I majored in Literature in English and Linguistics. Later on, at the University of Nairobi for my MA and PhD, I have done Literature. And yes, I have stuck to writing ever since.

As you have rightly put, I have ventured into the publishing world because I have realized there is a huge gap in the industry in Kenya, and the African continent in general. I endeavor to grow and nurture the creative industry in a huge way.

As a literacy advocate, we have just begun building community libraries and donating books to schools aside carrying out creative writing competition in schools.

**Grace Suge:** Your creative passion and action gravitate towards general literacy, quality education, and empowerment amongst your local Pokot community and Kenya. We are curious to know what birthed this passionate advocacy call.

**Philip Puyaka:** It is really about the passion in me to have my community change their perspective about education. There is a lot that needs to be done to help my community. Furthermore, I have always harbored the dream to have more writers like myself. Coincidentally as we do this interview for IHRAF, I have just participated in coming up with the first Indigenous Language (IL) texts in collaboration with KICD under the ministry of Education in Kenya. It is like my dream has partially been achieved.

**Grace Suge:** How do you envision the Pokot community heading into the future and what challenges have you encountered so far? Again, as much as we know that language has power, how are you planning to tackle these challenges using your literary pen and paper?

**Philip Puyaka:** I see my community competing with the rest of the other communities. The efforts I have put on advocating for quality education and literacy, will yield fruit. There are a lot of challenges especially on the issue of language; my community is traditionally been known for the sciences and mathematics. We have very few who have embraced the arts, especially the creative arts. To surprise you more, I am the first and the only with higher education in Literature and the first one teaching literature in the University.

I want to exploit this opportunity to motivate them to take up the arts. I also run an education empowerment program where I educate them on careers, every school holiday. I will definitely use my pen and paper too, to reach more readers once my three books are published by end year.

Another and most important challenge is financial support. It is quite challenging to run such activities on a shoe-string budget. I hope to get partnerships and donations in the form of books and money for logistical purposes.

**Grace Suge:** You have recently spread your wings into the publishing industry. What was the inspiration behind this move?

**Philip Puyaka:** As I had intimated to you earlier about the gap in our publishing industry, I had to venture into it. Publishing is quite rigorous and involving activity. It is quite a process beginning with drafts, editorials, revisions and production. I know this journey will yield fruit because the passion in me is huge.

**Grace Suge:** If you could be mentored by a famous poet or writer, who would it be and what is it about his/her literature that attracts you?

**Philip Puyaka:** That would definitely be the Poets Paul Lawrence, Langston Hughes and of course Ernest Hemmingway, Tolstoy too. I have several other writers too who could have mentored me.

**Grace Suge:** Is there a book written by yourself on the anvil? How soon should we expect it out?



**Philip Puyaka:** Yes. I have one nonfiction; Oral Literature of the Pokot and two others; a Novella and a poetry collection. All these will be out this year.

**Grace Suge:** We wish you the very best in all your creative pursuits and applaud your advocacy work amongst the Pokot community of Kenya.

**Philip Puyaka:** Thank you.

## GRACE SUGE INTERVIEWS ELIZABETH DWAMENA-ASARE



**Grace Suge:** You are an award-winning author, playwright, and creative writer. For the benefit of our readers, please tell us a little about yourself and your writing journey.

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare, and I am from Ghana. I work as a human resources officer during the day and as a writer at night. On various weekends, I volunteer with child-focused organizations to help children improve their reading and writing abilities. If I am not reading or hanging out with my family and friends, I'll be watching a comedy or learning a DIY via YouTube or Pinterest.

I have been writing since I was a child. In elementary and high school, I was an active member of the writers, debaters, and drama clubs. And I was that student who was enthusiastic about the library and was fortunate to work there. It provided me with an ideal opportunity to read. I suppose the desire to write existed, but being exposed to the works of authors and their diction struck a chord in me. I knew right away that writing would become more than a hobby for me. However, the writing process has been a roller coaster. I have learned a lot while also making a lot of mistakes. I've also won and lost a few contests, received numerous rejection emails while applying for residency programs, sought out a handful of mentors in the area without receiving responses, and, in a nutshell, considered quitting at times. I believe what has kept me going is the reason I started writing, and also, completing periodic self-assessments has made me realize the gaps in my path, so I have been doing my homework by learning and using the resources

available to me. I have seen progress since then. I'm still learning, but I know I'm a lot better than I was yesterday.

**Grace Suge: You won Best Author/Writer in the Central Entertainment and Business Awards 2022. How did you feel about winning this award, and what does literary success look like to you?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** Yes! I was thrilled to receive the award because it was my first as a writer. And it meant a great deal to me. I recall receiving notification of my nomination. I was nervous for a time, but then I began to smile, which made me realize that other people had noticed my work. It feels amazing to be recognized in this space because it inspires me to keep going even when the sky appears bleak.

**Grace Suge: In your short story "The New Normal", a driver, while contributing to the discussion on the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, quips, "As for me, it won't catch me oo! I am covered by the blood of Jesus." What perspectives or beliefs have you challenged with this piece?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** This is profound. The story emphasized how some citizens place their faith in spirituality. It also highlights how strongly they believe that spiritual beings govern the universe, despite the fact that we live in a physical world with actual problems that demand practical solutions. Combining the two is advisable, but focusing just on one aspect is unwise. And so it is with the driver, who believes he can survive the pandemic solely on faith. It is good to have faith, but it is also prudent to follow directions that will preserve it. Regardless of spirituality, health advice such as washing hands before eating or avoiding direct contact with those who have developed contagious diseases is essential.

**Grace Suge: Would you and your main character in "The New Normal", Nii, get along? And if you met him, what would you say to him?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** I am not sure that we'd get along in certain situations because we think and act differently as individuals. Unlike Nii, I do not run away from problems. He attempted to flee the pandemic by traveling to another country. I am resilient, and during the pandemic, I figured out how to adjust to the new normal and move on with my life. During that time, I made one of the best decisions of my life. If I met Nii, I would urge him to be patient in life, to keep positive even in the face of adversity, and to not flee problems because they won't last forever.

**Grace Suge: Our readers would also be curious to know what inspired the idea for writing a book specially meant for children titled "Who Cares?" and please tell us a little about its genesis and theme.**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** I love volunteering because it allows me to learn while also serving others. Before I wrote this book, I volunteered with the Ghana Recycling Initiative by Private Enterprises (GRIPLE), an industry-led coalition under the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) that combines solutions for sustainable plastic waste management. We visited various communities to educate people on plastic pollution, and then we bought their plastic waste. However, I noticed that the youth and the old received far more attention in all of the communities we visited. So I thought, "Who will educate these kids?" Because they equally need to be enlightened. With the help of interested volunteers, I visited the basic schools within my

community to educate them. But it was both expensive and time-consuming, so I reasoned, "Why not educate them through a book instead?" That's how "Who Cares?" came to be. It examines the world through the eyes of a young, inquisitive girl so that children can relate to her and learn about the consequences of littering the environment.

### **"Who Cares?" Synopsis**

Bubu is a feisty and curious girl who questions everything around her. She notices a lack of discipline in her town, with individuals continuously littering their surroundings. In her quest for answers, she develops boldness by bombarding others with questions, which many find a nuisance.

"Who Cares?" is a children's book that teaches kids about how their daily actions contribute to climate change and the consequences of littering. To help children enhance their analytical skills, the book also includes a glossary, a puzzle, and a "spot the liter" game.

### **Grace Suge: If you had to, what did you edit out of this book? What other books helped you the most when you were writing it?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** As a child, I read a lot of children's books, both local and foreign. This expertise came in handy as I was writing the book. Given the time difference, I also read a couple of new children's books on the market. So I revised the manuscript whenever I allowed others, including children, to read it and offer me their honest feedback. The feedback was helpful. The majority of the editing was done to simplify words for the intended audience, and more illustrations were added. The exercise was quite beneficial.

### **Grace Suge: How did publishing your first book change your process of writing?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** My writing has changed in that I no longer write lengthy pieces. This is because they cost more to edit, and inflation has increased the cost of paper and publishing in print. It has also taught me the knack of saying a lot with a few words. Now I am more informed about publishing my second book.

I had previously published short stories online, so I was familiar with digital publishing, but I was new to traditional publishing. So when I had to produce my first book in print, I learned working with publishing houses was a whole other ballgame. It was costly, and distributing the finished book to multiple outlets for easy customer access was hectic.

### **Grace Suge: What kind of research do you do, and how long do you spend researching before beginning a book?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** The research is subjective, and I consider a variety of factors. Typically, I do extensive research on the topic under consideration, and I also consult with colleagues who are experts on the subject matter to acquire additional knowledge. Even though the work is fictional, it is always best to get the facts accurate so that the audience gains knowledge from it. The research is also beneficial to me as a writer.

### **Grace Suge: Have you experienced writer's block, and how do you handle it? What spiritual or therapeutic practices help you get into the right headspace?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** I occasionally get writer's block. Fortunately, it doesn't happen very often because I have other obligations that take up my time, so I can refresh my memory and return to my piece of writing. But when I do, I take it as a sign to take a break from my pen and paper. What has worked for me lately is that I appreciate nature and spending time with

family and friends. Other times, I watch comedies or DIYs on YouTube and Pinterest, and then it leaves naturally.

**Grace Suge: Do you participate in writing challenges on social media? Do you recommend any?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** Yes, I take part in writing challenges. I participate when the themes inspire me to ponder and write about different aspects of life that I would not normally write about or think about. I will always urge other writers to take part, but don't let winning be your sole goal, because if you don't win, disappointment may lead you to believe that you're not a good writer or that your work isn't good enough, which isn't always the case.

**Grace Suge: Is there a particular genre you would love to write about, but only under a pseudonym?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** No, not at the moment. But ten years ago, if you had asked me this question, I would have said romance.

**Grace Suge: We would love to know what you love most about writing plays and who (if any) were the creative influences in your life. Do you have any favourite playwrights who inspire you?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** I love the diction, the dialogue conversations, and the stage performance. It is beautiful to watch a written piece being performed. I also admire Wole Soyinka's, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe's, and William Shakespeare's styles of writing. I don't have a favorite, but these playwrights' works inspire me in a variety of ways.

**Grace Suge: You wear many hats. You are a writer, a manager, and a graduate student at the same time. How do you manage to juggle all these roles in your life? What challenges do you encounter?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** At this point, I believe I can confidently call myself a superwoman. But it has been God's grace. I read about people who wear multiple hats, and I take cues from how they attain their goals by employing daily and effective strategies. I also believe that embracing discipline and having an effective plan to help execute every assignment has also helped. But when I'm overwhelmed, I simply use the scale of preference like an economist to get stuff done.

**Grace Suge: Is there another book on the anvil? When is it likely to hit bookstores?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** Yes, another amazing book is in the pipeline. It's titled "A Woman's Valley". It is a stage play, but this time the target audience is young adults. Give it a couple of weeks, and I'll get back to you with further information.

**Grace Suge: How can people find out more about you?**

**Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare:** Connect with me on my website, [www.elizabethdwamena-asare.com](http://www.elizabethdwamena-asare.com) or via LinkedIn (Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare).

**Grace Suge: Thank you so much for speaking to IHRAF. It was indeed a pleasure to speak to you. We wish you the best in all your writing endeavors.**

It was also a pleasure interacting with you. Thank you so much.

Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare is a published author, playwright, and non-fiction editor at Writer's Space Africa. She is the author of the books "Who Cares?" and "A Woman's Valley" and other pieces, including "The New Normal," shortlisted in the 2021 Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) anthology of short stories, and "We Are The Ones We Have Been Waiting For", which won the 2022 Africa Matters Media contest. She is the recipient of the author/writer category for the 2022 Central Entertainment and Business Awards. Her creative writing and articles have appeared in publications including Writers Space Africa, the Malawian National Newspaper, the Daily SearchLight, and the Daily Graphic Online. Outside the world of reading and writing, she loves to explore nature, make some real friends, and watch a good comedy.

## GRACE SUGE INTERVIEWS CHARLES KIMUNGU



**Grace Suge:** You are an established writer in Kenya, for the benefit of our readers please tell us a little about your journey as a writer.

**Charles Kimungu:** My writing journey dates way back to when I was in primary school, class five to be precise. During end term exams, we were required to write a composition titled "My Friend". I impressed our English teacher with my write-up so much that he read out the composition to the entire school. I almost burst with pride, and from that day, writing became my darling and we have never parted ways, despite a myriad of vicissitudes here and there. After high school, I penned my first novel titled "A blessing in disguise". I also have scores of short stories in my repertoire, which I hope to publish in an anthology in the foreseeable future.

**Grace Suge:** We would like to know what made you gravitate towards the fiction-writing genre. Were there any creative mentors and/or creative influences in your life that inspired and encouraged you to pursue it?

**Charles Kimungu:** At the risk of sounding boastful, I was a precocious boy who could contrive things beyond my age. Believe it or not, when in nursery school, I decided to abandon school for reasons that have remained beyond my ken to date. I played my cards so well for an entire week without arousing my mum's suspicion. Finally, my fortieth day arrived, and I received the most resounding beating you can imagine. In short, I have always been a creative person, which is why I naturally took to fiction like a duck to water. Well, I cannot really say that anyone mentored me but I have always been a voracious reader of fiction.

**Grace Suge:** What period of your life do you find you write about most often? (child, teenager, adult)

**Charles Kimungu:** More often than not, I write about my teenage life. Even though I was an introvert of sorts, I liberally engaged in mischief from time to time. Those escapades provide fodder for my stories, which I infuse with a sprinkling of humour.

**Grace Suge:** What books did you grow up reading and which you've read more than once in your life?

**Charles Kimungu:** While growing up, I extensively read novels by African writers, especially Kenyans and Ugandans. I loved novels revolving around crime. That said, I have read John



Kiriamiti's 'My life in crime' more than four times. I have also read 'Son of woman' and 'Kanina and I' by the late Charles Mangua severally. I just love Mangua's sense of humour.

**Grace Suge:** If you could be a character in one of your favorite books, who would you be?

**Charles Kimungu:** I have forgotten the name of the main protagonist in 'My Life in Crime', but I would definitely like to be that daredevil character.

**Grace Suge:** If you had to describe yourself as a creative writer in just three words, what would they be?

**Charles Kimungu:** A humorous scribe.

**Grace Suge:** Writers endeavor to translate their thoughts, incidents, events that inspire them and generally their creative urges on to paper. What is the most difficult part of that creative process for you?

**Charles Kimungu:** As I indicated earlier, I am endowed with an incredibly creative mind and I can come up with captivating and compelling ideas with considerable ease. However, and this is a big however, sitting behind a computer to write down my musings is always a struggle. This is an area I need to work on.

**Grace Suge:** What do you do to get inside your character's heads?

**Charles Kimungu:** Most of the times, I use the first person in my stories, which means that I am the main protagonist. This helps me in creating and relating with other characters.

**Grace Suge:** What advice would you give to help others create plotlines?

**Charles Kimungu:** To come up with compelling plotlines, I would advise my fellow writers to always be observant. The events we encounter in our daily lives, whether physically or otherwise, are the most reliable sources of plotlines. For instance, one day I travelled from Nairobi to Nakuru in a matatu. As fate would have it, one passenger (who remained unidentified) had a stomach disorder, and we were subjected to the most harrowing journeys ever. That incident helped me craft one of my most favorite and humorous stories. In short, writers should keep their eyes and minds open at all times, including while asleep.

**Grace Suge:** What is the most valuable piece of advice you've been given about writing?

**Charles Kimungu:** The most valuable piece of advice I have received in writing is to not to hope for things to work out, but to work towards it. The big break will never come on a silver platter.

**Grace Suge:** Are there therapeutic benefits to modelling a character after someone you know?

**Charles Kimungu:** Modelling characters after familiar people helps my mind come into terms with reality. Sometimes I could be straining under immense weight of stress, but creating a character who resembles someone I know helps to significantly relieve the stress.

**Grace Suge:** What makes your writing unique?

**Charles Kimungu:** In all honesty, I personally do not consider my writing unique. I just love being modest and all that. However, those who read me describe me as the funniest writer ever. Additionally, most of them complain about the vocabulary I employ in my homilies. I remember

some people complaining the same way to the late Philip Ochieng. His rather blunt response still rings in my mind. He asserted that those who could not comprehend his esoteric English should read other writers and not him. In short, I cannot help using those complex words, but I try to keep their usage to the barest minimum. Perhaps the only aspect of my stories I consider unique is their ability to make people laugh. Seeing that happen suffuses me with absolute delight.

**Grace Suge:** If you could write about any subject, what would it be?

**Charles Kimungu:** Love. I just like writing about love. Most probably because it is enigmatic, besides being the greatest commandment.

**Grace Suge:** What do you think makes a good story?

**Charles Kimungu:** I believe writing about issues people can readily identify and relate with makes a great story. Personally, I don't like science fiction, given its surrealistic nature. I believe the same applies to many others. Most of my stories, therefore, revolve around day-to-day happenings, which makes them sound so real. Many of my readers sometimes ask me whether they are true stories. So, I consider going overboard in one's imaginations an unwanted ingredient in writing.

**Grace Suge:** In Kenya, it is believed that a writer cannot live on his/her literature alone and it must be supplemented by another side job for one to survive. What challenges have you in particular faced in this field?

**Charles Kimungu:** It is absolutely true that the reading culture in Kenya is woeful, to say the least. In fact, someone insinuated that if you want to successfully hide something from Kenyans, hide it in books. So, lack of sufficient readership is one of the fundamental challenges we have to contend with. The other challenge revolves around publishing, the cost is just ridiculous. Then marketing one's works also pose a prodigious challenge to Kenyan writers. In fact, I do not think one can survive on writing alone without having a contingency plan.

**Grace Suge:** You've published most of your works on social media. Are you currently working on a collection of your short fiction?

**Charles Kimungu:** Yes, I am working on a collection of my short stories, and I can promise that you will find it hard to put the book down once you start reading.

**Grace Suge:** How can people find out more about you?

**Charles Kimungu:** Well, people can follow me via my Facebook wall, Charles Kimungu or they can personally contact me through 0723663459. They can call at any time of the day or night.

**Grace Suge:** Thank you so much for speaking to IHRAF. It was indeed a pleasure to speak to you. We wish you the best in all your writing endeavours.

**GRACE SUGE INTERVIEWS AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR, NETTABELLA RACHAEL SIMIYU**



**Grace Suge:** Please kindly introduce yourself to our readers

**Nettabella Simiyu:** Nettabella Rachael Simiyu is a Kenyan published author and a teacher of English and Literature. She is currently based in Ethiopia. She loves storytelling, but also has passion in both poetry and non-creative genres.

**Grace Suge:** Tell us all about your writing background- what you've written, and what you're currently writing.

**Nettabella Simiyu:** Nettabella has made the following publications:

(a) ' Peregrination to the Land of Liberty' (2018)- an Anthology of Poems in the Kenyan context. The core theme revolves around social and political liberty.

(b) 'Divine Voices: Nakupenda and other Poems from the Core of Africa' (2020) at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) - an Anthology of Poems in an African context. It has various themes revolving around: racial discrimination, colonialism, human rights infringement, despondency, love, determination, optimism amongst others. This Anthology was written during the COVID-19 pandemic period. America's Gorge Floyd's death also inspired the theme of racial discrimination in the poem 'Sweet Revenge'.

(c) 'Rebirth: a story about resilience ' (2019) at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) - this is a novelette that talks about the importance of resilience when faced with challenges. It's depicted themes revolve around Balondemu, a male fictional character, that beats all odds to financial breakthrough and freedom.

(d) Awards: Nettabella has received the following awards in her literary work:

- (i) The Igby Prize Essay (2020); [www.kalaharireview.com](http://www.kalaharireview.com) , <https://kalaharireview.com/pride-african-lgbtq-8f2252638ff6>, - a non fiction essay about the confidence and pride of belonging to the LGBTQ Community as an African. It called for non - discriminatory attitude towards members of the community and the need to respect their choices.
- (ii) The African Writers Awards (2020); Longlisted for Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature. <https://www.writerstrust.org/longlist-2020-african-writers-awards-awa-and-the-wakini-kuria-award/>
- (iii) Writing Ukraine Prize 2023 Global Anthology; Longlisted for her poem "Prestigious Ripples", highlighting the effects of war.
- (e) Current Literary Work: currently, Nettabella is writing an Anthology of Short Stories; ' Sapphic Religion and other short stories'. It focuses on the struggles, vulnerability and marginalization of the women folk, by their male counterparts and fellow women, as well as their struggle to make themselves significant in the patriarchal society. The first story focuses on the LGBTQ females, while the second one highlights the "side chic" labels.

**Grace Suge:** What excites you about a piece of writing?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I am excited about a writing that uses satire or one that directly fights for the rights of a particular group. Such pieces awaken my interest.

**Grace Suge:** Who are your favorite writers and why?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I love Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She inspires me in her writing. I have always wished to meet her. I love the fact that she's a strong activist for women and people's plights.

**Grace Suge:** What advice would you give to a new writer starting out?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** Writing has never been a bed of roses. As a beginner, there are many disappointments and rejection, as well as much negative criticism. But one has to be resilient and persistent. Never give up!

**Grace Suge:** What inspires you to write?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** My life experiences have given me the inspiration to write. I have always been an independent child from a very young age. Most of the time I would write simple stories from my surroundings, either through personal experience or what I saw from those close to me. It's these experiences that gave me a story.

**Grace Suge:** Do you have a writing routine? A place that's special?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I mostly write well at night, when people are asleep. My bed is my favorite spot for thoughts stimulation. It's here where ideas flow.

**Grace Suge:** How, when and why did you first start writing?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I first started writing at the age of 9 while in Primary school. I started with storytelling. In high school, I remember writing a play that won through the Provincial Levels- "Dunia Hadaa". I needed to try to compete my drama teacher's play, which I actually achieved. I was testing my ability in writing and directing a play. I was awarded the 'Best Scripted Play' in 1998. I could also compose poems.

While at the University, in 2002, I wrote my first Anthology of Poems, in an exercise book. A

classmate borrowed me, and never returned it. I was so broken hearted. At this level, I was inspired by Professor Henry Indagasi, who encouraged us to write.

**Grace Suge:** What was the first piece you ever had published?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** The First Anthology; ' Peregrination to the Land of Liberty', was my first publication; quite raw I should admit. It didn't sell that much.

**Grace Suge:** Do you address particular themes or issues in your writing?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** When writing, my work finds itself attached to the plights of humans; issues that affect human rights, discrimination, and violence especially against women. I rarely talk about love and romance as a theme.

**Grace Suge:** How did you feel when you first started sending your writing out into the world?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** When I started sending my work into the world, I was petrified. I feared rejection, because that was the first reaction I received from the first editor. But at the same time my dear was coupled with anxiety - wishing that I became significant like Majorie Oludhe Mc'Ogoye.

**Grace Suge:** Where do you get your ideas from?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** When writing, I get ideas from daily observations and encounters, personal experiences, imaginary ideas, or other people's stories. Those are the basic sources of my ideas.

**Grace Suge:** How did you get your publisher?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I got my first publisher on Facebook. We talked and that was how we made a deal. But I should say I wasn't serious about publishing.

**Grace Suge:** How can people find out more about you?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I am very present on social media. Am active on Facebook, and scarce on Twitter, rarely found on Instagram.

I have a page on Facebook 'Divine Mind; Nettabella Rachael Simiyu ' where I mostly pen down my poems or share my awards information.

**Grace Suge:** Tips, tricks, and things to pass on to dedicated writers?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I don't have much experience, but I wish that dedicated writers concentrated on contemporary issues. Besides, let them write from personal experiences and familiar environment. This helps the readers to relate themselves to the pieces.

**Grace Suge:** Any typical/common mistakes that new writers tend to make?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** Most new writers have impatience. They want to write and publish a book in one- or two-weeks time- shortest time possible. It is hard for them to write and rewrite, editing their own work over and over to meet the publisher's satisfaction. Others want to start earning money as soon as possible. (I do not get any money for the literary work in Amazon). They are not interested in writing for the public to read and notice them and groom them.

**Grace Suge:** Which of your books or piece of writing were the most enjoyable to write?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** I equally love what I write. But one of my current short story "Sapphic

Religion" has been my best. I got mixed reactions since I was addressing an LGBTQ couple. Some asked me if I was one; of course, I dismissed their questions. I enjoyed it because I read it out loud to an audience, that gave divided suggestions on how it should end, which gave me room to rewrite.

**Grace Suge:** Tell us about your first published book or piece of writing? What was the journey like?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** When I wrote my first book, I was so naïve. It's like I didn't know exactly what I was doing. I signed some contracts and was to be given royalties. The editing and printing were successful. But when I sold the first copies, it was hell being paid the amount. I even gave up at some point about writing. The publisher on the other side wanted the payment. However, COVID-19 crept in, and it all ended. I never communicated to the publisher and that was how we lost track of each other.

**Grace Suge:** What is the key theme and/or message in the book or piece of writing?

**Nettabella Simiyu:** My first publication, an Anthology of Poems, (which I have mentioned above) revolved around Social and Political Liberty.

## GRACE SUGE INTERVIEWS BETH RUGA: ONE OF THE BEST WRITERS IN KENYA!



**Grace Suge: Please kindly introduce yourself to our readers**

**Beth Ruga:** My name is Beth Ruga from Kenya. I am an Author, writer, editor and humorist. I am also an entrepreneur as well as a member of the Welfare Department of my high school ALUMNI GROUP where we pull resources together towards bursary. I take great pleasure in writing and reading. I also enjoy telling stories infused with a tinge of humour on Facebook.

**Grace Suge: Tell us all about your writing background- what you've written, and what you're currently writing.**

**Beth Ruga:** I started taking an interest in writing earlier on in life. I enjoyed putting my thoughts on paper more than I did speaking them out. I have always had something written down since I was a teenager. Being an introvert, it was/probably still is the best way I express myself.

I have co-authored in two Anthologies and currently have a novella at editing stage.

**Grace Suge: What excites you about a piece of writing?**

**Beth Ruga:** Simplicity of language used and authenticity of a story really does it for me.

**Grace Suge: Who are your favorite writers and why?**

**Beth Ruga:** My interest gravitates towards women and the marginalized. It is therefore natural that Wangari Maathai and Chimamanda take the lead. The former for her courageous contribution in challenging the then government in an era where women had little to no voice and the latter for how she is attuned to her origin as an Igbo first before anything else. I enjoy a

wide range of books from many other Authors though. I stay away from erotica but read almost everything else.

**Grace Suge: What advice would you give to a new writer starting out?**

**Beth Ruga:** That would be to simply “just start.” And when you do, don’t stop.

**Grace Suge: What inspires you to write?**

**Beth Ruga:** The environment I am in, mostly. I get inspiration from social issues a lot and I love to weave them into stories.

**Grace Suge: Do you have a writing routine? A place that’s special?**

**Beth Ruga:** Not really, I keep breaking the rules that I set so I just basically write when I set my mind to it. I am more spontaneous about writing than predictable.

**Grace Suge: How, when and why did you first start writing?**

**Beth Ruga:** Like I said earlier, I have always had something written. The why is in the passion but I just recently started my publishing journey in 2021.

**Grace Suge: What was the first piece you ever had published?**

**Beth Ruga:** A story in an Anthology called *Behind The scenes*, that highlights the plight of women in marriages when they do not get boys given that in most parts of Africa, a boy is more valued than a girl and is expected to carry on a lineage.

**Grace Suge: Do you address particular themes or issues in your writing?**

**Beth Ruga:** I am versatile in my writing and the only genre I feel I cannot venture in is Erotica and Science Fiction. The later for lack of knowledge in it and the former as just a personal decision.

**Grace Suge: How did you feel when you first started sending your writing out into the world?**

**Beth Ruga:** The feeling is exhilarating! It is like you have spent your whole life doubting yourself and suddenly you learn that the world is waiting for you with open arms.

**Grace Suge: Where do you get your ideas from?**

**Beth Ruga:** Social issues generally. Human interest, with a little imagination thrown into it. Reading widely also gives you hints on ideas to explore.

**Grace Suge: How did you get your publisher?**

**Beth Ruga:** Interestingly, I stumbled on an opportunity online. A publisher was looking for new writers to co-author an anthology with and I hopped on the bus!

**Grace Suge: How can people find out more about you?**

**Beth Ruga:** Only on Facebook as Beth Ruga, my other accounts are almost dormant; I should probably be more active on the others.



**Grace Suge: Tips, tricks, and things to pass on to dedicated writers?**

**Beth Ruga:** Networking is key. I do my best to attend most book related events in my country that mostly happen at Alliance Francais and The Goethe Institute where I interact with other writers as you learn from them. Having networks also exposes you to a lot of writing opportunities.

Do not stay in a cocoon; get out there and let the world see you.

**Grace Suge: Any typical/common mistakes that new writers tend to make?**

**Beth Ruga:** One word- procrastination!

**Grace Suge: Which of your books or piece of writing were the most enjoyable to write?**

**Beth Ruga:** *Women of The Light* a book I co-authored for charity towards bursary. It is the book I am most proud of. Its proceeds go to bursary 100%

**Grace Suge: Tell us about your first published book or piece of writing? What was the journey like?**

**Beth Ruga:** I wrote the short story seven years before it got published and sort of just stashed it away “for later”. At the time I was writing it, I never even imagined it would ever see the light of day- at least not in the way it did.

**Grace Suge: What is the key theme and/or message in the book or piece of writing?**

**Beth Ruga:** It dwells on Gender based discrimination that mostly affects the women and girls, especially in Africa. I advocate for equity.

**INTERVIEWS CURATED BY WOLE ADEDOYIN, THE DIRECTOR OF IHRAM  
AFRICAN SECRETARIAT, NIGERIA**



## **WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ATUNGWU ALLAN DI'ELDRA: THE KEY TO ANY FORM OF ART IS SIMPLICITY**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**ATUNGWU ALLAN DI'ELDRA**

**THE KEY TO ANY FORM OF ART IS SIMPLICITY**

Atungwu Allan Di'eldra is an artist, with a Higher Diploma in Industrial Arts from School of Arts and Designs, Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo, Benue State and Post Graduate Diploma in Education from University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

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

**ATUNGWU:** I have been writing as long as I can remember. As a primary 2 pupil my essay, **MY MOTHER'S KITCHEN**, stimulated my teachers senses. I have been writing since then. I write a lot of things, especially poetry and plays. I have been a poet lately .

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**ATUNGWU:** The picture value of the writing. How the words. Simple words fit to paint a picture. It is like a bricklayer. He knows the right bricks .

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**ATUNGWU:** Chinua Achebe. William Sassine of Konakri Guinea. The one a simple writer, infact my model. The other is his mathematical approach to literature, to me a Kumuyi of literature.

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

**ATUNGWU:** The key to any form of art is simplicity. And of course, great writers read.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**ATUNGWU:** People. People. People.

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

**ATUNGWU:** No. I write anytime and anywhere. I write all the time. I am writing now. There is nothing for me to write. I do not know how many poems I have written.

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

**ATUNGWU:** I just started writing. I started writing when I was in primary school, that was when I started writing.

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

**ATUNGWU:** MARRIAGE SMELLS SWEET IN NIGERIA.

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

**ATUNGWU:** I address everything. But I am a feminist. Several times I have been addressed as 'Ma' on Facebook.

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

**ATUNGWU:** It feels good. The voice spoke and the ears heard. That is how you will feel. Some out there will read the words is enough thrill to the author.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**ATUNGWU:** People. You see, my late mother is a librarian. I have only written with my mother's tongue. Her conversations are plied with images, helping the listener to grasp. Let the words paint the picture. And not picture painting the words, explaining the words.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**ATUNGWU:** I have always favoured my works published after my passing. That is why I am constantly writing.

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

**ATUNGWU:** Titles. God of Words, Word Lord, The king, King of Words, etcetera.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**ATUNGWU:** On Facebook: Mahogany Souls, Atungwu Allan, Sr.

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

**ATUNGWU:** Observe. Observe. Observe.

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

**ATUNGWU:** Trying to replace picture with sound. Literature is picture not sound.

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

**ATUNGWU:** All my works give me gleeful pleasure. I read my works very well.

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

**ATUNGWU:** I have not really published a book. I attempted one. It went down south.

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

**ATUNGWU:** There was no book

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**ATUNGWU:** On whatsapp +234 9031143202. Or on facebook messenger, Atungwu Allan, Sr. My online accounts were recently hacked.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS UDOCHUKWU CHIDERA: TAKE EACH REJECTION AS A LEARNING CURVE TO IMPROVE**



Udochukwu Chidera also known as Chidera is an award – winning Nigerian writer and pharmacist. Chidera won the second prize in the 2023 AS ABUGI PRIZE. She took the third position in the 2023 BKPW Poetry Contest. She was also shortlisted for the 2023 The Green We Left behind CNF contest organized by the Arts Lounge Literary Magazine. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her passion for writing.

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

**CHIDERA:** I have been writing extensively, right from when I learned to hold a pencil; I have written for so many literary journals and won lots of contests. Currently, I am working on a short story for a literary magazine I have always admired.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**CHIDERA:** I love well written stories, I love stories that make use of beautiful English to paint pictures and take one on a journey.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**CHIDERA:** I have always admired the works of Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. I love Chinua Achebe’s use of proverbs to tell a story of society.

Buchi Emecheta stands out to me with her fierce championing of feminism through the art of storytelling. Chimamanda is a mistress of words, she writes like she is taking you on a journey; you feel every emotion, you are present in that room as the scene is taking place and you don't want the story to end.

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

**CHIDERA:** To every new writer out there, I would encourage you to read as voraciously as you can. Good readers make good writers. Do not take any story as something to skim through. Read it like you want to learn something from it; that way you perfect your craft. Also, do not be discouraged when your work is criticized or rejected by editors or publishers, take each rejection as a learning curve to improve and bounce back ten times better.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**CHIDERA:** I am inspired by what is around me at that particular time. I have written pieces on music, mental health, ENDSARS, war, Nigeria. I feel we should use our gifts and platforms to write on things that really matter and speak on societal issues so I am inspired with the urgency to speak on the things that affect us as humans.

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

**CHIDERA:** I love writing in my room, after work. Anytime I come back from my 9 to 5 job, I take up my writer persona.

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

**CHIDERA:** I started writing as young as eight years. As a child, I was exposed to so many books by my father. I would sit with him for hours, reading Gulliver's Travels and Ugly Duckling. I had a whole library at my disposal so writing also came naturally to me. As a teenager I had so many unpublished works. Writing is a gift I was born with.

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

**CHIDERA:** My very first piece was published by my alma mater Nnamdi Azikiwe University when I won the inaugural writing contest. It was titled, FROM ME TO YOU, WITH LOVE.

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

**CHIDERA:** I do not like to restrict myself to any particular theme in my writing. I write as the inspiration comes. I have written on mental health, climate change, music, love, peace. I have a broad range of topics I write on.

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

**CHIDERA:** I felt nervous, not sure how the world would receive me and my writing but I received reassurance when my works won some prizes and got recognized. I knew this was my calling.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**CHIDERA:** I get ideas spontaneously and I always try to note them down. I have written a poem on a ride home. My ideas can come at any time.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**CHIDERA:** I am still a freelance writer, sending my works to different publishers. I see some openings online and I apply to different magazines.

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

**CHIDERA:** The responses have been overwhelmingly positive. I get so much encouragement that pushes me to push my pen. Every now and then, I get constructive criticism but I take them as lessons on how to improve and it has only gotten better.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**CHIDERA:** I am very active on social media. I post my works on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter so people can find more about me on my social media pages.

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

**CHIDERA:** Be pushing your pen, do not give up easily, the best is yet to come.

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

**CHIDERA:** Some tend to give up when they don't get the responses they want. They should learn to be consistent, go back to the drawing board and continue improving. The wins will come in due time.

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

**CHIDERA:** I haven't written any books yet but my favourite piece to write is BAGPIPES OF BAMFETE which won D'Lit Review Contest for August edition 2023.

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

**CHIDERA:** I haven't published a book yet but it's on its way and I am enjoying every single minute of creating this work.

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

The key message is on feminism and being confident in your own skin.

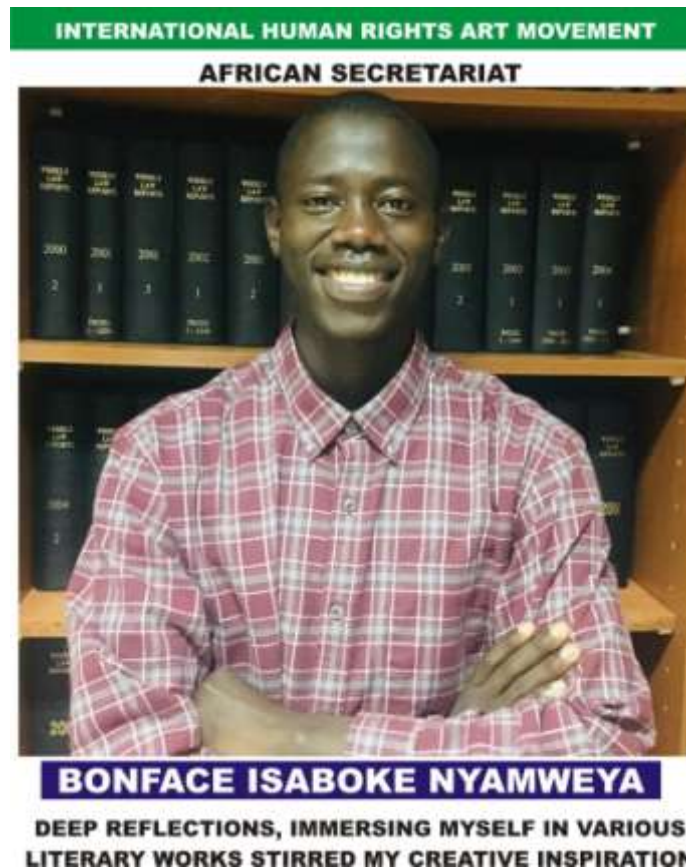
**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**CHIDERA:** I go by Chidera Udochukwu on Facebook, queenderaa001 on Instagram and chi\_deraa001 on Twitter.

Thank you.



**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS BONFACE ISABOKE NYAMWEYA: DEEP REFLECTIONS, IMMERSING MYSELF IN VARIOUS LITERARY WORKS STIRRED MY CREATIVE INSPIRATION**



Born in 1997, Bonface Isaboke Nyamweya is a Kenyan poet, short story writer, playwright and novelist. Nyamweya was a featured poet in the 2022 and 2023 Kistrech International Poetry Festival. He was selected as a co-editor of the Konch Magazine of America this year for the winter edition. Moreover, Nyamweya has a degree in Philosophy from the Pontifical University of Urbaniana, Rome. He also has a Masters in Philosophy from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Nyamweya is a law student at the University of Nairobi and an intern at the National Council for Law Reporting. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career.

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

**BIN:** I have written a number of poems published in various national and international anthologies. For example, ten of my poems have been featured in the forthcoming high school anthology- Voices from the Woods: An Anthology of Poems from East Africa & Beyond. I was among the poets featured in the anthology- Black Rootedness(2022). Some of my poems have been published in magazines like Kalahari Review as well. Other than poems, I also write

short stories and novels. *Peeling the Cobwebs* (2020) and *Her Question Pills* (2020) are my two published novels. My short story *Whose Title Died* was published in the Pan African Writers Association anthology *Voices that Sing Behind the Veil*. Some can be found even in the *Imbizo Journal*. Currently, I have written the first Ekegusii sci-fi novel 'Otongoro n'Eching'erabanto: Orogendo Gochia ase Ching'enang'eni' (Otongoro and the Aliens: An Interstellar Voyage). Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o has written the foreword for this book after reading an English synopsis about it.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**BIN:** It is in my mother tongue and I love how I am able to talk about complex concepts of plasma physics and quantum mechanics in my mother tongue.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**BIN:** Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o is my favorite author because of his passion for indigenous languages and his amazing writing style. I also admire Richard Wright for his beautiful writing style especially after reading *Native Son*.

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

**BIN:** Writing is not just writing, it is a societal revolution, a creation of beauty, a recreation of the beautiful, a rebirth of the muse in the shower of the totality of the ambience and historicity of humanity's being.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**BIN:** Each time I am in a vehicle traveling somewhere, I try to see the story around me. When I listen to gossips of people around me, the hawkers, etc., I try to see the story. Everything carries the seeds for a potential great story. For the phenomena to inspire me, I always pay attention to the atomic relationships of things around me, the tiniest relations or manifestations of everything around me.

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

**BIN:** I have a writing routine. I write always. But I do not have a special place to write. I write in my notebook, in my phone's notes, and in my mind. Anytime. Because a precious idea can be born at midnight or in the middle of a meeting, and if it is not jotted down, it can be lost in a marvelous forgetfulness.

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

**BIN:** I started writing when in primary school. I was writing compositions and essays. In high school, when in form two, I wrote several poems. In form three, I wrote my first play. After high school, I read widely and tried my hand in other genres like short stories and novels.

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

**BIN:** A poem "Burning White Masks" when Georg Floyd was knelt upon to death. The poem is about racism and was published in the anthology 'Shackles of Pain' 2020.

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

**BIN:** Yes, I do. My first book of poetry 'The Nile, Our Neither/Nor' 2019 treats nature and

environmental pollution. Peeling the Cobwebs novel talks about tribalism in an imaginary African country called Ricafa. Her Question Pills treats feminism and African womanism.

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

**BIN:** I felt ennobled, like someonesprinkling roses upon the path trekked by great people and like a guitarist whose melodies swing the moods of the listeners.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**BIN:** My muse was provoked by chats with friends, news, ruminations, and reading other works.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**BIN:** I had sent my work to a major publisher but it could not be published because they were not accepting unsolicited manuscripts. So, I opted for self-publishing.

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

**BIN:** My book 'Peeling the Cobwebs' has been done by five universities in Kenya including Kisii University, Kabianga University, St Paul University, and Moi University. Several high school students have read it as well, notwithstanding many non-students. Nearly all of them esteem the theme of tribalism treated by this book as it has not been delved with by many authors. They also talk about the usage of dramatic dialogue and vivid descriptions.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**BIN:** I am in Facebook as Bonface Nyamweya

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009193686600&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

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

**BIN:** Learn to hurry slowly. Read, read, read. Then, read and write and read. And read and read. And read and read and read. It is a great treasure to be informed of the vast number of writing techniques, flavors, etc. to make a book that will make people shed tears or smile.

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

**BIN:** Self-publishing without preparedness. Whereas many think self-publishing is cheap. It is not. It needs a budget not just to have the book printed, but as well editing, rigorous editing by expert editors. Failure to do this, substandard books end up in the market and this kills the reputation especially when notable errors are found. They also need a budget for marketing.

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

**BIN:** Peeling the Cobwebs, 2020. I had not started my undergraduate law classes hence I wrote it very relaxed.

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

**BIN:** My first published novel 'Peeling the Cobwebs' 2020 was first submitted to a major publisher. When the review report was out, I worked on it but sending it back, it was not

received since the editors were working on new curriculum materials. I sent it to another publisher in Tanzania. Covid-19 came and I met a friend who knew a self-publishing firm here in Kenya. I talked with the guy and I had to revoke my work from Tanzania and send it to this publisher domicile in Kenya.

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

**BIN:** Tribalism

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**BIN:** I am in Facebook as Bonface Nyamweya

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009193686600&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS EDWARD EDMOND EDUFUL: NEW WRITERS MUST MAINTAIN THEIR OWN WRITING IDENTITY**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**EDWARD EDMOND EDUFUL**

**NEW WRITERS MUST MAINTAIN THEIR OWN WRITING IDENTITY**

Edward Edmond Eduful is a creative writer who has authored, among others, the following novels- “The Marriage Market”, “Kofi James”, “The Morning After Sundown”, and “On The Verge”. He is a Business Management graduate of the University of Cape Coast. He is a member of the Ghana Association of Writers (GAW) and a chartered accountant with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana. He is versed in corporate income tax, VAT, withholding tax, PAYE, and management accounts. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing.

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

**EDWARD:** My passion for writing started in secondary school, but I shelved the thought because of my love for accounting. After graduating from the university, I couldn’t control the urge to hold off writing. My first article titled The National Service Hitches, was published in the Daily Graphic, a well-read newspaper in Ghana in 2008. I can’t describe the feeling that seeped through me when I saw my first article in print. It has been an exciting journey since. The newspaper, including its affiliate daily, The Mirror, would continue publishing my subsequent

articles: What Happens To Ghana2008 Volunteers?; Job Experience- A Threat to Employment; Kintampo Waterfalls Under Siege?; National Service Secretariat, Why?; Preaching in Public Transport; Society Must Fight This Canker; Mothers' Fortitude, among others. My novels: The Morning After Sundown; The Marriage Market; Kofi James, and On the Verge can be found on Amazon and Bookfusion-

<https://Amazon.com/author/eddylinto> and <https://bookfusion.com/books/3066169-on-the-verge> respectively. I am currently working on "The Righteous Sinner", a 1980s story about a young man, Nguzi, whose betrothed fiancée, Kazidi, has been forcibly abducted by a powerful king because of her moon-clad beauty. The only way to liberate her is through Bugaati, a young boy with an extraordinarily stealing prowess. Nguzi offers to buy Bugaati outright with gold bars. His father accepts, but his mother objects. Imagine how it pans out...

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**EDWARD:** In writing, it is a journey to an unknown world of endless possibilities, with numberless 'transportation systems to your destination'. Choosing the right words, painstakingly, arriving at your destination, thus, reaching the goal of satisfying my audiences or readers after a morsel of word transforms into understandably readable pages that fill a void excites me whenever I take a writing journey.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**EDWARD:** I have a lot of writers I enjoy reading their books. My favourite ones are: Eric Arthur Blair (George Orwell), Chinua Achebe, Ernest Hemingway, Steve Jacobs, Peter Abrahams, and Ama Atta Aidoo. These writers would transport me to a world I seemed not to belong at the initial stage. In the end, I absorbingly fit in as a 'resident' without bothering about anything with their illustrative, human-centred figures of speech and word constructions.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEW WRITERS STARTING OUT?**

**EDWARD:** It is great to read more about renowned authors and to learn something from them. New writers must maintain their own writing identity, thus, to be themselves. Success takes time. Research and read more. Getting published does not take a day. You need to hone your skills. There is nothing like failure in writing. Where there is a roadblock, retreat and analyse your manuscripts- proofread and edit to meet readers tastes and publishers requirements.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**EDWARD:** Going to writers conferences and workshops, and listening to conversations at parties, funerals, and how family members behave gives me the buzz when I have alone-time to visualise things.

**WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE?**

**EDWARD:** I have set up a writing space. Each day, at dawn, I spend two to three hours reading my manuscripts. In the night, before going to bed, I spend not less than an hour reviewing what I had put down in the morning.

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

**EDWARD:** The harmattan was blazing on the evening of November 2007 when I set out to write about the delay and truncation of national service allowance payment. I had to write since

we had just graduated from the university and our livelihood was the allowance. We needed the money badly because most of the service persons had travelled from Accra to Kintampo, a town about 326 kilometres away, and were without money.

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

**EDWARD:** I was doing my national service back in 2007/2008. The authorities had truncated our first allowance, insisting that service persons had reported late to their assigned workplaces. I wrote a feature- The National Service Hitches- in the Daily Graphic, the most circulated and renowned newspaper in Ghana, to respectfully draw to the attention of the national service authority that the late reporting was due to their reposting, which had delayed our early reporting. Gratefully, our allowance was paid across the country after the publication.

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

**EDWARD:** Addressing particular themes or issues is a mainstay of every writing. The issues are the ‘variable’ that seeks to address the needs of the readers or audiences; without it, much would not be achieved.

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

**EDWARD:** It was a dream come true for me. Seeing my first article published in the dailies was a heartening moment for me. It led me to take my writing seriously.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**EDWARD:** I get ideas from interaction with friends and family, research, extensive reading, notes-taking as I take a walk, and visualisations.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**EDWARD:** I self-published at the initial stage. Later, through online upgrade and searches, I got Amazon to publish my books. Pan African Writers Association and Access Publishers in Nigeria would print both hard and soft copies of my stories on the writing contest on open defecation: Toilet Paradise and Abiola Boomerangs: Builds Toilet by the end of 2023.

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

**EDWARD:** I often receive mixed responses from my audiences or readers, notably constructive criticisms. These often spur me on to correct mistakes and research my subsequent writings. They serve as a ‘reservoir’, a ‘goaded rod’ of go-to not to repeat mistakes made in the past. Where praises are due, they don’t hold them back.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**EDWARD:** In August 2023, I was happy to have won a publishing contract with the Pan African Writers Association/ Access publishers- <https://www.9jaliterature.com/2023/08/pawa-list-of-successful-manuscripts-for.html>. I am on two online websites: <https://Amazon.com/author/eddylinto> and <https://bookfusion.com/books/3066169-on-the-verge>.



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

**EDWARD:** At least set aside valuable time of your busy schedule within the week to have routine writing goals. Never give up when the going becomes tough. Joining writing groups and attending writers conferences, workshops, and talks would rekindle, shape, and remind you of your writing prospect.

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

**EDWARD:** At times, the angle (point of view) gets twisted from the start, which does not allow the subsequent paragraphs to interweave the starting point. Complex conflict, a plot not well set out, characters lacking purpose, poor dialogues, and misuse of contractions are just a few mistakes new writers are prone to.

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

**EDWARD:** I have written a few books. The Morning After Sundown, The Marriage Market, and Kofi James remain treasured books I have written.

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

**EDWARD:** My first published book was On The Verge, 2015; it was self-published. It was exciting to take the first step and accomplish and publish my first book. It was a dream come true. That was when I had to learn about ISBN, barcodes, copyrights, and marketing. Aside from the financial constraints, it was a worthwhile experience; it helped me on my later writing projects to manoeuvre my way through the registration processes, unlike the first time. I had to go to selected schools in Accra with copies. I made some negligible sales, though, as a first-timer.

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

**EDWARD:** There seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel for some who are drowning in the debauched lifestyle- overdrinking, drug peddling, womanising, and banditry. These individuals can turn their lives around when assisted by honest-hearted people who never give up on them. They can become assets in the community by helping those steeped in their bad ways.

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**EDWARD:** I am on Amazon: <https://Amazon.com/author/eddylinto> and Book Fusion-  
<https://bookfusion.com/books/3066169-on-the-verge>. Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/edward.edmond.14> LinkedIn:<https://www.linkedin.com/in/edward-edmond-116323244>



## WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS JIMOH O ABDULLAH: WRITING IS A CARRIER OR VEHICLE OF KNOWLEDGE

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT

AFRICAN SECRETARIAT



**JIMOH O ABDULLAH**

**WRITING IS A CARRIER OR VEHICLE OF KNOWLEDGE**

Jimoh Abdulahi is a Nigerian Writer. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing.

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

**JIMOH:** I started writing in my senior secondary school days when I began to emulate some of the writers of the pieces I read then. Trying to create something similar to what I've read like the poems, the essays, the short stories in my English textbook, the novels and so on. But all of what I wrote then, which I've later lost the possession of, can only be categorized as drafts because of how they were produced, they were just my first attempts at being a writer and as a result didn't go through the process of rigorous editing which now I believe is as important as the writing itself. In the course of my writing career, I've written poems & essays and I've been published in the two categories. About what I'm currently writing, I'm just writing poems (mostly centering on divorce and family-related grief) and essays and submitting them to journals and magazines.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**JIMOH:** I like the magic of the fact that strings of words can have a lasting effect on a reader for a lifetime. The fact that when you read some pieces, they can incur feelings of love, sympathy,

hope, etc. in an individual, interests me a lot. There is power in words. Also, I like the fact that writing is a carrier or vehicle of knowledge.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**JIMOH:** I think it will be an almost endless list if I decide to start mentioning all of them here. Nonetheless, here are the ones that surface on my mind right now: Brian Doyle, Safia Elhillo, Saddiq Dzukorgi, Abu Bakr Sadiq, Kaveh Akbar, Sharon Olds, Ada Limón, George Herbert, Richard Siken and Danusha Laméris.

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

**JIMOH:** As one of my writer friends used to remind me, read a lot. I would suggest too, that you read a lot, especially in the genre you're writing. A good writer is firstly a good reader.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**JIMOH:** The page, for me, is like a friend, whenever I feel like expressing myself, I go to my friend to pour out my mind. My environment and current situation ( struggles, wins and so forth) inspire me the most.

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

**JIMOH:** When it comes to this, I will say I'm a more flexible type. Sometimes I write regularly (routinely) but also, other times I may write intermittently. I don't have a special place for writing but for convenience, I would prefer to be solitary in a silent place while writing.

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

**JIMOH:** As aforementioned, I started writing while I was still in secondary school, around 2013 or so. I started out trying to simulate some of the works of the writers I read then that seemed captivating. Trying to clone the beauty in their works.

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

**JIMOH:** A couple of poems published by Kalahari review.

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

**JIMOH:** No. I don't stick to a set of specific themes in my pieces. I'm more flexible with this.

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

**JIMOH:** I felt happy and had high hope, high expectation with respect to the response I would get from Editors but unfortunately, it soon dawned on me that the industry is not as I envisaged it to be. Not easy, one has to drink rejections like water regularly, and never get tired.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**JIMOH:** From what I've read, from occurrences around me, from nature, from history etc.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**JIMOH:** I haven't published a book yet but for some of my pieces( solo works) that have been published, I came across the publication opportunities online via social media like from friends

on WhatsApp or the writer's community on Twitter (now X).

**WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCES\RS?**

**JIMOH:** Appreciation of the pieces, and words of encouragement.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**JIMOH:** They can check out my profile on Facebook and Twitter.

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

**JIMOH:** I would just suggest that a writer should read more than he/she writes.

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

**JIMOH:** Let me use myself as a case study. Once, I discovered that sometimes way back, I used to hasten to deem a piece of writing finished or ready for publication when in fact the piece still needed editing. Give yourself enough time for the work to materialize. One needs to be patient and not rush to admit a work is done.

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

**JIMOH:** I have not published a book yet.

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

**JIMOH:** I don't have a published book yet.

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**JIMOH:** On Twitter(X): @OC\_plus\_

On Facebook: Jimoh O Abdullah

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS JOSHUA IDOWU O MIDIRE: ANY PIECE OF WRITING THAT MUST ARREST MY ATTENTION MUST HAVE THE PIZZAZZ OF PHILOSOPHICAL DEPTH**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**JOSHUA IDOWU O MIDIRE**

**ANY PIECE OF WRITING THAT MUST ARREST MY ATTENTION  
MUST HAVE THE PIZZAZZ OF PHILOSOPHICAL DEPTH**

Joshua Idowu Omidire is a poet, editor, publisher, and digital media strategist. His poems have appeared in SpringNG, Nnoko Stories, Footmarks, Our Legacy of Madness, and The Sky is our Earth: Anthology of 50 young Nigerian Poets. He was the winner of professor Eruvbetine's poetry prize. He also won Professor Hope Eghagha's Drama prize in 2012. He has been published in Pulse, Ynaija, Praxis, Literary Horizon: An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal, etc. He loves reading books, listening to music, and tapping inspiration from ordinary sights. He toys with lines, colours, and shapes in his quiet moments. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks on his writing career.

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

**JIO:** I fell in love with stories quite early. As soon as I was able to read in Primary 3, I read everything in sight – signboards, newspapers, storybooks etc. I also listened to stories. I started forging stories from all the stories I knew. It got to the extent that my brother would ask me to tell him a story to redeem myself from punishment. So as a kid, I got away with murder a lot of times. Whenever my brother and I were done with our food and we wanted more, my brother would ask me to tell my sister a story so that her attention would be far away from her food. While she was busy listening, my brother would steal a portion of her meal and we would share it later.

As I grew older, I realized I could write these things down. So, I started writing. I could write

across genres: poetry, prose, plays and other formats. My poems and a play of mine have won me something. It's only my prose work that is yet to win me any prize as a writer. I am currently working on a collection of short stories. Meanwhile, I have unpunished poetry and novel manuscripts.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**JIO:** Depth. Any piece of writing that must arrest my attention must have the pizzazz of philosophical depth. It must have the touch of relatability. It must have the capacity to make me suspend my reality. It must be peppered with what Samuel Taylor Coleridge refers to as "suspension of disbelief."

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**JIO:** Few of my favourite writers are Gabriel García Márquez, Wole Soyinka, Dambudzo Marechera, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri, D.O Fagunwa. Each of them influences several aspects of my writing differently. They all have what I call literary madness. Without the touch of their kind of madness, you cannot adequately explore the seemingly inexorable aspects of human nature.

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

**JIO:** Study the masters. That is all the literary schooling you need. Then find your path. Your journey should be different and unique. A writer is a messenger. Find your message; it's your gift to the world. Share it through writing. Write. Write. Write. All the greatest knowledge of writing cannot make you a writer if you don't write. The secret is in the application of the knowledge.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**JIO:** Writing is teaching. Whatever we teach people hardly dies. It is often handed down from generation to generation. The idea of constantly touching lives even when I am gone inspires me a lot. It is amazing to continue to make life better and more meaningful for the living even in death. The concept of artistic immortality never ceases to amaze me. Every time I write, I see myself beating death.

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

**JIO:** I write every day, everywhere, almost every time. You may not see me write but the lines take life in me as I behold interesting sights. There are times I carry the lines in my head for days before writing them. All through such days, the lines get finetuned before I commit them to a page. It's funny how I don't forget these lines until I write them down. I write in all kinds of places: in the traffic, restaurants, by the roadside, at home etc. I write at night, early morning, afternoon. I write in stunning silence and deafening noise. But I find nature special. It's different when I write close to a body of water or gazing over mind-bending landscapes or walking through a forest.

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

**JIO:** In JSS 3, I started creating something for myself to read. I bought a special notebook wherein I wrote all my stories. This was influenced by two classmates of mine. They used to read a lot of magazines. Whenever they were done reading a magazine, they would get a

notebook and create their own magazine with stories of all the cartoon films they've seen. I read their "magazines" and told myself I could easily do this given my history of telling my brother stories as a primary 3 pupil. I wrote my version of all the cartoon movies I saw. When I filled up my eighty-leaf notebook, I bought a higher education notebook. This time around, I wanted to write something I could relate more with so I wrote my version of the story I heard on the radio. In SSS1, a friend in the coaching centre I attended after school hours saw it and pleaded that I should let her have the book for the weekend. The following week, she was done and while returning the higher education notebook, she asked me to write another one because she enjoyed the one she just read. I was like "Really?" That was the first time it dawned on me that stories are meant to be shared and that they can touch lives.

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

**JIO:** My poem "Awero" was published in Sentinel Magazine. It was the first time I would be published without me being a part of the process. I posted a lot of my poems on Facebook before this time.

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

**JIO:** I am passionate about the journey of the self. It is where everything begins. The self must be loaded with dreams which will birth memories that will sustain it on its way beyond this realm. Without the adequate realization of the self, we cannot bring about positive change in the lives of others. We cannot give what we lack.

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

**JIO:** It was the first time I felt brave enough to face the world. I was ready for whatever outcome it would bring my way. I was ready for the rejections and the acceptances. But you can't be too ready for these things. Every rejection or acceptance hits differently.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**JIO:** I get ideas from dreams; from my waking realities; from the streets; from my conversations with people; from books; from movies; from pain and pleasure.

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

**JIO:** Readers respond differently to my works. The responses are mostly positive. My writings make people feel and think deeply because of the philosophical depth.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**JIO:** They can just google my name or look for me on Facebook and LinkedIn.

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

**JIO:** Practise consistent writing. Your writing will develop in three months. Learn to send your writings to proper editors. Be brave enough to send your works out to online magazines. Do it afraid. Be ready for the rejection letters. Pick your lessons from each one and move on.

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

**JIO:** Lots of them. Many tend to go into writing just for the fame and fortune. These reasons are valid but they cannot be the **STRONG WHY** for a serious writer. There will be a lot of bad days at the office and it's easy to chicken out on such days. New writers tend to play down the place of spending on serious editing. No matter how amazing you are, get yourself an editor. New writers may not be able to withstand criticism.

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

**JIO:** Oh it was fun writing my manuscript. I won't tell you the title yet.

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

**JIO:** My manuscript is not published yet.

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

**JIO:** I choose to keep this for now.

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**JIO:** I am on Facebook and LinkedIn as Joshua Omidire.  
Threads, Instagram, and Twitter: page\_adventure

## WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO: I WRITE TO HEAL THE WORLD WHILE MY WRITING ALSO HEALS ME

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT

AFRICAN SECRETARIAT



OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO

I WRITE TO HEAL THE WORLD WHILE MY WRITING  
ALSO HEALS ME

Osieka Osinimu Alao is a Nigerian writer, poet, editor and academic. He holds an MA in Creative Writing from Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. He was shortlisted for the ANA-OSUN-OAU Prize for Poetry 2015, longlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize 2019, longlisted for PIN's PWPC 2022, shortlisted for the Albert Jungers Poetry Prize 2022, First Prize Winner BPPC Soro Soke Edition 2022, and a winner in the Creators of Justice Literary Award 2022. His works are featured or forthcoming in ANMLY, Ta Adesa, African Writer Magazine, Rigorous, International Human Rights Art Movement, Kalahari Review, Lumiere Review, Of Poetic Yellow Trumpets, Poetry Column NND, Synchronized Chaos, Arts Lounge Magazine, Nantygreens, Requiem Magazine, BPPC Anthology, and elsewhere. He is @OOAlao\_ on Twitter & Instagram. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing.

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

**ALAO:** Writing for me has been a form of healing. I write to heal the world while my writing also heals me. Been writing since I was small but became conscious of the writing gift in 2004 and since then it's been a passionate odyssey. I've written poems, fictions and plays. I have self-published three poetry collections: Epidocyle (2011), Apocyle (2012) and Blood and Ink (2013). I'm currently working on my debut full length poetry collection and a play, and my earnest desire is to secure decent traditional publishing.



**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-**

**ALAO:** I would say language and soul. Writing to me is writhing language while seeking soul. I'm drawn to aesthetic language that unlocks a certain soulful depth. Turning the mundane into marvel. Writing is purgation—an outpouring without hindrance nor pretence. The best writing is one that interrogates and explores.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**ALAO:** Some of my favourite writers include Wole Soyinka, Rabindranath Tagore, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Toni Morison, Ben Okri, and a host of others. Their artistic visions are beacons for humanity's transformation, which is something I've an affinity to.

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

**ALAO:** The first advice would be to read a lot. The place of reading can't be overemphasised. You need to possess a mania for reading. Then there're the 3Fs: Fearlessness, Fervour and Faith. A writer has to be fearless because writing is plying the wild. Fervour is imbibing an undying spirit that manifests as a form of piety towards craft. Faith—whatever you make of it—goes a long way.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**ALAO:** The world around me, my immediate and distant environment. I'm always on the lookout for the next muse, the next intrigue, the next trigger, the next quest, the next encounter, the next experience and so on. You have to stay hungry, stay thirsty, stay wanting. The best inspirations come from being responsive, and sometimes it could be the littlest things that stir our beings into wonder.

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

**ALAO:** Every day, I try to dedicate a certain number of hours to writing. Some days I accomplish a page or two, some days a paragraph, some days a few lines or sentences and some days a word here and there. I like to write in quiet places.

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

**ALAO:** Like I said earlier, I started writing when I was small but became conscious of the gift in 2004 when I was in JSS2 or so. On that fateful evening, I was in the classroom while my mates were on the field for sporting activities. I had not joined them because I was feeling down the whole day. So, while alone I scribbled a few things and like they say the rest is history. My first notable piece was a sad poem.

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

**ALAO:** It was a poem in a magazine put together by my secondary school Thomas Adewumi International College, Oko, Kwara State.

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

**ALAO:** I think over time the more you read and write you tend to tilt to certain ideas. Recently, I've found myself obsessing over the volatile human nature and the imminent decadence of humanity.

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

**ALAO:** It felt good but a bit anxious too because you know once your work is out it somehow ceases to be yours.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**ALAO:** I get my ideas from societal experiences and realities, some personal while others are not. As a writer you always have to be sensitive to your milieu.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**ALAO:** Through an online search.

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

**ALAO:** Over the years I've received positive reviews from readers, critics and scholars alike. I've also received comments from readers who think some of my works are difficult, obscure and ambiguous. But at the end of the day, it all boils down to the individual's understanding and interpretation of and connection with my work.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**ALAO:** Through my social media pages.

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

**ALAO:** Be fluid. Be experimental. Always be your own biggest critic.

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

**ALAO:** I would say editing. Thorough editing. Writing builds the work while editing shapes it.

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

**ALAO:** All my books but I would say Epidocycle because I was about nineteen then and it was my first.

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

**ALAO:** My first published book Epidocycle was actually self-published with AuthorHouse UK. The pre-publishing phase brimmed with a surge of excitement that came with putting out your work for the world to behold but the post-publishing phase has not been too pleasant because of royalty issues which I would not like to go into now.

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

**ALAO:** Epidocycle is a poetry collection that centres the phenomena of life, strife, survival, death, afterlife and eternity.

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**ALAO:** I'm OsiekaOsinimu Alao on Facebook and @oalao\_ on Instagram and Twitter.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OVERCOMER IBITEYE: IT'S GOOD TO READ THE WORK OF ESTABLISHED WRITERS, BUT READ TO LEARN AND NOT TO IMITATE**



Overcomer Ibiteye is a Nigerian poet and storyteller. Her works have appeared in anthologies like Agbówo, Bright Flash Literary Fiction, LandLuck Review, Apex Magazine and others. She's a two-time Pushcart nominee and the winner of the Stephen Dibase Poetry Prize (2023). In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her passion for writing.

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

**IBITEYE:** I started by writing poems in 2018, and began to submit to contests and magazines in 2019. I'm a fellow of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship (2021), and I have several of my works

published in anthologies like Agbówo, Bright Flash Literary Fiction, LandLuck Review, Apex Magazine and others. I was shortlisted for the African Writers Awards (2021), longlisted for the same award in 2022. I'm a finalist for the Calanthe Collective Prize (2022) and winner of the Stephen Dibase Poetry Prize (2023). I'm also a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee. I had my first book (On The Mount) published in 2022, and I'm currently writing a Chapbook on boys: their struggles and expectations. It's titled "Black Boys In Zion".

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-**

**IBITEYE:** I love the swift use of metaphors in a piece. I also love when a piece takes me by surprise - when the lines and plots are unpredictable.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**IBITEYE:** JP Clarke - His poems are simple, yet they address issues with great depth. Flourish Joshua - His poems are like catchy cliffhangers, full of meaning and suspense.

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

**IBITEYE:** Writing is a beautiful art, but like any other skill, honing it takes time and patience. As a new writer, you learn how to write by writing. So write as much as you can. Don't beat yourself hard if your pieces don't look too good at first. Also, this may sound cliché, but it's true: Read, Read, Read. There are many literary magazines online that has made reading really accessible. Read, Write, Read again, and submit to contests. Be patient too. There might be lots of rejections along the way, but keep at it. Writing is a journey: patiently savor each moment of it.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**IBITEYE:** I'm inspired by nature, and the Bible.

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

**IBITEYE:** I don't have a special place, but I like to dedicate three days in a week to write. I write in the evenings, after the day's activities.

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

**IBITEYE:** I started writing in 2018. I had always loved reading novels and short stories. I started writing first to keep myself busy. It was during ASUU strike and I read a lot during that period. But as I continued, my motive for writing changed. It was no longer to escape boredom, but to express my thoughts in ways that I wouldn't do when talking. Writing was, and is still, my highest form of expression.

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

**IBITEYE:** A poem on Writing Block, in a monthly series of BKPW contest.

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

**IBITEYE:** Yes, I address themes like: hope, death, climate change and atheism.

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

**IBITEYE:** At first, I felt unsure of succeeding. The literary space seemed full of expert writers, and I wasn't sure if I had a chance of getting published and known. But I had a writing mentor for few weeks - Ehi Ogwiji, and she helped me gain confidence in writing by telling me to face my fears head-on.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**IBITEYE:** From books, life experiences and the Bible.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**IBITEYE:** I won a Poetry contest, and the reward was publishing, at zero cost to me.

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

**IBITEYE:** Most of them are encouraging responses.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**IBITEYE:** You can find out more through my IG handle @ocie\_creative

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

**IBITEYE:** Don't get discouraged by rejections. Read more than you write. That way, you won't run empty of words and ideas. Take your journal with you. Everywhere.

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

**IBITEYE:** Most new writers want to write like someone else, instead of stepping back to find their unique voice. It's good to read the work of established writers, but read to learn and not to imitate.

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

**IBITEYE:** My upcoming book: Black Boys In Zion

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

**IBITEYE:** My first book is titled "On the Mount", and it was published by Poemify Publishers. It's a Chapbook of about 20-30 poems on climate change. I submitted it for a contest, and when I won, it was published

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

**IBITEYE:** Climate change.

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**IBITEYE:** My Instagram handle is @ocie\_creative

## WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ASHRAF HASAN: MY WORKS MIRROR THE REALITIES OF SOCIETY

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT

AFRICAN SECRETARIAT



**ASHRAF HASAN**

**MY WORKS MIRROR THE REALITIES OF SOCIETY**

Ashraf Hasan, born on May 22, 1974, in Bangladesh, is a distinguished literary figure renowned for his profound impact on the world of words. Armed with an Associate Degree, he has not only shaped young minds as a dedicated educator but has also illuminated the literary sphere with his remarkable talent. Ashraf has authored six poignant poetry books in English, Bangla, and Arabic, showcasing his versatile linguistic skills. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** I have authored numerous poems in Bangla, English, and Arabic, alongside a substantial collection of literary critiques, essays, and columns. With a long-standing career as a journalist, I continue my writing endeavors, focusing primarily on poems in Bangla and English. My work is showcased in various platforms including news journals, literary journals, online news portals, and social media channels. My literary pieces have been featured in several anthologies and magazines. Additionally, I have served as an editor for multiple journals, anthologies, and magazines. I am also the author of six poetry books.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-**

**ASHRAF HASAN:** The beauty inherent in nature and the complexity of human existence have nurtured my contemplative spirit as a writer. My inspiration stems from the profound emotions of enduring love and the inherent sorrows of humanity, motivating me to craft a world woven with words. The essence of my creativity revolves around life-based themes, delving into the intricacies of art. Within my poetic realm, I explore themes such as the catastrophe of thought, the erosion of humanity caused by destructive forces, and the bridging power of love. Through my poems, I shed light on the societal and political decay that permeates humanity, serving as a poignant reflection of the world we inhabit.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**ASHRAF HASAN:** My favorite writers include the National poet of Bangladesh, Qazi Nozrul Islam, along with poets like Forrukh Ahmod, Jibonando Dash, Al-mahmud, T.S. Eliot, Wordsworth, Roberk Herick, Wheetman, Fransis Key Scott, and Allama Iqbal. I am also deeply moved by the works of poets like Hafij, Jalaluddin Rume, and Omar Khaiyam. Among novelists, Nasim Hijajee and Mir Mosharraf Hussain hold a special place in my heart. These writers convey profound messages, genuine feelings of sorrow, love, human emotions, and the fervor of creation. Their works are rich with the essence of humanity's commitment and spiritual development.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** For aspiring writers aiming to be recognized as creative professionals, my advice is to immerse themselves in extensive reading, diligent practice, critical analysis, and consistent writing.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**ASHRAF HASAN:** The human crisis, the disintegration of social, economic, and cultural structures, hunger, wartime struggles, racism, and ultimately the crisis of love have motivated me to express my thoughts through literary creations.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** In writing, there is no fixed schedule. The themes, especially for poetry, and the emotions associated with them arise unexpectedly. Writers must seize these moments and jot down their thoughts immediately. Completing the work can happen later when there is ample time.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** My journey in writing commenced in 1988 when I was a middle school student in the 9th grade. During that period, I developed a habit of reading numerous literary books, magazines, and journals. This extensive reading deeply inspired me to venture into poetry writing. I distinctly recall the heartfelt joy I experienced when my first rhyme was published in my school magazine – that marked the beginning of my literary endeavors. Over time, my creativity continued to evolve and improve.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** My inaugural poetry book in Bangla, titled 'Surahoto Samgeet,' was published in 2014.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** Generally, there is no specific theme, but rather a central idea and intense emotions guide the work.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** When I first put pen to paper, the act of creation brings both pleasure and a profound pain akin to giving birth. It feels like embarking on a traveler's journey through a path carved by sorrows, loneliness, happiness, and spiritual moments.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**ASHRAF HASAN:** A poem encapsulates the unique feelings and ideas of a human being, distinct from others, portrayed through imaginative and distinctive expressions. These ideas are shaped and inspired by various life events and occurrences, taking a different and lovely form through creative imagination.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**ASHRAF HASAN:** Through a few of my friends, who are journalists and publishers, have approached me with requests to publish my books.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** There are discerning readers and supporters of my work whose thoughtful critiques, perspectives, and comments inspire me to be more articulate and prolific.

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**ASHRAF HASAN:** My poems and literary creations serve as heartfelt expressions, painting a portrait of who I am through the eyes of others. They mirror the realities of society, embodying the essence of love, sorrow, and humanity.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** Novice writers often make errors in spelling, word choice, and imagery. It is essential for them to dedicate time to practice and study in order to improve these skills.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** I find immense joy in writing all my poetry books.

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

**ASHRAF HASAN:** My initial collection of poems, titled 'Surahoto Samgeet,' brought me immense delight and a profound sense of poetic fulfillment.

**WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**



**ASHRAF HASAN: I can be found on Facebook, where I consistently share my literary creations.**

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS BEONS: ARTISTS SERVE AS SOCIETY'S MIRRORS, REFLECTING ITS COMPLEXITIES, ASPIRATIONS, AND STRUGGLES THROUGH THEIR CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS**



BEONS, an accomplished Indian artist, discusses her artwork and deep passion for the arts in a recent interview with Wole Adedoyin.

**WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF?**

**BEONS:** I am an Indian self-taught artist named Beone. I have a deep passion for drawing and create art inspired by what I love.

**WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT ART IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

**BEONS:** The appreciation of art transcends wealth; yet, the discrepancy lies in the support artists receive, with some affluent individuals recognizing its value while others, regardless of their financial status, may not fully appreciate or aid artists.

**WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE?**

**BEONS:** Yes! IHRAF stands for the International Human Rights Art Festival. It's a fantastic event that showcases various forms of art and performances, all centered around human rights

themes. Whether it's theater, music, visual arts, or any other creative expression, IHRAF provides a platform for artists to raise awareness about important human rights issues. It's a wonderful initiative that brings together artists and audiences from diverse backgrounds to engage in meaningful conversations about social justice and human rights. If you're interested in the intersection of art and activism, IHRAF is definitely something worth exploring!

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

**BEONS:** Artists in India are utilizing various forms of creative expression to promote human rights awareness in the country. Through powerful artwork, music, theater, and other mediums, they address pressing human rights issues, including gender inequality, social injustice, discrimination, and political freedom. These artists engage with their audiences, sparking important conversations and encouraging people to critically think about human rights challenges. Their creations not only raise awareness but also inspire action, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding within society. Through their art, these individuals contribute significantly to the promotion of human rights in India and beyond.

**WA: WHAT THEMES DO YOU PURSUE IN YOUR ARTWORK?**

**BEONS:** On Social Issues.

**WA: WHAT ART DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?**

**BEONS:** Nude and portrait.

**WA: WHAT ROLE DOES THE ARTIST HAVE IN SOCIETY?**

**BEONS:** Artists serve as society's mirrors, reflecting its complexities, aspirations, and struggles through their creative expressions. They challenge norms, provoke contemplation, and inspire change by addressing pressing social, political, and cultural issues. Through their work, artists ignite conversations, fostering empathy and understanding among diverse communities. They preserve cultural heritage, breathe life into history, and envision the future, offering new perspectives that enrich the human experience. Artists play a vital role as catalysts for social progress, pushing boundaries and shaping the collective consciousness, making them indispensable contributors to the evolution and enrichment of society.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ART WORK?**

**BEONS:** Erotic art.

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

**BEONS:** No job.

**WA: WHY ART?**

**BEONS:** Art holds a profound significance in human life for several reasons. First and foremost, art is a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers. It communicates complex emotions, ideas, and experiences in ways that words often cannot, fostering connections among people from different backgrounds.

Art also serves as a form of expression and catharsis. Artists can channel their emotions, thoughts, and experiences into their creations, providing them with a therapeutic outlet. For

viewers, art can evoke deep emotions, offering solace, inspiration, or a sense of belonging. Furthermore, art has the power to challenge the status quo and provoke critical thinking. It can question societal norms, spark debates, and inspire change. Throughout history, art has been a powerful tool for social and political commentary, advocating for human rights, justice, and equality.

Art also enriches our surroundings, making spaces aesthetically pleasing and culturally meaningful. Public art, in particular, can transform urban environments, creating a sense of identity and pride within communities.

Lastly, art stimulates creativity and innovation. It encourages individuals to think outside the box, fostering imaginative problem-solving skills that are valuable in various aspects of life. In essence, art is not just a product; it's a process, a reflection of humanity's diverse experiences and perspectives. It enhances our lives by providing meaning, fostering empathy, and inspiring positive change, making it an essential and enduring part of the human experience.

### **WA: WHAT IS AN ARTISTIC OUTLOOK ON LIFE?**

**BEONS:** An artistic outlook on life involves seeing the world through a creative lens, appreciating the beauty in everyday moments, and finding inspiration in the mundane. It's about embracing curiosity, valuing self-expression, and recognizing the profound impact of art and creativity on the human experience. Those with an artistic outlook often observe the world with heightened sensitivity, noticing intricate details, emotions, and nuances that others might overlook.

Additionally, an artistic outlook encourages individuals to explore different perspectives, question established norms, and challenge conventional thinking. It involves a willingness to take risks, experiment with new ideas, and embrace the unknown. Artists often find meaning and purpose in their creative endeavors, using their work to convey messages, evoke emotions, and provoke thought.

Moreover, an artistic outlook on life fosters a deep sense of empathy and connection with others. Artists often draw inspiration from diverse cultures, experiences, and backgrounds, allowing them to create work that resonates universally and promotes understanding among people. Ultimately, an artistic outlook on life is about embracing the endless possibilities of creativity, valuing imagination, and recognizing the transformative power of art in shaping not only individual lives but also society as a whole.

### **WA: WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE ART WORLD?**

**BEONS:** One criticism is the perception of elitism and exclusivity within the art world. Some argue that certain art forms, artists, and galleries are given undue prominence, leading to a lack of diversity and representation. This can create barriers for emerging artists and underrepresented voices.

Another criticism revolves around commercialization. Critics argue that the focus on the market value of art can sometimes overshadow the artistic merit or social impact of the work. Art is sometimes seen as an investment rather than a form of expression or social commentary.

Additionally, the subjective nature of art can lead to debates about what constitutes "good" or "meaningful" art. This subjectivity can create challenges for artists seeking recognition and validation for their work.

Lastly, issues related to plagiarism and intellectual property rights can be contentious within the art world. With the ease of digital reproduction, artists often face challenges in protecting their

original creations from unauthorized use or reproduction.

It's important to note that these criticisms are not universal, and the art world is incredibly diverse, with many positive aspects, including its ability to inspire, challenge, and provoke thoughtful discussions about culture, society, and the human condition.

### **WA: SHOULD ART BE FUNDED?**

**BEONS:** Public funding for the arts is a vital investment in the cultural, educational, and economic enrichment of society. Supporting the arts ensures the preservation of cultural heritage, promotes creativity and innovation, and fosters a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives. Arts funding not only contributes to economic growth by attracting tourists and creating jobs but also enhances education by nurturing critical thinking and imagination among students. Furthermore, art often serves as a powerful catalyst for social change, addressing pressing issues and fostering empathy within communities. While recognizing budgetary constraints, public funding for the arts is essential, as it strengthens social cohesion, encourages artistic expression, and enriches the overall quality of life for citizens, making it a worthwhile and necessary endeavor for any society.

### **WA: WHAT ROLE DOES ARTS FUNDING HAVE?**

**BEONS:** Arts funding plays a crucial role in supporting the cultural, social, and economic development of societies. First and foremost, it ensures the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. By supporting artists and cultural organizations, funding agencies help safeguard traditional arts and crafts, music, dance, and other forms of cultural expression, preserving them for future generations. Additionally, arts funding stimulates creativity and innovation. Financial support enables artists to experiment, take risks, and explore new ideas, leading to the development of novel artistic forms and techniques. This creativity often spills over into other sectors, driving innovation and enhancing the overall cultural landscape. Arts funding also fosters education and public engagement. It supports arts education programs in schools and communities, nurturing the next generation of artists and fostering a deeper appreciation for the arts among the public. Public art installations, museums, galleries, and performances funded by grants contribute to cultural literacy and civic pride, enhancing the quality of life for residents and attracting tourism. Moreover, arts funding has a social impact. It provides a platform for marginalized voices, addressing social issues, promoting dialogue, and fostering understanding among diverse communities. By supporting art projects that tackle important social and political topics, funding agencies contribute to societal awareness and positive change. Economically, arts funding stimulates local economies. Cultural events and institutions attract tourists, create jobs, and support small businesses, contributing to economic growth. Artists, in turn, contribute to economic development through the sale of their work and the promotion of cultural tourism.

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

**BEONS:** Cesar Santos, Rajacena, Yoshi.





**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS TAIWO FAUZIYAH ADESOLA: ASPIRING WRITERS SHOULD WRITE WITH A CLEAR PURPOSE INSTEAD OF MERELY TRYING TO OUTDO THEIR PEERS**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**TAIWO FAUZIYAH ADESOLA**

**ASPIRING WRITERS SHOULD WRITE WITH A CLEAR PURPOSE INSTEAD OF MERELY TRYING TO OUTDO THEIR PEERS**

Taiwo Fauziyah Adesola is a multi professional eminent with different personalities. Fauziyah is a young Nigerian poet, a fashion designer, a lexicographer and an aspiring publisher. She is a member of International Women's Writing Guild, Ibadan Book Club, Nibstears Poetry Cave Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Black Girls Tale and a pressman at Al-faaedah press. She is a student of University of Ibadan where she studies English and literary studies. Fauziyah has a background in programming, copywriting and graphic design. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her passion for reading and writing.

**WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?**

**FAUZIYAH:** I, Fauziyah, write to give meaning to the world around me and to directly or indirectly influence the life of the multitude.

**WA: WHICH AUTHORS DO YOU ADMIRE?**

**FAUZIYAH:** The authors I admire are: Niyi Osundare, Wole Soyinka, Daniel Tysdal, Bello Hamjad and myself because the five of them made me realize the VALUE AND POTENTIAL in myself that I know not of.



**WA: WHICH ADVICE WOULD YOU LOVE TO GIVE TO ASPIRING NOVELISTS LIKE YOURSELF?**

**FAUZIYAH:** To an aspiring author like myself, I would love to advise you to have a purpose for writing and not for the sake of simply competing with your peers .

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

**FAUZIYAH:** Yes of course, and they are MIRZA GALIB, MAYA ANGELOU, NIYI OSUNDARE, CHINUA ACHEBE AND BELLO HAMJAD.

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

**FAUZIYAH:** The book that most influenced my life was Chinua Achebe's *There Was A Country* and the reason why I am influenced by this novel is because it entails different categories of writing which are: the novel itself, poems at the end of each part and different mind blowing quotes which makes you take a seat and take a look at what this life is all about. A quote I can vividly remember is "Clearly, there is no moral obligation to write in any particular way. But there is a moral obligation, I think, not to ally oneself with power against the powerless."

**WA: GIVE US THREE GOOD TO KNOW FACTS ABOUT YOU?**

**FAUZIYAH:** The three facts I would love the readers to know about me is that firstly, I am a poet, a fashion designer, a lexicographer and an aspiring publisher. Secondly, I am the playful type but still when it comes to work I turn into a workaholic and when it comes to playing, I play like there is no tomorrow. And lastly, my belief about writing is that "You live a life by what you accept but you give a life by what you write"

**WA: WHO INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE?**

**FAUZIYAH:** I was inspired by a teacher like brother of mine when I was told to write a poem about heartbreak, me knowing nothing about writing nor about heartbreak picked up my pen to write "Here comes sadness,/ Peeping into my heart,/ Breaking through my soul,/ Within a second,/ And shattering my dreams."/ And that was the beginning of my writing life and career.

**WA: WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW? CONSIDER HERE YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES, YOUR INTEREST AND HOBBIES?**

**FAUZIYAH:** I want my readers to know that no matter how tough that situation may be, you might even be accused of plagiarism or your work stolen. I want you to know that it's not the end of the road because this life is like the EBB and FLOW of waves constantly. Encountering difficulties is normal but quitting along the way is absolutely abnormal because even the wise men say that "winners never quit and quitters never win."

What I love most is reading, writing, socializing and playing. While my dislikes are Competing without a meaningful reason, Unclean things and most especially I dislike BETRAYAL. I am majorly interested in becoming the most successful writer in Africa. And lastly, I don't think I have many hobbies except for Eating, Reading and watching movies.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS BINOD DAWADI: I HOPE TO ATTAIN  
RECOGNITION AND RENOWN THROUGH MY WRITING**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**BINOD DAWADI**

**I HOPE TO ATTAIN RECOGNITION AND RENOWN  
THROUGH MY WRITING**

Binod Dawadi is a Nepalese author. Author of the Power of Words. He holds a master's degree in English. He has contributed to over 1000 anthologies published in renowned magazines. His vision is to effect societal change through knowledge, using his writing skills to enlighten people. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing and his works.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?**

**BINOD:** I have always been an avid reader of literature and have developed a deep love for writing. I aspired to write poems, stories, and novels that could leave a lasting impact and establish my name in history alongside other great writers. This led me to start writing books.

**WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?**

**BINOD:** I have been writing for over three years and have produced an unlimited amount of work during this time.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?**

**BINOD:** I began writing during the time of the Earthquake in 2015.

**WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?**

**BINOD:** Yes, writing is both my passion and hobby. I aspire to achieve fame through my

writing, knowing that even after I am gone, my words will continue to make my name immortal.

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

**BINOD:** I would encourage new writers to connect with online platforms and publications where they can publish their work. Writing offers numerous opportunities for growth and learning.

**WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?**

**BINOD:** When faced with writer's block, I turn to reading new books and spend time in open spaces, allowing new ideas to flow into my mind. This helps me overcome the block and resume writing.

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

**BINOD:** I have written 23 books, with The Power of Words being my favorite.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOKS?**

**BINOD:** I have realized that my ability to think creatively and bring innovative ideas to life is unique. I write in a simple and relatable language, finding my own intrinsic value through my work.

**WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER?**

**BINOD:** In my book The Life of a Vampire, my favorite character is Binod, who is a vampire with a strong sense of goodness. He deeply cares for his people and his world, making him special.

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

**BINOD:** As mentioned before, Binod from The Life of a Vampire is my favorite character. His exceptional qualities, such as his love for his people and his world, make him stand out.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?**

**BINOD:** I draw inspiration from books, my education, and my knowledge. I believe that through writing, we can give a voice to the voiceless and share our knowledge with the world, ultimately bringing about positive change.

**WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?**

**BINOD:** On Amazon and in other stores readers can purchase my books.

Websites

<https://sydniebeaupre.wixsite.com/binoddawadi>

<https://sydniebeaupre.wixsite.com/thepowerofwords>

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

**BINOD:** I have not made any audiobooks up till now. However, I believe I should start making

audiobooks now. In my opinion, the challenges include some readers preferring to read books themselves and the lack of various good platforms for producing audiobooks.

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

**BINOD:** The Power Of Words and The Power Of Poetry, along with all my other books, were the most enjoyable to write.

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

**BINOD:** My first book is titled The Power Of Words. It consists of poems on various themes. I have a Canadian friend named Sydnie Beaupre' who is a best-selling and famous writer. She helped me in publishing my book. I felt incredibly happy when my first book was published.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BIGGEST THREAT TO FREE EXPRESSION TODAY? HAVE THERE BEEN TIMES WHEN YOUR RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION HAS BEEN CHALLENGED?**

**BINOD:** We cannot freely write on any theme. When we write our own books, we have the freedom to write about any topic. However, when participating in anthologies and magazines, there are certain themes indicated, and we cannot write beyond those themes. Therefore, when participating in other writers' books as a co-author, my right to free expression has been challenged, I believe.

**WA: HOW DOES YOUR IDENTITY SHAPE YOUR WRITING? IS THERE SUCH A THING AS "THE WRITER'S IDENTITY"?**

**BINOD:** My religion, background, country, culture, and knowledge greatly impact my writing. The context in which I am currently living also shapes my writing. Writers have their own identities, but they become common people who are experiencing suffering in the world while writing. A writer becomes another person and writes from the perspectives of others.

**WA: HOW ARE WRITERS USING THEIR CRAFTS TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

**BINOD:** Writers in my country are using their crafts to advance the cause of human rights by writing and publishing books about human rights. They are spreading awareness about human rights and focusing on freedom and rights everywhere. The government is also enacting laws regarding human rights. As a result, issues related to human rights are gaining attention throughout my country.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS RAHAMAN ABIOLA TOHEEB: POETRY  
BREATHES LIFE INTO ME**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**RAHAMAN ABIOLA TOHEEB**

**POETRY BREATHES LIFE INTO ME**

Rahaman Abiola Toheeb is a poet, literary critic, a trained language analyst, editor, freelancer, socio-political commentator and blogger from Iseyin, Oyo State. A graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for poetry.

**WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?**

**RAT:** The question why I'm a poet is what I sometimes find difficult to answer. Perhaps poetry chooses me, perhaps I choose to write poetry, sincerely I don't know. However, one certain thing is that there is a surging wave of recurring feelings and stubborn emotions borne out of what I come across on daily basis from home to street, from street to international scene on TV. And the channel to bring those feelings to life is through only poetry. The heart of a poet is ocean of thoughts, while poetry itself is life, poetry is god. So, I can say Poetry breathes life into me..

**WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?**

**RAT:** Being a poet is a great burden of consistent intellectual conviction. I know what it takes

to write poems, that is why I respect and read every poet whose work comes my way. Besides that I'll learn from him, I have exposure to new feeling -perhaps same as mine, or another entirely. But I must say that I love reading African poets, from Negritude to Euro-modernist, from Revolutionary generation (the angry poets) to the contemporary ones like Dami Ajayi, Gimba, Kakanda, David Isaya Osu, Wale Owoade, Jumoke Verissimo, Tosin Gbogi, Tade Ipadeola. I read Rasaan Malik a lot. His poetry is ubiquitous in terms of thematic direction. Facebook also introduces me to teeming legion of poets on daily basis. Recently I enjoy reading Warsan Sire, Tarfia Faizullah, Saed Jones, Sharon Olds, Laura, Kamiskin, Deborah Rancee, etc.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?**

**RAT:** For poets everything is inspiration. What I see and hear is what I feel should not vanish into wind like that. My home, my mother, my society, the world and everything within are what keep me moving as a poet.

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

**RAT:** I'm a freelancer. I write poetry. If I don't do that I work as editor. I am a consistent facebooker and active online user. If I'm not online facebooking, downloading books, or searching for what to read, that means I am busy at my Primary Place of Assignment, Kano Municipal Secretariat.

**WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?**

**RAT:** I write any time muse comes. It may be in a solitary room or on the street through my phone, my mobile writing device. But what defines how I write most is the kind of writing I'm engaged in. If I am working on essay or a political view I find it easy to write. If it's poetry, some lines demand midnight silence, while some I'll need to walk out alone pondering and come back home. Some need rough sketch on a sheet.

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

**RAT:** Poetry, a specialized form of expression, starts the moment an idea strikes my heart. The next process is getting perfect words that convey my train of thought; words that speak out images in my heart most. These words are sometimes expensive and difficult to find. I think this is what makes poetry stand out of all genres of literature. Editing is the next process; as this gives poetry its befitting shape i.e. laconicism, artistic ingenuity, perfect rhythmicity and figurativeness.

**WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...**

**RAT:** I am not yet published. I believe being published is a gradual process. As a poet the first thing is building your audience- people who your works appeal to. Make your craft convincing and fit for consumption by literary community of readers. Internet has been of help. These days one can easily send his poems to online literary magazine like Saraba, Kalahari Review, SentinelNg, Brave Art Africa, Expound and Praxis Magazine. National Dailies also publish both budding and established poets. Then one can go for full length publishing.

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

**RAT:** The question any aspiring poet should ask himself is: do I really want to write? If he can answer that then consistency follows, for that makes him better and stronger. Writing may be

frustrating at times, one just needs to move on and read. Similarly, monetary gain should not be number one priority. Any aspiring poet should ensure he establishes himself before any other thing.

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

**RAT:** They should continue reading, they should never relent. The country, though does not give total commitment and support to writing, ours is stars, with passion and patience.

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

**RAT:** My best time for writing is evening. This allows me talk aloud and to concentrate more, though the routine of my writing is usually defined by the work I have at hand, and the ideas that do not want me rest.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?**

**RAT:** I write from my home, sometimes from workplace.

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

**RAT:** Internet. In this digital age the fast way to make a bridge-gap between a writer and community of readers is internet and social platforms like facebook and twitter. When I write, I ensure I post it on facebook. I easily share the links of where my works appear with my online readers. Coupled with this is my blog. It has been of help, it gives me voice and online presence.

**WA: WEBSITE(S)?**

**RAT:** I don't have a website yet, but I have a blog where some of my works- poem, stories, review, political views appear. It can be located through the url:

<http://rahamanabiola.blogspot.com>

**WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?**

**RAT:** I love Bollywood movies, especially 3 Idiots and My Name is Khan.

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

**RAT:** Poets should enter for available competition. This will make them know their strength and their weak points.

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

**RAT:** I'm casually into nature and landscape photography. As a poet I hold the belief that there's a dialectical affinity between poetry and photography- of messages in pictures that can only be interpreted by poetry alone.

**WA: WHAT'S NEXT?**

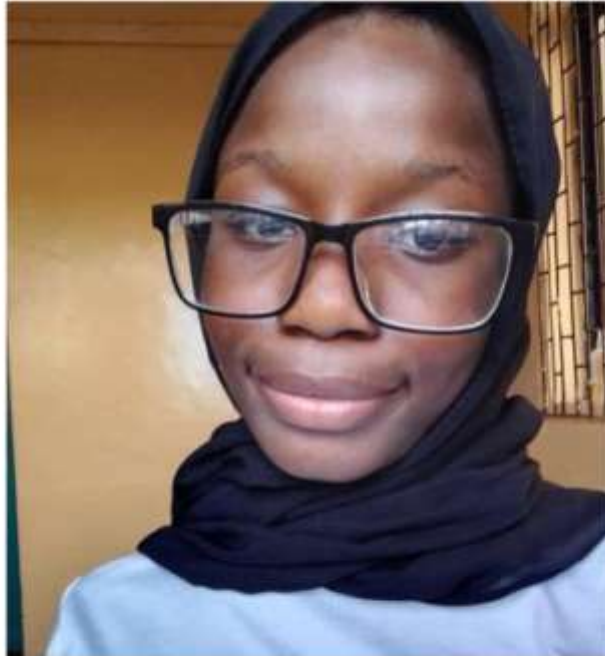
**RAT:** I have a project at hand. My first collection of poetry is also a priority.



**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS BAMIDELE SHAKIROH ADEWUMI: MY INITIATIVE HAS COMPELLED ME TO ENGAGE IN NUMEROUS ACTIVITIES I HAD NEVER ANTICIPATED DOING**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**BAMIDELE SHAKIROH ADEWUMI**

**MY INITIATIVE HAS COMPELLED ME TO ENGAGE IN NUMEROUS ACTIVITIES I HAD NEVER ANTICIPATED DOING**

Bamidele Shakiroh Adewumi, a distinguished graduate of Ekiti State University, Oyo Campus, specializes in English Language and Literary Studies. A fervent poet and gender advocate, Bamidele ardently supports UN Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality). She is the driving force behind Black Girl's Tale, an initiative dedicated to boosting the confidence of secondary school girls and empowering them to excel both academically and socially. Bamidele's tireless efforts also extend to championing the rights of the girl child, working relentlessly to eradicate abuse and discrimination. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her initiative, "Black Girl's Tale".

**W.A.: YOU ARE THE FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BLACK GIRL'S TALE, WHAT ACTUALLY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INITIATIVE?**

**BSA:** While growing up, I struggled with low self esteem due to some scenario that I experienced as a kid. I grew up yearning for someone that would know how I feel even without telling them how I feel. I had a secret that I did not tell anyone which affected me mentally. Then, in 2021, through some videos and poems that I saw on someone's page. I became



courageous and have the urge to share my story with the world.

On the 1st of January 2021, I started this initiative by sharing a particular story of mine. The aim of doing this is to let some other girls who are like me know that they are not alone and there is someone like them that would listen to them whenever they are ready to share their tales too.

**W.A.: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE BLACK GIRL'S TALE?**

**BSA:** I would say we haven't had a biggest highlight yet. The last event we did was our first girls' mentorship program that we held for 30 female students of AMA-D Hall, a school in Olomi Community, Ibadan. We are planning another girls' mentorship program in October, 2023, it's going to be a very big one and trust me we will have more of a very big event as time goes on.

**W.A.: TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN GIRL CHILD CAMPAIGN, ADVOCACY, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION.**

**BSA:** I am Bamidele Shakiroh Adewumi from Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. I am a graduate of English Language and Literary Studies from Ekiti State University, Oyo Campus. I am a poet and a gender advocate. Also, the founder of NGO, Black Girl's Tale, an organization that advocates for the UN SDG goal 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). I led OWA FOUNDATION Oyo State sexual purity campaign for secondary school female students on the 6th of October, 2022. Also, I led the girls' mentorship programme that Black Girl's Tale organized for girls on 11th of February, 2023. Also, I was selected as one of the Global Youth Ambassadors of Their world, an international organization that promotes Education.

**W.A.: IN WHAT WAY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTING TO THE GROWTH OF GIRLS EDUCATION AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION IN NIGERIA?**

**BSA:** Black Girl's Tale is contributing to the growth of Girls Education and Reproductive Health Education through mentorship. We guide these girls, build their confidence so that they can focus in class and be inclusive in school and society activities. We also make them aware of their rights as human during this mentorship programme.

**W.A.: WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU FACING IN YOUR FIELD OF WORK?**

**BSA:** One of the challenges that we are facing is financial support. We want to reach a large number of girls but we are unable to and that is why we seek for support from other organizations and from individuals whenever we have a project.

**W.A.: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN EXPERT IN GIRL CHILD CAMPAIGN, ADVOCACY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION?**

**BSA:** One thing that can make one an expert is to make researches, read more and learn more on Girlchild and Sexual Reproductive Health and be consistent in all activities that has to do with it.

**W.A.: AS THE FOUNDER OF BLACK GIRL'S TALE, WHAT KINDS OF CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?**

**BSA:** As a founder of the organization, I would say I haven't been facing any challenges yet.

**W.A.: HOW AND IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU THINK BLACK GIRL'S TALE AND THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART FESTIVAL CAN COLLABORATE?**

**BSA:** Black Girl's Tale and Human Rights Art festival can collaborate by organizing more programmes together for girls and women. Programmes that will give us avenue to let them know their rights. I would like to work with Human Right Act in organizing interesting and impactful events and activities for girls and women.

**W.A.: WHAT DRIVES YOU AS THE TEAM LEAD AND VISIONER OF BLACK GIRL'S TALE:**

**BSA:** What drives me and make me keep going is the commitment of the girls I work with. These girls are ready to work anytime. Their readiness gives me hope and this make me going.

**W.A.: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION?**

**BSA:** The greatest accomplishment we have made so far is the girls' mentorship programme we organized for the female students of AMA-D Hall, a secondary school in Olomi community, Ibadan.

**W.A.: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO GIRLS AND WOMEN?**

**BSA:** The message I have for girls and women is that whatever they want to do, they should do it now. Do not wait for future because the future is now. Do it anyhow, don't be afraid and be consistent.

**W.A.: WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF YOUR INITIATIVE?**

**BSA:** I have learnt that everybody have one or two to say when they see someone that would listen to them. Also, I have learnt that a child do not have to be one family before one treat them right.

**W.A.: WHAT IN YOUR LIFE HAS BROUGHT OR GIVEN YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION OR FULFILLMENT?**

**BSA:** Black Girl's Tale. My initiative has pushed me to do many things I never thought I would ever do. Making impact in people's lives is a big fulfillment.

**W.A.: LOOKING BACK, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?**

**BSA:** I really don't know but I'm glad I'm doing this.

**WA: WHAT WOULD YOU DO AGAIN?**

**BSA:** Having a poetry collection would be the next big thing I would love to do.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS SHAFKAT AZIZ HAJAM: READING ACTIVELY ENHANCES YOUR VIEWPOINT AND NURTURES NOVEL UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE CONTENT YOU DELVE INTO**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**SHAFKAT AZIZ HAJAM**

**READING ACTIVELY ENHANCES YOUR VIEWPOINT AND NURTURES NOVEL UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE CONTENT YOU DELVE INTO**

Shafkat Aziz Hajam, a multi-talented artist hailing from the captivating region of India's Kashmir, wears the hats of a poet, reviewer, and co-author. With a penchant for evocative words, he has etched his name as the creator of two delightful poetry collections for children: "The Cuckoo's Voice" and "The Canary's Voice." These works transport young minds to worlds of wonder through the magic of verse. His poetic prowess extends beyond borders, as his verses have found a home in esteemed international anthologies, including the UK-based "Wheel Song Anthology," Inner Child Press International, the USA's "PLOTS Creatives Online Literary Magazine," "Prodigy," an online digital literary magazine in the USA, and Pakistan's "Litlight Magazine." While he currently imparts knowledge as a dedicated private school teacher, Shafkat Aziz Hajam is also crafting a literary masterpiece for adults—a poetry book that intrigues with its enigmatic title, "The Unknown Wounded Heart." Through his diverse roles and literary endeavors, Shafkat Aziz Hajam paints a vivid mosaic of creativity and inspiration. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing journey.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**SAH:** I started writing when I was in 10th standard. And due to some domestic or I can say family problems I had to stop writing for many years and started again after graduation and by the grace of Almighty Allah I completed my valued based children's poetry book titled as The cuckoo's voice.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**SAH:** Social media especially Facebook has been quite advantageous to me since I commenced writing. It helped me to reach different foreign authors, Poets and by whose assisting I published my poems in various anthologies and participated in many poetry contests and got many appreciation certificates, this way social media has helped me to become known at national as well as international level.

**WA: WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU HAVE BEEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**SAH:** I have interacted and discussed with many writers regarding writing .Their most common answer to my questions related to writing was to read more and write more in order to improve your writing skills.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS?**

**SAH:** According to me as well as other expert writers, the most important things that you must do to improve writing skills are, to read other proficient writers and to write more and more, especially 5 to 10 pages daily. Reading actively enhances your viewpoint and nurtures novel understandings of the content you delve into. Writing will help you to increase writing fluency and will correct your grammatical mistakes with time .So reading voraciously and writing continuously is important to improve writing skills.

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**SAH:** Being a poet, especially a children's Poet, I write whenever I get an idea and usually I write in the morning and evening hours. Writing, especially poetry writing, has no special time according to me. It depends on when you get an idea and when you are free to ponder over anything you want to write.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**SAH:** I don't have a fixed time for writing. Whenever I am free I write and even while traveling in a vehicle, if I get an idea I start writing.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**SAH:** Yes, I do participate in many poetry contests held by different poetry groups on facebook and by the grace of Allah, I am appreciated for my writing for which I receive appreciation certificates.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WRITING YOUR FIRST BOOK?**

**SAH:** While writing my first book, I didn't go through any poetry books as being a children's Poet, I needed to read children's poetry which was available. So I had to use Google for reading children's poetry, which helped me a lot in writing my first children's Poetry book.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**SAH:** It could be a children's Poet, Kennin Nisbit from California.He is a poet Laureate.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BE BECOME A WRITER?**

**SAH:** I have never been inspired much by any author whom I have read. But I've liked Words worth, Shakespeare, Robert Frost etc .

**WA: HOW ARE WRITERS USING THEIR CRAFTS TO ADVANCE THE COURSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

**SAH:** I can't say that but I will say that writers of any country must be revolutionary. Their writings should bring social changes but positive one. Be it poetry or prose writers, their writing should let people know their responsibilities, rights and should wake up the sleeping conscience.

**WA: HOW DOES YOUR IDENTITY SHAPE YOUR WRITING? IS THERE SUCH A THING AS, "THE WRITER'S IDENTITY?"**

**SAH:** According to my knowledge, Every writer's identity has shaped his writing .Writer's identity means who the writer is, What the writer faces , What sort of culture he has adopted.Such things are answered by his writing either knowingly or unknowingly. Suppose I live in an ignorant society or I suffer this or that problem. My writing whether prose or poetry definitely reveals such things .It's because such circumstances compel me to write about them and sometimes it happens that if I am writing about the sufferings of any other society, person etc , I am actually writing about myself but unknowingly.

Yes , there is such a thing as the writer's identity and it is in the writer's style or way of writing , his vocabulary that he uses in his writing too . Simply I can say that a writer's identity is in the way he presents his ideas through his writings before the public and also how he is interpreted through his writing by the readers.

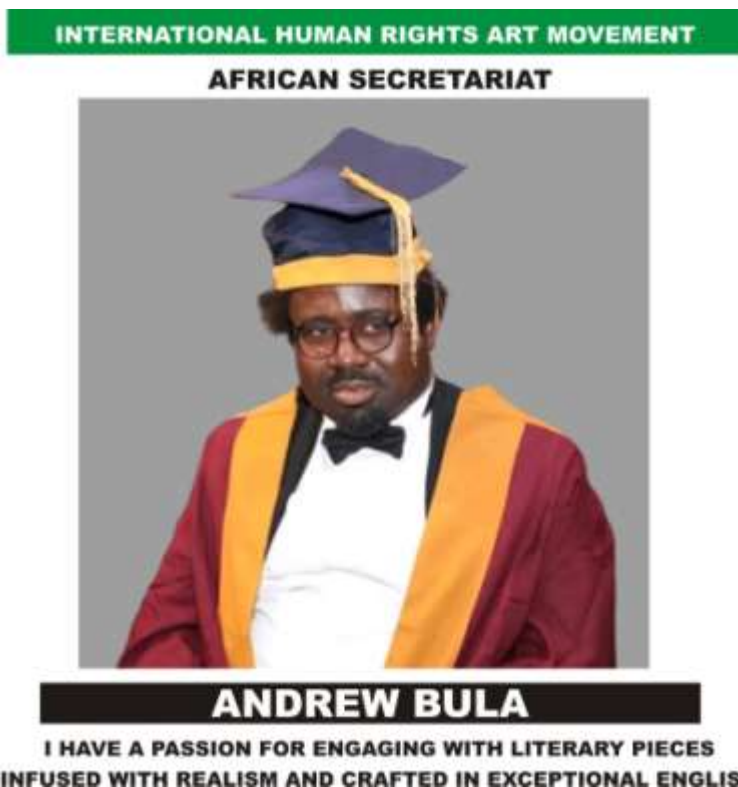
**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**SAH:** Actually, being a children's Poet I have not read any special kind of books more than once a year as children's literature was and is less available in the market in my access. But I have often read Islamic books and being a literature student , I read repeatedly what was there in my syllabus .And my surroundings have been my best book to read for writing that provided me with many ideas which I have preserved with my writing.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**SAH:** As I have already mentioned that I belong to an economically weak family and have not been able to afford to buy books that were not in my syllabus at school, since childhood. I have only read the books that were in my syllabus at school, college and IGNOU.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ANDREW BULA: I HAVE A PASSION FOR ENGAGING WITH LITERARY PIECES INFUSED WITH REALISM AND CRAFTED IN EXCEPTIONAL ENGLISH –**



Andrew Bula is on the staff of the Center for Foundation and Interdisciplinary Studies at Baze University, Abuja, where he teaches Literature and English Language. Besides being a lecturer, Bula is also a novelist, a poet, a poetry performer, a film actor, and an essayist, whose critical works have been published in Nigeria, London, Australia, India, Cambridge, and archived in the British Library, Stanford Libraries, ERIC Institute Education Sciences, and The Mark T. Coppenger Library of the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for the Church, Kinsas City, Missouri, United States. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing.

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**BULA:** Well, I suppose when someone has published a book length work of some esteem – that is to say, his or her work has received praise by an audience that he’s read to, or has been approved for reading in schools, or has been long listed/shortlisted, or even won an award, etc. In other words, the work is to some extent beloved. This way, I think, some kind of certification of being a writer is attained. But there are no fast and hard rules about this.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**BULA:** Frankly, I don’t know that there’s a divide between a writer and an author, given that the two terms can be used interchangeably. Too, if one writes and eventually publishes, he becomes

an author and therefore a writer. So, there is that process, which ultimately culminates to a title/status and the deployment of the terms, writer and author, interchangeably. If there can be a split between the two, it would mean that being a writer speaks to continuity whereas being an author is probably a status attained by the event of the publication of a book. But, again, I don't know.... The whole thing is nebulous and perhaps only an intellectual quibble.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**BULA:** Of course, it's a period of drought of imagination that affects one's writing. During this time, if the writer is like me, it might be helpful to listen to music of one's choice, see movies, sit through a preaching, read works related to what creative project I'm embarked upon, and suchlike in order to regain my muse or be assailed with imaginative ideas with which to produce creative works.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**BULA:** It's important for me to know what I have done, or how it is viewed by others in the creative enterprise. That being said, I'm not oblivious of the creative and its basics. Hence, I should be able to tell a “negative book review” which is decidedly hostile from one which is constructive, and to see if and where I do fall short of the mark or not and learn therefrom or otherwise.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**BULA:** Well, that would be anything and everything that has to do with the evocation of atmosphere in a work of fiction. In poetry, however, the herculean task is to convey things in the best literary language possible. I also do not want my poetry to be obscure nor to be very open, but where it is very open, I'm keen that the language indeed be literary. And then there is for me the huge and yet challenging concern for working rhythm plus rhyme into my poetry, and an altogether strong desire to set in motion work that appeals to the human senses.

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

**BULA:** Since my undergraduate days at Benue State University. Prior to the time, I had written a novel after my secondary education at William Muckle Bristow Secondary School, Gboko. And this was because while at Bristow, I had begun to explore and enjoy the world of creative writing, writing poetry (if I can call those elementary things poetry). It was nothing serious really! But it was when I got to the university and joined the writing club on campus called Writers' League, which was and still is a students' body of creative writing under the watch of some of our lecturers who were estimable practitioners in the domain of literature and creative writing that my writing took on a depth. So I began to see myself as a writer, even though, I reckon, those were still my formative years. I had only authored short stories and pieces of poems, and when we had readings in the league, I would present them - one per time - in the company of my course mates and creative writing colleagues. Su'eddie Vershima Agema, who is today a multiple award winning poet, who made the 2022 NLNG shortlist for his poetry Memory and the Call of Waters readily comes to mind. Alex Hembraor, Joshua Jaja, Joshua Agbo, Sewuese Akem, et cetera were among the crop of us young aspiring writers who were dreaming to be established. To my shame, I have only recently authored two creative works, Turns of Thoughts (Poems), which was shortlisted for the 2021 Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) award for poetry, and The School Chap (A Novel for Youngsters) which also made it on the

shortlist of the 2022 ANA award for Children’s Literature. These texts of mine have also been recognized in other varying ways; namely, Turns of Thoughts (Poems) has been recommended for reading in Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, SSS1, 2, and 3 by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), whereas The School Chap (A Novel for Youngsters) has also been recommended for reading in JSS1 all over Nigeria by NERDC. Further, The School Chap (A Novel for Youngsters) has been recommended as a complementary textbook and instructional material for use in JSS 3 in FCT Education Resource Centre from August 2022 – July 2025. As an added bonus, The School Chap (A Novel for Youngsters) has also been published in Germany and it is currently selling on 25 websites around the world, including London, France, Mexico, Denmark, Australia, Japan, Korea, Italy, United Arab Emirates, Athens, Greece, and Belgium.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**BULA:** Be patient at your craft. Don’t be easily satisfied with your work. In other words, be very hard at work editing your work. Too, from time to time, see the need not to touch your work for days - or so, before returning to it to read again and possibly edit it. If a glitch somehow escapes you and the work sees the light of day; that is, it is published, forgive yourself and don’t look down on yourself even if the work has ardent detractors who have made downright hostile comments.

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN WRITING?**

**BULA:** Off the cuff, the evocation of atmosphere, for me, is almost everything! This is because it seems to me that nearly everything within the work of fiction is connected to atmosphere – you know, from setting to character development, to placement of scenes. But also, the deployment of language and this too is pretty much tied to atmosphere. For, it is with the use of language that atmosphere, like other components or constituents of the novel, is worked out and effectively orchestrated. Nonetheless, I would be remiss if I did not isolate the utilization of “literary language” as something extraordinarily helpful to novel writing. By the use of “literary language”, I do not just mean any language, but one that is basic to literature, containing a poetic, not by the literary devices there are in literature. But I mean to say it is the language of literature, one that is not just rendered ordinarily. There is, of course, the plot or sequence of events and the characters. These are really important things in creative writing, especially novel writing and playwriting.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU – THE PLOT OR CHARACTERS- AND WHY?**

**BULA:** The plot, of course! And this is simply because I have to have a storyline first of all, before characters are worked in – except, perhaps, the germ of the story itself or the inspiration for the work derives from a real life character. The situation is pretty much like acquiring a patch of land before erecting a building on it; failing which the structure would not be achieved.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**BULA:** Well, it’s difficult to say. But, in truth, one idea leads to another in the development of both plot and characters.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**



**BULA:** Well, I am an optimist to the core, and so I called myself a writer right from the beginning of my writing career. And that was in 200 levels at university when I was aged 22. A healthy impression of yourself is important for you.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**BULA:** There are various ways, actually. One such way is to post poems on Facebook to elicit responses from readers – good or bad, in order to learn from. A poem/sonnet of mine, “Sonnet for a Facebook Friend”, attests to this. Another way in which I use Facebook is to derive inspiration with which to churn out literary works. A case in point is my poem, entitled: “Home O! Bloody Home”. Believe me, Wole, when I tell you that the inspiration for this work came from merely seeing a peaceful portrait of two huts surrounded by luxuriant, green vegetation in a hamlet, which I thought to be in Benue. The man who posted the picture is himself from Benue and very well known to me.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU’VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**BULA:** Read, read, and read. Write, write, and write; but do not force it when it seems not to come forth.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**BULA:** After much reading of excellent stuff, and learning from them, you must sit down to write your own literature, thereby learning and improving your craft.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**BULA:** Ultimately, I attribute the helpful side to my God; who is my inspiration! And then, with humility, I think I have a gifted mind. On the other hand, I can only say finding the time to write as I want is truly a challenge; it’s not that I am hindered, for one cannot be hindered except one wills it.

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**BULA:** I do not approach it that religiously. No!

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE BLOGS OR WEBSITES FOR WRITERS?**

**BULA:** I do not have any, and perhaps should have a go.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**BULA:** Again, I do not approach writing in that religious manner. I write when I want and out of inspiration, mostly!

**WA: WHAT’S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**BULA:** There is Grammarly, and then there is Sentence Checker, all of which are great!

**WA: HOW DO YOU COPE WITH CHARACTER NAMES FOR YOUR STORIES?**

**BULA:** I have several considerations for choosing characters, depending on what work I am embarked upon. In a children’s literature novel, I might name certain characters for the simplicity of the names and the musicality that come with such names. I might also name

characters to evoke a particular virtue which they represent, and so on. It really depends. I could do the same or similarly in playwriting or poetry, although with some measure of restraint in poetry.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**BULA:** No, I do not.

**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**BULA:** Evoking mood or atmosphere is predicated on the prevailing circumstance within the novelistic text, for instance. But I must say that I have been wholly unable to write on certain things, especially things which pertain to a loved one whose character traits and the situation in which they are trapped, I have adopted in my work.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**BULA:** I love and do read literary works with a touch and feel of realism couched in excellent English.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**BULA:** Yeah, we had very good and motivating literary texts in the primary school which I attended. Some were actually English text books with lovely passages in them. Kola Onadipe's Sugar Girl readily comes to mind. And then there was Chinua Achebe's Chike and the River, and D. Olu Olagoke's The Incorruptible Judge. In the Secondary School too, I encountered fine books. Again, the English texts at this level also had very interesting passages taken from Achebe's Arrow of God, Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country etc. Literary texts like The Merchant of Venice, Richard B Sheridan's The Rivals were exciting items of the learning experience. And then shortly after I left Bristow, I would trek long distances to buy and read Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God and other African writers. I had also bought and read Elechi Amadi's The Concubine. And I can say all of these played a part in making me become a writer, especially the novels by Achebe, for they contained in them great stirrings. But I must also mention that while at university, reading English and literature, I read many other works, William Golding's Lord of the Flies, Richard Wright's Black Boy, Alice Walker's The Colour Purple, Mongo Beti's Mission to Kala, Efua Sutherland's Sizwe Bansi is Dead, etc. Needless to say all of these - and more - inspired me towards that end.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**BULA:** It's difficult to say, since my first work is Turns of Thoughts (Poems). But I relied a lot on my own inspiration. I'm not here saying there are no possibilities of influence. If there is or are, I cannot lay a finger on.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**BULA:** But I have just provided that information, my dear Wole.

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**BULA:** Wole Soyinka

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**BULA:** Richard Wright, for his fine phrasings in Black Boy

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**BULA:** Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God, A Man of the People, No Longer at Ease, Anthills of the Savannah, and Girls at War, Hopes and Impediments, Morning Yet on Creation Day, The Education of a British-Protected Child. I am an avid reader of Achebe!

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS CHUKWU SUNDAY ABEL: EVIL GERMINATES AND FLOURISHES IN COMMUNITIES WHERE THE UPRIGHT REFUSE TO SPEAK UP**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**CHUKWU SUNDAY ABEL**

**EVIL GERMINATES AND FLOURISHES IN COMMUNITIES  
WHERE THE UPRIGHT REFUSE TO SPEAK UP**

Chukwu Sunday Abel is a journalist and a writer whose years of writing for the media as well as literarily is evident in the notable literary awards and recognition he has gained: Winner of the 2020 Creators of Justice Literary Award Literary Award, by the International Human Rights Art Festival Awards, New York. His short story “You Are A Criminal” won the Prof. Pius Adesanmi Prize in the just concluded African Human Rights Short Story Prize. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing and his award winning work.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?**

**CSA:** I started writing to express my deep rooted thoughts and philosophy which I consider worthy of interesting others and causing a positive change.

I see myself as a satirist who writes to the right by pointing out issues that undermine the wellness of my immediate society. Succinctly, the desire to have my voice heard inspired me into writing.

**WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?**

**CSA:** I started writing when I was in college. I wrote stories and had them read by my classmates and literature teacher who, on most of the occasions, gave the pieces some discouraging judgments. My major writing breakthrough came when my short story won the Creator of Justice Literary Award First Prize in 2020. Subsequently, my literary works have earned several prizes and positive reviews across countries.

**WA: YOUR SHORT STORY CAME SECOND; CAN YOU TELL US THE SECRET BEHIND IT?**

**CSA:** I feel motivated that my short story earned such a commendable recognition from a reputable literary magazine as International Human Rights Art Festival Awards. There is no secret behind my story writing other than that I desire to cause a change in the status quo of several anomalies that bedevil my society. "You are a criminal" explores such an anomaly that has become conventional in a community as mine.

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

**CSA:** Aside from the use of literary devices and writing in captivating manner, good writing should provoke certain thoughts, ask certain questions, aim to promote the wellness of the society and discourage practices that undermine the wellness of the society.

**WA: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE TITLE TO YOUR WINNING SHORT STORY?**

**CSA:** "You are a criminal" is like an aphorism used by police officers at suspects in my country. Suspects who are under investigation are usually called criminals by the investigators. Even in civil offences, one is referred to as a criminal as long as one isn't on the side of the police officers in my home country.

**WA: CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE STORY?**

**CSA:** Police brutality in Nigeria took the front seat of the several social issues in Nigeria in 2020. A now disbanded police unit, Special Anti Robbery Squad (SAR) was notorious for unprofessional conducts. Its operatives outrightly shot at suspects and brutalized people at will. A peaceful protest was embarked on by aggrieved Nigerians in 2020 to call for the disbandment of the police unit as well as the reformation of the Nigeria Police Force who were adjudged the worst police force in the world. The protest was tagged EndSARS. Sadly, these unarmed protesters were brutally shot at with many killed in the process by Nigeria Armed Forces who were deployed to quell the protest.

**WA: IS WRITING YOUR FULL-TIME CAREER? OR WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?**

**CSA:** At present, writing isn't a full-time engagement for me. However, I wish I could make it a full-time engagement but you know, writing pays but little.

**WA: ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WRITING?**

**CSA:** I do not write daily and I do not have a timetable for writing. I write when I get inspiration to do so.

**WA: WRITING CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AND STRESSFUL PURSUIT. ANY TIPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?**

**CSA:** A writer must be his first critic and fan. Condemn and commend your effort in a context where either of the two is required. Rejections from editors are inseparable from writing; hence, any who aspires having his voice heard must be passionate about it; undeterred by rejections. Also, to write well, one must read well.

**WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LITERARY CRITICISM?**

**CSA:** A writer who desires to write better must love his critics more than he does to those who commend his works. Whereas those who commend your works encourage you, your critics make you better.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?**

**CSA:** As I noted earlier, it's my desire to have my voice heard.

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

**CSA:** I have a personal website where I share links to my stories published by online magazines as well as publish a few of my stories. Whoever desires to keep up with my writing can either do so through: [Sunabel73@Twitter.com](https://twitter.com/Sunabel73) or [Afriature.blogspot.com](http://Afriature.blogspot.com)

**WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?**

**CSA:** I did mention earlier that un-checkmated police brutality in my home country inspired me to write this piece.

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

**CSA:** Police brutality was near incorrigible in my home country before the recent effort to reform the Nigeria Police Force. Hence, this piece explores how the dysfunctional policing system of a country can undermine and hinder the social cohesion in the said country.

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

**CSA:** An evil that assumes a perennial status has become traditional. Evil germinates and flourishes in communities where the upright refuse to speak up.

**WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?**

**CSA:** The title of this piece is symbolic as it's appealing to the readers. " You are a criminal" symbolizes an unprofessional maxim by officers of the Nigeria Police Force who assume that the accused is guilty as accused or as they imagine.

**WA: WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WRITING THIS STORY?**

**CSA:** I don't remember facing any challenge while writing this story other than trying to express fully what I felt and desired my writing to represent and pass across to the potential readers.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WRITING?**

**CSA:** I am a sports lover; a lover of football.

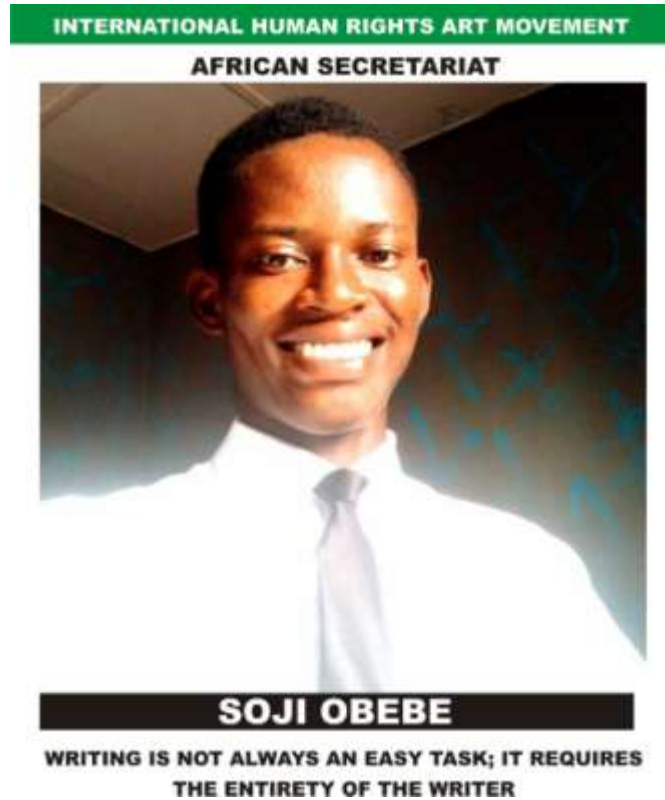
**WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE SHORT STORY WRITER AND WHY?**

**CSA:** I don't have any favourite short story writer. Any compelling short story whether from an established writer or an emerging one goes for me. I do not always look at the name behind stories. For me, it's the write-up itself.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS OR AUTHORS HAVE MOST INFLUENCED YOUR OWN WRITING?**

**CSA:** Buchi Emecheta works have not only influenced my writings but serves as a bedrock for my literary development. She looked at the ills and painted them as they were with euphemism which did not understate or exaggerate them: *Second Class Citizen* for an example.

## WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS SOJI OBEBE: WRITING IS NOT ALWAYS AN EASY TASK; IT REQUIRES THE ENTIRETY OF THE WRITER



Olusoji Obebe is a young Nigerian poet, fiction writer and essayist, nominated for BoTN and currently studying law at the University of Benin. He is a member of HCAF (Lagos) and recipient of PROFWIC ACHIEVERS AWARD 2022. His short story “At the End of the Rainbow” won the Binyavanga Wainaina Prize in the just concluded African Human Rights Short Story Prize. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his award winning work.

### **WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?**

**SOJ:** I think it is a natural urge. Not a book. It is not one writer, either. It is something innate. If you don't mind I call it internal inspiration—it is what I felt somewhere within me that prompted me to start writing. I started writing at a very tender age and when my family discovered this, they helped me. My mother would tell me stories and asked me to write them down for my novels. My father did get me books when I asked for one. My elder brother also bought books then and discussed writers such as Wole Soyinka, Pius Adesanmi, and Chinua Achebe with me. My sisters read the works I wrote and gave me nice feedback. I can say it all started from home before I entered into the global literary space.

### **WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?**

**SOJ:** Yeah, like I said earlier, I started writing at a very tender age. To be a bit precise, I have been writing since my primary school days. But in 2020, I became intentional and tenacious about writing. I connected with writers from around the world. I projected professionalism.



**WA: YOUR SHORT STORY CAME THIRD; CAN YOU TELL US THE SECRET BEHIND IT?**

**SOJ:** Ironically, I experienced some challenges while writing the story. And I almost stopped the story. But I continued. I drafted and redrafted. I stopped and edited. I continued. This is just the secret. As you can see, it is a well-known secret but some writers are not ready to sacrifice such energy which every good story deserves.

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

**SOJ:** There are many kinds of writing. However, be it a poem, prose or play, a good writing to me is one that can make me read into the night . This is what happened the day I read Nnedi Okorafor 's Zarah, The Windseeker. Or one that I can read till I forget to take my breakfast like "The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives" by Lola Shoneyin. Or that can leave me thinking—such is the critical works of Chinua Achebe and Tejumola Olaniyan. One thing I noted about all these works and a good number of others that I have read is that they are always enjoyable to read. The first few chapters would captivate you. The end would leave you wishing you still continued reading. Plots are well structured. Characters are given life. And most times, when I read these works, it feels like I am watching a movie. That's good writing.

**WA: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE TITLE TO YOUR WINNING SHORT STORY?**

**SOJ:**The truth is, I had other titles but I decided not to use them for the story. Then, "AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW" came to me while making a second draft of the work. Many believe that a rainbow after a rainstorm symbolizes hope or literally that peace is what follows at the end of chaos. But what follows at the end of the rainbow? Another rainbow? If you read the story, you would agree with me that I attempted to find an answer to that question through the character, "Tayo". She obviously doesn't know that a rainbow time doesn't last long and so, she becomes helpless with what has happened at the end.

**WA: CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE STORY?**

**SOJ:** Of course, there is something to say about the story. There has always been a "story" behind every of my stories. I'm sure this should be the case with other writers too. When I learned about the theme of the competition: human rights in Africa and their violations, my interest was caught. This happened when I was thinking about the case of gang rape that was rampant some time ago in my town. I felt so sorry about how girls do fall victim of the atrocities committed by men way older than them. And I set the later part of the story in Lagos. This is because of the belief I have about Lagos. My mother once told me she fled Lagos after she couldn't bear the ordeal she usually had with her brother's wife. I read a farewell poem where the writer had added a note, explaining how his innocent younger brother was shot in Lagos on his journey. Lagos is a beautiful city but can be a devil's nest.

**WA: IS WRITING YOUR FULL-TIME CAREER? OR WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?**

**SOJ:** Thanks for this question, Mr Wole. If I understand what you mean by writing as a full-time career, I can say people like John Grisham should not be called by the name "writers" or rather be called by something else other than "writers". But I do understand. Unlike what some people would have said, writing is not what I do just for fun. There is a possibility that when you find

something more fun, you would go for it and leave the other. Besides, writing is not always an easy task; writing requires the whole of the writer.

I'm currently an enrollee for a law degree program. It has been really demanding but I still write and read literary books. If this is writing as a full-time career, then that is what writing is to me. That is what I would like it to be. It is the last thing I would ever think to stop doing. I stop writing only when I stop living.

**WA: ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WRITING?**

**SOJ:** Sometimes I spend my day writing a poem. Sometimes, short stories. I don't time myself while writing. So I can't be exact about how many hours I spend writing. But on days I feel a strong surge of inspiration, I could write, say, in the afternoon and come out later, meeting the moon in the sky.

**WA: WRITING CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AND STRESSFUL PURSUIT. ANY TIPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?**

**SOJ:** I think aspiring writers should first stop believing they are writing for fun. Writing is not a Ludo game. Like you said, it can be an emotionally draining and stressful pursuit. Hence, "young" writers should be intentional and be sure they are not into writing for fame or to win prestigious awards and prizes. This would keep them writing even as rejections keep coming. Another thing that helps me is reading. There could be a reader who is not a writer but there is no writer who is not a reader. And lastly, apply for writing mentorship programs, free or paid. They help.

**WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LITERARY CRITICISM?**

**SOJ:** With open palms! I love receiving literary criticisms. They don't make me feel less a writer. They make me see where I am wrong or where I have failed. As far as man remains fallible, criticisms abound.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?**

**SOJ:** Majorly from reading other books. Sometimes, good music does. But one that has always remained constant is experience. What I learn by experience, whether what I see or hear or feel personally, inspires me to write. Such is what brought about "AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW".

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

**SOJ:** Readers can find out more about that, basically, from a handful of websites. My social media handles provided below will help them navigate through to them easily.

Facebook: @Olusoji Obebe

Instagram: @olusojiobebe

Twitter: @olusoji\_obebe

Milkshake: <https://msha.ke/olusojiobebe/>

**WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?**

**SOJ:** Seeing young girls on the street, homeless and begging, at the risk of their life. Though something might have caused this, I don't feel good about it.

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

**SOJ:** I want every innocent little girl to see what living in a world of men as we have it in Africa can do to them. I want them to realize that they have some rights and that they should not be silent in the face of infringement. I want to teach them wisdom, patience and contentment.

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

**SOJ:** All I wish they learn as I have pointed out earlier. And also, I hope everyone helps to protect children against all forms of abuse—what seems like an abuse, what is an abuse or what will be an abuse.

**WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?**

**SOJ:** Titles should be appealing to people. They are the first thing a reader reads. So, I always try to craft an intriguing title that would prompt my readers to read the story. This is what I endeavor to achieve with the title.

**WA: WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WRITING THIS STORY?**

**SOJ:** It got to a point I could not find the urge to continue the story. I took a short break. Breathed. Read some interesting works. And even after I was done writing the story, I felt it is not yet what it should be. So, I edited. Still not feeling satisfied, I sent it out to a writer-friend, Muiz, who helped to edit it.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WRITING?**

**SOJ:** Read. Do some pencil and pen drawings. Listen to good music.

**WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE SHORT STORY WRITER AND WHY?**

**SOJ:** Oh, I can't really tell. I have many favourite short story writers. The day I read "Do Not Say It's Not Your Country", Nnamdi Oguike became my favourite short story writer. By the time I read Kasimma Kasimma's, Kasimma is! This would go on and on and on with different writers.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS OR AUTHORS HAVE MOST INFLUENCED YOUR OWN WRITING?**

**SOJ:** By reading Prof Pius Adesanmi 's works alone, I have written a few poems (one of them dedicated to him) and essays. I cannot but mention Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, J.P. Clark, Gabriel Okara, Gbemisola Adeoti, Richard Wright, Sola Owonibi, Mariama Bâ, Camara Laye, Ifeoma Okoye, and a few more. In this contemporary generation, reading Stanley Umezulike's Ties That Bind made me grow a flair for crime fiction. John Grisham 's works too, especially "The Street Lawyer". I think Nnedi Okorafor is a very big influence for me. And I will never forget the day I finished reading "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho. I was happy I came across such a book.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS VICTOR DAMILOLA GARUBA, WINNER OF THE STEVE BIKO PRIZE: A GOOD STORY IS DRIVEN BY CONFLICT**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**VICTOR DAMILOLA GARUBA**

**A GOOD STORY IS DRIVEN BY CONFLICT**

Victor Damilola Garuba is a Nigerian short story writer and poet who finds his inspiration largely in mythological cosmology. His works appear in *Brittle Paper*, *African Writer* and *Writers Space Africa*. Garuba came first in the just concluded African Human Rights Short Story Competition. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing and his award winning story.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?**

**VDG:** I have always been a voracious reader; a bibliophile, at any rate. I suspect that my readings inspired me to write. Even as a mere under-10-year-old child, I had read everything I could lay my small hands on, from the *Ladybird Tales* to Soyinka to Achebe to Hemingway to Armah. In my first attempt at writing fiction, I had spoofed Armah without intending to, having been taken by his humorous synecdoches, notably in his *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

**WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?**

**VDG:** For as long as I can remember. If rendered in years, I would say a little over 20 years now.

**WA: YOUR SHORT STORY “WATER MAID” CAME FIRST; CAN YOU TELL US THE SECRET BEHIND IT?**

**VDG:** The plot feels brand-new--the story of a gifted child whose love for water creates a

character vs character conflict which drives the story. I think it is an unusual story, and that is a powerful secret, in my opinion. The judges know best.

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

**VDG:** A good story is driven by conflict. So, in my opinion, conflict is one important element of good writing. Another one is character. Without character, there can't really be a story. Things that happen matter because they happen to someone or something. Otherwise, no one would care for them. A good story is driven by character coupled with conflict(s).

**WA:** HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE TITLE TO YOUR WINNING SHORT STORY?

**VDG:** From the word go, I wanted to write about individuality and independence and how it could be a problem for a child in a very superstitious environment. So, when I decided on water and a water lover, something of an aquaphile, the word "mermaid" was in my head, but it felt too commonplace for the unusual story I had decided I wanted to tell. The title changed multiple times over the course of writing the story. But when "Water Maid" jumped at me, and I dare to say, rather suddenly, it stuck to me everlastingly.

**WA:** CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE STORY?

**VDG:** The main character, Iya, was inspired by my younger sister, Olayemi, whom everyone in the family called Iya when we were children. She has always been and is still an old head on young shoulders.

**WA:** IS WRITING YOUR FULL-TIME CAREER? OR WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?

**VDG:** Writing is not my full-time career, although I would love it to be. Currently, and unfortunately too, it is almost, if not impossible, to live on one's writing.

**WA:** ON A TYPICAL DAY, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND WRITING?

**VDG:** Nowadays, it has become typically not very much writing time for me. Because I have an almost round-the-clock teaching job, it is hard to have a daily writing routine.

**WA:** WRITING CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AND STRESSFUL PURSUIT. ANY TIPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?

**VDG:** When it is emotionally draining you rather than fuelling you, then it is time to take a break. It might just mean that you are stretched thin and/or are worried sick that you have weighed yourself against some other writer and have fallen short. It might also be that you have been writing too much, wringing yourself dry, stemming the flow of your creative juices. Whatever is the case, it must be addressed during a break from writing. If you are stretched thin, it might be from overworking yourself. Take a break from your writing. Physically and mentally separate from it. Take a walk. Watch TV. Listen to music. Read an easy book. Do anything, but don't write. After a short or long while, you might start to miss your story and want to run back to it with open arms. And supposing you have been clapping yourself over the head because you have weighed yourself against another writer and feel lighter, you might want to use this piece of advice from David Schlosser--"The only writer to whom you should compare yourself is the writer you were yesterday."

**WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LITERARY CRITICISM?**

**VDG:** I take it as a part my writing lessons. But for literary criticism, I don't suppose I would be here today as a prize winner. I have learnt a lot over the years from literary criticism. It has helped me grow and develop as a writer. There are only a few things I value more than feedback.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?**

**VDG:** I get my inspiration largely from spiritual or religious cosmology. I love otherworldly stuff; they fire my imagination. Folklores are an expansive material mine for powerful, meaningful ever-green stories. Cannibalizing myths and science have helped furnish me with ideas of stories, many yet untold, lying in gestation.

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

**VDG:** Readers can find me on Facebook (Victor Damilola Garuba) and Twitter (@VictorDGaruba). They can find my works on Brittle Paper, African Writer and Writers Space Africa. And also, on my personal blog, the Be Scared Blog ([www.beescared.blogspot.com](http://www.beescared.blogspot.com)).

**WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?**

**VDG:** I have read many heartbreaking stories of child witch hunts. Innocent children, some as young as three, become soft targets for superstitious parents or communities to explain and wish away bad luck or misfortunes. These stories inspired my story.

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

**VDG:** The key theme is superstition. Superstitions have driven people to deny vulnerable people their choices, overstepping their human rights, sometimes with devastating physical and psychological consequences for the victims.

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

**VDG:** I hope that my readers take away from the story the urge to do more for the vulnerable who are soft targets for rights abusers. It doesn't matter who is doing the abusing, it doesn't matter if it is a beloved pastor or a revered priest or a prestigious mullah, what matters is that someone's precious rights are being throttled, and that the victim needs salvation.

**WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?**

**VDG:** Water maid is my own way of writing mermaid. Mermaids are linked to individuality and independence, characteristics that superstitious people might have a problem with, and which Iya's mother in the story did have a problem with.

**WA: WHAT WERE THE KEY CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN WRITING THIS STORY?**

**VDG:** My editing-as-you-go habit throttled my creativity at some point and made completing the story a hassle.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT WRITING?**

**VDG:** When I am not writing, I like to read or watch horror/sci-fi/disaster movies. I enjoy my evening strolls too. And my hot baths, which have become rather occasional.

**WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE SHORT STORY WRITER AND WHY?**

**VDG:** My favourite short story writer is Edgar Allan Poe. I love dark tales, and Poe knew very well just how to darken a tale.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS OR AUTHORS HAVE MOST INFLUENCED YOUR OWN WRITING**

**VDG:** Reading Soyinka made me very much interested in religious cosmology. So, I would say Soyinka heavily influenced my writing.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS DAVID DAIRO: OUR WRITING SHOULD PRIORITIZE THE QUALITY OF IMPACT ON THE READERS RATHER THAN SOLELY FOCUSING ON MONEY**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**David Dairo**

**OUR WRITING SHOULD PRIORITIZE THE QUALITY OF IMPACT ON THE READERS RATHER THAN SOLELY FOCUSING ON MONEY**

David Dairo is an experienced Nigerian author with a writing career spanning over two decades. His writing journey began in 1989 when he started providing solutions to the challenges faced by students preparing for their final School Certificate Examinations in Social Science subjects. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for reading and writing.

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**DD:** At a point, the writer has a clearer picture of the thoughts (rich content) to be communicated consistently.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**DD:** A writer can be a spontaneous or a person who gives to a literary work consistently while an author can be a person who gives to literary work but writes more for commercial (monetary) purposes.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**DD:** 'Writer block' is the inability of a writer to initiate or complete a literary work or manuscript. Technical loss of concentration/ distraction, fluidity to write, and grit.



**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**DD:** Well, I want to know if the criticism is a positive one sandwiched with negativity if not I will stay on my thought-out materials. This happened in 2012 during the review of my titles (Books). The reasons for my actions were stated and buttressed by undeniable facts and figures.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**DD:** The challenge is organizing my thoughts and communicating them clearly and expressively.

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

**DD:** This started in 2002

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**DD:** The focus must be on the content which is the richness followed by exceptional yet creative and colourful book covers. ii. Meticulous editing by both the English and professional editors to eliminate grammatical errors and still retain the jargon of the book (Subject matter).

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?**

**DD:** Good and rich content ii. Ability to activate readers iii. Ability to improve readers' vocabularies (lexis and structures, idiomatic expressions, etc. iv. Use of words to create mental pictures for readers.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**DD:** The plot comes first then the character. Why? The plot determines the types of characters to feature/employ. It also helps the focus of the entire book.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**DD:** 2006

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**DD:** I use it to update my knowledge of the subject area. I learn writing expressions/ constructions from it. I also use it to verify dates.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**DD:** Our writing should prioritize the quality of impact on the readers rather than solely focusing on money. This I have experienced and enjoyed.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**DD:** The best way is to write however, a writer must also be given a great deal of reading.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**DD:** My family has been very supportive and cooperative. They allow me room when it's time to write. Hindrance: Distraction and Loss in thought (diminished inspiration).

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**DD:** I have a Timeline of 4 hours daily for 2 weeks to document thoughts ("Pouring"/ Ventilate).

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BLOGS OR WEBSITES FOR WRITERS?**

**DD:** I relate more to the Pdf site.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**DD:** Evenings and late into the night. My mornings are used for editing/proofreading.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**DD:** Yet to adopt one.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**DD:** No!

**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**DD:** The nature of my story determines the tone. ii. emotional: the tone will start from the beginning and graduate as the story progresses.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**DD:** i. Novellas- African titles ii. Motivational Books iii Leadership iv. Politics and government v. Biography .vi. Spiritual Books. vii. History of nations viii. Newspapers, Magazines.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**DD:** No! But I have learned from reading other writers. Authors that inspired me to become a writer are: Ben Carson, Wole Soyinka, China Achebe and William Shakespeare

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**DD:** Publication by Henniman.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**DD:** Pacesetter series-Too is cold for comfort. e.t.c, ii. African child, .iii. The lion and the jewel, iv. The incorruptible Judge

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**DD:** Wole Soyinka ii. William Shakespeare

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**DD:** William Shakespeare

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**DD:** i. On a platter of gold by Bolaji Abdullahi ii. Politics, Power and Dream by Adeniyi iii. The Vision iv. The Lion and the Jewel.

## WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS LOLA ODEYALE AYO-FASHIDA: WHEN IT COMES TO WRITING, MUSIC HAS BEEN MY GREATEST ALLY

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT

AFRICAN SECRETARIAT



Lola Odeyale Ayo-Fashida

When it comes to writing, music has been my greatest ally

Dr. Lola Odeyale Ayo-Fashida, though graduated as a Microbiologist, is a Nigerian based multiple award winning Finance and Management Consultant, a multi-talented professional, an author, Inspirational Leader and transformational coach whose passion is in life improvement and financial advancement. She holds a PhD in Personnel psychology with articles and publication. She is concerned with children enlightenment, youth development and women empowerment. She is an author of three books titled, I've Seen God, Broken and My Pot of Gold. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her passion for writing.

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**LOAF:** When he or she can pens down thoughts, ideas, concepts in paper or notepads, since we are in the digital era.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**LOAF:** An author is one whose written work is published while a writer has no published written work.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**LOAF:** It means when ideas or there is lack of flow of ideas or thoughts to pen down.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**LOAF:** I carefully look through and see how I can modify my writings. I believe reviews are to make my work better, so I don’t feel bad. It could be tiresome at times especially when the reviews are much but I believe it’s for the work to be better.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**LOAF:** Writing all the points down because I sometimes have a lot to write but when its flowing, I write so fast that I miss out some things.

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

**LOAF:** I started writing at the age of eleven. I remember then when my mum wants to go and minister in church, I would write her messages for her. I also wrote a book then which my mum gave to an uncle to help me publish but he went away with my manuscript.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**LOAF:** Pass your message across in a very clear and simple way.

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?**

**LOAF:** To me, I would say, clarity, concision and precision – being able to pass my message across as clearly and concisely as possible.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**LOAF:** I would say the characters because the story will resolve round them.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**LOAF:** Once I generate ideas, then I think of the storyline, the message I want to pass across and the flow. This helps me with the characters and plots.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**LOAF:** I called myself a writer when I published an article in the Guardian Newspaper in 1993.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**LOAF:** I use the social media to push my messages out, to promote my books, to read content from people and to source for programs or funding for authors.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU’VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**LOAF:** Your writings are easy to understand.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**LOAF:** Continuous reading and learning.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**LOAF:** When it comes to writing, music has been my greatest ally.

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**LOAF:** Some days, it could be 5 hours, other days no writing. On the average 1 hour a day.

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BLOGS OR WEBSITES FOR WRITERS?**

**LOAF:** [www.spring.org](http://www.spring.org), Brian Tracy.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**LOAF:** Evening into the night.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**LOAF:** Microsoft Word.

**WA: HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH CHARACTER NAMES FOR YOUR STORIES?**

**LOAF:** Through imagination.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**LOAF:** I do. Spring - I have applied once and I get regular updates.

**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**LOAF:** I try to write it as much as I can. At times, if it's so emotional; I could stop, take a break and return.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**LOAF:** I read all types of books – motivational, family, spiritual, business. Reading is one of my hobbies.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**LOAF:** None really, I took a course with Brain Tracy in 2017 on how to publish your first book.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**LOAF:** Several books like Success is never ending, failure is never final by Robert Schuller.

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**LOAF:** Rhonda Bryne in the book The Secret.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**LOAF:** John Maxwell, Brain Tracy.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**LOAF:** Richest man in Babylon.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS GABRIEL O. UDENSI: YOUR BOOK COULD BE THE ANSWER TO SOMEONE'S PRAYER**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**GABRIEL O. UDENSI**

**YOUR BOOK COULD BE THE ANSWER  
TO SOMEONE'S PRAYER**

The author hails from Abia State, from the Bende LGA. He is an apostle of JESUS CHRIST; also an associate Member of the Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB). He is member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Abia State Chapter ( currently serving as the Assistant General Secretary), also a member of Aba Book Club, and Aba Poetry Club. He is an internationally published author of several books, printed by Ukiyoto publishing company, Toronto Canada. His books such as Consider Jesus, Flashes of Insight and Bible for the Scientists, Mathematicians, Philosophers, Atheists, Gnostics and Christians; are globally distributed on Amazon and other bookstores. His author page can be accessed via this link: [Amazon.com/author/gabrieludensi](https://www.amazon.com/author/gabrieludensi)

**WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?**

**GOU:** I realized that there was so much satanic evangelism, via the channels of literature and the media, corrupting the minds of the people, especially youths with ungodly concepts, and the so-called New age movement, leading them astray. Therefore, I considered a personal call and ministry, to counter such diabolic movement, with the sound doctrines of Christ Jesus, through Christian books, to pull down every stronghold, imaginations, ideologies and knowledge, bringing them to the obedience of Christ Jesus.



**WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?**

**GOU:** Since my secondary school days, however, as a published author, I would rather say three years.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?**

**GOU:** I embraced writing as a noble profession in the year 2014.

**WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?**

**GOU:** No, but the agony and suffering in the world as a result of perversions of the godly principles, compelled me to answer my call of destiny as a Christian writer, to serve the world with the bread of life and the living water of the Word, to satisfy their hunger, and quench their taste for sound knowledge.

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

**GOU:** When you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit of God, prompting you to write for a specific target audience, harden not your heart; because your book could be the answer to someone's prayer. Imagine this situation; if Apostle Paul had not obeyed to answer the call of writing, (I always use the word the call, because writing is an office and also a specific ministry), we will be so ignorant of the new creation realities. Therefore, obey, answer the call, and preach the gospel of Christ through the tributaries of literature.

**WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?**

**GOU:** I will play some deep spiritual songs, to relax my entire being. And also to access the portal of infinite wisdom, through the only legal door, which is Christ Jesus. In doing so, my thinking faculty will be revitalized, for spontaneous overflow of creative ideas.

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

**GOU:** I will say four. It's very difficult to choose the favourite because each one is unique, and was written for different target audience, however, I will go for "Consider Jesus", because it is a book that incorporated diverse concepts, which includes: science, mathematics, philosophy, commerce, and literature, in expounding the gospel of Christ, with thought provoking illustrations. The book is very unique, in its narrative style and it took me ten years, to draft and thoroughly revise its manuscript.

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

**GOU:** I always feel a presence, as if someone is standing by my side, whispering some messages, and deep hidden things, especially on my left ear.

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

**GOU:** Yeah, her name is Erinma, an orphan, though am yet to publish the manuscript by may/June this year 2021. Her tenacity, and passion to liberate her colleagues at their work place, is extremely superb. She was initiated into voodoo cult as a teenager, but later in her life, she

encountered Christ Jesus through the prayers of her fiancée's pastor, who conducted a tedious deliverance for her salvation.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?**

**GOU:** From the Spirit of Truth, the omniscient Holy Spirit of Christ. Also from the book of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Epistles of Apostle Paul.

**WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR CHRISTIAN BOOKS?**

**GOU:** Through my Amazon author page: [amazon.com/author/gabrieludensi](https://amazon.com/author/gabrieludensi)

**At Okadabooks:** <https://okadabooks.com/user/gabrieludensi>

**At Collins bookstore:** <https://collinsbookstore.com/product/consider-jesus/>

**Paystack:** <https://paystack.shop/bookworld>

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

**GOU:** None have been made into audiobooks, still strategizing to do so soonest.

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

**GOU:** All of them. Writing their manuscripts gave me great joy, and a sense of fulfillment.

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

**GOU:** Awesome! The title of the book is "ConsiderJesus". It was indeed an adventure of ten years, of gathering, clustering, prewriting, drafting, organizing, editing, and revising the manuscript prior to publishing it. It was anchored by forty days of fasting, and midnight prayers.

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

**GOU:** The clarity of the message, value, and its simplicity in expounding mysteries, to heighten understanding with respect to the target audience.

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

**GOU:** Oh! Extremely difficult to choose, however, I will endorse E.W. Kenyon. And My favorite of his book is: "The Hidden Man." Moreover, the works of Derek Prince are excellent reads.

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

**GOU:** Still a project at work. It's about a young teenage girl, who was initiated into a witchcraft coven by the goddess of a River but was delivered from the shackles of darkness into the light of Christ, after her fiancée's Pastor, conducted a deliverance that nearly took his(Pastor's) life.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY SECRETS FROM THE BOOK, YOU CAN SHARE WITH**

**YOUR READERS?**

**GOU:** Yes, it very paramount that a Christian should always be on guard, by putting on the whole armour of God, in order to be able to ward off the fiery darts of the enemy. The midnight hours are extremely dangerous, and a lot of spiritual transactions take place at midnight. Therefore, as a believer, it's expedient to be spiritually alert, and sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, to escape from the onslaught and hidden snares of the enemy, during the night hours.

**WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY/BOOK?**

**GOU:** The quest for deliverance, liberty, and freedom of lawful captives from the hands of the mighty , and wicked captors. Suffice it to say that, the book of Isaiah 49:24-26, inspired the plot and conflict of the book.

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

**GOU:** The love, mercy, and grace of Christ, is all encompassing, and doesn't discriminate. It's available to all, irrespective of our past failures, sins, and ignorance. Whenever anyone embraces the gospel of Christ, he/she will be justified and made righteous, just as if he/she hadn't sinned at all. Moreover, as a believer, it's pertinent to be vigilant, watchful and prayerful, especially in these last days of trials and tribulations.

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

**GOU:** They will learn spiritual warfare strategies. And understand the nature of the tricks, and evil schemes of the crafty serpent, to be able to discern, and resist them, whenever they come.

**WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?**

**GOU:** "Erinma, the tragedy and triumph of a super woman"; speaks for itself because it narrates the process of transformation of a formal witch, a voodoo princess from the darkness of sin, to the great light of righteousness, through the liberty granted by Christ Jesus.

**WA: HAS A CHRISTIAN BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?**

**GOU:** Yeah, "TheHiddenMan", by E.W. Kenyon impacted me so much, with the imprints of the New Creation Realities.

**WA: WHAT GENRES OF CHRISTIAN BOOK DO YOU LOVE?**

**GOU:** All genres, provided the gospel of Christ, is being preached with simplicity, and self explanatory illustrations.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES OF CHRISTIAN BOOK YOU DISLIKE?**

**GOU:** No.

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

**GOU:** Andrew Wommack.

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

**GOU:** I love both.

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

**GOU:** All genres.

**WA: WHAT CHRISTIAN BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?**

**GOU:** The Hidden Man by E.W. Kenyon.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?**

**GOU:** In the year 2019, because the only library we have in Aba is undergoing some renovation and remedial construction works.

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

**GOU:** Not yet.

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

**GOU:** Yeah, my unpublished work, about Erinma. It's a tragic-comedy masterpiece.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS AMADI EKWUTOSILAM NJOKUGOOD:  
WRITING IS MORE THAN JUST STRINGING WORDS TOGETHER TO MAKE  
SENSE –**



Amadi Ekwutosilam Njoku, known as Mazi Emeritus Njoku, is a literary powerhouse hailing from Amasiri, Ebonyi State. His contributions to the literary world span various genres, including poetry, award-winning novels, plays, short stories, literary essays, and critical analysis. As the managing editor at Africa Press Chamber (APC), Amadi has showcased his talent through his thought-provoking books, gaining recognition through awards and nominations. His dedication to teaching and coaching, along with his role as the founder of EMERITO ACADEMY, exemplify his commitment to sharing knowledge and fostering literary growth. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for writing.

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**AEN:** Everyone writes, especially those of us on social media. We always write because we want to communicate ideas. It now depends on what we write and the level of skill and mastery we display in what we write. Once one can use language to express ideas well, often contributing largely to the cultural content of a society be it as novels, short stories, or poetry etc, one can at

any point call themselves a writer.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**AEN:**The difference is in getting published. Writing is only half the job of being an author. And one has to be intentional and tenacious in transiting from a writer to an author.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**AEN:** It's a condition of me or any other writer not being able to think of what to write or how to proceed with writing. Writer's block is just a short spell of inactiveness as a result of the mind going blank on ideas. Every writer often goes through it and recovers quickly from it as one recovers from intermittent fever like malaria.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**AEN:** Unfortunately, not every writer finds negative book reviews cool. Negative book reviews are a way of telling a writer, "Dude, you aren't getting it right. You have to work on something to get it right." So instead of trying to hate someone for the feedback they give me, I find a way of bettering my craft. I know one thing for sure, no piece of writing is universally beloved. Almost every reader or editor will have an entirely different opinion of your work, and there's value in that. Negative book reviews are pointers that I need to do some deeper soul-searching that would make me a better writer.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**AEN:**Researching part of it, for me; is not the plotting and actual writing themselves. Gathering information about your proposed story is more time-consuming. You have to put your facts together to ensure that there's believability. It's an activity that doesn't end before you begin writing your story, it's something you have to still keep doing while writing.

**WA: How long have you been writing or when did you start?**

**AEN:** I have been writing for 8 years now, starting from 2015 when I began with critical analysis or literary criticism. I authored my first book then titled Eraz Literature-in-English for senior secondary schools(critical analysis of WAEC, NECO, and JAMB recommended texts). But I began writing creative fiction in 2019. So, I should say, it has been 8 fruitful years with 5 books to my credit, including my award-winning novel The Invincible Will.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**AEN:** A tepid and loose story is a monumental embarrassment to conscious readers. Writing a good first book requires the writer to ensure that his anxiously waiting readers do not cringe at the whole effort as soon as his work finds itself in their hands. Writers working on their first book, especially indie writers, should never be in a hurry to publish their work until such a piece has been structurally tightened and polished to a fine gloss by a good editor. Every first book should be a good first impression of a writer's corpus he dreams to bless the world with.

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?**

**AEN:** Good writing, of course, is more than just stringing words together to make sense. Some

elements must be inherent. Simplicity without being simplistic is one core element of good writing. It is also sprung on active voice and the events therein must be logically connected as well appeal to the reader's emotions.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**AEN:**The creative muse is not rigid, it always comes in the form it listed, and as a writer, I am only a vessel for its manifestation when it comes. I don't get swept up in the arguments for or against plotting first or character sketches. This is because I can plot at one time and another by writing at the seat of my pants. I explore my story as I go along and in the end, I find myself coupling every part of the story together, seamlessly. I just experiment and do what works best for me. The freedom that comes with embracing this approach is downright cathartic.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**AEN:** I make sure each character's roles contribute to the development of the plot of my story. First, I start by making my lead character be in need or want something and piam! I throw in a spanner in the works with a good dose of detailed and sensory description. A good plot, of course, will show how characters mapped out for a novel have been transformed by the obstacles they've faced.

**WA: When did you first call yourself a writer?**

**AEN:** Though I might have nursed the idea of being a writer right from when I was in primary 7 in Cameroon. Then I was enthralled with the way some of our neighbors who were in high school and were preparing for their GCE would come home daily to talk about some of their literature study texts such as 'Pride and Prejudice' by Jane Austen, 'When Rain Clouds Gather' by Bessie Head, 'Great Expectations' by Charles Dickens, etc with great enthusiasm. But I first called myself a writer when I started experimenting with essays in senior high school(SHS 1). I found myself writing a plethora of them not as assignments but as a means of unleashing those unexplainable feelings that I was always steeped in.

**WA: How do you use social media as an author?**

**AEN:** The role of social media in modern times can not be overstated. As an author, I use social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to build my author brand and to connect with my fans and my fellow authors across the globe. Through it, my fans and readers get a glimpse of my personal life or writing process as an author.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**AEN:** To find my voice, have confidence in it, and never try to write like my idols. If you try to pretend to write like anyone else, your readers will know. Perhaps author Allegra Goodman said it best: "Know your literary tradition, savor it, steal from it, but when you sit down to write, forget about worshiping greatness and fetishizing masterpieces."

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**AEN:** Reading. Reading. Reading. A good writer is a good reader. He reads the works of other writers to hone his skill. I think Professor Wole Soyinka is right when he says, "And I believe

that the best learning process of any craft is just to look at the works of others. Attending creative writing workshops, literary seminars, and conferences are also sure ways to improve one's writing.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**AEN:** I am going to be responding to this question in a positive light. Telling authentic stories in an engaging, creative manner: telling authentic stories lets you personalize your writing style because these stories are unique to you. An audience may take an interest in your stories if they resonate with them and link to the main message of your story.

**WA: How many hours a day do you write?**

**AEN:** I try to be flexible as a literary practitioner. I don't limit my writing to a number of hours a day. In the part of the world that I live in, each day is swamped with numerous activities, and as a writer, one is forced to write at the slightest opportunity. I try as much as I can to write on the go while on the bus and at midnight when I am in my element. Therefore, it's difficult to give a figure in terms of time.

**WA: What are your favorite blogs or websites for writers?**

**AEN:** (Blinks) Blogs can be a great source of writing advice, but sometimes writers need a tool that helps them with the process, and this is where writing websites come in. Both budding and established writers will be able to tap into their true potential through these writing websites or blogs: Literary Hub, John Mathew Fox, Writer's Digest, The Write Life, Bookbaby, Authors Publish, etc.

**WA: At what time of the day do you do most of your writing?**

**AEN:** I do my writing at any time of the day when I'm in my element, provided that other personal needs are not interfering.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**AEN:** Writing a book is not as easy as a walk in the park. However, there is book writing software that can make the writing process and meeting a writer's daily goals easier! My writing software of choice includes Google Docs, Scrivener, Grammarly, ProWritingAid, etc. I have really found them helpful.

**WA: HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH CHARACTER NAMES FOR YOUR STORIES?**

**AEN:** I name my characters based on their backgrounds and the meanings the name would have on the entire story. I won't name a character because I want him or her to be identified. No! I reflect on names, their meanings, and their significance to the story before adopting them for my characters. As a writer of Igbo extract, I believe names play an important role in one's life. Mention any character in my work, and I will tell you why I named him or her so in that story.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**AEN:** I do social media writing challenges especially when they are ones with criteria that I can meet.



**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**AEN:** The mood is the emotional atmosphere of a scene. It is the way the story, setting, or scene makes your readers feel and the most effective ways to infuse my story with mood are through my setting descriptions and character reactions. What characters say and how they respond to their environment can build emotion.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**AEN:** Writers love to read and write. And as one, I enjoy reading both creative fiction and nonfiction. Poetry and short story collections are also a great read.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**AEN:** YES. Being exposed to the works of Chinua Achebe, William Shakespeare, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, and Ernest Hemingway early in life, really inspired me to become a writer. Also, my high school library was heavily furnished with fascinating books. All of those had a timely and overwhelming influence on me. I became familiar with works belonging to different literary periods ranging from the Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, Renaissance, and Restoration, through Modern. Expectedly, the efforts put into reading that spanned all genres helped develop my independent thought and enthuse my writing ambition.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**AEN:** Before I even began to write my debut award-winning novella *The Invincible Will*, I had spent much time leafing through the beautiful pages of these wonderful books: *Concision* by Joseph M. Williams, *A Writer's Guide to Understanding the Copyeditor* by Terry McGarry, *Writersisms and other Sins: A Writer's Shortcut to Stronger Writing* by C.J. Cherryh, *Mistakes In Writing* by Roger MacBride Allen, *The 38 Most Common Fiction Writing Mistakes (And How To Avoid Them)* by Jack M. Bickham, *The Elements of Fiction Writing* by Ansen Dibell, *Characters*, and *Viewpoint* by Orson Scott Card, *Chike and the River* by Chinua Achebe, *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and *The Drummer Boy* by Cyprian Ekwensi.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**AEN:** As I said earlier, I grew up in an environment that motivated me to read some classics at an age when I couldn't fully understand their textual relevance. I read works of Jane Austen, Bessie Head, Charles Dickens, and William Shakespeare to mention but a few

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**AEN:** William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe—perhaps because of the language of texts. Old English or Elizabethan English in which those texts were written, was something of great difficulty for me then.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**AEN:** This question depends on the genre. Some famous authors are known to have excelled in the prose genre while others are famed in poetry or drama. As a writer who is making inroads in both, if I'm to be mentored by a famous author, it should be Professor Wole Soyinka because he straddles both genres with equipoise.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**AEN:** Good books have magical appeals to readers. You are helplessly attached to them for one or two things. If not the themes, it would be the likeable character or the style of telling the story. And I have read a few good books by old and young writers across genres more than once but Achebe's Arrow of God is one piece I keep going back to, despite the literary tradition of the text.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS 'JOBA THE POÈTE': I NEVER LIKED BEING CALLED A POET BUT I SOON BECAME TAGGED A POET DUE TO MY RELENTLESS LOVE AND PASSION FOR WRITING POETRY**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**



**AWE JÈSÙJOBA ISAAC**

**I NEVER LIKED BEING CALLED A POET BUT I SOON BECAME TAGGED  
A POET DUE TO MY RELENTLESS LOVE AND PASSION FOR  
WRITING POETRY - 'JOBA THE POÈTE'**

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**JOBA:** At the moment they find spontaneity in the words that come alive in them.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**JOBA:** An author is simply a published creator who owns all the rights to his publication and possibly makes a living out of it, while a writer might be someone who scribbles down his own thoughts at leisure.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**JOBA:** For me, it's a temporary feeling of not finding the right words or not knowing how to craft them together to make art out of it.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**JOBA:** I have to read a book to really find what's negative about it.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**JOBA:** The most difficult part for me must be how to end it.

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

**JOBA:** As long as I can remember, I have been writing poetry since 2008.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**JOBA:** As one myself, I'd say take your time and not rush things just to get your work out there, but take time to read, carefully edit and proofread over and over again. It's the first one so one must make it count.

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?**

**JOBA:** The diction, and of course creativity in the storyline. I don't want to read the same thing a million times.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**JOBA:** The plot. That's just how my mind works, and the characters come after carefully finding what role suits them best.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**JOBA:** I'm not a writer of prose per se but then I think it should come after drafting a clear view of what the story must seem like.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**JOBA:** I never liked being called a poet but I soon became tagged a poet due to my relentless love and passion for writing poetry, and I thought to myself 'it's not so bad after all', but over recent years I started calling myself a writer because I dabbled into other forms of writing.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**JOBA:** I'm still on the verge of publishing my first book, but I love to use the social media as my voice when I need to express how I feel about certain life circumstances and especially in times when the nation or the world is going through turbulent times.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**JOBA:** 'Just keep writing'. And that there has always done it for me.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**JOBA:** I would never rule out reading, but for someone who in his early years never read much, taking time to search for and learn new words to add to my vocabulary helped me - movies,

billboards and listening ears when people who know better speak on certain situations.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**JOBA:** Like I said, I don't have a book to my name just yet, but definitely before the year runs out I'll be publishing my very first 'Tattoos of Yesterday'. It was easy writing this book because it was based on my personal life experiences.

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**JOBA:** Poetry found me. I write when I feel like. I write whenever I have the nudge to. I write on the go.

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BLOGS OR WEBSITES FOR WRITERS?**

**JOBA:** [descriptionari.com](http://descriptionari.com) and Pinterest for inspiring images.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**JOBA:** Very early in the morning feels best, late at night when the crickets rhyme in their crevices is such time too.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**JOBA:** Google Keep Notes.

**WA: HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH CHARACTER NAMES FOR YOUR STORIES?**

**JOBA:** Look up names from the internet or create one myself, but the latter is rare.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**JOBA:** I do, with my close circle. I also do random contests. I do not have any specifics when it comes to online challenges.

**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**JOBA:** First things first, I douse myself in it, through music or watching a video clip on something related to what I'm about to write.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**JOBA:** POETRY! I find it so easy to read poetry, perhaps because it's my area of expertise. I read novels and developmental and growth books too but not as much as I consume poetry.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**JOBA:** I didn't grow up to having any writer as a mentor or one to look up to. However, I read much of vintage poetry (inspite of the old-fashioned English) because they seem to hold treasures that I seek in my writing.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**JOBA:**I would say blogs—the internet generally.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**JOBA:** I didn't read much growing up because my family didn't see it as much of a big deal nor did they overly encourage it, and I have my regrets.

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**JOBA:** Honestly, I don't think there is, for me.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**JOBA:** The great William Shakespeare.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**JOBA:** None.

Awe Jésùjoba Isaac, also known by his poetic alias, 'Jòba the poète', or simply 'Jòba'. He is a multifaceted individual who identifies himself as both a poet and a fashion model. Awe is a distinguished alumnus of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, where he earned a degree in Counsellor Education. He discovered his passion for poetry back in 2008 while he was in secondary school and has been honing his skills ever since. Along the way, he also ventured into spoken word poetry, and he performed for the first time in 2018. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his passion for Poetry.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ONIKE RAHAMAN OLALEKAN: I ADORE  
PROF.WOLE SOYINKA NOT ONLY FOR HIS UNIQUE STYLE OF WRITING BUT  
FOR HIS VERSATILITY AND ACTIVISM**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**ONIKE RAHAMAN OLALEKAN**

**I ADORE PROF.WOLE SOYINKA NOT ONLY FOR HIS UNIQUE STYLE  
OF WRITING BUT FOR HIS VERSATILITY AND ACTIVISM**

Alhaji Onike Rahaman Olalekan is a seasoned administrator, freelance writer, academic researcher, editorial consultant, author, policy analyst, bibliophile, and educationist, with over ten years of experience in the education sector. He is an accomplished writer, starting his writing career as a freelance writer for TELL, The News, PM New, and Tempo. He has over one hundred writing portfolios and is also a speechwriter and ghostwriter for several eminent personalities and political office holders. He writes frequently for several print and online media platforms, including The Cable, Premium Times, Nigerian Tribune, Daily Trust, Nigeria Opinion, Sahara Reporters, among others. Alhaji Onike has written three books and has chapter contributions in several books. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him his passion for writing.

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL HIMSELF A WRITER?**

**ORO:** There is no singular or exclusive milestone or criterion that determines at what point an individual can be called a writer. Some may argue that one must have published work, build

social reputation in the field of writing as a craft; the person must have sufficient writing portfolios or must have made a certain amount of income from writing to be considered a writer. Some may argue that writing consistently and passionately is enough to earn the title. Of course, it is up to the individual to decide when they feel comfortable calling themselves a writer. Some may believe that being published or recognized by a certain community is necessary to be called a writer, while others may think that personal fulfillment and dedication to the craft is enough to earn the title. There is no concrete benchmark for when someone can officially call themselves a writer, as it is a personal identification and can mean different things to different people. It ultimately comes down to whether someone feels that writing is a significant part of their identity.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**ORO:** In my own view, a writer is someone who scribbles down words, thoughts and ideas, like a poet, a songwriter, newspaper columnists, speech writers, reporters among others. An author, on the other hand, is someone who is more focused on creating longer works, like novels, biographies, academic or literary texts or reference materials.

At the end of the day, both writers and authors are all just trying to express themselves. Whether it's through a song, a poem, or a book, we're all just looking for a way to share our thoughts, add values and express our feelings and ideas with the world. In a way, some writers are authors at the same time, while some writers don't publish on their own.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**ORO:** In all writing processes, writer's block refers to the condition in which a writer experiences a temporary inability to produce ideas, develop content, or make progress on their writing project. It may be frustrating and overwhelming for writers who rely on their creativity to get their work done whenever they experience writer's block. Writer's block can be caused by a variety of factors such as stress, self-doubt, lack of inspiration, or even just the pressure to produce something great. It is something that affects every writer, whether they are working on a novel, blog post, academic paper, or any other type of content. Overcoming writer's block requires different approaches for different people, but some common strategies include taking breaks, changing your environment, brainstorming, seeking feedback from more experienced persons, and practicing meditation. Above all, writer's block is a normal part of the writing process, and it is possible to work through it and come out with a stronger piece.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**ORO:** Dealing with negative book reviews can be challenging, but it's important to approach them with the right mindset and strategies. When you want to deal with negative book reviews as a writer, one important thing to do is stay calm and composed: It's natural to feel upset or defensive when you receive a negative review. Of course, you need to take a deep breath and remind yourself that not everyone will like your work, and that's okay. You need to read the review objectively. Try to detach yourself emotionally from the review and read it objectively. Look for any constructive criticism that you can use to improve your writing in the future. You don't need to take it personally. One needs to note that the review is about your book, not you as a person. People have different tastes and preferences, and it's impossible to please everyone.

If you must respond, you need to handle it professionally and politely. It is also necessary to



thank the reviewer for their feedback and one needs to strive to address any specific concerns they raised. Use the negative review as an opportunity to grow and improve as a writer. If multiple reviewers raise the same issue, consider addressing it in your future work.

Don't let the negative review overshadow the positive ones. Celebrate your successes and remind yourself of the positive feedback you've received. Don't let negative reviews discourage you from continuing to write. It is always good to use the negative review as your driving force and motivation to improve and grow as an author.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**ORO:** The most challenging part of the writing process can vary depending on the individual writer and the type of writing they are doing. Getting started may be the most difficult challenge. Some writers struggle with the initial stage of the writing process, where they need to come up with an idea or find the motivation to start writing. This is often referred to as writer's block. Once a writer has begun writing, it may be difficult to stay focused and avoid distractions, whether they be social media notifications or simply losing interest in the writing process. Writing and editing at the same time do constitute challenges in certain instances in my writing career.

Developing a unique and engaging authorial voice can be a challenge for writers, especially when they are working on a new genre or style. Balancing writing with other responsibilities, such as work, family, or education, can be difficult and requires good time management skills. Sometimes the most difficult part is to decide what to write on or to choose a topic or title for my work. Occasionally, mind mapping may be a difficult task for me and it may take longer time.

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

**ORO:** I started writing when I was in secondary school at Olivet Baptist High School Oyo as a member of the press club and as a member of the literary and debating society. I continued writing as a student at the then St. Andrew's College of Education Oyo now Emmanuel Alayande College of Education Oyo and during the period I served as Editor of The Voice Press Organisation. I could not forget how my position as the General Secretary, Students' Union Government in those days greatly influenced my writing skills and the experience gained as member Inter-Campus Union of Campus Journalists then.

I have been into freelance writing since my students union days and throughout the period I was active in human rights activism. I wrote my first book titled Human Rights in Islam in 1997. I published my second book titled Concise Guide for Professional Administrator in 2017 and my third book titled The Craft and Intricacies of Contemporary Writing published in 2022. I thank God that in the last twenty years, I have been writing consistently as opinion contributor for several newspapers and digital platforms. I have a lot of writing portfolio as ghost writer and as book project editor.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**ORO:** Any writer working on his /her first book needs mentoring, great passion for writing, be courageous and determined to succeed. There are visible challenges that may get one discouraged from pursuing the goal, but the obstacles are definitely summontable. Frustration from the publishers or professional editors need to be handled with care as a young writer. Fear of possible rejection at an early stage of one's career shouldn't be a hindrance.

A beginner writer must also be open to feedback - Receiving feedback may be difficult, but it's vital to becoming a better writer. Listen to constructive criticism and take note of areas where one can improve. Setting achievable goals can help you measure your progress and keep you motivated. Whether it's completing a certain number of pages or finishing a manuscript by a specific deadline, goal-setting can help you stay focused and productive. Hence, for the young writers to succeed or have their voices heard, they need perseverance, commitment and ceaseless passion for writing.

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?**

**ORO:** Good writing depends on various elements, including clear and concise language, proper grammar and punctuation, effective organization and structure, engaging tone and style, and the ability to convey the intended message in a compelling and memorable way. It also involves understanding the audience and tailoring the writing to their needs and expectations. Above all, good writing requires creativity, passion, and attention to detail to ensure the message is delivered in a clear, concise, and organized manner, with a logical flow of ideas.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**ORO:** The approach to writing a story can vary depending on the writer's preference, social environment, experience and exposure. Some writers prefer to start with the plot and then create characters that fit into that plot, while others prefer to start with the characters and then build the plot around them. There is no right or wrong way to approach writing, and it ultimately depends on the individual writer's style and process.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**ORO:** Writers typically develop their plots and characters based on storyline, style, personal idiosyncrasies and thematic message of the work. Of course, plot development often involves brainstorming ideas, outlining the story, and creating a timeline of events. Writers may also consider the story's setting, themes, and conflicts to help shape the plot. It's important to create a clear and engaging storyline that keeps the reader interested and invested in the characters and their journey.

It is to be emphasised that character development involves creating well-rounded and believable characters that readers can relate to and empathize with. Writers may consider the character's back-story, personality traits, motivations, and relationships with other characters. It's important to create characters that are dynamic and undergo changes throughout the story, as this can add depth and complexity to the plot.

Essentially, developing a plot and characters requires creativity, attention to detail, and a willingness to revise and refine the story as needed.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**ORO:** I started identifying the potential to be called a writer in myself when my letters to the editor and opinion started to be published by notable daily newspapers around 1991. I gained more confidence in seeing myself as a writer when I published my first book in 1997. To God be the glory, I have written a lot for individuals and organisations as a writer in the last twenty years.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**ORO:** With digital transformation globally, social media is a valuable tool for writers. Writers across the global geographical boundaries use social media for research, promotion of their work, awareness activities and connectivity to writers' communities.

.As a writer in specific terms, I use some digital utilities for paraphrasing when it is required, I used a grammar checker occasionally and plagiarism checker too. Sometimes, I use AI tools such as chat GPT and GPT 4 for research and content development.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**ORO:** The best advice is that every writer must cultivate the habit of continuous reading and writing, even when you are not sure of getting the fund to publish. Writers need collaboration and engagement with writers' communities across the globe. It is also necessary to emphasise the need for perseverance and to be well focused in writing, editing, publishing and marketing of books we might have published or planning to publish.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**ORO:** Like I have earlier pointed out, reading is one of the best ways to improve writing skills. It exposes you to different writing styles, genres, and techniques, and helps you develop a better understanding of language and grammar. One needs to practice writing regularly. Every writer needs to improve their knowledge of grammar. Although, having the knowledge of grammar alone doesn't make one a great writer.

One needs to set aside time each day to write, whether it's journaling, blogging, or working on a creative writing project. We need to also learn to get feedback. Feedback from others can help you identify areas for improvement and provide valuable insights into your writing. Join a writing group or workshop, or ask a friend or mentor to review your work.

Editing and revising are essential parts of the writing process. Take the time to review your work, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary changes. Trying out different writing styles and techniques can help you develop your own unique voice and style.

Writers who need to take writing courses or attend workshops can equally provide structured learning and feedback from experienced writers.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**ORO:** Lack of finance, other compelling engagement, time wasters and critical factors such as epileptic power supply and inadequate access to Internet facilities are major challenges.

However, some of the factors that have been helping me greatly in my writing career include access to great books and digital facilities.

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**ORO:** I write any time an idea flows. But I prefer writing in the night and early in the morning. Sometimes I read based on my fixed reading schedule and occasionally I read for pleasure at my leisure time. In a day, I make sure I read for at least two to three hours. It depends on my activities for the day, reading list for the month and assignments ahead.

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BLOGS OR WEBSITES FOR WRITERS?**

**ORO:** There are several popular blogs and websites that cater to writers in Nigeria. These platforms often provide resources, tips, and opportunities for Nigerian writers to hone their skills and showcase their work. Some of the favorite blogs and websites for writers in Nigeria include: Brittle Paper ([brittlepaper.com](http://brittlepaper.com)) - An African literary blog that features book reviews, author interviews, and news about the African literary scene. We also have The Naked Convos ([thenakedconvos.com](http://thenakedconvos.com)) - A platform for young Nigerian writers to share their stories, experiences, and opinions on various topics. There are still others like Naija Stories ([naijastories.com](http://naijastories.com)) - A website that showcases Nigerian fiction, poetry, and essays, as well as offering writing tips and resources. Of equal importance is The Lagos Review ([thelagosreview.ng](http://thelagosreview.ng)) - A platform that reviews books, films, music, and art, with a focus on Nigerian and African creative works. These websites and blogs offer a wealth of resources and opportunities for Nigerian writers to connect, learn, and grow in their craft.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**ORO:** Being a public servant, my schedule of duties is principally report writing, minutes writing, minuting, policy analysis and evaluation and as such I write any time of the day based on the demand of my office. But my creative and literary writing are often done in the night and early in the morning.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**ORO:** There are many popular writing software tools that writers use depending on their needs and preferences. Some popular options include Microsoft Word which is a widely used and versatile writing software that offers a variety of formatting options, spell-check, and grammar correction. It's also a great tool for collaborative writing. Another important one is Google Docs; it is a free cloud-based writing software that allows for easy collaboration with others, as multiple people can work on the same document simultaneously. It also offers automatic saving and compatibility with various file formats. We also have Scrivener which is a software popular among professional writers and offers an extensive range of features, including project management and organization tools, the ability to split screens and compare documents, and a distraction-free writing mode. Another software that comes to mind is Hemingway which is a software of choice for writers who are looking to improve their writing, as it provides suggestions for improving sentence structure, grammar, and readability. It's also a helpful tool for editing and proofreading.

**WA: HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH CHARACTER NAMES FOR YOUR STORIES?**

**ORO:** Well, as a writer, I hardly write stories, but there are some common methods that writers use to come up with character names. One method is to choose names based on their meaning. Writers may choose names that have meanings that align with the character's traits or personality, or even their backstory or culture. Another method is to use names that are common to the character's time period and location, or to use names that are popular in the character's culture or ethnicity. Some writers also choose names that are easy to remember and pronounce, as well as names that have a certain ring to them. Additionally, some writers may choose to use real names of people they know or admire as inspiration for their characters. Of course, the decision of character names is unique to each writer and the story they are trying to tell.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO**

**YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**ORO:** It has been a long time since I participated in a book challenge on facebook. I have not been involved in any writing challenge on social media. However, I was involved in a writing competition on social media in 2022 and I won.

**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**ORO:** Well, I have not taken time to venture on fiction much. I may pick interest in that aspect soon.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**ORO:** I read great books on philosophy, psychology, politics, contemporary development, sociology, linguistics, literature etc. I place high priority on Grammar and Usage too.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**ORO:** Yes, let me list some of the writers that inspire me: Prof. Wole Soyinka, Prof. Chinua Achebe, Peter Enahoro, Prof. Femi Osofisan, Prof. Olu Obafemi, Odia Ofeimun among others.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**ORO:** I read a lot of relevant books in the cause of writing all my books. I didn't limit myself to a single book.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**ORO:** In my adolescent years, I read books such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Death and the King's Horseman* by Prof. Wole Soyinka among others.

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**ORO:** I don't hate any author. I know what it takes to write. And there is no book without its inherent values. By my orientation and training, I appreciate every writer, even if I disagree with their viewpoints and approach.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**ORO:** I adore Prof. Wole Soyinka not only for his unique style of writing but for his versatility and activism.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**ORO:** I have a list of books I have read more than once and this includes *The Prince* by Machiavelli; *The 48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene; *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey; *A Promised Land* by Barack Obama, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe among other great books I have read.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OLUWADAMILOLA TREASURE OSARUESE TUNDE-ADELEKE: PEOPLE GET DRAWN TO THINGS THAT RELATE TO THEM AND CHARACTERS ARE USED TO SHOW THAT**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

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**OLUWADAMILOLA TREASURE OSARUESE  
TUNDE-ADELEKE**

**PEOPLE GET DRAWN TO THINGS THAT RELATE TO  
THEM AND CHARACTERS ARE USED TO SHOW THAT**

Oluwadamilola Treasure Osaruese Tunde-Adeleke is a 24-year-old recent graduate of the University of Benin where she bagged a Second Class (Upper Division) from the prestigious Faculty of Law. She is the fourth and last child of the Tunde-Adeleke's with two older sisters and a brother. She attended Covenant University Secondary School and served as the President of the Press Club in SS3. She began writing at the tender age of nine and has continued to write. In 2020, she released her first novel Coming Home on Wattpad and by 2022, her short story, "Anne: Lost in Transit" was produced. As a technology enthusiast, she self-taught herself HTML, CSS and the basics of JavaScript during the Covid-19 shutdown in 2020. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she shares with him her passion for writing.

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**OTOT:** The point of realization that you'd rather be writing than doing any other thing and you enjoy writing. When life, things happening, generally put ideas into your mind and you find yourself wanting to put ideas, prompts, stories into paper.

**WA: WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU SEE BETWEEN A WRITER AND AN AUTHOR?**

**OTOT:** A writer is a broader perspective. Articles, blogs, journals, freelancers are all writings. Authors expand their ideas to become a book, they want to publish. They build on a story they want to impact others with and permit me to say, authors are more personal about their writings. They focus on getting their books to the market.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**OTOT:** In simple terms, a situation that occurs where a writer gets stuck with everything about a book. Ideas stop flowing, construction of sentences become more difficult and you no longer feel motivated to continue writing.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**OTOT:** Sometimes, negative reviews end up being truths our family and publisher were too scared to tell us. How I deal with it is to seek out the truth about the comment. Is the book depicting exactly what the comment said or is it a lie? If it's true, I cry and try to not repeat it. If it's false, I overlook and tag the person as "jealous" or inexperienced to know better.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**OTOT:** Editing the first draft.

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

**OTOT:** I started as early as primary 4. I wrote an animal story in a notebook and told my artistic classmate to draw the animals.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**OTOT:** Be patient with yourself, learn good use of English, don't compare yourself with others, read about the topic you're writing about, go above and beyond in the story, do not be too predictable and be prepared to give out excellence.

**WA: WHAT, TO YOU, ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING?**

**OTOT:** Low predictability, suspense, easy to read English, realism, explorative, showing and not telling.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**OTOT:** The characters are the whole essence of the writing. I've counseled writers that brought books to me to publish that they must include characters in their works. People get drawn to things that relate to them and characters are used to show that. Eg, if I write about a girl that travelled to Dubai, my readers will feel a longing to her experience than how the place is ordinarily. When they check Dubai on the internet, they may see it through the eyes of my female traveler.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**OTOT:** The usual way, I think of them, put myself in their shoes, study how that character and plot should be, I ask questions and I follow my ideas.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**OTOT:** 2008/2009, in my primary 4.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**OTOT:** Well, I'm a publisher, so I post about my business on my personal page and writings on my business page.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**OTOT:** I wasn't expressly told, I learnt from Francine Rivers. Write the truth, write according to your style and be comfortable about your writing.

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**OTOT:** Writing often, reading books, watching movies, think wide and far and think impossibilities you want to write about.

**WA: WHAT HAS HELPED OR HINDERED YOU MOST WHEN WRITING A BOOK?**

**OTOT:** Time, fear of the unknown and what people will say hindered me. What helped me was my reality in Christ and the understanding that there is no perfect time to start. Sometimes, the success story of people.

**WA: HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

**OTOT:** As long as there is constant supply of light, I can write all day except I need to do other things. An average of four hours.

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BLOGS OR WEBSITES FOR WRITERS?**

**OTOT:** Tyndale Publishers and website. My own IG page, similior\_christus\_books.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**OTOT:** I am an all-rounder. If there's light and I feel the urge to write, I write.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**OTOT:** Ms Word.

**WA: HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH CHARACTER NAMES FOR YOUR STORIES?**

**OTOT:** it's easy. I use the names of the people around me and when I want to write about a different locality, I check the internet.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**OTOT:** Yes. I participated in two in 2022. One was "Challenging the Writers" and the other was "Christian Storyteller Prize." I recommend them both.



**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**OTOT:** I first act it out in my head, to myself and if I can get the emotions I need, I just go straight into writing, thinking of how a person should react and write about it.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**OTOT:** Romance.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**OTOT:** None but I like Francine Rivers.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**OTOT:** Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers. Not the story per say but her simple way of writing.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DID YOU GROW UP READING?**

**OTOT:** All kinds of books from my mother's libraries. I lived by the stories my eldest sister told me from the books she read. I usually felt inclined to read the books she read, whether love or action.

**WA: WHAT AUTHORS DID YOU DISLIKE AT FIRST BUT THEN DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION FOR?**

**OTOT:** None.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**OTOT:** Francine Rivers.

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT BE?**

**OTOT:** Second time it's coming up. Okay, I'll pick a second person, Rev Dr. Chris Oyakhilome.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**OTOT:** Too many to start listing. I'll go with a few. Redeeming Love, Scarlet Thread, Temptations Trail, Almost Heaven, Prince Charming...

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS OGECHI STANISHA UGWUANYI: LANGUAGE HAS IMMENSE POWER, ITS IMPACT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON HOW WE WIELD IT**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**OGECHI STANISHA UGWUANYI**

**LANGUAGE HAS IMMENSE POWER, ITS IMPACT DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON HOW WE WIELD IT**

Ogechi Stanisha Ugwuanyi is a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Abuja Chapter. She is a poet and a fiction writer. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing career.

**WA: TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.**

**OSU:** I hail from Enugu state, Nigeria. I'm the first daughter from a family of four siblings.

**WA: WHAT HAVE YOU WRITTEN?**

**OSU:** I have written a collection of poems/ spoken words titled Present Reflection and a fiction Dauntless Bunch of Dahlias. My other book 'Ogstanism' will be out soon.

**WA: HOW DID YOU START WRITING?**

**OSU:** I've always wanted to write and be a successful author. So, I started documenting my

thoughts on paper a long time ago. I remember always getting excited when ever i come across a new diary.

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

**OSU:** That was 'Beware Woman' in 2012. It was a poem from my poetry collection.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**OSU:** My ideas are gotten through self reflection. It evolves from what I sense within me and the society. Sometimes it just flashes through when I least expect it.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-**

**OSU:** The story line. I can easily pick a book, go through the first chapter then decide whether to go ahead or let it be. In most cases, it's the blurb.

**WA: DO YOU PREFER PAPERBACKS OR EBOOKS? WHY?**

**OSU:** I will go for a paperback because It gets me easily committed to reading books. Also, the sight of books makes me happy.

**WA: WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO A BOOK? THE COVER? BLURB? RECOMMENDATION FROM OTHERS?**

**OSU:** First, it's the blurb then the book cover. Recommendations play a vital role as well.

**WA: HAVE YOU READ ANY OF THE OLD CLASSICS? WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THEM?**

**OSU:** I read a lot of them in school. They greatly inspired my creative mindset.

**WA: WHAT'S THE FIRST BOOK YOU EVER REMEMBER READING?**

**OSU:** Well, this will be tricky. As an avid reader, I can recall reading a lot of Nigerian books like 'Ralia the Sugar Girl,' 'Eze Goes To School,' 'Without a Silver Spoon' etc.

**WA: DID SOMEONE READ TO YOU WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD?**

**OSU:** I'm not sure that happened but I heard a lot of folktales.

**WA: WHO'S YOUR ALL-TIME FAVORITE BOOK CHARACTER?**

**OSU:** Non in particular. I just flow with the tide.

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

**OSU:** I like a lot of authors and their books. However, 'The Palm wine tapster' fascinates me till date. I also like Enid Blyton's 'The Enchanted wood'.

**WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?**

**OSU:** Yes, it has. For instance, 'Joys of Motherhood' by Buchi Emecheta, 'Yellow Yellow' by Helon Habila etc. Feminist works in general lead me to propound my own theory because I didn't understand at the time why they had to project women in such a manner.

**WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?**

**OSU:** I may not have a favorite but fiction is the most popular. However, I easily connect to poetry.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?**

**OSU:** Not at all.

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

**OSU:** I'd love to meet Zadie Smith, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, J.K Rowling, etc.

**WA: DOES WRITING ENERGIZE OR EXHAUST YOU?**

**OSU:** It energizes me.

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

**OSU:** Well, the major challenge is trying to fit into other people's shoes. That is, trying to write like a particular author. I really crave originality. On the other hand, professional editors often don't come cheap and some established writers aren't ready to edit or proofread the works of the upcoming ones without monetary attachment. It's pretty hard. On the other hand getting a publisher who will do great publishing at minimal cost might be a mirage.

**WA: WHAT ARE COMMON TRAPS FOR ASPIRING WRITERS?**

**OSU:** It could be the absence of mentorship and funding. They need people who will motivate and lead them through the journey. Sadly enough, meeting the wrong people may either kill their passion or make them have wrong views about the profession. I had a fair share of this when I started. However, when I met the right people, things changed positively.

**WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER WRITER?**

**OSU:** I remember Dr. Akuso. He was my lecturer during my undergraduate days in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. He was the first lecturer who discovered my writing potential and made it a point of duty to hone that skill. I was really introverted, so I kept running away. (Laughs) Also, when I joined ANA, I met with a lot of literati who were eager to see me succeed as a writer. The MBARI SERIES members highly encouraged me. Global readers' book club gave me a great push.

**WA: HOW DID PUBLISHING YOUR FIRST BOOK CHANGE YOUR PROCESS OF WRITING?**

**OSU:** Publishing my first book was the miracle that needed to happen. It got me highly inspired and completely changed the writing process. I became more intentional in documenting my ideas. This helped me collate accurate data for my books.

**WA: WHAT WAS AN EARLY EXPERIENCE WHERE YOU LEARNED THAT LANGUAGE HAD POWER?**

**OSU:** Speaking, writing and reading are integral to everyday life, where language is the primary

tool for expression and communication. Language has immense power, and its impact depends entirely on how we wield it. Imagine giving Spanish students' English books to read or speaking mandarin to a French child.

**WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE? IF YES, WHERE?**

**OSU:** Yes, I have. A member of MBARI SERIES told me about it.

**WA: HOW ARE WRITERS USING ARTS TO ADVANCE THE COURSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

**OSU:** Art is a powerful tool for advocacy and for making people aware of human rights. It can bridge language and even cultural barriers. Writers in my country engage in heavy discussions on paper. They also advocate through the books they write as well as engage the media in a way that will reflect the minds of the people.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS JOEL OYELEKE IFEOLUWA: SOCIAL MEDIA HELPED SHAPE MY WRITING**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**JOEL OYELEKE IFEOLUWA**

**SOCIAL MEDIA HELPED SHAPE MY WRITING - JOEL OYELEKE IFEOLUWA**

**WA: AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD CALL THEMSELVES A WRITER?**

**JOEL:** Well everyone holding the pen and weaving powerful words in any of the genres is a writer. It now remains the acceptance of the populace. But maybe for formalities, let's call one a writer when his or her book is finally published in paperback.

**WA: WHAT DO THE WORDS “WRITER’S BLOCK” MEAN TO YOU?**

**JOEL:** It's the season of dryness for a writer. The head becomes blank, words become too heavy to be written. Although not every writer believes it, this block actually happens. To me, it can be overcome through meditation, music, etc.

**WA: HOW DO YOU PROCESS AND DEAL WITH NEGATIVE BOOK REVIEWS?**

**JOEL:** Destructive criticism is actually not ideal of a critic but since it happens often, one has to take it well. For a fact, a critic won't negatively review the book if it is not worth reading. Secondly, I always remind myself that literature is subjective. Another man's food can be the other's poison. When I get negative reviews, I sieve out lessons and learn, unlearn and relearn.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF YOUR WRITING PROCESS?**

**JOEL:** Fear; that the work isn't good enough. I want to be able to write like those I read. To meet that mark but as I grow I come to realize that I have to create my own path. Sometimes, some works can simply refuse to work. Other times I feel it isn't really aesthetic.

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

**JOEL:** Three years. I started writing in senior secondary school. And of course I started with poetry. I always wish I started much earlier but no time is too late.

**WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A WRITER WORKING ON THEIR FIRST BOOK?**

**JOEL:** Pour out that story, don't entertain fear. Don't put pressure on yourself, start now. Connect and maintain good relationships with people higher in the field, they can assist in editing, publishing, reviewing and critiquing the manuscript. One more thing, stop trashing your works.

**WA: WHAT COMES FIRST FOR YOU — THE PLOT OR THE CHARACTERS — AND WHY?**

**JOEL:** The characters come first. They are the conglomeration of what makes up your plot. The ability to develop and build powerful characters will make the plot of your prose a magnum opus.

**WA: HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLOT AND CHARACTERS?**

**JOEL:** Recognizing that every character in the story has a life. We have to be able to connect their back story to who they are and who they eventually become in the story. Your plot is just the arrangement of the stories of your characters in relation to the subject matter of the prose. So when I write, I want the readers to see reality and aesthetics in both my good and bad characters, this would guarantee that they follow the plot through to the end.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU FIRST CALL YOURSELF A WRITER?**

**JOEL:** In 2020, when I started writing I wouldn't accept being called a writer but later on - people called me a poet. I recognized that I am a wordsmith. So maybe let's just go with the 'writer' tag.

**WA: HOW DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN AUTHOR?**

**JOEL:** We are in the contemporary age. The computer age. Social media is one hell of a place. It helped shape my writing. It gave me consistency. I won my first awards and competitions on Facebook. The impact of social media cannot be overstated compared to seeing that it has birthed the powerful Nigerian contemporary writers like Romeo Oriogun, Saddiq Dzukogi, Eriata

Orhibabor and others. So I use it a whole lot, I have gathered courage and friends there too. You can check my Facebook: @ Joel Oyeleke.

**WA: WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ABOUT WRITING?**

**JOEL:** John Chinaka once told me; "Joel, write simple yet deep poetry.' Gbemisola Adeoti also advised me; 'Always learn that someone will subjectively think about your work, so write with enough brilliance so that your reader experiences catharsis."

Isaiah Adepoju keeps talking like S.T Coleridge; "Choose the best words in the best order."

**WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS?**

**JOEL:** Read. Write. ~ Repeat the process.

**WA: AT WHAT TIME OF THE DAY DO YOU DO MOST OF YOUR WRITING?**

**JOEL:** I once loved daytime but now, night musings enchant me.

**WA: WHAT'S YOUR WRITING SOFTWARE OF CHOICE?**

**JOEL:** Microsoft office and my Note App.

**WA: DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITING CHALLENGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA? DO YOU RECOMMEND ANY?**

**JOEL:** I participated a lot whilst coming up. I won some, lost some but I learnt from the experience. I recommend POETS IN NIGERIA INITIATIVE, HILLTOP CREATIVE ARTS FOUNDATION, PROFWIC SPOKEN WORD CONTEST, GENESIS POETRY, ARTING ARENA, etc. They are all on Facebook.

**WA: WHEN YOU'RE WRITING AN EMOTIONAL OR DIFFICULT SCENE, HOW DO YOU SET THE MOOD?**

**JOEL:** Catharsis. I levitate the scene to one that is full of pathos. I try to think of my most emotional moments, then use that ambience in creating that scene's mood.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU ENJOY READING?**

**JOEL:** Magical realism, Detective fiction, Thrillers, Literary fiction.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY BOOKS OR AUTHORS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME A WRITER?**

**JOEL:** Funnily, it was EXAM FOCUS (Literature textbook for WASSCE) and the works in it that first gave me the idea of writing. But of course Soyinka, Chimamanda, Achebe, Alfred Lord Tennyson, J.K Rowling, and Prosper Japhet shaped my passion.

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HELPED YOU THE MOST WHEN YOU WERE WRITING YOUR (FIRST) BOOK?**

**JOEL:** Sounds from the land of the trodden by Tunde Decker. That book enchanted me - it finally gave birth to my first book; THE THEM IN ME (published by Direwords in 2022.)

**WA: IF YOU COULD BE MENTORED BY A FAMOUS AUTHOR, WHO WOULD IT**



**BE?**

**JOEL:** I would love to be mentored by Ben Okri. I want to walk on the famished road. (laughs).

**WA: WHAT BOOKS HAVE YOU READ MORE THAN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

**JOEL:** A whole lot but let me mention 'Harry Potter' by J.K Rowling. I want to keep reading that novel till eternity.

**WA: WHAT ARE YOUR UPCOMING PROJECTS?**

**JOEL:** A new Chapbook is coming by May. It is a duet of over 40 poems written with a poet friend. It's not out but we have gotten a wonderful publication offer from ARTING ARENA MAGAZINE for it already. That should excite you. But note; It's about 'grief.'

Joel Oyeleke Ifeoluwa, WC V, is a Nigerian poet, student and literary enthusiast. Coordinator of Society of Young Nigerian Writers - OAU Chapter, Author of The Them In Me (Direwords, 2022). Joel Oyeleke Ifeoluwa has poems scattered all over magazines and anthologies. Asides poetry, he loves reading novels, playing football and dreaming about vacation in Michigan. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him his writing experience.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS MARK A.C OGBODO: MY WRITTEN WORK  
CENTERS ON CRUCIAL YET OFTEN DISREGARDED TOPICS THAT HOLD  
GREAT SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE TO OUR DAILY EXISTENCE**



Dr. Mark A.C. Ogbodo is a man of great vision and a natural leader, he is currently the Public Relations Officer: Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Benue State Branch, and Secretary: Association of Nigerian Authors, Benue State Chapter, and was the Assistant Secretary, Association of Nigerian Authors, Benue State Chapter (2022), Assistant Secretary: Association Of Government General Medical And Dental Practitioners, Benue State Chapter (2022), and the National President of Unique Secondary School Old Students Association (UNISECOSA): (2006 - 2017). In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his works and his passion for writing.

**WA: TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.**

**MARK:** I am Dr Mark A. C. Ogbodo. I hail from Abikpom, Ogore-Ito, Obi LGA, Benue State. I am a Medical Doctor and an Author with three books to my credit. I am also a natural Leader.

**WA: WHAT HAVE YOU WRITTEN?**

**MARK:** I have written three books, all prose. They are:

A) The Journey; A Flight To Greatness After A Long Walk (2017)

B) *Amour Maternel* (2021): Certified and approved by the Benue State Ministry of Education as main text for all JSS 2 classes, and as supplementary Reader by the Nigerian Educational and Research Development Council.

C) *Untold* (2023): Foreword by Dr Wale Okediran, Secretary General, Pan American Writers Association, PAWA.

D) *My Essay, The Broken Black Spell*, was published in Six Chinua Achebe's poetry/ Essays Anthology (2021).

E) Many manuscripts are ongoing.

**WA: HOW DID YOU START WRITING?**

**MARK:** At first, it wasn't easy at all. But, it became easier with my second book. I started writing my first book, *The Journey*, when I was in level 300 in medical school. It took me five years to finish, and I launched it in the sixth year. Writing became very flexible for me thereafter and I do it with passion.

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

**MARK:** *The Journey; A Flight To Greatness After A Long Walk* (Novel) (Prose)

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**MARK:** I always get my ideas from inspirations gotten during my quiet times and from life's experiences and happenings in my surrounding or the world at large. I focus on neglected topics that are very very important and needed in our daily lives.

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?**

**MARK:** Firstly, the quality of the book; for I find it difficult reading a poor quality work. Secondly, the title and cover page, then, the storyline.

**WA: DO YOU PREFER PAPERBACKS OR EBOOKS? WHY?**

**MARK:** I prefer paperbacks to eBooks. Easier to read and to continue from the last point. Not affected by low battery level of phones or laptops, which are needed for them to be read.

**WA: WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO A BOOK? THE COVER? BLURB? RECOMMENDATION FROM OTHERS?**

**MARK:** The cover/title; the first to be seen, the blurb.

**WA: HAVE YOU READ ANY OF THE OLD CLASSICS? WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THEM?**

**MARK:** Yes. Great inspiration and motivation to me.

**WA: WHAT'S THE FIRST BOOK YOU EVER REMEMBER READING?**

**MARK:** *Tales from Shakespeare's*.

**WA: DID SOMEONE READ TO YOU WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD?**

**MARK:** No.

**WA: WHO'S YOUR ALL-TIME FAVORITE BOOK CHARACTER?**

**MARK:** Sidi, in the Lion and the Jewel.

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

**MARK:** Dr Wale Okediran: Tenants of the House.

**WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?**

**MARK:** Yes.

**WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?**

**MARK:** Prose.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?**

**MARK:** No.

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

**MARK:** J.K. Rowling and Chimamanda Adechie.

**WA: DOES WRITING ENERGIZE OR EXHAUST YOU?**

**MARK:** Energises me; but wad exhausting initially.

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

**MARK:** Common error of new writers is mainly poor work.

**WA: WHAT OTHER AUTHORS ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH, AND HOW DO THEY HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER WRITER?**

**MARK:** My mentors are Dr Wale Okediran, Prof. Akachi, Femi Osofisan, Prof. Maria Ajima, to mention a few.

**WA: HOW DID PUBLISHING YOUR FIRST BOOK CHANGE YOUR PROCESS OF WRITING?**

**MARK:** Well, it exposed me to better opportunities.

**WA: WHAT WAS AN EARLY EXPERIENCE WHERE YOU LEARNED THAT LANGUAGE HAD POWER?**

**MARK:** In my secondary school when I was campaigning for the post of President of JET Club; JSS 2, precisely.

**WA: HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT IHRAF BEFORE? IF YES, WHERE?**

**MARK:** Yes. On ANA page.

**WA: HOW ARE WRITERS USING ARTS TO ADVANCE THE COURSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN YOUR COUNTRY?**

**MARK:** Through spoken and written words.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS JIDE OGUNLANA: ONLY FEW CAN WRITE GOOD STORIES BUT NOT MANY CAN WRITE GREAT STORIES**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**JIDE OGUNLANA**

**ONLY FEW CAN WRITE GOOD STORIES BUT NOT MANY CAN WRITE GREAT STORIES**

Jide Ogunlana is a Novelist, Editor, Playwright and Professional Publisher. Two of Ogunlana's plays, Verbal Violence and Clash of the Gods have been successfully staged in the Arts Theatre of the University of Ibadan and they are currently being read at The Polytechnic, Ibadan and some higher institutions in the country. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, the former Senior Editor with the Evans Brothers (Nig. Publishers) Ltd talks about his writing and publishing career.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?**

**JO:** Immediately I left secondary school, I started contributing to a radio programme on our local radio station, Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State, Ibadan for a prize. The programme was called WRITE IT WITH MUSIC, being anchored by Bola Alo, and each of all the letters I sent in that time won a prize of ten naira. There was another programme on Premier FM, Ibadan, where one would send in a poem written to a lover and which would be read on air. I believe it was Wale Don, the King of Lovers as he was called who anchored this. My poems were also aired many times. I guess these two things inspired me to start writing.

**WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?**

**JO:** I guess I've been writing one thing or the other for about 40 years now.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?**

**JO:** I started writing when I left the secondary school but I was not a published writer of creative stories until 2008 when I published my first book, a play.

**WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?**

**JO:** I read English in the university and I love the use of English as a teacher, an editor or a writer. The three professions are however closely related, I'm sure. As a school teacher for instance, I had written plays for my students which they had staged at various times. My love for writing however heightened when I got my first book published.

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

**JO:** Passion for writing should come first. There will be plenty of opportunities to get frustrated along the way and to want to give up but it is the passion that will keep you going. It is not language proficiency; if Amos Tutuola could get published, you can. And anyway, as long as you don't want to cut corners by bypassing the input of a good editor, there is a rescue. And again, everybody can write stories, few can write good stories but not many can write great stories. A great story demands investment of time, energy and money for the necessary research and materials.

**WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?**

**JO:** My belief is that there is always a reason for writer's block as long as the interest to write is there. I don't usually have writer's block but when I do, I will first find out what caused it. It may, for instance, be that I have pushed myself too much. In this case, all I do is to relax my mind by reading, watching comedies or wrestling. The writer's block may however be psychological. You will struggle to come up with a great plot structure when your child has just been sent home from school for non-payment of school fees. When your mind is too crowded, just deal with the situations first before you come back to what you are writing. You will only be wasting time and you won't be able to come up with a great creative work if you try to force yourself to continue.

**WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?**

**JO:** I have written two plays, one of which is in the Yoruba language, a collection of short stories, about eight children's stories and of course these are besides English language textbooks.

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

**JO:** One I guess is that I will just discover that I understand some piquant expressions that I've never used before, and I won't even remember where or when I've heard them before. I guess this is why reading is quite important to writers.

**WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?**

**JO:** I have some favourite characters and one is Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories and Scot Harvath in Tom Clancy's THE PATH OF THE ASSASSINS

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

**JO:** Professor, Policeman and Preacher in my play, VERBAL VIOLENCE. I enjoy their exchange of verbal abuse and civilized insults. I've always enjoyed good use of words in stories.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?**

**JO:** From practically everywhere; music, past experiences, market place, reading, etc. A writer may not need to go far for an idea. Some things in life are even stranger than fiction. A writer who can capture the extremism of the Boko Haram activities in Nigeria might even be accused of stretching credulity to the limit.

**WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?**

**JO:** My books may be purchased in two bookshops in Ibadan, Oyo State; Booksellers Bookshop, Magazine Road, Jericho and the University of Ibadan Bookshop. Direct order can also be made through email, [leratobookpublishers@yahoo.com](mailto:leratobookpublishers@yahoo.com) or [jideogunlana@yahoo.com](mailto:jideogunlana@yahoo.com), or through any of these phone numbers; 07032573576; 08129476883; 08059350497.

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

**JO:** I am active on Facebook and I have a page on Facebook: EDITING, WRITING AND REWRITING CONSULTANTS or through email or phone contacts.

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

**JO:** No.

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

**JO:** I have not attempted it and so I may not be able to talk about the challenges in producing it. But I can mention the problem of illegal copying, which may deny the writer a great source of income for his effort. Duplicating storage devices is much easier and cheaper than duplicating books unless the writer finds a way of preventing the piracy. It can of course also be made impossible to copy online but all these will invariably push up the cost of production.

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

**JO:** I enjoy writing all my books. As Achebe once said, choosing one of your books as your favourite is like choosing one of your children as your favourite. It sounds unfair.

**WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK.**

**JO:** My first published creative book is TWO PLAYS OF VERBAL ATTACK. It was published in 1998. It is being read in some higher institutions in the country and the two plays have been staged in the Arts Theatre of the University of Ibadan.

**WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?**

**JO:** I guess okay; just the usual promotion, marketing and marketers' problems.



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

**JO:** I read *THE ADVENTURERS* by Harold Robbins many years ago. I got to a place where Dax, the protagonist, is dying with his guardian. The author then takes the reader back to some good times the two had shared. It was so emotional and I just couldn't continue the reading again that night. This is a powerful use of imagery, which I appreciate in a story. Especially with a full-length story, characters must have distinguishable traits. It makes characters and thereby the story unforgettable. The detective, Sherlock Holmes, seems so real and credible that readers were sending letters to his fictional 221B, Baker Street address in London. But then each genre of literature will determine the elements to be emphasised. I enjoy poems with rhythm.

**WA: WHO'S YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR OF ALL TIME?**

**JO:** This is difficult for me to answer. It used to be Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, then it changed to Ian Fleming. I've read nearly all of Shaw's work and it was G.B. Shaw at a time. Now that I've fallen in love with espionage, I'm tempted to say it is now Tom Clancy!

**WA: YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK BY HIM?**

**JO:** All the works of these writers are my favourites but *THE PATH OF THE ASSASSIN* by Brad Thor (Tom Clancy generation) is one story I simply cannot forget.

**WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED A GIRL CALLED CORONA SOFIA CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?**

**JO:** It's a children's book. As you have rightly guessed, it is about the Covid-19 epidemic. As an editor, I've had the privilege of editing many stories on the epidemic. What I've discovered is that many authors just write books on causes and precautions of Covid-19 and not what you may call a creative or an exciting story. And believe me; it is easy to fall into such an error unawares writing on a specific topic such as this.

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

**JO:** There is none really.

**WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?**

**JO:** This is not far-fetched. Many people, especially when the disease first surfaced, did not know a lot about it and many still don't. As a topical issue, the adults as well as the children need to know about it to be able to protect themselves and avoid contracting the corona virus. One great way of passing the message across to the kids is of course through story telling.

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

**JO:** Essentially, the message is that corona virus is not a death sentence and we should avoid stigmatization. Also, if given the opportunity, children can play a considerable role that can change the negative orientation of even the adults.

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

**JO:** Just as I have said, if properly guided and with love, children can make significant impacts in society.

**WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?**

**JO:** The title emphasizes the extent of the heart rending stigmatization experienced by the girl called Sofia in her school after returning to Nigeria from the USA.

**WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?**

**JO:** On the negative side, I remember I read THE LOVE MACHINE by Jacqueline Susan when I was in Form 5 in the secondary school. I loved the character so much and I tried to behave like him. As his name, Robin Stone, implies, he has the heart of stone, especially in his relationship with women. Thank God it was not a permanent change! On the positive side, I have been greatly influenced by TRIUMPHANT CHURCH by Kenneth E. Hagin.

**WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?**

**JO:** I love all the genres of literature.

**WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?**

**JO:** No.

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

**JO:** Wole Soyinka. I want, especially, to be able to ask him some questions in MADMEN AND SPECIALIST. I think there is still a lot more to that play than I have grasped so far. It's a great play.

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

**JO:** Both. Although virtual library is more permanent, it is not as easily accessible as books on a shelf.

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

**JO:** I really don't have a preference here. Sometimes you suddenly get an idea for a particular type and sometimes it is for another type. And I read anyone that gets my fancy at a particular point in time.

**WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?**

**JO:** As I've said before, I've fallen in love with espionage. I will seriously recommend the Campus Novel, THE PATH OF THE ASSASSIN by Brad Thor (Tom Clancy generation). But you may start from the first of the Campus series written by Tom Clancy himself, THE TEETH OF THE TIGER although it may not be necessary.

**WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?**

**JO:** I go to the Oyo State Library in Ibadan regularly.

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

**JO:** I can't recollect any right now but I remember that of Kate in THE TITANIC film.

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

**JO:** Yes, one is Oliver Goldsmith's SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER and others are G.B. Shaw's plays, especially PYGMALION.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS DANIEL CHUKWU: UP AND COMING WRITERS SHOULD WRITE FOR PASSION AND NOT MONEY**

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**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**DANIEL CHUKWU**

**UP AND COMING WRITERS SHOULD WRITE FOR PASSION AND NOT MONEY**

Daniel Chukwu is a graduate of English from the National Open University. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writings.

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

**DC:** I can't remember a time that I wasn't creating stories and I began to write them down, when I was Ten years old. My first book was called "The Princess with the Secret Name". It ran to around 300 words, which is a lot when you only Ten!!I drew the front cover and bound it up and proudly showed it off to my friends and family. As I grew up, the passion and zeal continued. I kept writing Short stories like "the little angel.""" Mummy and son"" and when I was in High school, I wrote "the persecuted child of God"" a playwright which drew my English teacher's attention back then in Cameroon and she collected the script to read it and never returned it back(laugh).

So when I got admission into the university, that's the national open university of Nigeria to

study BA in English, it was a dream come through to me so I started with my first playwright in my 100level "Unwanted pregnancy".

**WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING**

**DC:** A fresh voice excites me. Great pace, superbly drawn characters authenticity and a strong plot keep me interested.

**WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**DC:** Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka are my favorite and they're synonymous with Nigerian fiction. Yet the literary output of the country is far from limited to those two greats. Achebe's work reveals a tapestry of cultural norms, changing societal values and the individual's struggle to find a place in this environment. Soyinka's writing often focuses on oppression and exploitation of the weak by the strong.

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

**DC:** I will advise them to just keep writing and never give up. They should write for passion and not money.

**WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**DC:** Testimonies of transformation. Read blogs from other writers Going for a peaceful walk in nature

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

**DC:** My special place I do write is my bed (lolz). I feel so comfortable and relaxed with a cup of coffee .It gives me more inspiration.

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

**DC:** How.....I honestly can't remember what made me want to be a writer. I have often told people that as I was drifting through space on my way to being born, I passed through a numbers of doors marked "teacher, pastor, lawyer." then I got to one labelled ""Writer"" and just stopped it is the only thing I have ever wanted to do the only thing I have ever really known and I grow more passionate about it by the second.

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

**DC:** Still in the process of publishing.(unwanted pregnancy).

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

**DC:** Yes, quite very important.

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

**DC:** Oh my goodness. I was so excited and felt honored.

**WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**DC:** From my neighborhood, Church, Market place, Work place, School. A piece I wrote on unwanted pregnancy, the inspiration came from my school because it was a real story that

happened to my female friend, may her soul rest in peace. I also get ideas from books and people around me as well.

**WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**DC:** I walked down to his office and was like hello sir, I am a writer and will need my book to be published, and the first question he asked me was, are u a writer?(lolz)

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

**DC:** HmMMMM good and bad responses. You Know people will always talk. Some will really encourage you, pray for u, while some will be like, guy go find work ooooooooo, that am wasting my time

**WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**DC:** Oh ok. My name is Daniel Gbakuruchukwu OKORIE. Am from Umuneze in Obowo LGA of imo state. I am a graduate of English from the National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja. I was born and breath in Cameroon. I had my primary and secondary education in the ideanu fake division of Cameroon and am also a fashion designer. My Facebook handle is (Daniel chukwu). And my IG is( ugobest202). And my contact number is +2348149327382.

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

**DC:** They should make sure to drop a line every day. Read books, Blogs, Do research, Be very creative and smart.

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

**DC:** Yes and that is putting money first rather than passion.

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

**DC:** ""Unwanted Pregnancy ""and"" In The Village of Obowo"". Obowo is actually not the name of my village but Umuneze . But I chose to call it this way because I felt it would draw the attention of the audience.

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

**DC:** Currently in the process . Unwanted Pregnancy is the one I am currently working on recently...is very captivating, the storyline is strong, good themes and a lot to learn.. Unwanted pregnancy is a story of a young lady called Sophia who happened to be a dancer at one nightclub in the country; she met Mr. Joseph Okafor who is a Movie Practitioner. They became lovers, but unfortunately, Sophia became pregnant claiming that Mr. Okafor is responsible for the Pregnancy. Mr Okafor denied the responsibility which made Sophia to commit abortion and in the process she died .which she promised herself to come back for revenge. The work explored the theme of abortion.

## **WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS ABDULAHY YAHAYA: IF YOU WANT TO BE READ YOU MUST AS WELL READ**

**INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ART MOVEMENT**

**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**ABDULAHY YAHAYA**

**IF YOU WANT TO BE READ YOU MUST AS WELL READ**

Abdulahi Yahaya is one of the up and coming writers from the Northern Region of Nigeria. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writings.

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

**AY:** Well, I developed the passion for writing right from my secondary school level, that is, when I was in SSS two. Then, of all the subjects taught in school, literature was and is still the very best subject I have always loved to learn with keen interest and curiosity, followed by English Language. In fact, I hardly missed these two subjects, not if I was sick, because they are the subjects to change my mood from bad to good. They are the subjects to change my dull look to radiant look in the face

When my English teacher, my Literature teacher and my principal : Malam Muhammad Abdulqadir, Malam Umar Yunus, Malama Hasana and Malam Auwalu Yunusa had noticed the passion in me, they immediately called on me and advised me to study one of the subjects in the University, particularly literature, and I welcomed their advice with open palms and thanks. In brief, that was how and when the passion for writing began to germinate in me up to this very time. From then on , I began to take part in every local and international literary activity like

essay, short story and poetry writing contest, which I thought would improve my talent. However, apart from that, I have always thought that to be a writer I have to be a reader and so I read like crazy actually. I read lots and lots of books of my accord, at my leisure; in school and at home. I read lots of books by great writers like Prof. Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi WA Thong among many more other African and non African writers. Prof. Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe in particular have always been mirrors for my literary make-up in the in my literary journey, with their unique styles of bravura masterpieces. I read lots, if not all of their books, which I enjoy and draw inspirations from them at the end of the day. I look up to them and sometimes even try to model myself on them, merely for their unique styles of writing. As to my works, I have lots of them published in local and international anthologies, journals, magazines, etc, even though I have not published any book to my name yet. However, I have some manuscripts to translate in due course. I have manuscripts of anthology and short stories for children and adults, which I hope to instill some values in them, both morally and psychologically.

**SYNW: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-**

**AY:** Things Fall Apart " is actually one of the best literary works I have ever read. I felt very excited reading the book. In fact, its excitement got me to read it thrice and can still read it again and again. So many things excited me about the book, the message in it, the style in which it was written and so on. In short, every of Achebean styles of writing excites me for its simplicity, clarity and brevity, which are most essential qualities for good writing.

**SYNW: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**AY:** My favorite writers are Chinua Achebe, Prof. Wole Soyinka, Chimanda Ngozi Adichie, Ngugi WA Thong, Gimba Kakande, among many countless Nigerian and African writers. These are some of my favorite writers because of their styles of simplicity of writing in the right application of diction in the right context.

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

**AY:** Well, my candid advice to upcoming writers like myself out there is to be focused and hard working in the absolute pursuance of their passion. As an upcoming writer you must be humble and be open to advice and criticism on your work. Just like I have always said, if you want to be read you must as well read. You must imbibe a reading culture with all your heart and mind. Read anything in black and white. Find mentor(s) and muse(s) to consult and look up to. By so doing, you are well on the way.

**SYNW: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**AY:** I source my daily inspirations from reading in addition to desperate passing of messages to people through writing, which is my passion. I have so many messages which I hope to pass across through writing, like other writers in whose writings I understand the messages they try pass at the end of the day. I have this ambition in mind and so realizing that, I feel inspired to set my curious pen to dance on paper almost every day.

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

**AY:** I write day and night. Yes, of course, I write anytime, anywhere when the inspirations come. I write in a car less I should forget. I write in my room, while reading, when the



inspirations come. I also write in public places, it only depends when and where the inspirations come to my mind.

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

**AY:** I started writing at my younger age, like I have said, when I was about 20 years old, in SSS two. I would write and post on social media for others to read and criticize or make corrections on my works. Sometimes I would even tag people whom I knew were literary gurus, all in order to read and criticize my works, being in literary incubating stage, and they would correct my spelling and grammatical errors, and advise me. I would feel happy and accept their corrections and advice with open palms and thanks. As time went on, I began to participate in local and international literary competitions in order to get better off.

**SYNW: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?**

**AY:** My first piece was a poem titled "My Love". It was published in an international anthology. I really felt happy and motivated having my poem published in anthology for the first time.

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

**AY:** My works are centered on almost every theme, aimed at addressing every issue affecting the society.

**SYNW HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?**

**AY:** I felt really happy whenever my works got published in either local or international anthologies. I felt inspired as well encouraged. This has also kept me going to come this far.

**SYNW: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**AY:** I get most of my ideas from reading works of other prolific and upcoming writers. I also get my ideas from nature and continuous studying of humans, as Prof. Wole Soyinka has once said "As a writer I have to study humans, study human behaviors." That is psychology. A writer is a psychologist cum sociologist and so on.

**SYNW: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**AY:** I meet most of my publishers online: on their official website or Facebook page, or group. These are the rendezvous.

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

**AY:** In fact, my works are highly recommended by my audiences, with a curious call for a book. This is because "... your works always whet my appetite for literary works," said a testimony. However, I have always tried my best to calm them with a daily piece of prose or poetry, before I publish my book.

**SYNW: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**AY:** Well, I am a poet and a budding writer from Jos, Plateau state, Nigeria. I am a participant of many more local and international literary competitions. I am also a recipient of many more local

and international literary awards and certificates of excellent performance in poetry, essay and short story writing. Many more of my works got published in both local and international anthologies, journals, magazines and websites for writers of high repute. I attended my both primary and secondary schools in Jos, Plateau state. At that, I attended Rikkos Community Secondary School(RCSS), here in Jos, Plateau state.

**SYNW: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITER?**

**AY:** To be honest, I don't know of any short cut, tricks, or tips for a writer other than being a hard reader. As an upcoming writer, you have to read. Research and write for others to read and criticize. That way you are good to go in your writing journey.

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

**AY:** One common mistake which most upcoming writers make is feeling of pride and arrogance when their works are beginning to get published, or win contests for prizes. It should not be so at all. You are still in developing stage. At this stage, you don't have to be arrogant. Arrogance leads to ignorance and ignorance will only make you a know-it-all person in absolute absurdity. You have to learn and learn from others who are higher than you. Any amount of success coming your way in the process should motivate and encourage you, not make you feel arrogant and proud.

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

**AY:** Like I have said prior to, I have not published any piece yet. However, I have some manuscripts to publish in due course. They are sure to be more interesting and enjoyable work of art, from the style in which they are written.

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

**AY:** Here, I will only repeat and emphasize on what I have said earlier, that I have not written any piece yet, but I have the zeal to do so in mind. It is only a matter of time, insha Allah.

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

**AY:** I should not reveal the tittle this early, unpunished. But my-yet-to-be-published books are sure to catch the interest of everyone laying his or her hand on them, if published.

**SYNW: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?**

**AY:** The messages in them as always will focus more on correcting every social, societal and political misbehavior caprice in the society and what not. However, there are other cognizant messages apart from this.

**WOLE ADEDOYIN INTERVIEWS DAVID NWAFOR: CONSISTENCY WITH  
CONSTANT PRACTICE WILL HELP UP AND COMING WRITERS**

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**AFRICAN SECRETARIAT**



**DAVID NWAFOR**

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSTANT PRACTICE WILL HELP UP  
AND COMING WRITERS –**

David Nwafor is the former Coordinator of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) at the Alex Ekweme University. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his life as a writer.

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

**DN:** My background in writing started during Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and I was tutored by the Momentous Writers' Institute owned by Nwafor Blessing. I have written many Facebook posts concerning my niche and also wrote a physical write up which was titled "Inquest For Riches".

**SYNW: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-**

**DN:** Inspiration I received about people and nature.

**WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?**

**DN:** The Late Prof Chinua Achebe is my favorite writer. His writing skills on African culture in his literary works teach me a lot.

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

**DN:** My advice to new writers starting out is to attend writing workshops so their writing skills will be brushed.

**WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?**

**DN:** My inspiration comes from God first, nature and people around me.

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

**DN:** No, I don't have a writing routine.

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

**DN:** I started writing as a result of the training I received from my writing coaches. I started writing last year. I started writing because I wanted to reach the masses in the world with my inspirational and motivational write-ups and books.

**SYNW: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER HAD PUBLISHED?**

**DN:** I haven't published any piece before.

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

**DN:** Yes, I address themes in my writing and it's about motivation and inspiration.

**SYNW HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITING OUT INTO THE WORLD?**

**DN:** When I started writing out into the world, I felt that one day my writing skills will be celebrated.

**SYNW: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?**

**DN:** My ideas are gotten from God, pictures, nature and people around me.

**SYNW: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?**

**DN:** I have not gotten any publisher.

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

**DN:** When I started writing on Facebook as posts, my audience usually complimented my write-ups with good and amazing comments.

**SYNW: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?**

**DN:** People can find out more about me on Facebook through the name "Daniel Nwafor" and I use this #THE WORLDWRITER as my hashtag on my Facebook posts. My WhatsApp contact is 09020288842 and my email isnd9476618@gmail.com.

**SYNW: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO PASS ON TO DEDICATED WRITER?**

**DN:** Any dedicated writer out there should not neglect the God factor in his writing skills. Consistency with constant practice will help them.

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

**DN:** Some mistakes new writers make is jumping from one writing niche to another in search of recognition. No, it shouldn't be so, all writers have specified areas in writing to cover. So stick to your own area and make out the best from it.

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

**DN:** I haven't published any books but they are in manuscript format.

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

**DN:** As I haven't written any books, I haven't published any books.

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

**DN:** My latest book is titled "Unlock Your Potentials". The book covers topics on helping young people to see how they are filled up with Potentials, how to unlock their potentials and unleash it to the world for development and growth of the world.