

SOCIETY OF YOUNG NIGERIAN WRITERS

**THE GARDEN CITY
AND
OTHER POEMS**

**(An anthology of poems in celebration
of Portharcourt @ 100)**

A Publication of the Society of Young Nigerian Writers

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THE GARDEN CITY

In 1913, a great city was born

Out of the heart of the southern Nigeria- Rivers
State

Initially for the sole purpose of coal exportation

Gradually and ever so consistently, they
blossomed

In diverse directions; they sprouted

Waxing stronger; industrially and commercially

Exalting the nation; financially and culturally

Augmenting our revenue drastically

Impervious to economical deterioration

1,947,000 people in habitation, yet unity in
maximization

I sing of Port Harcourt, the garden city!

A wonderful place; intricately carved from
creation

Luxuriating in hospitality and production
Like a plantation in full bloom; they flourished
Like a woman in her prime, they boomed

Amidst the massive benefit of the oil- minerals
They thrive in development of other resources
With fishes, great vegetation, oil and a tropical
monsoon climate

As their natural endowments
They stand tall in excellence

The Garden city; a centre of tourism
Playing host to magnificent seaports and airport
Enhancing sports and physical fitness with two
stadia

Boosting productivity with two standard
refineries;

Expanding the nation's horizons

In their un-daunting quest for knowledge
They sought to produce and educationally refine
individuals
From their “state of the arts” primary, secondary
and tertiary institutions
From far and near, people stride in
To tap from the “Garden city” awesomeness

Fishers’ a-fishing
Traders’ a-trading
Oil drillers’ a-drilling
Land tillers’ a-tilling,
In “The Garden city” of Rivers State.

Charlene Chiamaka Chikezie,

*Charlene Chiamaka Chikezie, is a Science
Laboratory Technology student of the Federal
Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri. She developed a*

passion for writing right from her primary school days. Her hobbies include: Singing, listening to music and playing basketball.

Poet's Note: *This poem “The Garden City” outlines the eminent and phenomenal features of Port Harcourt city in a poetic sense of reality with the intent of stirring unceasing interest in readers as they begin to discover peculiar qualities of the city which they never realized was there.*

Kunju seghi- The waist Dance

See, the magical ripples of these waists has
caught my pen;

The undulating moves that toss men to trance

Of gazing, of nodding, of smiling

And wishing end would never come tapping.

I have often times swam in your river like the
rest

Yet the cadence of your background songs

Still come to me, soothing like the breeze

And the sweet rhythm of your accompanying
drums

Each time tinkles my nerves to the core.

O! kunju-seghi, tell me

What semblance in nature can outshine your
paces?

The dance of mangroves when the winds play
there drums?

Or the bubble dance of boiling soup

When firewood play their gongs?

Tell me

Who can watch your twist

Without being lost in your beauty?

Who can tread your steps

Without getting drawn in your honey?.

I have seen men cook thunder with their palms

I have seen men sleep and wake in trance

I have heard strangers ask:

“What metal springs lie within these waists?

What bearings lie within these loins?”

Oh kunju-seghi!

Kunju-seghi which Fathers rolls

When the net befriends a big fish,

Which grandmother dives at

When a new Light is born,

Which the sun stares at and forgets to set

Now I believe you came from heaven

This dance of bliss

The Ijaw man’s pride.

Benstowe, Fubaraibi Anari

Note:

Kunju-seghi which is popularly known as the “Tuu dance” or the waist dance is a rich and traditional dance style; where The Dancer bends down, moves and swings His or Her waist coursing a rippling vibration on the waist and on the back.

It is perform by the Bonny and Opobo people, and also performed in other parts of Ijaw Tribe of Nigeria with their respective names.

AMNESTY

(To President Ya'duar)

Running! Falling! Hiding!

Gunshots emanating from complex machines,

Here and their...

Blasting, echoing fears in our World

Like thunder-storm from angry sky.

Ceaselessly, they tingled machines

To sneeze fire from their mouths

Like dragons in dreadful combat.

“Shoot, soldier man! Shoot, Soldier man!

Shoot! They poured hot-stones at our Brothers

While they too, poured at them.

“Ah! War! A bloody war!”

Some said has come

And those not lucky enough

Were calmed by their flying hot stones.

For so long

Gunshots became melody,

Melody to the ears of those

Who said to their soul

They fight for a communal course,

But how long shall this be

Before we all become still?

For in their next return

No one knows, man or spirit

Who shall kiss his last breath...

Then like faraway merchants,
They returned,
Here in our town squares
This time, no machines, no stones,
No soldier man to fire the guns,
No casualties in fire exchange, they returned,
Singing and chanting with loyal fans,
Embracing beloveds with smiles and bliss
I mean those who had breath.
But relatives who couldn't find beloveds,
There tears they took back homes...

For after many months of perils,
We now sleep under the strong net of peace

Weaved by him who once sat in Aso rock.

Benstowe, Fubaraibi Anari

Note:

This poem brings to light the experiences and the tension of the residence of the Niger Delta soil during the physical struggles between the Niger Delta Militant groups and the Nigerian Federal Government around 2008/2009

It also highlights the tremendous relieve the people felt when President Umaru Musa Yaradua called for Amnesty on the 4th of October 2009.

Salute to Temebo

For under your tutelage

I come paying homage,

For under your canopy

I come weaving unity,

*Temebo** of ancestral Fathers

I salute you,

The mangroves too greet you

The coconut trees will forever

Swing at your deeds

And the waves lash at your feet

You that created the waters

And manure it

You that created the trees

And how to carve them to boats
You that made the fishes
And how to stalk them so sweet.

Temebo of our rich Delta
Our noble plants greet you
Our liquid gold too salute you
You that saw other soils
And decides to plant it here,
You that made air and made it clean
You that made life and gave it free.
Thou art great to make man in perfect figure;
That only the demented dare rise and blab
“My eyes ought to be at my back
And my nose under my feet”

Your deeds and wits

Too frantic for Man or gods to fathom.

Temebo, out of the treasures of our mouths

And the prowess of the waist

Render we, dances and praises

More than alcohols and incantations

More than sacrificial goats and fresh eggs

More than *Omughu* and kola nuts.

O! You who made smiles and paste them on our
cheeks

You who formed laughter

And wrap them to our mouths,

Direct our paths and make it clean

Even In our flaws and iniquities
Blessed and enrich our waters
And the lands that spring liquid gold,
Bless our Generation
And our Children Children yet unborn.
All these and many more we ask
Through your son Jesus. Amen

*Temebo means a Creator; which denotes God in Ibani dialect, dialect of the Bonny and Opobo people in Rivers State Nigeria.

*Omughu is a tender palm front use for fetish sacrifices and traditional barricade in many parts of Nigeria.

Benstowe, Fubaraibi Anari

Note:

The poem is an encomium to God Almighty for his great and magnificent works in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, for blessing the land the with so much natural endowments.

The poet's personae also prayed and asked for God's mercy and more of His blessings in the Land and to the descendants of his Generation.

Benstowe, Fubaraibi Anari hails from Grand Bonny kingdom in Rivers State Nigeria.

In 2011 he obtained his Advanced Diploma in International Vocational Qualification, City and

Guilds Institute of London in Electrical
Installation from Bonny Vocational Centre River
State

Currently a 200 Level Electrical/Electronic
Engineering Student of Niger Delta University
Wilberforce Island in Bayelsa State who writes
to change His Society positively.

He has published in various newspapers,
magazines, and anthologies, which includes the
Nigerian/Zimbabwean's 'Silent Voices'
International poetry anthology (in Honour of
Professor Chinua Achebe), The Moonlight
Songs International poetry anthology (for Pa
Nelson Mandela) and other anthologies.

PORT HARCOURT

A garden city,
To behold
Beautiful buildings
And roads,
With nature all around

Port Harcourt,
A home for the talented
A place of people with
Great minds and intelligence
A place of people with
Great potentials

Port Harcourt,
A home for all and sundry
A place of united people
Though tribes and tongues differ

A home of various cultural display
Bound by love with varieties
Of people of different
Ethnic background

Port Harcourt,
A place of multiple interests
Blessed in diverse cultures
Adventures and exploits
A centre of attraction
For the tourist
A town flowing with milk and honey
A city of oil and rich
In mineral resources

Port Harcourt,
A comfort zone for the nation
A place of inestimable jewel
A place of immeasurable treasures

Port Harcourt,

My cherished Port of Shinning jewels

Port Harcourt,

My cherished Port of invaluable treasures

Oyinkansola Adesuwa Oyelabi

Oyinkansola Adesuwa Oyelabi, a child poet presently in J.S.S. 2. She is the author of “Thought of a Child” a collection of educative and informative poems for children. She has featured in various readings in Lagos.

Poet’s Note

The poem describes the beauty of the Capital State and the benefits that our great nation derives from the state. Also the uniqueness of the state makes it a priceless jewel among others.

TOMORROW

The most terrible day
The day no eye has seen
The day no eye can see
The day beyond our dreams

Who has ever seen tomorrow?
Or can hint to us the cloth it's clad?
They pin our hopes in tomorrow
But no eye has ever seen the ray
Of the long-awaited day.

Our celebrated Solomon says:
Man is the offshoot of the distorted ape,
Earth dances round the legless sun,
Earth steals the shape of the poor sphere
And more,
The sermons of the wise. Agreed.

But for “tomorrow” all the sage mouths shut.

In this stinking slums,
Where my dangling legs
Are hanged to my lice-ridden head,
My bloodless eyes see only today
And hear about tomorrow
Whose sun has never woken

They acceded to the throne
Brimming our ravenous hearts
With fusillade of promises and hopes
To dry tears from every eye
To provide eyes for every blind,
To give legs to the lame
To give ears to the deaf
To give mouths to the dumb
To give hairs to the bald
All to be done tomorrow

We drummed and danced
Celebrating our brothers
In khaki and Agbada
Whose words we swallowed
Without water

But a century has gone
The lame are still waiting
The blind are still waiting
The sick are still waiting
The deaf are still waiting
The dumb are still waiting
Hasn't the day "tomorrow" come?
When will it come?

Emmanuel Ejike Abraham.

DESPAIR

I looked up, there's no sky
I looked, there's no land
I listened, sweet melodies were sigh
My stomach sang one, a bizarre brand
My eyes strained, rays found no rest
Scourged by the lost sweat rivulets to the crest,
The soles that died on the thorn-studded tracks
Hoping at the end, sun could sleekly wax
But there's no sky, let alone the sun
I had my wide-bladed hoe, but no land

I began to withdraw cash without cheques
And breathed by launching financial wrecks
One day, trumpet sounded
My home changed; ceaseless pain abounded
Rivets, fleas, pasting and pungent odour

Became bosom friends I must on end endure
As a victim of gannet leaders who loot
And forget the seed, the future root.

Emmanuel Ejike Abraham.

THE TRAVELER

He was dim and cold
quite ready for the trip
though his bones not old
but must soon drip.

Gathered, his kiths and kin
with fat goats, fowls and cows;
spitting jars of palm wine and gin;
wrappers and woolly hats of grade;
hoe, digger and spade
and all which the custom allows.

With the hoe, spade and digger
they constructed a new bus -double decker
fed the tank well with the palm wine

and the radiator, with the daughters' eyes brine.

The traveller was clad in piles of first class
garment;
his cracked feet encased in shoes of sky-high
felicity
the ones he never wore until this icy moment
this he knew was a crass duplicity.

his profile was paler than iron dross
those grandiose fineries made his anger gross
but as a man in transit, he folded his lids
not to see their last pretentious bids
he shut his lips well, lest he uttered eerie words
into the blood of the deceit-ridden herds
whose father boarded a bus out of hunger
to the home yonder.

Emmanuel Ejike Abraham.

Emmanuel studied English Language at FCT College of Education Zuba, Abuja. He is the author of the novel titled "Waiting for the Hangman" in 2012 and currently working on others. He teaches inmates.

MIDNIGHT WOLF SONGS

When the great Iroko tree fell down
It crashed heavily to the ground
I swear, the sound drove sleep back to its land
Insomnia became my companion

When my clans' men woke at dawn
They slumped to the ground
Gazed for a while
And laughed and laughed
Till tears began to sting their eyes

I laughed too, I cried as well
Hmn! what grief
My ears have suddenly become heavy
Even heavier than Ajanaku the great elephants
ears
Aye! My heart is bleeding

As for my heart beat
It is louder than any Ozi players' drum
My limbs have taken root where the great
Irokotree fell
For the sight of it immobilised me

Argh! Somebody help me
For my heart cannot contain what information
my ears have passed to it
It is not true, never!
I shake my head vigorously,
I must erase from my eye and my mind this
memory
Iroko tree! Abadikurukuru!
You have cursed us
You used to be our land, our pride
Your branches shaded us
It was under your green canopy
My mama told me moonlight stories

S-o-o-o-oba eh!!! E-e-e-e-eh!!!

Shade us again from sunlight and moonlight

Without you my clan has no name, no face

Tufia! It is not true!

My hands clasp my breast

And I look in awe and wonder

Who did this?

What great wind brought you crashing down?

I heard the sound afar off

I warned oh!

Mba! You refused to listen

Hmmn! Now I mourn, I grieve but I still wait

For the day you will rise to your feet again.

My clans men, Wipe your tears

Abadikurukuru the great Irokotree still has a
giant root in the soil

Come, get up!
Don't sit on the dust and wail
It is not tears but blessings from our tropical
waters
That would resurrect the pride of our land
And then will our maidens sing again
Midnight wolf songs.

Aworabhi Okelani

Poet's Note

This poem is a cry of hope for Nigeria. It talks about a people who lost their dignity due to perilous times and situations. It is a lamentation for what has been lost and a sound of encouragement for future generations to have faith that change will come.

***Aworabhi Okelani** a young woman with a flare and natural talent for writing. Her style of writing is mostly free verse, she writes about nature, love, people, experiences and pressing societal topics like, religion, politics, gender equality, race and lots more. Aworabhi Okelani have been writing poetry and fictional prose since she was 6 years old and she has a deep desire to see her work published internationally. Although vastly knowledgeable in science, bagging a master's degree in Renewable energy technology and a bachelor's degree in Geology, art is her first love. Her role models are great African writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe and Christopher Okigbo. Other modern writers like Zainabu Jallo have also inspired her to write and speak to the world through the pen rather than violence.*

A MATTER OF TIME

I had once heard of a child of nobody,
Who later become a renowned somebody.
Albert Einstein was once the class dullest,
But later recorded as the world brightest.
Ben Carson was once regarded as nonentity,
But he later esteemed as a celebrity.
And Barrack Obama, who is now being
celebrated,
Was formerly scorned and humiliated.
Certainly, Life is a matter of time.

That you look like a beggar,
Not necessarily mean you can't be a pillar.
Even if you sometimes score zero,
Doesn't mean you can't be a hero.
That everything seems rough and tight,

Doesn't mean your future is not right and bright.
At times, when you are driven to the wall,
Just strive hard in order not to fall.
Since success in life is just a matter of time.

Therefore, neither be in a haste nor in a hurry,
Even if success depends on accuracy and
capacity.

If your life experience now is disappointment,
Doesn't connote you can't be rewarded with an
appointment.

Even if your endeavors bring fruitless effort,
Your consistency and persistency can bear
fruitful result.

Remember, anxiety in life can make one to be
deformed,

But through hard work and prayer, one can
easily be transformed.

Since everything is a matter of time.

Thus, don't succumb to any devastating
condition,
As you will soon be crowned with a pleasant
position.
Remember, there is always a long pleasure,
At the end of every tunnel of pressure.
Therefore, erase the terrible picture,
That the world is painting on your colourful
future.
Your obstacles can turn into miracles,
And your barriers can bring wonders.
Awaiting for God's time, things are made
comfortable.

Ogedengbe Tolulope

Ogedengbe Tolulope is a native of Ilesa, Osun State. He was born over two decades ago to the

renowned extended family of Ogedengbe Agbogunboro in Ijesa land. He is currently a student of the prestigious Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife studying Chemical Engineering. His hobbies are pen writing and Sport

Poet's Note

The poem entitled "A matter of time" describing life's success as a matter of time. The poem depicts that no condition is permanent and when it comes to succeeding in life, there are no late comers. Conclusively, no matter how the present condition, we should not give up in life.

THE GLORY OF TOMORROW

Today, we reminisce with nostalgia and tears,
On our trek and pilgrimage through the years,
Today, we mark the scars and stars of time,
On the rickety frame and soul of our clime;
At the birth of time, it was a nest of nature,
Clad in flora and fauna, with dreams for the
future,
Birds chirped away at the distant sky,
The music of the woods made spirits high,
Twilight folktales and memories stole our huts,
Peace and pure camaraderie made our lots.

Alas! Time made us guests to burdensome folks,
Feigning lamb-like guests, with the leviathan's
strokes,
We bore the Whiteman's burden in our region,

Adorned subtly with the cloak of civility and
religion,
They came behind the façade of the Holy Word,
And unleashed the venom of the merciless
sword,
They turned lords to rule our tropical waves,
And made our mothers and fathers slaves,
While we labored under a pitiless pain,
They reveled in the spirit of the champagne.

Share not in our stinging memories of chains,
Drink not from our epochal jars of pains,
Our guests' burden was a racist bourgeois
mantra,
Poor men from poor metropolises, enriched by
poor Africa;
Bring me not memories of our triangular trade,
Nor the fettered epoch of our vassal grade,

Tell me not of colonial guests' tools in the
nation,
For they're all monstrous sordid façades of
dissimulation,
Tell me not of the vilest rape and debauchery of
a people,
Lest you make hearts the boiling pot of a ripple.

Tell all ears with a romance of nostalgia,
Of the travails of this Niger Area,
Oft in the belly of soul-sickening throes,
Oft in pitiless stinging odious woes,
We've passed through the fire, flame and flood,
We've survived the baths of blood,
Heights of bliss; depths so bleak, in our clime,
Sober memorable moments of time,
Treasured beyond the gold in Spanish mines,
To indite, troubadours would pen classic lines.

Albeit, the tides have come and gone,
Let hearts and souls be no more forlorn,
Afflict us no more in a mournful number,
Sing us not melancholy melodies to bring us
slumber,
Let the dark ages of our despair quell the dark
story,
For 'tis the epoch to blaze a trail of glory,
All feet on clay, set to scale so far,
For acquaintance with our near star,
Shed no more the tears of sorrow,
Ere comes the glory of tomorrow!

Magnus Abraham-Dukuma, Esq.

Poet's Note:

*The Glory of Tomorrow chronicles our journey,
as a people, from pre-colonial times to this*

present moment wherein we hope for a glorious tomorrow.

NATIVE MARCHING SERENADE

Here comes my native marching serenade,
A time of native convalescence of strife gone by,
An aura of jubilation and camaraderie on high,
An evanescence of rivalries in my clime,
A spontaneous recovery of glad spirits of time.

Here comes my native marching serenade,
Come see diverse culture on parade,
An epic display of scenery natively made,
Come see the camaraderie of a people,
A tide birthing a fresh spurt, and quelling ripple.

Here comes my native marching serenade,
The music of spirits and mortals,
The talking of native beads and dancing of
petals,
The throbbing of bosoms and flaunting of

waists,

The shouting of whistles, gongs and rhythm of
breasts.

Here comes my native marching serenade,

Let this camaraderie be our soul lover,

May it be over and, in hearts, not over,

May its reminiscence breed a good picture,

And may its fruit bring a better future!

Magnus Abraham-Dukuma, Esq.

Poet's Note: *Native Marching Serenade is a traditional lyrical poem for celebrating the Port Harcourt Centenary Anniversary and the Rivers State Annual Carnival (CARNIRIV).*

SALVATION FRONT

We look for the birth of better years,
And the oblivion of dead dark days,
We stand this day with a heavy sigh,
Waiting for a kinder sky.

We look for streets of gold,
And a haven hewn as abode,
We stand this day with a stinging sorrow,
Waiting for the glory of tomorrow.

We look for a semblance of peace,
And the lovely caress of bliss,
We stand this day for a better lot,
Waiting for our salvation front.

Magnus Abraham-Dukuma, Esq.

Poet's Note: *Salvation Front yearns for the birth of better days and years ahead, as we can never get to the acme of our socio-political evolution.*

STAR-LIT COURSE

Years have come and gone,
Days have shared the stars and sun.

Now dawns a new day,
The death of days births a new year;
As these days shall live,
Let's have what we please.

Let the sun light our course,
Let the stars guide our course,
Let the moon gladly grace our night,
Let our stars bring us blessings and light.

Let our course be star-lit,
Let our days be glory-arrayed,
Let's know the peace of the ether,
Let our dreams come true.

We'll go far!
Naught shall men dim our star,
Though dreams come true tomorrow,
And not today, clad in tearful sorrow,
Let our course be star-lit,
Let our days be glory-arrayed,
As these days shall live,
We crave a star-lit course.

Magnus Abraham-Dukuma, Esq.

Poet's Note: *Star-lit Course is an affirmation of a better tomorrow, sharing similitude with Salvation Front.*

Magnus Abraham-Dukuma, Esq. *was born on March 24, 1986. He hails from Ede Town in the Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of*

Rivers State. The poet underwent his Legal studies at the Rivers State University of Science and Technology from 2005 to 2011. He proceeded to the Nigerian Law School and was called to the Nigerian Bar as Barrister, Solicitor and Advocate of the Supreme Court of Nigeria on November 20, 2012. He is also a product of the Garden City Literary Festival, rechristened Port Harcourt Book Festival. He is single and presently engaged in private legal practice in Port Harcourt.

