RIPOSTES OF LOCKED DOWN VOICES

(A COLLECTION OF POEMS AND ESSAYS ON COVID-19)

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY OF YOUNG NIGERIAN WRITERS

(SYNW)

EDITED BY
IZUNNA OKAFOR
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The Ripostes of the Silenced Voices
Published in Nigeria


By
Society of Young Nigerian Writers

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DEDICATION

To

THE WORLD
Editor’s Note

The fight against the novel coronavirus has become a global affray that requires the collective effort of every creature – writers inclusive – and the application of every efficacious weapon at man’s disposal – pen inclusive. This is buttressed by Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s age-long aphorism that ‘pen is mightier than sword’.

Unarguably, this basically informed this journey to this classic anthology – the quest to employ the weapon of pen in the fight against coronavirus.

In response to our Call for Submission which lasted for 30 days, a total of 249 beautiful poems and essays were received from writers from different countries of the world, jostling for space in the anthology. However, after a series of vetting, the editorial team found 97 entries worthy for the anthology, particularly with regard to adherence to the theme.

These writers, employing the tool of creativity, and toeing the path of experience and art diversity, masterfully dissect the theme, unleash their ripostes and make headway towards defeating the world’s latest enemy – coronavirus.

It was the conglomeration of these ninety-six classical works of these writers that gave birth to this masterpiece – Ripostes of Locked Down Voices, which is a must-read for everyone.

Obviously, with this publication, another feat has indeed been recorded in this global fight against the monstrous virus christened ‘COVID-19’. And this will hauntingly stand as global writers’ common ‘voice’ and ‘punch’ in this universal fight, even for generations to come.

Izunna Okafor
Editor-in-Chief, for the Editorial Team
**APPRECIATION**

My appreciation and congratulations to this troop of writers who identified with this noble cause, including those whose works could not make it to the anthology. As I always say, keep writing, for writing is part of life.

I must also appreciate the indefatigable National President of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW), and initiator of Writers Against COVID-19 Movement, **Mr. Wole Adedoyin**, for this wonderful initiative, which has indeed offered writers the opportunity to contribute their pencraft and creativity towards winning this battle; and also for giving us the wonderful opportunity to steer this worthy journey.

My appreciation also goes to my highly-talented and hardworking editorial team members – Musa Sunusi Ahmad (National PRO, SYNW, and Sec. Gen., Writers Against COVID-19 Movement ), Luqman Alawole (SYNW Coordinator, Osun State), Angelica C. Uwaezuoke (SYNW Coordinator, University of Nigeria, Nsukka), Alabi Matthew (SYNW Coordinator, University of Lagos), and Abdulrazak Denja Balema (SYNW Coordinator, Federal University Lokoja) – and other Committee Members of the Writers Against COVID-19 Movement – Innocent David Chinaecherem (SYNW Coordinator, Federal University of Technology, Owerri), Henry Ndifreke Precious (SYNW Coordinator, University of Abuja), Sakinah Yusuf (SYNW Coordinator, Bayero University, Kano), Adebayo Iwalola (SYNW Coordinator Adekunle Ajasin University) – who all gave their best in every ramification towards the success of this project.

It was nice working with you bards. May your pen never run dry. Thanks also to everyone else for being part of this.

To you all, I say, let’s do it again next time.

**Izunna Okafor**

Chairman, Writers Against COVID-19 Movement

For the Committee Members
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THE WORLD REPLIES 20:19 PANDEMIC:
BY KUNLE OWOLABI

FIRST VERSE

Hello world!
I am Corona.
Did I just lock you down or quarantine you?

I heard you also call me COVID-19.
Oh! You aren't answering my calls.
But aren't I just a virus?

I travelled,
Explored your men but few.
But I will leave on your permission only.

I do cry!
For some build up immunity.
And they recover in isolation.

SECOND VERSE

Hi Corona,
As I have been locked down by being indoor all weeks.
While you gave me mask and gloves which make my loved ones doubt my identity.

Well, Yes! You're a virus.
But don't you know how damaging you are?
Hoping I'll get you silenced soon.

I will soon be a happy one.
For with my dedication
You might leave on defeat for deciding not to be a friend.
Hi Corona,
But your COVID-19 name sounds strenuous.
Heard it's because of your effect and being born in 20:19.

Do you really radiate in disturbance?
For I heard you're a friend of the 5G.
As my friends associate you two.

Well Coronavirus,
I am also a bit relieved you release more than you take away.
But I still wish you go and never come back.

ABOUT THE POET

KUNLE OWOLABI is a graduate of Computer Science from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. He is a passionate writer and a poet. He lives and works in the city of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC (THE FACELESS TORMENTOR)
BY AJAYI OLUWAFERANMI DEBORAH

At first, it was a story to some people
Then it became reality to all people,
One by one, bit by bit, people to people,
It spread round to the east, west, south, and north
It planted fear in innocent souls, what an ‘Angst’!!
One by one, bit by bit, people to people, the world is humbled, little by little.

Days filled with the torturing presence of death,
Weeks filled with the overflowing tears of men,
Months filled with counting numbers of the dead,
The earth filled with helpless and hopeless souls,
Mourning voices of men fill every nation,
Different voices from different angles of the earth.

The presence of the faceless tormentor on the earth,
Tortures every living soul of the earth,
The fresh bodies, the grey haired,
It knows no one, it pities no one, and it spares no one,
The noble, hopeless, the leaders tremble, the followers confused,
Every soul helpless.

Things seem to get really critical,
Every soul needs to get really practical,
Something practical can make things seem magical,
Few instructions, simple obedience,
Little encouragement, renewed and hopeful soul,
One by one, people by people, little by little, things seem magical.
Things seem to get really critical,
Every soul needs to get really practical,
Something practical can make things seem magical,
Individuals, united, families, united,
Harmony in states, oneness among nations,
One by one, people to people, little by little.
Things become magical.

ABOUT THE POET

AJAYI OLUWAFERANMI DEBORAH was born on June 17, 2005,
in Owo, Ondo State of Nigeria. She is a student of Living
Spring Secondary School, Iselu, Owo, Ondo State. She has flair
for writing.
**HOPES FROM YESTERDAY**

*BY ROSEMARY NWADIKE*

The memories of the past are an elixir
The hopes of the future a faceless shadow at the end of an unstable tunnel
The reality of the present the stretched out legs of a widow
Hopes band and disband like emotions on a rollercoaster
A pervasive cacophony ticks
Man, woman, child ashen
Kissed and made untouchable
Fixed to a bottomless platform
The priest, an armour to his body and soul
Stares in horror
In the Name of the Father
The Son
The Holy Spirit
Hope is lessened in panic
Panic is heightened by swollen stomachs
Below chests baring rib cages
Whitened hands clasped together
A desperate shield

**ABOUT THE POET**

*Nwadike, Rosemary Nwankasiobi studied English and Literary Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She is a creative writer, scriptwriter, literary analyst, critical analyst. Rosemary Nwadike writes from Maryland, Enugu State, Nigeria.*
JANUARY TEARS
BY MUSTAPHA FOLAMI

and only God knows
where it came from
at the last count
it hisses
with a venom
overflowing the tears bank
into:
Wuhan
where the women are asking the question
what is our crime?
then:
the gland of tears
enwrapped the sky.
as it meanders along,
i saw five letters on its head –COVID-19.
LOCKDOWN BLISS
BY AGUNBIADE OLATUNBOSUN JOSEPH

Mind peace and tranquillity,
Stress blinks signalling less,
Proper cardiac beats and pumps,
And a sweet circadian rhythm sync.

Familiar adhesion and love,
Parenthood and dopamine,
Siblings on sight, tummy flies,
Perfect expression of family.

Neo growth and development,
Of self, indoor group and public,
Unleash of hidden skills and talents,
Wide space for work in luxury.

Stay safe, stay sane, stay happy,
This period will pass and be past,
Enjoy all as worth doing in ease,
That is the bliss of lockdown, peace!

A poetic inscription of euphoric feels and compulsory homing experience...

ABOUT THE POET

Agunbiade Olatunbosun Joseph is a student of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. He writes poetry and short story.
The seven Hydra headed monster
Is lurking,
Its rays scattered beyond the stars.
I wish this was an illusion, a fantasy
or a beauty and the beast fairy-tale.
Before me stirs this nightmare
Caterwauling like the tsunami of Japan.
Like a volcanic eruption, the earth quakes!
All and sundry quivers and finds a hind out.
The safest places have become the most vulnerable.
solitary places are now cemetery places,
one can only find solace and bliss only in eternal sleep.
Living is worst than dying and dying is better than living.
How can we live in a dead zone?

Just one beast, and we are like a walking dead,
A living corpse waiting to decay into eternity.
Just one beast, humanity is now faceless,
class is classless and being classic is stupidity.
This is the world of the unknown,
where your sophistication becomes your greatest ignorance
and your exploration, the bait for your exploitation.
Today the gods and the scavengers are equal before this trauma.
The rule and the ruled are now subjects and slaves to the beast.
Just one beast, just one plague, just one night,
all other days are shattered.
I almost fainted,
I had my heart in my mouth,
As it pounds louder
Than the beating of the Zulu drums.
What's happening?
I'm lost! Could this be a wilderness?
Was there rapture before I could wake?
Am I left to suffer the ruin of Armageddon?
These thoughts perused my mind
Gazing at the lonely street.

A pin fall was louder than the bass drums in our churches
Perhaps this is more desert than the Sahara.
My eyes lurking around like a day thief..
Thoughts enormous are caterwauling my mind
The streets are deserted to ruin
I must die of this thirst and hunger
Because crossing to the other end
Is already a suicide mission...
Sellers and buyers are already prisoners
In the same hell of a cell.

A nightmare at dawn I call it.
You can't pray to wake any longer
Your reality stirs in the face to your quake
Rising up is only falling into the hands of the predator.
Like prey we wait for when it pounces on us
With its bleeding crooked hands
We must face it, bear it and conquer it.
This nightmare at dawn!
RIPOSTES OF LOCKED DOWN VOICES

JUDGE FROM WUHAN
BY ETUMNU EMEKA WILLIAMS

In a prison without sentence
Who created this judge from Wuhan?
When is your stay expiring?
So you could go back to the lab.

What type of judge are you?
Our sports you suspend
Our entertainment shows you suspend
You pissed on everything
Oh judge bearing no blindfold
When will you go?

Who created this judge from Wuhan?
That's laying people off
Everyone finding it tough
We're all tired
Of your court room full of Doom.

Hold still your gavel of pain
Making us adorn black attire
Mourning, falling Victims of your fangs
Oh cruel judge from Wuhan!

In your cruelty,
You turn a wife widow
Husband, widower
The poor child an untimely orphan.

Oh One day!
Wailing will cease
When the chief judge will overrule you;
You dreadful judge from Wuhan!

ABOUT THE POET
Etumnu Emeka Williams is a graduate of Mass Communication and a member of the African Council for Communication Education. He once participated in the Nigerian Centenary Quiz competition in 2014; has also worked with the Nigerian Television Authority, International as content creator.
Etumnu Emeka Williams writes from Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.
WORLD IN GLOOM

BY EMMANUEL ODEYOVWI OVURUME

The world was calm and cool
Before Corona came to sit and rule
Shutting the world's economy down
As one in sea is getting drown

Like a wild west wind in harmattan
Came Corona from China's Wuhan
Dreaded virus, oh slaying sword
On whose command have you stilled the world?

And men’s’ freedom stolen in isolation
Some stolen in dust before their time
And their living burst in crumbled prime
Making the world wail in desolation.

The deaths toll is rising
And confirmed cases are pilling
Defiling scientific solution
And the strides of World Health Organization

But who could bring back all those
Whose eyes coronavirus forever close?
Will the world bounce back again?
With these scars a bygone pain?

As we wait to kneel and pray
And sanitize and at home we stay
Let's learn good hygiene and social distancing
Soon the world will come out rejoicing.

ABOUT THE POET

Emmanuelp Odeyovwi Ovurume holds M.Sc. Degree in Public Administration. He is a Political Analyst and Critic, an Essayist, and has written over a hundred poems with
"Mornings in their Teens" as his first published anthology among others. Emmanuel Odeyovwi Ovurume writes from Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.
THE CARINA CALLED CORONA
BY RICHARD NYIKWAGH

You came in December
Then, you were the only member
You killed the Chinese
And spread to your nieces in the East with ease.

You bombarded Italy
The country could no longer eat
You stopped football all over
And had the balls to pull over.

You fought the West
And that affected the rest
You came with reliefs so pure
And lured the cure.

Rising daily cases
Even took you to places
You improved your economy
And stood tall in an autonomy.

You enriched our elite
And hence deleted our masses.
We stayed indoors in hunger
And took to the skies to ponder.

We waited for palliatives
As we ran to our natives
Our businesses were shut down
As we sat in a lockdown.
Crime was on a high
As corona reached its prime
Our youths began to rob
And food largely mobbed.
Your took our economies to impotency
While improving your currency
You were ever ready to fight
Thanks to your increased might.

We united as one for all and all for one.
The carina called corona will crash soon...

ABOUT THE POET

Richard Nyikwagh is a writer and financial expert residing in Benue, Nigeria. He has published poems from the stable of Society of Young Nigerian Writers. He is currently the Team Lead at a Facebook group; Riverbell Stories with Richard Nyikwagh. He writes from Benue State, Nigeria.
A POEM OF HOPE

BY GLORIA OLUCHI JOHN

Though hail has pelted down on us as hard as pebbles,
A cryptic pandemic from the gringos has taken its toll on us
Its uncouth nature has obdurately placed grime on our nabe.

But let us not swim in the bitter
waters of paranoia,
For this affliction is far from being unbaiting.
Every creation that has a beginning has an end,
So my brethren, all is well.

Let us not wallow in the corny hands of trepidation,
For this wily pandemic will soon become a platitude,
COVID 19,
Your days are numbered,
For your profounders and creators will soon become wily beguilers.

O yea African!
Let us prevent silent play of emotions
from clouding the elegant lines
of our beautiful faces,
Let us always wear smiles
That bespeak hope and tranquillity.

Let us jealousy maintain our
equilibrium and raise our heads regally high like the royalty we are,
Let us do well to bolster our wavering confidence with positivity and hopeful thoughts,
Let us make poise and control
to be the order of the day.
We can quell the tide of anger that is welling with us
Surely, we can.
Let us clear the cobweb of fear
That is obdurately eluding the one thing that has kept us going through the years the zeal to live and survive.
Let us share a laugh and chat without reluctance,
Yea we should.

O yea African!
My brothers and sisters of probity that are proudly clothed with a skin that bespeak strength and originality,
Let us revel with pride in our dark skin which is somewhat immune and insusceptible to this affliction, yea, it is.

Let us rise from the ground gingerly like a silver wedge and eradicate this disturbing sense of dread that is obstinately feeding off greedily from our sleep.
Let us drive our heart to swell with hope,
Let us dash our tears away for we are the ones after God's heart and after the night comes the morning.

ABOUT THE POET
Gloria Oluchi John is a passionate and indefatigable writer who majors mostly in poetry, prose and essay. Gloria is a native of Ihe in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State.
She is currently a 200-level student of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, where she studies Mass Communication.
A zealous writer, Gloria has written quite a number of poems, short stories and articles, some of which have been published in newspapers, (like National Light Newspaper) and online platforms,
like The Nigerian Voice, Zens Pens, Naija Books, Best Naija; Echo Nigeria; Gistmania, among others
Some of her recent titles include: God; Little Vampires; Fire; Free the Girls; Troubled Housewife; Sick; Ignorant Generations; What Really Are You?; A Poem of Hope; Cohabitation: A Thorn in the Flesh of Undergraduates; Struggles of Mama, among others.
She is an active member of some writers groups and associations in Nigeria, including Society of Young Nigeria Writers (SYNW) Anambra Chapter; Association of Nigeria Authors (ANA) Anambra Chapter, and Zenpens writer's community (ZWN).
Gloria Oluchi John writes from Ikorodu Lagos State.
THE VIPER’S JUICE
BY SAMUEL EPHRAIM EDWARD

It came to us like a bad dream
And all got drowned like it was a stream
Sadness and loneliness we rubbed like a cream
A flu that came and took everyone by surprise
A virus that created darkness out of sunrise.

From a city called Wuhan
It spread to us and won
People falling like packs of cards
Not because of lack of care
But because of a plague that scare.

We had just celebrated Valentine
Then we all went into quarantine
Staying home became our routine
Empty and hungry laid our intestine
We felt like we were sent to the guillotine.

Sneezing became an iniquity to humanity
Fever became not just an infirmity but calamity
Coughing created anxiety and enmity
Visits and vacations were considered evil
As if we were fighting the devil.

Out of necessity we saw solidarity
The rich showed forth magnanimity
To help keep alive the poor community
We saw fraternity in the mist of perdition
Posterity will never forget every act of alleviation.

Who do we blame for this virus?
Everyone claiming so virtuous
Who will ever take us serious?
Without and within we feign conscious
Yet the proper cure has eluded us.

ABOUT THE POET
Samuel Ephraim Edward is a literary luminary with over four years of active writing. It gives him great pleasure to educate and inform his esteemed readers on diverse issues of topical importance. This he does through his writing tablet which is called “SIRIACY CRAFTS”.
As a poet also, he sees poetry as a tool for societal reformation when appropriately employed. He learns everyday even as an open-minded word surgeon and he treats every opportunity as his last chance.
Samuel Ephraim Edward writes from Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
THE SILHOUETTE OF A SINISTER NIGHT
BY NZUBE OKEKE

We did not see it coming,
The debris of a shattered world
Only yesterday,
We clutched hands like brothers,
Parlayed like friends,
And smooched like lovers.
Only yesterday!
We never saw it coming,
When we could say to a friend:
"Let's chill out for bottles of beer."
And to a lady, "Your lips are kissable."

Only today, we were all bamboozled
Like animals in zoo,
To watch our years die by,
To watch men go out sick,
And never return;
Only to be told later: "we could deck
our flowers and sing the funeral dirge."

ABOUT THE POET

Nzube Okeke is a student of English and Literary Studies at
Nwafor Orizu College of Education, affiliated with the
University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He writes poetry, short story
and novel.
Nzube Okeke writes from Okija, Anambra State, Nigeria.
TOLLS OF PLAGUE
BY INNOCENT PAUL UCHECHUKWU

Does your heart skip like mine when you hear the tolls of plague? That swells in the announcements of the radio reporters? Did you tune in with stout heart, but held your breath As you realized this bug besets our skins as well?

Well, wear a mask upon thy face, dear compatriot And when we chew the fat, distance thyself from me Cup the coughs and the outcomes of thy every sneeze Within thy flexed elbow, that we may curb the spread.

Do you dream like me, dreams of days spared of fears When we could once again fill the streets to make bargains? Do dread cloud your head, yet you rest to wake by morn With hope to bask in the glow of our triumph song?

Well, then, wear a mask, my fellow countryman And when we chew the fat, distance thyself from me Cup the coughs and the outcomes of thy every sneeze Within thy flexed elbow, that we mayst curb the spread. Think of me, countryman, as I think of you So we could make a dawn fit for you and me Remember me, dear friend, in your good conceit That we may all prevail, till the ill and woe recedes.
ABOUT THE POET

Innocent Paul Uchechukwu is a graduate of the University of Port Harcourt. He is a Nigerian poet, scriptwriter and freelancer. When he is not typing into the computer, he reads, writes, or watches football.

Innocent Paul Uchechukwu writes from Rivers State, Nigeria.
MACABRE DRUMBEATS
BY ADEBOWALE ADEGOROYE

Lethargic but the unseen non-cellular structure assumed life quietly in Wuhan. Evolutionary apparition of the limbless definer of a new world order remains shrouded in convoluted controversies.

Global economic recession though uninvited, yet imminently turned out our unavoidable guest as cities that never go to sleep have forcefully submitted to accompanying quietness of graveyard. Usually accustomed hustling and bustling in cities are already declared forbidden.

Mandatory notice of compulsory holiday handed down to all mortals is acknowledged with stoic acceptance. Medical sophistication of global powers is helplessly mocked with derision. Mere microscopic virus shut unabashedly the doors to all religious worship centers on the planet earth. Faint sounds of macabre drumbeats which emanates from sleepy Wuhan City soon attained frightening global decibels.

Wingless unseen enemy flies across the universe and brutally cowed all mortals to submission. Venomous pang of our common foe soon littered streets with human remains. Tons of human manure surfaced from victims railroaded to untimely graves even as mass internment depressingly became their compulsory lots. Global economic landscape is whimsically reconfigured with unemployment seen foisted on millions.
Strict compliance greets desire of our collective enemy to have the gates of all educational facilities shut worldwide. Compulsion on facemask wearing and regular use of sanitizer is our new normal. Social Distancing is appointed the global enforcer on suspension of all our social gatherings. Quarantine gets elevated from mere lexical word to a standard global practice. Panicky confusion envelopes the world but a glimpse of hope shines forth from a tiny Malagasy Island.

ABOUT THE POET
Adebowale Adegoroye is a lecturer at the Languages Department of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo. He is a creative writer and public analyst. He loves nature and artistic works. He is married and resides in Lagos State, Nigeria.
**THE CORONAVIRUS**
**BY CHUKWUKA UCHENNA**

From endemic to pandemic
From Wuhan to worldwide
That invisibility appears invincible
That lethal Arsenal proves impossible

It came like a dream without a beam
Its reality no clarity to behold
Chasing the mist, catching the wind
The whirlwind sweeping the world off its feet.

Do we call it an invincible war?
Do we fight it to win the war?
Medical or pharmacological?
Militarily or economically?

The Western, Asian, African
Even the bravest and the sophias
All ponder and wonder
With hands akimbo, and legs so feeble.

Daily the toll rises
Days break in vain and pain
News break in tears and fears
No help in sight or sigh of relief.

**ABOUT THE POET:**
*Chukwuka Uchenna is a passionate writer who expresses his ideas in poems and prose. He is a graduate of Philosophy from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and currently doing his PhD program in the same institution. He is working with Anambra State Government as an Administrative Assistant. Uchenna writes from Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.*
THE BLACK SEASON
BY SHUAIBU SABO

It all started at the centre
Ending our lives like disaster
Catnapping confusion in arena
Dancing with fear like a sinner
Coughing severally with sneezing
Flying highly in a season
Infecting others with a handshake
Terrifying the world like earthquake
Chasing every one out of ambient
The place is no longer convenient.

ABOUT THE POET
Shuaibu Sabo writes from Rishi, Toro Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria.
THE VIRUS THAT STRUCK
BY ADEFEYINTOLA ADESEGUIN

High spirits for the new year
New dance and great plans
But that was not how it played
It was like watching horror movie
For the plague struck swift
Rising steadily in numbers daily
And death became the lead-stick
It took irrespective of race or age
No difference in the classes reign
Nations feared and hid in terror
The world was no longer safe
Became a prisoner in lockdown
The virus was like gasoline
It rages and burns than the sun
Unleashing fangs in every corner
Like a phoenix it rises to live
But do not let fear overwhelm
Or anxiety weaken your heart
Keep up the hope and faith
Prayer is a major key to hold
For this will pass as it came
Follow the safety precautions
And we will be Safe and Strong

ABOUT THE POET
Adefeyintola Adesegun is a final-year student of Philosophy in the University of Lagos. She writes, and she is planning on taking it to a professional level. She has been awarded with certificate of digital marketing training online by Google, and she is planning on taking it practical with provision of intern jobs. She spends her free time reading books and listening to
music. Adefeyintola Adesegun writes from Lagos State, Nigeria.
A SICK EARTH

BY ADEPOJU ISAIAH GBENGA

I see the sun covering its nakedness;
It whirled and covered the earth with dust!

The earth is sick!
The earth is like a sick foetus
That pukes at every chance.

The cloud has rolled away,
All I see is a night covered with scars!

Not that I am blind?
But when I walk in the day,
I see shadows of broken hearts
Each in their desolate homes.

I see the bird born for joy mourning,
I see the traces of its tears on the cloud,
And mourners scurried in as it rained on the sick earth.

It's Golgotha; a city of skulls
Where on the path,
I see wailing ghosts,
Trailing the path to eternity.

I sit at my balcony,
Watching the earth fade away,
And all I see now is a pandemic,
Moving from home to home,
Leaving with each house a trademark of ruination.
ABOUT THE POET
Adepoju Isaiah is from Osogbo, Osun State. He joined the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) in 2020 as a teen author, he finished high school in 2018, and he is an aspiring legal practitioner. Adepoju Isaiah writes Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.
COVID-19: DILEMMA OF THE DEATH WE'LL CHOOSE
BY KOLADE OLAWALE KABIR ÀDÈLÉ

In the air fly particles of death's spirit,
Every night in our land, crow sings sorrowfully,
Now we dig graves more than food mournfully
Adieu! Adieu!! We sing to souls we lost,
Our brothers, sisters have names in the list.
Our economy is draining dreadfully,
Businesses, policies fails woefully,
Appetite brings death but virus is first.
This is dilemma in the death we choose;
Isolation or the breath that takes our souls.
Ten rich men became Corona death’s goose,
Hunger was fifty kids graves' directional poles.
Our minds are sagged like tired rope on the loose,
Figuring out the death we’ll let take our souls.

ABOUT THE POET
Kolade Olawale Kabir hails from Kwara State and resides in the state capital, Ilorin. He is a graduate of Agriculture from the University of Ilorin. He loves playing football, eating and writing. Kolade Olawale Kabir writes from Kwara State, Nigeria.
My people got a culture
To act like dead bodies
Even when their leaders are vultures
My people got a lifestyle
The leaders deceive them yet they never turn hostile

Both poor and the rich are being tortured
Even leaders think everything is vanity
Even they realized money can stop functions

Collecting mumbo jumbo in the name of pandemic
They don’t even care for the day they will give account to their creator
I don’t need to remind them, that day will be catastrophic

Putting fear in mind of people for something that’s totally real
If you’re in their shoe, they would know how it feels

We are wrongly admired for holding African power with pride
Little did they know we are just giant of Africa with mouth

It’s COVID-19, not COVID-419
Allow the people to go back to their normal life
How long are we gonna be quarantined?
My people got a lifestyle
You deceive us, yet we never turn hostile.
ABOUT THE POET
Kulubeen Yusuf (MR HEALTH) studies at Bayero University, Kano. He writes from Ajaokuta, Nigeria.
THE GUERRILLA
BY ATANDA CLINTON SHAFIULLAH

Let me write my words,
Words from my tampered but hopeful heart,
Words from my greener pastures,
And words comforting me from my comfort zone
To the world, the tiny inferno.

Like the morning dews,
Our dreams were fresh and fine,
Counting on good glistening catches;
And ready to leap
Like a puma ready to prey.

But fretful ambush in patience
Laid down at the toes of our shore of actualizations.
Like silence in the air,
Like guerrillas in a compartment,
Fed on dreams ready to be hatched
It is it- the heartless plague.

Some hopes are blind; some- grain of sands
And down the war field,
Are men with rickety hands
Fighting the Invisible in the world of visibility

Let me shed pitiful tears
For the man caged in his own haven,
Forced to slaughter his dreams on the altar of
Destruction- and served silence to feed on.
For choices are scarce at the market of life.
Oh creator! Save our dying souls
The world is at stake of malady
And our anvils are feeding us evilly.
ABOUT THE POET
Atanda Clinton Shafiullah is a man who sees writing as his shadow. He is a motivational speaker and writer, an essayist, a prose man and a law student. Atanda Clinton Shafiullah writes from Kuje, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.
THE STATE OF MY STATE
BY ONYEKA, NNAEMEKA VICTOR

When we heard it from afar
We earlier wanted our air gates locked
But their sons haven't crossed the bar
And they won't leave them stuck
But if the apocalypse drops by the door
It'll dehumanize us-rich and poor.

"Arise O'Compatriots" we chant
But you leave your warriors naked
Against a virus surrounded with lance
Extra lives chosen to be wasted
And our hospitals outgrown by grasses
The Chief Staff mingled with the masses.

Our soil anyways is familiar to burial
If not the insurgents, then it is herdsmen
My motherland were graves are serial
But we lend our voice with our pen.

ABOUT THE POET
Onyeka, Nnaemeka Victor (The medic and the ink) is a young Nigerian writer and poet. Born in Onitsha and hails from Adazi-Enu both in Anambra, his poem "Camp of Depression" was published in the 2019 Nigerian Medical Students' Association yearly magazine. He's currently a 500-level Medical Student at UNIZIK, Anambra State. Onyeka, Nnaemeka Victor writes from Anambra State, Nigeria.
OH SON OF ABRAHAM
BY RAJI, TOHEEB ADEREMI

O son of Abraham
I can hear the sound of the heaven tears
Absorb by the dancing of the earth
As heaven wishes malediction
Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden

The world has been sitting on its own
When an awkward hands of plague
Perch like birds on the petals of blood
Causing casualties moving like flood

Is this the wish of God?
Or the wish of the gods?

That separates the congregation in mosques
And disentangle the conference in churches

That incarcerates everyone in their penitentiary
And impregnates conflicts in each household

Things fall apart like leaf in autumn
As the things around our necks
Are no longer at ease
Life has begun to bleed
Oozing from the vessel of inhumanity
That spreads round the cosmos
Like coronavirus
A plague that suckles lives like bedbug.
ABOUT THE POET
Raji Toheeb Aderemi is a writer, a poet and multidisciplinary artist. He rains from Ile Aremuyo, Ede, Osun State. He is a graduate of English from Federal University Dutse, Jigawa State. He is among the featured poets in Petals of Wisdom (anthology of collaboratively written poems) published by Poets in Nigeria. He derives more pleasure in reading poems and stories. He sees poetry as a key that opens the voiceless mouth to speech. Raji Toheeb Aderemi writes from Duste, Jigawa State, Nigeria.
COVID -19
BY OSATOGBE SHOLA

On your mark ready let's go!!!
The race is on, a race against time to find a cure
This is war - a bio-war ... a war of words
There is pandemonium everywhere as the pandemic with fangs out fan out and the stalemate pans out.
Accusations and counter accusations
Those who are supposed to find a cure are acting officious pointing accusing fingers
The body count is on the increase and the fear is gripping Hearts bleeding
I hope you all can hear me loud and clear
I have to clear the air cos it's filled with a lot of stench
The truth is my wrench
I am talking like a talking drum and beating it hard ....hard enough until it seems like I am virtually banging on your eardrum.

Some are pants sagging
Others are hands clapping
Eyes teary cos things are becoming scary
The rulers are shagging their subjects and electorates
Everybody is at loss
In a lose- lose situation
There is no victor or vanquish
Fear we must banish and responsiveness we all must embrace
This plague must be faced tackled headlong before it can be phased out
Man-made or as a natural consequence of cross transmission
A product of deceit or conceived out of deceit
This is the Coronavirus
The eggheads spinning in a gyroscope
The butcher showing no discrimination
It’s all out for total annihilation
This is not like your everyday Sci-fi or a well scripted horror movie
The horrors are real
The harrowing effects are realer than life
This is like none other and it’s different from the others:
The Plague, Zika, the Ebola, HIV/AIDS virus
and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARs).
In all respect, it’s vicious
Everywhere is in lockdown
Perhaps this is the final countdown to Apocalypse.

ABOUT THE POET

Osatogbe Shola, is a career teacher and graduate of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
COVID-19

BY MUHYIDEEN KOLAWOLE

My eyes bleed blood
Bellow my bloody blanket
Busy counting death day
By now, in minutes or seconds

This life has fed me up
Our local and national news
The world, all rain pathetic blows
Against every peaceful face

COVID grows, sweeps very fast
Rapid blowing like falling stars
No, thunder light across our world
A cough, a sneeze, two hands: mighty death.

Alas, enough! Enough I say
Halt that scary barn on man
Has my freedom ceased like that?
Or that my family is now forbidden?

Am I in mosque not allowed?
And so in church, what I do?
Even my wedding could not hold
Behind my room I stage my cell.

Who on earth can so much hearken
To my bitter voice of Coronavirus
That will not fear to have me contact
Again in heaven, even my president.

ABOUT THE POET

Muideen Kolawole is an award-winning student journalist. He was recently shortlisted as one of 30 finalists out of over 250
candidates for the Youth Digest (national) Campus Journalism Awards. This is due to not only his writing dexterity, which has earned him publications in reputable national dailies, as well as his zeal for individual rights, policy reforms, and impact making.

He is a final-year undergraduate of English Language, currently the Secretary General of the National Association of Campus Journalists, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. He is from Ilorin, Kwara State. Muideen Kolawole writes from Nigeria.
OF DEATH IN PASSION
BY BELLO HANEeftAH

One wrong fluid in your body is all it takes
for Covid-19 to fill your lungs.
She comes like a jealous mistress, ravages you
till the only prayer on your tongue is her name.
In the heat of her passion,
she permits only the walls to remain with you;
Unwilling witnesses to the feverish moans
of your body responding to her caresses.

On a sinking couch, we sit and wait,
Till we can take your presence for granted again;
Till your absence during dinner,
is just you working late, again;
Till you can kiss us goodnight again;
Till we can swim out of this bad dream;
Till we can unlearn how to carry
the porcelain silence of your absence in gloved hands.

But you drown in your body,
leaving love, life, and lungs,
for the viral arms of a jealous mistress.

ABOUT THE POET
Bello Haneefah is a poet and short story writer. She also
writes flash fiction, and is an avid lover of books, fashion
designing and African artwork. She is currently studying law
at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Some of her works have
been published by Nantygreens and Brittle Paper.
A FIGHT AGAINST DARKNESS
BY CHIDIEBERE NWOKEDI

The sun goes down
And the moon goes sour
Darkness surges till dawn
Still conquering the day's hour

The light is gone
Now darkness prevail
We must all go home
Till this dark veil is raised

Darkness hidden in size
Is the deadly Coronavirus
To defeat this monster we must pay a price
To live we must fight with our might.

Together in isolation and love
We shall again spark this light
To illuminate the heavens above
And celebrate our victory over this plight.

ABOUT THE POET
Chidiebere Nwokedi (CANP) is a poet and a motivational writer who hails from Ogidi town, Anambra State, Nigeria.
SMALLISH VENOM
BY ONUORAH VALENTINE CHUKWUEBUKA

There's something sweet about this solitary confinement
How doors get shut against the epidemic wave
Where in bravery goggles and white overall that strolled to shave
Are fetched back in tsunami roll-call and reassigned

At first, the rainbow deserted the sky in apt solitude
I thought it cared for peace against banters of swine
Against the dictatorship of noise; yet, nothing was of mine
Only for the earth been tilted and so was changed the altitude

Gosh! I saw not only for myself the bat-infested home
Smallish chiroptera, gallivanting the eaves - vector of venom
For ourselves, we saw the smallness of "nahuw" become
The new Pontificate of this aching, devastating Rome

But here, laughter dies; for in the long procession of cardinals and lay'
To the church gate all must bow to this smallish prey

ABOUT THE POET
Onuorah Valentine Chukwuebuka hails from Atani, Anambra State, southeastern part of Nigeria. He obtained B.Sc (Hons) in Biochemistry from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli, Nigeria.
DEAR PREDATOR
BY EZE UKAMAKA RACHAEL

We struggle with our instincts,
For you are neither a man nor a soul.
How do we explain to our generations yet unborn
That an unseen being holds the whole world to ransom.
White and black, young and old.

You are a warrior without a weapon,
A weapon without a holder
Yet swept the human race
As clean as the palace.
Oh what a menace!

Though we can't see you
But the fear you inculcate in us
Has a strong odour, the odour of death.
You prey on us
That we have to pray to survive the pain.

Come out,
Let us know what we confront,
What do we owe you?
Don't hide under a facade to hum your Hymn.
Dictate your lyrics let’s dance to the rhythm.

The fall of men is caused by men,
It's not a myth or a mirage.
Maybe our ancestors have offended you,
Tell us and see us do the needful.
If you were a god, we would have offered you some tubers of yam.

From the deepest deep of our hearts,
We submit our plea,
Please, leave us alone,
We want to live.
We are humans not viruses.

ABOUT THE POET
Eze Ukamaka Rachael (poetically known as Solidpen) is a lover of poem and prose. She is currently studying in the University of Nigeria Nsukka.
FALLING FORWARD
BY PUNO SELESHO

Life has become the adult version of a childhood game
Breathe in, cross your arms and then lean
Lean back
Far
To fall
To Surrender

It's a second, but it feels like a forever
Stomach in throat
Throat almost closed

Fall.
The hands will be there
Keep falling
You lose yourself
But at the bottom you gain trust.
Breathe in and fall.
Remember when high school would NEVER end.
When you'd NEVER graduate.
When you'd NEVER get that car.
You'd NEVER talk to that person again.
When you'd NEVER break up.
When that heart ache would NEVER end.
You swore to NEVER love again.
You swore to NEVER drink again.
You'd NEVER go freelance.
You'd NEVER give it all a second chance.

Be honest, those things eventually came.
And NEVER became LATER.
If not yet, it's still on the way.

You thought you'd NEVER make it to 21 DAYS.
Well, here we are friends.
And we are still going.

Throw that NEVER word away.
There is an end.
It's time to surrender to the WHEN.
A STATE OF LOSS
BY PUNO SELESHO

We are in a State of Loss.

We are carrying a collective tightness in our chests.

Normality has been burnt to the ground
now our lungs have been filled with a grey grief cloud.

So before we talk about healing, let's sit here and breathe it all in.

Grief is like Eskom, you must learn to come to terms with the stage you are in.

So only when we get to number 5, can we breathe it all out with a collective sigh.

What was taken by the greedy flame?
What parts of your life will you never see again?
What did you manage to salvage and save?
What will you need next to help you be Brave?

If this is an altar of sacrifice,
may the sweet aroma, together with our cry, make it to the sky,
And touch the heart of heaven.

Grieve, Mzansi, grieve
You are in a State of Loss.

ABOUT THE POET
Puno Selesho is a spoken word artist from Pretoria South Africa. He has been writing and performing for 10 years and
his main aim is to spread hope and light in the world using his words.
GLITTER

BY OORMILA VIJAYAKRISHNAN PRAHLAD

I remember the shrink
scribbling in her notes
while I wept of my shame
talking of how I’d suddenly see
shadows creeping across my hands
waves of marching microbes
how I craved my soothing ritual -
the relief that lather gave
till a whole bar of soap was reduced to suds
and my epidermis yawned pink
pleading to be spared

that was decades ago
and I padlocked such obsessions since
but I knew I was doomed
the day I saw an Instagram post
by someone portraying the virus
as party glitter that stuck to your hands
from switches and door knobs

I managed to hold my demons at bay
till the Corona hand wash method
replayed on TV became my slippery slope
and I heard the clamour of termites
steadily usurping my palms
as I desperately rummaged
amongst my stash of soap bars
my mind besieged by fluorescent glitter
plummeting into the horror world
of microscopic pathogens
armies of aphids studded on my hands.
ABOUT THE POET
Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad is a Sydney poet. Her recent works on the COVID crisis have been featured in COVID Art Resource, Dwell time, Leopardskin and Limes, and are forthcoming in The Pangolin Review, Star 82 Review, and elsewhere. Oormila Vijayakrishnan Prahlad writes from Sydney, Australia.
AT THE END

BY ABDULMUEED BALOGUN

At the end,
when humanity becomes
a free bird once again.
When death is tired of slaying
and the vulture of life is done-
feasting on the carcass of humanity.
When the stomach wall of our wicked
mother; earth that uses the cold blood of her children to
assuage her blazing thirst.
When she's (earth) filled to her threshold
and her stomach wall ceases to frolic
and gyrate like an hunter
that killed an Ajanaku (Elephant) on his first hunt.

At the end
of the tunnel, this waning torch
of hope will rekindle.
And smile shall be restored to wistful
faces.
Incessantly, memories of our beloved
that left without a farewell-
will hunt us like a predator.

At the end,
the survivors will cite
to their children's ears,
the tale; how their beloved were buried with their enemies.
And the depth of sorrow that sulked their
merry minds into sea of dread,
anguish and tempest.
And at the end, 
the heavy legs of yesterday will gyrate like a sybarite swerved 
in sea of pleasure. 
Our wistful souls will wilt her sorrow 
and wounds sustained during this pandemic, 
their scars will become our nightmare 
that torment us in our sleeps- 
reminding us of how our beloved drowned with its ship right 
before our eyes.

ABOUT THE POET
Abdulmueed Balogun is an undergraduate student at the 
University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, where he studies 
Medical Laboratory Sciences. He has been a staunch writer 
for two years. His love for poetry emanated from a Scholar, 
writer and Poet, Muhammed Sulaiman who provided 
mentorship as regards poetry.
EVERY DAY IS THE SAME NOWADAYS (a prose-poem)

BY PRAISE OSAWARU

every day begins the same. i wake up in the couch in the living room. it’s no use isolating in the bedroom when the whole house in now a cave where i seek shelter because of a virus i cannot pronounce without rolling my tongue. i feel a burn or tickle in my chest and i wonder what it means. the answer is somewhere between the underlining anxiety and the seeping madness of self-isolation and social distancing. every breath is examined twice to see if it’s inhaled properly. i wash my hands exhaustively with soap and water till they become pruney. i brush my teeth thoroughly till i cannot taste even my own words. it’s better than the bitterness of reality. i watch TV till PHCN realizes they left the power on too long, and eat till my stomach expands the length of the universe. i consume data on Netflix like a camel to water. in many ways i need it to survive and stay sane. when i tire of myself, i retire into my mind and play out different scenarios: a blend of dreams and plans. every day ends the same. i leave the TV in the lowest volume and close my eyes till i no longer hear myself breathe.

ABOUT THE POET
Praise Osawaru is a Nigerian writer, (performance) poet, and wannabe entrepreneur studying at the University of Benin, Nigeria. His works have appeared/forthcoming in African Writer, Kreative Diadem, Ibua Journal, Nantygreens, Ngiga Review, Perhappened Magazine, Praxis Magazine and elsewhere. He was longlisted for African Writers Award 2019 and shortlisted in the 2019 Kreative Diadem Creative Writing
Contest. He’s openly a film fanatic and consummate art enthusiast/lover. Praise Osawaru writes from Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria.
SCOURGE OF TWENTY-TWENTY
BY HENRY NDIFREKE PRECIOUS

Just like a dream,
Streets deserted,
Towns became ghost cities,
The world stood still,
Its government humbled,
Powerful leaders were
Confused,
Everyone scurrying for safety.
I was there!

Stay at home became the
latest gospel preached in
town,
Armed men in their Kaki,
scattered deep and shallow
throughout the cities,
We were thrusted into a state
of shock,
What a threat to humanity!
I was there!

Economies shut down,
Churches and mosques shut
down, schools shut down,
Tourists centers shut down,
Borders shut down,
Ceremonies cancelled,
Annual conferences cancelled,
All sports postponed, clubs
sealed,
Entertainment world cried,
groaned and mourn for her loss,
Movements restricted, National emergency declared,
It was a haughty threat to humanity!
For I was there!

Just because of one virus,
People we coerced,
Do not shake hands,
Do not hug,
Maintain physical and social distancing,
Wash and sanitize hands frequently,
Get tested and quarantined at the release of innocent sneezes.
No doubt,
I was there!

Before then;
There were kingdoms against kingdoms,
There were families against families,
There was war, crises, protests, political unrest and riots,
But the virus was superficial,
Everything became quite and everyone ran to seek safety,
I was there!

Mighty men and women of riches died,
We became slaves to hunger
under our roof,
We lived by fate as we retire
into our inner chamber,
Unaware of when we would
feel the air of sunshine again,
I wept for humanity!
For certain,
I was at the scene!

ABOUT THE POET
Henry Ndifreke Precious (poetically known as MyPreciousPen) is an aspiring writer, poetess, and student of Linguistics at the University of Abuja. She loves to see humans as they are, and has decided to house the present system of things in her poetic home, so that it can serve as a reminder to the generation unborn.
Henry Ndifreke Precious writes from FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.
WHEN THIS IS OVER
BY FAVOUR EMMA-NWACHUKWU

Every night, before I go to sleep, I wonder; if tomorrow was my first day after this lock down, what would it be like?

Would I book the first flight out of here, hungry to see the wonders of the world and all the adventures that I had put off till ‘later’?

Would I plan a grand day with friends in the bid to fill my lungs with laughter and surround my heart with bliss?

Would I pick up the phone and ask to see the one who could’ve been my lover if I had given us a chance?

Would I pull everyone I meet into a tight hug, desperate to make up for the time that we were apart and feel the warmth of relief that radiates from their arms?

Or would it be a simple day filled with me savouring the mundane things; the chirp of the birds, the crack in the sidewalk, and the smell of freshly cut grass?

Which would it be?

With these thoughts running through my mind, and with the glimmer of hope that that first day holds, I am able to fall asleep, ready to face another day locked up in quarantine.

ABOUT THE POET
Favour Emma-Nwachukwu (Favour Emma) is an economist and writer. She is the writer and editor of The Three Minutes Blog where she shares thought-provoking poetry, amazing short stories and inspiring word art. She writes from Abuja, Nigeria.
NOWHERE ELSE
BY OLALEYE DOYIN SUNSHINE

Where do we go from here?
Into some planet or hell?
Into a cocoon of eggs?
Or into a large shell?
Where?

Our air became our death
Ask USA, she will tell you
Of how our land screams for help
Ask Italy of souls sown into the sandbanks.

How she felt
How she wept
How she bled... Ask
How the pillars of the earth trembled for ill health.

Our streets became den
Of diseases, of cries, of tears
Our homes lost the warmth for rest
While running from the earth's revenge.

Where else do we go from here?
We who had eaten the virus morsel
Are now with sickness fed
A tiny thing, we felt
But are now trapped in her cell.

The world is unwell
But together we can mend
Lest she bid us farewell
‘Cause we are left with nowhere
Nowhere else.
ABOUT THE POET:
Olaleye Doyin Sunshine is an award-winning International Poet, Writer, Microbiologist, Family Health Consultant, Peace Advocate, and a lover of art. She is the chief representative of World Nation Writers' Union in Nigeria, as well as the Squire of the World Union of Poets.
THINGS FALL APART
BY OLUUMIDE ODENIKE

Hours rolled into days, and days into weeks,
leaving our fates in the bleak.
For like an army, it invades all countries,
threatening the existence of the human race.
Like a wave, reverberates the entire globe in quick pace.
Like an hurricane, ravaged the world's peace in rage.
Like a plague, sent countless to their graves.
Like a blade, cycles the earth round its orbit in a show of
shame.
World leaders trade words with blame,
seeking for whom to pay for the disarray.
Nations shutdown with urgency,
leaving most economies in a state of emergency.
Jobs are lost in vain,
making all shiver with pain.
Palliatives shared for our burden to bear,
further left us in despair.
Could this be the end of us all
as the world plunges into a fall?

ABOUT THE POET
Olumide Odenike was born on May 23, 1989. He bagged his
Higher National Diploma Certificate in Building Technology
from the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Ogun State. A prospective
member of the Nigerian Institute of Building and Council of
Registered Builders of Nigeria, he is experienced in
construction and financial management.
AN UNPALATABLE PANDEMIC HITS HUMANITY
BY MUOMA VALENTINE CHIBUEZE

An unpalatable pandemic hits humanity,
Causing pandemonium
Ravaging nations of the world
Has succeeded in holding us apart
in the name of social distance
Isolation, quarantine, lockdown, sickness,
fear, panic, hunger has become the order of the day

Those who are sick now fear going to the hospital
For fear of being suspected of COVID-19
Even those with the virus are scared of opening up
For fear of being segregated
Thereby infecting others
Increasing the spread the virus.

The pandemic has become a throb in our neck
Its tremulous beats wake trenchant
Its stings becoming catastrophic to the well-being of the nation
The number of cases keep raising daily and has become a plethora

The social media has become agents of adulterated news
Bringing forth absurd means of combating the virus
Propagating outrageous number of cases
Creating panic, fear and chaos in the land.

Observing safety tips is the only panacea to contending the virus
Anything contrary exacerbates the pandemic
Continuous public health enlightenment
Should be accessible to everyone.

Corrections of fallacies on the spread of the virus
Is our collective responsibility
Looking out for one another is imperative
With all these measures on ground
We can successfully overcome this unpalatable pandemic.

ABOUT THE POET
Muoma Valentine Chibueze hails from Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State. He is currently a 400-level student of Political Science at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. He is a poet, essayist and motivational speaker. He is the current Financial Secretary of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers, Anambra State Chapter.
Muoma Valentine Chibueze writes from Anambra State, Nigeria.
AN INTRUDER
BY DOOGA, BEM THEOPHILUS

You came in our homes like light
With warmth of a burning oven
Sounding like nocturnal birds
To naked our souls and secrets
And make us wail and wealthy.

Your face trembles and confuses all
As you blur minds with your deadly
Epileptic venom that keeps us far
From hands you shake and ones
You have signalled.

Though we’ve seen your kind before
Your case is different as your presence
Is felt by suit men and those on
Streets in rags to equate us all
Since we eat altogether at home.

For queens and their kingdoms bow to
Your queenship adhering to the ordinances
You brought for them to live since you have
Thrown many lives away, has denied us our
Laughters and faiths.

Your coming is painful although gainful
Because your takeover has made us sons and
Daughters know who our parents are
And the nothingness of their leaderships
Making our scientists suffer blackmails.

You have brought our mighties to their
Knees and all cry loudly like vagitus
Accusing the men and gods who are quiet
But like others who came and are gone
You are a robot that shall be destroyed.

ABOUT THE POET:
Dooga, Bem Theophilus is a Tiv-born poet and prose writer from Guma, Benue State, Nigeria. He was born on the 15th November, 1993. He holds a B.A in Linguistics from the University of Markudi where he served as the president of Writers’ League.
He won the Best Graduating Short Story Writer (2016), and also won the second runner-up in the ANA/Yusuf Ali Short Story Competition (2016, Benue Chapter) with his short story "The Reality of a Dream: A Tale of Two Lovers". During his service year, he headed Editorial And Publicity Community Development Service. He currently teaches English Language at the Integrity International Academy, Gombe.
FOOTPRINTS OF THE INVISIBLE WOLF
BY SIMEON OSOSE EIDENOJE-OKHAIYE

Facemasks, hand rubs and curfews,
Ambulances blaring sirens down deserted streets,
Schools closing suddenly with farewell songs unsung,
Parents confining children to overcrowded homes,
Employers stopping staff from working during workdays,
Churches shutting their doors to converts on Sundays,
Banking halls shut against mint-laden merchants,
Markets abandoned by Shylock-cum-sellers
And left for the howling wind for fear of the invisible enemy;
These were the familiar scenes under the lockdown,
Lockdown imposed due to the ravaging beast,
That raged across rivers and over mountains,
Leaving behind ‘sorrow, tears and blood.’

Where were our sung heroes that ambushed wild beasts?
Couldn’t fairy godmothers wave their magic wand to wish it away?
Prize-winning scientists having found their wits’ end,
Left unbelievers giggling at monuments in New York and Rome.

Some blamed high-tech for upsetting the airwaves,
Clerics cited the Apocalypse,
Despondent denizens dazed by hand washing protocols
Decrined daily tirades of tranquil task forces
As, ‘Hollow sham for siphoning state funds,’
Rumouring claims that paupers were immune.
After all they say, “What a man doesn’t know won’t kill him.”
We may not have trapped it alive,
We may not have seen its strain under the prying microscope,
But we won’t forget the footprints of the invisible wolf, Called coronavirus.

ABOUT THE POET:
Simeon Osose Eidenoje-Okhaiye holds a Master of Laws degree from the prestigious University of Benin, Nigeria. He has several works to his credit, both published and unpublished. He developed love for literature due to early exposure to his father’s well-stocked home library which contained works of celebrated authors like William Shakespeare, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Cyprian Ekwensi, to mention only a few. He was also motivated by an elder sister who was an avid reader of books.
I look at the layer of my skin
and wonder about the saggy lines that riddled it,
It looks leathery and sinks my youth,
I mumble my eyelashes and my imagination journeys to many sections,
Of what had passed and what's still flurrying in the air like scattered ashes,
It rings in one mystic section,
And I think it's about something
I need to narrate to my grandkids,
A story of fear,
Triumph,
Water,
Masks,
Sanitizers
And defeat,
I want them to hear all about it,
So they could marvel at our iron-fisted strength,
I'll tell them,
About her invisibility and how she curled her figure as though a snail between us,
How she planted our buttocks at home and made our stomachs rumbled,
I'll demonstrate how we ceased to loiter in our streets, markets, churches and mosques
for thoughts that we will blend in crowds and such will piss her off to jerk our most private possessions,
And how some wise savings could save lives,
I'll let them know about everything,
But I will hide some parts of the story,
Which I know wouldn't symbolize any act of triumphing over evil,
I'll not tell them about how the poor starved because the amounts of money given for their aids are too precious for their dusty hands,
How they managed to lay down their shaky figures every nights only to wake up and have breakfast with their radios,
They listened,
To stories about millions and millions and millions,
For their aids,
They sighed and wondered how they didn't get a Penny from that share,
Maybe, 'The money is as invisible as the ailment,'
They thought.

ABOUT THE POET
Zainab M. Anka is a writer and poet. A graduate of Yasmin El-rufa’i Foundation manuscript writing workshop, 2019, her writings have appeared in many literary platforms. She breathes between the pages of books and appreciates nature.
CORONAVIRUS
BY AMAH-MERCY SAMUEL

Fear, chaos, staged pandemonium,
Fast shatter of baked forums,
Clutter of human: disaster's triumph.
Loudly sung, proudly slung,
The resounding dirge
Terror's sight, horror thrives
At misfortune's merge
Olympus has fallen
But not alone this time
For its victor is falling.

"Nemesis or blasphemy," they say
Dictator's torture, salvation's rupture
Surpassing hollows of defined nature
Beyond meteorologists claim
Perhaps, science's aim
COVID-19, endemic, no, pandemic
The new bulletin
Appraisal of your beloved, slain
Redemption of borders, drained
Your stigma, though dreadful, I'm sure would elapse.

We would care less if numbers be rising false
And pray on that none, next, is christened "gone"
To leaders and rulers,
Let's host a marriage
Of research, of science and seal of sacred,
The most high's preference.
To corona, our robber,
Let's see God's verdict
For this land, in due time,
Shall tell this story.
ABOUT THE POET
Amah-Mercy Samuel is a feminist, linguist, writer, poet and spoken words artiste. She is a dedicated volunteer with a great heart for humanitarianism. Being a survivor of sexual harassment, she is passionate about gender equality and an advocate for sexual abuse and the Girl Child education. She has volunteered for social services such as Editorial and Publishing Community Development Service, Makurdi, Benue State; AuntLanda Bethel Foundation, Lagos, to mention but a few. She is currently birthing a foundation of justice for the girl child. Amah is an enthusiast and lover of education. She is a linguist, lecturer and literacy coach at the Bookworm Cafe, Lagos. She is a graduate of Mass Communication with experiences as a news writer, Ray power, Daar communications PLC, Lagos, and Presenter/On Air Personnel (OAP), Radio Benue, Makurdi. She strives for balance and modesty in the society and world at large. She can be reached via her social media platforms, @itzamahmercy on Instagram, @Amah-Mercy Samuel on twitter and Amah Mercy on Facebook. Amah-Mercy Samuel writes from Lagos State, Nigeria.
DARK APRIL

BY LUKACHI NNEOMA

Coughing bodies heaving, restless
Ominous dread hanging, waiting
Ragged breathing, drawing, hissing
On each row death song echoes
Novel virus rules, experts whisper
Answers afar, science racing
Ventilating sorrows a beeping symphony
Infectious limbs wash the assurance
Rescue calls to hopeful hearts
Up together, restore victory's song
Safety in all places at last for us.

ABOUT THE POET

Lukachi Nneoma Ike-Akude is a writer, poet and female enthusiast. Founder of StandOut Woman Organization, she is a part-time lecturer at Shaka Polytechnic Benin City. Lukachi Nneoma Ike-Akude writes from Benin City Nigeria Edo State Nigeria.
TIME IN HISTORY CAME
BY IFUNANYA JULIET OTTIH

A virus came like a gale of hurricane
Dwindled lives amongst us in coffins
And latches us in a cage called home.

With stony faces, we gaze in silence,
As we are battered by famine and thirst.

We are like a hungry ghost,
buzzing for clothes, crawling for aid,
to protect us from the force of rogues.

Our hospitals were a sea of hope,
Swam by people with weary skins.
Where a three-dose of aspirin,
Cured their headache.

But now, our hospitals are morgues,
A path of exile, where we are tossed away.

Here, we can hear our children's groan
Calling time a thief that stole us from them.

The weeks crawled by until we meet them
We see them eaten up with hatred
Mistrust had poisoned their relationship.

We tell them of how history deteriorates,
And in time past had seen worst
We have become their evidence of hope again.

We are silent verses,
Where the rhyme glides noiselessly as an oar.
ABOUT THE POET
Ifunanya Juliet Ottih is a talented creative writer, poet, storyteller, public speaker, and debater. Many call her a personality with myriads of talent because of her insatiable urge for knowledge. She is a 400-level student of University of Calabar, where she studies Linguistics and Communication Studies. Her in-depth knowledge is born out of the unending concern for society and human behaviour towards their environment. Ifunanya Juliet Ottih writes from Crossriver State Nigeria.
THE COMMON ENEMY
GOKAH FRANKLIN YORM

You came as a thief in the night
And brought nothing along save for blight
You devour with all relentless might
But know this; we won't give up without a fight

You lay siege to our lungs
Envenoming us continually with your fangs
You deny us intimacy with our loved ones
Worst of all, you tend to stop our very hearts.

You have proved yourself a worthy opponent
Conquering nations as well as continents
Taking as booty millions of decedents
Looting souls of the ordinary besides the prominent

The entire human race is in such anguish
For all efforts have proved bluntish
And the quest for a cure undeniably brainish
For we contend with a foe rather brutish

Nonetheless, all hope is not lost
For we shall at all cost
With the tenacity and determination of Faust
Bring back that which is lost.

ABOUT THE POET

Gokah Franklin Yorm is a Ghanaian writer, aged 21. He is currently a student at the University of Cape Coast and reads Bsc. Psychology. In his leisure time, he loves to write essays and poems in hope of becoming an essayist and poet in the near future. Gokah Franklin Yorm writes from Cape Coast, Ghana.
**HUNGER THIEF**  
**BY JAJA GODSPOWER MELCHIZEDEK**

Every hashtag of the virus is loud  
But now the police brutality is louder  
Do you not see my nose mask?  
Yet you hit me  
Do you not see I’m trying to survive?  
Yet you beat me  
Who told you I do not love my life?  
Yet I must eat  
Do you wish I starve to death?  
Yet I must dare  
Dare or Die  
Which way Nigeria?

Thief! Thief!! Thief!!!  
Yells the angry mob of venomous brute  
More engulfing and thunderous was the roar  
Falling from the eyes of the bloodshot brute  
I saw him covered with blood, his own blood.  
We all steal but perhaps none of us is a thief.  
Perhaps, only when you are caught, you wear the crown of a thief.  
His streaming blood covered the earth like a stormy flood  
I could feel every strike piercing my soul like the Spears of Sparta  
Tons of heavy sticks and planks falling on him,  
Different inches of bricks raining on him.

They want to kill him,  
He is the thief, the thief they caught.  
And now they want justice, their jungle justice.  
What about the “agbada” and “khaki” men who steal and are caught?
No one seeks for justice,  
whether jungle or legal justice.  
But this is a hunger thief  
He wants to be meaningful to himself and society,  
But this dream is only an illusion due to the meaninglessness of the society.

We were in this together!  
His groans tell a thousand unseen and unheard stories from his bleeding eyes.  
He was stretching his hands towards me  
Perhaps, calling on a brother to save him.  
But this brother also needs to be saved.  
Or perhaps he is pointing to a partner in crime,  
I couldn’t save him.  
His breathe is gradually sniffing out from him.

The lacerations on his body maimed him, his eyes roll in death.  
Thief!!! They called him.  
Why couldn’t he beg?  
How can he beg, where can he beg, who will he beg from?  
When beggars are now givers and givers have nothing left to give?  
When we all are beggars, who then becomes our saviour?  
Because even the saviour needs to be saved?  
How many more hunger thief would they kill?  
Because we are scattered like sands on the bloody devilish streets.  
'Save him' is the cry of my silent whisper roaring in my head.  
A man in chains must not die in chains!  
Save him, save me, save us!!!  
Was the cry that rent the air.  
We are not the looters, the usurpers, or the legal criminals.  
The real thieves are in the brick houses and rock houses.  
They are in their castles and palaces.
We are not thieves, just a hunger thief.
LEGALISED RECLUSIVENESS
BY INTROVERT BLUE

Looming large like the sun, reeking of death
Making grocery shopping a sport of holding our breath
National lockdowns, corporate shutdowns, empty towns,
With facial frowns, we're learning new nouns.

Self-isolate and wait for fate in a calm state.
The spread is too great so cancel every date.
Stay at home and lock your gate.

We're being held hostage where we live
By a virus too vicious to forgive.
It's hard to believe, but life gives.

In one hospital lie different faces and races,
Breaking news reports new cases in different places,
Rumours and fear spread on a daily basis,
And the economy is paralysed beyond tying its own laces.

After years of jostling in the market street,
Of shaking hands as a way to greet
And loving cuddles for feeling a heartbeat,
It's sad to know that there's a risk if we meet.

I never knew the importance of a touch
Until a few rules constrained me to do such
This sounds new, but I've never missed my family this much.

One cannot see a friend, cannot farm the land
No sessions for the band and the music lovers understand
The postman cannot send letters meant to mend
Broken and failing hearts that need a hand
When will it end?

ABOUT THE POET
Introvert Blue is a high school student and a teenage poetess enthusiastic about socialism and storytelling, in general.
She writes from Mohale's Hoek, Lesotho.
O MOTHER, APHRODITE
BY ARATRIKA GANGULY

O Mother of the three realms
O Mother of love
O Aphrogenea
Hear my prayer
Hear my prayer, for I pray for all the Anthropos that walks
the earth.....
All the Anthropos: mortal and vulnerable
"Daughter of Zeus, Enchantress, I implore thee”
Heal the children of thy father’s mother; heal the children of
Gaia

Aphrodite Ourania
Lady of Cythera
Lady of laughter
Gaia is plagued by grippe now and only you can transform
her, all the
Anthropos walking on her.....
O mighty mother, who knows the various ways of love
Once again seduce the world with your power of love
Once again send your love-child Eros
Send Eros so that he can strike people with his love arrows all
over
again......

Aphrodite Epistrophia
Lady with golden locks
Lady of Desire
Hear my prayer
Come hither soon

Come as Gaia needs you more than ever
You who fought with death for Adonis must come here and
now and fight
for the world
Because if you do not arrive soon, all the Anthropos will be
sent to
Persephone forever and not for semi-yearly promenade
around the
sun..........

**ABOUT THE POEM**

This poem is inspired from the poems of the great lyric
poetess, Sappho and is also dedicated to Sappho. This poem
is my prayer to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love,
sexuality and beauty. May the earth heal speedily and her
children live with peace.

**ABOUT THE POET**

Aratrika Ganguly is a PhD student in the Dept. of
Comparative Indian Language and Literature, University of
Calcutta. Her areas of interest are: South Asian Literature,
Migration Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, African Literature,
Greek Literature and Feminism. Aratrika Ganguly writes from
Kolkata, India.
OUR WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

BY CHRIS GONOH

Have you come by to sling over my arm?
Like a slow and silent midnight train,
Lies the onset of Plagues. Sneeze ripped through my lungs.
My throat is loosed, within Seconds I flap cough.

To cope as a human I tried
Have you come to Sling over my arm,
I Live in the oven with no inhale.
As tension hovered around, am Close to my grave.

There's a place in my memory if I triumph not;
A hole of no return facing sunny North
Have you come by to sling over my arm?
I Borrowed hope. We can still strike.

Wide and wide we have no Crackling weapon,
But we shall keep to the preventive measures.
Our world has turned upside down,
Have you come by to sling over my arm?

ABOUT THE POET

Chris Gonoh, a young gifted writer and bookworm was born on 27th of July, 2004. He hails from Afokpella-Okpella, and is a bona fide student of Afokpella Secondary School. He is the youngest child in a Monogamous family of twelve. Chris Gonoh writes from Edo State, Nigeria.
THE PANDEMIC
BY SAMUEL OLOMU

Do not touch!
It is harmful
Your hands you should always wash
It is needful

You are only Nineteen '19
Powerful than our men of fifties
Now you are more than twenty '20; cos you are
Disturbing the peace of big cities

My people stay safe and do not go out
If you must go, then mask it
Believe in my precautions and have no doubt
Lest you end up in an unwanted casket

Boys and gentle girls
Let us refuse to be fazed
Our schools are soon resuming.
Be my guest
And we shall soon forget that which we have faced

You left the World Powers gripping in fear
Sorrow, humiliation, shame and heaviness of heart
Now they have addressed us with their tears
Seeing their subjects carried away for burial in their majestic cart

Now you are very proud;
Transporting yourself with the breeze
I believe you shall soon come to a dead end under this cloud
When everyone will be assured of their peace
Listen! You are soon becoming a thing of history
Then we shall have to remember our present predicament
To our children we shall unfold this mystery
And from your fall we shall pick entertainment

But; prevention is better than cure
I'm immune and always pure.

ABOUT THE POET
Samuel Olomu is an essayist, poet and motivational speaker.
He writes from Ogun State, Nigeria.
DEATHS IN OUR HANDS
BY JIDE OGISAN

Our world is shaking, bleeding and grasping for urgent fresh breath
Our dreams, our aspirations and projections curtailed by COVID-19
Angst all the world over, anxiety in the cities, countries and homes

Wuhan, a city of prosperity, but now known for bringing this death
China! A country of technology, but now known for deadly virus, why?
Deaths everywhere, black, white, young, old, man and woman
COVID-19, a fearful name all over the globe, you are dreadfully wicked

Go! You must go! Now is the time.
We have lost people all the world over, we have lost friends, family, even foes
The world is breathless, gasping for fresh breath days and nights
The world is shaking, jiggling, agitating and panicking over you
This uninvited, unwanted, and unwished human killer
We shall all overcome this deadly, deathly, dreadful and dreaded virus!

ABOUT THE POET
Jide Ogidan, a lecturer in the department of languages, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Nigeria, has some published and unpublished works in pragmatics, short stories and anthology of poems.
TOMORROW WILL NOT BE LIKE TODAY
BY SAMUEL EDET

The dark clouds in the sky have no silver lining
The skies rain blood
There is no water in the river anymore
Everywhere is a cemetery
With fractured skulls and broken bones littered all around
We have not seen this sight before.

No one knows just yet how long the abnormal will remain the new normal
How long before we can shake hands without trembling?
Will the day of victory come soon?
Science seems to have no answer
Neither does society possess a clue
But we are certain of a few things like the coming of tomorrow.

Tomorrow will come
And it won’t be like today
Tomorrow, the day we will look back at this pestilence with joy in our hearts
Contented that our tribulation went the way of vanity.

ABOUT THE POET:
Samuel Edet is a graduate of Political Science from the University of Calabar, Nigeria. Aged 22, he is a writer, budding scholar and keen observer of international affairs.
WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE
BY OLUWAOJOBA OLADEJI

Stuck in your thoughts and caged in your house.
Now I say let the birds fly,
For if they enjoyed their stay they would be back.

Freedom the word of a wise man but we are all foolish,
How then do we hate ourselves for being this way?
Why are we so paranoid?
When this is all we have done to nature,
How then is the meal bitter when we cooked it?
No one ever said a lie is sweet but we know the truth is bitter.

For now, let’s all enjoy what we’ve done,
Hopefully, a day would come when the sun would shine on us,
The stars give us those twinkles,
The old would find their beautiful wrinkles,
Birds would sing melodiously,
The rivers would stream till there is an ocean of beauty,
The branches of trees would lead us to the tier where the healing fruit is,
Karma came from Mother Nature, bastard it is not.

Surely,
For now let’s pray,
Someday it would rain again,
Every now and then.
Amen.

ABOUT THE POET
Oluwajooba Oladeji is a student of the university of Ibadan in his 3rd year studying Wood Products Engineering. He loves to write, a fast way to express his feelings at all times. His
writing has been featured on some blogs like the naked convos, e.t.c

Oluwajooba Oladeji writes from Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
TRESPASSERS
BY ONYEABOR GIFT

Why is everyone gay
when even every gay
Is dumping from gay?
Is she not in the Nigerian ray?
Even at the back behind Nigerian hay.

Why is everyone outside
when she is not by the bedside?
She is in Lagos by the beach side
and no one in 9ja sees her jeopardous strides.

Even the sea is troubled
the oceans looking crumbled
seeing her viperous bubbles
the citizens are noble
but the leaders trouble the humble.

Corona can be a hurdle
but not worse than poverty's bundles
and now hunger is on the double
so Corona can go to Google,
see what bully we are and why sicknesses all got bundle,
right here and off the Nigerian puddle
let alone an alien-intruder trespassing in our puzzles.

ABOUT THE POET
Onyeabor Gift is a graduate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, where she obtained BA in English and Literary Studies in 2017. She is also a graduate of Confucius Institute where she studied Chinese Language.
Born on 5th of December, she loves writing so much.
Although she cannot stop herself from scribbling a poem or two whenever she sits with a pen and paper; typing still proves a great challenge to her, while pen seems to do the magic. She loves to read and write, but she is somewhat more in love with poetry. She also likes watching movies and travelling. She admires Emily Dickson, and loves works of Chinua Achabe.

Onyeabor Gift writes from Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.
SURELY

BY MAUREEN ONYINYE KENNETH

OK! I've heard it, enough of it,
It shouldn't be just all about it,
because there was happiness,
love, smiles, joy before it
Don't make it sound like it's over

Choose your words well
Be mindful of what you hear
Your belief might be strong
Yet it's not enough
To defeat the unleashed

Listen to them when they say
"Wear the nose mask,
Sanitize your hands,
Stay away from the crowd,
Stay on healthy diet"

Apply hard work and do your best
The deed is done
But the deed can be solved
We could Change this fate with faith
Don't exclude the good work

There will be no more crying
We could do all of these
Sure we need a grace to survive
It isn't my grace, or yours or.....
It's only by God’s grace!
ABOUT THE POET
Maureen Onyinye Kenneth is a poet, a fiction writer, an orator, and a blogger @maureenkenneth.com. She was recognized as one of the top ten young Nigerian poets by BN Magazine in 2019. She was also recognized as the Best Female Writer of the Month —January 2020, by the Society of Young Nigerian Writers. In 2019, one of her works titled 'Ndida, the Home of the Legend' was published in the Chinua Achebe Poetry/Essay Anthology, Arrows of words.
NIGHTINGALE

BY KOLAWOLE ADEBOWALE

This rain has beaten our skin,
why does it not wash away our spots?
This night too will pass,
we are not fashioned to be ripped off our pasts

This Nightingale may tarry long after,
In our bed bugs draught and wrath it may offer,
from our cold lungs but like acacia seeds,
we will sprout with open limbs ever standing on the banks of distant rivers.

We, are made in one thread to fail, to fall and to fight to rise with all our might and to be made right Just before our eyes and to shine whiter, than street lights

This rain shall not beat our roofs alone It shall wet our wombs.
ABOUT THE POET
Kolawole Adebowale is a poet, playwright, blog writer. As an emerging literary man, he stealthily enjoyed his obeisance and immersion to African heritage. He has been measured up to the standard of sophisticated literature. He has written over 50 poems in gallery, including Song of a Widow, Bond, Summer Holidays, Independence, July Lollies, and The Mystery of Babylon which gave him a flawless ground in Poetry City Poetry Contest. His writings show a profound exploration of human themes and concerns through the unique exploitation of his cultural milieu. He has claimed a notable number of prizes for his contribution to literature. Kolawole Adebowale writes from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
SILENCER PLAGUE
BY ISRAEL AKINOLA OLATUNJI

This eerie voice
that quickens me awake each day,
and leads me to sleep.
The day's insipid, and
I'm clueless of the night.

The town crier still shouts:
'To thy tent O! Israel'.
and from ear to ear, the wind transports the message.
The silence is blinding,
except generators and trailer voices,
that I see sometimes.

'Our visitor is a tiny little enemy'.
Daddy in America said so.
But our visitor has killed many a souls.
Many lost in an untimely sleep at noon.

"It's a power play son
all we can is but pray,"
Says our loving and confused priest.
I'm seeking refuge in the highlands: spiritual,
and bored in this hut: terrestrial.
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ABOUT THE POET
Israel Akinola Olatunji is a writer with a didactic tone. An author of over a 100 poems (published and unpublished), he majors in poetry and prose.
He is very passionate about passing a message to the world, through his writing.
Israel Akinola Olatunji writes from Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.
ENMITY OF LIFE

BY HAEKIN MIKE

Humanity at war,
Against a plague of great terror,
Leaving world's powers in fear
Activities took to their heel,
Restrictions are on human movement,
It’s too early for a farewell.

The ocean waters now kill it occupants,
An enemy with no phiz, more than a disease
Pharmaceutical giant are scared of the worse
The soil is no longer loamy
No one to help, not even our science.

Sanitize your hand; this will pass
It would be fine, they promise
We all hope for the best and prepare for the worse
Hunger has taken its toll
The only way to feed for some, revolts around violence.

A threatening Philistine,
Troubling both old and teens.
While the world was clamouring for a change,
Like a challenge, you came.
Poetic justice of ancient lineage
Annihilating man's courage!

Humans live in the fringe of life,
Yet we dance to an optimistic melody,
We smile deeply in anxiety,
As we sit isolated calling on the heavenly,
Against the Goliath of our time
Challenging the whole of humanity to a fight.
ABOUT THE POET

Haekin Mike writes from Lagos State, Nigeria.
A THIEF IN OUR NIGHT
BY TOPE ASHAOLU

A thief in our night again
This time around he is not ready to steal parts
But after the undivided
Aye! He is after the uncut and rounded bloods
As he keeps raping, sinking and digging our graves

Sometimes I tend to dagger this current moon
As it was revealed as a pace that gives a space for the thief
But when I call to mind again about
who can pass through a weeping window,
without even blessing its foot
Then I bethink this month is just a pretty lass,
that hell passes through in luring a man

But who shall write to hell that keeps sucking our survivor?
Who shall present a template of seeking clemency to him?
Who shall lift the weight of many voices to him?
And who shall borrow us a mask of rigidity?
In order to stand and ask what the abyss sprite wants from us.

ABOUT THE POET
Tope Ashaolu is a Yoruba-born poet, raised in Kwara State, where had his primary and secondary education. He has feature in some poetry competitions, including the 2017 Chrysolite Wordwar, where he emerged as the 2nd runner-up, among others competitions.
He is studying currently at the Federal University, Oye Ekiti. Tope Ashaolu writes from Ekiti State, Nigeria.
WHERE ARE THE SENSES OF OUR SILENCE?
After the knife has cut our hands
The feverish torments diseased the hearts
Weeping deeply into our minds
The strain our eyes are raining out like rainfall.

What has been our sin?
In the earth, oh human being!
The world is not at rest
Individual nurtures life with hard pressure
Through which the soul may be taken off.

Here, a virus birthed at China
Threatening the lives of the world
At infancies, pandemic as its name
Ranging from the state of Italy
Recorded deaths, what bows minds into its grief.

Is there any trace of the cause?
Of what intimidates human into deep grief
What at this time brings relief?
To the minds that virus puts weariness.

Coronavirus is a tame visitor
Who inherits its host with melancholy
Before the natural death comes their way
Accidentally, the world witnesses tremble
That original transform the comfortable zones of the world.
All the world raise their voice
Pleading to the Most Powerful God
To intervene, send his peace agent
To the world for merciful rain
And wash away the deadly pandemic.

**ABOUT THE POET**

Abdulganiyu Abdulrahman Akanbi is a 200-level student of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. A native of Ilorin, Kwara State, he is campus journalist and currently the Auditor General of the National Association of Campus Journalist (NACJ), UDUS. Abdulganiyu Abdulrahman writes from Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
THE 3RD WORLD WAR
BY OKECHUKWU ONUEGBU

'Like play, like play'
Blood of the king
Blood of the queen
Blood of the subjects
Has been sucked
Not by deadly ogbunigwe;
The historic Biafran booooom!
But a microscopic visible god.

From Ngwere-agbago stream
To the Pacific Ocean,
"Ground no level."
If you don't stay home
Wash or sanitise
You test positive!
Isolate or quarantine
Turn negative or earth.

The contagion
Withdrew travellers' breaths.
Some denied beds
Some suck her breasts!
The poorest wail in dungeon
WHO, when would this war end?
Can't you consult the African herbs?

ABOUT THE POET
Okechukwu Onuegbu is the MD/CEO of Devoice Creative Network, a literary firm based in Awka, Anambra State.
Onuegbu is a journalist and blogger, and has authored two
collection of poems — 'Songs from a Solemn Mind', and 'Mirror of the Minds'; a short story — 'The Mysterious Housekeeper'; a health book — 'Diet Guides'; a novel (waiting publication); some acted plays and others. He is happily married with children.
CATACOMBS
BY ANIMASHAUN AMEEN

a country fell from the sky and
broke the world into two.
ask me the origin of bodies
and i'll show you the
scripts written on the face of
the lost ones. over this border,
there is a country crawling out of herself
only to find herself crawling back into herself.
say Italy and a dead bird will try to
crawl its way out of your throat and
flee for freedom.
or say Spain and a
city full of dead things will erect
at the tip of your tongue and threaten to drown you.

i once listened to a man describe the process of cremation –
how the skin thaws in contact with fire and
how the brain melts into the mouth before drying up.
every time i close my eyes,
i see bodies wilting like flowers waiting to be tossed into
mass graves.
i see children searching the pages of tomorrow
hoping to find their mothers calling out to them,
i see dreams plummeting from the sky and crashing into
nothingness;
i see death waiting on every doorstep and every time,
i cry, and i cry,
and i die.
ABOUT THE POET
Animashaun A. Ameen, is a 19-year old Nigerian poet, and a student of University of Ilorin. He lives and writes from Lagos State, Nigeria.
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

By OWOBU MERCY

As I sat quietly on the sofa
Looking at how the world is going
What the world never bargained for
Has now started hunting all of us
Leaving us with heavy hearts of fear

Will this pandemic end the world?
A disease that's no respecter of anyone
The only disease that made the world hopeless
Forcing us to hide in fear
In a world that belongs to us

The awesome COVID-19 pandemic
The disease that left the rich powerless
If money could ever buy a cure
They would have bought it all from the market
Leaving the poor to die like insects
The rulers and leaders of men
Upon their knees are crawling without succour
COVID has really made people realise
That the rich and poor are truly the same

As the kings and their poor subjects
Share same fate in the hand of COVID
As millions of people are hungry
So also millions are hopeless
Thousands already are in the grave
Many others are at the verge of ruin
Very many weary hearts are shrinking
Many untimely death litter the globe
All bcos of COVID-19 pandemic
ABOUT THE POET

Owobu Mercy is a student of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria, where she studies Mass Communication. She loves reading and writing.
The shooting of your arrows of death,
Shooting without pausing,
Shooting without ceasing
Has sent thousands to their grave!
And the shooting of the arrows still
Killing, killing and killing!
And sending and sending
More and more to their grave, early grave!
Causing the recoil of the world into its shell
Like a snail in the harmattan season;
Snatching from us our way of life
And imposing on us another way of life:
Never hugging or kissing
Never crowding or handshaking,
Never sneezing naked sneezing,
For this will invoke your wrath!
And we’ve been docile;
But to no avail, and on you went shooting,
Shooting your arrows of death;
Shooting without pausing and ceasing
And sending us to our grave, early grave!
What is our crime?
COVID-19! COVID-19!
You’re a MONSTER! You’re heartless!
Remember COVID-19, remember,
Remember there was a Pharaoh;
But today, where is he?
Time shall tell the tale.
ABOUT THE POET
Abubakar Terkimbi Saidu read English and Literary Studies at the Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue State. He is a poet, playwright and a short story writer. Abubakar Terkimbi Saidu writes from Benue State, Nigeria.
SPROUTING OF GREEN LEAVES IN A BURNT LAND
BY IFEANYI JOHN NWOKEABIA

Pandemic fire burns our earth
Leaving its inhabitants in vulnerable fear
Tomorrow becomes an endless journey
Outside homes have turned hostile
As no one goes out without a pounding heart
Python has swallowed our peace
And we are left at the mercy of the maker.

This fire is a respecter of none
It spreads its tentacles with reckless abandon
Daring the powers of the medicos
Whose efforts are jeopardized and rendered fruitless
Death tolls keep our eyes’ rivers flowing
Every breaking of morn increases our calculation
Who did wrong and who do we run to?

Its victims wriggle in pains and heartbreaks
As the thoughts of endless unachieved goals churn up
They wail and fight the unseen enemy just to live
But the enemy’s missiles of cough, fever and low breath
Defile every boundary that tries to resist its fangs
Gradually it burns its victims’ soul to ashes
But should we give up hope and fail to live?

The pregnant cloud brings rain to drizzle
And the roaring storms help the sea to shake off stress
This fire that clears the garden of our earth
Denying it, its commercial, educative, agricultural... activities
Will one day, quench; and green leaves shall sprout and flourish
And life will become once more hilarious and normal.
ABOUT THE POET

Nwokeabia, Ifeanyi John is a poet and teacher. He hails from Nibo in Anambra State, Nigeria. He is a tutor of the English Language and Literature.
THIS HARD TIME SURELY WILL PASS
BY OLATUBOSUN DAVID

A song comes
In the power of a sacred muse
We sing at every crossroads
That all may wake and ward off
The looming disaster
But very few seem to understand our reasons

We make our bata beat*
In the voice of a watchman
We make our ọjà play**
In the manner of a skilful flutist
That all may heed and watch
But only few are able to fathom
The adage of our bata beat

The atmosphere -
A mixture of songs of joy and sorrow
Distant folks are perturbed

An evil bird flies across borders
With the venom of adder
The threnody of those bearing its peck
Provides outflow of tears
That plead for mercy of the Merciful
The spirits of the gone victims also speak
In the cold of the dead night
Pleading for the listening ears of the living
To take cover indoor
The great God speaks, men turn deaf ears
Asking only for the mercy of God
That we refused
When this storm shall be over
We may never again be the same.

Note:
bata – a drum type used in Yoruba land
*ojà – a locally made flute used in Igbo land

ABOUT THE POET
Olatubosun David is a Nigeria writer and poet. A graduate of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State (since 2013), he currently works in Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.
COVID-19: A LAMENTATION
BY SUNDAY AFOLAYAN

When from far off I saw you approaching
From the Wuhan City of Hubei Province
With your novel gift of deadly carrot
A mere play or drama 'me thinks it was'
But surely my prognosis was proved untrue

In shining China I saw you first romancing
You crept in like a childish guest unnoticed
And not a single one amongst the seers
Ever knew you as the albatross of nations

Oh Coro! Oh Corona! Father of all viruses
You’re the cankerworm of global lockdown
The evil pest that darkens the sunny sky
The plague that makes the world go tremble
You fight the world without a single canon
Deadlier is your sting than the bomb of Hitler
Never in a century has the world suffered
A terrible blow like the heavy punch of yours
You spread abroad beyond the farthest coasts
You captured the mountains and valleys and hills
Like a dunghill smoke without a finite course

He who embraces the kisses of your mouth
Is fast heading for the deepest of graves
He who dares your touch as if it’s attar
On the way he's bound to the pit of hell
You rid from our towns and also the cities
The jolly traffic of people in diverse directions
With your deadly grip upon the lungs of men
And the venom you poured at random around
You wiped off the bliss from the faces of all
The songs we sing around the streets in melodies
Are now the threnodies that fill our mournful hearts
The neighbours and friends who once sat in group
The same you set apart like hermits in holes
The grooms and their brides are no longer united
For the fear of a demon that puts lovers asunder
You're the masquerade that no one must hobnob
The demonic dragon that knows no appeasement
You're, indeed, the terror the Scriptures fore-told
That walketh about in the dead of the night
You are the arrow the Psalmist fore-warned
That flieth in its fury in the cover of the dawn
You’re the pestilence that lurks in darkness
The ruin in the noonday that wasteth (in hundreds)
A thousand have fallen by your lethal venom
And thousands are falling to your cruel attack
The kings and their subjects, the rulers and the ruled
Are hapless and helpless, and hopeless, ill-fated

Bad virus! Wicked virus! COVID19 - the Hades
The demonic angel from the bottomless pit
May you live but just for only a short while
May your days be cut off upon the mother earth
May your violent wind that blows across the gale be calm
May the tide be silent, may your whirlwind be still

May the siege you placed upon our roof-tops
May the mercies of God contain the brutish assault
To free the world from your claws of death.

ABOUT THE POET
Sunday Afolayan, author of "Beyond the Silent Grave" and other titles, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Nigeria.
MONSTER OF THE ERA
BY OLADEYOINBO ABDUN AYOADE

The land shakes, mother earth crying.
It’s outlandish, never heard of in times long.
It has no boundary, not even demarcation.
It doesn’t want to know, whether you’re white or colour.
The mysterious soldiers cloned in Lab.
But, they’re on the trial of their host.
It boomerangs; seems rich of the host attacked.

The altar is scanty, so also shrine dried.
Only the crucifixion can be seen and pinnacle of dome,
That of the mosque.
No wonder, the altar in cell so also the ablution.
It causes tremor and terrific in its spoilage.
No laden wind to convey hawk, either to the West or East.
They also fear to go, because it comes from there.

It is a respecter of no one,
even the creators and paraphernalia.
It removes them, as monkey removes cob from its stalk.
Never saw a monster unequivocal as this!
Wild child of mother devil.

I know you came by virtue of rebellion.
They conspired with you to invade our land.
Those who have lost their sanity.
But, were caught in their gimmicks, because of your non-
discriminatory.
Who is going to deliver them from supposed conspiracy?

However, the monster has a rule which he also respects,
Confine to your sell that you may live.
Let your chick breath and gasp from within.
Thus, it will soon stop its storm
The rain will soon come over our drought.
Indeed, there is a pandemic. But the famine will end

ABOUT THE POET

Oladoyinbo Abiodun Ayoade who hails from Igbeti is a PhD Student of Psychology at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
UPON CORONA
BY CHIKAMSO OKOYE

I heard the world is coming to an end
The state of Earth, no one can comprehend
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the Earth
The best that might happen to us is death.
It really hit the world hard from behind
To the extent we put our differences aside
Instead of Join Focus to fight this Virus
No more terrorism, racism or some looting of funds
The world seeks ways to break this pandemic bond
Across Asia, Europe and America
Across Australia, even in Africa
Death tolls pile up day by day
The world is doomed! What more can I say?
We are not sure again of the air we breathe or food we eat
Our livelihoods are now by chances
We depend on mere facemasks, gloves and some sanitizer for survival
All of a sudden, we've run to God for revival
forgetting that we are pathological sinners
That this could be the consequences of our blunders
I hope we rethink after this round
And I pray God forgive our errors and heal our land
As we STAY SAFE!

ABOUT THE POET
Chikamso Okoye (poetically known as Mr Focus), is a writer, rhymester and spoken word artiste. A 400-level student of English Language and Literature, in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, he has written so many works and produced so many too. Chikamso Okoye writes from Anambra State, Nigeria.
How do we win this in a crowded world?
Self-isolation that leads to being bored
Social distance to fight the virus born
Many lives trying to stay strong are torn

We are at risk to what we didn't form
From kitchen the problem has come
Now we freely can't cough or sneeze
You do so and you're told to freeze

Solution to the pandemic is being alone
Ghost town, no movement just phone
Real time lives are lost, while number goes up
You and I will not drink from this cup

The government is doing what it can
Self-isolation is key to winning this war

ABOUT THE POET
Ode Clement Igoni is a Civil Engineer who also has passion for art, and expresses himself through poetry and other forms of writings. He is the self-published author of three poetry chapbooks titled '20th March', 'Green Words', and 'Sonnets of a Mortal'. Ode Clement Igoni writes from Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria.
BECAUSE THE SUN STILL SHINES
BY TOMÁS Ó CÁRTHAIGH

Because the sun still shines
As it did in plagues before
We know that there were better times
To come, there will be more.

We know not what is to come,
Thank God we cannot see the signs,
Let us be content when times are bad
Because the sun still shines...

ABOUT THE POET
Tomás Ó Cárthaigh (whose name in English form is Thomas Carty) writes from Ireland.
PERILOUS DAYS
BY ADEPOJU ISAIAH

On every street of man,
Lies scraggy bones, lifelessly
on the ground
Every handshake, a little suspicious!
A slight sneezing, everybody takes cover
And soldiers troop in with
Heavy artillery; buildings crumble and rumble,
Heaven and earth unamended and,
The hosts of earth with sanitizers and gloves.

ABOUT THE POET

Adepoju Isaiah is a writer and a member of Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Osun State Chapter. He is currently a Jambite warming up for admission into a higher institution. Isaiah writes from Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.
**JOY IN THE LEAD**

**BY AKACHI ORJI**

Are you by the rivers; a bruised reed?
Whine not about what you need
Whether you have dough to knead
Or for a morsel to feed you plead
Let nothing stampede of David
Not even the evil deed of 19-covid
Evergreen is the shepherd's 23rd creed
Heed its voice of hope and be freed
Free is the tree of life; none can bid
Cheer if you have breath; be not morbid.

**ABOUT THE POET**

* Akachi Orji is an ardent writer, and has a plethora of poetry collections to his credit.
* He writes from Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
AFRICA WHERE ARE THY POWERS?
BY IZUNNA OKAFOR

Africa Africa Africa!
Oh the once mighty and heroic Africa
Why have thou grown so cold?
Why have thou remained thus numb?

A fremd is here in thy enclave
Battling thy home without mercy
And battering thy all in thy all
Before thy very eyes, oh Africa!

Thy peace is stolen
And fear injected in thy veins
With thy activities all at halt
All by same unwelcome visitor.

Thy hands are caged
And thy mouth silenced with mask
While thy children die in numbers
Before thy very eyes, oh Africa!

Hunger is dire in the land
Yet thy children are home and docked
For the fear of the fremd
And thou dost nothing.

Thou keepest quite, oh Africa!
In the midst of all these
Waiting for the Whites to solve thy puzzle
And the world to come to your rescue.
When hast thou grown lazy, Africa?
Where are thy ecumenic powers?
Where are thy roots and thy foods?
What happened to thy herbs?
Why art thou dependent on the Whites?
Why hope on them for solution?
Why look akimbo, oh Africa?
Can't solution come from thee?

Are thy bushes there in vain?
Thy creatures and powers to create
Africa, recall thy deeds in the past
And might and beauty in the days of old.

Arise, oh Africa, to save the world
For a fremd has trapped the earth
And the key with the earth remains
Arise oh Africa, and find ye the key.

Arise, Africa, Arise
Leverage thy powers and flowers
The world is waiting for your
Arise, oh Africa, arise.
JUST CORONAVIRUS ? (An Acrostic)

BY IZUNNA OKAFOR

Judgemental and impromptU
Sounded your arrival and your hiT

Consternation entrenched by a ganeV
Obstinate than the yet lethal tsutsugamushi
Rotting down the earth as skulls in eerie sepulchreR
Oblivious of the world's long wail and its ever increasing vU
Nauseous, tortuous and hideous to creatures in all ramifications
Are you a plague, wrath, trial, or something else; what really are you?

ABOUT THE POET

Izunna Okafor is an award-winning Nigerian novelist, poet, journalist, essayist, editor, translator, publicist, Igbo language activist and administrator who hails from Ebenator in Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. He writes perfectly in English and Igbo languages, and has published several books in both languages. He has received over 25 awards, and has over 3000 articles published online, both nationally and internationally, cutting across creative writing and journalism.
ESSAYS
COVID-19: THE WORLD AND I
BY ILEMONA ABRAHAM

The world swims in the turbulent waters of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its consequent unrest and destabilization of normal life. As we continue to swim through and against the tide of this pandemic, we all ought to embark on a soul searching mission, reflection and some kind of personal analysis. These will help us not only to stay safe and overcome the moment, but also to plan and live the life beyond –years to come.

When we dot our I's and cross our T's properly, we will know without being prophetic that the following facts are obvious:

First: this will linger till about midyear (June-July) globally.
Second: the world will never remain the same.

In the light of the aforementioned realities, we all should ask ourselves very important questions such as: am I going to be counted among the survivors? And if I am privileged to be, how prepared, well equipped am I for the upcoming reality? Am I really updated and on an even pace with global realities? How can I be relevant to myself and to the people of the new globe?

Let us imagine or think around some postulations. Presume that the COVID-19 pandemic is a plot to depopulate the world. If that is the case, the smartest quote that comes to mind here is that of Charles Darwin's on evolution —"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives; it is the one that is most adaptable to change."

Can my present state of mind and value added to the society stand the new global realities, or, am I going to be redundant
in very few months and years to come? In my place of work, considering my skills and certifications, am I going to be laid off? Can my company/firm do without me?

Even if you are working for the government, let me shock you: many nations are going bankrupt in their GDPs and Foreign Reserves, which obviously Nigeria is not exempted from, considering her position in the world's poverty map. This implies that there is every tendency that Government may not be able to pay salaries in months or years to come. Faced with this reality, this biblical steward's soliloquy (in Luke 16:3) comes to mind: "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed."

And I wish to add (on a lighter note): "Stealing? Death and jail terms await me." Therefore, everyone has to think outside the box to survive.

Let us imagine another postulation: presuming COVID-19 Pandemic is a global war between China and America or the G8 countries — United States of America, Russia, Canada, Japan, Germany, Italy, France and United Kingdom. This brings to mind, the common African proverb that says "When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." This means that the weak gets hurt in conflicts between the powerful.

Where does my country Nigeria fall in in this analogy with regards to its political, economic, technological status? Obviously IT IS in the weak category. Therefore, if the big guys are fighting, Nigeria and many other African countries will surely get hurt. No more charity funds, because more money will be needed by those nations to fight their 'wars'. There will be little or no foreign investors, which implies consequently less money for the government to sustain their luxury not to even talk of remembering the Masses.
And remember when I talk about being relevant to the new globe, it is not only about Nigeria. Let me ask you; if after Covid19 Pandemic, you are granted an Express Visa to America or any of the advanced countries, what impact are you going to create? How relevant will you be to that country? What will you be doing to survive? It is not enough to say "I will Hustle" remember that is not your comfort zone and not your father's land.

Worthy of note, is the fact that the problem of Nigeria is not only about President Muhammadu Buhari; because the next three presidents of Nigeria are going to dish to us same or similar governance. You know why? The political system and atmosphere is already toxic; so it is going to be somewhat difficult for any government to make things right. We are yet to see that determination and plan in any of them.

So faced with all these realities, what is going to keep one going in the new global order. Primarily gain more self-discipline, Learn more skills, be (at least) cyber literate. Beyond the social media, what else do you know about the cyber world? Be open-minded and malleable; be innovative.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ilemona Abraham is an ardent reader, a postgraduate student of Clinical Psychology, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. He is an advocate of self-sufficiency through innovations. Abraham writes from FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, and strongly identifies with social issues
WAITING FOR HAPPY DAYS
BY MARSHALL GU

Samuel Beckett is renowned for his work in “Theatre of the Absurd,” a type of drama focussing on when meaning ceases to exist. In language. In memory. In life. For example, in Waiting for Godot, two characters wait and wait and nothing happens. Godot never shows up.

This is not an essay on Waiting for Godot because that would be too on-the-nose at a time like this. Instead, this is an essay on Happy Days, a play written just over a decade after Waiting for Godot.

Happy Days similarly revolves around stasis, except it is arguably more profound in Happy Days. There are only two characters on stage, as opposed to Godot’s five (and implied sixth). One of those characters is Winnie, who is physically unable to move as she is “Imbedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound,” and by the second act, she is buried neck-down and no longer able to move her head. Typical for Beckett, there is no explanation of how we got here, just that this is the way things are now.

To pass the time and to distract herself from her suffering, she attempts to communicate with her husband, Willie, and relies on a daily routine to keep herself busy as she laments happier days. For example, she starts her day in prayer before brushing her teeth, and then rummages through her bag to take out various items - the toothbrush, the toothpaste, her spectacles - for the purposes of examining and polishing them; more text is given to how she handles these items than her actual speech (mostly to herself, as her husband barely communicates with her) such that the
importance of her rituals with these items cannot go unnoticed.

Famously, one of the characters in *Endgame* declares “Habit is a great deadener,” and that readily applies to Winnie in *Happy Days*. Despite her absurd situation - sinking lower and lower to the ground; forgetting the unforgettable - she keeps her optimism up. “Oh, this is a happy day, this will have been another happy day!” she exclaims in the play’s end.

Is there a more relatable character than Winnie in the pandemic era? Certainly, staying at home feels like a physical restriction as much as Winnie’s situation does, albeit to a much lesser extent. And we should consider ourselves lucky if there is someone to talk to, if at all. But there is much that we can learn from Winnie in times like these - we can still be happy.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Marshall Gu, has had his short stories and poems published by the Dalhousie Review, the Spadina Literary Review and Untethered Magazine. Additionally, he is a music writer for Tone Glow, and was previously a contributor to Popmatters and Pretty Much Amazing. Marshall Gu writes from Toronto, Canada.*
UNCERTAINTY
BY SAKINAH YUSUF

It all started with a single cough; itching the throat and tightening the chest. Now, it's echoing fear and pain; failing economy, defying religion and science, bringing food crisis, detaining the masses at home without trials, killing hundreds of thousands and infecting millions more..... Indeed the killer virus roams

It started in Wuhan, China, from epidemic now to pandemic as was declared by World Health Organization (WHO) in 11 March 2020; now shutting the world, now blooming of uncertainty. There is no cure yet, hence, the world shivers.

The media play a vital role because that's where people look up to for credible information. However, here in Nigeria, the issue of denying the existence of the killer virus once brewed, to the credit of incredible information. Most people were like: "What is the name of the Italian man who was claimed to have brought the virus to Nigeria?"

"Where is his picture?"

"We didn't know and didn’t see."

"What did they use to cure the people who have recovered, since they say there's no cure?"

"Who are there, and where are their pictures?"

"What happened to all the money that individuals, corporate bodies and countries have been donating to the government, from which the Federal Government claims it has released billions in the name of the killer virus....while more people die of hunger?"

These are all fear of uncertainty.
And one may wonder, ‘When will all this fear of uncertainty end?’

Food crisis is another alarming case on the increase, as several malnourished children now abound while hunger kills scores in lockdown. Businesses are closed, no palliatives from government there is high cost of food prices, which gradually leads many Nigerians to their early grave.

The killer virus affected our social, religious, educational and economic life, banned us from visitations and travels. Mosques and churches closed, and our schools shut till further notice, while our economy which depends on oil falls with oil price.

Notwithstanding these negativities, there is always a beauty in tragedy. The air is clean, as there is reduction in pollution. The period has helped parents to get more acquainted with their kids. It has strengthened the family bond in greater ways. It has offered a perfect time to learn that skill, which work and school did not give you chance to learn. It has offered enough chance for that cuisine you always wanted to try, and those books stacked up in shelves. It has also revived praying together as a family.

Though without any cure yet, we still unburden to our creator in hope that there will be an end to this uncertainty, being optimistic that we will surely overcome this.

There are some guidelines we can follow to keep ourselves safe, such as; obeying the law of staying at home, covering mouth while coughing and sneezing with a tissue or into our elbows; regularly washing our hands, avoiding touching our faces, social distancing, avoiding unnecessary travels, and staying away from crowded places. It is better not to flaunt any of these rules and be safe at home, than ending up in isolation centres alone with your life hanging on a thin thread.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sakinah Yusuf is a student of Bayero University Kano, and lives Kaduna State, Nigeria.
It seems insensitive to title an essay ‘LAFTA’ at a time when the world is reeling in sadness, right? Humanity has reached the point where the presence or absence of a ventilator can make a difference between living and dying for those who contract COVID-19. For a few, catching the virus literally allows them to die in peace. No crowd of mourners; just you, confined to your corner in an isolation centre.

Rather than insensitive, I would say ironic. Yes, it is ironic because happiness is a choice, and in extension, laughter. Sadly, it took a great pandemic to restore families to factory settings. Parents now spend more time with their children rather than ‘dumping’ them in schools or leaving them with a nanny.

Rewind to my childhood days, my dad was a petty trader—he still is. He left before 6 in the morning and returned at 10 pm. This meant I barely saw him some days. The only day I had to spend with him was Sundays, but he was always too tired from accumulated fatigue and preferred to sleep almost throughout the day. If there was a way I could make him to #StayHome and play with me, I would have. Sadly, I now know there is a way—albeit too late. I bet many children across the globe would wish this sweet moment they share with their parents lasts forever.

To curtail the spread of the virus, many governments are enforcing lockdowns to buy time while the world looks around for the antidote. Lockdown has brought sanity to our atmosphere. There is now a dip in air pollution. However, it has also brought the global economy to its knees. For countries like Nigeria that were hitherto heavily indebted,
recession looms like the cumulus cloud that comes before the rain. Again, what is the lesson to learn from this?

Before now, some categories of jobs were termed ‘secure’. Mischievous individuals within some of these organizations who are in charge of recruitment exploited people’s desperation for this ‘security’ in job racketeering. I was once told by a friend to pay N2 million for a job. I didn’t have, so, I am still unemployed.

Obviously, the only secure job is agriculture. Also, COVID-19 has exposed the importance of having a digital skill in the 21st-century. Writers, programmers, graphic designers, and others with one form of digital skill or the other are still earning handsomely from the comfort of their homes. Perhaps, rather than lamenting about how bored you are, this retreat should be the best time to earn a digital skill as well as reassess whether your job will still be relevant in the next decade.

There is no better time to prepare for the grim aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic than now. The virus will not last forever but the ripples will. The big question is, how ready are you?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Emecheta Anthony is a creative freelance writer. Unable to secure a job after a master’s degree in Microbiology, he embraced his innate childhood passion —writing. He hopes to one day eat from his brain.
Emecheta Anthony writes from Makurdi, Nigeria.
WAKE-UP CALL
BY MOHAMMAD HARUNA

The world, like never before, has been hit with a pandemic that has infected more than millions and has killed thousands globally. Like many countries around the globe, Nigeria still records more cases of this virus infection, and has lost some of her citizens to this pandemic disease. One of the most prominent of these deaths was that of Alhaji Abba Kyari, the Chief of Staff to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"When health workers are on risk, we are all at risk," says Tedros Adhanam Ghebreyesus, the Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO). Nigeria like many other African countries has been battling with a poor healthcare sector, lacking facilities of international standard. This however, has over the years been neglected by many Nigerians, most especially the lawmakers who seek medicare overseas, thereby living the healthcare sector, the citizens, and particularly the healthcare providers at the mercy of an unforeseen pandemic disease such as what the world is facing right now. In line with the above quote by Tedros Adhanam Ghebreyesus, with the Nigerian healthcare providers facing such risk, the country in its entirety could be at even a greater risk.

Before the arrival of coronavirus, Nigeria as a country was already battling with the Lassa fever, malaria, typhoid fever, poliomyelitis among others. Despite these diseases we have against us, the government has only allocated 46 billion naira for the healthcare sector in the 2020 budget of the nation. This has generated a concern and worry to many health professionals within and outside the country. It is below the international requirement, considering the poor condition of
the health sector amidst the many life threatening diseases we have. And we now have the coronavirus disease, which is currently the most infectious disease in the world.

The outbreak of the coronavirus has not only affected the already struggling healthcare sector of Nigeria, but has affected the entire economy. Many professionals from different sector of the economy have related the devastating effects of this pandemic to the poor condition of the country's health sector, and the lack of support from the government for healthcare providers.

I believe this outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic should not be considered as just a lesson to learn, but as a wake-up call for the government of Nigeria to with utmost urgency turn their attention towards salvaging the health sector. Having adequate facilities and motivated healthcare providers, the country can be rest assured that not only will her citizens be provided with a more decent health treatment but also the nation will be more defensive against any of such pandemic in the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Mohammad Haruna is a student of Biology Education at the prestigious Bayero University, Kano. He is a passionate writer, essayist, poet, playwright and a humanitarian. Mohammad Haruna writes from Kebbi State, Nigeria.
GRATITUDE AND KINDNESS IN TIME OF COVID-19
BY ANUSHA PILLAY

When we wished our friends and family a happy New Year this 1st of January, little did any of us know that a tiny virus would wreak havoc across the world, turning our lives upside down. Globally, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is now ringing in millions, while thousands have lost their lives to the virus.

The COVID-19 pandemic will have far-reaching implications for the global economic, social and political order. It has already brought about sweeping changes in the way we work, live, play, eat and learn. Schools, colleges, workplaces, malls and parks are shut. We find ourselves confined to the four walls of our homes with only family for company.

The pandemic has, I think, opened our eyes to the abundance of riches in our lives. We often take for granted things such as meeting friends, interacting with teachers, hours spent at school or college, a walk in the park, watching a match at the football stadium. These are ordinary things, but we have never valued them as much as we do now, when they have been taken from us. One must practise gratitude for all that one has been blessed with because; as this pandemic has shown us, life is uncertain. Anything could happen in the next moment, hour or week. If you love someone, show it. Appreciate them for what they do.

I also realised the importance of family, and how fortunate I am to have loving parents and an indulgent older brother. Too often, caught up with academic and professional commitments, one tends to neglect his parents and immediate family. This must change.
The Coronavirus pandemic has brought out the best and worst of humanity. In India, there have been heart-wrenching visuals of migrant labourers walking thousands of kilometres to their homes. Most of them have lost their livelihoods and been turned out of their dwellings. With neither food nor money, they set out for their homes, carrying infants and children, some of the women heavily pregnant, some unable to suckle their babies, having not eaten for days. Compassionate leadership is the need of the hour. Those of us, who are well-off, ought to contribute and help those who are not as fortunate.

In a horrifying incident, an Indian policeman’s hand was chopped off with a sword and six other officers were injured when they were enforcing the coronavirus lockdown in Punjab. There have been many instances of healthcare personnel being socially ostracised by community for doing their duty.

At the same time there have also been countless examples of good Samaritans helping others in distress. The Indian railways delivered 20 litres of camel milk to a woman in Mumbai after she requested assistance for her autistic child on Twitter; a man in Kerala travelled over 150 kilometres in order to deliver medicines to a child suffering from cancer.

In the middle of a global pandemic as this, when resources are limited, the kindness of fellow humans can be harnessed to save lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anusha Pillay, a student of Metallurgical Engineering, has keen interest in reading and writing. Anusha Pillay writes from Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India.
'Because there’s nothing to say' resonated in my head in response to why Ebuka and I no longer talk. Our communication has dwindled to once in a sennight if I am lucky, or fortnight if I make no effort. It’s as though the COVID-19 is showing me just how much I mean to him. Maybe I’m overthinking things, the world —most of it —is on hold because it seems to me that while many are at home waiting for life to resume, some are at-home living. I wonder what category I belong to. I am not sure if I want life to resume right away. I am comfortable and happy with how my daily is for now. Another month exhausts it.

Before this pandemic broke out, I was stressed, exhausted and on the verge of losing direction. It didn’t help that my friend who was housing me was severely depressed, I was broke and when my depressed friend needed space, I had to stay with another friend in a flat he shared with another. With the lockdown and space, I believe my friend has time to work through her problems. I preferred staying in the flat because I didn’t go hungry. Hunger was a familiar fiend at the time, so much that I was told by aunty how scrawny I looked when I went to visit. She went as far as to extend the invitation that I visit more and have meals. She also encouraged me to take foodstuff from her home too. These were extremely foreign to me.

My academic life was in shambles too. I missed classes more than I attended—sad—and I didn’t understand my chemistry. I was going to write a test on this course when the lockdown happened and boy was I grateful. I thought that with a month or at most six weeks that the pandemic break would
give I could study and catch up. It’s barely working out that way.

Nigeria’s economy cannot take this lockdown for much longer—we would crumble. I read a post on a contact’s status where he shared the brutality a ‘task force’ subjected the common folk to while they tried to make a living. My heart broke at the cruelty of it. If there’s anything to be done for others, I want to try the best I can: this is what I say but commitments of any sort are never easy.

A few weeks ago, I read in a child-rearing book about forcing a child to go to school especially after they have had to stay home for a while due to an illness. Psychology dictates the child’s hesitance as being fear; you have to get them to act despite that fear. It’s the same for us; we have to act right despite how we feel; whether we feel sometimes to resume life right away or to take advantage of the lockdown to build ourselves. This involves everyone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chizoba Kate-Flora is the first child of her parents. She has five younger ones. She is currently a student of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Chizoba has passion for reading and writing. She loves to travel, and is curious about many things. She is an avid believer in all things good and godly. Chizoba Kate-Flora writes from Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.
Coronavirus belongs to a family of viruses that cause disease in animals. The novel COVID-19 is a new virus that has made its jump to humans. Although it emerged from the “wet market” in Wuhan, China which sold dead and live animals, rumours are rife that COVID-19 may have escaped from a China laboratory either by accident or design. COVID-19 has spread to nearly every country in the world.

The disease is mostly spread via droplets that come out from the infected person's body when he/she coughs or sneezes. The droplets which land on surfaces are picked by the hands of others and are spread further. The same thing happens when people touch their mouth, nose and eyes or any other opening in their body. The debate about whether coronavirus was an airborne disease rages on but it is clear that it can only spread by close contact.

Among others, the symptoms include fever, sneezing, dry cough, malaise (tiredness and general feeling of being unwell). Others are loss of taste, smell and stomach problems. It culminates in difficulty in breathing and even ultimately death to some people.

Preventive measures include wearing of face masks, frequent hand washing under running water, accompanied by the use of hand sanitizer, avoiding picking the face as well as social distancing. Generally, boosting one’s immunity by eating lots of fruits and vegetables can protect him against COVID-19.

To curb the spread of coronavirus, infected people have been quarantined while the rest of the world experienced lockdown. Hence this global pandemic has had dire consequences on the world.
Apart from the loss of lives resulting directly from the infection, the lockdown has slowed down economic activities. Export restrictions and travel bans have led to unemployment. The stay-at-home foisted on us has made people restive. It has been a harrowing experience of fear, worry and anxiety.

Writers are not immune to these consequences. Due to inbuilt resilience, people respond to stress differently. Thus, while some writers experience overwhelming paralysis that they cannot think, let alone write—a case of writer's block; others have seized the opportunity akin to writers in a residency to focus on their writing. They educate the masses on COVID-19 and utilize the time to write their poetry, fiction or drama.

This is a challenge to all especially writers to maintain calm for enhanced mental energy and clarity. Have sober reflections on the things that matter—food, family, relationships. Treasure family. Support fellow writers. Visit your to-read stack of books. Write. The lockdown needs not be a brain lockdown. Be involved with goal-oriented activities such that when the lockdown is lifted, you will emerge with a bounce in your step because you have written that book. Most importantly, stay safe.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ohita Afeisume is married and has six children. This has provided rich experiences for her writing. She is a professional teacher and counsellor. Her areas of interest are writings on marriage and family life. She has written numerous articles in *The Nigerian Observer* on the subjects. Ohita Afeisume writes from Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.
MISSED MOMENT, MIND BUMPS AND LOCKED PADDOCKS
BY MBIZO CHIRASHA

(This hybrid piece is based on the author's experiences during COVID 19 Lockdowns, as an exiled poet living in a foreign country)

Calling the morning with a mournful urgency, sleep fell off the routine checks of protocol and the gong silently, if not urgently, summoned a sermon of fleeting feet. A son beheld the sun’s shadow with loving thoughts packed hurriedly into a strained back. The beauty of smooth roads and distance hills failed dismally to tell the dreams on a runway refusing crafts to land. Temporariness is a weed with long tendrils as only those with healthy respect for shadows know. To part with tomorrow’s hope to the hands of a paid Piper whose mission in “his appointed career” is to poach livelihoods of passer-by’s in quest for a night's nest on this migratory routine is a pain bordering on a tooth extraction without anaesthesia. That this accepted sin is described in business lingo as lucrative is tearing off fresh from the living and asking to be thanked.

And the revolutionary chant is not over!!!

I'm blind and love it because that way I judge nobody.

I'm deaf and trust it because that way I hear only hope from Angels from a far.

I'm immune to cold and heat so the elements don’t scare me,

I am a lamp post planted by hands I can only guess at. I'm a child and a man honest enough to acknowledge God exists in the spirit of creation and the heart of men however few.
When boarders slam doors louder than an irate spouse demonstrating disgust at an assumed slight by love, common sense stirs the soul for an instinctive triple jump.

I'm a son of the South where the sun rises with the song of the hills and cattle calling milk to duty.

Milk is a source of life and its absence is a bitter song that speaks kwashiorkor and other third rate needs unmet.

I'm a product of great souls that the universe unites to clear the morning smog with a hearts torch. 
And the struggle song is not over!!!
What is Man but a product of Man?
I refuse to reject humanity, and I do it with humility.
Where I am is a location whose dust reminds me of my earliest form and my final formlessness.
I am a journey on a travel and now is time to chant an old tune,
That no struggle is without cause and course if it’s the one that chose you,
And in the beauty of such times as we are living in, islands within,
I'm counting thousands of breaths in gratitude for the spice that life and living is.
For spice true, is in the variety,
Not only of terrain but of origin,
But also the hand that tended it,
The hand that picked and packed it,
As such,
Making the whole a part of the bits and vice versa.
Cycles refuse to rest, like a month in flight, a soul flies in the night leaving a sad dream on a prodigal sons wet eyelids.
And the liberation vibe is not far,
Who can say the taste of life is anything but mysterious and hard at its best?
News is best at its absence if it’s not the birth of a child,
I'm awake to all truths even the most banal and morbid,
I'm human enough to weep at wickedness and laugh at jest,
But tell me fair men of this land that “unlanded” me how to virtually bury my own,
Tell me like I'm a three-year old how to grieve with dignity
this vehicle that bore me to your shores and must now bid a silent goodbye in my blinded monastery upon this cavernous existence.
And the redemption thunder is rumbling more close!!!
I'm flesh and flesh has demands to weep and touch its own in making and unmaking,
Who will roll this mist back a day and allow a wish to plan a shared hug?
I'm a child of the universe bleeding hard on the winds that make commandments of demented buffoonery,
I fall on these weakened knees sending this mute anguish up into the bloated clouds,
If I see tomorrow it’s all because silence has given me a route to walk in this barren vacuum of misplaced hunger of human touch,
That voices sprout hands that feed my sanity with a purity only angels know, I'm grateful,
And someday, when the grass has grown over that mound that settled unto itself,
This boy with a grey beard shall come back to plant a fruit tree on the home square and name it “Silver” in honour of all dawns and dusks.
And the tender hands that give me dew upon this journey at the earliest of arrivals.
I'm all that because you are all that, even as you now ride the stars in the silence of night and the wind of days.
And the revolutionary chanters are chanting still
It's not yet Uhuru, Aluta Continua, the fight and chant for freedom Continues.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Mbizo Chirasha is a Zimbabwean writer.
I was in the room all alone that night, four of my roommates went to somewhere I can't remember. It seemed like they travelled home. There were plashing pitter-patter of rain on the rooftops of the Girls Hostel, and the environment was cool, so to say, unlike the usual enthusiastic vibe. I scheduled to attend a rehearsal in my church that night but I felt my instinct lecturing me, "There shouldn't be public gathering anymore, stay home and be safe." As the rain showered and the downpour became so intense, I quickly dived onto my bunk and crouched. My thoughts raced. I was fear-stricken. The reports of the virus hiked. To me it wasn't a case to worry about because it kind of belongs to the Whites, the Chinese to be precise. Little did I know that it's a bombshell gradually blasting from states to capitals, from capitals to nations, and from nations to globe. It is termed a pandemic. I was never accustomed to the word 'Pandemic', though I know it is part of our English Vocabs and now this is reality playing out on stage.

Schools shutdown instantly and parents welcomed their children in an embrace of hope. Our educational system went wacko! Not just the educational system, everything entirely; businesses, social activities, religious activities, markets, political activities, transportations, industries and lots more.

Suddenly, the grip of the pandemic tightened, souls began to drop and the remnants are muzzled like a horse. What could be the mission of this pandemic, that even our sage scientists are left devastated? Despite all the measures taken to contain its spread, it keeps thrusting so hard, like an aroused manhood, snatching our loved ones, suppressing the power
of our freshest dreams, ambitions and resolutions; reaping off our booming economy and leaving us at the mercy of fate.

An inner voice keeps saying, "Hold on, life is not ajar!" What point are you trying to make (inner voice)? when the entire globe is apparently horrendous; hunger-stricken faces straining their necks from various windows in search of food, dusts and cobwebs caressing our offices, classrooms and shops with their tongues as the owners are on lockdown, our roads voraciously longing for that buzz from vehicles and human beings. Yet that inner voice persisted, "Hold on, life is not ajar!"

Only if we can persevere, keeping to the stipulated measures. Although it wrecks the heart and really punches the soul with pain like thorns, it is possible to make this a win-win.

Remember, like the Psalmist wrote, "Take it to the Lord in prayer." And hope for the better!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Ani Juliana Amarachi is a budding writer who wishes to reach out and give voice to the world through her writing skills. She is currently a 100-level Accountancy student of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. Ani Juliana Amarachi writes from Nigeria.
LESSONS FROM COVID-19 AND LOCKDOWN: THE NEED FOR PREPARATION BEFORE A CRISIS
BY CHINEDU VINCENT OKORO

Just like the unprecedented tragedy of the sinking of RMS TITANIC – a ship proudly described by its owners as being ‘practically unsinkable’, resulting in the death of over 1,500 out of the 2,240 passengers on board —the novel coronavirus struck the city of Wuhan, China in 2019 and rapidly spread across the world. There is no overstating the fact that the Corona Pandemic is so far the greatest threat to humanity in the 21st Century. It has brought both the developed and developing countries of the world to their knees.

In the absence of any scientifically proven cure, lockdown has been the most effective measure taken by different countries of the world to check the spread and curtail the devastating impacts of this deadly virus. Nigeria has also adopted this measure in a bid to protect her citizens.

However, every sensitive government considers the possible effects of her policies on her citizens before implementing them. A policy suitable for Country A may be harmful to Country B. This is the basis for my question, as to whether Nigeria’s political leaders actually considered the effects of this lockdown before its implementation, given that majority of Nigerians survive on their daily earnings.

Here are some instances of the negative effects of the COVID-19 Lockdown on Nigerians:

- Increase in Robbery and Other Crimes: A typical example of this is the One Million Boys terrorizing Lagos residents. There are similar cases in Ogun, Oyo, etc.
- Extrajudicial Killings and Harassments of Vulnerable Nigerians Who Cannot Cope with the Lockdown: On April 15, 2020, the National Human Rights Commission released documents on the extrajudicial killings of 18 helpless Nigerians by security operatives between March 30 and April 13. There are also cases of misuse of power and infringement on human rights by the same security operatives.

- Domestic and Public Violence: Domestic violence has been on the increase because of hardships caused by the lockdown.

These negative effects are as a result of hunger, lack of fund, idleness, boredom, bitterness, depression, frustration, etc. This exposes the ineptitude of our leaders in crisis management. It is therefore imperative that they learn to plan ahead before another crisis strikes, by compiling comprehensive E-data of all Nigerians; overhauling the health system; providing adequate fund for research in herbal medicines; providing monthly social relief funds for the unemployed; providing adequate fund to support SME's; providing fund for E-Education; encouraging E-Commerce, among others.

An Igbo adage says, “It is better to begin in the morning to search for` a black goat before night falls.” For the protection and comfort of her citizens, and ultimately to be prepared to face eventualities like COVID-19; it behoves the Nigerian government to, as a matter of necessity, implement the above recommendations. I would like to conclude with the motto of Boy Scouts: (Let's) “Be Prepared".

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Chinedu Vincent Okoro is a Nigerian Writer, Educator and Social Change Activist. He holds a B.Ed in Educational Management and Political Science from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). He is a member of Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA).
LOVE TOO IS A VACCINE
BY Nket Godwin

The thought of love as part of the prerequisites needed to
overcome the ravaging COVID-19 sounds like a hollow tone.
Of course love is abstract, and we need something concrete
(a vaccine); something someone can take in and be cured or
be prevented from the virus. However, we also need to know
that the indispensable effect of love is still paramount,
especially in such a dangling moment as this.

As the world sets out on the quest to producing a vaccine for
the deadly virus, we seem to forget the immediate vaccine
which we can all offer. We seem to forget that humanity
needs love at this critical moment. However, the ilk of love
that can help curb the menace of this invisible war has
deserted us. We seem not to know that in a time of war, love
also heals.

Also, like the scientific vaccine which the world quests for,
the love for humanity, love for what we can offer, can also be
centrifugal in overcoming COVID-19. Conversely, the lack of
such love has given birth to suspicion and speculations
amongst nations. One of such cases is the speculation that
China intentionally created COVID-19 as a biological weapon
to subside the economy-cum-manpower of other nations.
Even World Health Organization turned down the vaccine
that was created in Madagascar, with a reason bearing the
reflection of racial prejudice. Now that we need international
dialectic and research aimed at providing a cure for the virus,
we resort to looking at one another with racial and
inferiority-complex monocle; we resort to looking down on
our creative strength.
Consequently, there's dearth of love for our humanity; love devoid of nationhood, Creed, religion, race and tribe. At first, it was termed 'China virus', and the international community turned their attention, and everyone seemed to look through the same lens. Sadly, now it has become war against humanity, with overwhelming effect on our social, religious, economic and political lives. Little did we know that the love for humanity can make us see our problem and the world differently.

More so, even our immediate response to this novel plight of humanity is a concern in the long run of seeking for a vaccine. The question of how we respond to the looming pandemic in our different endeavours is all-encompassing, both to nations and our immediate societies. To the Western nations, this is not the time to gauge where we are in world power; thus, bent on using it to create xenophobia, racial prejudice and inferiority complex. To the Africans, this is a time to look inward and explore our natural and human creative capability, as Madagascar displayed.

Conclusively, this is a time to rekindle the tenets of humanity, as we all suffer the same pang of economic hardship. We must learn to see our problem in the light of the fact that we are humans. The world must look through the lens of love to overcome this enemy of humanity.

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THE UNSEEN FOE
BY AMAKA TESSY UMEACHUSI

The novel virus has caused more harm than good in the world at large. To my best of knowledge, it is an invisible enemy that all countries have been fighting for past months now. New cases keep emerging every day and number of death as well increases on daily basis around the globe. Some who tested positive were isolated in other not to spread the virus to others and for proper treatment.

This virus was first noticed in a city in China. The name 'Corona' was derived from a Latin word because of its crown shape. It is christened pandemic because it has spread across the globe; and it has also adversely affected economy, businesses, religions and other sectors of the world. Even with the lockdown initiative, the cases have continued to increase.

I must say that people shouldn't be restricted from going out to their businesses or worship their Maker. Schools should reopen, so learners would go back to school. Because some people who once tested positive have been testing negative after brief treatment in the isolation centres, one could safely argue that coronavirus is curable.

I believe the best way to wage war against this coronavirus is to take all precautions given by the Ministry of Health, as well as taking enough Vitamin C to boost one's immune system. Lastly, traveling to and fro overseas should be suspended for now. With these measure implemented, we shall soon win this difficult battle against this unseen foe called Corona.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Amaka Tessy Umeachusi is an educator, trainer and author of Children's Literature, who hails from Uga, Aguata Local
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Fighting the Invisible
By Jennifer Chioma Amadi

As humans, our dissimilarities may outweigh our similarities, but one unarguable thing we all have in common, is enemies. Regardless of their sizes; continents, countries, and communities have engaged in wars, just to ward off enemies. In most cases, engaging in wars was fulfilling because regions threatened by intruders they can see, touch and practically scare, made fighting more tangible and fulfilling.

The year 2020 was one of the most anticipated years in the history of mankind, but then, COVID-19 struck! Unleashing itself upon humanity and striking fear in their hearts. Like wild fire, its spread from being an epidemic in Wuhan, China, to the rest of the world was too rapid and fierce to be comprehended. And like an unexpected enemy, it struck even the strongest nations. It bypassed bounder checks – penetrating into every nook and cranny – defeating the alertness and preparedness of many countries, leaving practically every nation fighting for not just their security but also for the lives of their citizens. In a bid for humanity to protect itself, a new form of fighting has been birthed.

As the months go by, it becomes clearer that the fight against COVID-19 can never be with the usual approach. The knowledge that not just human lives are at risk, and that every single thing has been affected by the pandemic, will awaken our sense of reasoning to other methods of fighting and winning a battle. But then, how do we fight an enemy we cannot see, touch or negotiate with?

While most countries have taken to lockdowns, social distancing, self-isolations and quarantines, which are good ways to prevent the spread as recommended by WHO, these
can only serve as temporary measures and never should be the new normal. Shirking behind the closed doors of our homes while we watch our economy, schools, worship centres, and everything that makes life bearable, halt abruptly, will never be the best battle tactics for conquering coronavirus.

At a time like this when even the strongest economies are crumbling, when lines of cluelessness run through the faces of the smartest scientists, and the most powerful troops are useless; humanity must realise that this is not the usual battle. This would require not just intelligence but deep insights, not only excellence in work delivery but also in empathy, not just head knowledge... but an unexplainable faith!

Our new reality, while we continue to combat the invisible enemy, should give rise to a deeper sense of unity worldwide. Knowing that humanity thrives on the wings of collaboration would make our fight more seamless.

©Jennifer Chioma Amadi

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jennifer Chioma Amadi is a storyteller and writer from Nigeria who is constantly inspired by the stories of random people, places and events. She sees storytelling as an indispensable means of preserving history and creating the future.
Asides being a content developer for a business consulting firm, she is a blogger and loves to share most of her short stories on jenomanook.com. When she is not writing, she is either relishing the lyrics of her favourite songs or engaging in quality conversations.
OASIS

BY ANODO REJOICE

Life before the pandemic was simple and easy going. We had problems and we took care of them. Our joy and woes, we shared them, together. Not for a moment did we think that it would come to this —the world being on a compulsory holiday.

New words have been introduced into our daily use of words: palliative, lockdown, sanitize. And now, when we part, or end a phone call, we say "stay safe". The little things we ignored, that seemed so trivial, are now so important that we sometimes ache for them. A hug after church service, a kiss, even a handshake have all been suspended. We never thought about it when we did these things. Things that now remind us of our humanity.

Simple measures, all this while taken lightly by man, have been endorsed as the sure ways to stay safe. Everywhere, words of caution are been sung —wash your hands, put on your nose mask, stay apart, stay hydrated, stay safe.

"When will this end?" we ask ourselves. "What did we do wrong?" "Is the world coming to an end?" we rhetorically ask each time.

Sometimes, we ask them out loud, other times we mull them over in our minds. Conspiracy theories, changing COVID-19 updates on Google, the news, all of that do not help. They only makes us despondent. There is light at the end of the tunnel. It has been a long walk, witnessing the death of loved ones first hand, staying away from each other deliberately, working from or doing absolutely nothing at home, rationing our meals so they can stretch out, watching our world
economies plunge, our world government falter in the face of this pandemic.

All hope is not lost, for when there is life, there is hope: the force that drives us to do greater things. Many have died, many will die, but that won't stop us from living, from pushing forward. A cure will come. The end to all this madness will come. When it comes, we will sigh with the relief of a thirsty pilgrim who finds an oasis in the desert.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anodo Rejoice is a writer and student. She writes from Aba, Abia State, Nigeria.
"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," Nelson Mandela once said.

In line with this, I strongly believe that I won't be far from the true by saying that in the nearest future, post COVID-19 era; many Nigeria students will be forced to give up their academic studies for financial reasons. This may be as result of the COVID-19 emergency and lockdown that resulted in the loss of labour workers and problems with family incomes. "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today," says Malcolm X.

How prepared are we today for tomorrow?

COVID-19 came to battle with us at exactly during the academic registration period in many higher institutions. Many parents by then were still finding it very difficult to afford their children's school fees due to the unstable economic crisis experienced within the country.

This virus came to hit thousands of Nigerian parents, guidance and students in the pocket and has severely affected the quality of their academic learning. Before this strange and deadly pandemic came to Nigeria, many Nigerian students ranging from Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities had been finding it very difficult to meet up the rising costs of their academic pursuits; even when most students try as much as possible to still engage themselves in part-time jobs. Yet they sometimes find it unpleasant and difficult to meet up the financial challenges ahead.
Many families have been in the continuous struggle to pay the price, no matter how difficult it seems to be. And unfortunately enough, few other families who couldn’t meet up such ground will unremittingly have their children dropping out of school. And few may peradventure end up becoming nuisance and problem to themselves, family and the country at large, involving in all forms of criminal acts, prostitution, thuggery and many more. Who knows?

Today, there lies another phase of economic crash that befalls on us. Our economy has changed drastically over the course of COVID-19. Numerous jobs have been lost. There has also been an unfavourable increase in prices of commodities across the country. This has however, led to a number of families across the country struggling for their survival why some are in dilemma, as to whether or not the continuity of their children's academic pursuits.

What is democracy? If democracy is being defined by great Lincoln as "the government of the people, by the people and for the people," is democracy obtainable in Nigeria? It is an inherent unfairness to the poor and lower class citizens of the country that the government cannot make a provision of at least one year tuition to support the education of our youths.

It is therefore on this note that I write and call on the Federal Government today, to make provision for at least, one-year free education in all tertiary institutions in the country in this period of coronavirus pandemic. It is constantly recited in the student’s unionism anthem that "Education Must Be Free." Perhaps we might probably not get such long free education that we desire, but it should be ensured that a single year free education be given in or after this period of COVID-19, when schools must have resumed.

Finally we call on the attention of the President Federal Republic Of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, Minister
of Education and all Commissioners of Education and the Governors across the 36 states to please come to our aid and rescue us from this unforeseen circumstance that lies before us as students of this great nation. We must all remember that Education is bedrock of any society. Therefore our government must do everything possible to protect and secure an everlasting, sustainable and productive education for us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Balema Denja Abdulrazak hails from Ibaru Oworo, Lokoja Local Government Area of Kogi State. He began his early education at Modern Primary School Bwari Abuja, and furthered ahead to Government Secondary School Agbaja where he completed his secondary school. He is currently a year-two student of Federal University Lokoja (Fulokoja), where he studies Geography. He is a member of the Society of Young Nigeria Writers (SYNW) and the Coordinator of the association in Fulokoja. Balema Denja Abdulrazak writes from Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria.
We are currently in a midst of worldwide trial that has changed our lives beyond recognition. We are confronted with the true uncertainty of human existence and the true vulnerability of human life. Reflecting the severity of this situation, over half of all countries surveyed were containing the spread of the coronavirus with national lockdown measures. Billions of people are in lockdown, unable to meet one another in public places. The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the inequities and injustices that threaten people's well-being, safety and lives.

Lessons learnt from the global response to the on-going coronavirus pandemic give positive signals on how the world can deal with the devastating impacts of global crisis. A picture is emerging on the kind of society needed to withstand the future outbreaks scientists say are inevitable. Each day brings shocks and possibilities, illuminates a little more of our reality.

The coronavirus shows us how terrible it really is to waste our lives, embroiled in endless battles for wealth, status and power. How terrible it really is not to recognize the value in the people around us - not just our family and friends, not just colleagues and fellow citizens, but also strangers. How terrible it is not to give our lives meaning - every hour of everyday, by honouring the sacredness of life and according all living things the respect and care they deserve.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates to us the value of freedom: the freedom to move, to be with those we love, to
live in dignity and security, for ourselves, and for those around us.

The needs and purposes not just of individuals, but of societies and of the natural world, in pursuit of not just our individual, self-interested payoffs; but in pursuit of all our overarching communitarian goals that are articulated in our religious and cultural aspirations.

This pandemic helps us to realize that in most of our endeavours, we are interdependent. One individual cannot succeed without the cooperation of others. We cooperate at many different scales- locally, regionally and internationally. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the danger of ignoring our interdependence and the importance of global cooperation. It shows us that all of humanity is in the same boat. Since the virus can be defeated somewhere only when it is defeated everywhere, it shows us the terrible folly of pretending that we can achieve security in isolation, within the borders of our nation, class, culture or religion.

This is the lesson we must take to the post-COVID-19 world: The time has come to re-evaluate the appropriate goal of business, the goal of our economic activities, the goal of our ideologies and social conventions, and the goal of our national, local and International governance structures. This requires us to cooperate locally when we face local challenges, nationally when we face national challenges, and globally when we face global challenges.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is dreadful, we must commit together to build equitable and sustainable models for an optimistic future as we emerge from the crisis of pandemic. Civil Rights Strategist, Eric Ward writes, "The truth of our interconnectedness has never been more apparent." The difficult ethical questions that we all are being asked to confront in our daily lives right now are: What is the common good? What actions can I take to promote the common
good? How are my individual actions parts of a collective action?

The changes we are being asked to make in our lives—like washing our hands thoroughly, limiting our contact with other people, and staying home as much as possible—are designed to protect every one of us for the common good. According to Harvard Political Philosopher, Michael Sandel, "The common good is about how we live together in community. It’s about the ethical ideals we strive for together, the benefits and burdens we share, the sacrifices we make for one another. It’s about the lessons we learn from one another about how to live a good and decent life."

Understanding the role we all play in this new reality:

In many countries, the importance of shop assistants, postal workers, delivery services and hospital cleaners has been noticed. As citizens, our duty to the government in this pandemic is to obey her directives of social distancing and other. By distancing ourselves, we are contributing to a societal act—a collective action—that is not only protecting us, but also protecting others. And so if we can see some community in that, and see some connectedness in that, I hope that’s a motivating and aspirational way of looking at something that is inherently difficult. As long as we remember that we share one future, we will survive.

We know “this too shall pass” and no doubt we will spend months documenting and learning all there is to know about the why, how, when, what and where of COVID-19. The standout quote for me the last few days comes from Chancellor Rishi Sunak MP that “We want to look back on this time and remember how, in the face of a generation-defining moment, we undertook a collective national effort and we stood together.” The key is collective action – here, there and everywhere.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Uchenna Peace Okpalanma hails from Anambra State, South Eastern Nigeria. Her life has been built by a conscious desire to make an impact on people’s lives. She is a talented young lady who is enticingly passionate about creative writing. She has engaged in several essay writing and other forms of writing competitions.

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RIPOSTES OF LOCKED DOWN VOICES

YAHOO BOY
BY TANROSE ANOMUOGHARAN

So I have been indoors for a couple of weeks now. I have a lot of materials to work on. Ideas have been hitting me from all corners that I don't even know the first piece to work on. You can say my brain is clouded and busy again. I had to look for a way to ask the ideas to give me a break. What I normally do is, pause the work and take a strolling break. I would walk a long distance alone, letting the ideas play in my head, or I will visit a good friend of mine and we will talk about everything happening around us. I decide to take the second option, and visit a friend. We will have a lot to discuss with BROS CORO around.

To get transportation from my side to my friend's house, I would need to walk some distance. On the way, everyone was talking. Off course, you know the topic of their conversation. Everyone has become a medical consultant overnight. It's okay if they are giving the right advice, not spreading fear. I saw some face mask and some hand gloves. Funny thing about the hand gloves is, most of them are not the medically prescribed hand gloves.

~As they hear, "Hand gloves can prevent you from contacting the coronavirus by handshakes." Everybody just wearing any hand gloves they see; even that 100 Naira a pair that we used for Lebu job, years back. ~

I got to the junction where I would take a KEKE to my friend’s place, and I stopped one. To my surprise, the KEKE driver who wore a face mask and a pair of those Lebu hand glove, brought out a hand sanitizer and asked me to open my palms. I smiled and granted his request. He poured a little
quantity of the hand sanitizer in my two palms and instructed me to rub them together, which I did.

Satisfied, he asked me to go to the front seat by him. On the three seater at the back is a guy with well-maintained dread locks, that made me wish I had fast growing hair. He was well dressed on Jean and a white T-shirt. On his lap was a laptop bag. With him was a girl in her late twenties and a guy in native wear probably of the same. The way they were seated, I could tell they are dating. He was very protective of her to the extent that he did not even allow her move her head one bit to the guy, sitting by him, even though she showed her dissatisfaction with a frown. I understood him.

Trust these GEE BOYS. They could steal your girlfriend with just a blink of an eye, most especially when you are a broke boy like us and you have a girl who usually eyes things you can't afford. You would do all you can to make her see that those things are vanity.

I said vanity on purpose because, we can't afford it now. Manage us as you see us BIKO.

In less than five minutes we began the trip, a Hilux with three policemen screeched off from behind and parked at front of our KEKE which was on a speed too. Nobody could tell how the KEKE driver managed to march his emergency break and stopped the KEKE a few distance from the Hilux. And the policemen rushed towards us immediately.

"Step down from the KEKE," one of them ordered the guy with dreadlocks, pointing gun at him, while others positioned their guns towards us too. And we all raised our hands in total surrender.
"Put your hands down, we are not here for you," said one of them, as they reposition their guns towards the guy.
"What do you have in your bag?" they interrogated him.
"Just clothes. I am a fashion designer," he replied.
"Bring it," they ordered. He checked the bag and brought out some pairs of male clothes designed with Ankara materials. All well packed for delivery. Then, passed the bag back to him. "Where is your phone? Bring it," they requested. As he was about passing the phone to the Police officer, he sneezed and coughed on it several times. Brought out an handkerchief from his pocket, cleaned his nose and mouth, then passed the phone to the police officer. The police officer shifted back from him. He tries to go near passing the phone to him, the police officer shifted further. He went to the other two, and they did same. After a very short moment of whispering among themselves, they marched back into their Hilux and drove away. I let out a loud laughter. The KEKE driver and the other passengers also cracked their ribs. "I think say una no dey fear death. Nonsense! Come check my phone nah. Una leave work them send una dey do EFCC work. Yeye people," the guy muttered. The guy on dread laments as he gently arrange the clothes back into the bag and zip it. Then join us on the KEKE. "Give me your number. I like your sewing," the guy seating beside him requested passing his phone to him. They exchanged numbers. I would have done same too, if I were a native wear person. His designs were very good. But because I don't like wearing native, I didn't bother. The rest of the journey was fun. We talked about the incident and how Nigerians are reacting to the coronavirus. I almost passed my bus stop, if not that the KEKE driver reminded me we were there already. Coronavirus is not a death sentence. We will beat it if we adhere to experts' advice. Wear facemask regularly. I know it's expensive now, buy as many as you can afford, and change them regularly. Also use hand sanitizers. If you can't afford it, borrow. Buy for people and distribute it free if you have the money. Wash your hands with soap on running water as often as you can. Dispose off used tissues, hand
gloves, and facemasks properly. Sneeze into your bent elbow or dab as they say. Cover your mouth while you cough, and also maintain social distance. Avoid crowded places as much as you can. Stay indoors if it gets to lockdown and go out only when necessary. Practice good hygiene. Flush your toilets after use. Wash your clothes and kitchen utensils regularly. Keep neat. Stay neat. We will all survive this. Don't get spiritual about coronavirus, but Pray. Our creator is still the Lord of the universe.

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Tanrose Anomuogharan is a young writer who hails from Warri, Delta State. He loves to use his pen to make a difference in the society. And he writes on any subject that wins his interest or beckons his attention.

BY IBE KELECHUKWU

Human activities have altered virtually every part of the earth - from land, air, up to surface and ground waters. The constant encroachment on nature and the degradation of the ecosystem has endangered human health to a large extent. As stated by the executive director of UNEP, Inger Anderson, 75% of the all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic i.e. originating from animals and transferred to humans. This continued trespassing into wild spaces has brought humans closer to animals which engender diseases transfer to humans. Aaron Bernstein, also buttressed this point at the Harvard School of Public Health in the United States, saying that the destruction of the natural habitat drives wildlife to live close to human, aside that of climate change. Ebola (originating from bats, chimpanzees, apes, monkeys), bird flu (from waterfowl), Zika virus (from apes and monkeys), West nile virus (from birds) amongst others are some novel diseases of the twenty-first century transcended from wildlife.

The emergence and spread of COVID-19, alleged to have originated from pangolins or bats in Wuhan, has been predicted by Andrew Cunningham, of the Zoological Society of London, some years back. He had said that there would be another viral emergence from wildlife that would be a public threat, stressing that fatality rates of diseases from wildlife are much higher in humans. Today, not only is COVID-19 a public threat but also a pandemic to the entirety of human race.
The novel COVID-19 has held the World at ransom leaving everybody irrespective of race, tribe, class or religion to battle for one thing: survival. Industries are shutdown, transportation restricted and businesses halted. With the outbreak of the virus late December 2019 in Wuhan, China and the declaration by World Health Organisation as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, the virus has spread to about 146 countries and regions. It has forced major changes in homes and businesses, including frequent use of chemicals and disinfectants in keeping proper sanitation and hygiene which has introduced new sources of waste. Also, hand gloves and personal protective equipment used in cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and treating infected persons are also sources of increased waste generation.

SARS-CoV-2, the causative virus for COVID-19, has the tendency to survive outside the host organism’s surface increasing the risk of contracting the virus. According to a publication by the American Chemical Society, the coronavirus has been detected to survive in stools of infected patients for 4 days and remains infectious in water and sewage for days to weeks. Researchers have recorded that the period to reduce the virus infectivity by 99% in pure or pasteurized water is several days. The survival period, as well as adsorption of the virus on airborne dust and particulate matter, also aids the long range transportation of the virus. Thus, the virus is facilitated in the environmental media by water, particulate matter, dust and sewage wastes. Correspondingly, the virus can be infected by contact with infected surface and inhalation of exhaled respiratory droplets inform of aerosol through the: mouth, nose or eyes, as has been identified.

It is therefore necessary that as we circumvent the spread of the virus in humans, necessary precautions should be taken to ensure that the virus spread is contained in the environment. Thus the determination of levels of this
infectious virus in various environmental components for precise quantification and identification of COVID-19 virus is of utmost importance bearing in mind that the amount could be low and require very sensitive method. This is to determine the occurrence, survival and behaviour of the virus in the environment and reduce the chance of infection by developing practical methods for large-scale disinfection and keeping people away from infected environment. Similarly, proper waste management system from medical and isolation centres is also pivotal in the containment of the spread of the virus.

However, prevention of further outbreak of zoonotic viruses, like COVID-19, is necessary for sustainability by stopping the illegal wildlife trade and the destruction of natural ecosystem. There is therefore the need to rebuild nature by working with it, and not against it. Health and environment cannot be separated because what goes around, comes around. Our health is a reflection of the quality of our environment, the climate we create and the other organism we share it with. COVID-19 has provided us with another strong opportunity and awareness for change of attitude towards the natural ecosystem.

Safe handling and management of chemicals and waste especially from the medical and isolation centres, protection of biodiversity (the remaining natural ecosystem), restoration/rehabilitation of degraded ecosystem, promotion of afforestation and reforestation programmes, and ban on illegal trade of wildlife are steps which should be taken to stop the spread of the virus and prevent the emergence of similar novel virus and other diseases in the future.

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Thank you for reading...
Stay safe...