

Poetry Series

Akwu Sunday Victor

- poems -



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Akwu Sunday Victor holds a degree in English and Literary Studies from Kogi State University and is currently a postgraduate student at the University of Abuja, where his research interest includes Trauma and Memory Studies, psychological realism, and literary theory and criticism. He was a winner of the Saraba Non-Fiction literary competition in 2016. He is a critic and book reviewer, as well as a researcher in Nonfiction and Psychotherapeutic Poetics, and runs the SparkUp Africa Podcast, where he discusses issues relating to Africa and the seven mountains. He is also a winner of the prestigious Vice Chancellor Scholarship Award from Teesside University, UK, and serves as an ambassador for the institution. Additionally, he is pursuing a PhD in Theology and Ministry from Zion Bible School and Seminary.



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White Robes, Red Hands - (A Poem For A Country Forgetting Its Wounds)

White Robes, Red Hands
(A poem for a country forgetting its wounds)

They say the war is over
and peace, like a stray goat,
has found its way back to the village square.
But look well
what you think is peace is just silence tied with raffia.
The gunmen now chant psalms,
and murderers quote the Qur'an.
One even greeted me last week,
with teeth so white I almost forgot
those same teeth once bit through bone.

Ah, Nigeria

a land where widows drink tears like garri,
where orphans sleep with headrests made from gravel,
yet the killers now wear white agbadas,
pocketing amnesty like allowance,
and singing reconciliation songs
as if blood dries with the morning dew.

“They have changed,” they say
because their AKs are now quiet
and their stomachs are now empty.
But why now?
Why repent when your bullets are finished
and your wives are breaking firewood with cracked lips?
Why not when your firepower roared
and villages turned to ash under your proud boots?

Why did you not repent
when you danced around burning churches
like masquerades around shrines?
When you took Halima at thirteen,
forced her to carry twins before she knew what menstruation meant?

When Baba Musa was made to dig his grave
while his sons watched-bound and weeping?
When you wrote sermons with blood
and converted towns to graveyards?

Now the tide has turned
and you tuck your tail like a whipped hyena,
chanting "we surrender"
as if we are daft, as if we lack memory.
This is not repentance
this is arithmetic.
You counted your bullets and found none.
You counted your wives and found them begging for cassava peel.

But Abuja listens.
They bring white cloth and government rice.
They say "let's reintegrate"
a big grammar that means
"Let us reward evil, and ignore the tears of the just."

Yet, Aunty Ngozi still searches the dumpsite
for the wedding ring her husband gave her
before he was blown into memory.
And Hassan, the boy with one leg,
sits by the junction,
selling sachet water to the ghosts of his siblings.

Satire is now our survival
we laugh in the marketplace
because our hearts cannot afford tears.
They parade killers like prodigal sons
while we bury justice in unmarked graves.
They call it peace
but it smells like betrayal served with ogbono soup.

"Let's heal," they say.
But how can a wound heal
when the knife is still inside?
How do we move on
when the same boots that crushed our skulls
now march beside us wearing uniforms of forgiveness?

This is no justice.

This is theatre.

This is a masquerade where the dancers wear faces of the dead
and the drummers are paid to silence the truth.

Nigeria, shine your eyes.

Peace without justice

is like pouring perfume on a corpse
and calling it resurrection.

Let every widow's tears become testimony.

Let every orphan's hunger indict the hypocrisy.

For until those who destroyed are held to account,
the land will remain wounded
and peace will be nothing more
than a prisoner on parole,
waiting for the next rebellion
to break her chain.

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Ink Of Iron, Heart Of Stone - (A Lamentation For The Wounded Land)

I saw him.

The one they said had changed.

He walked past my window yesterday,
carrying kola and bread for his mother,
smiling like a boy who had only just returned from farming
not from fire,
not from blood.

His turban now white,
but I remember the red that once soaked his sleeves.
I remember his boots on our holy mat,
his rifle resting beside the Qur'an.
He took Papa.
He took Amina.
He took peace from our throats
and now they say, "Forgive. Forget. Reintegrate."

But how do you welcome back a storm
and expect sunshine to bloom?
A goat that eats your yam twice
should not graze in your garden again.

Their doctrine
etched in their hearts with iron ink,
carved with the blade of hate,
was not erased by soft speeches in Abuja halls.
They knelt only to rise stronger.
They wept only for the camera.
The tree that bore bitter fruit
was not uprooted only repainted.

In our village,
Mama still rocks an empty wrapper,
singing lullabies to a child she buried
with nothing but a name.
Fatima, her eyes always lost in smoke,
cannot hold her husband's hand

not when she remembers what hands
dragged her sister into the bush.

Now the killers return.

Home.

To their own wives

while many wives sleep alone,

or not at all.

The wombs they once broke,

now carry secrets that cannot be born.

They say he is reformed.

But his shadow still flinches at the sound of a rooster,

trained to wake and kill before dawn.

They say he is healed

but the knife remembers its edge

even after being washed.

Forgiveness without truth

is like covering a snake with a wrapper,

hoping it will warm you.

We are not fools.

We have not forgotten.

The ashes on our roofs are still fresh.

The trees still hum with the songs of the kidnapped.

Their names echo like rain on zinc:

Zarah.

Yusuf.

Kemi.

Gone.

And their ghosts walk beside us

while the government shakes hands with their tormentors.

Tell me

If you grind pepper with rotten tomatoes,

will your soup not carry the stench?

If you pour water into oil,

can you make it wine by declaration?

Let the wind carry this truth across every hamlet:

Peace without justice is war in disguise.

A man cannot rebuild the same house he bombed

with the same hands not without first digging graves,
saying names,
confessing sins,
and weeping loud in the market square.

Until then,
we will watch
eyes wide, hearts burning,
our hands on our cutlasses,
because even if the masquerade removes his mask,
we know the dance.
And we remember the drumbeats
that sent us running into the bush.

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The Man In The Dust - (For Every Man Who Vanished Into The Forest)

The Man in the Dust

(For Every Man Who Vanished Into the Forest)

He sat like a broken proverb
in the belly of the forest,
bare chest, dust-painted skin,
wearing only the shorts that once saw home.
Two machine guns like angry gods
pointed at his ribs
as if truth can only come when fear breaks the bones.

He was nameless now,
not the man who paid school fees
or mended the roof before the rains.
His name had been stripped like a stolen SIM,
replaced by trembling eyes,
cracked voice,
a prisoner of performance.

"Tell them to send the money, "
one captor barked,
another towered above like an unkind spirit
smelling of sweat, weed, and war.
A phone camera blinked its eye,
like a hungry ghost watching him die slowly.

So, he spoke,
not like a man anymore,
but like something trying not to drown
in a river of dread.

"Mama... send the money... please..."
His voice cracked like dry harmattan lips,
hope scattered in syllables,
every word a funeral for dignity.

Inside, a storm brewed.
He remembered the tree where he carved his name at ten,
his daughter's drawing stuck to the fridge,
his mother's voice during evening prayer.
He wanted to cry
but the tears were hostages too.

Who is a man
when the state turns its back,
when the forest becomes court,
and his only judge wears a mask and holds an AK?

Fear crawled like ants on his skin.
Not the fear of death alone,
but of how he might die
slowly,
humiliated,
without witness.

Where is the government
with its songs of protection?
Where are the laws
that promise freedom and peace?
He wondered if those laws had ever walked these woods.

If a man can disappear in his own country,
reduced to dust and begging,
what then is citizenship
but a paper dream?

And still, the forest waited.
The camera rolled.
The machine guns stood.
And somewhere far away,
someone would watch
and either send the ransom
or not.

And he
He would remain a parable
of how quickly you can become nothing.
A nameless man

in a nation that forgets
that to be human
is sacred,
and to protect that humanity
is the first duty of power.

But here,
power wore jungle boots
and held triggers.
And mercy?
Mercy was not invited.

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No Freedom In Libya

for The Nameless Ones Caged Without Cause, Twice Condemned.

No Freedom in Libya

For the nameless ones caged without cause, twice condemned.

We rose from home with sunburnt feet,
Chasing a promise beyond defeat.
But freedom, ah freedom! a word we sang
Till we crossed the desert and were left to hang.

In Libya's womb of sand and chain,
We were neither dead nor fully sane.
Black skin marked us, not as kin,
But as cursed, condemned, and born in sin.

They said, "Go home," then slammed the gate,
Mocked our hunger, laughed at fate.
Released us once into dust and sky,
Then netted us like birds that fly.

Back again to hellish cells
No light, no law, just iron smells.
We drank our sweat, we chewed our pain,
We whispered names that died in vain.

One man spoke of Ghana's green,
Another wept for a child unseen.
Somalia, Nigeria, Mali too,
Each name a dirge, a tear-stained view.

A boy once asked, "Why are we here?"
The guard just grinned and pulled his beer.
"No reason," he said, "you're just too black."
Your future died on migration's track.

Oh Mother Africa, where is your cry?
Your children rot while vultures fly.
Europe turns its silver eye
And counts its gold while we die.

We are the dark ghosts in their file,
Unseen, unheard, without a trial.
Some of us speak in shattered tongues,
From minds dismantled, lungs unstrung.

Yet still we hope, and still we dream
Of rivers pure and skies that gleam.
Of lands that welcome not betray
Where Black is blessed, not thrown away.

One day, the walls will fall like ash,
And truth will rise from every lash.
Till then we chant from cage and floor:
We are not less. We are much more.

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Amina Of The Sand: A Migration Lament - a Multi-Voiced Poem In Five Parts

Amina of the Sand: A Migration Lament

A multi-voiced poem in five parts

I. Amina

Zamfara, my cradle of dust and dreams

I was twelve when Mama said,
"Go find gold in Libya's belly."
But I carried no gold
just hope,
Wrapped in nylon, knotted tight.

The man with cracked lips and city shoes
Said, "You'll sweep floors in Europe, maybe school."
But I swept through deserts instead,
Beneath suns that burned names off bones.

They gave us water like secrets
just enough to hush our tongues.
I saw Fatima fall asleep in the sand,
but she never woke.

My name is Amina.
But they called me cargo,
called me investment,
called me disposable girl.

II. The Smuggler

No name. No face. Just profit.

He counted girls like goats.
Amina was number seventeen.
She had eyes like waiting wells,
but he had no time for poetry.

In Agadez, he sold silence and fear.

He taught children to walk by moonlight,
to drink sweat when water fled.
And when they died, he buried dreams, not bodies.

To him, Amina was a receipt
already half-paid.
She would fetch double in Sabha,
where men don't ask names.

III. The Desert Wind
Witness of centuries. Keeper of bones.

I saw her.
Amina, child of millet and mango rains.

She cried for her mother in Hausa,
then cried in silence.
She kissed a photo till it turned to dust.

I swept sand across her footsteps,
hid her tears in dunes.
I whispered lullabies of vultures
and old bones that used to sing.

She is not the first.
She will not be the last.
But every child I bury
curses the sky differently.

IV. Amina's Mother
In Zamfara, watching the stars lie

You sent her with prayers and wrapper money.
You believed the man when he said,
"She'll be a nurse, she'll be rich."

Now, you sit by the radio.
You ask Alhaji Musa,
"You don't hear from Libya? "
But the line is dry.

At night, you boil water with no food.

You see her in dreams,
dusty, barefoot,
running but never reaching.

You gave birth to a bird,
but the sky devoured her wings.

V. God
Neither male nor female. Just listening.

I was there.
When Amina crossed the border
of innocence and betrayal.

I heard her prayer in a cracked whisper
not in Arabic, but in soul.

When the traffickers laughed,
when the guards turned away,
I wrote her name in stars.

You ask where I was
I was the breath she held.
The tears that carved her cheek.
The last "Mama" before the silence.

Epilogue
A desert holds more than sand. It holds secrets.
Amina now walks with ancestors
young, betrayed, and burning still.
And every girl from Zamfara who dreams of flight,
should ask first:
'Which wings, and who holds the sky? '
'The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its
warmth.'

Let us not bury Amina twice, once in sand, once in silence.
Let her name be a drumbeat in policy halls,
a fire in pulpits,
a grief that refuses to be forgotten.

We Who Left The Gold Behind

We Who Left the Gold Behind

By Victor Enejo (inspired by the cries of a continent)

We are the children of the soil,
Where rivers run with oil
And mountains cradle cobalt and gold,
But our dreams were sold
For peanuts on foreign plates
By leaders with ten stomachs,
And no conscience for our fates.

We are the minds drained from Africa's breast,
Carrying brilliance in broken briefcases,
Wiping tables in cities
That once borrowed our books.
Our names sound like kings,
Yet we kneel like pawns
In foreign lands where snow
Falls on borrowed dignity.

They have no oil, no gold,
No coltan in their crust
Only storms, quakes, and icy air,
But they mined their minds
And built empires on ideas.
They grew thinkers like trees,
While we chopped ours at the root
For the firewood of selfish power.

We have wealth that walks on legs
Doctors, engineers, poets, teachers
All boarding planes like exiles
From the land of squandered plenty.
We leave behind Mercedes-driving ministers
Who can't spell integrity,
And senators with stomachs
Larger than national budgets.

O Africa, Mama of milk and minerals,

Why do your breasts still dry
For your own children?
Why must we beg for bread
While sitting on silos of grain?
Why must we bend our backs
While lying on beds of diamonds?

We left not for love of cold weather,
But for warmth of opportunity.
We traded native tongues
For passports and paychecks,
Not because we hate our roots,
But because our roots are choking
In the soil of corruption.

Europeans built cathedrals of minds,
We built cathedrals of greed.
They teach their toddlers to dream,
We teach ours to survive.
They face natural disasters;
We face leadership disasters
And theirs, at least, bring people together.
Ours divide, devour, and disappear.

And so we run
From sun to snow,
From hope to hustle.
We, the exiled eagles,
Searching for skies that will not clip our wings.
But one day,
May the prodigal minds return
To till the ground with truth,
And teach the land to value brains
Over bullion.

Until then,
We'll keep lamenting in airports,
Crying in cubicles,
Whispering to the wind:
We are rich in earth,
But poor in worth.
We are home in exile,

And exiled from home.

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