

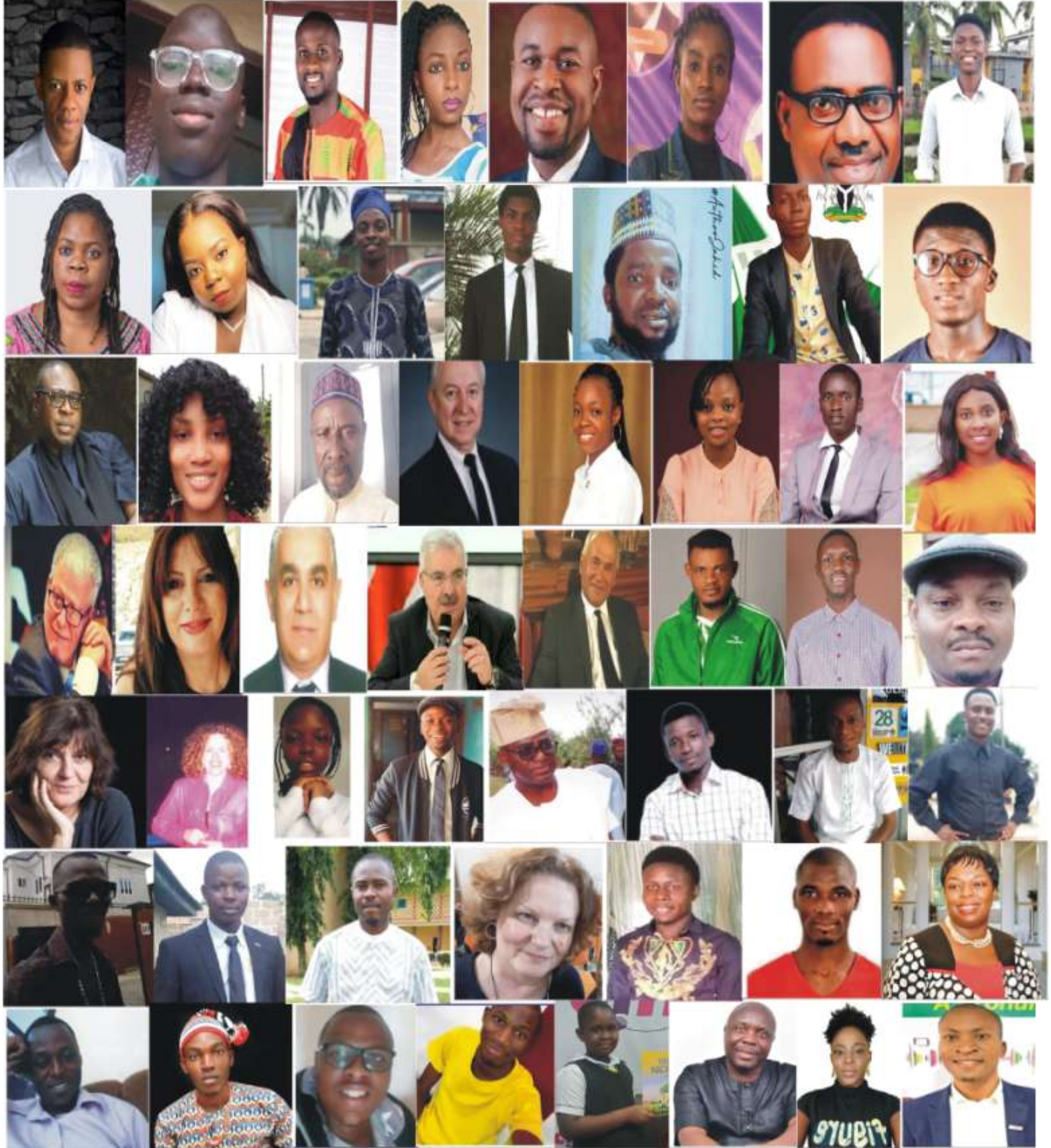


INSIDE IHRAF AFRICA



Compilations of Interviews from the African Chapter of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF): January - December 2022

BOOK 2



INTRODUCTION

The first edition of this publication (IHRAF Interview Series) documented 48 Interviews. The 48 African and Non African Creators featured in the book consisted of Artists, Professors, Scholars, Poets, Journalists, Writers and Human Rights Activists and were picked from different countries across the globe.

This second edition also featured interviews from notable African and Non African Creators ranging from Artists, Writers, Journalists, Human Rights Activists, and Professors etc. A total of 54 Creators were interviewed and published.

The Non African Creators whose interviews were published include:

Prof. Edward R. Raupp is the founder, Milton Society of Georgia. He is a Professor of Humanities at Gori State University and a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia.

Prof. Youssef G. Rahme is the President of The Cedars Institute and the brain behind the Study Abroad In Lebanon (SAIL) programme. The SAIL programme, collaboration between the Cedars Institute (CI), Notre Dame University (NDU) Lebanon, and The Wole Soyinka Foundation (WSF) Nigeria, gives students the avenue to study World History and Dialogue through the eyes of Lebanon.

Iman Humaydan is a University Professor and President of PEN Lebanon. She is also a Board Member of Pen International.

Lidia Popa is a Romanian writer. She is a member of the Italian Federation of Writers (FUIS). Also an honorary member of the International Literary Society. She is currently the Vice President of Hispanomundial Union of Writers (Union Hispanomundial de Escritores) in Romania.

Joseph Fenianos is a former President of the Gibran National Committee (2018-2022). Also the Founder and member of the Board of Administration of the Lebanese Red Cross in Becharri.

Hoda Zohrob is the current Office Manager at the Gibran National Committee in Beirut Lebanon.

Joseph Geagea is the Director of the Gibran Museum.

Tarek Chidiac is also a former President of the Gibran National Committee. He is a dentist who has been practicing for almost 40 years and a scriptwriter.

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International Human Rights Art Festival (African Chapter)

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Published 2023

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Published by: IHRAF

**WRITING GIVES ME PEACE OF MIND AND A SENSE OF FULFILMENT -
STANLEY UMEZULIKE**



Stanley Umezulike is the author of the book “Ties That Bind”, published on 16th April 2021 by Love Africa Press, a publishing house based in Epsom, Surrey, United Kingdom. Stanley’s writing has appeared in various publications including Daily Sun (Nigeria), Creative Freelance Writerz-Africa, Spillwords, Love Africa Press, Love Africa Bookclub and popular online bookstores all over the world. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him his writing experience.

WA: MAY WE MEET YOU?

SU: I am Stanley Umezulike. I am a Nigerian writer born in Enugu and raised in Anambra State. I write crime fiction, family drama and romance stories set in tropical Africa. I discovered books at a very young age. The stories I read took me to countries across the world where I learnt about different people and their cultures. Since then, I’d become an avid reader. I found my passion for writing at the age of 14 and I’ve been writing ever since.

I am a graduate of Political Science from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and did my Master’s in International Relations at the same University. My newly published book, Ties That Bind was published on 16th April 2021 by Love Africa Press, a publishing house based in Epsom, Surrey, United Kingdom. It became an Amazon bestselling novel and reached number one on Amazon US and Amazon UK in the first week of its release.

My writing has appeared in various publications including Daily Sun (Nigeria), Creative Freelance Writerz-Africa, Spillwords, Love Africa Press, Love Africa Bookclub and popular online bookstores all over the world. I am the founder of Prolific Fiction Writers Community where I help fiction writers master the art of storytelling. I have mentored over 6000 writers from

different parts of the world within the past two years. This is part of my mission to help writers get the tools and resources they need to excel in their writing career.

I am the co-founder of IfèAdigo, a publishing company based in Nigeria that publishes books in print and digital formats, connects authors with global readers and help them to shine on the global stage. I have been featured in The Light TV Show, Awka, Nigeria, and have been invited to speak on various online and offline platforms.

In recognition of my work of transforming lives through storytelling and sharing my stories with the world, I was awarded Top 40 International Leading Youth Award 2020, in the best author of the year Male Category, an initiative organized by Make Mee Elegant Foundation to commemorate the 2020 International Youth Day and celebrate youths across the world who have been truly outstanding and impactful in their various fields.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

SU: I write because it's something I'm passionate about. Writing gives me peace of mind and a sense of fulfilment. I started writing at the age of 14 when I was in secondary school. However, I'd always enjoyed reading from when I was a child. One of my childhood's sweetest memories is of my late father (may his soul rest in peace) giving me books and newspapers to read. At the age of five, I remember one week when he returned from one of his travels, the first thing he did was to give me a Saint Anthony Magazine.

"Chukwuebuka, read the story in the last page. You will love it," he addressed me by my Igbo name.

My eyes sparkled. I collected the magazine and turned the pages fast until I reached the short story section. I finished the interesting short story in five minutes and went to his room to ask for more magazines. From then on, my father continued to give me magazines and newspapers and bought books for me. I remember he'd open the newspaper and tell me to read the literary section. It was later when I thought about it that I discovered that my father laid a strong foundation for what would eventually become my writing career. I'm glad that I can write and share my stories with the world.

WA: WHAT KINDS OF BOOK DO YOU WRITE, AND WHY?

SU: I write crime fiction set in tropical Africa. I love reading thriller and crime fiction novels. You know those kind of novels that are fast-paced, interesting, filled with car chases, criminal investigation, lots of action and a little bit of romance. I enjoy reading American crime fiction/thriller novels. These stories feature FBI, CIA or NYPD agents chasing criminals and solving cases in United States.

However, when I went to the bookstore and searched for such crime fiction novels featuring Nigerian characters and law enforcement agents solving criminal cases, I couldn't find any. What did I do? I decided to write it.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS/WRITERS DO YOU ADMIRE?

SU: I enjoy reading American crime fiction/thriller novels. My favorite crime fiction and thriller authors are James Patterson (I love his Alex Cross series and Women Murder Club series), Harlan Coben, Sidney Sheldon, John Grisham (a mix of crime and legal thriller), Patricia Cornwell (I love her Kay Scarpetta series), David Baldacci, Vince Flynn, Brad Thor, James Hardley Chase and Nora Roberts (Her In-death series).

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU PUBLISHED, AND WHAT ARE THEIR TITLES?

SU: I have published seven books. Four are novels and three are non-fiction books.

The titles:

- a) The Shock
- b) Love Diary
- c) Twisted
- d) Ties That Bind
- e) Outline Your Novel With Ease: A Practical Guide That Will Help You Outline, Write And Finish Your Book In Record Time
- f) Dominate: The Practical Formula To Building A Profitable Writing Career On Social Media
- g) Start-Up Kit For Fiction Writers: Learn The Basics That Will Help You Improve Your Writing Craft

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS IS YOUR FAVOURITE NOW, AND WHY?

SU: I love all the books I've written. They capture the different stages of my writing journey. I'm like a mother who adores all her children and has no favourite. Right now, I'm focused on the new book I'm working on and making it the best it can be.

WA: DESCRIBE THE ROUTE TO YOUR FIRST NOVEL BEING PUBLISHED; AND TELL US ABOUT YOUR LITERARY JOURNEY SO FAR, AS A WRITER.

SU: I wrote my first novel The Shock in 2008 at the age of eighteen. I published it five years later in 2013, through a local printing press in Nigeria. Then I was a newbie writer and made mistakes along the way. I learnt from those mistakes and with the help of mentors, I was able to learn a lot about how the publishing industry works. In 2017, I started building my brand as a writer on Social Media. It helped me connect with authors from different parts of the world. It

was through Social Media that I got in contact with a traditional publisher that I'm working with today. The journey has been amazing. I'm grateful.

WA: HOW HAS HAVING A PUBLISHER HELPED YOU?

SU: My publisher is Love Africa Press. It is a publishing house based in Epsom, Surrey in United Kingdom. Having a publisher helped me navigate the publishing world without stress and connect with readers all over the world. I'm grateful to Love Africa Press. They have helped me to achieve amazing success in my writing career. Every writer needs a good publisher like LAP.

WA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG/ASPIRING NOVELISTS?

SU: Read a lot of books in your genre and learn from the best. Read in different genres as well. Don't be in a rush to write and publish. When you finish working on your first draft, revise it until it becomes better. Then, give it to beta readers to read and offer you feedback. The feedback you will get from these beta readers will help you improve the story. Work with an editor who understands the genre. The editor will help you polish the story and make it shine.

Don't feel bad when you read books written by great authors and feel your writing is not good enough. Every expert was once an amateur. Practice makes perfect. As you keep learning and remain consistent, you will continue to get better in your writing craft and eventually get to the top. Don't be afraid to write your own story. You are the only one who can do justice to it.

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

SU: Right now, I'm reading Justice For Sara. It's a crime fiction novel written by Erica Spindler. Authors such as Sidney Sheldon, James Patterson, Clive Cussler and Harlan Coben are my great mentors. Reading their books inspire me to write.

WA: ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ANY LITERARY ASSOCIATION, AND HOW HAVE THEY INFLUENCED/HELPED YOUR WRITING?

SU: Yes, I'm a member of Society of Young Nigerian Writers (Anambra State Chapter). Being a member of this amazing organization has helped me connect with lots of writer, share ideas and learn new things about writing. The book reading that we do during our meetings has helped me become a better writer and improve my writing craft. I'm glad to be a member of this organization.

WA: WHAT ARE THE BOOKS THAT MOST INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE — AND WHY?

SU: The Bible, Godfather by Mario Puzo, Kane and Abel by Jeffery Archer, Ist To Die by James Patterson and No Excuses: The Power of Self Discipline by Brian Tracy. These books has helped me to learn more about different aspects of life including writing. They are my favourite books.

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

SU:

- a) The bible
- b) Kane and Abel by Jeffrey Archer
- c) The Godfather by Mario Puzo
- d) Ist To Die by James Patterson
- e) Purple Hibiscus by ChimamandaNgoziAdichie
- f) Arrows of God by Chinua Achebe
- g) Transfer of Power by Vince Flynn
- h) The Sky is Falling by Sidney Sheldon
- i) Treasure by Clive Cussler
- j) No Excuses: The Power of Self Discipline by Brian Tracy

WA: FAVOURITE FILMS?

SU: 24 TV series and Prison Break TV series

WA: FAVOURITE MUSIC?

SU: I like Psquare songs and Celine Dion blues. I listen to hip-hop and reggae music.

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

SU: I have a book club. We read genre fiction books and do weekly book discussion. A book I can't get tired of reading is The Sky is Falling by Sidney Sheldon. I love everything about the story. The characters are unforgettable.

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

SU: The books I listed in question number 12.

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

SU: Three 'Good to know' facts about me

1. I write in the morning.
2. I'm Leo
3. I love watching football matches and playing video games

The inspiration for my writing comes from life, what happens in the world and the books I read. I also get inspiration for my writing from watching movies and listening to good music.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE CONTACT OR FOLLOW YOU IF THEY WANT TO CONTACT YOU?

SU: People can contact me via my phone number +2347060745771. They can also reach out to me via my email: umezulike@gmail.com or on Social Media @Instagram @stanley_umezulike, Twitter @stanumezulike and on Facebook @Stanley Umezulike.

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

SU: I'm simple and straightforward. I hate lies. When I am not writing or working in the office, I enjoy traveling to new places, connecting with other writers, listening to good music and watching Crime Thriller TV shows.

DON'T WRITE MORE THAN YOU READ - USMAN IBRAHIM TAIWO



Usman Ibrahim Taiwo is a 21-year-old writer, librarian, self-publisher, blogger, political scientist, and libertarian. . Currently, a member of African Liberty, Teen Lit Journals, Poets In Nigeria (PIN), Society of Young Nigerian Writers, Nigerian Society of Campus Writers, and Ibadan Book Club. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career.

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

UIT: My name is Usman Ibrahim Taiwo, a 21-year-old writer, librarian, self-publisher, blogger, political scientist, and libertarian. . Currently, I am a member of African Liberty, Teen Lit Journals, Poets In Nigeria (PIN), Society of Young Nigerian Writers, Nigerian Society of Campus Writers, and Ibadan Book Club. I am a prolific writer with the empirical fact that I had written many literary texts, poetry, novel, novella, drama, short plays, short stories, academic write-ups, essays, etc. Albeit, I am still an unpublished writer. All in all, poetry is the most prominent. Again, currently, I am writing a lot, but poetry is the most.

UIT: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

All in all, I like a piece of writing to be as illustrative as the ethical commandments of the Creator, God. And, it should be satirically employed to treat contemporary situations. It should be at least comprehensible by an average reader. For instance, the anthology by Charles Akinsete titled *Dance of Savage Kingdom* was a good example of a satire that treats contemporary issues in Nigeria, abroad and personal lives. Also, a literary work as *The Animal Farm* by George Orwell is a good example of satirically written literature. A fable that treats power disparity and ambition in our contemporary setting.

So, a good piece of writing that excites me would be the one that the problems and solutions come in small packages, which means they are to be dealt with by readers cool as a cucumber.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

UIT: Almost all authors treat what excites me. As a bookworm, all writers excite me with their imaginative power. However, some authors' names ring more than others; the likes of George Orwell, Wole Soyinka, Bernard Shaw, Babatunde Sanyaolu, Bayo Adebawale, Dele Charley, Aderibigbe Moronmubo Martina, Sarah Ladipo Manyika, Ken Saro-wiwa, Vaneetha Rendall, Charles Akinsete, Keye Abiona, just to mention a few. They had all inspired the world with their writings. Albeit, my favourite is George Orwell, for his book, "Animal Farm" is a book of high imaginative power which is directed to every reader as an animal. Reading the fable, you will find your rep among the animals.

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

UIT: Well, I am also a new writer. The Moses rod to a new writer from me is the same one I have been giving to myself. That, don't see writing vis-à-vis reading as a mechanical process, but rather as an intellectual process. Two, read a lot, and write average. Don't write more than you read.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

UIT: There is a multifaceted answer to this question. God first. My source of wisdom. Two, me myself inspired myself to write. Three, my mentor, Mr. Babatunde Sanyaolu. Four, my colleagues, they are writing challenging. Five, my salvaging savaged country inspires me to write for social amendments.

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

UIT: Yes. A good writer should have a writing routine. One, my writing routine are the standard writing process taught in Standard English course with some pluses. One, think before you write and write before you think. When you think before you write, you wouldn't write junks and when you write before you think, you give room to detect errors in your writing. For if there is a special place. Yes. There is. Since I had my pen and paper with me, in their absent, my phone. They are my special place for me to write.

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

UIT: There is no definite answer to that. They are just rhetorical to me. While, When is answerable, the How and Why are not. I start writing from my primary school days, but my writing was reascent and reshaped during my secondary school days.

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

UIT: Presently, I had no identifiable published piece of writing. However, the first piece of writing I submitted was just read on stage, not published.

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

UIT: Yeah. Sure. Themes are parts of writings. It is central to a writing. I address particular themes like Integrity, Contentment, Greed, Love, Corruption, Patience, Hardwork, Revenge, Special people and their special needs, Karma, Team Work, Librocubicularism, Technology, Human, Animal, Parents, Family Bond, Power, Wealth, etc.

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

UIT: I feel satisfied that some of my writings had been able to go through the last stage of writing value chain and this serves as achievement.

Albeit, I had wanted to stop sending my writings for competitions and embraced self-publishing. The reason for this, is the improper appreciation of literary works, tagged as shortlisting. The judgements, most of the times are discouraging.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

UIT: From God, the source of my inspiration and knowledge and from books read.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

UIT: I have no publishers yet.

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

UIT: Positive responses. The first poem I would read to my audience titled "corruption" elicits enthusiastic applause from my audience.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

UIT: For now, people can read more about me from my Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082236799217>

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

UIT: Read a lot, write averagely. Don't see writing vis-à-vis reading as a mechanical process rather than as an intellectual process.

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

UIT: One thing common is many writers are certified with" attic impress". This, they copy and change other writers literary words. This is thick as bad.

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

UIT: All of them. Nothing less.

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

UIT: To far to say, I had no published work yet. But, the journey when it comes to writing is over rough and smooth.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST WRITING, CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE WORK?

UIT: My latest writing is about the handicapped which I titled "I Am Fearfully And Wonderfully Made". It is a first person narration as the handicapped dog is content with its predicament saying, if not for his present predicament "I would have been bad and been friends with dips". Also, the structure of the poem corroborates the title and the theme.

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

UIT: The key theme in the poem is that my disability didn't determine my ability as being handicapped also counts.

Thanks.

**I GET MY IDEAS FROM EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE AROUND ME
INCLUDING MYSELF - CHIMA OGOKE**



Chima Ogoke is a Nigerian writer who specializes in novella and poetry. His works are often the psychological journey of self and the mind (Protagonist). Currently, he is working on a manuscript on psychotic depression. Chima is a member of Association of Nigerian Authors, Imo State Chapter. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him, his writing experience.

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

CO: I specialize in writing novella and poetry. My novellas and poems are often psychoanalytical. Often dealing with self and the mind. Though not entirely away from the thrust of socio-cultural influence. My first published novella, 'Agony of a Poor Orphan', centers on series of sexual abuse leading to traumatic and post-traumatic experiences. I am currently working on a new novella that echoes psychotic depression. Also, I have a completed manuscript on psycho-brutality, sexual abuse and post-traumatic experiences. This manuscript has a touch of queer philosophy but it is not about the queer.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

CO: Interrelatedness of plot and characterization as well as diction.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

CO: Chinua Achebe, John Munonye, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are my favorite writers. I said so because of their dexterity in telling stories through fascinating characterization.

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

CO: My advice to a new writer starting out is to read and read and read good books, especially on the genre he or she wants to venture. He or she should also endeavor to participate in creative writing workshops and seminars and belong to at least one literary club or association. After all, iron sharpens iron.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

CO: Funny as it may sound, it is bad mood. Whenever I am in a bad mood, the tap of my Muse is turned on. Most of my poems are conceived in a bad mood. Though they do not reflect it. Same as my novellas.

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

CO: I do not have a writing routine. I set out to write anytime I am possessed by Muse which often comes in a bad mood. For your second question, well, I did convert a section of my room as a 'temple of peace' where I do all my writings and research. The seat and table in that section are sacred. I don't allow anyone to make use of them. You may call it superstition. But it's my home of Muse.

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

CO: I discovered my writing prowess in 2012 on a particular evening when I set out to write about my journey through secondary school. It was to my later amazement that I abandoned that project and began a fictional story about an orphan girl. That was how I ventured into creative writing.

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

CO: The first piece I published is titled Agony of a Poor Orphan in 2014.

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

CO: Yes I do. In my novellas, I address issues such as traumatic and post-traumatic experiences, psychotic depression, murder, suicide, sexual abuse, psycho-brutality, to mention but a few.

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

CO: I really felt so great. It was a dream come true kind of feeling for me back then.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

CO: I get my ideas from everyday experiences of people around me including myself.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

CO: I was introduced to my first publisher by a writer friend. Whereas, I met my second publisher in Lagos during ANA national convention in 2018.

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

CO: I do get inspiring responses but within me, I know that my best is yet to come. I am still nurturing my talent.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

CO: I go by the name Chima Ogoke on all popular social media handles.

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

CO: Like I said earlier, he or she should read expansively and attend workshops and seminars on creative writing.

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

CO: Of course! That is what I describe as GPQ (Get Published Q) syndrome. There is a distinction between a draft and a manuscript. Unfortunately, most new writers tend to rush and publish their draft because of the get published quick syndrome.

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

CO: It is the current manuscript which I am working on. It centres on psychotic depression, an experience suffered by a bereaved child. It is a bildungsroman novella. I enjoy the fact that I am able to create a character whose experiences bring tears to my eyes.

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

CO: Like I said earlier, my first book is Agony of a Poor Orphan. It is a fictional story of an orphan girl who passed through series of sexual abuse which caused her traumatic experiences that informed her later decision in life. The journey to writing this novella, however, was fascinating because it was my first creative experiment.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED “THE ACCIDENTAL BANDIT\WHAT ELSE ARE IN MY STARS? ” CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

CO: My last book is titled Dark Prize. It is a book on depression, murder, suicide, anxiety, and inordinate ambition. It Chronicles the life and death of Prince Anyaora who is desperate to ascend his late father's throne against the custom which disqualified him.

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

CO: The key message of the book is that inordinate ambition breeds tragedies such as depression, murder, and suicide.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-chima-ogoke-i-get-my-ideas-from-everyday-experiences-of-people-around-me-including-myself>

**MY IDEAS COME STRICTLY FROM MY IMAGINATION - ISEYEMI FEYINTOLA
RACHAEL**



Iseyemi Feyintola Rachael is a member of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW). She is a young writer with only one published work to her credit graduated from the prestigious University of Port Harcourt last year from the department of Educational Foundations (English Language) with a First Class Honours degree. She is also a teacher cum editor at Tismek Global Publishers. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her newly published work titled “DEBRIS”.

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

IRF: In recent years, I have been privileged to write quite a couple of poems, a play and a novel. After I published my novel earlier this year, I have settled down to writing poetry every now and then.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

IRF: The writer’s ability to appeal to my emotions and his artistic use of language is what excites me the most about a piece of literary work.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

IRF: The legendary Prof, Wole Soyinka is a literary juggernaut I admire for excellent use of artistic tools. I stand in awe of Ngugiwa Thiong’O because his novels *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between* respectively availed me deep insight of what the Africans really went through in

the hands of their colonial masters. Abubakar Gimba is another writer I love for his ability to portray in-depth ideologies through his characters.

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

IRF: Do not give up. It does not matter if your works doesn't sound as polished or looks as refined as the works of advanced authours. They did not get there in a day. One step at a time and we would surely get to the highest height of success through commitment and hardwork.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

IRF: Colourful things, unusual occurrences and quiet environments have helped in no small measure to excite the serene feeling that inspires me to write.

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

IRF: Although, I do not have a specific writing routine, I have discovered that despite the fact that sometimes I get ideas when I travel, I find it difficult to really get the ideas as organized as I desire in a place where I feel like a stranger.

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

IRF: I started writing because I was restless. I only feel better when I have penned down the ideas in my imagination; the sole reason why I describe writing as 'somewhere between torture and fun'. I was around 14 years old when I started writing but I cannot guarantee that what I wrote made any sense. I used to write on scraps of rough papers and I end up throwing them into the waste paper bin.

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

IRF: Debris (a novel) is the only piece of literary work that I have published. I hope to publish more across the three genre of literature in the following years.

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

IRF: I do not think I would love to be limited to certain themes and issues in my writing. As long I find a theme I feel I should explore; I would love to do that without any hindrance.

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

IRF: When I published my first work, I was uncertain but I found solace in the thought that constant practice makes perfection and with commitment and hard work, I can attain mastery of the art of writing.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

IRF: My ideas come strictly from my imagination, but then more often than not, my imagination is triggered by something that I must have seen, heard or feel.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

IRF: My publisher was my senior colleague and academic mentor during my university years. I had known him years before he became a publisher.

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

IRF: Most of the readers who had access to me contacted me before they even finished the book. I felt fulfilled because I was able to appeal to their emotions which made them feel happy, sad, angry etc.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

IRF: The easiest way to find out more about me is by asking me directly, you can mail me via babalolafeyintola@gmail.com. Some extracts of my works are also found on my Facebook account IseyemiFeyintola.

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

IRF: An adept reader with good writing skills and wild imaginations would surely make a great writer. A writer who does not read much might not turn out to be very excellent.

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

IRF: New writer might be tempted to think they have arrived as a great author of the century but more often than not, it is just a product of the imagination. If a new writer is good, he/she must note that there is still an avenue for self-improvement.

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

IRF: I have derived great joy and pleasure from writing my novel *Debris*. Till date, it is the work I found most pleasurable during the formative stage.

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

IRF: My first published work is *Debris*. It centers on the three generations of a typical South-Western Nigerian elite family. It mirrors the unrelenting ambition, pervasive affluence and unflinching value in the pursuit of a happy life through business, education, and family bonding among the Raymonds. *Debris* would not have been *Debris* without the eventual tragedy that befell the family. But then, the resilience of the Raymonds in utilizing what is left of their debris is worthy of applaud.

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

IRF: One of the messages I intend to pass to my readers is that there are precious things of life beyond the reach of money; money is something but not everything. More importantly people should understand that they have the ability to rebuild from their debris.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-iseyemi-feyintola-rachael-my-ideas-come-strictly-from-my-imagination>

YOUNG WRITERS SHOULD LOOK FOR MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP THEMSELVES INTELLECTUALLY- SHINA FASANMI



Shina Fasanmi has a career that cuts across teaching, writing and journalism. He runs physical and online classes in Advanced Writing Skills, Creative Writing and English Language Proficiency. He is a Member of the Society for Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) and other professional certifications. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writings.

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

SF: I have a collection of poetry, a short story (fable), a motivational book and other literary works. Apart from creative writing, I also have four textbooks for my students. Reading also contributed to my background in writing. My father had a bookshop many years ago. I used to go there to read books in the evening and on weekends. During the holiday, I was always there to assist at the bookshop. That exposed me to the literary world before I gained admission to secondary school.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

SF: Writing is natural for me. I derive inner satisfaction and the courage to write more when I get feedback from those who read my work. I am also interested in criticism of my works because it makes me work more on myself in becoming a better writer.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

SF: Well, I love a lot of writers. I love the works of the following writers: Prof. Wole Soyinka, Prof. Akachi Ezeigbo, Prof. Niyi Osundare, Sefi Attah, Lola Shoneyin, Kaine Agary, Adunni Adelakun, Chimamanda Adiechie, Ayobami Adebayo and a host of others. These writers are versatile with a rare intellectual fecundity, particularly, I love their authenticity and style of assertion.

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

SF: They should not be discouraged when the road is rough. When things are tough, they should not be discouraged. They should look for more opportunities to develop themselves intellectually. They should also have mentors.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

SF: A lot of things inspire me to write. Ranging from situations that I find myself in, and to the latest trends in society.

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

SF: Writing is part of me. I write every day, irrespective of my busy schedule. After dinner, I go to my study to avoid distractions. I visit the library on Wednesdays in my free time.

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

SF: I have been writing as far back as 2002, when I gained admission to Olabisi Onabanjo University for a Diploma-in-Law programme. I used to publish a monthly magazine. From there, I coordinated the publication department of my church, RCCG, Royal Parish for some years.

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

SF: Webs of Sambisa Forest

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

SF: Yes, different themes abound in the poems such as sectarian violence, ethno-religious crises, policy paralysis, human trafficking, bad leadership and other issues that resonate with readers.

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

SF: I used to be nervous but with the encouragement from experienced writers made me believe in myself the more.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

SF: I get ideas from many places and perspectives

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

SF: They are self-published. I hope to partner with Kraftgriots Publishers in the near future.

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

SF: One cannot be too perfect. I get positive and negative responses from them. I don't allow criticism to weigh me down, it is just an avenue to work more on myself.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

SF: I have social media platforms. For example, I use my pseudonym on Facebook: Phassy Law Wordsmith and Phassy Law Wordsmith II.

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

SF: Humility, quest for knowledge, volunteering to work as an intern.

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

SF: Quick money syndrome, fast fame, etc.

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

SF: Poems

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

SF: The book constitutes a testimony of the indispensability of people in the social and economic life of Nigeria. It reveals my commitment to the cause of humanity and my concern for the freedom of the oppressed from all practices and beliefs which impede their material and spiritual progress.

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

SF: Abduction/kidnapping. The text is proven to not only be reflective of life, but it can also be used as a guide for the reader to follow and practice good judgment.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-shina-fasanmi-young-writers-should-look-for-more-opportunities-to-develop-themselves-intellectually>

**NEW WRITERS JUST STARTING OUT SHOULD WRITE AND READ MORE -
TEMIDAYO OLALEYE**



Temidayo Olaleye is a writer of various genres such as paranormal, contemporary, christian and historical romance, crime and suspense. She is a poet of vivid expressive words and imagery. She loves to inject humour and hidden morals in her works. She has written a lot of books, some of which are self published on Amazon KDP and Selar. In this concise interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing vocation.

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

TO: Though I wrote and told stories as a kid, I started writing intentionally after I left secondary school. I have written a vampire series, a werewolf series, a crime series, a couple of romance novels, contemporary Christian novels and poems. I am currently writing a fairy tale of enchantment and love.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

TO: What excites me about a piece of writing is the twists and dialogues between interesting characters.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

TO: I love to read and I have read many great novels that are always hard to pick but I loved books by Dan Brown, Sidney Sheldon, Richelle Mead to mention a few because of the twists you never see coming in their books.

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

TO: I would advise a new writer just starting out to write and read more. One can only get better at an art by doing and learning more of it.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

TO: What inspires me to write is when I am done and I go through the work and see a new world I made and the smiles on people's faces as they read. The knowledge of bringing a world that hatches in my head to life keeps me going.

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

TO: Yes, I have a writing routine. I don't really have a special place for writing. I can write anywhere but I prefer to be indoors writing.

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

TO: I started writing because I want to tell the stories I dream of and bring to life characters that wouldn't have existed without me. I want people to pick a book - my book - and relax, laugh and also learn from it. I started writing at the age of nine but wrote only one story and told tales to my younger siblings at night. I didn't resume writing until I was out of secondary school and since then, I have drafted a lot of plots and written many novels. I started my writing with a vampire series. While studying for university admission, I read the whole Argeneau series by Lynsay Sands and that inspired my desire to write my own vampire series. That was how my writing career started and then I moved to other genres when I started reading books by Francine Rivers, Karen Kingsbury, Jessica Probst, Nora Roberts and the likes.

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

TO: The first piece I ever had published online was a vampire novel titled 'The Local and the Flirt' though it is no longer available because I have to make some changes to it.

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

TO: Yes, I address issues in my writing but they are not limited to a particular theme.

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

TO: I felt hopeful when I first started sending out my works to the world. I still feel that.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

TO: I get my ideas from anywhere, anytime and anyhow. They could be random thoughts, from movies, from books, from life experiences or overheard conversations.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

TO: I don't have a publisher yet(apart from online media).

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

TO: Responses from readers vary but they are mostly good.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

TO: People can find out more about me on my social media platforms. Facebook: Temidayo Olaleye.

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

TO: Tips to pass on to dedicated writers are to be open minded and break through the barriers of their minds when they write. The only thing keeping the creativity caged is what we think we can't do but once we let the mind explore beyond itself, it is always worth it.

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

TO: Typical mistakes new writers make is thinking writing is all about having fun. It is work. You have to be conscious and intentional about what you serve the reading audience and you must keep on developing yourself to do that in both art and in grammar. Some also don't get creative enough and just write lazily on what had already been written. Even if you want to write an old story, make it different so that it feels like no one has ever read it before.

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

TO: Some of my books which were most enjoyable to write include Love Complicated, Nature's Joke, The Road to Hawaii, The Demon Wolf, Redeemed, The Innocent Psycho and Bloody Mess.

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

TO: A friend helped me to upload my first published book online.

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

TO: The current book I am working on is the first book in a series called 'Tears of a Maiden'. The book is titled 'The Horse Prince' and it is about a young prince who was turned into a horse by an evil witch and the father was looking for all means to make him human again.

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

TO: The key theme in the book is that love conquers all and that no matter how bad it seems, there is always someone for somebody.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-temidayo-olaleye-new-writers-just-starting-out-should-write-and-read-more>

**UP AND COMING WRITERS SHOULD NOT RUSH TO PUBLISH UNEDITED BOOKS
- MNGUEMBER VICKY SYLVESTER**



Mngumber Vicky Sylvester (MNAL, MNAE) is currently a Professor of Literature/Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her works.

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

MVS: I started with short stories. I have written several short stories, poems, a play and novel including lots of academic writings. Currently, I'm working on 2 books; a collection of poems and a collection of short stories

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING

MVS: Descriptions - how creative minds and authors capture the atmosphere around them. You can get a sense of how people feel about their environment or even how a country is moving (progression or otherwise), in their writings. It's fascinating and inspiring the way the scenarios are captured.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND WHY?

MVS: I have so many but let me try to restrict to a few. In Nigeria for now I love Akachi Ezeigbo— she writes about things I'm passionate about. Her stories about the war and specifically the role of women; when there is war, women fight two wars – the actual war and war of abuse. I also enjoy Helon Habila, Sefi Atta and Tanure Ojaide's realistic works. And of course Udent's Art, Society and Identity. Right now I just finished Lola Shoneyin's Baba Segi...and I am enjoying Niran Okewole (The watch man trilogy)- there's a lot of promise in his work. I also enjoy Travel logs like Wale Okediran's work. As an avid traveler myself, its enjoyable to reflect on the images he creates in his writings. For Non-Nigerian writers, Maya Angelou- natural and down to earth, Ezra Pound's modernism. I never stop going back to Plato and Aristotle's view of imitation as a creative process.

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

MVS: Tell them to tell the truth, not procrastinate and their dreams will turn to reality- their readers know the truth, be patient and don't rush to publish unedited books – they may have good content but take time to get them properly edited.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

MVS: I am inspired by everyday life conversations that lead to and develop creativity; everywhere you go there's a story, the market, the social media, the bus, streets, schools.

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

MVS: I like working in the morning but sometimes the muse comes randomly and you just want to capture. I remember stopping on the Niger bridge near Lokoja to capture something that was triggered by the grass growing on the bridge. I tend to write better when I travel – probably because there's less distraction. Senegal has been one of my best writing spots.

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

MVS: I started from secondary school with Short stories and continued into university where creative writing classes made me more invested in writing. I was lucky to have great teachers who encouraged my passion

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

MVS: First short stories I ever published was in the Nigerian Standard Newspaper on Sunday in early 80s. There were several of them but I was careless at the time and did not save them. My first fictional work was a collection of Poems 'Zuma rock and other poems' in 1996

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

MVS: Issues of injustice to people especially gender related injustices. In my novel, Long shadows, I focus on injustices to a particular tribe.

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

MVS: Very exciting, especially when people react to the writing. There are Mixed reactions, people wondering how you are able to write about certain issues they feel you don't have experience about. Criticism they say, is one of the best things you can get and I am glad when I get that as well

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

MVS: From everywhere and anything

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

MVS: First publisher was the University of Jos publishing press when I was doing my PhD so It was easy. Subsequently, I have looked at published works to engage the ones I like

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

MVS: Google. Even though you may not find much. Mainly from around the university community

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

MVS: Read, Read and Read

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

MVS: Common mistake is some new writers don't get people to read their books and are worried that someone may copy their work and so they rush to publish. That's a mistake. It's expensive to pay an editor but extremely important part of the process.

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

MVS: Long shadows(novel)and The Cabals. (collection of short stories). Though books are like children I guess. You start because an idea intrigues you.

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

MVS: It's called 'The *Plague of many colors*', about COVID and how it affected people across works of life. It's not colors in the literal sense but looks at how people perceived and reacted to COVID, and highlights the need for people to pay attention to such pandemic situations.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-mnguember-vicky-sylvester-up-and-coming-writers-should-not-rush-to-publish-unedited-books>

**PATIENCE IS WHAT EVERY WRITER NEEDS TO UNLOCK SUCCESS - FAOZAT
MODUPEOLA KALEJAIYE**



Faozat Modupeola Kalejaiye is a Poet. Being a poet, she believes poetry is an expression of feelings, emotions, life sorrows and life's pleasures. She is the author of Elan Vital (a collection of poems) which was launched in 2019 and approved by Lagos State Educational and Examination Board for JSS 3. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing career and works.

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

FMK: I'm a poet, I love writing poems, I've written a book Elan Vital (collection of poems) , I'm currently writing another one on tax which I plan to launch soon.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

FMK: What Excites Me About A Piece Of Writing Is That I Write When It Comes To My Head/ From Within, It's Not Planned....But When It Comes I Write.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

FMK: Maya Angelou - because she shared her story, passed messages to the world through her writing, she led an enormously influential life, using her 1969 "I Know Why the Caged Birds Sings" autobiography to share her personal experience with racism, trauma, family and journey of self discovery. Wole Soyinka - because he's a great & special poet and special because he based his writing on the mythology of his own tribe - the Yoruba- with ogun, the god of iron and war, at the centre.

You see the beauty of writing is that everyone has a special way of writing theirs. There is no formula to follow, it's something that allows you to do you.

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

FMK: My advice to a new writer starting out is that the beginning of the journey might be rocky, rocky in the sense that your first piece of writing might not sound good or solid but if you keep it going you'll get better overtime and before you know it you'll just become a pro, moral lesson: don't give up, keep it going.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

FMK: Honestly They're so many things I can say that inspires me to write, most times it depends on what comes to my head , sometimes my mood, sometimes stories I hear, let's say life itself inspires me to write.

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

FMK: Growing up I never had a writing routine, I write whenever it comes to me but being an adult I create some time to write and I don't have a special place as long as it's a peaceful environment.

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

FMK: Well, all I can say is growing up I did not plan to be a writer or a poet, it was an hidden talent I discovered in Junior secondary school...I fell in love with poems were written when my literature teacher comes to teach us and started writing mine gradually, sometimes I don't finish a poem but whenever it comes to my head I write it down and that's how I kept doing this and then one day my mum bumped into one of the poems I wrote and asked if I wrote this and unknowingly to me she kept keeping all the poems I wrote and then before I knew it they were a lot and enough to be in a book/to be a collection of poems and then she asked me to try and finish the one that were abandoned, typed it and then it was published and launched in 2019 and approved by Lagos state educational & examination board.

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

FMK: My first piece I ever published was elan vital (collection of poems).

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

FMK: Yes, I do address particular themes in my writing.

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

FMK: It felt great when I started sending my writing out into the world.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

FMK: Like I said earlier, sometimes I get my ideas from my mood, stories I hear, let's say life lessons.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

FMK: My mum got me my publisher.

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

FMK: I get really magnificent responses from readers and audiences.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

FMK: People can find out about me through google, LinkedIn and Instagram.

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

FMK: Honestly There is no trick to writing, my advice to dedicated writers is that you don't have to follow or copy and trend 'just do you' who knows yours might be unique after all.

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

FMK: The common mistakes new writers make is they tend to give up when they start but always believe in your heart & mind that you can do it and get better at the end of the day.

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

FMK: Elan vital (collection of poems) was the most enjoyable to write because some poems were from my mood.

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

FMK: Well, my first book wasn't planned...the journey started from junior secondary school where I just fell in love with some poems my literature teachers reads to us in class and I just knew it somewhere inside me that I can do that too but I needed to discover that by trying to write whenever it comes to my head and even if I didn't finish it I'll just leave and go on to the next....until my mum bumped into some of them and asked me if I wrote them and was amazed....she kept piling them up till one day she showed me all that I've written and I couldn't believe it.....she then asked me to complete the unfinished poems, type it and then it got published.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED "ELAN VITAL" CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

FMK: Well it's a collection of poems that's about life itself in general.

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

FMK: The key theme/message in the book is LIFE itself, things we go through in life. **Faozat Modupeola Kalejaiye** is currently the Coordinator of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) Lagos State Chapter and also a member of Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA).

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-faozat-modupeola-kalejaiye-patience-is-what-every-writer-needs-to-unlock-success>

UP AND COMING WRITERS SHOULD ENSURE THEY ARE CONSISTENT IN THEIR WORKS - ENITAN, ABDULTAWAB BOLUWATIFE



Enitan, Abdultawab Boluwatife is a Nigerian poet, essayist, budding novelist and a literary enthusiast. He is presently a year two student in the English Department of the University of Lagos, Lagos State. His works have appeared in The Shallow Tales Review, Poemify Magazine and The Shuttle Journal. He is presently the President of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers, UNILAG chapter. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing.

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

EAB: I started writing when I found out I could register my thoughts and ideas in ink. It all started when I applied for an essay competition and I ranked third. Since then, I had written several poems, essays and short stories.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

EAB: What intrigues me is the capacity of a piece to capture a theme or subject matter in its entirety. Also, a piece that is ridden with literary elements or devices gladdens my heart.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

EAB: Professor Wole Soyinka and Ngugi Wa Thiongo. I love them because of the *Africanness* in their works.

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

EAB: Consistency is the key. New writers should ensure they are consistent in their works even when they are not getting positive criticisms from their works.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

EAB: Africanness. Everything about Africa needs to be put into writing and that inspires me to write.

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

EAB: No. I write when I am most comfortable to write. Also, I give myself various writing blocks in the course of writing so I can come up with very good write-ups.

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

EAB: Like I said, I applied for my first writing contest in 2015. I am a very shy person but I always want to express my thoughts. So, I resorted to writing.

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

EAB: *Orisagamu Ewa*. It is a poetic piece in a literary magazine named The Shuttle. Orisagamu Ewa focuses on the brilliant features of the towns in Sagamu, a local government in Ogun State.

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

EAB: No. However, I try as much as possible to infuse Africanness. One of the things I have noticed of myself is the inability to conform modern and new themes in African literature. Apart from essays, my short stories centre on African culture and values.

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

EAB: At first, I felt agitated and anxious at the same time. The agitation was birthed by the uncertainty of criticisms and that still haunts till date. Sometimes, I feel like hoarding my works because I think I have written nonsense. However, I felt eager to hear my reviews after writing.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

EAB: Books. I write more when I read more. That's my first muse. Then, my environment gives me ideas, too. I am a great observer of my environment and I put I into writing.

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

EAB: My readers encouraged me to write more. Then, they are in love with the infusion of Africanness in my works.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

EAB: I have a blog where I put my work (bolustic.wordpress.com). Then Instagram at emini_bolu and Facebook at Ẹnìtàn Abdultawab.

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

EAB: There is always an opportunity to utilize the ever-evolving society to write more works. Writers should not stick to a particular theme as they can write more contemporary issues and even write on issues that are likely to unfold in the nearest future.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-enitan-abdultawab-boluwatife-up-and-coming-writers-should-ensure-they-are-consistent-in-their-works>

ONE MISTAKE NEW WRITERS MAKE IS THINKING THAT WRITING IS ALL ABOUT THE IDEAS - IHEDURU LESLIE



Iheduru Leslie hails from Imo State in Nigeria. He is a graduate of Law from the University of Calabar and a practicing lawyer in Port Harcourt Nigeria. In this interview with Wole Adeoyin, he talks about his writings.

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

IHEDURU: I got attracted to writing after reading Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Adichie and a few others from Chinua Achebe. I had been made to read a few of their works for the compulsory senior school certificate examinations. I started with just poems as they seemed easier and a faster means to pour out locked up emotions. I later went on to do some academic writing on sexual violence, human rights and violence against women, then I returned to my first love 'poems'. I am currently working on a short story about the state of the country and what our utopia would be like.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING

IHEDURU: A lot of things actually. The setting, the theme, the characters, the plot and how all of this works together to make a piece of writing beautiful.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

IHEDURU: Chimamanda Adichie and Chinua Achebe because their works are easily relatable and fluid

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

IHEDURU: Writing is not so easy, as there are good days and not so good days, but consistency and devotion always makes the difference.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

IHEDURU: A couple of things like my environment, my mood, my relationships, family and most importantly, events around the world

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

IHEDURU: I do not have a writing routine, but I know that my toilet inspires me a lot

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

IHEDURU: I started writing after my ssce in 2011

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

IHEDURU: I am yet to publish my works, but I am taking steps towards that

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

IHEDURU: Yes I do

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

IHEDURU: I was curious to know how it will be received

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

IHEDURU: Everywhere

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

IHEDURU: I do not have a publisher yet

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

IHEDURU: There are usually mixed reactions, good and exceptional and not so good too

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

IHEDURU: I am working on my visibility, but I can be found on medium

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

IHEDURU: Stay focused, read and write

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

IHEDURU: As a new writer myself I think I'm still learning, but I feel one mistake new writers make is thinking that writing is all about the ideas

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

IHEDURU: None yet

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

IHEDURU: None yet

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

IHEDURU: Still in progress and the development could change, so its better I skip this question

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

IHEDURU: What Nigeria should be

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-iheduru-leslie-one-mistake-new-writers-make-is-thinking-that-writing-is-all-about-the-ideas>

I WRITE TO EARN THE FAVOUR OF GOD - SHERIFF OLANREWAJU



Sheriff Olanrewaju is a renowned Nigerian writer, an inspirational speaker, spoken word artist and a published author of many prose and poetry books. He has distinguished himself as a literary genius with his literary masterpiece titled *The Porcupine and the Pompous Professor* published in 2019. In 2011 and 2013 respectively he emerged as the best international poet, IWA International Poetry Contest, Texas, USA. *Apa-Ola, Songs of Applause and of Awakening* is his 4th collection of poetry. In this extensive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career.

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

SO: I didn't venture into writing as a professional – it's just what I found myself doing right from childhood after having developed keen interest in reading and listening to folktales and oral poetry often rendered by my mother. I started reading comics at the feet of my father who would encourage me to read voraciously. I grew up reading cartoons like the Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles and a lot of Yoruba fictions like *Ireke Onibubo*, *Igbo Irunmole*. For me, my parent's efforts really assisted in my willingness to hone the skill and write as a literary enthusiast; even though I wasn't really passionate about writing as much as I was about reading. I remember, I used to trek all the way from Apapa Road to Iponri Housing Estate in Lagos just to get new books from the book club that I joined as a kid, and if I could read and return before the given days elapsed, I stood a chance to get two titles at a go when next I wanted to get another title. My first published book is a collection of poetry titled *Poetry from the Minaret*. I gave it the title because I started writing it in a mosque at Oluwalogbon Street, Somolu, Lagos State. The book was not a potboiler of some sort because I had the rare privilege to be mentored by experts in the community known as the publishing home of Nigeria; in memory of my great mentors Shaykh Kamaludeen al-Adabiyy and Shaykh AbdulHakeem ibn Abayomi who passed away in 2014, at

the Advanced Academy for Arts and Sciences, which he established. My first fictional world was created in 2007 with the book titled *The Gamut of Gospel Gimmicks*, a short story about the return of schools to the missionaries. The accolades received after its public presentation inspired me to write another set of prose, *The Porcupine and the Pompous Professor*, 2009; and *Once upon a Big Black Bird*, 2011 respectively. I'd like to state unequivocally that most of the books I published were distributed to friends and family though I was able to sell a few. I never stopped writing and going to press even as the fund invested into publishing had gone down the drain. My father, who was my major sponder found joy in encouraging me to write with the publishing fund readily available. It was after his death in 2011 that I published a poetry collection in his honour- *Agonies of a Bereaved Poet*, sponsored by the Blue Olive Publishers in Quebec, Canada. The publishing firm owned by Nancy Elizabeth Biddle, a Canadian later published a prose which I wrote to address the Boko-Haram issues- *Sambisa Squirrel and the Clueless Zoo-keeper*, 2013. In 2021, I had a stage performance of a poem specially written in honour of a fellow writer who was a former Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Kwara State chapter who offered me a brotherly handshake; it was when the video of my performance went viral that I received an invitation from Avril TwentyFourth Publishers to submit my manuscript for assessment. That was how the collection titled *Apa-Ola, Songs of Applause and of Awakening* got published. At present, I am considering writing a drama.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

SO: For me, the beauty of composition is about how the words are spurned, the use of language thrills me more irrespective of the genre. I'm mostly really interested in adventures and fables, that is why as a young child I read and re-read *Lord of the Flies* by Williams Golden and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. Such books, whether they're voluminous or short stories, would be read voraciously by me. So any creatively written piece with a touch of suspense would enliven my spirit as an avid reader.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

SO: That's quite tough a question for me to answer because whenever I pick up a book, the first thing I do is to go through the blurb, I would be willing to the readers' comments, and that is where my first interest begins. So, if I am to mention those I found most interesting and consider as favourites, the list will be too long. For instance, when I was a kid, I used to consider George Orwell, Ann Taylor, William Golden as favourites but as I grew up I developed so much interests in African writings and Middle Eastern Arabic poetry, to such extent that I would shed tears profusely each time I read the poems. When I was writing about my father in *Agonies of a Bereaved Poet*, I adapted the styles of David Rubadiri and Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori because of their brilliant efforts which I was privileged to have come across. When we talk of contemporary poetry Adam Roa (English) and Jaed Joa (Arabic) are my favourites. These are writers with magical deployment of satires in such captivating ways that are amazingly unique. I

have a immeasurable admiration for Professor Wole Soyinka, Niyi Osundare, Dr Wale Okediran, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Elechi Amadi and a host of others who have created worlds for readers to tour. Writers whose works have left indelible marks in the annal of history – those are genuinely the favourites that I adore.

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

SO: I read quite a number of books before I ever dreamt of writing mine; doing so afforded me the rare opportunity to broaden and widen my understanding of the arts. So young writers should understand that reading more books will add values to their lives. And whenever I feel fulfilled to have completed a work, I wouldn't rush to the press in order to self-publish, I would ensure that I single-handedly proofread the first draft even before seeking the assistance of proofreaders. I consider it a blessing to have my work critiqued and my candid critics were taken as my best friends. Sadly, I have met a number of up-and-coming writers who detested being counselled or corrected and I don't think such attitude would make them go far; aspiring writers shouldn't mind going back and redrafting, while bearing in mind that doing so is to their own benefits. After all, what is written without efforts would in turn be read without pleasure.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

SO: My eyes. According to Willa Cather, "If a true artist was born in a pig pen and raised in a sty, he would still find plenty of inspiration for his works, the only need would be the eye to see." So, the creator of my eyes and all that I have been able to see automatically becomes my inspirer; what I am able to see or read determines the characters I would create in my writings.

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

SO: I don't really have a particular writing routine or a kind of tryst where I commune with creativity. And I don't set goals, I only decide to put pen to paper as a form of distraction to temporarily dismiss from my mind the troubles in my life. Oftentimes I do so in my privacy, but at times I write in the company of friends who wouldn't dare to distract my attention because they understand the consequence of doing so. I write the best when I seclude myself in the garden while enjoying the buoyant chirp of birds and insects. I don't always do that, but when I'm in my hometown, I could even go into the forest. If I write during communion with nature, it becomes a great piece. It enables my body and mind the opportunity to relax. And the more I relax, the better my writing. My writing corner doesn't have to be elegant or attractive – I only want to enjoy the cool breeze and write imaginative pieces.

SYNW: HOW, WHEN, AND WHY DID YOU START WRITING?

SO: I first shot at writing was in 1997 while I was in secondary school. I was mandated to submit a short story and poems to be published in the school magazine. Few weeks after my attempts as a neophyte, I was stunned to see my piece in print and I felt so overwhelmed joy because my picture was also published in the section where my work appeared. That gesture by the school reinforced my interest in writing.

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

SO: The poem titled syllogism stanzas which were published in 1997 in my school's literary magazine, as earlier mentioned.

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

SO: I write didactic stories and inspirational poems. As a Muslim who firmly believes that there is life after death, and that the Day of Reckoning before our creator would certainly come, I write with caution so as to avoid the use of blasphemous languages that might earn me ephemeral accolades here on earth but the wrath of my Lord in the Hereafter. In other words, I write first to earn the favour of God; and most of the readers who find interest in my writings are those who uphold the belief in monotheistic faith.

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

SO: Doing so afforded me the opportunity to heave a sigh of relief, with hope that a mission is almost accomplished. That is because I have always equipped myself with the belief that a beautifully scripted manuscript lying flat on my table would remain on my table, until it is sent out for publishing considerations to various publishers. So, each time I send my works out, I follow it up with prayer because I know that no one would give me what He hasn't destined to be mine.

SYNW: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

SO: I get my ideas from life experiences; I watch adventurous movies and interact with the elderly.

SYNW: HOW DID YOU GET PUBLISHERS?

SO: By self-promoting my works on my Facebook page, www.facebook.com/literacychampion some publishers would deem it fit to contact me for business.

SYNW: TELL US WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES YOU GET FROM AUDIENCE/READERS?

SO: So far, it has been quite encouraging. I can remember in 2007, I was invited by the youth-wing of NASFAT to come and deliver a lecture at Alausa Secretariat, Ikeja. After, having delivered the lecture, I was approached by a Muslim revert who introduced himself as an Engineer with Rodot.org, he said he enjoyed reading my books at his based in Germany; and that he came to NASFAT purposely to meet me on that very day; and he presented me with a very beautiful Dell laptop computer. In 2006, one Mrs Edicha reached out to me from the Education Trust Fund (ETF), Abuja and appealed that I should take a copy of my works to the Maritime office in Apapa, Lagos. When I got to the office, I met the Director, a Fulani man who said he enjoyed reading my books; on that day, he gave me a large sum of money to organise a befitting public presentation of Poetry from the Minaret. As I said earlier, the feedback has been quite encouraging.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

SO: I won the IWA annual International Poetry contest, Texas, USA, adult category in 2011 and 2013 respectively; let people go and read the winning entries to find out more about me. My work was judged the best out of about 100 submissions from professional poets for the Al-Hikmah University school anthem. So today, without an iota of immodest, I'm the writer of the University anthem; let the people read the 2011 convocation magazine of the school where the centre spread was dedicated to me as the best graduating student.

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

SO: I used to be a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Kwara chapter. I'm also a reading campaign advocate for the National Library of Nigeria, Kwara branch. I organise interscholastic literary contests for schools, I arrange writing classes for burden writers, and I also attend writers' workshops whenever I'm able to do so. I hold cross fertilization with other writers in high esteem, and attending literary events inspires me to hone my writing skills. I'm on the board of Piam Voices. They stage quiz competitions and workshops for secondary school students, including this inspirational thing called poetry performance contests, where you present your original works and get awarded with beautiful gifts, you would even stand a chance to work with coaches and mentors. It's highly beneficial to collaborate and attend reading sessions with experts.

Another thing is to attend conventions and conferences; in a saner clime these are good places to meet like minded individuals and showcase your writings.

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

SO: They get easily discouraged and they often fail to show commitment and that is why I charge consultation fees when approached by new writers who just want to get published without having to make the necessary intellectual exertions.

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

SO: My latest book, Apa-Ola, Songs of Applause and of Awakening because it is all about my beloved people, my culture and heritage.

WA: CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

SO: The book - Apa-Ola, Songs of Applause and of Awakening takes me back to my roots. Its poetical flashbacks bring a deep insight into my past and it further instills humility into my system. Reflecting on the experiences I had with my late grandparents broadens my understanding of the ephemerality of this world, and the inhumanity of man against fellow man. Today, it seems unbelievable to tell the youths that what was used as paint on the walls of our homes in the olden days was the excreta of cows. The book is about the contentment of our parents. Sadly, the politicians who lived in luxury would only come for electioneering purposes to canvas for our votes with empty promises. After having savoured these experiences, I wrapped it up by saying:

"Until the time we learn to fight legitimately for our rights,
the hope for days with no rack-rents
would only be seen in black and white."

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-sheriff-olanrewaju-i-write-to-earn-the-favour-ff-god>

UP AND COMING WRITERS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT AND STRAIGHTFORWARD - YUSUFF OPEERE



Yusuff Opeere is currently the coordinator of Iseyin Book Club and a member of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW). In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he briefly talks about his writing career.

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

YUSUFF: I am a young love-affected writer. My first manuscript is based on love. I wrote it at the age of twenty-three. I have written two works; and I am currently working on a memoir.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING

YUSUFF: Nature, and what is in it.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

YUSUFF: Every writer whom his/her works can have influence on people is my favourite writer. Though I have a few writers who are earning my respect, like Wole Soyinka, Okey Ndibie(The author of 'Never look American in the eyes'), Funke Awodiya (poet), Tochi Okafor (The audacity of Youth), and those that meet my taste.

WA: What advice would you give to a new writer starting out?

YUSUFF: They should be consistent and straightforward.

WA: What inspires you to write?

YUSUFF: Love.

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

YUSUFF: No. I write when the inspiration creep in. Though I don't go out with notebook; my phone is my notebook. I write anywhere, anytime.

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

YUSUFF: I started writing in 2017 on Facebook. Then I would write short memoir; fifty words or less. I was doing that because if I kept all what I was posting on Facebook to myself, it would 'eat' me. Because it is fire.

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

YUSUFF: For how long shall we continue like this?

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

YUSUFF: Not really. But I choose love and fate.

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

YUSUFF: I feel happy. I feel like a prince when someone who's a journalist said to me when we were talking on phone that he loves my writing, and he uses to consult 'second teacher' because he understands my words. And when I was in college, a lecturer nominated as me Secretary General of our department because he had seen and felt my ability of writing.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

YUSUFF: It comes from our daily happenings and others' works.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

YUSUFF: I haven't published any work but I am working on it. I came across a poetry book in a library which that publisher published and I took his numbers and phone him.

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

YUSUFF: Infact, I do always satisfied with my readers' comments. It does make me dance in the streets.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

YUSUFF: They can find me on Facebook. I use it as a medium of communication. I write and post there.

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

YUSUFF: Like I have said, consistency is what we all need. Nobody is as a writer. We learned it. Daily reading and writing is the only tip I can think of.

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

YUSUFF: They are after money. Especially the up-coming writers.

WA: Which of your books were the most enjoyable to write?

YUSUFF: I am yet to publish book.

WA: Tell us about your first published book? What was the journey like?

YUSUFF: I am yet to get any book published but I have manuscripts. Cost of publication and marketing are somehow scaring me, and I know, it happens to some of other budding writers.

WA: On your latest Book, can you share with us something about the book
YUSUFF: Yet to publish.

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

YUSUFF: I wanted the work and its message to remain in the dark until it is published but, at a certain point when I was writing it I discovered that I need to share it with some people to give rheme on it, and it has actuated me to lengthen it. For substraction and addition. Therefore I have shared the memoir with two publishers and a few people. There is one more than a message in the book, but, er, the only message that birthed the work to uproot the dubiety and establish it that dream (or nightmare) is real and there's purpose for it.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-yusuff-opeere-up-and-coming-writers-should-be-consistent-and-straightforward>

I WRITE TO MAKE SOCIETY BETTER - OMALE ALLEN ABDUL-JABBAR



Omale Allen Abdul-Jabbar is the author of the Poetry collection *Behold, Your Scented Daughters* and a Civil Servant living in Abuja, Nigeria. Ex- Chairman and Public Relations Officer of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) and recently elected as the National Vice Chairman of the Northern Nigerian Writers Summit (NNWS). Writes poetry, novels, drama and essays and an award winner of the maiden Pen Nigeria/Saraba Poetry Prize and honorable mention in the Korean Nigeria Poetry Prize 2011 & 12 respectively. Highly anthologized and influenced by the works of Toni Kan, Helon Habila, Garcia Marquez, Ben Okri, Isabel Allende, Margaret Artwood, Pablo Neruda, Maik Nwosu and Toyin Adewale Gabriel. Omale narrowly missed the Library of Africa Residency (LOATAD) programme but has been accepted for the Ebedi Residency in August 2022. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, Omale talks about his works and writing career.

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

OAA: My name is Omale Allen Abdul-Jabbar. Known in some quarters by my Pseudonym ‘Masaihead’, I am the author of the Poetry collection *Behold, Your Scented Daughters* (2011) and a Civil Servant living in Abuja, Nigeria. Ex- Chairman, Ex- officio and Ex-Public Relations Officer of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) and recently elected as the National Vice Chairman of the Northern Nigerian Writers Summit (NNWS). I write poetry, short stories, novels, drama and essays and an award winner of the maiden Pen Nigeria/Saraba Poetry Prize and honorable mention in the Korean Nigeria Poetry Prize 2011 & 12 respectively. Highly anthologized and influenced by the works of Toni Kan, Helon Habila, Garcia Marquez, Ben Okri, Isabel Allende, Margaret Artwood, Pablo Neruda, Maik Nwosu and Toyin Adewale Gabriel. This novel has its first chapter published recently in the PAWA Anthology *Voices That Sing Behind The Veil*. I am presently a resident @ the August 2022 cohort of the Ebedi International Writers Residency expanding it into a full length novel titled *Love Is A Knife*. My writing idea is taken from a solemn believe in the triumph of the Human spirit. I reside at my home of the ‘Purple Rain Suite’ in Abuja with my wife, five children and dog Steel (who passed away months ago). I can be reached at omaleabduljabbar@gmail.com and [@allenomale](https://twitter.com/allenomale). Twitter handle: @allenomale.

Currently am working on a novel called the Accidental Bandit or What Else Are In My stars? (Final title coming up). Manuscripts awaiting publication include: The Heart is an Organ of Fire (Poetry), The front of the Past (short story), Destiny`s Eyes (Novel), I carry Some Dreams In the Trunk of my Car (poetry) , They Came for Me (Play) and I bought My Own Death (Novella).

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

OAA: I am thrilled by dexterous deployment of imagery and the philosophies injected into pieces of writing by authors. Garcia Marquez, Maik Nwosu, Isabell Allende, Margaret Artwood, Helon Habila, Ben Okri have done these marvelously in their novels/stories: One Thousand Years of Solitude, Alpha Song, Two Words, My life a s a bat, Waiting for an Angel, The Famished Road respectively.Toni Kan in Nights of a Creaking Bed for his humour and character development.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

OAA: The writers mentioned above and the reasons I gave. Others are playwrights like Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima for their resourcefulness in taking history hostage as central focus and the master craftsmanship in storytelling and Wole Okediran, Toni Kan, Poets like Pablo Neruda, Toyin Adewale Gabriel Perpetual Ezeffule, Sitawa Namwali,

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

OAA: Read very voraciously; attend writers gatherings as iron sharpens Irons. Select five successful writers from each continent and apprentice yourself to them via their writings, study their form, style, character development, theme, and plot development and come up with your own unique art. Do not copy them, hence you emerge as a mere clown, this is only Monotonous and boring. For instance, I`d recommend the Nobel Laureate Ernest Hemingway, author of the Old Man and the Sea among several other classics for his minimalist style of writing. This works on the principle of the iceberg, what you see peeping out of the ocean is just a tip, as what lies beneath is a chunk. The Art of telling more by telling little. You don`t have to explain everything in your story, especially the short story genre. Finally, send your works for entries in anthologies and competitions, the evaluations and feedback usually helps i.e the acceptance and rejections.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

OAA: What inspires me to write? Hmmm, first I`ll tell you that I started writing diary entries to record my own existence and the experiences that life threw my way, joy and pain, hopes and dreams, then I burned the diary because I felt it had a power over me, someone I had to come and confess to-then I started song lyrics, the poetry, then short stories and novels. Now I write from my conviction that I have a responsibility, being “chosen as” a writer, to chronicle the varying tides of society, its ups and downs(sadly, there appears to be more downs than ups especially in Nigeria now) .

I write to make society better, to give out an essential message that, no matter how long the night may be, morning always comes and we'll get up and go. Maya Angelou and William Faulkner both championed this thought. I believe essentially in the triumph of the human spirit. It baffles me why people commit suicides, there's always hope. Change your perspective and geographical locations. Reading readily comes to the rescue. Cheap and free!

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

OAA: No, not really. I write when I am inspired. Coffee tends to do the trick most times. Ha ha. Routine? Nothing like that. I write when I can break for the hustle bustle of trying to earn a living. Any quiet place is good. My library. Any time.

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

OAA: I think 5 above answer some of these. Growing into adolescence after finishing secondary school in 1987, I started to become more aware of myself and surroundings, attraction to the female gender and issues occurring daily around me, my elder brothers and sisters had so many novels lying around and naturally, I was attracted to them. They also told stories of what they've read. James Hadley Chase, Bertha M Clay, Mills and Boon, Nick Carter, Agatha Christie, Robert Ludlum, Jackie Collins, Lobsang Rampa. Pace Settesr and The African Writer Series were a huge delight as I could relate more directly with the Stories.

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

OAA: "To live and Die in Titicaca" Thisday Newspaper, 1996. Then "Sonnet to an old pair of shoes" Hints Magazine. Poems. I have Toni Kan and Helon Habila to thank for that.

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

OAA: Initially I wrote based on whatever inspires the write up, from politics, fall in and out of relationships, cross section of random issues I encounter in my interaction with people and my environment. These days, my attention is being drawn to issues specific themes i.e where I tend to dedicate the entire work to a particular concern or theme ranging from the woman as a gender, (I have scented daughters!) mental health, nature, poverty, cultural heritage etc.

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

OAA: Most exciting. When I first googled my name, I found that I was on the World Wide Web? That was the most thrilling Priceless. I started by keeping Newspaper cuttings of my published poems. Yeah that was pretty cool!

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

OAA: Again I think 5 above answer some of that. The Muse delivers story ideas on its own without my having a say in the matter many times. Sometimes, a whole poem is complete with

each line. I only have to edit later on. But you know something about the muse, it can be very irresponsible and mischievous, so you have to discipline the muse when it prompts you at times to write.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

OAA: In Nigeria, mostly self publishing is the norm. My first book ‘ ‘ Behold, Your Scented Daughters’’, a poetry collection was published by a friend Hyacinth of Hybun International Publishers in 2011.(Bless his soul). Synopsis for my current book The Accidental Bandit or What Else Are In My Stars? Planned for the West African Writers Residency (LOATAD) in Accra was ‘ ‘rated highly’ ’ and I was placed on a waiting list but never made it in the end. I am presently writing it at the Prestigious Ebedi International Writers Residency, Iseyin, Nigeria. Initial three Chapters of the MS have been sent to Ouida books Publishing and Botsotso Press in Nigeria and South Africa respectively. I am hopeful for a traditional publication deal with this one. Royalties and the whole nine.

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

OAA: Both high and low. Some folks think I’ve arrived and a star. Ha ha, I thank them. (Mostly family and friends). Some others do not think so much. But it alright, am getting there.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

OAA: Facebook; Omale Allen Abduljabbar, instagramm : @alleabdujabbar, twitter: @omaleallen or just google my name Omale Allen Abduljabbar, my publications are across several anthologies and online journals.

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

OAA: Consistency, dedication, felicity, hard work. Talent alone is not gonna get you there nor sustain you. So many new, talented and anxious kids on the block. See the generational shift in the Nigerian NLNG Literature Prize? The final shorted trio: Saddiq, Suddie and Romio are all youngsters.

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

OAA: Yeah, they tend to rush to publish their works without the usual painful process of rigorous editing. The poet and late friend of mine, Carlos Izzia Ahmad, use to say ‘ ‘ let it gestate for a while..’ ’ Just keep writing. Publishing will follow after due editing process.

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

OAA: Destiny's Eyes". I felt like an angel, following my characters "Cass Abdalla" and "Bellema" across five countries and continents, watching their love story unfold in its twist and turns. Sweet,

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

OAA: Hmmm I borrowed money to pay for it. Holding it finally in my hands I smiled, yeah I made it. Am now a published author! A wonderful feeling till date.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED "THE ACCIDENTAL BANDIT\WHAT ELSE ARE IN MY STARS? " CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

OAA: Dan Asabe, an Al Majiri boy of fifteen years runs away in a groundnut truck from his village of Talata Mafara in Zamfara State, rejecting the life that has been given to him for a better one in Abuja. A chance encounter with wild animal circus trainers turns him into a baboon handler. Now at twenty five,he stands in a ring under the pedestrian bridge in Mararaba , entertaining a crowd with Smokie, his bet baboon with his routine acts that makes jests of smokers, teachers, pregnant, women, prostitutes and soldiers. The last group being right beside him on this day, he runs into trouble where they force him to stab the baboon. He stabs himself too from heartbreak.

Picked by Senator Sani Morroco and taken to the hospital where he survives, his life takes a rollercoaster turn as he watches his life changing from a houseboy in the Senator's Asokoro house where his lesbian wives threatens him into providing hard drugs and sleeping with them, to his sudden transportation to Adagez, Niger where he is raped on arrival, to his metamorphosis into a murderer, a migrant with his failed attempt at crossing the desert into Europe, into a bandit, a soldier fighting the wars in Zamfara and finally returning to Abuja for a settlement of scores.

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

OAA: An existentialist tale. Man and his struggle for survival in a world that is seemingly determined to see him fall, and the vagaries of fate the choices he finally makes to take control of his life.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-omale-allen-abdul-jabbar-i-write-to-make-society-better>

**PASSION TO IMPACT POSITIVELY IS MY DRIVING FORCE - ONYINYECHI
CHIZOBA IHEANYI**



Onyinyechi Chizoba Iheanyi is currently an undergraduate in Medical Biochemistry of the Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State. She is a writer, a beautiful soul who likes rabbits as pets. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her passion for writing.

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

OCI: I started writing as early as 7 years of age, from incoherent scribbling to numerous attempts at poetry (of which I can comfortably say I failed woefully at. Don't get me wrong, poetry is a great genre of literature and it's gifted to specially crafted souls by mother nature), to short stories about princesses in magical lands, to writing articles, essays and sharpening my pen to write novels. It's been a great journey so far, lots of amazing experiences, some blissful, some downright scorching pain (I could remember when one of my mentors asked me to write a biography, it should come as a short story for one of Nigeria's former Chief Of Staff. I wrote diligently, smiling when I submitted it to him for proofreading because to myself, I had done an excellent job. You can imagine my shock when I received a call from him, asking me if I wrote the short story for a baby. Honestly, for a few days, I wasn't myself, but I'm glad he made that statement. That sentence alone pushed me to work on myself and aim higher. Well, I've written a couple of articles, essays, short stories and currently, I am writing my debut novel.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

OCI: The ability of a writer to captivate his/her reader, to hold the reader captive, to enthrall the reader, to keep the reader locked in the vast world of that written work is what excites me about a piece of writing. Moreover, for this to happen, the written piece of work must be engaging, enlightening, informative, adventurous (I like exploring new things), inspiring etcetera you name it. It just needs to be able to totally by totally I mean 100%, it must totally capture the reader's attention. Reading the book should make the reader feel like he/she is in a different world away from the present.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITER'S AND WHY?

OCI: My favorite writer's are Kenneth Hagin (he talks about improving your relationship with God, drawing closer to GOD and living in the SPIRIT), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (her written works are full of indepth wisdom, her works tell of a strong woman, in my native language we say águnwányí meaning strong woman, a woman who seeks to pull women from the shackles of patriarchy, discrimination, abuse etc. A woman who wants and supports the full humanity of women like she said in one of my favorite quotes of hers ``Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture." Another writer I love is the late Buchi Emecheta (her books talk about how African's can rise from the shackles of racism, quit being second class and third class citizens and see them as humans full of potentials and equal with all other, irrespective of race, color, tribe, religion etc. I also love mama Maya Angelou, God rest her soul. She was a gem, an epitome, a voice for black people all over the world, a voice for women all over the world...mehn she really inspired me and one of her quotes I hold so dear is "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor and some style." She showed what it truly means to be a black woman and to be so amazingly proud of it.

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

OCI: Well, to a new writer's beginning this beautiful journey of writing, you must surround yourself with like minds; you must belong to a community of writers. You must love what you do, writing is not easy, it's your love for your art that will keep you going when it gets tough or when you encounter the writer's block. Have a mentor, seek out one. Totally scrap your mind, cleanse your mind from any monetary value you would get from writing. You're just starting and if at this level you see writing as a business, you're on your way to crash. People pay money for value, for content and presently you need experience, lessons etc to be able to package your written work and get potential clients/readers. So for now, focus on making yourself better. Focus on building your writing world, focus on sharpening and honing your writing skills. It's a step by step thing. Do not be intimidated by the big shots you hear about in writing, instead seek to learn from them by reading their books. They say "a book is a walk into the writer's mind." Lastly keep writing, no matter how stupid it sounds to you, keep writing and never be in a hurry to publish

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

OCI: My passion to impact positively is my driving force. The zeal in me, to tell and show people that this is the right way of doing things is what inspires me to write and keep writing. Then, I am also inspired by certain situations. Let's say listening to the news and hearing about an injustice met out on the victim could also inspire me to write an article on that subject matter. Infact in lots of cases, it has and one thing I love about the works born out of such inspirations is that they have so much passion in them. The vigour is tangible, so tangible, it can be felt and has the ability to influence the reader positively for sure.

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

OCI: No I don't, I can write anywhere provided the environment is peaceful.

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

OCI: I think I've answered the how and when of my writing background in the first paragraph. As to why I started writing, honestly I do not know. I just found out that I was able to cook up really interesting stories, to the point that if anyone was bored at home, they would tell me to read them a story. I found I enjoyed what I did, so when I came of age, I decided to make writing a professional career.

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

OCI: I haven't officially published any book yet. Funny enough, a lot of writer's would be panic-stricken, but not me. I am comfortable with that status and I keep working on myself, so that when I eventually publish my debut novel, it's going to be a blast, a bomb.

WA: DO YOU ADDRESS PARTICULAR ISSUES OR THEME'S IN YOUR WRITING?

OCI: Yes I do, depending on the context, depending on the subject matter at hand. If I'm writing a short story on domestic violence, my piece of work would not depart from the subject matter. Even if I'm writing a general work, I would definitely have a theme or an issue to address.

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

OCI: Felt hesitant, contemplative, but within me, there was a burning excitement, a hunger for people to see my works. Fear was there, but my zeal to use my works to positively impact humanity was greater. I knew criticism would come, I thought I was ready but unfortunately I wasn't ready for the dimension it took. I'm grateful, so grateful for those criticisms, it shaped me, it honed my writing skills and made me push further.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

OCI: I get my ideas from anywhere. It could be when I'm seeing a movie, walking down a street, listening to music... anything, just about anything could be my muse.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

OCI: I do not have a publisher yet as I haven't officially published any work.

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

OCI: Let me use this opportunity to thank everyone that has been oppurtuned to read my work uploaded by any organization or enterprise. Your well-meaning comments and otherwise comments are greatly appreciated; it pushes me to up-my-pen. Thank you

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

OCI: You can follow me on Facebook, I'm there as Onyinyechi Iheanyi. You can also follow me on Instagram, infact all social media platforms except TikTok and LinkedIn.

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

OCI: The best book, most enjoyable so far for me, is the one I'm currently writing. My debut novel, it's an interesting and captivating read. I'll definitely be sending you a copy Mr Wole, I bet you'll enjoy it.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-onyinyechi-chizoba-iheanyi-passion-to-impact-positively-is-my-driving-force>

**NOTHING KILLS A WORK FASTER THAN HASTE AND SHODDY PUBLISHING -
SUMAILA ISAH UMAISHA**



Sumaila Isah Umaisha is currently with the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) as Chief Information Officer. He had worked as Literary Editor since 1994 with various media organisations including Hotline magazine, New Nigerian Newspapers, Blueprint Newspapers and then as Editor with the Nigerian Newsday from 2013 to 2020. Among other prizes, he has won twice (2004 and 2007) the prestigious Literary Journalist Prize awarded by the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). His short stories, poems, essays and interviews have been published in several national and international anthologies, journals and magazines, including *DRUMVOICES REVUE*, USA, *The London Magazine*, UK, and his blog, <http://www.everythinliterature.blogspot.com>. His first work, a collection of short stories titled *Hoodlums*, is a recommended text in some Nigerian universities. His second work is a novel titled *Glasshouse* (2022).

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

SIU: Before my present work, I had worked as a Literary Editor since 1994 with various media organisations including Hotline magazine, New Nigerian Newspapers, Blueprint Newspapers and then as Editor with the Nigerian Newsday Newspapers from 2013 to 2020. So, I would say my writing career is an offshoot of my literary journalism profession. I could also say my journalism career was inspired by my creative ability and interest in literature. Throughout my journalism career I engaged in the promotion of writings and writers and got to learn a lot more about literary creativity. In short, my writing and my profession complements each other. So far, I have written quite a number of short stories, poems, essays and interviews. Some of them have been published in national and international anthologies, journals and magazines, including *DRUMVOICES REVUE*, USA, *The London Magazine*, UK, and my blog, <http://www.everythinliterature.blogspot.com>. My first work in book form is a collection of short

stories titled *Hoodlums* (2011). My second publication is a novel titled *Glasshouse* (2022). I'm currently writing short stories on contemporary issues like the phenomenon of child begging in Northern Nigeria. I'm also writing poems on similar issues.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

SIU: The qualities that excite me most about a piece of fiction are the style of language and the story line. I can only read a novel to the end if it has these qualities or either of them. As for poetry, I look out for an innovative use of language, surprising turn of phrases, and the use of fresh imageries that aptly depict the subject-matter. I love plays that are subtly dramatic and surreal. Generally, I love works that engage the reader on both emotional and intellectual level.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

SIU: They are very many because any work I find interesting the author becomes my favourite. If he or she has more works, I search for them to read. My most favourites, however, are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, James Hardley Chase and Ernest Hemingway. I love Achebe for his simplicity and the way he 'coloured' English into Igbo language, showcasing African culture to the world. I love Ngugi for the same reason. I like Soyinka's works for their cryptic nature. Reading him is like solving a difficult mathematical problem and the intellectual pleasure you get from solving a difficult math equals the pleasure you derive from his work when you eventually understand it after reading and re-reading and much thought. I love the intellectual exercise. Chase's works were my favourite in secondary school because of their exciting storylines. I love Hemingway's works, especially *The Old Man and the Sea* because of the philosophical message.

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

SIU: My advice to a new writer is to read other writers' works. It is only a good reader that can make a good writer. He should read all kinds of works even those he might consider uninteresting. It is also advisable to read works that have won prizes. Some of these works may appear dull, but there are always hidden qualities behind the ordinariness. Secondly, the writer must not rush his work. Every work must be edited many, many times. Apart from personal editing, he should also let others go through the work. And he must be tolerant of criticism; it is a necessary fire a writer must pass through to success. However, this does not mean he must accept and incorporate every suggestion into his work. A writer must have a mind of his own. Finally, to be a good writer, write every day if possible.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE?

SIU: I was inspired into writing through reading. I am an ardent reader. In my secondary school days you would most certainly catch me reading James Hardley Chase novels even when I was preparing for exams. Before I left college, I started trying my hand at writing. And I've been writing since I discovered I could write.

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

SIU: Honestly, I can't remember the first piece I ever got published, because I did not care to keep the newspapers in which they appeared. But I know a lot of my poems and short stories were published in the 1980s in various newspapers, such as *New Nigerian*, *Nigerian Standard*, *The Triumph*, and *The Democrat*.

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

SIU: Oh, I felt great! It is really great when people tell you 'I read your poem in today's newspaper, and it is very interesting'. Some of us who started writing in the 80s were partly inspired by the fact that newspapers were publicising our works. That's why when I became a journalist, I was very active in promoting young writers. And my efforts in this regard earned me prizes including the Literary Journalist of the Year Prize awarded by the Association of Nigerian Authors, which I won twice (2004 and 2007). Unfortunately, only few newspapers still provide spaces for young writers to have their works publicised today. Our values have changed from that direction, which is one of the reasons why the reading culture is dying.

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

SIU: Yes. I write mostly in the night and at dawn when the atmosphere is quiet. I have a writing desk in my bedroom. When I'm on a journey I ensure my hotel room has a table and a chair. At times when an idea comes and the inspiration to put it down is so strong that I can't wait till night, I get down to work even in a noisy environment if I can't get a quiet place. I block the external noises with earpieces, listening to soft music on my phone or laptop while I write.

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

SIU: I address virtually every and any issue worth the reading public's interest and attention. The themes range from the corruption pandemic that is ravaging the world, especially Africa, to the phenomenon of love and issues relating to human conditions generally. In my collection of short stories, *Hoodlums*, for instance, I dwell on the incessant upheavals rocking Nigeria, the religious and ethnic inspired riots and the general state of insecurity. The title *Hoodlums* refers to the real hoodlums on the streets carrying out the riots and the so-called big men behind the riots, including the corrupt politicians and civil servants whose actions give rise to all the chaos.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

SIU: I get my ideas from the society. I listen and observe and anything that rouses my anger, sympathy or fancy I write about it. Specifically, my ideas come from the news media, conversations, personal and interpersonal experiences. At times ideas for a story or poem comes from deep contemplation especially when I'm travelling. Most of my poems and short stories come this way. I use my mobile phone to draft them as soon as the ideas come. Then I allow them to incubate for some time, for the mental picture of it to develop properly before I get down to writing it.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

SIU: I began by looking for traditional publishers. Failing to get any of them to publish me, I resorted to self-publishing. I asked friends who had published this way and they connected me with their publishers.

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

SIU: The responses have been favourable and they have inspired me to continue writing. My collection of short stories was well received by both the reading public and literary critics. In fact, it is being read as literary text in some Nigerian universities. Scholars have studied it and written much about it. My novel, *Glasshouse*, published a few months ago, is equally being well received. I have been hosted to reading sessions by literary bodies. It was on the longlist of the 2022 edition of the James Currey Prize for African Literature. It is just starting out, and I believe it will go very far by God's grace.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

SIU: They can read my blog, mentioned above, though I have lost access to it now. I don't know how it happened, but I suddenly discovered I could no longer log in. The blog is very rich as it contains some of the literary reviews, reports and interviews I published in the newspapers as a literary editor. People can also connect with me on Facebook; the one bearing the username Sumaila Umaisha. I can no longer access the account with the username Sumaila Isah Umaisha, it has been hijacked by scammers, which is why I opened another one. Also, by googling my name one could be led to my works on the internet. My Email address is umaisha2012@gmail.com. For physical contact, I could be reached in Abuja through my office. I'm currently working in the Public Relations Unit of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency as Chief Information Officer.

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

SIU: The utmost trick is to read, read and read. Then write and write. Write every day if you can. And don't rush; make sure your work is clean before publishing it. Another trick is to aim at a prize while writing a story, a poem or a novel. It will help to make you sit up and put in your best. Even if you don't win the targeted prize at the end of the day you would have produced a masterpiece worthy of winning a prize. Prizes may not be the ultimate aim of writing, they have a way of motivating writers to higher heights.

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

SIU: The major mistakes are rushing their works in time to enter it into a competition and employing the services of roadside printers. Nothing kills a work faster than haste and shoddy publishing. Even though it is good to set a high standard for your work by targeting a literary contest, it becomes disadvantageous when one becomes hasty, so desperate about winning a prize that he ends up producing substandard work. Just take your time. I spent five years writing *Glasshouse*.

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

SIU: I enjoyed writing all of them. You know, writing a book is like giving birth. Just like the mother enjoys (and sometimes endures) all the processes of childbirth so does the writer enjoy writing his works. If not for the God-given pleasure of the art of creating, one would not be able to spend so many years writing a single book. And that's why even though there's not much money in writing, the writer still writes. There's joy in sharing one's ideas with others through the written words. Books are the best legacy one could leave behind. God rewards you for every positive impact you make on your readers.

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

SIU: Publishing *Hoodlums* did not come easy. Several years after writing the stories I could not publish them into a book because I could not get a traditional publisher and I had no money for self-publishing. It was a friend of mine, Abubakar Sidi, author of *Poet of Dust* that came to my aid. He assisted me financially to publish it. I will ever remain grateful to him. The journey has been rough, but I thank God. The future is very bright!

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED *GLASSHOUSE*; CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

SIU: *Glasshouse*, which is set on a farm, is a combination of many things in terms of genre. It is a romance, a mystery, a thriller, a crime, and a historical novel. It is a combination of all the

novels I have read! [laughs]. It is written from both the realist and the idealist points of view. The main theme is corruption, but unlike the other novels about corruption which I have read, *Glasshouse* approaches the subject from a different perspective. It depicts the appalling depth of corruption in Nigeria and its far-reaching consequences, and at the same time, it signifies hope for a better future. In short, the message is that even though we are down we are not out, there is light at the end of it all.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-sumaila-isah-umaisha-nothing-kills-a-work-faster-than-haste-and-shoddy-publishing>

**OUR AIM IS TO BRING TOGETHER A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS INTERESTED
IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN MILTON - EDWARD R. RAUPP, FOUNDER-
MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA:**



Edward R. Raupp is a Professor of Humanities at Gori State University and a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia. He has published many books and scholarly articles in different international journals. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his efforts in promoting John Milton's Life and Works through his brainchild, Milton Society of Georgia (MSG).

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF:

ERR: I am Edward R. Raupp. I have a Bachelor of Science degree from Carnegie Mellon University, a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Pennsylvania, a Master of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Minnesota, a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Georgia, a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from Selinus University, and Honorary Doctorates from Gori State University and Tskhinvali State University. I am a Colonel in the United States Army in a retired status. I am married to Danna Vance Raupp. We are dual citizens of the United States and Georgia, and we live in Gori, a city in the independent nation of Georgia.

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA- HOW IT BEGAN, WHO'S INVOLVED, ETHOS, AIMS, AND WHAT YOU DO.

ERR: The Milton Society of Georgia was founded for the following purposes:
1. The general purpose of MSG is to raise the level of awareness of and scholarship in both theoretical and practical, studies of the life and works of the famous English writer John Milton (1608-1674) and, more generally, to improve English language proficiency among Georgian pupils, students, school teachers, university lecturers and professors, and others in the area of English philology.

2. Specific aims and objectives of MSG are as follows:

- a. Bring together a community of scholars interested in the life and works of John Milton.
- b. Encourage the production of literary works associated with John Milton.
- c. Issue publications about John Milton.
- d. Hold meetings at which John Milton's works shall be studied and discussed.
- e. Foster the development of interest in English language and literature.

WA: HOW DO YOU RUN THE ORGANIZATION?

ERR: We have an Executive Committee and a number of operating committees. The Executive Committee and the full membership meet quarterly.

WA: HOW IS MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA PROMOTING THE WORKS OF MILTON?

ERR: We established the *Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies*, which is published quarterly. The third issue has just been published: <https://www.cjojms.com/index.php/research/issue/view/5>

WA: WHAT MAJOR SUCCESSES HAVE YOU HAD SINCE FOUNDING THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA?

ERR: Publication of three issues of the *Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies*.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR MODUS OPERANDI (MODE OF OPERATIONS) AT THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA?

ERR: We follow the philosophy of John Milton's *Areopagitica* and his principles articulated in *Of Education*. There is never any fee for publication or access to the *Journal*.

WA: WHAT MAKES YOU EFFECTIVE AS THE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA?

ERR: I practice "Servant Leadership." I serve the members of the Society and the wider world of those who are interested in English Language and Literature.

WA: WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU FEEL WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

ERR: External funding beyond the donations of a few members.

WA: IN WHICH AREAS WOULD YOU LIKE TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA?

ERR: Classes on writing, including poetry writing.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT THE WORKS OF JOHN MILTON.

ERR: Milton's poetry and prose are widely available in English, e.g. the Milton Reading Room at Dartmouth College https://milton.host.dartmouth.edu/reading_room/contents/text.shtml

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WORK BY JOHN MILTON? WHY.

ERR: *Lycidas* is my favorite Milton work. It is the greatest pastoral elegy ever written in the English language.

WA: WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MAKE HIS WORKS KNOWN ESPECIALLY TO READERS IN AFRICA?

ERR: Our *Journal* is freely available to readers in Africa. We also invite African scholars at all levels to submit their work to the *Journal* for publication. And we donate funds to the Milton Society of Africa for their programs.

WA: AS THE CURRENT PRESIDENT OF MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATION?

ERR: I am soliciting papers for publication and assisting the Editor in Chief in preparing submissions for publication. I am also promoting the Society to teachers, lecturers, pupils, students, and school directors.

WA: HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR TEAM FOCUSED?

ERR: The *Journal* is a major program to maintain focus, as well as quarterly meetings of the members.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS FOR THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA?

ERR: We aim to start a Milton Corner for readings and classes.

WA: WHAT'S THE MOST INTERESTING THING ABOUT MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA THAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW?

ERR: My wife is the Editor in Chief of the *Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies*, and she spends many hours improving the submissions.

WA: CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT MILTON SOCIETY OF AFRICA?

ERR: I know what the President has told us.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MILTON SOCIETY OF AMERICA?

ERR: I am a long-time member of the Milton Society of America. They have advised us in our planning of activities .

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE MILTON SOCIETY OF GEORGIA?

ERR: Publication of the first three issues of the *Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies*.

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE READERS AND LOVERS OF JOHN MILTON?

ERR: Read his works out loud. Meet with others and discuss his life and works.

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR READERS TO KNOW?

ERR: I am a Full Professor of Humanities at Gori State University and a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia. I have published many books and scholarly articles.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/edward-r-raupp-founder-milton-society-of-georgia-our-aim-is-to-bring-together-a-community-of-scholars-interested-in-the-life-and-works-of-john-milton>

I GET INTERESTED IN ANY WORK OF LITERATURE WRITTEN IN A SIMPLE AND CLEAR LANGUAGE - NWOSU PRAYERLIFE



Nwosu Prayerlife is a graduate of Mass Communication from Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri. Her poems have appeared in local and international Anthologies and literary Magazines. She is currently the state Information Secretary of the Society of Young Nigeria Writers Imo state chapter (SYNW). In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, Prayerlife talks about her passion for writing.

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

NPO: I started writing in 2020. I have written over 100 poems and two short stories, I have over 20 published in different Magazines, Journals, Online media platforms and Anthologies and the two short stories are still under consideration at different editorial tables. Currently, I am compiling my poems into a collection of over 100 poems titled REAL WORLD IDEAS. I am hoping to get it published on Amazon as soon as I get it ready for digestion.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

NPO: Well, I get interested in any work of literature written in a simple and clear language. I love works that reflect the KISS style of writing. Keep it short and simple.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND WHY?

NPO: I really do not have any favorite writer, because I don't fancy lengthy works. Like I said I always love the KISS writers but I can give 5 stars to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie over her light use of heavy vocabularies, her audience analysis and simplicity in choice of words.

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

NPO: I believe in life that the best advice is that one you give yourself, but to upcoming writers, I have just one sentence to make: Be unique, don't copy me, your style is the last of its kind.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

NPO: I get inspired by real world happenings. Although, I limit my works with trending issues in Nigeria be it political, environmental, crimes, etc. Sometimes I write out of my feelings and weird imagination to create imagery and a real sense of reality in the minds of readers.

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

NPO: I have no writing routine, I write anywhere as long as the environment is peaceful and lonely.

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

NPO: Like I said earlier, I started writing in 2020 as a result of idleness from the pandemic. I started writing by coincidence after a friend sent me an article to proof read and edit. While on the work, I began to hatch more unique and interesting ideas from it. So I began to write those unique words on a sheet of paper and after the editing process was over, I coined them into another piece of article and posted it in social media. The likes and comments I got were overwhelming. The applause gave me a push because I was very much impressed.

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

NPO: My very first work was a poem published in the Anthology of Late Prof Jerry Agada titled: HALL OF FAME in the year 2020 by the Society of Young Nigerian Writers.

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

NPO: Of course I do. And like I earlier said, my works are purely poetry and are mostly focused on real world happenings.

WA : HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITINGS TO THE WORLD?

NPO: I was feeling less concerned about sending my works out because I was afraid of plagiarism and rejection. But my mindset changed immediately my work was published in an Anthology. I was so happy that I had to share the success story to who ever cared to listen. My coach on the other hand pushed me hard till I saw the light at the end of the tunnel.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET IDEAS FROM?

NPO: I get ideas from issues around me especially trending issues of concern but my works strictly on issues within Nigeria.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHERS?

NPO: I visit different pages in search of calls for entries for poetry and short stories on Facebook and join online publishing platform on Whatsapp. I subscribe to their newsletters and they get notified once there is any call for entries.

WA: TELL US WHAT KIND OF COMMENTS YOU GET FROM AUDIENCE/READERS?

NPO: I get more of applause and some morale boosting tablet of encouragements from readers. Sometimes I get the religious audience who contradict my ideas based in their religious beliefs.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND MORE ABOUT YOU?

NPO: My works have been recognized by search engines just by mere typing of my name. Also I can be reached out with my Facebook page @ real world ideas, a page dedicated to all poem lovers, and with my Facebook user name: PrayerlifeNwosu.

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

NPO: Like I said earlier, don't copy me, be unique. One does not have to impress everyone to ensure a good work. I recall the first time I sent a work to Upwrite Magazine and it was harshly rejected twice. Haha, I felt I was poetically dull, so empty like I decided not to write again with the feeling that poetry isn't my calling because that was the very first step I took. What kept me strong were words of encouragement from my boss Mr Etumnu Emeka Williams. But today, I have a work of mine published in their Magazine. Their rejection never turn to my eviction. So don't allow anyone step into your heart with a dirty feet. Every successful person has a sad story.

WA: ANY TYPICAL OR COMMON MISTAKES WRITERS TENDS TO MAKE?

NPO: Well it depends on the meaning you attached to that word MISTAKE. What I consider mistakes are grammatical errors and punctuations otherwise I call them errors. What you consider a mistake could be my style. But generally speaking, the common mistake writers tend to make is lack of patience and understanding. You get a call for submission; you jump into writing without proper understanding of the guidelines and theme? That is the major reason most works are rejected. So as a writer be patient, take your time, read more than twice, understand the given theme, allow your ink bleed and proof read well before your post.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLE CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETIME ABOUT THE BOOK?

NPO: My book is still in progress.

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

NPO: The key theme and message in the book will be based on happenings in Nigeria and the book would act as a call for positive change.

Thank you!

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-nwosu-prayerlife-onyinyechi-i-get-interested-in-any-work-of-literature-written-in-a-simple-and-clear-language>

**WRITING IS JUST LIKE LEARNING A LANGUAGE, TO UNDERSTAND IT, YOU
NEED TO WRITE – MARTHA SHIGABA**



Martha Shigaba is a young lady from Kpanche, Kogi state, Nigeria. She is currently a 400L student of English and Literary Studies, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi state. She is a Linguist and a Creative writer who has developed an interest in lending her voice to society, by taking writing-related roles, hence producing an excellent piece of work. In this concise interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing and her latest book, “*Dead After Death*”.

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

MS: I started taking writing seriously after the commencement of the ASUU strike. So far, I have written a book which is published as an ebook on Amazon.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

MS: The choice of words, the fantastic representation of places, the ability to see through the writer and understand what he or she is talking about.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

MS: Helon Habila; for his plot twist, Demola Adeniran; for his choice of words and plot twist.

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

MS: It may not look like it now, but keep writing—one day, you'll find your space among thousands of writers.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

MS: The society. According to one of my lecturers, "no writer writes in a vacuum."

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A SPECIAL PLACE?

MS: I write every day and post my writings on Facebook.

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

MS: How I started writing; I started writing as a series to keep my audience glued to my Facebook handle. I began writing fully, during the ASUU strike, and I started writing because I wanted to keep myself busy.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER PUBLISHED?

MS: I self-published a short story on Amazon.

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

MS: So far, most of my writings have been focused on corruption, politics, violation of human rights, love, etc.

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

MS: At first, I was scared—but recently, I feel elated.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

MS: Mostly from the Holy Spirit, and then movies that help me think critically.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

MS: I have never gotten a publisher.

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

MS: To be frank, each time I post my stories on Facebook, I always get comments like, "wow, I love the way you twist your plots," "I love the way you always tell us more about a new character you are about to introduce," "I love your punctuation techniques," "I love the way you put us on suspense," etc.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

MS: Facebook has been a platform between my audience and me. So, they can find out more about me on Facebook.

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

MS: Writing is just like learning a language, to understand it, you need to write—keep your pen bleeding.

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

MS: One of the common mistakes I have noticed about new writers is the eagerness to show themselves to the world without going through the place of growth.

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

MS: *Dead After Death*

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

MS: My first published book, *Dead After Death*, wasn't really easy to write, but I appreciate the audience who kept giving good comments under each episode I post on Facebook—I started it as a series. At some point, after each episode, I ran out of ideas of what to write in the next episode, especially when the narrator, who was also a character in the story, lost her life. All is well and good, it came out beautifully well.

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

MS: "Dead After Death" is a book that depicts the corrupt attitude of those in power: police officers and politicians to be precise. It showcases how these individuals get away with crimes because of their leadership positions. It also mirrors the violations of human rights: the right to life, the right to speak, freedom of movement, etc. It portrays the unfulfilled promises of politicians when they gain power.

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

MS: The major themes are themes of corruption, love, police brutality, drugs and human trafficking.

ABOUT SHIGABA'S LATEST BOOK

It is obvious that society no longer recognizes the term "human rights" and as a result, does the little or most they can, to forcefully take away these rights from citizens, thereby leaving them with the fear of being killed. *Dead After Death* is a book that mirrors the corrupt and illegal practices of political leaders. It portrays corrupt politicians—who feel nothing for those who voted them into power and police officials who, after receiving bribes, do everything within their reach to protect the corrupt politicians. Just like any other book that portrays the same themes and subject matter, *Dead After Death* not only mirrors these issues but also exhibits the power of the law, as those offenders were duly punished.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/woleadedoyin-interviews-martha-shigaba-writing-is-just-like-learning-a-language-to-understand-it-you-need-to-write>

**GIBRAN REPRESENTS THE BEAUTIFUL FACE OF LEBANON TO THE WORLD -
JOSEPH FENIANOS, PRESIDENT, GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE**



Joseph Fenianos is the President of the Gibran National Committee for the current mandate 2018-2022. Also the Founder and member of the Board of Administration of the Lebanese Red Cross in Becharri. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him comprehensive facts about his life, contributions, challenges and achievements as the President of the Gibran National Committee.

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF

JF: My name is Joseph Fenianos. I am married to Nahla Fakhry and have 3 children. I earned a Teaching Diploma in Physics from the Faculty of Sciences in the Lebanese University in 1982. I was Instructor of Physics in several schools, President of the Gibran National Committee for the current mandate 2018-2022, Member of the Committee of the Cedar Forest Friends since 1988 and chaired it for two terms, Founder and member of the Board of Administration of the Lebanese Red Cross in Becharri, Vice-President of the Gibran National Committee from 2010 to 2018.

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT THE GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE- HOW IT BEGAN, WHO'S INVOLVED, ETHOS, AIMS AND WHAT YOU DO

JF: The Gibran National Committee, established in 1933, is a private organization from which all the townspeople of Becharri benefit. Headquartered in Becharri, the Committee has another office in Beirut.

The organization aims to:

- Enforce the will of Gibran Khalil Gibran regarding the proceeds of the copyright and investment of his books and his various literary and artistic effects belonging to the town of Becharri, the Committee on Funds and Properties resulting from such copyright, and the use of the achieved resources for the good and benefit of Becharri and its residents.
- Give special attention to Gibran's Art Museum and maintain his artistic and literary legacy, and also to Gibran's Music Institute, Private Library, and the house in which he was born.
- Publish on a regular basis Gibran's books and help spread his paintings, concepts and thoughts,

as well as introduce him to the new youth generation and the world by organizing local and international lectures, exhibitions, literary events and anniversary ceremonies.
- Contribute to raising the urban, cultural and social levels in Becharri.

WA: HOW DO YOU RUN THE ORGANIZATION?

JF: We hold periodic meetings every two or three weeks, starting with the incoming papers and the due expenses. Then we start discussing the points indicated on the agenda, studying the projects to be implemented, and take the appropriate decisions.
Funds are disbursed according to disbursement decisions, while purchases are made under quotations. Decisions are made as for accepting donations.

WA: HOW IS GNC PROMOTING THE WORKS OF KHALIL GIBRAN?

JF: The Committee that bears the name of Gibran is always striving to consolidate Gibran's presence in the Arab and international community.

Among its activities aim at promoting the works and legacy of Gibran are:

- Holding exhibitions of Gibran's original paintings or copies thereof in Lebanon and abroad;
- Organizing specialized conferences on Gibran's philosophy in Lebanon and abroad;
- Organizing seminars, lectures, exhibitions and competitions in Gibran's Museum as well as in schools and universities;
- Contributing to theatrical, cinematic and artistic activities which address Gibran;
- Producing publications for the Gibran National Committee and printing Gibran's books;
- Organizing the Annual Art Festival in Becharri Square in front of Gibran's house under the name "In the Footsteps of Gibran", showcasing works of painters, sculptors, photographers, musicians, dramatists, and writers.

WA: WHAT MAJOR SUCCESSES HAVE YOU HAD SINCE BECOMING THE PRESIDENT OF GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

JF: The major accomplishments made by the current Committee are:

- Holding an exhibition of Gibran's paintings at the Victoria Museum in Melbourne, Australia.
- Reprinting of Gibran's book "The Music", in cooperation with the Antonine University, with an explanatory introduction by Father Rami Choullami and Prof. Nidaa Abu Murad.
- Organizing the art festival entitled "In the Footsteps of Gibran" in 2018 and 2019;
- Cooperating with the Alfredo Harp Helu Foundation, ADABI, to restore some of the paintings in the warehouse and some books in the Saint Anthony's Library, Qozhaya, and a plan of action for the future was developed between the Committee and the Foundation;
- Reopening of the Gibran Khalil Gibran Library to visitors;
- Activating Gibran's Music Institute which now includes more than two hundred students;
- Organizing concerts for the students of the Music Institute;
- Holding singing soirees at Gibran's Museum;
- Distributing prizes and certificates of appreciation to students who excelled in the official exams;

- Cooperating with senior directors and actors in Lebanon in order to revive the plays of Gibran, for instance: “Khalil the Heretic” and “The Madman”.
- Printing the two one-act plays “Lazarus and his Beloved” and “The Blind”, with an introduction by poet Henri Zgheib.

WA: WHAT IS YOUR MODUS OPERANDI (MODE OF OPERATIONS) AT THE GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

JF: The Committee is composed of 15 elected members from Becharri for a period of four years. We work as one team. When we were elected, we created smaller teams who work in sub-committees because I believe in teamwork. For instance:

- The management sub-committee includes lawyers as well as management and business professionals.
 - The cultural sub-committee includes members who work in the cultural field.
 - A sub-committee entrusted with the tasks of developing Gibran’s Museum, Music Institute and Library.
 - The Public Relations sub-committee that works on Gibran’s presence on social media.
- Each sub-committee has a specific budget that is approved at the beginning of each year after the Committee provides a statement of account and prepares for the specialized programs. Our Committee believes in the necessity of building on creative ideas that are brought to us by thinkers and innovators from all over Lebanon and the world in order to better serve Gibran's legacy and thought.

WA: WHAT MAKES YOU EFFECTIVE AS THE PRESIDENT OF GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

JF: I believe that the role of the President is to better serve the Committee and deploy all the efforts necessary for its development and further outreach.

I strive to cooperate with every single member of the Committee and invest in their potentials, particularly because I have been working as an instructor of physics for more than 38 years, meaning that I apply the pyramid concept, i.e., everyone has his/her own role in the success of the action plan that we set when we were elected. And because I previously chaired the Committee of the Cedar Forest Friends, whose main purpose is to preserve the Cedars Forest and to plant cedar trees in the surroundings of the forest, I also believe in the importance of cooperation with all associations concerned with Gibran’s philosophy.

WA: WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU FEEL WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

JF: Gibran National Committee has been particularly relying on tourism to finance its fund that enables it to pay the dues of its employees and workers, noting that the financial returns from selling Gibran’s books by the *Knopf* publishing group stopped at the end of 2018; no doubt that the situation has worsened following the outbreak of the Corona pandemic and the suspension of all touristic activities. Therefore, we decided to reflect on new ways to support the Committee:

- Developing a program that aims to create a page for the museum on the social media platforms, i.e. integrating it on a digital system or otherwise establishing a twinning relationship between Gibran's Museum and other international museums.

- Cooperating with international associations concerned with Gibran's writings and paintings to host conferences and exhibitions abroad.

WA: IN WHICH AREAS WOULD YOU LIKE TO FURTHER DEVELOP GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

JF: Since our election, we have sought to achieve several improvements within the Committee in order to turn it into a well-developed entity at the administrative and professional level. We have updated the bylaws as well as the internal regulations of the Gibran National Committee so that it becomes more compatible with the needs and aspirations of the new generation. As we were elected by the community of Becharri, it is hence our duty to further shed light on the noble and pioneering values that Gibran believes in to promote social justice and liberate the society from fake restrictions, customs and laws.

WA: TELL US MORE ABOUT THE WORKS OF KHALIL GIBRAN

JF: Gibran represents the beautiful face of Lebanon to the whole world whom we take pride in. He is the writer, the philosopher, the thinker, the painter, and much more. Our bond with Gibran has become more strengthened when we started, through his writings, to dive into the memories of our own childhood as they are the stages on which stand the protagonists of his stories; the orchards, the vineyards, the rivers, the mountains and the valleys which he depicts in his writings are all real places. Moreover, when we meet the characters of his stories, we find out that they resemble in fact many of the dignitaries, clergymen, wealthy and poor townspeople whom we encounter and live with. We can feel the flesh and blood of these characters because, despite the change of names, they represent true personalities who had their own history. It is worth mentioning at this point that the religious memory, the spatio-temporal memory and the social memory of Gibran's writings have all been represented in "Becharri in the Memory of Gibran".

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WORK BY GIBRAN? WHY

JF: It is true that all the works of Gibran reflect the tales of his heart, that heart which loved, outraged, revolted, and yearned to an idealistic universe; it is also true that throughout his writings he exposes himself with enthusiasm, boldness, and transparency. And it is not a mere coincidence that "The Music" was the first book among Gibran's literary works, since music represents the spiritual and artistic world of Gibran. It is the key treasure and the password of his literature. His thoughts, emotions, sorrows, and metaphors all flow like fine-tuned melodies and then become concretized in words. Music and its connotations have thus added to his narrative style a poetic dimension, conveying those silent distances and that being that remains silent and tranquil in the inner self of the poet.

WA: WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MAKE HIS WORKS KNOWN ESPECIALLY TO READERS IN AFRICA?

JF: The Committee is carrying out the activities I mentioned earlier so as to encourage the new generation to explore the philosophy of Gibran and become influenced by his innovative and revolutionary thoughts; hence, this generation would be a tool for peace and love, not for war and injustice, a tool that efficiently serves to reach a better world. At this point, I would like to thank your association, the Khalil Gibran Society in Nigeria and Africa, and its Chairman, Mr. Wole Adedoyin, for the artistic and literary works that you are working on. We look forward to preparing joint intellectual and cultural activities and holding exhibitions of Gibran's paintings.

WA: AS THE CURRENT PRESIDENT OF GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO IMPROVE THE ORGANIZATION?

JF: As I mentioned earlier, our activities mainly consist in implementing Gibran's will as stated in Article 2 of our bylaws, shedding light on the legacy, philosophy, and art of Gibran in Lebanon and the world, and providing continuous financial support to fund the activities organized by the Committee.

WA: HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR TEAM FOCUSED?

JF: As previously indicated, I collaborate with each sub-committee separately and follow up on their work, in addition to preparing an implementation plan in cooperation with the specialized staff.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE GOALS FOR GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

JF: Developing and modernizing the Gibran Museum as well as providing a digital platform for it, in cooperation with ADABI Foundation;
- Developing and supporting Gibran's Music Institute;
- Modernizing the Gibran's Library and establishing links with other libraries in Lebanon and abroad;
- Holding exhibitions of Gibran's paintings in foreign countries, so that the world can learn more about Gibran's art.

WA: WHAT'S THE MOST INTERESTING THING ABOUT KHALIL GIBRAN THAT PEOPLE DON'T KNOW?

JF: I believe that Gibran's literature has managed to reach the whole world through The Prophet, his masterpiece which has been translated into more than 140 languages. Since it was first published in 1923, it has never been out of print. Most of the translations can be found in the Museum.

However, Gibran as a painter is not as well-known as a writer and philosopher. Although he undoubtedly represents a legend worldwide when it comes to narration and storytelling, his reputation has not made it that far with his visual arts. Although he painted more than 700 watercolors and drawings, his paintings were somehow overlooked in the West and most of them were shipped back to Lebanon after his death.

Gibran was a talented artist who painted alongside some of the most acclaimed artists of his days, notably the French sculptor Auguste Rodin. That is why we should deploy more efforts to highlight this aspect of Gibran's legacy.

WA: CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT KHALIL GIBRAN SOCIETY IN NIGERIA AND AFRICA?

JF: I knew about your society through your Facebook page, and it will be my honor to meet you in person and have the chance to closely delve into all the interesting values you represent. I am confident that this cooperation will be fruitful and lead to successful outcomes in the future, whether by disseminating Gibran's thought or holding exhibitions of his paintings.

WA: WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHLIGHT OF THE GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

JF: Gibran National Committee is the custodian of Gibran's artistic and literary heritage. It was founded 88 years ago and it is entrusted with executing his will. Not to forget that it is the only committee in the world elected by the society as a whole. It has the exclusive right to his literary production.

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE READERS AND LOVERS OF KHALIL GIBRAN?

JF: Gibran wrote his books more than one hundred years ago, and till the present day, when we read his writings, we always feel that his topics remain topical, going beyond the limits of time and place, as if he is still alive amidst us and writing to us. It is not a mere coincidence that his writings have been translated to all main languages of the world in all continents, especially The Prophet because this book has proved to transcend all religions, cultures, customs and races in order to reach the human being, the spirit of divinity on Earth. Gibran conveyed his revolutionary thoughts with enthusiasm, boldness, authenticity, warmth and clarity at the beginning of the last century, and they are still influentially and prominently present in our contemporary word, whether in the East or the West, particularly because Gibran echoes the values of pluralism, diversity, tolerance, freedom, justice and witness to truth.

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF YOU WOULD LIKE ME TO KNOW?

JF: It is a pleasant incident that this conference, gathering well-known speakers from all over the world to address the thought and art of Gibran, coincides with the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of Gibran's death.

I find in your conference a valuable addition to Gibran's heritage and the human heritage in general.

Isn't he the one who said: "You are my brother, and both of us are sons of a single, universal, and sacred spirit. You are my likeness, for we are prisoners of the same body, fashioned from the same clay... You are a human being and I have loved you, my brother." I would like to thank your association for all the efforts deployed to shed light on the literature, art and heritage of Gibran from a holistic and innovative approach. And we cannot but rejoice, take pride and offer support.

The Gibran National Committee heartfully welcomes any initiative that can be added to its calendar of cultural and artistic activities.

Thank you.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-joseph-fenianos-president-gibran-national-committee-gibran-represents-the-beautiful-face-of-lebanon-to-the-world>

**I WISH TO SEE MYSELF TOURING THE WORLD WITH GIBRAN'S ORIGINAL
PAINTINGS - HODA ZOHROB, GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OFFICE
MANAGER**



Hoda Zohrob is the current Office Manager at the Gibran National Committee in Beirut Lebanon. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, she shared with him details about her work and thoughts about Khalil Gibran

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE

HZ: My name is Hoda Zohrob from Lebanon. I am the current Office Manager at the Gibran National Committee in Beirut. I have worked with many Nationalities in Lebanon and abroad. Most positions I occupied in the diplomatic and private sectors were social, consular, administrative, and commercial.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

HZ: My duties as Office Manager include handling, organizing, participating and reporting local and International activities and projects such as: exhibitions, conferences, seminars and general cultural events. For instance, I had the chance to participate in an event organized by the American Embassy in Lebanon. The programme was a cultural event about Gibran Khalil Gibran in 2017 which took place at H. Ex. Mrs. Elizabeth Richard's residence and follow up with "The Prophet" animation movie project. I also handle literary and artistic issues that are related to the use of quotes and copies of original paintings of Gibran.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WORK AT THE GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

HZ: My most exciting work is when organizing an exhibition, showcasing original paintings, manuscripts and personal belongings of Gibran abroad. As you know, Gibran is revered worldwide. Gibran Khalil Gibran is known as a poet, writer, and philosopher, so organizing such an event is exciting because it reflects Gibran's spirituality, deep understanding of human and life, and reveals his sensitivity.

WA: WHAT'S A TYPICAL WORK WEEK LIKE?

HZ: Reading and replying emails that are most related to the use of quotes and copies of original paintings of Gibran also assisting students, film makers, writers, teachers, cultural institutions and ministries who are preparing projects related to Gibran too.

WA: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AT GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

HZ: Dealing with any violation of any kind that can harm our mission which is to represent Gibran professionally at the highest levels and achieve big projects related to our mission perfectly.

WA: HOW ARE THEY FINANCING GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE?

HZ: Majorly, our income comes from the sold books of Gibran and the entry fees for excursions paid to the Gibran Museum by visitors.

WA: WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM? WHO ARE YOUR DONORS?

HZ: As I previously mentioned, having an exhibition of original paintings abroad is usually funded but such events don't occur frequently. It takes place once every two years. Also researchers always pay for the use of original paintings of Gibran used for their research and projects. We got some little funds through that too. As for donors, we sometimes receive little donations from a local NGO.

WA: HOW HAS SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGED THE OUTREACH WORK OF THE MUSEUM?

HZ: Social media plays a very important and vital role in the dissemination of information in GNC. Social media shortens distances by all means. Presently, we have an active and multimedia website which documents and showcases information about GNC. We also have an active Facebook page and other social media platforms which we always use to convey information and publicize our events. Currently, we are elaborating our own projects in which visitors will be able to tour Gibran Museum behind screens but this project needs more time to be realized.

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO KNOW?

HZ: Yes, I am a friendly and practical person. I love people, I love collaboration that leads to realizing beautiful projects of mutual benefits and I wish people love each other too so we can live in a better world with no conflicts. It is Gibran who said 'You are a human being and I have loved you, my brother'.

WA: WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS?

HZ: In five years time, I wish to see myself touring the world with Gibran's original paintings.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-hoda-zohrob-gibran-national-committee-office-manager-i-wish-to-see-myself-touring-the-world-with-gibrans-original-paintings>

HOW THE GROTTO BECAME THE KHALIL GIBRAN MUSEUM - JOSEPH GEAGEA, DIRECTOR OF THE GIBRAN MUSEUM:



In this exclusive chat with Wole Adedoyin,, Mr. Joseph Geagea, Director of the Gibran Museum shares with us the historical journey of the Gibran Museum.

WA: HOW DID THE KHALIL GIBRAN MUSEUM FIRST STARTED? JG:

JG: The conversation towards the Gibran Museum first started in 1926, while in New York, Gibran who was still alive, had decided to buy the Monastery for his retirement and the hermitage as his final resting place. Upon his request, his sister Mariana purchased both the Monastery and the Hermitage. On the 22nd of August 1931, Gibran's Corpse reached Bsharreh. The transformation of the new Monastery into a Museum did not occur until 1975 when the Gibran National Committee restored the Monastery and built a new wing in the eastern side. The floors of the Museum were linked through an internal staircase to create a harmonious space where the works of Gibran are to be exposed. In 1932, the content of Gibran's studio in New York, including his furniture, personal belongings, Private Library, Manuscripts and 440 original Paintings, was transferred to his native town in Bsharreh. Today, these items form the content of the Gibran museum. In the 7th century, Saint Sarkis's cult reached Northern Lebanon. At the foot of the mountain, overlooking the Valley of the Saints, close to the Phoenician Tomb, east of the existing building and amidst the Caverns of the Hermits, lays the Cave that Gibran chose to be his tomb (room XII). It was known as the Hermitage of Saint Sarkis. By the end of the 17th century, Carmelite monks living in the Qadisha valley, the sacred valley, began construction of a new monastery, which was completed in 1862. Originally, the Museum used to be a Grotto known as the Mar Sarkis (Saint Sergious) hermitage. It was first known as Gibran Khalil Gibran's tomb, and was later turned into his museum. In 1995, the museum was further enlarged and supplied with up-to-date Equipment/materials that will enable it to exhibit the entire collection of Gibran's Manuscript, Drawings and Paintings. A plan for the whole site including extensions, a parking and an access road was executed in the summer of 2003. The aim is to preserve the Lebanese heritage moulded into a privileged cultural and tourism site.

WA: WALK ME THROUGH HOW YOU PLAN AND ORGANIZE THE ACQUISITION, STORAGE, AND EXHIBITION OF COLLECTIONS AND RELATED MATERIALS, INCLUDING THE SELECTION OF EXHIBITION THEMES AND ARTWORKS MADE BY OR ON KHALIL GIBRAN

JG: The organization of the exhibition inside the Museum is based on some main rules. Before we select the exact items, they must be in safe condition to be on a permanent exhibition. If the item is too fragile, if it was sent abroad and just came back after foreign exhibition, it is due to temporal rest and detailed examination before making a decision where to be placed. Generally, our collection on permanent exhibition represents all artistic periods of Gibran; we are trying to present all kinds of Gibran's works, to show the variety and the richness of his artistic techniques. We have galleries dedicated to the most famous of his written works, such as *The Prophet*, *Jesus the Son of Man*, *Twenty Drawings*. We try to represent the atmosphere of Gibran's creative environment - the objects that surrounded him in his daily life and the things that inspired his imagination.

WA: HOW ARE GIBRAN WORKS AND ART WORKS HOUSED AT THE MUSEUM? ARE THEY ALWAYS ON DISPLAY? IF NOT, ARE THEY AVAILABLE ON REQUEST?

JG: The Gibran Museum's collection of artworks forms 440 original pieces of art, divided into certain groups, depending on their themes. They can be Oil paintings, Watercolors, or Charcoal. The collection on permanent display is formed of approximately 130 pieces of art, as we balance between the kinds we expose. We try to present the art of Gibran in all its variety and from all his artistic periods. The artworks which are not on permanent display are placed in a special storage room called "The Reserve". They are placed under special conditions based on international standards. Usually, when we organize exhibitions, we let our partners choose from the entire collection, but always we keep the rule of choosing upon the general condition of the artworks.

WA: WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB AS THE DIRECTOR OF GIBRAN MUSEUM?

JG: The most challenging part of my job is how to keep up with it. It is so dynamic and every day, so much opens new horizons that I hardly find time to adapt to the current situation before something new comes out.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR ROLES AS THE DIRECTOR OF GIBRAN MUSEUM?

JG: The first and the main role I have as the Director of the Gibran Museum is to understand and to take very personally the mission of Gibran and his heritage. His wish was his message to be spread and never to be forgotten. Many of his thoughts remain valid for the reality we live in, as if they are written today. I take the message very personally. It guides my work and I apply it for all my responsibilities. I am in charge of the collections in the Museum, also enhancing the appearance of the Museum in front of hundreds of visitors coming. I also source for Supports, Donors, Sponsors, etc. I am also in charge of the daily needs of the museum and its structures.

As Director of Gibran Museum, I am the face of the place. If any visitor feels happy after the excursion and leaves the Museum enriched with knowledge and experience - it is a smile on my face, a sign of doing my job well.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE WORKS IN YOUR COLLECTION?

JG: There are plenty of artworks I like, but it is natural to have some closer to my heart. One of my favorites is called *The Hand of God*. It is a watercolor drawing of a huge arm, holding in its palm a folded figure of a human being. The figure is like just about to awake and begin its life and achievements. It shows that we are all creations of God, of one divine power from which we emanated and which remains beside us throughout all our lives. Another of my favorite drawings is of a similar kind - it is called *The Flame of Life*. It is expressed through the image of a hand from which a warm flame comes, showing us that with our hands, or in other words with our deeds and creations we awaken the flame of life and we enlighten the world. Another very interesting painting was drawn while Khalil Gibran was studying painting in Paris. It is a painting of a nude woman, who posed for Gibran. The woman is unknown, but it was beautifully drawn in warm autumn colors, for which reason it is called *The Autumn*.

WA: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE WORK BY GIBRAN? WHY?

JG: My favorite literary work of Gibran is his last published book called *The Wanderer*. It is a collection of Short Stories with very deep morals. Even though *The Prophet* is considered as the most thoughtful of all of Gibran's works.

WA: TELL ME HOW YOU ORGANIZE, PLAN, AND PRIORITIZE YOUR WORK?

JG: My priority follows the laid down rules of the Gibran National Committee and of course the priority of the Museum. If there is a project which will in any way improve the condition of the collection, if there is a project that can lead to improving our facilities, I place them ahead of everything and I concentrate on the organizing process of such projects. The organizing of an exhibition abroad is a very heavy and complicated process and it needs to be given all the time. In times like this, such projects become priorities. I have a kind of personal understanding and preference regarding the priorities. For example, I like prioritizing educational projects. I think that spreading education is a goal we all must work on. I put priority on projects like lectures, conferences, and projects with universities. Such are not a financial target. We usually use reproductions of Gibran's works. But such projects have a great impact on the young generation. They give a different perspective of Gibran's philosophy and art between the young people of our tomorrow. I immediately embrace any such initiative.

WA: DO YOU ALWAYS GO OUT FOR EXHIBITION?

JG: If you mean if I should accompany the items we send from the Museum for exhibitions abroad, usually it is a must to go with them as I am the custodian of the collection, or in other words I am responsible for every single item which is inside or which leaves the museum. There are plenty of logistics regarding this part from the organizers, but in most cases, I have to go wherever the collection goes. On the other hand - if your question is if we always do exhibitions

abroad - yes, we put such projects as a priority, but we always study each case in detail and very carefully. We estimate all the risks and we always prefer the projects with minimized risks and with the best outcome, not only financially, but mostly socially for both the organizing parties.

WA: DO YOU HAVE TIPS FOR OTHER SMALL CULTURAL INSTITUTES THAT WILL HELP THEM WITH THEIR COLLECTION MANAGEMENT LIKE KHALIL GIBRAN COMMITTEE?

JG: There is plenty of advice we can give as an organization, to other smaller ones, maybe with less experience. Regarding the collection we follow certain internationally approved standards, which are a must. But according to the collection management, creating a registry, keeping a record on the collection and the history of each item, we follow a list of procedures which we have obtained through the years. Some are based on our knowledge while others are updated through our experiences working with other institutions abroad. Procedures and conditions can always be improved as we always seek for the best, but we can definitely transfer know-how practices.

WA: WHAT IS MOST CHALLENGING ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AT GNC?

JG: Through the years, there have been many challenges, but always and since the Gibran National Committee is a non-profit organization, it is the fundraising for supporting the museum and its collection. Such funds usually come from the organizing of exhibitions abroad. Sometimes, the support is not only expressed by financial funding but training, transferring of know-how, sending teams to do some restoration procedures and providing equipment. But all of these small steps lead to considerable results at the end. Organizing projects abroad is always a challenge as it is very easy to embrace the idea of doing it but it is different and much more difficult when it comes to the executing of the entire process and to leading it to the desired results.

WA: HOW MUCH TIME OFF DO YOU GET/TAKE?

JG: Honestly, I rarely take time off. Simply because it can never be completely off. Usually, as all regular employees I have my annual vacation, and the regular day off each week, but the reality is that during this time I always work more than during my regular working hours. During any working day at the Museum many things can distract me for example, questions from the Visitors, arranging for some special visits. My phone never stops ringing. My days at work are usually very exciting.

WA: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS AIMING TO STUDY GIBRAN'S LIFE AND WORKS?

JG: I would like to advise everyone, who in any part of his life wishes to attempt a work on the topic related to Gibran, that it will not be a time spent for nothing. The journey called "Gibran" is so addictive and has the power to change the life of every person in a good direction. Studying Gibran's works may cost a lot of sacrifice. It may create a kind of internal battle in one's thoughts and self understanding but at the end it deserves every minute spent on it. Gibran,

himself is a universe. We shall continue to learn from his works throughout all our lives. When it comes to the issue of life, Gibran is the best teacher.

WA: WHEN THE MUSEUM IS CLOSED, DO YOU SPEND TIME VISITING THE COLLECTION/EXHIBITIONS?

JG: When the museum is closed, I often pass by and spend time in the galleries because it is the best time to observe the heritage and each of the pieces from the collection. For professional reasons, whenever we prepare for an exhibition, I walk around the Museum, spending more time observing the creations of Gibran and rehearsing what to say to the visitors. Gibran Museum has become my second home. That is why every now and then when it is closed, I pass and spend time there.

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF YOU WOULD LIKE ME TO KNOW?

JG: Living with the works of Gibran and spending most of my entire professional life in his Museum, among his artistic creations influenced me and my whole life and channeled most of my views to a good direction. After so many years of working on Gibran, his life and his personality, I have found myself attached to his philosophy and artistic ideology.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-joseph-geagea-director-of-the-gibran-museum-how-the-grotto-became-the-khalil-gibran-museum>

GIBRAN'S BOOKS PROVIDE TIMELESS SPIRITUAL WISDOM THAT HELPS READERS UNDERSTAND LIFE'S STAGES - DR. TAREK CHIDIAC, GIBRAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE FORMER PRESIDENT



Dr. Tarek Chidiac is the immediate past President of the Gibran National Committee. He is a dentist who has been practicing for almost 40 years and a scriptwriter. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him details about his tenure as former President of GNC and facts he knows about Gibran's life and works

WA: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE KAHLIL GIBRAN TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT READ ANY OF HIS WORKS?

TC: Kahlil Gibran is a Lebanese-American writer, poet and artist who has a philosophical interpretation of what human life should be. He raised the morale of building peaceful relationships between individuals and considered love as the only route that leads to human serenity. Gibran was born in Bsharri, North of Lebanon, a village that is known with its Cedar Forest Reserve which is considered the symbol of persistence and strength of the country. He wrote 16 books, of which "The Prophet" is still the most famous one and painted more than 800 paintings. He died in the USA at the age of 48.

WA: IF READERS WOULD LIKE TO READ KAHLIL GIBRAN'S BOOKS, WHAT BOOKS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

TC: I would recommend starting with "The Mad man" written by Gibran in 1918. It was Gibran's first book in English, in which he interpreted his own opinions about major principles of life, followed by "The prophet" Gibran's most selling book published in 1923 and the masterpiece of a collection of philosophical, spiritual, and above all, inspirational poetic essays. Next, I would recommend his most important book to my opinion, "The Earth Gods" published in 1931 (the year of the author's death) which presents a dialogue about the meaning of human life between three unnamed earth Gods referred to as the first God, second God and third God.

WA: GIVE US THREE GOOD FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU

TC: I was a member of the Gibran National Committee (GNC) for almost 20 years, and its president from 2010 till 2018. The committee aims to further spread Gibran's thoughts in Lebanon and Worldwide and holds the exclusive rights to manage the author's copyrights of his literary and artistic works.

I organized many international exhibitions of Gibran's artworks in Lebanon and abroad: Sydney - Australia (2010-2011), Maryland-USA (2012) , São Paulo-Brazil (2013), Sharjah-UAE (2015) , Paris- France (2018) to name a few...

I am passionate about Gibran Kahlil Gibran and I presented many studies about his life and works, my biggest study was about the reincarnation in Gibran's beliefs. Although I'm a dentist practicing my job for almost 40 years and a film writer.

WA: WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW? ARE THERE ANY AUTHORS (LIVING OR DEAD) THAT YOU WOULD NAME AS INFLUENCERS APART FROM KAHLIL GIBRAN?

TC: I am currently reading "The Introduction" written by the Lebanese philosopher Charles Malek. It is an introduction about the author's rich life in the United Nations, full of activities and views. He was one of the founders of "The human rights Charter". Apart from Kahlil Gibran, I personally consider Charles Malek as well as the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre as influencers.

WA: WHICH KAHLIL GIBRAN'S BOOK INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE AND WHY?

TC: Certainly "The Prophet". This short book has 26 chapters talking about human life. Each chapter expresses Gibran's thoughts about love, marriage, giving, children, teaching, praying and other social topics. The book provides timeless spiritual wisdom that helped me understand life's stages.

WA: IF READERS WOULD LIKE TO READ UP ON KAHLIL GIBRAN'S WORKS, ARE THERE ANY BOOKS APART FROM THE PROPHET YOU WOULD RECOMMEND?

TC: All of Gibran's books are interesting and recommended to be read. His collection of books is very inspirational. Kahlil Gibran was a key figure in a romantic movement that renovated Arabic literature in the first half of the twentieth century, so all his books are considered equally stimulating.

WA: WHICH CHAPTER OF THE PROPHET WAS THE MOST PERSONALLY INTERESTING TO YOU? WERE THERE ANY FACTS OR THEMES THAT YOU

WOULD HAVE LIKED TO INCLUDE BUT KAHLIL GIBRAN DIDN'T MAKE INTO THE BOOK?

TC: The most interesting chapter in the Prophet for me is “Love”. When a person has love in his heart he cannot harm his brothers in life. As humans, we cannot get away from love, for love lets us follow our hearts to make a better future. We can survive because of love. I would have loved to know Gibran’s opinion about “The parents” and how they should raise their children and I wished the poet explained to us his thoughts about “reincarnation”.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR THREE FAVORITE BOOKS BY KAHLIL GIBRAN AND WHY?

TC: Firstly, “The forerunner” which is considered as a primer to Gibran’s masterpiece “The Prophet”. In fact, these 2 books complete each other and are certainly my favorites. The third one is “The Earth Gods” which represents the passionate dialogue between those 3 Gods about human beings.

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO KAHLIL GIBRAN READERS AND LOVERS?

TC: Gibran’s books must be read slowly and with devotion, for his thoughts are deep and sometimes hard to be understood from the first reading. I also recommend trying to apply Gibran’s principles and values in daily life and personal behaviors. When done, readers and lovers will certainly feel happy and joyful in their lifetime.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-dr-tarek-chidiac-gibran-national-committee-former-president-gibrans-books-provide-timeless-spiritual-wisdom-that-helps-readers-understand-lifes-stages>

A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF GIBRAN’S WRITINGS NECESSITATES AN APPRECIATION OF HIS PAINTINGS - YOUSSEF G. RAHME, PRESIDENT, CEDARS INSTITUTE



Dr. Youssef G. Rahme is the President of The Cedars Institute and the brain behind the Study Abroad In Lebanon (SAIL) programme. The SAIL programme, a collaboration between the Cedars Institute (CI), Notre Dame University(NDU) Lebanon, and The Wole Soyinka Foundation (WSF) Nigeria, gives students the avenue to study World History and Dialogue through the eyes of Lebanon. In this Interview with Wole Adedoyin, Dr. Youssef G. Rahme shared with him his thoughts about Khalil Gibran, facts about The Cedars Institute and the future projects of the Institute on Khalil Gibran.

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF

YR: I was reared at The Cedars, Lebanon until the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) at which time I went to the United States to continue my education. I completed a B.A. in economics and an M.A. degree in Middle Eastern Studies and minor in economics at The University of Michigan (UM)—Ann Arbor. I finished my higher education by earning a Ph.D. in the Division of Social Sciences from The University of Chicago in 1994. Between 1992 and 2011 I was a full time faculty at the UM-Flint Campus. During that time I held various university-wide administrative positions including the Directorship of the International and Global Studies Program. At the end of 2011, for familial reasons, I resigned my tenured faculty position at the University of Michigan and returned to Lebanon. In 2012, I founded with colleagues at NDU, The Cedars Institute, an academic NGO headquartered at The Cedars, and established the Study Abroad In Lebanon (SAIL) program with my colleague Dr. Edward J. Alam in 2013. From 2015 to 2019 we hosted numerous editions of the SAIL program. Finally, since 2014, I have been an adjunct faculty at Notre-Dame University teaching courses in philosophy, religion and sociology.

WA: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE KAHLIL GIBRAN TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT READ ANY OF HIS WORKS?

YR: Kahlil Gibran is a deeply spiritual and mystical person. His spirituality is rooted in his background and heritage (eastern Syriac-Christian heritage of Ottoman Mount-Lebanon within the context of an Islamic-Arabic Civilization), in his upbringing at the hands of his mother Kamila Rahme, and in his life-long trials and tribulations. It is truly an ecumenical spirituality that appeals to diverse cultural and religious traditions. Despite the various tragedies that he experienced, Gibran's oeuvre is optimistic, unlike that of some of his towering contemporaries such as the American-English poet T. S. Elliot (1888-1965). It speaks to future generations. Another point I like to make to his potential readers is that Gibran's oeuvre is multifaceted. In order to fully appreciate his lyrical prose and poetry, one should view his artwork, especially his paintings and drawings (most of which are located at The Kahlil Gibran Museum in his birthplace Bsharri), for Gibran was a painter before he became a writer. His writings complement his art. A full understanding of his writings necessitates an appreciation of his paintings. This is a point that was stressed to me by the previous Director of The Khalil Gibran Museum in Bsharri, the late Mr. Wahib Keirouz.

WA: IF READERS WOULD LIKE TO READ KAHLIL GIBRAN'S BOOKS, WHAT BOOKS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

YR: Obviously I would recommend first and foremost his magnum opus *The Prophet* to draw readers to the rest of his work. For once you read *The Prophet* you immediately become cognizant of the depth and wisdom of his thought, a book akin to other great works of world literature such as *Nahj al-Balaghah* of al-Imam Ali (601-661 CE), and the *Analects* of the Chinese social philosopher Confucius (551-479 BCE).

WA: GIVE US THREE "GOOD TO KNOW" FACTS ABOUT YOU AND THE CEDARS INSTITUTE.

YR: I am a multi-lingual academic who lived most of his life abroad in major metropolises, and who resided in (not just visited) seven different countries on four continents. I currently live at The Cedars (ca. 2000m above sea-level) feeling truly privileged and blessed to live in such a holy, extraordinarily beautiful, mostly tranquil place (i say mostly because of the noise pollution generated by the unregulated All-Terrain-Vehicules—ATVs— and Ski-Doux, especially during week-ends) and in a relatively clean environment, being in my humble opinion the closest approximation of heaven on earth.

As for The Cedars Institute, it was established in 2012 to promote and support academic activities: hosting conferences and seminars, organizing and managing the SAIL program,

supporting academic projects that focus primarily on any of the following themes broadly conceived: Religion, Migration, and the Environment.

In March 2014 I was able to invite, through the good auspices of Dr Ernest Emenyonu my colleague and friend at UM, Professor Wole Soyinka, the first African recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature, to The Cedars Institute and Notre-Dame University in commemoration of the first anniversary of the death of the founder of modern African literature, Chinua Achebe. The fruits of this event culminated in the publication of a volume entitled, Honoring Chinua Achebe: A Lebanese-Nigerian Celebration in the Company of Nobel Prize Winner Wole Soyinka, edited and introduced by Edward J. Alam (NDU Press, 2016).

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

YR: Currently I am reading David Christian’s Origin Story: A Big History of Everything (Little, Brown Spark, 2018), a book that I recommend wholeheartedly to anyone interested in understanding the history of the universe, life on earth, and the human condition. It is truly a must-read to anyone yearning to understand the emergence of complex life on planet earth. To my knowledge, Dr. Christian is the first serious academic to tackle universal history and to place human history in a universal context.

I am also currently reading the novels of R. K. Narayan, an outstanding and distinguished 20th Century Indian author, introduced to me by my fine friend and colleague Dr. Edward J. Alam. Reading Narayan is akin to feeling with your bare hands a rich, intricate and colorful tapestry woven with an eye for exquisite details. I concur with the words of the British author and friend of Narayan —Graham Greene that “Narayan...wakes in me a spring of gratitude, for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian.” As for authors or thinkers who have influenced me, there are many but I shall restrict my comments to one author in particular, the German-British economist E. F. Schumacher to whom I was introduced by Dr. Karl Deutsch, a visiting professor of political science from Harvard University while I was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan. Schumacher’s book Small is Beautiful (1973) went against the then dominant current in academic economic thought. Schumacher emphasized the importance of nurturing sustainable development and satisfying one’s needs with the least consumption of resources, an outlook that I have appropriated ever since.

WA: WHICH KHALIL GIBRAN’S BOOK INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE — AND WHY?

YR: Probably “The Madman” (1918), a story that influenced me as a young idealistic young man. Its depiction of the corruption in Mount-Lebanon is deeply moving. One realizes that true

peace within and among human societies cannot materialize without genuine justice. Of course certain themes from *The Prophet* shaped my outlook on life. In particular the chapters on children and giving resonated with me when I became a father. Gibran's words of wisdom will echo through many generations to come.

WA: IF READERS WOULD LIKE TO READ UP ON KHALIL GIBRAN'S WORKS, ARE THERE ANY BOOKS APART FROM THE PROPHET YOU WOULD RECOMMEND?

YR: Of course, other than *The Prophet* and *The Madman* I would recommend *The Broken Wings* (المنكسرة الاج نحة), written in Arabic in 1912, transliterated as *al-Ajnihah al-Mutakassirah*), a book that some scholars of modern Arabic literature consider the first novel in the Arabic language. It is a tragic love story that stresses religious corruption and the dismal condition of women. Here I advise readers to read the translation done by University of Michigan professor, Dr. Juan Cole, *Broken Wings: A Novel by Kahlil Gibran*. (Translation of the Arabic novel, *al-Ajnihah al-Mutakassirah*. Ashland, Or.: White Cloud Press, 1998).

WA: WHICH CHAPTER OF THE PROPHET WAS THE MOST PERSONALLY INTERESTING TO YOU?

YR: This is a demanding question. Many of the themes about which Gibran wrote are timeless and most relevant. It is hard to narrow one's choice to one theme. Be as it may, the first theme that al-Mustafa speaks about is one of my favorites—Love, the central value of Christianity. It is no coincidence that he began his book with it.

WA: WERE THERE ANY FACTS OR THEMES THAT YOU WOULD HAVE LIKED TO INCLUDE, BUT KHALIL GIBRAN DIDN'T MAKE INTO THE BOOK?

YR: Yes, one theme in particular comes to mind that of forgiveness. For love and forgiveness are two of the main pillars of the temple of the Christian faith. Forgiveness is the companion of Love.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR THREE FAVORITE BOOKS BY KHALIL GIBRAN —AND WHY?

YR: *The Prophet* (1923), *The Madman* (1918), and *The Broken Wings* (1912) for reasons stated above.

WA:WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CEDARS INSTITUTE AND YOUR FUTURE PROJECT ON KHALIL GIBRAN?

YR: The Cedars Institute is delighted to inform The Khalil Gibran Society in Nigeria that the Institute has begun to make preparations for the celebration in 2023 of the one hundred year anniversary of the publication of Gibran's Prophet in 1923. We are in the process of embarking on an ambitious set of programs and activities. Most importantly, thus far, we have already commissioned the translation of The Prophet into most of the major languages of Nigeria, including Bora, Fulfulde, Hausa, Ibo, Kanuri, Nupe, and Yoruba. This will make Gibran's masterpiece accessible to millions of Nigerians in their native languages! This translation effort, spearheaded by Nigerian scholars, will culminate, God Willing, in the organization of a conference and roundtable around it. Other programs and activities are being organized for the Centennial.

We will keep you abreast of our initiatives as we proceed!

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO KAHLIL GIBRAN READERS AND LOVERS?

YR: My heartfelt message to those who like to discover and delve into Gibran's writings is to visit his birthplace and hometown, Bsharri/The Cedars and its surrounding areas. Such a visit should enable the Gibran reader to appreciate the sources of Gibran's inspiration: The Qadisha (Holy) Valley, one of the oldest centers of Christian eremitic and monastic traditions in the world and a UNESCO world heritage site, the Biblical Cedars of Lebanon in particular the majestic Cedars of The Lord grove (another UNESCO world heritage site) nestled under the highest peaks of the Lebanon mountain chain, and finally the divine scenery and panoramic views from multiple vantage points. In addition, the interested Gibran reader or scholar would be able to appreciate first-hand Gibran's art work at the Kahlil Gibran Museum in the town of Bsharri and visit Gibran's restored home in the town's main public square.

WA: THE STUDY ABROAD IN LEBANON (SAIL) PROGRAM, WHICH THE CEDARS INSTITUTE, WOLE SOYINKA FOUNDATION IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY ORGANIZED, MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO COME IN CONTACT WITH KAHLIL GIBRAN, CAN YOU TELL US LATEST DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM?

YR: The SAIL program was started in December 2013 when we (I and my colleague Dr E. J. Alam) signed in São Paolo a memorandum of understanding with the Rector of one of the foremost Brazilian universities: Universidade Federal de São Paolo (known by its acronym UNIFESP). This happened through the good auspices of our mutual friend, Ms. Denise Milan, a distinguished and accomplished world-renowned Brazilian visual artist of Lebanese descent. Since 2014 we have had many editions of the SAIL program hosting scholars, high-ranking university administrators, students, and professionals from Brazil, Nigeria, and Ukraine. The last edition of SAIL was in Summer 2019 when we hosted Nigerian students and professionals. Here

let me state in unequivocal terms: The Nigerian editions would not have been possible without the generous support of Dr. Habib Jafar and the collaboration of The Wole Soyinka Foundation. Since then, the conjuncture of global events—the COVID pandemic and ensuing global economic recession, with local developments in Lebanon (the upheaval of October 2019, economic collapse, and the tragic explosion on August 4, 2020) have scuttled and derailed our plans to host SAIL programs in 2020 and 2021.

Nevertheless we are hopeful to resume the SAIL program in 2022. For more information on the SAIL program and its previous editions, please consult our website at www.cedarsinstitute.org

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-youssef-g-rahme-president-cedars-institute-a-full-understanding-of-gibrans-writings-necessitates-an-appreciation-of-his-paintings>

A WRITER MUST BE ABREAST WITH THE HISTORY OF HIS SOCIETY - AKWU SUNDAY VICTOR



Akwu Sunday Victor is also known by the pen name, Akwu Ene’jo Adeyi. He holds a degree in English and Literary Studies from Kogi State University, Anyigba. His writing cuts across the three genres of literature: Poetry, Prose and Play. His published works include: *Breaking the Cycle of Silence*, 2013, (play), *New Voices from the Confluence: An Anthology of New Writing*, 2013, *Bourgeois Politics and Ideology in Vincent Egbuson’s Womandela* (Long Essay, 2014, Sambrukeen Germany). He has academic papers published in scholarly journals in Nigeria and abroad. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him his literary life, activism and other facts surrounding his writing career.

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

ASV: Akwu Sunday Victor is my name. I started writing poetry in 2004. I read Ann Taylor’s poem ‘My Mother’ in an English text book for secondary school. I imitated the poem and from there began to read other poems and to imitate them. I studied English and Literature at degree and masters levels and have published *Breaking the Cycle of Silence* (a play) and *Voices from the Confluence: An Anthology of Contemporary Writings*. I have scholarly and critical papers published in Nigerian and international academic and literary journals.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

ASV: The function and effect of the work. As a writer and a critic, I look out for the social impact of a piece. No writer writes in a vacuum. The society and its historical evolution should be documented.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

ASV: There are writers who shaped my creative imagination starting from the Bible, William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, Taylor Coleridge, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Ngugi wa Thiong'O and James Hadley Chase.

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

ASV: To a new writer I would advise, be a voracious reader. Read poetry books. Read novels across ages and continents. Above all, a writer must be abreast with the history of his society. He must step outside and see for himself the social order of his society, the plight of the masses and above all, he must read newspapers and watch news channels to be abreast with happenings around him.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

ASV: I see myself as a social critic. Once you are a writer with ideological leaning, you feel responsible to the peasants and the less privileged in society. When I see or read about dehumanization, exploitation of workers by the government or the employers that inspires me to write. Above all, bad governance is a major source of inspiration to me as a writer. The failures and failings of governments, the menace of terrorism, banditry, kidnappings and ritual killings, street begging are all are issues a serious writer in this age can not shy away from.

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

ASV: No writing routine. I write when the muse of writing comes on me. I write when I see social injustice. I write when I read other books that trigger desires to write. I don't think writers should have writing routines because routines are killers of imaginative creativity. I write when the passion, the drive becomes strong and compelling and that allows my creative works to be artistic and inventive.

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

ASV: I started writing in 2004 and it was after reading many texts such as Eze Goes to School, Chike and the River in my junior secondary school, I began experimenting with form and content. I can't say write I started writing but I believe that a reader of literary texts has potentials of becoming a writer of literary texts.

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

ASV: My first literary text to be published is Breaking the Cycle of Silence in 2013.

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

ASV: The book Violence by Festus Iyayi in my secondary school days introduced me to radical literary aesthetics. I see myself more of a radical writer than just a writer without ideological leaning and that is why even my undergraduate project was studies in ideology (Bourgeois Ideology in Vincent Egbuson's Womandela). I therefore address the issues of oppression, exploration, dehumanization in all forms and now I focused more on the themes of street begging

know as Almajiri in northern Nigeria and social dislocation as a result of terrorism, banditry, religious extremism and cultural roots of Contemporary pandemonium.

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

ASV: Well I felt elated receiving feedback from readers and even publishing houses. I have received many rejection letters and I have won awards, however, there is nothing pleasurable than having positive feedbacks from readers of your work.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

ASV: Literary ideas do not grow from a tree, they are everywhere. So long as you live, ideas are everywhere in pictures, art works, films, other literary texts, and above all in society. However, there is a greater reality when you write about what is part of your existential reality.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

ASV: I self published most of my works. Many publishing houses are looking for those who made names forgetting that the tallest iroko in the forest was once a seedling.

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

ASV: I always get a response of awe at my poetic constructions. I am primarily a poet. Therefore imagery is one of my major device in all of my literary constructs.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

ASV: I have so many literary works on social media. When you Google my name: Akwu Sunday Victor, you will see samples of my writings.

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

ASV: Writing is like cooking. The same ingredients in the hand of Mrs. A will not give the same aroma when in the hand of Mrs. B. So a writer must understand his subject matter and treat it with all mastery he can muster. Writing is a serious emotional affair. So, it is important to focus on what you can handle and research deeply whatever you can handle before the outburst. Thus the principle, look before you leap is important to every writer. Research your theme properly before writing. In all, every writer that must be taken seriously must be a serious researcher.

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

ASV: I call them the Facebook poets who hastily construct poem-like write-ups and publish them without going through mentorship. So, a writer must be mentored directly or indirectly by

existing or dead writers. Before you begin publishing your works on social media or traditional means, go through proper mentoring, it's important.

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

ASV: I am writing a novel, Season of the Locusts which is set in Borno state and centred on the menace of terrorism. It is a book I am writing, pushing my imagination to the edge. I have never been to Maiduguri or Borno state but I have to depend on my imagination and research from the internet for me to build a society that can be acceptable by even indigenes of the state.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

ASV: What was the journey like? It was written when I was in university. We were reading books like I Will Marry when I Want, Devil on the Cross, by Ngugi, Moroutodun and Once Upon four Robbers by Femi Osofisan and Arrow of God by Chinua Achebe. These books at the time shaped my ideological and linguistic configurations. I drew poetic and proverbial language from Chinua Achebe and an ideological base from Ngugi. The book was my first literary child, I have seen a lot of shortcomings in the work and my handling of the theme was not matured enough in the light of my present growth.

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

ASV: My latest work which isn't yet published is about a young girl whose childhood was shattered by the menace of terrorism. The environment, the people and even the spiritual aspects of life were interfered by religious extremism.

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

ASV: Terrorism, menace of street begging.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-akwu-sunday-victor-a-writer-must-be-abreast-with-the-history-of-his-society>

**GIBRAN WAS NOT ONLY A TALENTED WRITER BUT ALSO A WORD STYLIST -
PEN LEBANON PRESIDENT, PROFESSOR IMAN HUMAYDAN, AND SECRETARY
MARIE TAWK**



The PEN Lebanon, a non-governmental, non-political and non-profit organisation was founded by several Lebanese writers. Since inception, it has never fallen short of its mandates which is promoting literatures of Lebanese and also defending the freedom of expression and thought as specified in Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, in this dual Chat with Wole Adedoyin, Iman Humaydan, a University Professor and President of PEN Lebanon shares a heart rendering conversation about PEN Lebanon, Khalil Gibran and which was graciously translated by Marie Tawk who also is a writer and translator. Incidentally, Marie hails from the home village of Gibran and she is one of his avid readers as well. She is also Secretary, PEN Lebanon. This interview is run concurrently as Marie Tawk provides us with the English narration from Professor Iman Humaydan.

WA: PLEASE KINDLY INTRODUCE YOURSELVES

IH: I am Iman Humaydan. A Lebanese Writer, Researcher, University Professor, and President of Pen Lebanon. I am also a Board Member of Pen International.

MT: I am a Writer and Prominent Translator from French into Arabic.

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT PEN LEBANON

IH: Pen Lebanon was founded in 2012. It is an affiliated center to Pen International. Its main aim is to promote literature and defend freedom of speech. Its main activity is to promote literature on different platforms and in Secondary Schools, Cultural Clubs, through organized readings of literary texts and fruitful discussions.

WA: HOW IS PEN LEBANON PROMOTING THE WORKS OF LEBANESE WRITERS?

MT: Through our reading programs, Lebanese writers visit schools invited by Pen Lebanon. They read their texts in front of the students. These visits help writers to be known by the young generation and at the same time, help students to get to know the writers and to be encouraged in writing their own texts and express themselves freely through discussions and writings. At present, we are translating poems of very young Lebanese poets that have never been translated before. This is part of a plan to promote them and make their creative writings popular. We are organizing a zoom poetry event to take place and introduce these poets to the public.

WA: WHAT MAJOR SUCCESSES HAVE YOU HAD SINCE BECOMING THE PRESIDENT OF PEN LEBANON?

IH: The literary visits that we, all members of the Pen Lebanon have been organizing to remote schools in Lebanon, as well as the continuous support to young writers. Now, because of the crisis in Lebanon and because of Covid 19, the schools have been shut down for a while now. We are planning to organize poetry events online.

WA: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE KHALIL GIBRAN TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT READ ANY OF HIS WORKS?

IH: Gibran is local and international. His work can be described as influenced by his local atmosphere, ie.Bsharri, as well as by the international atmosphere that affected him as a writer and artist.

The Prophet, as a book embedded in the Philosophical atmosphere, has gone beyond geographical and historical frontiers. Its human value talks to all times and all places. Nevertheless, this ‘Internationalism’, if we can say, could not make us forget the hidden effects and traces of the first place of Gibran. There, where he listened for the first time to the singing of Birds, the sounds of Animals, the howl of the wind, the roar of the storm, the running water in little streams, the whisper of the air, and the patterning of the rain on the house roofs of Bsharri. We cannot see the Northern part of Lebanon but in the eyes of Gibran. He has this complexity and richness of dimensions. Gibran is very Lebanese, but at the same time he is international. The Lebanese writer Mikhail Naimi, who knew Gibran very well, wrote “we cannot see the writings of Gibran but embedded is a Lebanese character. In his sentences we see the Snow, the Water sources, the Valleys, the light that penetrates the Valleys, the Fog of early mornings etc....”.

We, as readers of Gibran, agree with Naimi, as we cannot see the Mountainous North of Lebanon but in the eyes of Gibran. Mikhail Naimi also said “**if you want to feel and smell your land, and know your country, you must read Gibran**”. From this narrow local place (Bsharri), Gibran went very far to the international scene. In this sense Gibran is a talented multi-dimensional writer. Gibran was not only a talented writer but he was also a word stylist.

MT: On the other hand, he is an international citizen. In his writings he called for the internationalization of religion and values. He was able to be local and international at the same time. Reading *The Prophet*, one can feel the human values, as this book goes beyond time. You can read it at any time and it stays contemporary at any time. Gibran was able to be the son of Mar Sarkis (an area in his village), and the son of no one. He wrote once: ‘The whole earth is my

homeland and the world is my family'. He is the international citizen, the restless who is searching in vain for a shelter that makes him feel satisfied. He is the stranger, the philosopher in a continuous search for beauty and human reality, who is never satisfied with what he finds. Gibran is the 'outsider' in the sense of Albert Camus' word and book title '*l'etranger*'.

WA: IF READERS WOULD LIKE TO READ KHALIL GIBRAN'S BOOKS, WHAT BOOKS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

IH: *The Broken Wings*, and, *Sand and Foam*.

WA: GIVE US THREE "GOOD TO KNOW" FACTS ABOUT PEN LEBANON

MT: It includes multi linguistic writers. The majority of its active members are women writers. It never accepts financial support from Lebanese political authorities!

WA: WHAT MAKES YOU EFFECTIVE AS THE PRESIDENT OF PEN LEBANON?

IH: This should be left to other Pen members to answer. If I have to say something, it is that I try to be effective.

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

IH: I am currently reading *The Books in my Life*, by Henri Miller, and I am also reading the *Boxes of Desire* (Arabic novel written by Abbass Beydoun, a member in Pen Lebanon). There are many writers (dead and alive) whom we read and whose work is important. For example, to mention a few Lebanese here: Mikhail Naimi, Maroun Abboud who reminds us of Gibran's atmosphere too. And other international writers as for example, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Paul Auster, Toni Morrison, Wole Soyinka, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

WA: WHICH OF KHALIL GIBRAN'S BOOK INFLUENCED YOUR LIFE — AND WHY?

MT: His early writings. They are full of passion, of social criticism, of freedom of spirit, and of images that make you feel you are living the story and its place. Mainly *The Madman*, and *Sand and Foam*. We read them in the age of adolescence and they were important to us because they introduced revolutionary ideas. These books helped us to understand the negative social effects on the free souls and to believe that humans were born free. Undoubtedly, The prophet affected us too, as well as *The Broken Wings*.

In the *Broken Wings*, Gibran criticized Lebanese society. In *The Prophet*, he introduces an international body of values that can be adopted in any place in the world. In all of his books, he internationalized the human values and founded the culture of peace and of openness. He is a revolutionary spirit searching for more than one reality. He was free, really free.

WA: WHICH CHAPTER OF *THE PROPHET* WAS THE MOST PERSONALLY INTERESTING TO YOU? WERE THERE ANY FACTS OR THEMES THAT YOU WOULD HAVE LIKED TO INCLUDE, BUT KHALIL GIBRAN DIDN'T MAKE INTO THE BOOK?

IH: The Chapter on Love. Gibran topics went into philosophical directions. He covered many subjects and themes. However, he did not tackle the topic of sex, gender and gender relations; neither he went profoundly into the concrete practical meanings of social justice. And lastly, he did not talk about aging. But a good writer never writes about everything.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR THREE FAVORITE BOOKS BY KHALIL GIBRAN —AND WHY?

MT: We already mentioned 3 titles of books beside the Prophet. Here add, also the book '*The Storms*'. I suggest them because of their human values, and because they carry very important messages on the innate freedom of human beings. They are the religious and social authorities that make human beings prisoners of the traditional frustrating norms and habits.

WA: WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW ABOUT PEN LEBANON AND YOUR FUTURE PROJECT ON KHALIL GIBRAN?

IH: It is important to find Pen centers all over the world. We founded Pen Lebanon because we want to have our voices heard and our works read. Pen Centers in the world enhance cultural and literary exchange and this is a very good initiative that writers all over the world need. What a pleasure now to find ourselves writing about Gibran and about our center to Gibran Society in Nigeria. This is what Pen centers do: Openness towards the other, a value that Gibran himself believed in. We hope to continue promoting literature and freedom of writing and expression. Actually, Gibran's work is a part of the yearly education program for schools.

WA: WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU GIVE TO KHALIL GIBRAN READERS AND LOVERS?

MT: The world is in a health crisis; Lebanon is not only in a health crisis but also taken hostage by vicious military powers who do not believe in peace nor in an independent Lebanon. We need Gibran today more than ever, as his writings are a light to our dark times. He was among the first who wrote on peace in its spiritual and philosophical dimensions. We call every person who works for peace to read him again and to read him always. Khalil Gibran writings can be a constitution for human values.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-pen-lebanon-president-professor-iman-humaydan-and-secretary-marie-tawk-gibran-was-not-only-a-talented-writer-but-also-a-word-stylist>

WRITING HELPS ME TO EXPRESS MYSELF WITHOUT EXPOSING MY WEAKNESS - NDUKWO MARY CHIDINMA



Ndukwo Mary Chidinma is a poet and novelist. She is a member of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers, Oyo State Chapter and the current Secretary of Ibadan Book Club. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing career.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

NDUKWO: I like to write because writing helps me to express myself without exposing my weakness, apart from the fact that I want to be the first and the youngest Nigerian female writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature.

WA: WHICH WRITER DO YOU ADMIRE?

NDUKWO: I have a long list, but I prefer Amma Dakor, Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie.

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

NDUKWO: Actually, I am reading Joan The Made by Kristen Pham

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

NDUKWO: Purple Hibiscus. I read it at the beginning of my teenage year and I had gone through most of the protagonist's situations before I had the chance to grow.

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

NDUKWO: The Ultimate Series (5 books), Gifted Hand, Faceless, Along Came A Spider, Future's Past and The Duplicates...Well they made me understand lives from others point of view

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

NDUKWO: Disney's Aladdin, Frozen 1&2, Mulan and reflection

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

NDUKWO: Anything from Beyonce and Disney is fine by me and a little of Cardi B.

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

NDUKWO: Any of Ben Carson's books and James Patterson Alex Cross Series, It helps you see Life from others perspective according to their profession

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

NDUKWO: Any of James Patterson's books is great

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

NDUKWO: I am very great at hiding my emotions because I believe it can be your weakness. I also prefer people knowing me for who I am and not what others think, and I am unpredictable at times.

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

NDUKWO: Yeah, I want to tell my readers, when I write, it isn't always about me but my present society and how they live. What I don't like? Selfishness...I despise using others for your selfish benefits because you are higher than them or privileged. I also hate gossiping too. WHAT I LIKE? I love traveling, acting and dancing. Favorite ways to relax, watching the stars, reading and dancing.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-ndukwo-mary-chidinma-writing-helps-me-to-express-myself-without-exposing-my-weakness>

I WRITE DUE TO A STRONG COMPULSIVE PASSION - BABATUNDE ADEBAYO



Babatunde Adebayo A. (Jr.) is a final year student of Electronics/Telecommunication Engineering in the Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the institution's Newspaper which operates under the banner of the Union of Campus Journalist (UCJ)/Press Council TPL. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

BAA: I write due to a strong compulsive passion. And of course, I have an ambition to be the second Nobel laureate in literature.

WA: WHICH WRITER(S) DO YOU ADMIRE?

BAA: A long list, but I like Wole Soyinka, Nnedi Okarafor, George R. R. Martin, J. K. Rowling, J. R. R. Tolkien and Chimamanda Adiche.

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

BAA: I'm reading Thinking for a Change. Dead? Tolkien and Achebe. Maybe ancient ones like Shakespeare and Homer.

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

BAA: 48 Laws of Power. I saw it at the lowest point in my life. Amidst heartbreak, depression and disappointment.

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

BAA: A Song of Ice and Fire series (5 books)
48 Laws of Power.
The Lord of the Rings series (3 Books)
King Henry's Six Wives
Dunno.. They just seemed to open my mind wide.

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

BAA: Anything from One Direction, Michael Jackson, Khalid, Fela, Brymo, Rihanna is favorite in my books.

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

BAA: Inception, Titanic, Avatar, and Justice League.

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

BAA: My books... Lol

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

BAA: 48 Laws of power, Gifted Hands, anything psychological.

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

BAA: Oh... I'm notorious for being blunt. I try to be as honest as possible, and well I get hated for it. For my writing however, my main skill isn't about good grammar, it's more about my imaginative mind... It's often in the clouds, I over think, critical thinking. So it forces rapid thinking of a preferred scene in my mind. Plus, I think I'm cool headed. Nice to be with. I think.

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

BAA: Yeah, I want to use the medium to share untold stories. Many don't know of past events and while history repeats itself... Those people are bound to make the same mistakes... I hope to help avoid it. What I don't like? Lies... I hate it because it brings unpredictability. I hate something that's not clear, because I'm often always clear. What do I like? Meeting someone who is free spirited. Also doing something that helps the needy. Favourite ways to relax. Chat with friends, preferably old friends... Talk about love and life over a glass of wine.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-babatunde-adebayo-i-write-due-to-a-strong-compulsive-passion>

A WRITER MUST WRITE WITH PASSION, EMPATHY, SKILLS, PRESENCE AND COMPREHENSION - DIIPO FAGUNWA



Diipo Fagunwa is a fiction writer. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he unveils details about his writing career and his latest book titled “Inúlayéwà”.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

DF: My parents. My father was a writer and my mother wanted me to continue in the same vein.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

DF: About thirty five years.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

DF: I started writing as an academic in 1982. My first publication was in 1985. It was reprinted in 1986.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

DF: Yes. I have been encouraged to explore writing by people and the goodwill they have always shown towards my father who was a writer. My late mother was also very enthusiastic about me being a writer.

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

DF: Give it a go. You never know the lump of charcoal you have, it may be diamond.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

DF: I have found them useful for sharing experiences.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

DF: Four, although only One has been published. I have two books of short stories completed and a compilation of my tributes and requiems posted on social media. I am also writing my second novel 'Èmíqlá'.

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

DF: Experiences shape ideas and ideas churn out other ideas.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

DF: I really do not have a favourite character. I have always wound my stories round the narrator and narratives.

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

DF: Inúlayéwà. His odyssey is what makes him special.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

DF: Everywhere and anywhere; life is full of inspiration. My late mother was quite inspirational. She inspired me in a lot of ways. She was a great communicator with loads of intelligence and experience. I also get inspiration from my father's stories and novels. For instance my novel 'Ìfèwùmí' is a kind of continuation of Adiiu Olódùmarè (my father's last published novel).

Adiiu's life story inspired the story of Inúlayéwà's sojourn in me.

I always get a lot of inspiration from my friends and acquaintances. I have always kept friends with great sense of humour and warmth and what they say many times spontaneously inspire. One also gets inspired by the social groups one keeps as well as the streets etc. For instance what you hear from bus drivers, conductors, touts, traders, churches, mosques, meetings, gatherings and ordinary persons on the streets go a lot of ways to inspire creativity in a writer and sometimes create a background for storytelling. Above all I get a lot of inspiration from the Kegites, Palmwine Drinkard Club where I am an old Chief or former President and a Member of the Board of Trustees. Kegites' language is fecund with inspiration, intelligence, wise cracks and sayings and their philosophies very rich and overwhelming.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

DF: Bookshops and online with Amazon and some other outlets.

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

DF: They can find out more about me from academic communities where I have kept many worthwhile friends. I can be traced on the internet especially with regards to some of my academic publications. I am a member of the D O Fágúnwà Foundation and very available with them. I have a bit of presence on the social media (Facebook) and some of my stories have been peddled around on WhatsApp. I went to some great schools especially Christ's School, Adó Èkìtì where I have kept my network very active and it has been enriching. I also have many other friends and well-wishers who have access to me and of course my publisher (International Publishers) is helpful.

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

DF: No.

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

DF: I have not made any attempt to turn my books to audio yet hence I cannot be sure of challenges that may be attached. However my experience with my Father's novels shows that there is a problem with copyright infringements. There are some of his works on audio being advertised and sold without permission.

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

DF: The one I am currently writing – Èmíọlá.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

DF: It is a surreal adventure that is a followup to Adìtù Olódùmarè which was my father's last published novel.

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

DF: It was interesting, fulfilling and uplifting. It gave me a sense of pride that I was able to continue the Fágúnwà legacy.

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

DF: Style and creativity. A writer is always in a classroom where his students are not contiguous but dispersed. Thus a writer must write with passion, empathy, skills, presence and comprehension. The language of the writer must be very ordinary, simple and easy to discern.

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

DF: My Father; Chief D O Fagunwa.

WA: YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY HIM?

DF: Igbó Olódùmarè.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED “IFEWUMI, THE TRAVAILS OF INULAYEWA” CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK.

DF: It is an adventure story of a man whose wife was abducted by his lunatic friend and he travelled round the world searching for his lost lady. He found his wife after twenty five years of sojourn that exposed him to varying life experiences and taught him about large heartedness, peace of mind and spirit of forgiveness.

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

DF: The novel is a dance round day to day experiences of life.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

DF: I wanted to continue my father’s legacy.

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

DF: Lessons on the Spirit of Forgiveness.

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

DF: Morals about large heartedness and eschewing themselves from bitterness and life of wickedness.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

DF: Literally speaking ‘Ìfẹ̀wùmí’ means ‘I like Love’ . The storyline is about Love and the problems that can come with it.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

DF: Yes. All my Father’s novels have influenced me. I love ‘Tales from the Arabian Nights’. They have very wonderful literary styles; they are surreal and are rich on lessons of life, morals and living a life of quality. I find Shakespeare’s works very inspirational too and full of wise sayings. I have also enjoyed Chinua Achebe’s works. His delivery is of the quality of the village story teller; indeed he was a cultural man with classic mastery of words and delivery.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

DF: Surreal adventures.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

DF: No.

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

DF: None that I have not met at the moment.

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

DF: I always display my books on shelf and virtual library.

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

DF: I love short stories.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

DF: Many; especially the African Writers Series.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

DF: Last year in the UK. COVID 19 has not allowed current visits.

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

DF: No.

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

DF: Yes; many. The social media is very rife now with interesting creative writings.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-diipo-fagunwa-a-writer-must-write-with-passion-empathy-skills-presence-and-comprehension>

THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN HUMAN RIGHTS BY ONYEKACHI PETER ONUOHA



Being a paper presented at the first Webinar of the International Human Rights Art Festival (IHRAF) African Chapter by Onyekachi Peter Onuoha, Lecturer at the University of Calabar

As a matter of interpretative convenience this talk reframes the theme of today's discourse in a rhetorical manner by asking, "What is the role of literature in human rights?"

Human rights literature is the appropriation of creative literature as a tool for social change. It is the use of literature to amplify the voices of the oppressed and in the seeking for social justice and equality in the society. Human rights literature re-enacts and reflects society through highlighting of social interactions and actions, which sometimes leads to subjugate of the subalterns within their social space. This social depiction provides a moral focus for those who still have conscience to act in an attempt to correct social ills. Human rights literature is a form of creative testimony that provides a balance of narrative for all parties involved in social controversies to make a case for their own existence through balance of characters depiction and engagement within the framework of art.

African Literature from the time of Achebe until now has played a functional role in social justice and equality in the society. The foregoing foregrounding Achebe's postulation when he submit, that art for art seek is a deodorised dog shit. Achebe believes in the functionality of literature in the society and that is why he clearly state in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* that; "I will be quite satisfied if my earliest novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past- with all its imperfections- was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them (45). From the foregoing, Achebe's earliest novels were seeking for the dignity and the rights of Africans within the framework of art. An attempt to reject the human rights violations and exploitation of the colonialist government as depicted in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, through literature Achebe makes a case for the pre-literate African society before the coming of colonialism.

Literature as depicted by Achebe frames social justice within alternate spaces and allows us to reimagined situations through the framework of reflection as represented by art. Achebe's depiction of human interactions in Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart* implicates the role of literature and human rights when he affirms; "Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. (...) art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind". This in brief shows that literature assist in the depiction of human rights. The role of human rights literature educates the masses on the abuse of their human rights as foregrounded in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* etc. Literature in human rights is an applied form of literature as clearly illustrated by Achebe. It is a form of literature that makes a case for the masses on their rights and the abuse of their rights in the society.

Sometimes, the role of literature in human rights takes the form of propaganda to draw the attention of the world to the subjugation of the masses. W.E. B. Du Bois in "Criteria for Negro Art" note that; "...all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that what ever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the others is stripped and silent" (103). Oppression and injustice is backed by a form of propaganda that emphasizes the superiority of one above the other. And W.E.B Du bois thus re-domesticates the operation of the propaganda to seek for the existences of his people through the framework of literature. Feminist literature foregrounds the function of literature in human rights, literature and propaganda in the advancement of equality of gender within the African traditional society as portray by feminist writers in the depiction of subjugated and liberated woman within the framework of art and the African Novel. Feminism is t a clear illustration of the functionality of the role of literature and human rights in the human society. Feminist literature advocates for gender complementarity and gender equality in literature and by extension in the society. Human rights literature through representation re-engages social norms and belief in the society in a form of interactions that reflects various advantages and disadvantages as criteria for change and social justice.

Denis Brutus' *Letter to Martha* did a poetic witnessing to pain and trauma in South African prison as a depiction of the functionality of the role of literature and human rights abuse. Poetic witnessing is used to illustrate the climate of uncertainties and a bearer or witness to pain. Brutus' *Letter to Martha* is the poetic narrative of the oppressed through an autobiographical presentation of his plights and suffering in the hands of Apartheid administration. Writers over the years have used art as testimony as witnessing against the nation state and its exploitation of the masses within such political discourse. Achebe in *Witnessing and Resistance* through poetic composition captures the pain and alienation during the Nigerian Biafran in his *Girls at War* captures the pain and annihilation of the people of the former eastern region during the Nigerian Biafran Civil war. In recent times, the poetic composition and video recordings on social media captures the not too long python dance in the Eastern states is the to the brutality of the people of the Eastern region and the function of literature as witness to human rights abuses and advocacy in Nigeria. Creative literature aids the dislodgement of the fierce python dancing in Eastern region in the sense that literary and (auto) biographical representations of the actions of the military in that part of Nigeria raises questions on the motives of their actions in the region.

Kan Saro Wiwa through his literary writings and activism seek for social and environment justice for his people within the Nigerian society and the concept of resource control. Saro Wiwa employs literature as a tool for enlightenment and to highlight the effect of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Many writers after him have used literature to x-ray the effect of oil spillage and the exploitation of the people of the Niger Delta and thereby demanding for social justice. The foregoing illustrate how literature functions within the framework of human rights or how human rights function within the framework of literature as literary materials for the advocacy and the survival of the subalterns in the society.

End SARS poets as depicted in End SARS Rhythms continue in this form of poetic tradition of witnessing and resistance to injustice in Nigeria as an illustration of the role of literature in human rights. The poets through poetic remediation of memory engages in poetic activism and resistances to police brutality in Nigeria. Human rights poetics in literature is a form of literary mediation of resistance and the erecting of memorial in art as confrontation to totalitarian system of governance. The poetics of End SARS Rhythms highlights how poetry participates in movements and fashions its content based on the agitation and redefines the memory of such movement as freezing the memory in poetic frame. The role of literature in human rights is framed in poetic resistance and is founded on the ideological concept of Marxism which is geared toward emancipation of the oppressed in the society. This is also the temperament and the function of literature in human rights. The Editor's Note in End SARS Rhythms indicates the functionality of poetic witnessing in literature and by extension the role of human rights thus; "Literature and arts owe society the duty not just to entertain and educate but also to document the history of the people as well as mirror and x-ray the society" (5). End SARS Rhythms does three things which are: to entertain the people within the site of their trauma and brutalisation, document in poetic form various instances of their brutalisation and through this medium question the moral fabric of the society. Through such questioning the poetic rendition of End SARS Rhythms highlight human rights violations and implicates the role of literature as a tool for confrontation of social injustice.

In accounting for Marxism and how it functions in human right literature, Charles Bressler note that; "...society shapes our consciousness; that social... conditions directly influences how what we believe and value...Marxism offers us an opportunity and a plan for changing the world from a play of bigotry, hatred and conflict resulting in class struggle..." (115). Marxist poetic which is steeped in the use of poetry as resistance to oppression in the society highlights such oppression as witnesses against the Nigerian Police force and by extension bad governance in Nigeria. This is an indication of how literature function in human rights. Human rights literature does not only portray abuse of human rights but suggest methods and medium to change such social abnormalities and make the world a better place for humans.

Furthermore, Endsars.com is a Digital Storytelling site that hosts testimonial which became part and collect cause for resistance to police brutality and activism during the End SARS in Nigeria. The narratives in Endsars.com are a form of (auto) biographical narrative in blog clearly depicts how police brutalities have destroyed many Nigerian youths. Digital Storytelling becomes testimonies and memorials as a form of activism and resistance to police brutality in Nigeria. #Endsars narratives in #Endsars.com portrayals the damage police brutality has done to many

Nigerians and through such narratives keep protesters of #Endsars across Nigeria in the streets during the protest.

In the human rights literature, memory plays an active role in the composition of art. The human memory powers the human creative imagination and leads to literary output. The authorial vision within the framework of art is the principle that aids the gleaning from memory amidst the interfacing influence of the imagination. Onuoha writes about memory that; “Memories are a defining characteristics of man; they are a form of socialisation of self-worth and they are the promise of the definition of what is good and bad in the African traditional environment” (84). Raji’s work strives on memory and poetic justice is one of the cardinal principles of Remi Rjai’s *Webs of Remembrance*. In the attempt of the poet persona to remember the injustice done to his people by those in the corridor of power the poet persona proclaims hailstone judgement against them amidst the memorials of the afflicted. Michael A. Quinlam writes in regards to poetic justice that; “The study of poetic justice necessarily involves a study of ethical principles in literary art; for the very idea of poetic justice implies a judgement regarding the morality of action. As a result, then, of studying criticism it is possible to come to a partial knowledge of the principles of by which a given races of people was governed at same given time” (ii). What the foregoing highlight is that poetic justice is an act of literary retribution within the work of art and it reflects the morality of the society.

Memory and history is an enabler to the poetic composition of *Web of Remembrance*. Raji reimagines the past under the same sign of the past even in the present; memory recall makes him to locate the search for justice within the sight of historical crime. Paul Ricoeur corroborates the foregoing that; “Under the sign of the same: “Re-Enacting” the past in the present under the sign of the same. I place the conception of as a re-enactment of the past...(13). *Web of Remembrance* is a re-enactment of the past and the coming back of traumatic memory of the poet person is a product of history which is powered by memory of such history. Raji’s *Web of Remembrance* is a re-enactment of memory in fierce remembrance of the evil of military dictatorship and by extension an enactment of memorial for the plight of the masses using poetry as the memorial tomb as an evidence for seeking of justice.

Finally, literature in human rights provides realist evidence on the actions and inactions of man within his immediate environment. it educate man and provides a medium and a second handle in the assessment of man in an alternate space as a representation of his environment. Human rights literature gives man a sort of objective representation to see his actions and relationship with others in his environment. Literature plays a functional role in the liberation of the people and enables the people to change their ways and to be involves in issues that affect them and the society. Human rights seek for the equality of all including the environment in the society.

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<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-shares-paper-from-onyekachi-peter-onuoha-what-is-the-role-of-literature-in-human-rights>

UPCOMING WRITERS MUST NEVER RELENT AND BE SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF INTIMIDATION - KEHINDE GBADEYANKA



Kehinde Gbadeyanka is a playwright and political activist. A member of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers and a fellow of the Ebedi Writers Residency. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, the Chief Executive Officer of The Assembly of Potentials (TAP), an NGO aimed at enhancing and discovering new talents shared with us his literary life and other facts surrounding his writing career.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

KG: I write to correct the ills and iniquities in the society and by doing so we have a better and tranquil society.

WA: WHICH PLAYWRIGHT DO YOU ADMIRE?

KG: I really admire Ola Rotimi because of his aesthetics and uniqueness in creativity

WA: DESCRIBE THE ROUTE TO YOUR FIRST DRAMA BEING PUBLISHED...

KG: I have not published any works of mine but one is on the way. I have written many works. One of them will come out before the end of this year, I will invite the army of writers to launch by God's grace. The issue of novel coronavirus also caused a kind of disturbance.

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

KG: The Boys At The Border by Dr. Wale Okediran, The Gods are not to blame by Ola Rotimi and my manuscripts. If I should mention the living Juggernauts in writing and literary activism that influence me, they are doing very well in this writing industry and have contributed

immensely to the sustenance and stability of this industry. They are Dr. Wale Okediran (Creative writing and literary organization), Hon.Wole Adedoyin (literary activism). God will continue to bless them.

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

KG: The Boys At The Border, it really made me understand that one can't stay in power for long and at the same time every corruption act has a nemesis. Permit me to use this Yoruba adage" Bope titi epo atan lenu, which literally means everything can't last.

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

KG: The boys at the border, it teaches moral
The Gods are not to blame, it depicts Africa's tradition and norms
Lonely Days, teaches gender discriminations
Native sons, portrays racism and immoral acts and its nemesis.
Sweet sixteen, teaches obedience
Trial of troubadour, teaches endurance.
Woman of Owu, also teaching obedience
Woman in her prime, depicts perseverance.
And last but not the least, Blinkard entertains but of its comic way of presenting it

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

KG: I like all the films produced by Tunde Kelani.

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

KG: Well, I like traditional music. I like Ayinla Omowura , Epo akara and K1..I do learn from their classic presentations.. I also prefer Barrister.

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

KG: If I have a book club I will make sure the visiting writers read and discuss issues that can make our society a better one. Sadistic acts must be left out of society.

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

KG: Dr. Wale Okediran's - The Trial of the Troubadour and his other works

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

KG: Laughs.. I'm so strict and tough. I don't condone indolence. And lastly, I like to accommodate people. Well, to talk about my inspiration, when I listen to music or words from aged people. The inspiration overwhelms me.

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

KG: They should cultivate the habit of reading, researching and attending creative writing workshops. They must never relent and be subjected to any form of threatening. Writers are voices for the voiceless.

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

KG: I want my readers to know that nobody can lay claim to know all things. We, writers are not angels but messengers so as a result of this we can make mistakes and you correct us politely. Thanks. Honorable, as I am fondly called. I like to travel, I don't like to eat much and I always have interest in political issues.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-kehinde-gbadeyanka-upcoming-writers-must-never-relent-and-be-subjected-to-any-form-of-intimidation>

**YOU CAN'T BE A GOOD WRITER, IF YOU ARE NOT A GOOD READER -
MICHAEL DAVID OGBONNAYA**



WA: MAY WE MEET YOU?

MICHAEL: My name is Michael David Ogbonnaya. I am a native of Lodu-Imenyi in Bende Local Government of Abia State. I graduated from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, where I read Zoology. I am a Fiction Writer.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

MICHAEL: I write because it's what I deeply love. I write because It's an avenue through which I find uttermost expression, it gives me a sense of fulfilment and meaning.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

MICHAEL: A couple of them; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, Sidney Sheldon, Lola Shoneyin, Ben Okri.

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

MICHAEL: I was first published in a Chinua Achebe Anthology; An anthology of poems. I felt elated when the opportunity came because I really wanted to be read by others. And so, when I saw the opportunity, I jumped at it. Although I don't consider myself a poet, but it was easy for me to write a poem about Achebe because he was one of those who inspired me.

WA: HOW HAS HAVING A PUBLISHER HELPED YOU?

MICHAEL: It has given me the opportunity of being read by a large community of people.

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

MICHAEL: I would say to an aspiring writer, read widely. Read, Read and Read. And then write. Here is it, you can't be a good writer, if you are not a good reader. You need to learn from the masters. After learning from the masters, you tell your own story.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

MICHAEL: I'm currently reading Paulo Coelho's 'The Alchemist' and also Tsitsi Dangerembga's 'Nervous Conditions'.

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

MICHAEL: I'm deeply influenced by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's and Chinua Achebe's works. When I first Achebe, I loved his work. It is full of powerful and intelligent proverbs. I enjoyed it, some of his works like Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, talked about pre colonial Nigeria.

But I thought I couldn't write like Achebe because I couldn't talk about a Chief priest and sacrifices and Colonialism.

Then I read Adichie. With her, I gained confidence. She wrote about things I was very familiar with. So in many ways, she paved the way for me. So now, I write about things that interest me and also draw from Achebe's bountiful wisdom and his style.

For me, it wasn't just a book that influenced my life. It's a combination of things; books and videos I watched. I was deeply taken when I first saw Chimamanda Adichie's Ted talk titled 'The Dangers of A Single Story' . . I think that talk captures the center of humanity.

Because I believe as humans, we are not just one thing, we are a collection of many things. And there is never a single story to anything. So, for me, 'The Dangers of a Single Story' really had a great impact on me as a writer.

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

MICHAEL:

i. Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. I love the way the story was told- its going back and forth. I love the simplicity of the grammar and yet the fact that they formed sophisticated sentences. I love the honesty of the novel.

ii. Arrow of God by Chinua Achebe for its ancientness, its descriptive prowess. It's rich in Igbo proverbs.

iii. Joys of Motherhood by Buchi Emecheta for its truthfulness and vividness and melancholy.

iv. Native Son by Richard Wright. I love this book, for its intrigue. I think this book is a master when it comes to writing dialogues in prose.

v. The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives by Lola Shoneyin. I love this book for the way it's able to hold one's attention to the very last sentence of the book.

vi. Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. I love this book, because It captures the humanity of a people even during a civil war. - How people could live and laugh and even have sex in the midst of a civil war.

vii. Blurred Vision by Dayo Benson for its suspense.

viii. Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. I love this book for its coolness and yet its fierceness.

ix. Miracle by Tope Folarin (A short story) I love this book for it's suspense and humor.

x. Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. I love this book for its unHINGING descriptive power.

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

MICHAEL: Olympus has fallen.
The November Man.
Game of thrones (The series)
House of cards (The series)
Taken Part 1, 2 and 3.

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

MICHAEL: For king and country - Shoulders.

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

MICHAEL: The Secret Lives of Baba's Segi's Wives by Lola Shoneyi.
Americanah by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
Arrow of God by Chinua Achebe.
The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives by Lola Shoneyi.

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

MICHAEL: I consider myself to be a storyteller. I have understood through reading that irrespective of culture or ethnicity or religion or race, we share a common humanity. We all seek to be valued.

WA: WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT YOUR READERS TO KNOW? CONSIDER HERE YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES,

MICHAEL: I love to address issues from the angle of storytelling. I love to read and write. I'm a fan of any good music. I love Onugbu soup and Fufu. Watermelons are my favorite fruit. I love honesty and sincerity and hard work. I dislike lies and incompetence. I have an interest in playing the keyboard. I also have an interest in acting.
Hobbies - Playing lawn tennis (although I'm not very good) laughs. I also love driving.

WA: YOUR FAVORITE WAYS TO UNWIND

MICHAEL: One of my favorite ways of unwinding is, watching a good movie on my laptop, in the comfort of my house. Having my popcorn by my side, the curtains are down, the room is dark (cinema mood). Laughs.

Michael David Ogbonnaya is a Fiction Writer. He is a member of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW). In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shared with him some facts surrounding his life and writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-michael-david-ogbonnaya-you-cant-be-a-good-writer-if-you-are-not-a-good-reader>

**ASPIRING POETS SHOULD BE OPEN MINDED AND LEARN THE ART OF
READING BOOKS - EMMANUEL OKPOR AMEACHI**



Emmanuel Okpor Ameachi is from Delta State of Nigeria. He is a member of Center for Poets and the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW). Emmanuel Okpor is the author of the poem 'Beautiful Ikeja'. In 2010, Emmanuel Okpor was one of the winners of the prestigious Ibadan poetry Prize. He has also attended numerous creative writing workshops organized by the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) at the University of Ibadan.

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

POET: I am a poet because I am designed as one, so as to reach all readers participants to get through their situation in more informative order.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

POET: I admire a chosen few poets who do more than just writing poetry, but poets that are spiritually connected to their creative effort to solve problems, because this should be the primary aim of a good poet.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

POET: Exceptional work inspires me...such type of work is found as a hit...cos once you have your ideas polished with it...You know you have a game with your craft in flawless mode.

WA: TELL US ABOUT A NORMAL WORKING DAY

POET: A normal working day can simply be a day to observe what works with creating a different kind of Writing.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

POET: I do my writing by first imbibing on an idea, then I brainstorm characters and situations into it by bringing copies of detached thought to life.

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

POET: Many times poets come with the notion of abstract. When you get to read some poems,... while on it, you know the poet is trying to say something but you can't simply grasp the poet's intention, and it's all works of art. Therefore, my thought process behind a craft comes through imagery.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...

POET: My route to being published can be diversified in, most especially...online platform blog publishing.

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

POET: Aspiring poets should be open minded and learn the art of reading books with poetic text content that structure in sentences.

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

POET: My work manuscript took several stages of publishing within a publishing house in word count, text format, book size, margin and pricing

WA: DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR THE YET-TO-BE-PUBLISHED WRITERS READING THIS?

POET: I advice about to be published writers reading this is that they should understand that publication is a series of process that must be embarked on carefully through process to avoid misrepresentation and it's wrong impression of ideas. That is, they should be patience with good result orientation

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

POET: Typical writing day for me is in the winter.. when the breeze romance peacefully with a damp effect of coolness.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

POET: I write from the recess of my own personal idea

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

POET: I have a page on facebook...Winners Only....where my articles and online books can be assessed...and another one called News Vibes.. where readers can come and learn from other people's informative ideas.

WA: WEBSITE(S)?

POET: My books can be assessed at=www.amazon.com/authorEmmanuelOkpor
Also... www.Okadabooks.com/EmmanuelOkpor: Titled Campus Life.

WA: BEST MOVIE(S)?

POET: Hoodlum by Lawrence Fishbourne, an actor who showed a poetic ability while reciting lines of poems in a scenario with Vanessa Williams.

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

POET: Best piece of writing advice, writers should avoid word repetition while getting on creative writing and don't negotiate words for too long, forgetting to be constructive with imagery.

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

POET: Something personal about me people will be surprised to know about me is that I am a Rapper .. MCs

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-emmanuel-okpor-ameachi-aspiring-poets-should-be-open-minded-and-learn-the-art-of-reading-books>

**READING IS A GOOD SOURCE OF INSPIRATION - LUQMAN ADEWALE
ALAWODE**



Luqman Adewale Alawode is the Director of Studies at initiative for Sound Education, Relationship & Health (ISERH), In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, the initiator of the global anthology tagged War Against Fake News, an anthology that seeks to eradicate the spread of fake news across the globe shared with us his literary life, activism and other facts surrounding his writing career.

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

LAA: This is a big question, being a poet I can say is not a conscious effort for me, it is a journey I can't really trace back but somehow it started while I was in secondary school. I love writing, especially making short words/sentences that are full of meanings. Also poetry or writing per say is my passion, I do it effortlessly and with or without being noticed.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

LAA: Oh! To be candid, I cannot say precisely. As Yoruba would say "if a child has not been to another person's farm he will claim his father's farm is the biggest", if you haven't read from some writers you would think the ones you have read from are the best. My exposure to various literary societies has made me appreciate and admire writers generally. In short, if you are a committed writer, I admire you. It is not easy to pour your mind on a piece of paper, just for others to be entertained or learn.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

LAA: You mean what inspires me to write? I draw inspiration from happenings around me. Look at our country and the world at large, you will agree with me that we have a whole lot of inspirations on a daily basis except if we are too lazy to discover them. In short, society and events are my major inspirations.

WA: TELL US ABOUT A NORMAL WORKING DAY.

LAA: Every day is a working day for me, I write anywhere and anytime as long as I am inspired.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

LAA: I have three major gadgets; my phone, my exercise book and laptop so it all depends on where I am when I am inspired or when a notable event takes place but I never allow any thought or event pass me by without jotting it down.

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

LAA: Poem is the arrangement of the best words in the best order, so it is not something that one can just dabble into if he doesn't have the skill. A drop of water makes an ocean, so also is poem one have to start somehow and anyhow with time the person will graduate to a more professional level.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...

LAA: This is just like Yoruba's proverb that says "if you want to see the teeth of an elder, ask about her husband". This is a very tough and rough journey because the conventional publishers are not helping but thank God for internet, it is now easy and easier to publish through online websites like amazon, okadabooks etc

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

LAA: To be a good writer you must be a good reader. Read, read and read, reading is a good source of inspiration and make sure you write everyday even if it is just a stanza in the case of poem, a chapter in the case of prose and/or a scene or dialogue in the case of drama

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

LAA: Well, no one is an island of knowledge. It is best practice as far as I am concerned to have a third party read through your work before you think of publishing otherwise it may be full of errors or passive words. I noticed in my writing journey that if you write and you edit you are likely going to see little or no error unlike when you have a third party reading and editing it for you.

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

LAA: My advice is that they should not be in a hurry to publish and never allow money to drive their ambitions, otherwise if money did not come their pens will run dry. Another thing is when they are writing they should put their audience in mind, fine it is their work but anything that does not appeal to your audience is rubbish. They should make sure they carry their audience along.

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

LAA: Sincerely, I do not have a specific day that I write, I write virtually everyday as long as I am inspired. In fact I feel incomplete if I do not write.

WA:: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

LAA: I write anywhere even if it is to use my phone's note pad or other electronic devices.

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

LAA: I join writers' platforms. If you want to be widely read, join writers platform like ANA, SYNW, WGM etc also participate in anthologies

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

LAA: I don't really have favourite movie but I love Yoruba movies generally

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

LAA: As a writer, you are the mouthpiece of your society, speak well of them through your pen

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

LAA: Nothing per say, I am a very open person with little or no secret

WA: WHAT'S NEXT?

LAA: Hhhhhmmmmmm the next thing on my mind right now is my upcoming anthology; it is a global anthology that features people from twelve countries. I tag it War Against Fake News.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-lugman-adewale-alawode-reading-is-a-good-source-of-inspiration>

YOUNG POETS SHOULD EXPLORE THE INTERNET FOR GREATER OPPORTUNITIES - OLATUBOSUN DAVID



Olatubosun David is a Nigerian writer and poet. He is also a member of PEN, Nigeria Centre. In this brief interview with Wole Adedoyin, the Coordinator of SYNW in Achievers University, shared with him some facts surrounding his life and writing career.

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

OD: I didn't choose to be a poet. God made me one. It is important that you know that the gift of a man defines him, if he treasures and utilizes that gift.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

OD: I admire every poet that writes what appeals to my emotion. There are a good number of established poets I admire such as Dike Chukwumerije, Mbizo Chirasha (Zimbabwean poet), Folu Agoi (the President of PEN, Nigeria Centre), Tony Marinho (a columnist in The Nations Newspaper), Sola Owonibi (the author of Homeless not Hopeless), Sunday Afolayan (the author of Beyond the Silent Grave), Demola Jolayemi (the author of Ode to Winnie Africa: Reminiscent Sonnets). I also read and admire some other young African writers like myself.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

OD: What I see, what I feel, what I hear, the happenings around me - good or bad.

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

OD: As a staff of higher institution (Achievers University, Òwò), my normal working days are from Monday to Friday. And as a non-teaching staff, there is no academic freedom, so I work from 8am to 5pm everyday. I still, however, find time to do things I fancy.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

OD: Different people have their own different writing styles. Most of the time, I conceive ideas in the form of a whisper. At times, I feel a burden upon my heart that propels me to write. Some other times, a line (which sometimes may later disappear in the body of the work) may just come to me. I would grab and quickly pen it down. Then, I would continue to nurse it until it matures as I write.

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

OD: Nothing too special. Conceive an idea, nurture it and pen it.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...

OD: I just make sure I don't despise any idea muse gives me. I write and send to online magazines and websites and anthologies. So far I have a number of published works online and hard copies.

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

OD: They should continue to read, read, read and write, write, write.

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

OD: For now, I write and edit my poems myself and sometimes by my brother (Sunday Afolayan). Meanwhile, it's good for poems or other forms of writing to pass through the editorial table for healing purposes. That is, it allows elimination of hidden mistakes, thereby making a literary work better and more suitable to the reading public. However, such must be competent hands.

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

OD: Yes. The advice I have for them is that they should follow the rules they have known (or may not have known) already. To continue to read and continue to write. They should believe in God and the gift He endowed them. It's a perfect gift; even though no man is perfect. Yet persistence can make them better and better until they become the best of God (which is the best they can ever be). They should seek opportunities on the Internet. They shouldn't feel discouraged at rejection letters from editors. With time they can be the person of their dreams.

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

OD: Well, some people do have a particular day for writing but for me, I don't have a particular day of writing. I only write when the muse engages me.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

OD: I write from Ọ̀wọ̀, Ondo State, Nigeria.

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

OD: Like I said earlier, I submit my poems to online websites and also to local and international anthologies. I also post some of them on social media handles.

WA: WEBSITE(S)?

OD: No

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

OD: I like Yorùbá traditional movies and other ones that promote African culture and preserve our identity.

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

OD: No

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

OD: Let it remain personal, please.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-olatubosun-david-young-poets-should-explore-the-internet-for-greater-opportunities>

I LOVE AND CHERISH CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISMS MORE THAN COMMENDATIONS - IZUNNA OKAFOR



Izunna Okafor is the National Secretary of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW) and the initiator of Chinua Achebe Annual Literary Festival. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, the journalist, Igbo language activist, publicist, literary coach and organizer shared with us his literary life, activism and other facts surrounding his writing career.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

IZUNNA OKAFOR: I write because I'm called to write. The same way some are called for one thing or the other, others are also called to write. I'm into various forms of writing, cutting across creative writing, journalism, speech writing, academic writing, and others. Even when I don't want or feel like writing, I still see myself writing. And I won't feel relieved if I don't write, until I do so. Writing is a gift. Writing is my gift. These collectively preach that writing is my calling.

WA: WHICH NOVELISTS DO YOU ADMIRE?

IZUNNA OKAFOR: It depends on what 'admiring'/'admiration' means to you. To me, to admire basically means to like or regard someone or something with respect or warm approval, especially because of unique qualities they possess or exhibit. So, having said this, I admire every novelist. It is not easy to write. So, every writer, in general, deserves a measure of admiration. And I admire them all.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: My first book was published in 2012, during my final year in secondary school, at Community Secondary School Ebenator, Nnewi South L.G.A. of Anambra State. I had earlier been writing and dumping in my lockers, both in school and at home, without publishing any.

Aside that I was not privileged to have a mentor to guide me on how to go about publishing any

of the manuscripts; my family background made it somewhat financially uneasy to fund the publication, knowing fully well that self-publishing was the only option available to me. Be it as it may, being a rural secondary school student, I was updating my pocket then through some menial works I was doing after school hours, on weekends and during holidays, such as cutting riped palm fruits for people, tilling the lands (during family season), packing sands from gutters and in rivers, among other such works that trended in the village then. But I was committing a greater tranche of this to support my studies in funding my studies. To cut the long story short, a good friend of mine then and now, by name, Chidiebere Austin Ojiego, who was also a young writer and hustler like myself, independently published one of his own manuscripts to book when he was about wrapping up his secondary school studies. He was a-year ahead of me in school then. But that single act motivated me. I then started working harder and saving more, from which I eventually elicited some naira notes (barely a year later) and published my own book — Ikem's Adventure during my final year in the secondary school. The returns I earned from the sale of the book helped launched me into the university. And ever since then, I have continued to write and publish, both in hard and soft copies till today.

WA: HOW HAS HAVING A PUBLISHER HELPED YOU?

IZUNNA OKAFOR: Because I do self publishing, I do not necessarily have one publisher. However, being a young, I would say my publishers have commendably offered some advisory helps that have helped my writing career and publishing, in one way or the other.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: We have many writers and few readers today. And that is bad. I would advise an aspiring writer to read ardently and write ardently. Passion and creativity should drive his pen, interest and aspiration. He shouldn't write to be called a writer; rather, he should write because he is a writer.

Again, writers (especially burgeoning ones) should not always be in haste to publish their works, so as to minimize errors chance and mistakes of any kind associated with writing and publishing. They should always work, re-work, and re-re-work on their manuscripts, and ensure it passes through third party(ies)/ editor(s) before publishing it. And they should always be ready for and open to criticism.

Also, no writer should also write to win awards or recognitions. Passion should be the driving factor behind their writings. Awards, recognitions and other such incentives are good, (of course I have won some); and I would advise writers to submit their suitable works for any if opportunity calls. Of course, it is one of the ways a writer appraises the worth/quality, acceptability or impacts of his pencraft and literary products. They (awards and recognitions) are desiderata, but should be seen as appendages, incentives and appraisal factors, not as nitty-gritty of writing.

WA: WHAT ARE YOU READING RIGHT NOW?

IZUNNA OKAFOR: I am reading "The Forlorn Fate" by Prof. Ngozi Chuma-Udeh, and "Ako Na Uche" by Prof. Fidelis Onwudufor. One day off, one day on, for each.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: Chinua Achebe, Sefi Atta, Olaudah Equiano, Chimamanda Adichie, F.C. Ogbalu, F.O.F. Onwudufor, Pita Nwana, Marie Arana, Annie Dillard, Christopher Okigbo, Pita Ejiofor, Chuka Nnabuife, Chima Ugokwe, Godwin Udagbor, Ann Handley, and host of many others.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: Bible. Why? Because it is Bible. It is the most consummate book on earth. It is also the only book that contains and touches all aspects of literature, cutting across drama, prose and poetry, as well as literary techniques.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR 10 FAVOURITE BOOKS, AND WHY?

IZUNNA OKAFOR:

- * Bible, because it's Bible (as I said earlier).
- * My books —they are works of my own hands.
- * Omenuko (by Pita Nwana), because it brought Igbo Language into the world's map of literature, being the first novel to be published in Igbo Language. And I am an Igbo language activist and writer. So I'm always happy each time I read the novel.
- * The Writing Life (by Annie Dillard); Bird by Bird (by Anne Lamott), Everybody Writes (by Ann Handley); Your Right To Write (by Muhammed Abdullahi Tosin). These books made me a better writer than I used to be.
- * Mmanu E Ji Eri Okwu; Ako Na Uche (by F.O.F Onwudufor). I have read these two books over and over; and I will continue reading them as long as I remain an Igbo language writer and activist. The books (authored by a Reverend Father) continue to improve my masterful usage of Igbo proverbs in my Igbo writing and Igbo poetry performance.
- * Abụ Akwamozu (by Prof. Sam Uzochukwu) which I read back then in my secondary school was the first book that familiarized me with Igbo poetry and its writing.
- * The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (an autobiography of Olaudah Equiano) is one of the most interesting autobiographies I have ever read. It also made me 'witness' (in pages of book) what the slave trade was actually like. I also love "Think Big"; and "Gifted Hands" (both by Ben Carson).

WA: FAVORITE FILMS?

IZUNNA OKAFOR: I don't always have enough time to watching movies. But I love war films, documentaries and historical movies.

WA: FAVORITE MUSIC?

IZUNNA OKAFOR: I do not have any favourite music in particular. I like every good music with good message. But I have more preference for traditional music, hymns, praises and worship songs.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: Everything literature. Why? Different people have diverse interests when it comes to book, literature, and work of art in general. And, considering this, it would be witty to give everyone a sense of belonging whenever opportunity calls for that.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: My books are the favourite books I can give as gift. And I would accept any good book given to me as a gift.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: I commit a minimum of five to six hours to book/writing daily. *I am a novelist, poet, essayist, journalist, reader, editor, Igbo language activist, publicist, literary coach and organizer, translator, administrator, teacher, learner, keyboardist, and electrician. I am also the initiator of Chinua Achebe Literary Festival.

*I write fluently in Igbo and English languages, and have published enormously in both.

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

IZUNNA OKAFOR: I love and cherish constructive criticisms more than commendations, notwithstanding from whom they are coming. I like being in midst of writers and readers of any status, knowing fully well that iron sharpens iron, and that learning ends in grave. * I cannot go out without pen in my pocket, and paper in my wallet. It started since my secondary school days, to the credit of creative writing, and recently, of journalism. My inspiration comes unannounced. And if I do not pen it down, it may evanesce. Though, I recently learnt to use my phone's note and its recorder to chronicle the ideas and inspirations as they come (and these are swifter alternatives, and more secure too); I still find it very difficult to go out without pen and paper. What if my phone disappoints me? *Writing-and-journalism-related engagements obsess me from social media, and I currently have more than 6000 unread WhatsApp messages (though group messages inclusive), innumerable Facebook notifications, and a plethora of Facebook messages. Ruefully, some of my Facebook and WhatsApp friends misunderstand it to be pride, that I do not chat or reply their social media

messages promptly as they desire, even when my status shows 'online'. However, that is never true but a mere surmise and misinterpretation, as I see no single foredeal in pride. My parents taught me humility, and that has been an integral part of my success stories. So what do I gain from pride, when I don't even see myself as one who has achieved much? Everything here boils down to chance. When you have manuscripts to complete, bunch of the books to edit (especially for young writers, some of whom are usually overzealous), journalism works to do (which is a daily time-demanding routine) and other such engagements dunnig for attention; prioritizing social media chatting above them wouldn't be a wise or rational decision. It won't help your career and profession in any way. Unknowingly to many people, such a wrong prioritization could even land a writer in writer's block, if care is not taken.

I stopped giving regular and prompt attention to social media and social media chatting during my undergraduate days in the university, as I was so committed to my studies, doing tutorials on different courses for students (of my department and other departments), writing, and working as a journalist and a freelancer, in addition to other engagements and other things I was doing then—all as a student.

Be it as it may, having known that I am not always available for and prompt in social media chatting, I answer, and can call or speak with friends for a very long duration on phone call. I prefer calls and text messages to chatting, because the former are less time consuming. Again, some people like sending endless messages to retain you 'online' whenever you attempt to reply them promptly. You know there are many types of friends. So, that's another reason I prefer calls because, the more you are online replying messages as they come in, the more you keep receiving messages.

But one thing is that I always apologize for my delayed response whenever I respond to people's messages. And I try as much as possible to make friends understand the reason behind that, so they won't mistake it for pride or something else. My apologies and regular speaking on phone with them have also gone a long way in proving the genuineness of my reason to them, and made them believe it's all about chance. It has also made most of them to understand, believe, tolerate and love me the more.

*I like reading and writing, teaching and learning. I also like dancing, just that I don't know how to dance. Both boys and girls have taught me that; yet, no way. I still don't know how I'll go about this on my wedding day. But that's still somewhat far anyway.

*I love oja (wooden flute) so much, especially when I am performing poetry in Igbo language. Indeed, I love oja so much. I also like and play keyboard (organ).

*Similar, I do and enjoy Mbem —ima mbem, which is an Igbo poetry chant. It is a blend of poetic speech and song wrapped into one (delivered in Igbo language).

*Concerning my favourite ways to unwind, it depends on where I am at the time in question — village or city. When in village, I unwind by 'dismantling' a plateful of well-garnished abacha (African salad or tapioca) with dry fish, while also sipping from a calabash of fresh pamlwine to help its journey down the oesophagus.

In the city (where the availability and naturalness of the above food and drink are in doubt), I go for a chilled bottle of milky content, with anything crunchy or crispy.

*I react a lot to wrong English, and I am somewhat inquisitive —the two 'natural' traits that denied me (my dream) first class in the university. One of my lecturers scathingly hated me for these, termed it "ITK", (which I eventually understood to mean 'I Too Know'); and thus, began to 'throttle my results' because of those that.

It happened to the extent that my fellow students who I (as a tutor) was teaching the lecturer's courses and other courses that time started scoring better than I tutored them (with great margin) whenever results of the lecturer's courses came out. That was a cross I carried till I graduated, after a series of unfavourable reports to higher authorities. That was my most hideous experience in the university, but that is Nigerian university for you. Though my result was excellent and among the best when we graduated; I was not happy that I did not make first class. There was just a second hiatus between my result and first class.

However, knowing that I have what worth more than first class, and being optimistic and sure that my success is not dependent on certificate; I had to move on with life. And today, here am I.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-izunna-okafor-i-love-and-cherish-constructive-criticisms-more-than-commendations>

BEING A POET GIVES ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS HOW I FEEL ABOUT SOMETHING - ETUMNU EMEKA WILLIAMS



Etumnu Emeka Williams is a Poet and a Playwright; he hailed from Imo State, Nigeria and currently resides in Owerri. He is a graduate of Mass Communication. The poet's works have appeared in Upwrite Nigeria Magazine, Blood moon rising magazine. The poet's works have also appeared in Chinua Achebe Man of the People, Get Consent, End SAR Voices, Riposte of Lockdown Voices anthologies. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he takes him through his writing routine.

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

EEW: I'm a poet because I enjoy poems a lot and being a poet gives me the opportunity to express how I feel about something.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

EEW: There are several good poets I admire the list is endless but particularly I admire Kofi Awoonor, J.P Clark, Denis Brutus, John Milton, L.S Senghor, Wole Soyinka, Graciano Enwerem, Amirah Al Wassif, Ovurume Emmanuel, Bright Etumnu, Anoruo O. Immaculata etc.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

EEW: A lot of things inspire me as a poet but to be particular, nature, music, trends and situations either good or bad.

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

EEW: Apart from writing poems and plays I am an academic researcher. I do a lot of research work in order to find solutions to problems in our society. I'm a Real Estate Consultant too. If you need a house inbox me ASAP.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

EEW: I write through inspiration. As they come I try as much as possible to trap them even with my phone. Writing through inspiration makes my work flow effortlessly. Most times I write with my phone or laptop.

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

EEW: Every poem should have a message it is passing across. As a result of this I'm always critical in my thoughts before I put down any line. Secondly, I always ask myself will my readers enjoy it this way or that way and I tried to make my poems poetic by trying to infuse poetic devices to beautify it.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...

EEW: At first, I was greeted with rejections but then I was determined to get my works out there so that people can read and enjoy it. Luckily, acceptance started coming during the lockdown period. At first, my work was accepted in the anthology of COVID-19 by the Society of Young Nigerian Writers and that paved the way for me. After that, my work entitled "Island of skull" was published in Blood moon rising magazine a foreign magazine. My works appeared in the Chinua Achebe Anthology, Get Consent Anthology, End SARS anthology and one of my poems was published in Upwrite Nigeria magazine. Sincerely, I'm happy that my works are published.

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

EEW: They should never be deterred by rejection. They should keep trying until they have the breakthrough. More so, they should study other successful poets and carve their own niche.

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

EEW: I don't have any particular day for writing. I write as the inspiration comes. If I'm not able to write at length I will write the main idea somewhere or record it on my phone so that I don't forget it.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

EEW: I'm currently residing in Owerri Imo State, Nigeria.

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

EEW: For now I'm more focused on building a good profile as a writer or poet because in most cases your outstanding profile can sell you out. Also, I'm leveraging social media platforms to get across to my readers. In no distant time I will create a blog where my reader can have access to my work of art. However, currently I have some of my works on poemia, poemhunter, Allpoetry etc.

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

EEW: In 2020, my favorite movie is "Citations" a Nigerian movie but my lifetime favorite movie is "Merlin" I don't joke with that movie. If I may add another I will say "Spartacus"

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

EEW: All I have to say is that as a writer, be dynamic and stay focused. Try as much as possible to pay attention to your environment.

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

EEW: People think I'm that shy type but I'm not, just that I don't like talking too much. I like books and I don't joke with them. I can give you all my clothes but not one of my books. I'm "book stingy" lol!

WA: WHAT'S NEXT?

EEW: By the grace of God I'll be publishing one of my books this year.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-etumnu-emeka-williams-being-a-poet-gives-me-the-opportunity-to-express-how-i-feel-about-something>

POETRY IS A MEDIUM THAT WE CAN USE TO EXPRESS WHAT NOT MANY CAN DO - LIDIA POPA



Lidia Popa is a Romanian writer. She is a member of the Italian Federation of Writers (FUIS). Also an honorary member of the International Literary Society. She is currently the Vice President of Hispanomundial Union of Writers (Union Hispanomundial de Escritores) in Romania. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her writing experience as a writer.

WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND: WHAT YOU WROTE, WHAT YOU ARE CURRENTLY WRITING.

POPA: The literary debut was in 2014 in two anthologies with several poets. After that I continued my journey to make myself known, reaching to overcome the participation in more than 40 anthologies with different authors and different publishing houses in various countries. My first book "Different point (to be)" is the first poetic monograph published with Aletti Editore in 2016 in Italian. An existentialist research within myself, through which I presented my footprints in true emotions not reworked.

The second book of poetry "In the depth of my thoughts (Dacia)" published in bilingual Italian / Romanian edition in 2016 with Aletti Editore is a tribute that I owe to my family and to my country of origin Romania. I could name it the book of affections, as it was considered by the Italian critics.

The third poetic book "Sky amphora" bilingual Italian Romanian edition published with Edizioni Divinafollia in 2017 is an offering for poets and poetry, not a manifesto as one might believe but only a riot of emotions triggered by literature and art in general.

I have currently sent two manuscripts to two publishers of which I can only release the title: The fourth book "Syntagms with a desire for clover" which will be published only in Romanian, with the preface by the Romanian poet Gabriel Gherbaluta, at Editura Minela in Bucharest. The fifth book is a Romanian / Albanian poetic monograph with the preface and the translation by the Romanian poet of Albanian origins Baki Ymeri, Editura Amanda Edit SRL entitled "The soul of words".

In both volumes named above are poems written between 2011 when I resumed writing again and 2021.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A WRITTEN PIECE?

POPA: The emotion at first impact with the text makes me stop breathing and I try to reread it several times to understand the depth of the author.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND WHY?

POPA: My favorite writers are the classics of universal poetry, although I have never prepared their style. They help me reflect on life and bring references with wise reflections of their own in my poetics. Among contemporary writers I prefer poetry and critical essays, theater and novels. I love substantive novels of fiction, which leave me wanting to return and encourage the search for a reason, the motivation that led the author to write the text. Short stories are not one of my favorites. I don't have a preference for the literary genre and neither for the authors. I read, if any book is interesting from start to finish.

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

POPA: My advice that I give to anyone who thinks in the exaltation of already being a warned writer is to read a lot to find out about the genesis of poetry or other literary genres. Always learn from those who have much knowledge and experience in your field of writing.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

POPA: Any emotion that life, literature, art and music gives me, sends the impulse to the brain to start writing again. Usually just thoughts and development if it is an essay, or narrative. With poetry I am more spontaneous because if inspiration comes I cannot leave pen and paper until I have written the text. It rarely happens that I return to the same text to rework. This happens especially before a paper publication that is in a magazine, anthology or book, or if I am invited to a literary event.

WA: DO YOU HAVE A WRITING ROUTINE? A SPECIAL PLACE?

POPA: I don't have a routine. If I feel the need to write, I sit at the table with pen and paper, or at the computer and write. If I am traveling, sitting, I take advantage of my free time to let my imagination run free. Every day I have to write something to keep this pleasant habit going.

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

POPA: I resumed writing in 2011 after my daughters decided to think of their lives as normal after finishing their university studies. I am a migrant after the fall of the Berlin Wall. I settled in Italy in Rome. My daughters in their turn emigrated to Greece and England for work, where they got married and have children, my wonderful grandchildren whom I adore. Being almost always alone, I had more time to devote to my intellectual growth through reading books and participating in literary events, art exhibitions and cultural events, which motivated me to return to my habits of reflection, research and writing.

WA: WHAT WAS THE FIRST PIECE YOU EVER RELEASED?

POPA: I never published my first piece; it became a memory dear to me, because it was a poem dedicated to spring and snowdrops, flowers with very delicate white bells, which I love. This poem got lost with all my first school notebooks and I never found it again. I was only 7 years old.

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

POPA: themes in my writing have varied; they always depend on the emotions of my experience. I dealt with the social theme, love, nature, religions, against war, in defense of the weakest, of gender diversity or belonging, where I try not to miss wisdom and the philosophical messages. I consider that poetry is a medium that we can use to express what not many can do. It cannot be simply banal or vulgar or dedicated to vain glory. If we have the right intelligence skills, we need to work consciously while always maintaining our belief in peace, friendship and humanity.

WA: HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU STARTED SENDING YOUR WRITINGS TO THE WORLD?

POPA: Whenever my message arrives in a part of the world, I feel an enormous liberating joy of completeness. If, then, the work is appreciated, my work and time are certainly not wasted.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

POPA: Even if I repeat myself, I want to say that our life is so full of emotions that I cannot help but take inspiration to write.

Observation dictates the words to me, then it is they who melt in the ink, guided by my hand.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR EDITOR?

POPA: Publishers have always proposed to publish with them. I have never understood the right motivation yet. I like to think that it is the quality of my writings and messages that I try to convey to the world. If I have succeeded you can see from the sales of the books or from the reading request in libraries.

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

POPA: Compliments are always reverent from the audience attracted to my poetic art. Obviously the most difficult texts are not within the reach of any connoisseur, but then being a muse in the field of literature transmits to me, even if not expressed, the value of my work. That's why I prefer to read contemporaries too. I understand in this way how far I have penetrated.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE KNOW MORE ABOUT YOU?

POPA: Very easy. The internet has made various methods available from Facebook, Twitter and various sites on literary portals.

WA: TIPS, TRICKS, THINGS TO CONVEY TO DEDICATED WRITING?

POPA: What I suggest is not to offend or disrespect through writing. Be ironic or self-deprecating, yes, but with compliance. Very easy to offend, difficult to know if you have crossed the threshold, if you do not know your limit.

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

POPA: Publishing any banality on paper is the biggest mistake a writer makes, it escaped me too. Then the tendency to plagiarism that I find to be indicted. Nobody is allowed to plagiarize; it is an intellectual theft of the work of others.

WA: WHICH OF YOUR BOOKS WAS THE MOST FUN TO WRITE?

POPA: Funny no, challenging yes, the fourth "Syntagmas with a desire for clover" and I would say not worrying about the last "The soul of words", but probably always focusing on the latest books is a way to win your own challenge to evolve.

WA: CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK? HOW WAS THE TRIP?

POPA: I think I already spoke in the first question. The journey was long and for the first two books it still lasts because they are on sale in ebooks, the third is still on sale in paper form, but we must insist on the publisher to send it to the retailer.

WA: WHAT IS THE KEY THEME AND / OR MESSAGE OF THE LATEST BOOKS?

POPA: In the book "Syntagmi with desire for clover" the theme is desire, melancholy and the lack of affection, family, traditions, and roots. The emotion is more mature now, and more aware.

In the book "The soul of words" there is no key theme; everything aims to define me as a poet with its own imprint that is valid. I do not consider it, but those who have already read the manuscript.

WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

POPA: On line they can be found on:
<https://facebook.com/lidia.popa1>
<https://lidiapopablog.wordpress.com>
<https://lidodellanima.wordpress.com>

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-lidia-popa-poetry-is-a-medium-that-we-can-use-to-express-what-not-many-can-do>

**WRITERS ARE PEACEMAKERS ACROSS ALL CORNERS OF THE EARTH -
COLLIN STANLEY KARIMI**



Collin Stanley Karimi is a Kenyan writer and the author of “The African Powerhouse, a masterpiece. Karimi has written for Writers Space Africa (WSA). He also worked for the Kenyan branch of Writers Space Africa (WSA) as a reviewer and as an editor. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his masterpiece “The African Powerhouse” and his writing career.

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

CSK: I started writing in the year 2016. It was in this year that I dedicated time to crafting articles meant to inspire and educate readers from all over Africa and the rest of the world. I have written for Writers Space Africa (WSA) as a reviewer and as an editor at WSA Kenyan branch. Previously I worked at Bibsbebe Magazine, a local Kenyan Magazine as a Chief Editor. As of today being 3/11/2022, I have published an article collection dubbed; The African Powerhouse; An Article Blockbuster. It is a collection of sixty-one articles, which follow an authentic rhythm from the first to the last article. Currently, I am working on my second manuscript dubbed, “The Three-Second man.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

CSK: What is exciting about a piece of writing is the process involved in the creation of characters, their symphony in the book, and the twists and turns the characters experience as the writer weaves through the story.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS AND WHY?

CSK: Robert Kiyosaki is my favorite author because his book, "Rich Dad Poor Dad" became a massive influence to the menfolk across the globe, and to date, his book still inspires young and old fathers to be responsible on major aspects of family life, most importantly on matters bordering on finance.

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

CSK: Advice I would give a new writer is to dive deep into their creativity and intelligence and be extra careful on editing and proofreading.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

CSK: What inspires me to write is the completion of a good story and the impact a story could bring to generations year in year out.

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

CSK: Yes I do have a writing routine, I find writing to be magical as a writer, and it engages my whole self especially after I master a title then ponder on it before I recollect and write down my thoughts. A place that is special, I have not yet found one, let's say preferably the beach on a sunny day.

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

CSK: How I started writing is exceptional, in that I used to read in a *matatu* heading for Nairobi. It was during these frequent trips that I would write notes on my smartphone and it grew into a habit. Later, a friend from University gave me a writing job. It was since then that I am now an Independent Publisher.

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

CSK: The first piece I ever published was a paragraph titled, 'The City'. It was four lines long. The feeling afterwards was quite exceptional as I looked forward to writing the next titled 'That year 2016'.

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

CSK: In my latest release, "The African Powerhouse," there are themes in every article, most talk on the variance of the fixed and growth mindset. Since the book is perceived for assertiveness and self-reflection, it is an open library to every reader.

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

CSK: I had butterflies at first, especially after publishing, and it was quite a spectacle when I saw the first copy. I look forward to the opinion and perspective from all the readers across the world.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

CSK: I worked as an article writer for two years. The articles were from international news outlets. I got to learn on the workings of article crafting and after some prolonged period, I could see the differences in our country, and I thought it best to write articles and bring perspective into the various cultures and livelihoods of readers across various backgrounds.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

CSK: How I got my publisher is interesting. I had a digital print of the 61 articles on WordPress. On Facebook, there was a writer who usually publishes on Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP). She goes by the name Author Daisy Jane. I worked through their portfolio and published my title ‘The African Powerhouse.’”

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

CSK: Responses I get from my audience are quite exhibitory in the sense that they respond with utmost respect and wonder especially if they bought the book from me personally. The last copy I sold, the feedback I got was satisfactory in the manner that they could not believe I was the author of the text.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

CSK: People can find me on Amazon, Rakuten Kobo, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Overdrive (US).

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

CSK: Tips I would give to dedicated writers is to proof read & edit their manuscript to cater for their stipulated audiences. A trick I could pass on to them is to always carry a pen and a notebook. A thing I could pass to a dedicated writer is my latest release, ‘The African Powerhouse; An Article Blockbuster.

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

CSK: Mistakes new writers make is the hooliganism that tags a new writer. It is a mistake as other writers and readers have a keen interest in reading their published manuscripts, and it is a common knowledge that writers are peacemakers across all corners of the earth.

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

CSK: The African Powerhouse is my most precious book, as it came out as a miracle to my profession. The 61 articles bring inspiration and insight to any reader who turns pages. I could add that the book has a turn-page reflex. More so, at the last page, there is my first quote as a professional writer.

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

CSK: My first published book is a deep book. For instance, the article “ The Destructive Man Box, speaks on the tragedies of menfolk over the centuries where Tony Porter expounds on the rigidity of modern society and the effects on the box on the female gender with regards to the structuring of the society. The journey was six years long, with every article having a time difference of a week or less. I could affirm that the journey was quite revealing and at the near end of the book, there is an article specially written for my guidance titled, ‘A note to my old(er) self, which resembles like a map to my writing profession.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED “” CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK

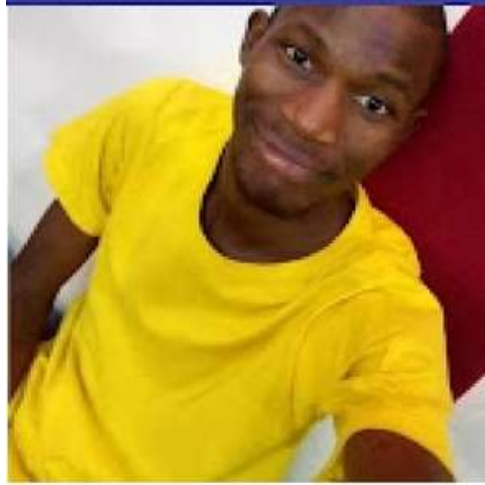
CSK: ‘The African Powerhouse,’ spreads the insight of the African reader with retrospect to ancient Africa. Despite the efforts of the white man to colonize and educate Africa, the rigidity of their system toned down the heritage of our people. I thought if we Africans and the rest of the continents, brainstormed, then we would have formidable solutions for the 21st Century, solutions that would deem necessary for the co-existence of the next Century considering the text found in the book. This is the primal reason I wrote the book in the first place. This was the original sketch of the article blockbuster.

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

CSK: The key theme in the book is in knowing the growth and fixed mindset that my readers get to experience on every page they turn. The message in the book revolves around change of livelihoods for better sustainability. In addition, it is a happy book meant to rejuvenate the ambiance.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-collin-stanley-karimi-writers-are-peacemakers-across-all-corners-of-the-earth>

**YOUNG WRITERS SHOULD BE PATIENT, NEVER BE IN A RUSH TO THE PRESS -
FLOURISH, JOSHUA MOLÒLÙWA**



WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

MFJ: I do not think I intentionally and consciously chose to be a Poet. Poetry chose me and I let it lead me thus far.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

MFJ : Wale Ayinla, Nome Emeka Patrick, Logan February, Pamilerin Jacob, Theresa Lola, Romeo Oriogun . . . to name a few.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

MFJ: Anything & everything.

WA: TELL US ABOUT A NORMAL WORKING DAY:

MFJ: From time to time, everyday, poetry tends to come in. Or let me rather say, poetry clings to my neck like a cape, so that I bare it like a yoke while doing my day-to-day activities.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

MFJ: Uniquely. Out of "the box". Poetically. In a way that if ART stopped by to read me, it'd appreciate me well.

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

MFJ: It could take me couple of days to brush up on a poem, because my thoughts are too wild. I use what are not related to what I want to portray, to talk about what I want to portray. Then I leave it for days to return to it with a fresh eye to spot errors or chaff.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED...

MFJ: Everyone wants to get published. I mean, it's a good thing. Once I'm sure I am done with a poem, I send it out for publication. If it is rejected, I know they simply don't like it, and I'd send it elsewhere. I don't go back and forth on works I'm done with.

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

MFJ: Never (ever) be in a hurry to getting published. Be patient with your art and in all you do, step out of the ordinary.

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

MFJ: In deed and in truth, write things that haven't been stressed out already. Just find a great and (lonely) path to tread. If you're good, others will follow you with time. Be patient with your art. A great poem is better than a good manuscript.

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

MFJ: A lot of thinking, talking to myself, strolling to and fro, looking weird and everything in-between.

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

MFJ: A very cold and serene estate in Ogun State.

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

MFJ: I do not think gaining readership is an automatic thing. I mean, it can't be purchased. A poem gains lot of readership by its madness and uniqueness. As for platforms, there are a lot of them.

WA: WEBSITE(S)?

MFJ: Not yet.

WA: Favorite movie?

MFJ: I barely see movies.

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

MFJ : In all you do, as a writer, step out of the ordinary.

WA: SOMETHING PERSONAL ABOUT YOU PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED TO KNOW? MFJ : I am the (only) Yorùbá man who doesn't eat "swallow" foods.

WA: WHAT'S NEXT? MFJ: Doing greater things, heading for spotlights and writing more.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-flourish-joshua-mollwa-young-writers-should-be-patient-never-be-in-a-rush-to-the-press>

I WRITE TO EXPOSE SOCIETAL ILLS AND VICES - AKINYEMI JELILI OYELERE



Akinyemi Jelili Oyelere is a final year (HND 2) student of the Department of Local Government and Development Studies of the Polytechnic Ibadan. Also a former Vice President of the National Association of Kajola Students (NAKS). Currently, Oyelere is the Public Relations Officer of the Institution's Students' Press Council. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him details about his writing career.

WA: WHY ARE YOU A POET?

AJO: I am a poet because I was inspired by one of my friends, Majaro Ayodele

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

AJO: Niyi Osundare, Wole Soyinka, Eriata Oribhabor etc

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

AJO: Nature, contemporary issues, loneliness, sadness and happiness.

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

AJO: About my normal working day. It starts from home to school, from class to Press Council, online activities and I attend to other issues that need my attention.

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

AJO: I write whenever I receive inspiration to write

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

AJO: There are different thoughts behind every poem. Major motive behind my poetic works is to expose societal ills, vices and for people to be aware of them in order to provide solutions to them. Also, I write to make people mad, sad and glad.

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED

AJO: The path was rough and the journey was tough. When I was about to publish my debut poetry book titled "Awakening Dreams", I searched for good publishers but their fees were too expensive for me before I later found Parousia Magazine that later published the book. Issue of funds was also one of the disturbing factors.

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

AJO: My advice for budding poets is that they should be persistent and consistent in writing. Rome wasn't built in a day. They should learn to earn themselves recognition and good appellation first. Their names will later sell their books in the future.

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

AJO: My manuscript actually got a good editor from my Publisher and was later proofread by Emmanuel Abiodun Dada.

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

AJO: Yes. Those that are not financially healthy should submit their works for the chapbook Series. But if they are financially buoyant, they should go to a publishing firm they trust their work can be handled well.

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

AJO: I don't have a particular day for writing, my pen dances when it hears the drum of muse and inspiration

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

AJO: I write from Ibadan, Oyo State, South West, Nigeria.

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

AJO: I always utilize WhatsApp groups to gain the attention of readers. The group is an International group. I also make use of Facebook to make noise about my work etc.

WA: WEBSITE(S)?

AJO: I don't have a particular website but you can Google my name to see more of my published works.

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

AJO: Married Again, an India movie

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

AJO: I wrote my WAEC and NECO exams seven times. I spent two years in SS1, two years in SS2 and three years in SS3

WA: WHAT'S NEXT

AJO: The publication of my second book titled "The Cave of A Thousand Demons" is the next project I am presently working on.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-akinyemi-jelili-oyelere-i-write-to-expose-societal-ills-and-vices>

CHILDREN SHOULD READ STORIES THAT THEY ENJOY AND LOVE - RACHEL YRAM



WA: TELL US ALL ABOUT YOUR WRITING BACKGROUND – WHAT YOU’VE WRITTEN, WHAT YOU’RECURRENTLY WRITING?

YRAM: I learnt to read before I turned 3 years so by six years I had read a lot of stories. Some I enjoyed, some were boring and others scary. So I thought children should read stories that they enjoy and love. I then started thinking about my own stories whilst on bed. Story after story came to mind day after day.

When I tried telling my friends in school, they would not listen but make noise so I started telling my dad my stories in the mornings whilst he was in bed. He found More Nice City interesting and it turned out to be my first book.

I am currently working on Princess City. Another nice story book.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING?

YRAM: When characters are made to do interesting things only in our mind, I get excited.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

YRAM: I don't have individual favourites but all who write interesting stories are my favourites.

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

YRAM: Just write what you find interesting.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

YRAM: Anytime I write I become happy because I know my book will not be boring or be scary to children.

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

YRAM: Normally, I write on Daddy's writing table early in the morning before school.

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

YRAM: I drew the characters in More Nice City, named them and gave the story my own title, More Nice City. My Daddy wanted me to change the title to "Nicer City" but I explained to him that I like "More NiceCity". Then I started writing down the full story after Daddy said it was a nice story I told him. That was in April 2021. I was then 6years old.

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

YRAM: "More Nice City"

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

RAM: I want children to be happy reading it.

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

YRAM: First my book was given to every child in my school so many started asking me how I was able to write a book even including those who didn't like me at first. It made me happy. Then I heard people talking about how nice the book was. That made me feel the world should know about my other stories.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

YRAM: When I think about writing a story while in bed, I wake up getting clear and interesting story which I write down.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

YRAM: My Dad published the book for me.

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

YRAM: Children from one school at Akuse in Ghana, after reading the book, said "We can't wait to read your next storybook". Many, like the Minister of Education in Ghana, congratulated me for the achievement and encouraged me to write more.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

YRAM: My website and at Vestel Publications Ltd offices and website.

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

YRAM: Writing comes naturally when we enjoy what we write.

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

YRAM: I am not sure about that.

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

YRAM: I have published only one book so far, "More Nice City" and I enjoyed working on it.

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

YRAM: I wrote the story and my Daddy published it. He then took me to many offices and they said nice things about the book. They also congratulated me. That was it.

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

YRAM: Be happy with what you have and forgive when you get offended.

WA: WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU ONLINE?

YRAM: My website-under construction, otherwise through Vestel Publications Ltd, Tema, Ghana

YRAM'S PROFILE

Rachel Yram is a Ghanaian youth author. She is the author of “More Nice City”. Yram has two more stories titled “Princess City” and “The Ugly Beauty” which are being worked on towards publication. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, she talks about her passion for writing. Yram is a seven-year old girl who learned to read at the age of 2 years. The friendly and hardworking girl makes good use of her reading ability by reading wide range of materials daily. Yram is born into a family of 4; two siblings and loving parents, who are both educationists. From age 3 years, she often gathered children her playmates, and sometimes adults, to tell them stories. There were almost some children always around enjoying her stories. By five years, she started telling stories in school which some of her friends enjoyed. She extended her storytelling to her parents who eventually found “More Nice City”, one of her stories they heard from her sometime in April 2021, very interesting. Upon encouragement from her Dad, she first illustrated the story and later wrote it under his guidance. It was published in September, 2021, making her, at age 6, the youngest author the world has seen.

She has two more stories titled “Princess City” and “The Ugly Beaut” which are being worked on towards publication.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-rachel-gram-children-should-read-stories-that-they-enjoy-and-love>

DON'T STOP BUILDING ON YOUR CRAFT - JOSHUA P. OLATUNDE



WA: WHY ARE YOU A WRITER?

JPO: *\$smiles* 'Why...?' What a question? I'm a writer so I could express myself (explore, act, play), simply put. In other way, I write to 'Say Something, each time I See(Sense) Something', humanely, responsibly, 'actively speaking', and play my part for the world to be a better place. Then I write to stamp my feet on the sand of people's hearts through time. Want to be a great personality, represent Ibadan, Nigeria, the Yoruba and Africa as whole, and be celebrated.

WA: WHAT POETS DO YOU ADMIRE?

JPO:I admire crazy, smooth super wordsmiths Fun ones like Okot P Bitek, Lola Shoneyin, deep dark lords like Christopher Okigbo, and of course greats like J.P. Clark, Whole Soyinka, and many more I can't exhaust here.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

JPO: Experiences generally [Sensed (Seen, heard, etc) in every sense or thought out].

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

JPO:*smiles* Lately, my normal working day is at the studio, writing lyrics, assisting recording acts, reasoning music ideas with producers and other music minds; or I find a very secluded spot to Think, ease off, then, Write, Write and Write whatever (songs, poems, other literary things, even non-literary stuffs like project-based write-ups, essays, etc.)

WA: HOW DO YOU WRITE?

JPO: I write anyhow possible, seriously. *smiles* I've been a very flexible person from way far back. Things pop up my cap like God-knows-what, wherever. [I take pen and paper to bathe, and I write in the toilet.]

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

JPO: There is really no specific or particular Thought Process. This still has to do with my spontaneous way of life. I cannot be found in a fixed box. You would rather find me dancing on it; or somewhere outside, working on it; if even found in it, probably purposely there to perform some 'out-of-the-box' wonder! [Feeling myself here, huh?? *Smiles*]

WA: DESCRIBE YOUR ROUTE TO BEING PUBLISHED

JPO: This might sound crazy to tons of people who have known me J.-middle name 'Poetry'-Olatunde with writing since early 2000s in Educate Trust at the Leventis Building, beside Coca-Cola, Oremeji-Mokola, Ibadan: I have not been majorly published. The reason is, shortly after Educate where I rocked-and-popped with many other young potentials in such a place filled with Ideas, Challenges and express Inspirations, I got cold in writing Poetry also for another reason I really cannot say.. Then, I caught the fancy of Hip-Hop/Rap music, after being influenced by my Educate pal, Babs (Babatunde Olowojaiye) and R&B with Gabby (Gabriel Afolayan). Since then, I've been more of Music than anything. Funny, people that professionally rock with me now hardly know I write 'straight Poetry'. Well, I still write o!--not just as before. But, I believe that Golden Times in Educare, where I had some of my works published on some anthologies and Poetry.com where 'Woman' topped to finals and won--is a phase I would fall back to. *smiles*

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

JPO: Be Charged!! Be FREE!; Be Super-Sensitive, proactive, then Be Flexible, adjustable to Trends, other Clime, Time; Be open to advise; Don't stop Building on the craft (Learning cannot end until the 'Ultimate End'); Fuel further your POETRY/Literary Fire!! Don't die while alive.

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

JPO: I really don't have any specific/special routine. I'm a pretty spontaneous person, freaky flexible; and as I earlier stated, these days, I do more of Tuned/Melody-laced Poetry (Lyrics) than the normal 'straight' Poetry-but still write POETRY o! *Smiles*

WA: WHERE DO YOU WRITE FROM?

JPO: As I earlier said, I can write just from anywhere, but I sometimes seek very secluded places to storm papers with my pen!!!

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

JPO: I'm planning to learn serious social media strategies, then SEO techniques to push wide across my pieces and promote my Songwriting, Content Creation and other writing services I passionately engage in.

WA: WEBSITE(S)?

JPO: Yet to set up one.

WA: FAVORITE MOVIE?

JPO: Foreign: 'Love Jones', 'Poetic Justice', 'Love & Basketball', 'Titanic', 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love?', 'Juice', 'Straight Outta Compton', and other awesome American Movies; Nigerian/African: Any Mainframe Pictures productions ('Oleku', 'Saworo Ide', Thunderbolt, 'To Oluwa No Ile', etc.), and other Poetry-enriched films.

WA: FAVOURITE WRITERS?

JPO: Okot P. Bitek, Wole Shoyinka, J.P. Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Lola Soneyin, Bayo Adebowale, Niyi Osundare, Eugene B. Redmon, Jeofrey Chausier with 'Canterbury Tales'.

WA: FAVOURITE BOOKS:

JPO: 'Songs of Lawino' by Okot P. Bitek, 'African Verses' anthology, 'So All The Time I Was Sitting On An Egg.', 'Songs of Solomon' and other poetic books in the bible among others.

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

JPO: Be ORIGINAL. Be REAL. Speak The TRUTH. Be Daring! Fearless! (and Fearful too! *Smiles*); Be The Voice of The Voiceless. Make an Impact! [All aside the energy put into owning amazing writing skills.] By these, I believe the Poet/Writer would stand out, so much loved and stand the test of time.

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

JPO: I have been a Content Cook (Ghost-writing on some platforms, then openly creating contents for others as have been recently done for the Charley Boy Foundation). As much as I write 'free-rolled' writing like formal non-literary stuffs like Proposals, then Essays, I have never attempted a Literary PROSE. I really don't know what has been keeping me from trying. *Smiles*

WA: WHAT'S NEXT?

JPO: I will be embarking on translating Banjo Akinlabi's super-epic Yoruba literature works, starting from this year, by God's Grace; then will hopefully, wake back up to Poetry and hopefully other genres. Also hope to take Song-Writing to the next level... *Smiles*

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

JPO: *Smiles* ~ Also speaking to myself, as one not as much published as should: ~ *Smiles* Keep being 'Hungry', 'Thirsty' of Ideas; Seek Knowledge on, as said earlier; Attend Literary

events to brush up and mix up/network with like-minds for development. Use the Internet widely and smartly to source for ideas, gather useful materials, link up with remote amazing literary people, then find publishing platforms and all. Above all, #BELIEVEinYOURSELF #YouCanAchieveAnything #RISEandSHINE #LiftUp #TakeOff #FlyHigh & #TouchTheStars

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-joshua-p-olatunde-dont-stop-building-on-your-craft>

**WRITING, READING AND STORYTELLING ARE VEHICLES THAT MOVE
CULTURE FORWARD - AKOBI JOSHUA BAMIGBADE**



Akobi Joshua Bamigbade is a published author and book promoter. He has worked as a teacher of English Language all through his career even when appointed as Principal until his retirement from government service in 2020 after the mandatory 35 years in service. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him brief details about his writing career.

WA: WHY DO YOU WRITE?

AJB: It's just an instinct.

WA: WHICH WRITER DO YOU ADMIRE?

AJB: Chinua Achebe

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

AJB: There are so many of them. Sir. Rider H. Haggard, Chinua Achebe , Sydney Sheldon, Ola Rotimi and so on.

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

AJB: Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. I was influenced by its straightforward narration and its use of proverbs.

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

AJB: The question could have been my favourite genre or authors. I love African writers whose sole aim is exposing the African experiences under colonialism or apartheid or the new experience under self rule. In a nutshell, I enjoy satire. Equally I enjoy thrillers, espionage and adventures. I love reading books from Achebe, Soyinka, Elechi Amadi, Sembene Ousmane,

Buchi Emecheta etc. For thrillers I enjoy books from Sydney Sheldon, Dennis Robin's etc.

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

AJB: Poetry and Prose. I love poetry because of its use of words. Prose because it keeps you company. You are never lonely with Prose in your hands.

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

AJB: I love reading novels and love seeing children writing. Most especially I love pleasant surprises in actual life and always want to bring this into my stories. In a nutshell I love intrigues. I always want the reader to get the message I am using the story to pass across. I love treating contemporary issues though a literary work lives on forever and would be relevant in any period or time.

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

AJB: For hobbies, I love reading and playing volleyball.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

AJB: My writing inspiration comes from what happens in society.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET TO BE WHERE YOU ARE IN YOUR LIFE TODAY?

AJB: I have a motto; Jah guides. God has been leading.

WA: ARE YOU A FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME WRITER? HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOUR WRITING?

AJB: A part time writer. You know I have been a civil servant all along.

WA: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE FUTURE OF READING/WRITING?

AJB: Quite foggy. The likes of Achebe, Ferdinand Oyono, Peter Abrahams are dwindling.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

AJB: Can t say

WA: WHAT KIND(S) OF WRITING DO YOU DO?

AJB: Short stories and poetry

WA: WHAT CULTURAL VALUE DO YOU SEE IN WRITING / READING / STORYTELLING /ETC.?

AJB: Writing, reading and storytelling are vehicles that move culture forward. Without them there would be nothing left of a particular society's culture. They are transmitters of culture.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-akobi-joshua-bamigbade-writing-reading-and-storytelling-are-vehicles-that-move-culture-forward>

WRITING IS A PROCESS; YOU GET BETTER WITH TIME AND LEARN FROM CRITICS - STEPHANIE MWUESE, ABUGHDYER



Stephanie Mwuese, Abughdyer is from Ushongo Local Government Area of Benue State. She is the author of “Sons of the Earth” and “Monster in my marrows”, Stephanie is also an administrator and an aspiring academic. She holds a B.Ed English honours, M.A International Realations and Strategic Studies all at the Benue State University, Makurdi and has currently rounded up her studies for a masters in English Education at the Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi. In this interview with WOLE Adedoyin, she talks about her writing experience.

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

SA: I started writing a novel after reading a lot of Hardley Chase and Mills and Boon. Then I wrote Plays, then delved into short stories again and tried my hands at poetry too. Currently I must confess, I’ve written more academic pieces like assignments and all maybe because of school.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

The interplay of use of language, imagery and suspense.

WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

SA: I love works of John Grisham, Stephen King, Silvia Plath, Francine Rivers, Chimamanda, Maya Angelou, Bridget Davoe, the list is endless. These writers know their crafts and I always look forward to reading them.

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

SA: Read more than you write for in reading you get to develop the craft.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

SA: Compelling experiences be it those I have, people around me or those I empathise with after reading theirs.

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

SA: I don't have a writing routine but I like writing in quiet places.

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

SA: I started writing in my secondary school days. I used to read a lot and decided I'll come up with a novel. I recently came across the manuscript but haven't read it yet. I started writing because I felt in my writings I could take charge of events and determine what happens to whom.

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

SA: My first published work was a collection of plays entitled "sons of the Earth". Sometimes I'm embarrassed by it but I think it shows how much I've grown as a writer.

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

SA: No. They have a plethora of themes.

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

SA: The first writing of mine that enjoyed a large audience was a poem entitled "When I die". It was published on quintessentialchristian.com. I was skeptical when I was told it was published because I didn't know how it would be received. It received accolades and I was surprised people liked it. I stopped after I got rejections from online magazines. I became confident again after I shared short stories with my friends and I asked if they really liked the stories as they and they said, I shouldn't be concerned much about how a work is received, if I have a story that I feel is good enough, I should share it regardless of what people feel.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

SA: From things I read online, experiences I have or those around me.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

SA: I went for a writing course he organised. I can't remember how I heard about it though. After one class, we got talking and he said he publishes so I sent him my manuscript and he said it was publish worthy and we went to work. Midway through I almost gave up because of the financial implications. It only went to press after my Dad stepped in.

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

SA: Most people like what I write and sometimes I wonder if the works are that good or they just patronise me. Sometimes I prefer I should get criticism instead, the constructive kind though.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

SA: I'm the quiet type, most of my life is not on social media. However, Facebook and WhatsApp get most of what I put out there.

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

SA: Ruminates about an idea for a while before you put it down. That way, you work out how it will flow. There are some works that won't wait, for those ones, get straight to work.

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

SA: They tend to think they've mastered the art and take criticisms as attacks. But writing is a process, you get better with time and learn from critics, especially constructive types.

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

SA: I think the work that is yet to be published. I had it rewritten about 5 times and I liked the newer versions compared to the older ones.

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

SA: I feel embarrassed by it sometimes. There are a lot of things I should have done better looking back. The journey wasn't smooth, I must say. Then I decided to launch it and didn't get what I put in to publish the book. I learnt a lesson there though; that is, there is a dichotomy between writing for money and for the love of it. I think I write to tell the way I view the world

not necessarily to make money. Don't get me wrong, if I get money it won't be a bad idea. I think I am still improving.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED “BITTER SWEET” CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK?

SA: It is an interplay between anger and its consequences and the psychological trauma of those at the receiving end

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

SA: Facing issues that arise during relationships and addressing them adequately

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-stephanie-mwuese-abughdyer-writing-is-a-process-you-get-better-with-time-and-learn-from-critics>

MY WRITING IS LARGELY AFRO-CENTRIC, I WRITE ABOUT THINGS THAT AFFECT US AS AFRICANS - CHIGOZIE ANULI MBADUGHA



Chigozie Anuli Mbadugha is a multiple award-winning author with a natural flair for the arts. She wrote her first unpublished novel at the age of six and has been writing poems, scripts, short stories, and songs since then, which were mainly for leisure. One of her poems, “The New Yam Festival,” won second prize in a nationwide poetry competition in 1983 and she was the recipient of the silver prize at the Kanagawa World Biennial Children’s art competition in Japan in 1987. Her debut publication **Beyond the Trial** was awarded the Samuel Ajayi Crowther prize in 2017. **Beyond the Trial** is a collection of three novellas with a unifying theme of female empowerment. The UN SDG 5 Book Pick **Rude Awakening** is one of the three novellas in **Beyond the Trial**. All three novellas have also been published as standalone books. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, Chigozie Anuli Mbadugha shares her writing experience and what her readers should be expecting from her.

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

CAM: I have always loved literature from childhood. When I read fiction books I escape from my current reality. When I write fiction, I create worlds in which I can control the outcome of events and circumstances; something that is impossible to do in real life. I wrote stories, poems, and plays as a teenager. Some of the plays were staged and won school inter-house competitions. I started publishing my work in 2015 with a collection of short stories titled 'Beyond the Trial.' Since then I have published the short stories separately as novellas and written three Colour-Illustrated children's books. I have several works that are unpublished and many that are still uncompleted.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING-

CAM: I am excited by the themes explored and the richness of the characters.

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

CAM: My favourite writers are many and cut across several genres. For the sake of brevity, I will mention only a few: The late Prof. Chinua Achebe - he wrote about Africa with a passion and fondness that is palpable. Prof Wole Soyinka - his works are intellectually stimulating. I love the way Chimamanda Adichie infuses the Igbo language into her novels. I enjoy reading Nnedi Okoroafor's books because I admire the genre she writes.

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

CAM: I would advise new writers to surround themselves with cheerleaders who will encourage them to keep writing when they feel like giving up.

WA: WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO WRITE?

CAM: Events happening around me.

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

CAM: My writing routine is to try and write early in the morning when the family is still asleep. I am not able to follow that routine every day but I try to when I can. I have no special writing space. I can write anywhere.

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

CAM: I started writing when I was six years old. I liked to create my own stories as a child after reading the books in the family library.

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

CAM: *Beyond The Trial* was the first work I published and incidentally, it went on to win the Samuel Ajayi Crowther Prize in 2017. That encouraged me to write more and provided some validation of my ability to write.

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

CAM: I can address any theme when I write but my writing is largely Afro-centric. I write about things that affect us as Africans.

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

CAM: Initially, I was afraid of being accepted. I wondered if people would like my writing enough to buy my books.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?

CAM: Life events.

WA: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR PUBLISHER?

CAM: I got a contract with a traditional publisher to publish children's books after my self-published book *Beyond The Trial*. It's a long, pain-staking process and while waiting I published several other books.

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

CAM: I have had largely encouraging and receptive responses from audiences and readers. This has encouraged me to keep writing.

WA: HOW CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

CAM: I am available on social media platforms under my self-publishing company imprint **CambaBooks** I can be found on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook as **CambaBooks** I can be reached via email at: author@cambabooks.com

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

CAM: Keep writing. Keep reading. Don't give up and don't hesitate to attend training courses online about writing. Join author groups that are supportive and can provide constructive feedback to you about your work.

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

CAM: They tend to want to do everything by themselves. I provide editorial services to authors but I have hired two editors to read one of my manuscripts before because there is nothing more helpful to a manuscript than fresh eyes reading it over with a view to making it better. Don't assume you don't need an editor even if you edit other people's books.

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

CAM: I enjoyed writing *A Visit to Grandma and Grandpa* because it was inspired by actual life events. It was lovely to infuse fiction with reality and include folk stories I enjoyed listening to in childhood.

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

CAM: The journey was difficult because it was my first and I was venturing into a field that was not as familiar as my professional life as an eye surgeon.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST PRINTED BOOK TITLED “RUDE AWAKENING” CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK:

CAM: *Rude Awakening* is one of the novellas in my debut publication *Beyond The Trial* It was published digitally but not printed. I am presently printing paperback copies of it because it was recently selected and recommended as a United Nations SDG Book for African Book clubs for exploring the theme of Gender Equality (SDG 5).

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

CAM: The key theme in the book is that Gender Equality should be promoted and inheritance laws should not foster gender discrimination in our culture.

Below is a short write-up about **Rude Awakening**:

Rude Awakening is a novella that explores gender discrimination and empowerment. It tells the story of a young Nigerian widow victimized by her in-laws when her husband dies without writing a will.

It was inspired by real-life stories of women I have interacted with and stories I have heard about what some widows go through.

The treatment meted out to these women varies in degree, but are generally worse when they either had no children or had only female children.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-chigozie-anuli-mbadughamy-writing-is-largely-afro-centric-i-write-about-things-that-affect-us-as-africans>

REGULAR NEWS REPORTS REVEAL SO MUCH THAT I HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO WRITE ABOUT - AFEEZ AYOMIDE OLAGUNJU



WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

AFEEZ: It all started when I was preparing for GRE exams in 2016. I went through a lot of reading comprehension, vocabulary and writing drills. This was the time I started building my writing skills and I wrote my first poem with the help of my brother who was studying English education at the time.

I started writing fully in 2017. I based my writing more on poetry and then article writing because of my background as a Computer Science Graduate. The skills I gained from writing drills and the vocabulary I had built became useful in my works. Even though I didn't eventually write the GRE exams, writing stayed with me.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

AFEEZ: Writing has always been part of me since my elementary school days. The first significant knowledge gained while growing up is that of writing basic things like alphabets and numbers. This skill grows to a level where one can use writing to effectively communicate as one learns and move through the stages of learning. Despite writing all my life, I however did not start writing poetry, which most of my works are based until 2016. So, I would say I have been writing since I was a kid. I wrote my first letter at age 9 to my uncle. However, I've been writing poetry for 6 years now.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

AFEEZ: I became a writer after my first poem in 2016. I wrote once in a while during this time. My writing intensified in the following year because I had more time to write. However, it wasn't until early 2018 when I joined Allpoetry.com, a writing community on the web that I started writing almost daily.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

AFEEZ: No. I stumbled upon writing. After I graduated with B.Sc in Computer Science, I wanted to further my education and go into academics. However, I couldn't do that. It was writing that helped me through the disappointment which almost led to depression.

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

AFEEZ: My advice to a new writer is to first pick a niche and genre which he or she can do well and start slowly. Furthermore, the new writer should be an enthusiastic learner. He/she must be an avid reader because you can't write what you don't know.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

AFEEZ: I let the block flow through me by giving myself a break. During this break, I make sure I recharge myself by learning, reading articles and books which would in turn increase my knowledge on the subject I intend to write about.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

AFEEZ: I have two unpublished poetry collections in my kitty. They are titled: Desert to Rainforest and Poetic Inventions. The first work is a collection of poems I have written based on nature, society and poems modelled on people I tagged the desert plant. People despite dearth in basic needs and despite huge challenges, are thriving and are surviving. The second is the collection of uniquely created and innovatively written poems. These poems are about human nature, society and culture. I should have edited these books but I faced challenges in publishing which I'm trying to solve by establishing a self publishing service that would enable authors like me publish books and get 100% royalty from my works.

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

AFEEZ: I was amazed by the amount of knowledge I gained while compiling my poetry books. I became the patient of my own drugs because I read much of my works this time and it greatly influenced my life and writing skills.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

AFEEZ: Kako Onikumo Ekun of Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irumole by D. O Fagunwa is still my favourite character. I enjoyed his adventure in the face of various adversaries in the mysterious forest.

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

AFEEZ: I have not written any character. I write poetry which means I don't have to create characters to convey my message through my works.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

AFEEZ: I get my inspiration from nature first of all. I love watching nature documentary which is where I get ideas about nature in my works. Also, I get my inspiration from happenings in the society. Regular news reports reveal so much that I have more than enough to write about.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

AFEEZ: Very soon, readers will be able to read my books online on Amazon KDP, Bambooks and Goodreads and so on. They will also be able to purchase my books on various online book stores like Amazon, Okada books, Jumia and so on.

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

AFEEZ: Readers can find out more about me and my books on my Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/afeez.olagunju.35> Or join "Poetry Planet" group on Facebook.

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

AFEEZ: No! But I intend to reproduce my books into audiobooks due to its budding popularity and the ease of production due to artificial intelligent text to speech one can make use of.

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

AFEEZ: Both of my books were enjoyable to write because of my passion for writing. However, my second book, Poetic Inventions enabled me to defy the status quo in my writing. It enabled me to raise the bar in terms of idea generation and in terms of expression. I enjoyed my time writing and compiling this book because I've always wanted to invent. Poetic Inventions allowed me to invent words, emotions and ideas through poetry.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

AFEEZ: None of my books have been published yet but I'm working on getting them published through a self publishing service named Cereus Publications in which I just launched. Self publishing requires putting in efforts and it requires a lot of work because the odds are stacked against a self publisher. However, if there is a company to help alleviate the stress by doing most of the jobs required for publishing that would be a life saver for the author.

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

AFEEZ: I must say it was an exciting, life changing journey. I metamorphosed from being a novice writer to a proficient one. I changed from not being able to express myself well, to a good communicator through writing. Finally, I evolved from having not much command of English vocabulary to a well equipped English writer.

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

AFEEZ: In my opinion, the most important elements of good writing are: the point of discussion or the central idea conveyed; the premise that support this idea; clarity in developing and in delivering this idea; the kind of language and the vocabulary used in expressing this idea and lastly, the mechanical aspects of writing such as spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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

AFEEZ: I enjoy reading nonfiction, self-help books so that I can apply the principles learnt to my life. Books like: The richest man in Babylon by George Clarson, Think and grow rich by Napoleon Hill, Rich Dad, Poor Dad by Robert Kiyosaki etc. have influenced my life positively over the years. So, my favourite author is Robert Kiyosaki for sharing valuable principles about wealth in his books.

WA: YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY HIM?

AFEEZ: Cash flow Quadrant. It's a book on how you can amass great wealth.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED “POETIC INVENTIONS”, CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK.

AFEEZ: The title of the book is Poetic Inventions. I have been working on it for a while now and I'm getting ready to publish it. The central idea of the book is to make poetry feel like the invention process. The creative process of imagining, clearly expressing and problem solving are what you would find in the book.

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

AFEEZ: All I can share about the book is that you would see poems written in a way you have never seen before. I made sure I incorporated innovation in creating the poems in the poetry book.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

AFEEZ: I'm always fascinated by the process of invention. There are many ideas I scribbled on my notebook to help solve some problems and change the production process in a number industry. I actually have blueprints of inventions which I've not been able to bring to reality. So I wanted to import this idea of inventing into poetry writing. Can't we use words to invent a new world in the minds of the reader in which their problems can be solved and dreams achieved? That was the question popped up my mind.

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

AFEEZ: The key message is showcasing how people use the power of creativity to defy their limitation and achieve their dreams.

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

AFEEZ: As there is no limit to creativity, there is no boundary to what we can achieve. We just have to involve the use of imagination to devise ways to achieve our goals.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

AFEEZ: Poetic Inventions shows the power of poetry as a form of creativity to evoke emotions, ideas and values. Poetry can be attributed to the creative process of inventing.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

AFEEZ: The richest man in Babylon by George Clarson gave me ancient wisdom about money which I'm applying for financial freedom.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

AFEEZ: Even though I enjoy reading from wide arrays of genres, I love reading self-help books of various kinds like financial, habit building, leadership etc.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

AFEEZ: No. I don't hate any genre in particular. If a book is interesting due to other people's review, I would read.

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

AFEEZ: I would love to meet Wole Soyinka. He is an inspiring figure in terms of literary studies in Nigeria.

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

AFEEZ: It would be a dream comes through to have so many books in hardcopy to be kept in a bookshelf. Right now, I have only a handful of hardcopy books. Most of my books are in electronic format. Thus, I'm still keeping books in a virtual library.

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

AFEEZ: As I mentioned earlier, I enjoy reading self-help book so that I can apply valuable principles to my life. Nevertheless out of the mentioned genres, I prefer novels because novels are long and if interesting can transport the mind into a new world and help build behavior by learning from the characters in such book for so long.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

AFEEZ: I would recommend a self-help book because that's what I enjoy reading. I would recommend "Atomic Habits" by James Clear. It is an interesting, life changing book on building good habits and discarding the bad ones.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

AFEEZ: It's been close to two years that I have visited the library. The name of the library is Herbert Macaulay library, Yaba and I read there in December 2019. The library is located near the area I was staying while in Lagos before I moved back to Osogbo.

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

AFEEZ: No! I have not and I don't think I will.

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

AFEEZ: I'm not a fan of comedy books but a particular book amused me because of the way other characters in the book underrated the lead character not knowing he is a secret millionaire and the son of a billionaire. It's a fantasy book and the title of the book is: My billionaire mom by Abraham Atubra (an online series).

Afeez Ayomide Olagunju is the founder of Cereus Publications. He is a poet, songwriter, innovator and entrepreneur. He is also a graduate of Computer Science from Osun State University. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him facts about his writing career.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-afeez-ayomide-olagunju-regular-news-reports-reveal-so-much-that-i-have-more-than-enough-to-write-about>

WRITE NOT BECAUSE OF MONEY OR AWARD BUT BECAUSE OF PASSION, LET YOUR WORKS AFFECT THE SOCIETY POSITIVELY - BUSAYO FAKUNLE



WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

FAKUNLE: My unending love for children and the desire to cause a change from this unpleasant state of the society to a better one actually are the two main reasons why I started writing. I feel responsible for every child. As an adult, I constantly believe I have a responsibility to every child and that's to put their feet on the right path with a quest to cause a drastic change in the society.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

FAKUNLE: I started writing while in UNAD (where I obtained my first degree) after taking a creative writing course taught by Dr Adeseke. That should be over twelve years ago. But then, I became a published author in 2013, with the book, 'The Faces of Life'. 'The Faces of Life' eventually made the list of literary texts recommended for public schools by Oyo State Ministry of Education in 2014. That achievement encouraged me to write the more.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

FAKUNLE: Yes. And I give the credit to my late father. He allowed me to choose the department of my choice (Arts) while in secondary school. There, I read works from Camara Laye, Richard Wright, Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, JP Clark, Elechi Amadi, Ola Rotimi and to fully make me fall in love with writing was when I encountered our own WS in 'The Lion and the Jewel'.

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

FAKUNLE: Be real. Read deeply. Write not because of money or award but because of passion. Let your works affect the society positively. Write so humanity can feel your absence when you leave here.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

FAKUNLE: Writer's block is caused by many factors. For me, there are so many things that distract me when writing; books to read, works to edit, classes to teach, family needs etc. But then whenever any of these happen, I take time to attend to them and also sometimes go for walks, listening to my favourite artistes, in fact I do house chores to stop thinking about writing, for a while.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

FAKUNLE: Just last month, the list clocks ten.

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

FAKUNLE: That the first thing is to start. Once I start, I may not be able to predict the end. Also, I see a part of me in most characters.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

FAKUNLE: While I love how I have developed all characters, my favourite character is in my first book, 'The Faces of Life'. His name is Toro. I see myself the more in this character each time I read it. He's blunt with truth. He's honest and sincerely loves everyone. He values his culture. Hear what he says; 'Foreign culture has sent ours to its grave. It has killed the richness in our culture. It has made us a nonentity.'

Wait for it, I'm not saying civilisation is bad but can't we also see into modernizing things that are ours too? Can't we find ways to make what's ours more appealing? Kudos to Prof. Okonjo Iweala who just showed some people that our Ankara isn't bad to resume in an international office.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

FAKUNLE: Nature inspires me. So also my daily encounter and experiences especially with children. Yes, reading inspires me.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

FAKUNLE: My books are in some selected bookshops. You can also easily access them from my publisher, Pethant publishers, 47 Bashorun Road, 2nd Floor, Titlas Building, Opposite BCOS Bashorun, Ibadan, Oyo State. I can also be reached on 08164776627.

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

FAKUNLE: <https://www.facebook.com/Possibilitybooks/>

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

FAKUNLE: No

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

FAKUNLE: I enjoyed writing all of them.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

FAKUNLE: 'The Faces of Life' captures different stinking phases of the society through the story of a particular family that has been grounded on poverty. Wole, the breadwinner couldn't survive the hostile condition, leaving Toro in such a corrupt society caused by bad governance, poor system and betrayals in turns.' Here is also what a renowned journalist has to say about 'The Faces of Life's : At a critical time in Nigeria when writers need to be the voice of reason in the society, Busayo Fakunle's 'The Faces of Life' presents everyday existence and reality of Nigerians as a perfect social commentary. It is certainly beautiful to note that a young writer such as he has recognised the need to make every work of art a voice that seeks to highlight and improve everything that is wrong in the society.- 'Kunle Falayi, Journalist

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

FAKUNLE: It's been fun and I feel fulfilled seeing the reactions of people towards my works. And it will be appropriate now to say that I don't write to compete with others or for awards cum prizes, I just want a better humanity as I focus on the concept of family. Reason being that families have become bad streams that flow into a polluted river.

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

FAKUNLE: I think content; the message in a piece of writing is the most important element. Messages or lessons should be coherent enough for readers. And this can only be achieved once the writer has a targeted audience.

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

FAKUNLE: Wow. Favourite author? Of course our own WS. Wole Soyinka. This love is further cemented when my role model, Prof Remi Raji-Oyelade was the University of Ibadan's orator in oration for Wole Soyinka, in 2015 I think. I mean the 'Enu dun ju'yo'.

WA: ON YOUR LATEST BOOK TITLED "TOMI'S TRIALS", CAN YOU SHARE WITH US SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOOK.

FAKUNLE: 'TOMI'S TRIALS' presents an image of the road to success. It teaches that diligence, perseverance, persistence and prayer are ingredients to becoming victorious.'

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

FAKUNLE: So many of them.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

FAKUNLE: All

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

FAKUNLE: No

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

FAKUNLE: Wole Soyinka. I want to meet him a thousand times.

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

FAKUNLE: I display. I sell them out offline. In fact, for each of the published books, I've sold a considerable number.

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

FAKUNLE: I'm actually in love with all. But then I write more of short stories and Novellas.

Busayo Fakunle is a Phonics consultant, poet, publisher, seasoned English language tutor, an editor, author of children's literary texts and the CEO, Hope Alive Educational Consultancy. Some of his creative works have appeared in both national and international anthologies cum

journals of high reputation. Busayo Fakunle is the winner of The Poetry Court contest to celebrate Prof. Wole Soyinka's 81st birthday. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him details about his writing and his latest book, "Tomi's Trials".

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-busayo-fakunle-write-not-because-of-money-or-award-but-because-of-passion-let-your-works-affect-the-society-positively>

**WRITING SHOULD NOT BE A SHORTCUT TO WEALTH, IT MUSTN'T BE
COMMERCIALIZED. IT MUST BE USED TO DRIVE THE COLLECTIVE GOOD -
TUNDE AKINGBODERE**



Tunde Akingbode is a prolific author of so many books, a vibrant public speaker, poet and Columnist. He is the author of the best-selling "Okonkwo, the poor Orphan". The prose, Okonkwo, The Poor Orphan had been adopted as an approved literary text since 2018 by the Ondo State Ministry of Education, for junior secondary school one. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing career.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

TA: I write because I have the conviction to affect my society positively. A lot of values have changed in the system; we must learn to operate via the instrumentality of writing as we correct so many things.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

TA: I have been in active writing for six solid years.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

TA: I discovered my passion for writing while I was in secondary school. That was during the year 2014. The school really contributed to the development of my artistic dream.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

TA: Sure! I was a fan of books. That inspired my interest in writing. I could not just afford to digest without birthing my own idea. I continue to improve on my craft each day.

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

TA: Writing is what every living being should do. Nobody has been able to fathom the number of untold stories. Appalling too is the fact that these stories could have made bestsellers. Emerging writers must learn how to be tenacious, forthright and painstaking. Writing might not be a shortcut to wealth, it mustn't be commercialized. It must be used to drive the collective good.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

TA: Writer's block is to be handled with seriousness. It is an avenue for the sharpening of one's ideas and innovations.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

TA: I have written so many books. But I only have 3 published books at the moment.

WA: WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING YOU DISCOVERED WHILE WRITING YOUR BOOKS?

TA: Writing apart from being one of the greatest callings, has taught the susceptibility of an average human to mistakes. Nobody is perfect when it comes to writing. One learns while writing too.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

TA: Okonkwo of Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart".

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

TA: Okonkwo, the comedic hero of my first book.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

TA: I am inspired by situations of people, events and happenings around. I was inspired to write about student unionism on witnessing the state of the leadership in our universities.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS

TA: I have my books on AMAZON, Boldscholar and some others.

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

TA: A type of my name on Google would release most information about my books and Articles.

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

TA: None!

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

TA: I have not done any. I might not be in the best position to talk about that.

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

TA: Okonkwo, The Poor Orphan.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST BOOK

TA: I titled my first book Okonkwo, The Poor Orphan". It was published in the Great Britain. It has to do with a very young boy, who seem to be very far from most opportunities. He was forced to go through the rigours of life as an orphan but later became successful. A story of determination, didactic too!

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

TA: Not too easy but we scaled through.

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

TA: A good writing must be able to clarify itself, it must be simple and loaded with ideas that can champion improvement and developmental initiatives.

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

TA: Professor Wole Soyinka

WA: YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK BY HIM?

TA: The Trials of Brother Jero.

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

TA: My latest book tallies salient issues as to student unionism. I titled it "A History of Student Unionism in Nigerian Universities". The book is an authoritative document on the resonance of student unionism in Nigerian varsities.

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

TA: The secrets are still sacred. It will be laid bare soon.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

TA: The inspiration behind the book is the level at which students' union leadership had descended in Nigerian Universities.

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

TA: Student Unionism and its Paradigm Shift in Nigerian Universities.

WA: WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR READER TAKES AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

TA: I like to imbue my readers with the inspiration to fire into the actualization of some ideals, capable of redefining leadership at the level of the student union.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

TA: The title inspires leadership in Nigerian Universities.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

TA: Sure! Leadership Jigsaw by Yemi Akinsiwaju did a lot to bring some changes to my leadership career. I did love it.

WA: WHAT GENRE DO YOU LOVE?

TA: I think I am in love with prose works, lately poetry. Prose works are meant to unleash your ability to tell stories. They continue to expose the metaphysical realities.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRE YOU DISLIKE?

TA: NONE!

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

TA: Professor Wole Soyinka! He is an hero I met a long time ago. I long to meet him again.

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

TA: I like to see my books on bookshelf. That's the only way to immortalize those who have taken their time to birth a book. Online distribution of books has contributed in no small measure to piracy of intellectual properties.

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

TA: I prefer novels. The bible, including so many big books like autobiographies (exploring into life and times) are prose works. I am in love with them.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

TA: Watch The Watcher by Yinka Odumakin.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY

TA: I visit the library every week. Sometimes for research or genuine break into the world of some literary giants. Lawyers and students studying studying the course are advised to always use the library.

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

TA: Sure; I have always seen the picture of a mermaid while reading about Cleopatra of Greek mythology. I also have this enduring passion for young Nwoye of Bayo Adebowale's "Lonely Days".

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

TA: Sure! So many of them. I remember laughing so loud on reading Wole Soyinka's "Trials of Brother Jero". I wonder how sporadic his metamorphosis was.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-tunde-akingbodere-writing-should-not-be-a-shortcut-to-wealth-it-mustnt-be-commercialized-it-must-be-used-to-drive-the-collective-good>

**READING OTHER WRITERS ENABLES ME TO LEARN FROM THE STRENGTH
OR FLAWS IN THEIR WORKS - GABRIEL SUNDAY AFOLAYAN**



Gabriel Sunday Afolayan is the author of *Beyond the Silent Grave*, *Romoke: the Little Orphan*, *Pa Jeje's Legendary Tales* and other titles. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Nigeria. He possesses a Master of Science (MSc) degree in Mass Communication and currently on his PhD at University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Gabriel Sunday Afolayan is no doubt, one of a few crops of committed writers in the 21st century Africa. A former News Correspondent and Staff Writer with National Concord (defunct) and The Guardian newspapers respectively. Afolayan is a member of the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Africa Journalism and Communication League (AJCL) and Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). His works are widely used as literature reference texts in many universities in Nigeria and abroad. In this comprehensive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing vocation.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

GSA: Firstly, it was youthful exuberance - that childhood wishful thinking to be a writer. That was in my primary school days when I used to write down some of the stories, mostly fables that my father used to tell us inside unused note books in such a childish way. Then later, writers like James Hardly Chase, D. O. Fagunwa, Robert Ludlum, William Goldie and many of the Pacesetter's series authors, to mention a few, inspired me a lot, particularly James Hardly Chase, because of his fast moving detective stories, suspense and adventurism.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

GSA: I started amateurishly in primary school but my active writing career started when I was an undergraduate, about three decades ago. Then I used to write short stories for a soft sell magazine in Lagos for stipend.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

GSA: Long ago.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

GSA: Yes. I had always wanted to be like the authors of those wonderful stories we used to read in primary school books in those days; books like "New Oxford English Course" (NOEC), "Alawiye" and so on.

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

GSA: To me, no writer is actually born. Great writers are made. No matter your level of intellectual endowment, if you don't put it to use, it will remain dormant. The Chinese say "the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step". A starter should take a bold step to start out. He should not resent his humble beginning. Constant writing improves one's capability. He should be determined and focused. Just start writing and continue to write. However long the journey may be, a determined stammerer will pronounce his father's name. In addition, reading is very important. All great writers are avid readers. When you read constantly, you also learn constantly.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

GSA: I relax and reflect on how to break out of the conundrum. When satisfied, I refuel and fire on. Sometimes I may restructure or overhaul my plot formation.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

GSA: My first major and successful title - "Beyond the Silent Grave" - a 251-page novel - was published by Spectrum Books, Ibadan, Nigeria in 2001. After that, I have written many others, out of which six have been published by other publishing companies.

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

GSA: The most surprising thing is sometimes ending my storyline differently from how I earlier conceived it.

WA: DO YOU HAVE FAVOURITE CHARACTER(S) THAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN?

IF SO, WHO? AND WHAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL.

GSA: Yes. My favourite characters in my works are (1) Pa Jeje - the narrator in my short story collection - "Pa Jeje's Legendary Tales" for his role in inculcating morals in his audiences - little children; and (2) Dr David Okoye, in "Nemesis" - for not taking vengeance on his oppressors when the tide changed.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

GSA: From God and the society. First, God is the source of all good things. Second, literature is a reflection of life experiences.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

GSA: Bookshops and online sources.

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

GSA: Google search, my publishers and my institution - Rufus Giwa Polytechnic (formerly Ondo State Polytechnic), Owo, Nigeria.

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

GSA: No. But many of my poems have been recited in book reading sessions. Apart, one of my works "Nemesis" has been adapted into a home video.

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

GSA: Getting someone who can read so fluently to sustain readers' attention and getting commensurate returns for your investment because of its novelty in this part of the world are some of the challenges.

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

GSA: Let me answer by saying the easiest of my books to write is "The Recalcitrant King" because the story was handed over to me by my late father. I did not need to rack my brain to start thinking of conjectures or permutations. All I needed was to do a little modification on it to make it more appealing to modern readers.

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

The title of my first published work is "Beyond the Silent Grave". I started writing it as an undergraduate. It went through series of restructuring and modifications thereafter, especially when I started reporting for the defunct National Concord and later The Guardian newspapers. As a news reporter, I had the opportunity to really work on the manuscript due to my improved competencies. It would have been published by Longman in Lagos where I was asked to abridge it due to its volume to be accommodated in the "Drum Beat Series" but when Spectrum Books, Ibadan accepted to publish it without abridgement, I willingly let go. Unfortunately, it was four years after its acceptance that the book was finally published in 2001. In 2003, it was nominated for ANA/Cadbury Prose Prize; while in 2004 it was also nominated for the first edition of the NLNG administered Nigeria Prize for Literature. Apart from being used as a literature reference text in some universities in Nigeria and beyond, it has been reviewed in many literary journals across the globe. Most notable among these were published in University of Texas, Austin, US, University of Oklahoma and "World Literature Today" - the highest global journal featuring outstanding works in literature. In 2013/2014, it was among the few story books that won the FGN/UBEC Intervention Grant of the Federal Ministry of Education. By implication, the book is in all public libraries and schools across the nation. Among other dividends, I earn annual royalties on the book and it has been doing well in the market place.

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE?

GSA: Smooth and rough. Smooth because writing places one above his contemporaries, in most instances. It earns someone high regard everywhere one goes. Many people follow me on the social media, for instance, because of my writing antecedents. So being a writer is actually status conferral. It also builds confidence in you to make commentary on the society through the expression of your thoughts in the various themes raised in your book. Rough because books do not bring much returns to writers these days like in those days. This is partly due to the abysmal manner in which reading culture is getting eroded among the youths. Another issue is getting a reputable publisher to take on your work, especially on "regular publication."

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

GSA: Simplicity. I tell my students that "the best writer in the world is someone, who writes in the simplest form of a language that everyone can understand". Simplicity brings clarity and other features of good story telling. So don't write to impress. Avoid high sounding grammatical compositions. Write to communicate. Be yourself. Don't force to imitate other's style. Simplicity enables you to communicate effectively. In addition, reading other writers enables you to learn from the strength or flaws in their works.

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

GSA: Hard to choose. Different writers impress me in different ways. For instance, I love Wole Soyinka because of his rare ability to drive home his message using few characters. Interestingly, you see these characters exhibiting different shades of human behaviours or attitudes. I also love

Chinua Achebe because of his down to earth narration and his ability to employ many characters and ascribe roles to all of them without complicating his plot structure. However, as a youth, I was really fascinated by writers like James Hardly Chase, Nick Carter, Robert Ludlum and the rest because of their fast paced and suspense laden detective stories.

WA: YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY HIM?

GSA: "The man died" by Woke Soyinka and "Things fall apart" by Chinua Achebe.

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

GSA: My latest book is "Pa Jeje's Legendary Tales" It is a collection of three short stories, entitled "Taiwo and his naughty friends", "The three greedy rascals" and "The foolish beggar and the rich man". They were purposely composed for senior primary school pupils. The major preoccupation of the work is didactic, that is, to teach moral uprightness in the younger generation. The book is currently a hot cake among schools in Ondo and Ekiti States.

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

GSA: Morals. Etiquette.

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

GSA: To build a total person in our children. To give them sound knowledge about life from the angle of literature and build their character fitness.

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

GSA: The themes include "consequence of disobedience and evil doing, reward for hard work and piety, building confidence in God, the evils of greed, helping the needy and less privileged", among others.

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

GSA: Good storyline, morals.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

GSA: The title evokes the age long African tradition of the "story by the moonlight" of yesteryears where children gather from the neighborhood to listen to fables and stories of legends narrated by aged man/woman, usually at the village square or house frontage.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

GSA: Yes. Books like "The Conquest of Happiness" by Bertrand Russell, "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hills, The "Richest Man in Babylon" by John Carson, Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People", and so on.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

GSA: I love all genres but I am more at home with prose, poetry and essays.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

GSA: I am a general reader but more comfortable writing prose and poetry.

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

GSA: Woke Soyinka, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Salmon Rushdie.

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

GSA: Both.

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

GSA: It is the writing prowess of the individual writer that determines readers' preference. I read all manners of good or well written narratives but my preference is dictated by the way the writer expressed his thought.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

GSA: "Beyond the silent grave" and "The recalcitrant king" by Sunday Afolayan.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

GSA: As an academic, I visit my school library regularly, to read or write but the last time was about a month ago, to borrow a textbook on Advertising.

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

GSA: Yes. It was Abel Whittle and Farfrae in "Mayor of Casterbridge" by Thomas Hardy. These characters later became the albatross that signalled the down fall of Michael Henchard - the protagonist in the book.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER MADE YOU LAUGH.

GSA: Of course, books like "The Lonely Londoners" by Samuel Selvon, "So Long a Letter" by Mariam Ma Ba, etc.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-gabriel-sunday-afolayan-reading-other-writers-enables-me-to-learn-from-the-strength-or-flaws-in-their-works>

**GOOD WRITING SHOULD HAVE FOCUS, RELATABLE, CLEAR, POIGNANT AND
MUST HAVE A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WRITER AND THE
READER - OLADEJO HANEEF**



Oladejo Haneef O, also known as Harnyfman Asishana is a graduate of English language and Education at Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti. He is a teacher, poet, writer, and motivator. He loves writing poems with every surrounding theme because his inspiration is driven by the happenings around him. He is friendly and straightforward; he is simple, and simplicity is beheld in most of his works that have found their ways to anthologies, magazines, and journals. He was one of the shortlisted Top 100 Student Poets in Nigeria by the PIN NSPP (Nigerian Students Poetry Prize) Award in 2017. In this comprehensive interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing vocation.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

HANEEF: This is indeed a memory I would always want to remember. It all started a very long time ago when I used to be an ardent radio listener. Then I would listen to all sorts of motivational talks. I as well would read religious books and articles on every topic that came my way. That inspired me to give my thought and display it to people. Apart from articles, I started creatively with three poems while I was in secondary school.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

HANEEF: It's been a long time. A very long time ago.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

HANEEF: I started writing while in Junior Secondary School. I was in class 2. That's... yes, that would be 2006/07. That would be the first time I remember putting something together

creatively. I was pondering over a motivational talk I had listened to that morning and, boom... I wrote three poems. Though, only God knows where they are now. I could faintly remember the contents of each poem.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

HANEEF: Ordinarily, no! Creatively, yes! I have had encounters with creative individuals, some of which are on television shows and movies. I would put myself in their positions and believe I could do what they are doing. You know, in a movie, we've got different actors taking exceptional roles, they are always my model. Imagine seeing a kid in a movie doing perfectly with his dialogue... same goes with any orator that orates beautifully. All these aroused my interest in becoming like them. I had no clues to 'how', then.

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

HANEEF: We've all got potentials! There's a 'spark' in every individual. You shouldn't wait for an angel to tap at your shoulder before you begin to get yourself into action... I am worried you will live without doing anything. A new writer needs to know his capabilities and tries to go by them. He needs to know his space and earn it without any reservation. There is no crime in trying new things, but it shouldn't be to your detriment. A new writer should try to establish himself with the people around him and know what they've known him for, and then he builds on it. It's essential to know who your audience is and the type of work they look up to from you. Though I will strongly advise him to let not the world craft him, he should craft the world in his way. There is no limit to what he can do.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

HANEEF: Every writer must have experienced this a lot of time. I am the type who harnesses many things together, and sometimes I could be too empty to put something down. And sometimes, there would be a lot of ideas about something going through me but how to put them down is a significant issue. Most of the time I go through this; I don't bother myself too much. At that moment, I would write about the situation, how it is, now I'm unable to put my thoughts to fill a blank page... doing that for a while would help me get there - putting down some of the ideas I have had initially. Apart from that, I sometimes read, and it's helped a lot.

WA: HOW MANY BOOKS HAVE YOU WRITTEN?

HANEEF: I have collections of poems, unpublished.

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

HANEEF: That's hard to say, lol. I do more poetry than any other genre. While collating some of my poems that have their themes streamlined, I had many memories relishing. I knew I have only written my feelings, and I did that so well, but the thought of getting it across to individuals strikes me. I was having it mind if my thoughts are going to be synced with theirs. Despite that fact, I was never going to let it douse the enthusiasm. I collected some of my poems, and the number amazed me.

WA: WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER?

HANEEF: For some dramatic poems I have, I would say 'Akanmu,' lol. Akanmu is a character in a duet, a poem written with Aboo-l-Marjaan, a prolific poet. The poem is titled 'Tèni n Tèni' (to each his own). For others, especially poems written with a particular poetic form, Ghazal.

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

HANEEF: Yes, it's just like I have mentioned earlier. My favourite character is Manash. There's what we call 'Takhallus' in Ghazal Poetry form. It means a poet's Pen-name, and it's expected to be featured, especially in the last part of the poem. Apart from 'Harnyfman Asishana,' that which would be my pseudonym, Manash is another name I cherish. I have also used it in a poem as well as an 'immortal conjurer,' lol.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

HANEEF: I get them from within, and most of them from everything around me—love, hatred, melancholy, loneliness, struggle, motivation, opinions and thoughts, etc. I am also inspired by the book I read and the movie I watch.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

HANEEF: I haven't published any books. Though, some of my poems have been published in anthologies and poetry journals. I do share my poems on literary platforms or read to friends in a book reading club or poetry hangout. Although I have a blog, it's not too active until recently. You can see some old poems of mine on harnyfmanwrites.wordpress.com.

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

HANEEF: They can connect on Facebook - Harnyfman Asishana. Instagram - @man_asishana.

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

HANEEF: Not at all.

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

HANEEF: I haven't tried. Even I am yet to publish my collections. I can't say anything about it yet.

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

HANEEF: 'Urban Strife,' one of my collection of poems.

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

HANEEF: It has a lot to it, but it starts from somewhere. Good writing should have focus, a connection between the writer and reader, relatable, clear, and poignant. If a piece is written with all these elements, In my opinion, it is a good one.

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

HANEEF: Odia Ofeimum

WA: YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY HIM?

HANEEF: The Poet Lied.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

HANEEF: No! I love all the genres. I am establishing myself in all the genres.

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

HANEEF: Wólé Soyinka. He's been a legend of all times.

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

HANEEF: I would like both. Having my books in both Hard and Soft copies would be a privilege.

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

HANEEF: Short stories.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

HANEEF: Richard Wright's Black Boy.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

HANEEF: Some days ago.

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-oladejo-haneef-good-writing-should-have-focus-relatable-clear-poignant-and-must-have-a-strong-connection-between-the-writer-and-the-reader>

WRITER'S BLOCK CAN BE FRUSTRATING SOMETIMES, ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE IS YET TO FIND THE TRICK AROUND IT - AYOOLUWA OLASUPO



Ayooluwa Olasupo (Imisi) is a Nigerian poet/writer and practicing medical doctor currently based in Osogbo, Osun State Capital. Her works have appeared in Christian Literary Hub's Anthology, Afritondo, The Shallow Tales Review Literary Magazine, Eboquills, Shuzia. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, Imisi shares her writing experience and what her readers should be expecting from her.

WA: WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START WRITING?

IMISI: Writing for me began as a spur, and what later transpired into a passion, then hobby from childhood. It began from the enthusiasm I often experienced from wielding a pen over the fresh page of a new book and I was notorious for always "wasting" money, buying new exercise books during my childhood days. As far back as I know, this art of buying new exercise books with the aim of writing something on it was one of my greatest sources of excitement as a child.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

IMISI: I have been writing since I was 8. As at primary 4, I was through with the final draft of my first creative book consisting of originally created stories, curated quotable quotes, riddles, jokes, cartoons and so on. I rewrote this book over and over until it was perfectly ready for print. My parents promised to print the book for me and even now I can still see the pages in my mind, with the calendar wrapped cover and my tiny handwriting in colourful pens. But the printer died and in those days too, writing and other art related talents were not often paid much attention to like it is today, so this was how I was unable to publish my first book at age 8.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

IMISI: As earlier answered above, I started writing 20 years ago.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

IMISI: Yes I have; since I was 8 as earlier stated.

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

IMISI: I think I'm also just starting out and the advice I'd give all of us is: We need to keep learning, unlearning and relearning. We need to not know so that we will be able to know; yet, we need to know so that we can be confident of our craft, able to teach those coming behind us.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

IMISI: I handle writer's block in different ways depending on the situation. Sometimes, I let myself stretch beyond limit, melting the block rigorously with the wind of persistence over hours to days until what is hard begins to release droplets of ideas that flow in form of writing but at other times which is what I more commonly apply, I take the risk of letting the block block me out of my inspiration, until I find myself in a close where I forget I was in need of inspiration, going about my routine activities.

Then I suddenly realize that road blocks are often accompanied by sign posts indicating a new route, so I start to explore the new route of ideas, while the old inspiration returns with multiple and mightier muse.

But writer's block can be frustrating sometimes especially when one is yet to find the trick around it.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

IMISI: Majorly from my day to day life situations especially as ordained by God. My name Ìmísí means inspiration and according to Job 32:8, my inspiration is often God breathed, mostly through my life experience including the good and seemingly unpalatable ones. I believe divinity is a key to unlock creativity

WA: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FIRST PUBLISHED BOOK?

IMISI: I have published works in reputable journals but none in print yet. My first published work was "Saviours of savour", a poem written in the Christian Literary Hub's Anthology published in September 2020.

WA: WHAT WAS THE JOURNEY LIKE

IMISI: Full of ups and downs, building of confidence and sometimes the shaking of it; full of discovery and beauty, connection to great writers, opportunities and feeling of fulfilment, watching my art breathe. Above all, I've discovered that writing is a great tool for influence especially for those of us whose creative writings are mostly around faith and Christian living.

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

IMISI: Simplicity, Aesthetics, Coherence, Originality, Good vocabulary, Excellent editing, Emotion, and thought provoking. Able to induce impact.

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

IMISI: Francine Rivers, the award winning, renown Christian novelist, Taiwo Iredele Olubiyi, our own astute Nigerian novelist, Warsan Shire, the award winning poet

WA: YOUR FAVORITE BOOK BY HIM?

IMISI: Francine Rivers: Redeeming Love
Warshan Shire: Home
Taiwo Iredele Olubiyi: Shadows from the past

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

IMISI: Yes. Francine Rivers' Redeeming Love. As far back as 2010 after reading the book, I was moved to dedicate my life to Christ. The book was borrowed but I couldn't resist scribbling the words of my dedication inside the back cover. I look forward to more of such books especially from faith based authors in our days. I'm currently reading the book the third time—my own copy which I purchased 2 years ago.

WA: WHAT GENRES DO YOU LOVE?

IMISI: I love writing poetry and creative nonfiction. I enjoy reading fiction too.

WA: ARE THERE ANY GENRES YOU DISLIKE?

IMISI: Not really. Though I don't really like straightforward essays, I'm beginning to get a grasp of it through more creative forms like journalism, travel essays and memoirs.

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

IMISI:A. H. Mohammed rated as a candid chronicler of young adult writing and shortlisted for the Macmillan write for Africa prize. His book, "Last days at Forcados High School is on the UTME required reading in Nigeria. This literary feat is super excellent especially for a resident doctor in training. Because I'm also a medical doctor, I would like to meet him to know how he's able to achieve this great record combining the duress of medical profession, more so in Nigeria. The second reason I want to meet him is for my attraction for the group his writings target which is young adults including children and adolescents. If you read my bio, you will discover my love for this same age group.

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

IMISI: Both

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

IMISI: Novels

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

IMISI: Taiwo Iredele Olubiyi's shadows from the past

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

IMISI: I visited a library few weeks ago

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

IMISI: None that I can remember right now

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

IMISI: Kayode Olamide Valentine's "Pearls and Pebbles"

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-ayooluwa-olasupo-writers-block-can-be-frustrating-sometimes-especially-when-one-is-yet-to-find-the-trick-around-it>

**THE BANE OF LITERARY PRIZES IN NIGERIA IS POOR ADMINISTRATION,
FUNDING - MARCUS OVIE UGBODUMA**



Marcus Ovie Ugboduma is a Playwright, Poet, Teacher and Creative Thinker. He was one of the judges of the African Human Rights Playwriting Prize, 2022. He has published in several literary anthologies. In this interview with Wole Adedoyin, he talks about his writing and experience as one of the Judges of the recently concluded African Human Rights Playwriting Prize.

WA: FROM YOUR AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS PLAYWRITING COMPETITION EXPERIENCE, WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A JUDGE?

MOU: It's a great honour extended to me, I seized the opportunity to do a great job, because the future of all the writers who entered for the competition depended on my decision and judgment. So long-listing Africa's future playwrights was a thing of great joy, to enjoy such privilege, I am honoured.

WA: EVERY YEAR THERE SEEMS TO BE MORE LITERARY PRIZES APPEARING: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS? DO WE NEED SO MANY?

MOU: Africa with a population of over 1.3 Billion people, and Every African born is literary minded in Nature, Africa is the home of literature and a handful of literary prizes does not befit our status, hence the need for more prizes, literary bodies must create prizes, schools and institutions and at the communities and grass root level should have existing and functional literary prizes, even if only for the sake of acknowledgement with little or no money involved. Such prizes will greatly help to discover great literary minds from Africa who shall soon rule the literature world.

WA: AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN A JUDGE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANYONE SUBMITTING A PLAY TO A PRESTIGIOUS PLAYWRITING COMPETITION? ANY FAUX-PAS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

MOU: The first faux pas is when submitting a play for any playwriting competition and it lacks originality, and poor knowledge of writing mechanics, the next faux pas is to submit a play with a poor storyline or without conflict is like going to battle with an untrusted weapon. Now my advice for anyone submitting a play to any prestigious playwriting competition is as follows: never enter a playwriting competition for the sake of the monetary prize, you may never go far in your career as a writer. Secondly, your plotting must be properly and creatively done, characterization moves the play, your play must have strong characters who are multi-dimensional. That means it pays if your characters have many sides, attributes or virtues or even otherwise. Next, make your play rich in conflict, it is the tension that keeps the play going, through adequate characterization and conflict, the theme of the play is exposed through rich dialogue, characterization and conflict generation or resolution in the play.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS PLAYWRITING COMPETITION OUTSTANDING PLAYS?

MOU: From the plays I long listed, some outstanding plays include "Freedom Corner", "A Dog's Life", "The perfect Husband", "Gun Fire At Our Market place" and "Tegina" (broken Silence).

WA: WHICH PLAY ARE YOU READING AT THE MOMENT?

MOU: About ten days ago I read *The Lion and the Jewel*, by Wole Soyinka, I was reviewing the book for personal purpose, presently I am not reading any play at the moment, rather I am planning my next play titled "Emoghene" I hope it's going to be the next great work from my stable.

WA: IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT A PLAY THAT WOULD MAKE YOU INSTINCTIVELY SWITCH OFF FROM READING IT?

MOU: I will discontinue reading a book, the moment I discover it lacks originality, or has been plagiarized; this turns me off, because I stand against theft of intellectual property etc

WA: WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES YOUR HEART SOAR A LITTLE WHEN YOU READ A NEW PLAY?

MOU: I love a good storyline, especially if it is conflict driven with rich dialogue, with that I am good to go,

WA: WHILE JUDGING AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS PLAYWRITING COMPETITION, WAS THERE A TIME YOU DIDN'T READ BEYOND THE FIRST LINE OF AN ENTRY AND DISMISS IT IMMEDIATELY?

MOU: I would do no such thing, every entry has to be given equal attention by a judge, lest my conscience would haunt me for as long as I live, to avoid doing a haphazard work I ensured reading each entry twice, the first time, I read each entry for fun and then began the second reading taking notes and looking out for entries that best meets the judging criteria, moreover

you can't tell a story by the first line only. To judge the plays I set about 10 parameters or criteria, with which I judged each play.

WA: WHICH PRIZES HAVE YOU SEEN EMERGING RECENTLY THAT YOU THINK WILL HAVE A BIGGER PROMINENCE IN NIGERIAN LITERARY SCENE?

MOU: The bane of literary prizes in Nigeria is the funding, most sponsors of these prizes are not consistent because they lack commitment to the cause of promoting literature in Nigeria, Many prizes have died of natural causes, The Nigerian prize for literature has been sustained over time, ANA literature prizes have also lingered, but I think this African Human Right Playwriting Competition would go far, because it has no Monetary attachment to it, it only requires a little funding to publicize the prize and be handled by committed hands like the Society of Young Nigerian Writers (SYNW).

WA: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THOSE ENTERING COMPETITIONS ARE INFLUENCED TOO MUCH BY THEIR IDEAS OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE JUDGES AND WRITE TO THE DETRIMENT OF THEIR PLAYS?

MOU: I do not believe that anyone entering a writing competition would be influenced for any reason by their expectation of the Judges. If such a thing exists, then I pity such writers. Why should anyone take the judges expectation into mind before writing his or her play, not every play is written for competitions sake, The judges should not be anyone's standard, no one should write to judges expectation, rather write for your audience, write to communicate, educate and entertain your readers, Mind you, a good play will definitely sell itself. If you must write for a competition, abide by the rules of writing plays, you could look out for expected criteria by Judges, think of your plays readability, plot your play well and let it be dialogue and conflict driven.

WA: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU AS A JUDGE TO FIND A NEW VOICE?

MOU: It's important, because it shows Africans are making progress in the literary world, new emerging voices show judges' efforts are not in vain.

WA: DO YOU IMAGINE THAT READING LOTS OF PLAYS FOR A COMPETITION LIKE THIS WILL HELP WITH TEACHING PLAYWRITING?

MOU: Yes, it definitely will help in teaching playwriting, for example the magnitude of plays I read opened my eyes to human right abuses and the need to defend human right, my next play Emoghene, stems out from human right abuses meted on Emoghene, for which he sought justice. The more writers we have the more we encourage reading, the more we teach one another.

WA: ANY ADVICE FOR PLAYWRIGHTS HOPING TO WIN FUTURE PRIZE?

MOU: Read more, write often, follow writing rules, get writing prompts to guide you, then think well, write well, allow critics to critique your work. Then take the feedback into consideration.

WA: TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.

MOU: I come from a humble Christian background, my parents were civil servants, reading and writing were commonplace in my home. Music, dance and drama were my past times, and my parental encouragement were my source of inspiration, I was a rapper, singer and Disc Jockey at different points in my life. I was taught modesty while growing up, and I still live modestly till date.

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

MOU: There are many but let's look at two or three, one is misuse of punctuation, another is spelling errors and inconsistency in the use of names, and thirdly poor opening narratives are some common mistakes even established writers make.

WA: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT A PIECE OF WRITING AND WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SINK?

MOU: A good storyline that is logically told excites me,

WA: WHO ARE YOUR FAVOURITE WRITERS AND WHY?

MOU: I belong to the old School, so my favourite writers would be from the old brigade of writer's which includes, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Flora Nwapa and a few others. They wrote African Stories the African way, exposed several hidden truths and stood by the truth they believed in, and most of their writings were prophetic and predictive.

WA: WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

MOU: My plans for the future are to read more, write more, promote the reading culture and help young writer's reach their dreams.

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

MOU: Hard work pays, resilience is a virtue necessary for every writer, invest in yourself, and invest in others too, pursue your writing career, never give up or suspend writing, you may lose touch with reality. Remember if you must be remembered after you have died, do something worth writing or write something worth reading. So, let your writing influence the world positively

WA: HOW SHOULD OUR MEMBERS APPROACH YOU IF THEY WANT TO?

MOU: I am accessible and approachable. You can reach me on Facebook Al Marcos Ugboduma or on WhatsApp on the number 08037255607 or via email marcosdivine2@gmail.com or bimsam22@gmail.com

<https://www.ihraf.org/african-secretariat/wole-adedoyin-interviews-marcus-ovie-ugboduma-the-bane-of-literary-prizes-in-nigeria-is-poor-administration-funding>

I GET MY INSPIRATION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE - OGUNSOLA AYOO LUWA FOLAKUNMI



Ogunsola Ayooluwa Folakunmi is a graduate of Tai Solarin University of Education. He is a Young Motivated Environmental Activist, a Poet and Digital Marketer. In this short interview with Wole Adedoyin, he shares with him his writing experience.

WA: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WRITING?

OAF: I have been writing for more than 10 years.

WA: WHEN DID YOU START WRITING?

OAF: I remember writing story books in used Note books about the age of 11.

WA: HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A WRITER?

OAF: Definitely, I always knew I couldn't run away from writing as it was a form of expression for me.

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

OAF: Let it flow from the inside. Everyone has a Writer in their soul just waiting for an Ink to Explore.

WA: HOW DO YOU HANDLE WRITER'S BLOCK?

OAF: I usually try to read other books and go out with friends to get inspirations.

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

OAF: I have not written a book. But I have a book that is upcoming.

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

OAF: The fact that each Character has a reflection of the writer's personality hidden in them and at the same time they function at different areas.

WA: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION?

OAF: I get my inspiration from my environment.

WA: WHERE CAN READERS PURCHASE YOUR BOOKS?

OAF: My books will be on online stores very soon.

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

OAF: They can check my LinkedIn and Social Media.

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

OAF: My current book.

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

OAF: I think that the master of each character and expression matters to a large extent.

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

OAF: Dale Carnegie.

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

OAF: Yea my book explores Characters of individuals who are on a trip to the North and they discover social issues like drug abuse, Ethnicity ,Alumanjiri and Terrorism. The book ends with Love and

WA: WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STORY?

OAF: The inspiration of the story was from my friends in the university and Northern Nigerian.

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

OAF: To learn about how human interaction can be better improved and finding societal solutions to problems one step at a time.

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

OAF: To learn to live with people in love and harmony and find creative solutions to social problems.

WA: WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE?

OAF: Time is of the essence.

WA: HAS A BOOK EVER CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

OAF: A lot of books.

WA: WHAT BOOKS DO YOU LOVE?

OAF: Career development books.

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

OAF: Wole Soyinka.

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

OAF: I prefer Virtual Libraries.

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

OAF: Novels.

WA: WHAT BOOK CAN YOU RECOMMEND TO ME?

OAF: How to win friends over by Dale Carnegie.

WA: WHEN DID YOU LAST VISIT A LIBRARY?

OAF: One week ago.

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

OAF: I have admired a couple of characters but a crush is a strong word. Hahaha.

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

OAF: yes!

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