

EARTH ON A WHEELCHAIR

AN ANTHOLOGY OF VIRUS-INFECTED POEMS



FRANKLYN ORODE

EARTH ON A WHEELCHAIR

An anthology of virus-infected poems



Edited by

**Franklyn Orode
&
Somadina M. James**

ACEworld
...the world of the bases

Earth on a Wheelchair

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DEDICATION

To the victims and survivors of the
COVID19 pandemic and to
the generations not
yet born



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CLEMENTINA E. OWUMI

INTRODUCTION

“Get ready to leave very early in the morning to beat traffic flow. Prepare this night please!”

That was the message that beeped on my phone at exactly 8.02pm, on Sunday March 29, 2020 as I was about to retire to bed in my hotel room located in the heart of Satellite Town, Lagos. Having had a very hectic day at work, it had not occurred to me to confirm from the headlines, the news making rounds that the Federal government of Nigeria, following a global trend, was about to declare a total lockdown due to the novel corona virus pandemic. That message from my boss confirmed that it had not been a rumour after all. The much expected lockdown had been declared in Lagos, Abuja and Ogun but as reasonably expected most other states joined the bandwagon.

Having been working as a project engineer on a construction project and at a time when site activities were at an interesting peak, I felt somehow reluctant travelling home but as I was not the one paying the hotel bills and I have not been trained to be supervising deserted sites, I had to get my luggage arranged before midnight and get ready to leave for Warri the following morning.

However, my boss was not in any way right in his expectation, the reason he had asked me to leave very early in the morning. There was no traffic to beat. But I would have almost called him a prophet if he had hinted that there would be scarcity of vehicles ready to ply the roads which is of course a strange reality given the high rate of traffic that often characterize Lagos Roads. But I was shocked beyond words that early morning as finding a vehicle around the popular parks in Mile 2 was far more difficult than passing the head of a camel through the eye of a needle. Luckily for me however, I found one in which other desperate passengers and I were jam-packed like pieces of processed sardine fish in a tin.

As I journeyed home that morning, I felt this unusual serenity in Lagos. The term “social distance” began to take up real meaning before my very eyes that I began to wonder If I was actually in Lagos. These sentiments were well expressed in the opening poem of this collection, thus:

*“At last Lagos goes to sleep in the morning, wearing masks
As Wuhan hawk litres of fear along her rude express lanes”*

The streets, the highways, bars, the restaurants, everywhere have been deserted. We enjoyed a rollercoaster ride for the following four hours until we reached the Edo-Delta boundary where we met a scene that prolonged our journey for another six hours! Soldiers, Policemen, civil defense corps and almost every known security outfit in Nigeria had fully been mobilized by the state government to bar all entry into Delta state. Since it has been announced earlier that the state would be enforcing a lockdown starting from the following day, we could not fathom why the law was then enforced before the announced date. There I was, being denied entry into my own state of origin. The pandemic was truly not a matter of joke.

We joined a host of other commuters trying to pacify the uniformed men to allow access into the state but to no avail. How our driver maneuvered us through some very risky and awkward routes till we reached Effurun roundabout at about 11pm is a story I cannot cover just in one piece.

As the pandemic hits harder and death tolls rise worldwide, it began to dawn on man how much he had been unfair to himself, to the earth and to humanity in general, how man has dominated the earth to a point of destroying the only home yet known to him thereby endangering his very existence as thus expressed:

*I mourn for all that's dust
For rottenness has found its way to the wind's gust*

In the words of William Wordsworth “Poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, recollected in tranquility”. The lock down brought a great deal of tranquility to poets all over the world and as they stayed isolated in their homes they hatched eggs of literary creativity borne from powerful feelings of depression, frustration. Loneliness, hunger, anger, fear, sorrow, grief and of course a sentimental longing for the once beautiful place man has known as his only home since the founding of the world, the earth.

*But I just want a safe universe
So father please come and take
Me away from here
For I am dying slowly...*

This collection is a kaleidoscope of emotions and experiences from the covid19 pandemic gleamed from a handful of young emerging Nigerian poets. It takes the reader's mind on an excursion through one of the most tumultuous era of human history.

Through the eyes of the poets the earth was unarguably visualized in very apt imageries as a sick old woman needing urgent medical attention, badly injured with broken legs, sitting helplessly atop a wheelchair, having been long neglected by her own children. This is the dreadful reality the world was awoken to as thousands worldwide lose their lives, as the air freely given to us by nature becomes our own preying enemy, as economies crumble from country to country and as long cherished norms, as simple has having handshakes becomes highly forbidden habits! It thus seems beyond reasonable doubts that the earth having been fed up with man's mistreatment of her was serving him an urgent eviction notice as she terribly needed repairs!

*She's crippled, her psyche is burgled
Helplessly she lies down on her own sickbay
Beyond thoughts of remaining in motherhood
For disowning her own children have come to mind*

“Earth on a Wheelchair” however goes beyond simply presenting dark verses of despair, desperations, frustrations and the likes but also in artfully crafted lines radiates with flickers of hope and positivity for the reader. As expressed in the spirit of the concluding poem, soon we will break free like the morning, caged by a dark domineering night.

Franklyn Orobe,

June 7, 2020

8:35pm

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BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTING POETS

MASKS

Franklyn Orode

At last Lagos goes to sleep in the morning, wearing masks
As Wuhan hawk litres of fear along her rude express lanes
Sprinkling imported goosebumps on our skins dirty with sin
As confused faces learn statistics from the television screen
Our feverish factories have shut their smelly mouths in a hurry
Their tenants sit at home killing mosquitoes with bulldozers, jittery
Whispering in very silent cacophony, counting fate in daunting digits
Weekends, the blaring speakers shout quietly from their sore throats

Fear also has legs, we found our big brothers' shoes stuck in the mud
Watched planet earth fall down to her knees, her broken bones cried
She'd begged bandana to wipe her leaking anus, her infested lungs
Before the new crown toured the world, a reigning artiste on a circus
To the thirteen tribes of John's nirvana, greetings from Xi to the pope
Poisonous paroxysms, a chronic lunatic on the loose, while we grope
She came knocking at our doors, our sickle cell parents crowed attitude
They opened not just the doors, but the windows of our errors, nude

We heard the first knock before our planes could reach heaven's port
Then came the hush that broke our codes, made our arms grow short
Lagos sneezed but on her elbow, it echoed like a growling thunder
Her married sisters fainted with fear, their husband caught a high fever
Our markets suffered from bareness, our schools became graveyards

Ethanol for cleansing exorbitant, water and lathers in public parades
Indoors, we await the angel to pass over us, prayed our sins forgiven
While earth wears a mask, sitting on a faulty wheel chair, bedridden

LOCKDOWN

Franklyn Orode

Fear became the daughter of our distant relatives
Not by natural birth nor mutual adoption,
not by inheritance from our lost cousins far away
Not by a miracle for they feign knowledge of Bethlehem
Thus she carries her disgusting crown of rotten beauty
Around the playground of clay pots of human beings
And deities licking lies with our borrowed tongues
Until they all bow down to her deadly seductions
That suck their breath away through valleys of death

In Wuhan a dead child, a curse has just been born
For the world to lick the remains of her ingratitude
A traveler of repute planting goosebumps aplenty
in our skin of coloured dust, in our plastic skeletons
Fear does not knock on doors without a peaceful fight
But how do we learn to wear our new boxing gloves
When the giants yonder still lick their imported wounds
So they baptized the child not in the name of his father
And gave it a name his mother could not pronounce

Slowly and quickly she dropped her plagues everywhere
The vegetation sneezes as planet earth sat helplessly naked
On her wheel chair of misery, tendered to by very sick doctors
Lockdown is the new tradition, our markets have gone to sleep
And the industries fear to speak in their usual polluted tongues

INSIDE

Franklyn Orode

Inside with a putrefying silence stinks
As Kainji dams this place with darkness
My penumbra, a lonely companion I seek
Gathers crumbs of comfort around my wick
While fear found rooms enough here to rent
Freedom and I keep ourselves at arm's length
Through this enduring torture of purification
Behind my door, isolated in this open prison

Inside my belly, hunger plays the tambourine
And throw a party for the tenants living within
As palliatives got stuck in a Fulani man's teeth
We drink cups of promises to retain good health
I can no longer remember the colour of the moon
While keeping social distance even with my spoon
Tomorrow, you will find me still here on this seabed
Of depression, excavating my soul, finding fortitude

Inside, we sieve gory news from television headlines
Through my coughing gen suffering from tuberculosis
Who is knocking at my door without wearing a mask?
Get behind me good neighbour lest I become a skunk
To the round spiky mistress, I now bow in obeisance
Pillaging her spoils while we peep from our windows

Outside, the city still sleeps like a lungfish aestivating
While I mark calendars, home alone, patiently waiting

EARTH ON A WHEEL CHAIR

Franklyn Orode

A very gorgeous woman she once was
Adorned with a lovely headdress of vegetation
By the magnanimous sun, the husband of her youth
His favourite among a litany of nine wives and
countless concubines accursed with barrenness
Knowing not how to cook nor how to build a home
But earth has been fruitful since her wedding day
Her womb of dust, oh! so blessed beyond compare
So we lust after her immaculate beauty
Caressing her dangling breasts of drupes
That from them often we grab our mouthfuls
As regularly her periods come and go
We used to dance to the music of the earth
The nightingales singing for the clapping tides
The acrobatics of travelling streams as they glide
Through the hunched backs of hilly savannahs
We watched the sky gleefully strike her matchsticks
To light the lanterns for the cheering moon to dance
As night stretches forth her arms to cuddle us
So the rhythms can reach our dream lands
But Come and see her now

Come and take a look at her flawed face
How she's fast been losing her grin
How she's being stopped from going green
Come closer, do you still recognize her?
Can you still remember her name?
Is she still dancing with us?

She no longer wears her gown of three atoms
Of oxygen, shielding her from corrupt energy
Come and see the blisters in our skin,
The kwashiorkor garners of our land
The dead fishes spewed by sickening seas
For their throat can no longer bear the stench
Of black blood dripping from our greed

She's heartbroken
she's becoming a barren woman,
Water, her daughter has long lost her purity
And the air is an open grave for walking corpses
Of very tiny demons riding on dark horses

A very sick land lady earth has become
Poisoned by her own unruly tenants
Ungrateful for oxygen and for free rent
And helplessly she pastes her eviction notice

Upon the doors of our trembling temperaments
As Corona carries her message far and wide
While she sits on a wheelchair of misery

WHEN IT'S ALL OVER

Somadina M. James

So when finally, we're shod with serenity's soles
And there's a cessation of the emittance of foulness from our souls
When at last we've made peace with Peace
And a lasting yoke with love is bound beneath time's trees
When all earth has stopped to stink
Just then should all pause to have a rethink
As again we embrace fortune and kiss hope
Let's not forget how we made it clinging onto its rope
Let's not dismiss
Nor be displeased
With ashes from the magmas of smoldered dreams
Of American skins
Whose echoes
Sing mezzos
Of songs unsung
Pages unturned
Bells of hope not rung
From the ashes of demise
Filtered fears Pulverized
Wuhan wills unmaterialized
Italian wishes that breathless, lies
English visions that ne'er met eyes
Let's not forget in a hurry
As we dance to the demise of our worries

The fleet of chance-deserving bodies
That chose to walk our miles
So we'd bake on tiles
In the flames of the river's furnace
So that the earth's surface
Would still have voices
To tell their sad stories.

THE TEARS OF THE SUN

Somadina M. James

I had just returned from dream isles
When the sight of the sun smeared my eyes
He was bleeding furious drops
And at the same time sipping from sorrow's cups
The night before, the moon had feigned quintessence
But her tears sold her out, she couldn't hide her penitence
I thus inquired from the sun
What befell thee old man that you so mourn?
Not once have I known thee to be such one?
The one-eyed god, always bright sun jiggered as to me he turned
Pellets of golden tears rolling down his cheeks as he unto me beckoned
Hast thou seen the rivers, how they've stopped to flow?
Hast thou found the lost stars who has now refused to glow?
The brazen alters of sanity has taken too far a stroll
And as of when serenity will return from her journey, no one knows.
I mourn for all that's dust
For rottenness has found its way to the wind's gust
The earth now stinks for drinking wine from a smelly chalice
Comfort has taken to her heels; she will no man find
in the bosom of his beloved Alice
The time has come for all to take path in the ritual, the bloodbath
From Hell's treasury, Heaven's wrath
Son, seest thou not how without masks no man breathes
The clouds are sick and of their pus, creation stinks

It's here, the curse of the nations
But yet with eyes not these, I thus can see
With ears not these, I hear the seas
Senseless and at the moment numb, still I perceive
There yet remains a chance for man
To rekindle the flames and heal the land

The flames of devotion to one another
A chance to yet again, exist as brothers.

This the song I heard the sun sing
The words a dove did to my ears bring
The sun will still rescind his burns
The lost waters I know, shall be reborn.

OUR OLD LADY

Somadina M. James

Our old lady has been crippled
She danced to the cursed music
Her children are drunk from devilry
They made to move her feet
Until they tripped and became sore
She's now without access to her own soul
She's been denied passage to her own grace
See they want to cremate her living figure
Making haste to sniff essence out of her
They are choking her resplendence from within
They've resolved to shaming her before cosmic spectators
They've naked her too, before her wards
On the wheelchair of shallow hopes
She sits defrauded by the future
Today's not what it told her it'd be
Now she prays for a miracle
Perhaps the balm of time,
will heal her of this debacle.

DEAD STARS

Abe Victor

Now, silence rest in the bosom of my heart
Like the funeral of dead stars,
The moon seized my smiles,
I feel like a thousand butterflies laid to the dust
Seems my liveliness was stolen by the lightning thief
My high hopes reaching to the billows of heaven
suddenly, we're shot-dropped by despair

Seriously, I hate this house arrest
I hate the fact I couldn't cry
To hold my relief after the night
Thou, I find my way out from this prison
Outside is another labyrinth
with the inscription
"in circles you go, no way of escape "
Where all routes look the same
My dining table frown with boredom,
Welcome my new splinter cell

I miss those days
When my feet are not manacled by fear
Of earthen men in chameleon sartorial
When the tolling bells of citadels
Send a message to my little beginnings

I wish this was a nightmare
So, I need someone to wake me up
I think I prefer insomnia
If slumber is the mastermind

EYE- SORE NATION

Izang Alex-Marie Haruna

Wash your minds with sanitizers
Lest the touch of this poem infects them
Its lines are viral, vicious, and virulent
Be face-masked as you breathe them in

I'm writing this isolated in an eye-sore nation
Here people are clustered in search of survival
Only the palliatives are maintaining social distance
To survive here is to kiss goodbye to law and order

The atmosphere is polluted with rebellion
For which freedom is the needed ventilator
In my corntree this is how to bury walking corpses
Tell them: stick to your tents O Israel with no Manna

With the needed aids short in hand and selective
The streets will be pallbearers of bodies so restive
With the choices being the blue deep sea or the devil
The grim reaper is the winner whichever way

West of the Niger River feels convicted of nineteen virus
For their minds stay at bay from conviction - so livid
Down South the lagoons they feel conscripted to a crucible
While the other cardinal-points sit like boys on a fence

Allow us, like those across the River, to dare the dragon's fire
See if it can consume a people already liquid, who never tire
To paddle their canoes to places today knows not
Nor can morrow promise a return to normalcy

As we await help from a government who needs same
Between Isolation and an eye-sore nation who's to blame
Between a virus and human wickedness which kills faster
I choose the latter in both debates, Save us from ourselves.

HOMO - SAPIENS WHY?

Izang Alex-Marie Haruna

Where I come from, irony is The Lord of the Rings
There men have humbled forests to grow crops
They've outmuscled mountains to make roads
They have tamed raging waters with alluring dykes
And Damns have been set as class monitors over rivers
But the forest of ignorance still stands as knowledge lies low
Sentiments tower like mounts, no road for objectivity to pass
The putrid waters of greed and corruption overflow to drowning level

From where I come paradox is the rule of law as though
we had something to do with opening Pandora's Box; for
Of all arts, one alone has enjoyed the monopoly of progress
None but the all hallowed art of war; peace is now a prey
We are persons displaced and dispersed as guests in our home
See us walk over the clouds and swim better than fishes
See us fly faster than birds; but to live as brothers?
That's too much to ask in a corntree of animal farms

There, in that strange place I call home we've dug mines for gold
But the mine of the mind, the main brain in the membrane
That fertile soil is deemed a fatal toil and left fallow to be drained by erosion;
With a silent scream I echoed a cry: Homo Sapiens, why? Could it be that
The answers are artificial because the questions are not real
Maybe because truth and falsehood are no longer strange bedfellows

I heard they have made a social contract with Opinion
No right, no wrong, only what fits and suits
So as we take down bridges to build walls against each other
And with cavalier shouting 'away with love, crucify her crucify him'
May it not reach the point that even Calvary cannot be our cavalry

VULTURES GATHERING

Uzo Nwamara

The storm rages
and vultures gather
hovering over darkening
skies with their
monstrous wet wings

cries resound inviting
vaunting bald vultures
wearing emaciated necks
running out of
their famed patience
dancing in the
air and salivating
over living dead carrion

impatience is fitting
for fated failure
storms may rage
cries may resound

Yet we dig
in holding onto
this limping life
of ebbing tide

he has promised
and we know
whom we believe

EVIL WAVE

Uzo Nwamara

In this ship
tossed and turned
on this sick
sea we watch
with bated breath
as this evil
wave billows wild

We sit down
and laugh peeping
under we see
no beating heart

Its breath hangs
not reaching down
to rally velocity

Why the puerile
panic when the
gods cursed this
dark wave and
plucked its life
before its birth

we have seen
winds and waves
this dark wave
harbours light in
its brutal belly
as it threatens
sun and sky

smile brother for
this wave trails
off in a
rainbow as this
cruel snake seals
its cure in
its deadly venom

FROM WUHAN'S HEART

Asiwaju Abiodun Abdula'zeez

Evils sneaking out of worthlessness,
Pains emitting from Wuhan's heart
The toothless thing bites us harder,
And Satan smiles and rumbles his gut.

Colours and sunsets are anti-happiness;
Handshakes become a trench with snakes,
No clenching of palms to trade affection.
Homes become shrines to live and starve!

How do you stretch your calamities?
I mean your doom with just a strand
Like a tattered mat for a calling feet

Tears of deaths, pains of recurrences!
Tombs feed on our tears and sorrows,
Hearts become the occupancy of grief,
Our soul becomes a drainage for phobia.
Inhalation becomes filtration via mask,
No sympathy for sneezers like before,
Damn! How did we arrive at this place?

SUDDENLY

Asiwaju Abiodun Abdul'azeez

Suddenly corona lays her nineteen eggs

Hatching terror in our hearts of clay

A first-class burglar of countries

Shattering like glasses shot at close range

Suddenly there is this anomalous decorum;

Death's travelling train speeds at day break

Firing its engine with earth's premature tears

Stealing our smiles and laughter

While we grope about like a prodigal

Our labels of emotions

We've devoted to this unseen enemy

Mothers and fathers can not

anymore protect their children

As they drink from their jugs of grief

How life looked death straight in the eyes

And myriads mingle with mud without hesitation

As evil cracks its suspended layers. enraged

Suddenly the rich befriend silence

While hunger cuddles the poor to sleep

As both carry daggers behind a nose mask?

To battle their guest to a pyrrhic victory

Suddenly voices rise against corona

We wash of hands to sanitize our minds

And perform handshakes only in our dreams

Friendship's now a crime, a manslaughter charge

Keeping malice is cool, our new tradition

But when can we cease from hearing

these jungle drums of death

And let elegy be old hymns

We've lost enough dreams to this lunar eclipse

IMPAIRED

Charles Nnanna

Where's Harry Potter's wand?

Or Merlin's dragon?

There's a Morgana that needs to be burnt

Her darkness makes me walk with my heart on my sleeves

Whilst putting it under the pillow every night

To shield it from the voices on the screen

Scary voices, telling me how unsafe I am

Where are all the super heroes,

Captain America, Wonder woman...

There's an ugly black chart in my country

Having the colours of the traffic lights

But a monster is keeping civilians from going green

And there's too much traffic on the waiting light

John Wick, John Wick!

You brought men down — the number of a village

There's a vulture hanging on our flag

Come, come take it down.

Our doctors are fighting in the circle below

But this vulture sits above the table

Pouring its venom on any throat(s) on sight

So come help — go up and take it down

Impaired, impaired are our moon and sun
An eerie cloud covers our smiling skies
Probably there are X-Men somewhere
That'll clear the coast and erase the cloud

So we're waiting with our hands on our heads
Waiting for Barbie's magic
Or Cinderella's fairy godmother

To make a shoe that'll walk us through the doors of a cure
And a gown that'll attract the perfect answer from heaven.

SONGS OF SORROW

Jacob Ojima-Ojo Fidelis

See how I crumble,
Disaster looms in all nooks,
And panic visits all crannies
As my peace has turned null,
And hopes of man's safety, void.

But 'tis you, oh! man.

You caused me into this violence,
And even more, to come whence the monster
You hatch in guise of industrialization
Breaks totally free from its shell.
Have you not caused me damages enough?
You release such strong energies
To tear me apart, displacing my surface
Turning me into a monster swallowing things,
After which comes tsunami to wash down.

Natural habitats destroyed, poisons on fishes,
Deforestation of flora and fauna's dwelling,
Sun casts its bleached eyes glaringly
As Ozone molecules are constantly smashed
By man's halon and marsh gas.
But the more damage you cause me,
The more harm returns to you.

Until this monster you continue to hatch

Breaks out of the shell

Then there 'll be no more place

To find a hiding from the sun

ENEMY BE GONE

Jacob Ojima-Ojo Fidelis

You have the streets deserted,
Silence lingers all around
How pleasant is it for you
Roaming the streets all alone
With only silence as company?

Kisses; you've turned disastrous,
Handshakes; most dreaded calamity.
The world stands still in awe,
For many you sent to eternal sleep,
And many more down with affliction.

You've crippled the world,
And she sits atop a wheelchair,
Waiting for her legs to heal.
But hopes seem to be lost,
As songs of sorrow fills the air.

But this one thing is sure and certain,
In few years ahead, history shall you become.
And we shall bury you underneath our hearts.
A light shall overshadow the dark you carry,
And forever shall you our enemy be gone

TRAPPED

Samuel Oguche

With flowing eyes

I share this pie

Medical men on the run

Prayer alters burn

Daily; figures rapidly rise

As though it aims a golden price

many are cheaply dying

With medical tools barely sufficing

Daily hunger beats

No food to eat

On nothing we could feed

Cos men couldn't meet needs

Trapped indoors

Life; tough for the poor

Streets in locks

Still, death proudly lurks

To man up the war

We're out to face it raw

We wear nose masks

Despite the huge task
To sterilize
We sanitize
We wash our hands
Healer! Please heal our land
On us; fear daily speaks
Cos it's almost at its peak
In us; diverse thoughts splash
Like all will soon crash

We've lost hope
By your grace, we cope
Sinners we are
Yet we trust the healer

Dear Lord, we shall hear
Daily with our ears
To our dwellings
May it not come trailing

I'M NOT SAFE

Francis Onyedikachi

Father I am no longer safe
I cannot rest in the city
I cannot rest at day or at night
The loud music tears my eardrums
And I know not where to find healing
Last time I told you about
The carbon that destroys
The fine air we take in
My lungs are but charcoal
My skin is whiter than snow
I feel pain all over my chest
I am going to the forest
Where I can have fresh air
I want to go to the riverside
Where I know just peace
I don't wish now for paradise
But I just want a safe universe
So father please come and take
Me away from here
For I am dying slowly...

ALL HOPE NOT LOST

Olagunju Festus Olaoluwa

We thought things would never change
All seem to be doing incredibly fine
No one seems to have enough time
Everyone is in the rush to shine

Suddenly it came, like September torrents
Pouring on earth with unparalleled enthusiasm
It shocked the blue ball, like a man stepping on a live wire,
Making the world to convulse, like a malnourished child

Lessons not easily learned, now free to all taught,
Without options of choice, with noncompliance
setting on fire those without a hearing ear,
Making them choked, inside-out.

Soldiers peep behind thick veils of fear
Our hands keep malice with our faces
This we have learned to face.
The bullet cannot fight all battles.

Many dared to face you, in pain they languished,
Not knowing that your coronation
is of substantial consideration.
All hail the sudden world leader

Guilty and innocent, by death vanquished.

Husbands and wives separated,
Children now talk to their parents,
Through magical electronic glasses,
Desolated busy streets,
Ever smiling men now in tears,
Workaholics befriend idleness
And sleep becomes their new job

Mighty men are fallen,
Faces of strong men swollen,
The economy is drowning,
And the whole world is crying.

We have hope, the world will recover.
We are strong, the earth won't falter
Tears may last the whole night
And after that, we'll have a feast.

THE TWELFTH HOUR

Olaniyi Olajide

Everything's on a stand still

Like in a posture

For a family photograph

Everything on earth

Are on a pause mode

Activities crippled in folds

At the twelfth hour

Earth took a long breath

To clear the fog hanging

Over her air

Toxic fog

Logged by

Earth's visitors

Who has become suitors

Threatening to overtake

At the twelfth hour

Men grow handicapped,

Survival become the hit song.

The cloud now wear

A new garment --

Babysitting purified air.

Silence now dance
In the market place
Empty stores stare
At her intricate moves

ECHOES OF SILENCE

Olaniyi Olajide

Everyday,
Dawn draws hope
And men suck
From its bosom
Awaiting a second chance.

A dust is raised
Time sings hymns in an
Unknown language
The hour lost its voice
A dust is raised

Dawn - a gorgeous pink aurora
Tiptoed past snoring heads
While the sun still had
A sleep mask on -
There is an echo of silence
Gone are the days when
Alarms made early
Morning cry

Now we wake to
Only see the surprises

In the chest pocket

Of the day

The streets no longer

Hold stage drama --

Noise now serves jail terms

Crowd- it's alibi, is in rehab

There is an echo of silence

Across the land

LIFE WAS HERE

Samson Abanni

I'm here by the scene
of the Italian massacre.
I am here in Lombardy-
the site of the bombardment
I'm here for the service of songs
For the burial of humanity
The air is solemn, the silence sings
The only thing not under quarantine is fear

I hear that we are in a revolution
I hear that we are at war
That our attackers are invisible
That every home is now a trench
And we should take cover
And wake each day to count our dead
Today the number was four thousand
Life's on a lockdown, faith is under siege
Hope is all we now hope for

Death has changed its immigration policy
It now calls those who never applied.
But we have written to pause the earth
We all signed with our nose masks on
because death is now everywhere

There has always been a queue
of men leaving the earth
But someone somewhere, thinks
That queue is not moving fast enough.

THERE WAS A WORLD

Samson Abanni

There is war outside, why are we all inside?
Borders are for humans; borders are not for Corona.

Now we know
That the war's real, but our bulletproof vests
are made of plastic.

Money makes the world go round

But everyone is missing hugs.

The experts are talking in low tones

Remind them
that we are still washing our hands

The only one not working from home
is the sun, and his sons on the front lines.

They said we can no longer go outside
so I have sent my imagination.

But I know this world belongs to us-
we're already selling the land on the moon

So who is the landlord of Corvid-19

The future had asked us to wash our feet

Or return to the past

Some say death has come

to collect it backlog of taxes

I'm not angry at these rumors,

the world has enough weapons
but those weapons only kill men.

Everywhere is quiet,
but that quietness doesn't mean peace.
The park benches have told the park grasses
that the earth is closed for repairs.

Science now avoids mics and open places
Except on Skype, he's always with his nose mask
But we are still asking
Why the map makers are now asking for directions.
When the only ones in the streets are rumors and Corona.

How can you keep seven billion dreams indoors?
Something the earth could not do.
When did hiding become an act of valor?
Why are we recruiting nose masks?
instead of soldiers
We got no word that our worst war
Will be against things we cannot see
Who believed that we will miss the things we hate:
the traffic we disdain and the road rage?
So If we are not rats, why do we miss the rat race?

THE PLACE WE CALL HOME

Emmanuel Momoh

Yesterday, I took the evening off
just to think my thoughts and chew them like cud.
I watched the sun lazily resigned to its hut after a hectic day's job.
While I wandered off to the cozy coffers of my imagination
Writing this from the now dead streets of mile 12, Lagos
Still Seem a bit insidiously awkward

I recalled certain things I've mostly ignored
Like how some days before, we lost yet another neighbor
Not to death, but to a forceful isolation
"I'm afraid, you'll have to come with us.
You're exhibiting some of the major symptoms"
Were the exact words
of the overzealous members of the task force
He since has not been seen
nor heard from
'Symptoms' I retorted
since when has sneezing become treason?
Or has coughing in public become outlawed!

"How did we get here?
When did we become next door neighbors to fear?"
The air stings, the silence screams

And the sun doesn't even seem like his usual self
I threw a cursory gaze back and forth, here and there
I noticed that the flowers and trees
now seem like dysentery patient
They've all lost weight
Even the melodious hymn
of the lovely birds now seems like a dirge
I'm sure they too, have a sad tale to tell

But who cares to hear
When we must now wake up
each morning to number our dead.
And wonder who's next
on the black list of death

LEST I FORGET

Emmanuel Momoh

Before I forget how to shed tears
Let me cry a sea for mother Earth
Before my tear bank goes dry,
And my ink also forced into quarantine
Let me scrawl this dirge for posterity
To tell her how humanity was besieged by footless foes.

Before I forget how to knock heaven's gate
Let me adjure this day
For a visa back to yesterday
For reality has dished so much pain
On our pale looking plates
And tomorrow too, isn't wearing a friendly face.

Before crying too becomes an offense,
Let me cry a mighty torrent
For our heroes in death row uniforms
Who stake their lives at the warfront,
And traded their breath for our borrowed lives
Standing gallantly nose to nose with unseen forces
They told death that he wasn't welcomed here

After earth welcomes them with a standing ovation

Let posterity's lips sing them worthy encomiums

.

Lest I forget,

Corona is still singing

And we still haven't stopped dancing

Before the men up there

Tell us to change our dance steps,

Let me remind them

That we've forgotten how to share pleasantries

And that we now sleep with our facemasks on

and our sanitizers beside our beds

A DIRGE FOR MOTHER EARTH

Emmanuel Momoh

This morning, I was live
at the scene of another Carnage
I stood with misty eyes,
Trying both to remember and to forget.
I tried to remember who we were
before earth was confined to this wheelchair
And I tried to forget all the noise that have relocated
from the now dead streets into my head.

Where do we go from here?
Where else can we safely call home?
For mother Earth's now too Ill
And have given us all eviction notice
Cos she just mightn't house us all anymore.

Is she undergoing ecdysis as some claim?
Is it an evolution of or a prelude to a fresh start?
- a beautiful, stronger, new earth as others ascertain?
Is the Earth truly broken beyond repair?
Will she soonest, fall into forever's sleep as many feared?

Yesterday the statistics read a hundred scores

Today the figures have tripled

We've now gone from numbering our dead

To counting those that are left.

So if my neighbor greets me 'good mourning'

I'll ask him 'how many have you got left?'

With humanity pinned to an abrupt pause,

And hope still under quarantine.,

Fathers began scrawling their wills

And every son began aborting his dreams.

Everything that once mattered, mattered no more

For the pandemic taught us that all men are equal

They told us to prepare for death

For we all are on an endless queue evacuating the earth

They said our foes could pick anyone from anywhere on the queue

So nobody knows who is next

Well, since I haven't died before.,

I'm almost convinced there could be no death worse than this.

AFTERMATHS

Zugu Sesugh Enoch

When it is over,
We shall hear
The songs of outrageous palliatives
Given to the citizenry.

When it is over,
The palliatives
Will be accused
Of causing unstable economy.

When it is truly over,
Will the labour of selected few
Who died in the line of duty
Be recognized?

When it is completely over,
Will musicians world over
Gather to do 'collabo'?
Or will they throw love away?

And when the war is over,
Will betting houses return
With full force?
Will the customers patronize?

And when it is over,
Will football remain
Yes, the only uniting cult
And fans over patriotic?
It will soon be over.
Lords of the bar will resume
To embrace wholeheartedly
Their profession and 'calling'.

When it is over,
The bars will continue
For they were never closed
They were ever active.

When it is over,
The overpopulated miracle centres
Will open with shameless prophecies
Terminating 20years and above diseases.

When it is finally over,
Can we be human
With humane attitude?
Or activate the beast in us?

When it is over,
How many will retain their jobs?

How many have prepared
For looming food insecurity?

And when it is over
What will be said of the past?

DELUGE

Zugu Sesugh Enoch

In recent times,
It saunters our climes
Like in Noah's times
As a pay for our crimes

The turbulent water slides
With northern hemispheric tides
Dislodging activities from all sides
The earth does nothing but abides

We have always been streetwise
Hunting fish for a rise
In our statuesque for a prize
Which is no longer in disguise

The desperation of fish hunters
The manipulation of sinkers
Are all fragrance to dreamers
Supposedly accolade seekers

The dams are in shambles
Because of man's fumbles
Ego has resulted in lots of humbles

Which make constant rumbles

Lack of town planning

Inefficient gutter manning

Paper-talk river dredging

Disobedience that is overarching

All streamline into excessive flooding

We are at the mercy of our degeneration

Flood has come for reeducation

For out of our momentary inclination

Life suffers a bout of frustration

We may die while we live without aversion

We shall forever suffer the deluge

If we cannot embrace the judge.

SHE CAN'T WALK

Nwolisa Emeka Sydney

A dreadful age so stressed
Solutions are still far-fetched.
Why the ruthless ravaging
Causing pain and needles' carnage.
Victims are also underage.
Sanitizers have gone out of reach
Spirit that drives you away even from the rich.
Pleasantries are exchanged in distance
Turning friends to enemies in disguise.
It takes you fourteen days to incubate
It takes you less or more to annihilate.
You spare no one but kill in inches
Even the younger is still your victim.
Health workers toil day and night to create your vaccine
Carelessly without remorse you remain a killing machine.
Lovers are down spirited on Valentine
You make sure everyone is on quarantine.
You have brought the Earth to her knees

She breathes
Yet she can't walk.
Leaders brainstorm to get her on her feet
But report worsens as she tilts towards the pit.

I CAN'T BREATHE

Nwolisa Emeka Sydney

Man, of life appeared right at the beginning.

With an earth opulently green with fortune

Strong on her back enough to carry skyscrapers

Busy bustling life with good wax wrappers.

Just like the weak in the last lap of a race

She gradually lost a beautiful face.

The green with paleness has gone

The savor, from our greed, on the run

Man milks the earth before her mother's face

And shave the earth clean of her neat tree beards

She can't boast of her fortress

Man has exiled her forests.

Animals find homes to rent inches from our barn

And viruses share their hospitality also with man

Hear her plea - "I can't breathe"

Come hear the song of the earth

On a wheelchair crying for conservation

Choking endlessly from this deforestation

She'd beckoned on man for replenishment

But corona gives her manure for refreshment

LIFE IS LIFELESS

Falana Idowu Zion

The affluence and the wealth,
Are not to be compared to health
The fame we claim to aflame
All is about to inflame

The life we thought we were living,
In here is life without meaning

The gaze and the frolic fancy play
Drift away without a brace
The shining desire and the aims
The joy and the smiles,
All changed like sunshine to rain
At the advent of the invisible plague

I've not come with complaints to say
I've not come with flaws to glare
But I know,
We'd find a brace to our souls
Crafting meaning to our world
Leaving out our tangled pasts
Valuing ourselves beyond the affluence and wealth.

EARTH ON A WHEELCHAIR

Collaboratively written by:

*Onyedikachi Francis. Olagunju Festus Olaoluwa, Nwolisa Emeka Sydney, Falana Idowu Zion,
Izang Alex. Emmanuel Momoh, Samuel Oguche. Abe Victor and Zugu Sesugh Enoch*

Like heavy crumbled glaciers
Our hope's in smithereens
Laid bare to dust of despair
We look up to the teary skies
If tears would rain down a cure
And we're getting tired already
From this accident borne from recklessness
Perhaps from drunkenness or our blurred visions
Which terminate our greedy missions
As the breathing globe dance solitarily
And without reason, punctured by rusted nails
She's become a woman with broken limbs
Unworkable, un-walkable, absolutely unpalatable
The rain has fallen on us as tears
And we daily feast on tears as bread
For our old mother needs an antidote
As she crumbles on her broken feet
She's crippled, her psyche is burgled
Helplessly she lies down on her own sickbay

Beyond thoughts of remaining in motherhood
For disowning her own children have come to mind

We've become slaves in our father's kingdom
Captives even to our own freedom
So much inconveniences to bear
So we dance to the music of doom
While we welcome our new religion

She's been wrecked by her own children
She can't breathe anymore as she used to
For the air is agog with flying pestilences
But she wishes to walk again
And clear the eye-sores from her dimples
To rise up strong from this Intensive Care Unit
To bask in an avalanche of pure oxygen
And clear the black soot from her lungs

She sits solitarily on a wheelchair
But how can we let that here?
How did our feet's bring us here?
We won't let it be any more
We will fix some of her broken bones
We will be good children once again
We will plant fresh smiles on her dimples
Truly, she's sick of chronic ailments unknown
But our father up there will not let this prolong

WORLD NIGHTMARE

Igboji Obinna Matthew

The garment of the universe

Stained beyond recognition

The world is on its peak

The earth is bleeding,

Exhuming the corpses of centuries

Paving ways for the new ones

An uninformed visitor has paid a visit

With its peck of hunger

The streets are decorated with vultures

Without an adieu from beloved loves

Nature stopped taking its course

Ancient cities are but abandoned museums

Rome's prince is running out of frankincense

Seeking the face of the one upstairs

For Italy is deluged with lamentations

The faith of humans has been shaken

Religions comparing their holy books

Light and darkness share a resemblance

God's voice recognized by the atheists

America's soul has been stirred

Their might is on their knees

Scholars are out of rhapsodies

The sky is crying helplessly
like a child looking for the mother
The sun is mourning over the earth
Like a woman that had lost her husband

The cities of love are without romance
Britain the home of royalty is without servants
The queen has lost her vocal cords
The great wall of China is in poor yield

The war needs frontiers
The commanders are with vertigo
The troops lack the verve
The sour taste of expectations
Can we hear a sound of victory?

Our umbilical cord has been cut
Celebrations are strange here
Action of Pontus Pilate is literally on a mantra
Authorities are on self-imprisonment
They lack the power of freedom
Fear is the national emblem

The world's economy stands motionless
like a statue of liberty
Even indoors we're not safe
With fear engraved in our minds
-"Life is precious and priceless"

A lesson learnt in the reversed order

The message of appreciation

With its footprints on sand like a cinder

DEM SAY STAY AT HOME

Clementina e. Owumi

Dem say "Stay at Home"

Cook food plenty, Eat

Heap plate like say na last supper

Stay safe with family together

If power no show, bear the heat.

"Stay at Home."

Dem say "Stay at Home"

Watch TV till eyes wan fall off socket

spend money wey dey your pocket

Read, dance, sleep

Build up no sleep

sha "Stay at Home."

Dem say "Stay at Home"

Dry belle with fasting

Sun mouth if food no drop-in

Wet tongue if saliva dey dulling

Do something abeg no forming

"Stay at Home."

Dem say "Stay at Home"

Stay house with Wifey, Hussy, Pikin(s), Mille, Paale

do holiday with empty belle.

All na for one sure reason;

Corona na prison

"Stay at Home."

SOON

Clementina E. Owumi

Soon,

It will all be over.

Our nose will need no cover.

We'll shake our hands without fear
of unruly viruses flying in the air:

Neither of drying throats,
running noses

Nor of shivering whole;
mind, body and soul.

The mourning of our mornings
forced to embrace quarantine
for staying safe as an antidote

Causing a trembling silence;

A restructuring of habits, of our lives
Bonding families; husbands and wives
Booming businesses once seen as flaws.

Soon,

raindrops of our eyes will drip dry
as for corona we build a penitentiary
Bridging gaps built by "social distancing"
we, will break free like the morning

caged by a dark domineering night
of staying at home without light
We'll move without fear about on streets,
play like nothing matters, freezing this hotness:
fueling spending
and earnings burning
For this traversing fever
Soon, also will be over
We will all be together
without a reason to shiver

BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTING POETS



Franklyn Orode is a creative writer from Nigeria having a strong bias for poetry and prose. He is a graduate of civil engineering from the University of Benin. Franklyn has been writing poetry since he was a teenager but gave more impetus to it in 2017. He regards poetry as a means of momentarily finding his way around the vicissitudes of life. Franklyn's works have been published on Eboquills, SprinNg, voicesnet, PIN, hello poetry and elsewhere. He is the author of the poetry collection *ASHES OF ORANGE DREAMS*.

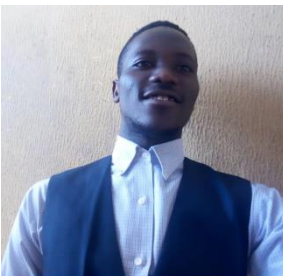
Franklyn writes from anywhere his engineering practice takes him to.



Somadina Michael James is a writer from the south eastern part of Nigeria. He is the author of "dance of dandelions" a collection of poems. He is one writer who writes basically for the love of art. Since 2019 till date he has contributed to many anthologies, local and international and has garnered for himself quite a collection of literary accolades. His romantic works has caught the eyes of blogzines and many other forums of art. He has edited for many literary giants, including the likes of Samuella J. Conteh of Sierra Leone. Somadina is a singer and a songwriter of the gospel genre. He is passionate about influencing the literary world with his romantic ink and leaving indelibly, his footprints on the sands of time.



Samuel Oguche is an undergraduate studying Biochemistry at the Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi State. He is a passionate young fellow who never let his love for poetry to be overshadowed by his chosen career. His works are majorly aimed at setting right the ills of the society. Added to his credit is an undying love for playing the guitar too.



Olaniyi Olajide is an educator, Author, Teen Personality Coach and Poet. He has authored short stories and poems and featured in various anthologies. He publishes his poems and short stories at Poetreehub, a dedicated Facebook page for everything poetry.



***Samson Abanni** loves telling stories with words and seeks to heal with poetry. He is the chairman of Samson Abanni foundation, a student leader and a final year medical student.*



***Francis Onyedikachi** is a poet and a short story writer. He is a graduate of English Education from the University of Jos. He is also an English and literature as well as an IELTS and PTE teacher. He has three yet to be published collection of poems from poets cutting across seven countries namely South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, India, Nigeria, USA and the UK.*



***Olagunju Festus Olaoluwa**. is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Local government and Public administration of Nigeria (CILGPAN). He is a poet, Public speaker, a Tie-dye Artist and an entrepreneur. He loves nature, especially livestock. Presently, he is also serving as a volunteer with an NGO.*



***Zugu, Sesugh Enoch** is a B.A (Ed) holder from Benue State University, Makurdi and is presently an M.A English student of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He has published papers in National journals and has contributed to published anthologies.*



***Charles Nnanna** is a Nigerian undergraduate studying Mass Communication at the University of Ilorin. He is a lover of poetic literatures and loves writing too. He is an optimist who believes that someday through the healing words of poets and writers across the globe, the large gap between justice and humanity may be firmly bridged. He goes by the pen name “RunnyInk”.*



***Jacob Ojima-Ojo Fidelis** is a Nigerian undergraduate. He has a dream of becoming a lawyer but at the moment studying Counseling Psychology at the University of Benin. He loves literature and strongly believes that poetry is a strong means of expression, and a way to set people aright from societal ills.*



***Izang Alex-Marie Haruna** is from Jos, Plateau state of Nigeria currently studying Criminology and Security Studies at the National Open University of Nigeria. A catholic Christian by religious orientation; literary enthusiast with strength and preference for poetry and reviews. He has been published in many local and international journals, magazines. Anthologies and Blogs. He is currently working on a couple of self-publications.*



***Nwolisa Emeka Sidney** is from Anambra State, a Bsc Business Administration Holder from the Ahmadu Bello University and an associate member of the Nigerian Institute of management (NIM). He has lived equal part of his life in the East, North and now west of Nigeria which have all come together to embolden his love for poetry as a unifying source, a place of solace.*



***Asiwaju Abiodun** is an Iseyin born young poet and a medical practitioner in the Nigerian Navy. He has an HND in Dental Technology from Kwara State College of Health Technology and a Technician certificate from the Nigerian Navy School of Health Sciences(NNSHS). He is a member of the Nigeria Young Writers Association, Association of Nigerian Authors, Bayelsa State. His works have appeared in anthologies titled 'My daddy' and 'the burning desires', in online magazines and elsewhere.*



***Uzo Nwamara** is a poet, playwright, novelist, broadcaster, editor and publisher. He studied English and literature at the Abia State University, Uturu and at the University of Port Harcourt. He contributed to and co-edited "Rivers of Treasure" and co-authored "Elechi Amadi: A Quintessential Giant". His collection of poems 'The Stone breakers' and his play "Dance of the Delta" are on reading lists of Universities and Colleges. He is the current Chairman, Association of Nigerian authors (ANA), Rivers State Chapter. He lives in Port Harcourt, rivers state.*



Momoh Emmanuel is a blooming Nigerian poet and writer from Edo State presently residing in Ogun State. He stumbled on his passion for writing in 2018 and since then had a lot of poems to his credit. He is presently studying Civil Engineering Technology at the Federal Polytechnic Auchi. He enjoys learning French, listening to gospel music and reading fictional as well as adventurous books.



Falana Idowu Zion was born to the family of Chief E.B Falana. He published his first work in 2017 titled 'The world' and has thereafter written for different magazines and anthologies. He aims to make the world a better place through the use of his talents and skills. Above all, he loves creativity and impact. He blogs at www.idowuzionspoems.wordpress.com



Igboji Obinna Matthew an artist and a poet from Ebonyi State who is currently an undergraduate studying Psychology at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. He grew up in and presently resides in Anambra state.



Clementina E. Owumi is a creatively crafted creature with a blend of natural gifts that sets her apart from her peers. She is a writer of wise words and performer of poetry. She has written/still writing countless inspiring poems, gracing stages across the country, serving spoken word as an art for the heart in lines of advocacy, affirmation, advisory to name just a few, to her audience. In 2013, she was recognized by Words Rhymes and Rhythms (WRR) for her commitment to the art and also by Poets in Nigeria (PIN) in 2017 and 2018 respectively. She has been consistent in serving as a spoken word artiste during the grand finale of the Nigerian Students poetry prize since 2017.