

The background of the cover is an abstract composition. It features large, overlapping shapes in shades of blue and yellow. A white, featureless human figure is positioned in the center, with its arms raised. Black hands are visible, one on the left shoulder and one on the right arm, suggesting a supportive or protective gesture. The overall mood is somber yet hopeful, reflecting the theme of the anthology.

DO NOT DIE IN THEIR WAR

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE APRIL-MAY 2022
BRIGITTE POIRSON POETRY CONTEST (BPPC)

EDITED BY: BRIGITTE POIRSON
& KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON

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DO NOT DIE IN THEIR WAR

TOP 20 POEMS OF THE
BRIGITTE POIRSON POETRY CONTEST (BPPC)
APRIL / MAY 2022

Edited by
BRIGITTE POIRSON
KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON



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National Library of Nigeria Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Cover Design: Grafreaks

Published in Nigeria by:
Words Rhymes & Rhythm
Authorpedia Publishers
Abuja | Lagos | Ibadan
08169027757, 08060109295
www.wrr.ng/



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INTRODUCTION

Do not die in their war!

In this anthology, Joseph Olumide, leads a pack of poets loudly protesting against war. The poems in "Do Not Die in Their War" admonish, lament, question, and dream while pricking our consciences and painting our wounds in heartfelt verses. Stop the War, they scream, and their feelings are clear in their poems.

Why would a poet say, "*Do not die in their wars*," when the world is still reeling from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the countless victims did not choose to be victims? This is a valid question, but the poet is right because war neither begins nor ends on its own.

Humans are the ones who start wars and, deliberately or unknowingly, create the conditions that eventually destroy them and other innocents. Therefore, it is we humans who must come together so that we do not 'die in their wars'.

"Do Not Die in Their War" is a delightful read worth sharing.

Kukogho Iruesi Samson

May 2022

HONOUR ROLL: APRIL/MAY 2022



OLAJUWON JOSEPH OLUMIDE is an award-winning Nigerian poet, soul singer and author. He studied Mass Communication at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, and teaches English Language and Literature at the secondary school level. Olajuwon has published three books, including *'Walking the Pathway'* of Excellence and *'Beyond Our Dreams'*. He has also won the *Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (BPPC)* a record four times.

BLESSING OMEIZA OJO is an award-winning writer and author of *Light Dish*, a 2020 poetry chapbook. His writing has been published or is forthcoming in *Split Lip Magazine*, *Ohney*, *Icefloe*, *The Deadlands*, and elsewhere. His literary awards include the 9th Korea-Nigeria Poetry Prize (Ambassador Special Prize), the 2020 *Artslounge Literature Teacher of the Year* award, the 2021 *Words Rhymes & Rhythm Nigerian Teacher's Award*, and the 2022 *Maryam Aliyu Award for Best Teacher (Male)*. He is presently a creative writing instructor at Jewel Model Secondary School, Abuja, Nigeria."



JEW OGHENETEGA is a poet, creative writer, and Christian spoken word artist. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in *WSA Magazine*, *Brittle Paper*, *PoeticAfrica*, *Artslounge*, *Itanile*, *Mayó*, *ChristApoet*, *Spillwords*. Jewo is the winner of the *CreativeNaija Blog's LAMNIGERIA Contest* (writing category), and 2nd runner-up of the BPPC (August/September 2021). He is presently an undergraduate of Medicine and Surgery at Lagos State University.

APRIL/MAY 2022 TOP 10

1. OLAJUWON JOSEPH OLUMIDE
2. BLESSING OMEIZA OJO
3. JEW OGHENETEGA
4. PRAISE EBIRIM
5. HASSAN A. USMAN
6. ZION AYOMIDE SHITTU
7. NNADI SAMUEL
8. FRANKLYN ORODE
9. OLAFISOYE-ORAGBADE OLUWATOSIN DAVID
10. UDE VIVIAN CHIDIMMA

After Dele Farotimi

Since I sauntered here from a place mocking empiricism,
I've begun to read the algorithm of life.
As a student of life, I've found out that:
Proselytizing of ideologies is the con monster
Behind the missing peace of this tired place.
I've felt the hellish embers of cold war—in subtlety—
Calling for hot spills of blood on the lease of life,
As instruments of war are passing messages of doom.
Look up the rack of reminiscence,
You'd see the medals of death hung with pride
Like the guns of dissents! Open your ears!
Hear the onomatopoeia of nuclear fireworks
From Russia to Ukraine, the staccatos of mocking rhythm
Weaving a dance of shame for humanity!
History is the museum bearing such documentaries
Of fledging stars stuffed in the cheeks of death.
Can you see marauders still killing for god in Sokoto?
We must learn the art of repelling this great evil
That won't let half of a yellow sun morph in full hope of dreams.
That war is a clarion call of folly to die for the Selves
In some faceless plotters using tools of Religions,
Politics and Mammon for their divide and rule.
They know Rome is the mob, mob is the game.
Let's enroll the mob in the school peace
With the diplomatic mantra, "Do not die in their war!"
If not, letting arms in the hands of fools is sitting on kegs of gun
powders.

UNLEARNING THE ART

BLESSING OMEIZA OJO, 2ND PRIZE WINNER

It's dawn, yet the day scents like darkness garnished with death.
War is a lost man who goes around and returns with silence.
On this Earth, how much of an antler can we be?
Every war has its own venom. You look at a city once greeted
in a destructive language and see its embers dancing in the wind.
My eyes, tired of waking up to the red sea flooding the street
of all memoirs will not close tonight if my cousin doesn't return
as a flower, petals unbroken. Thinking of my losses here,
to the edge of swords, to the embrace of a bomb, to the kisses
of bullets, to the cuddle of fire, every shadow in my house resembles
the portrait of bodies lost to war- that of a stunted candle with which I
read
from the catalogue of war that my father lost his legs in an ethnic saga,
looks like the hand of a child whose body sunk into the wind.
This place, volatile, unwilling to be christened a home, is a war zone:
over land dispute, a man churns a machete from his rage and strikes
his brother. Nearby, a woman is carving arrows out of her words.
God, will I be here to witness another harvest of bodies by ravens?
My muse could bless me with an elegiac poem today.
Blessings of war. Blessings of blood. Blessings of bodies.
But I do not want to be a poet borne of war- a poet of bloodlust.
I do not want to win a contest with a poem carved out of massacre.
Swears: into the ash heaps of history, many have been entombed.
War is an art as much as peace. Here and now, let's unlearn the art,
sheathing our weapons like God, in the cloud.
And let it be rain or nature making flowers bloom.
Let it be roses touching my skin from the oval mouth of a gun.

RAVENS

JEW OGHENETEGA, 3RD PRIZE WINNER

Beneath skies crackling with thunder, we were fed crumbs of lightning
just enough to cause the earth to rumble,
but never enough to spur total chaos,
every reverberation accompanied by war threats disguised as news
headlines.

The first time we heard the rains visit with more than just thunder,
we struggled with crippled tongues to find onomatopoeic synonyms for
bomb-blasts.

Our screams clawed their way out of abdomens that had learnt
to stomach anxiety, like a festering ulcer.

In every house the evening hymn bore a bit of sorrow in it,
and the night gradually became diurnal, encroaching into the sunrise,
as diplomatic tempers teetered on twig-like limbs,
and ears deafened to reason birthed discord in cold hearts.

The peaceful streets, the quiet walkways, the serene neighborhoods,
all gone in the blink of a ballistic missile's eye.

The streets now lay like folded sleeves on the shoulders of other streets
and houses slept on each other, amidst searching for the corrugated iron
caps
that once roofed their now bald heads & shielded them from the
autumn wind.

Ravens drifted through the black skies,
bearing forgotten memories on broken wings,
saturating the atmosphere with the sound of missing laughter.

And now our hearts beat with a unified message: STOP WAR!!.

WHO MADE YOU GOD

PRAISE EBIRIM

Who made you God?

It is the question he forgets to remember before he pulls a trigger,
Cuts another up with his words or his knife,
Then says it is for his God.

Who made you God,

For you to term another religion wrong
As long as that belief is contrary to yours?
You say your religion is the right one,
Yet, you are the picture of what people will never want to become.

You feed your children their differences before their first breast milk,
Pass down hate like it was a gift from their genes.
If the very thing that should bring unity
Turns you to monsters,
You must be looking at the wrong side of the mirror, you see.

I wonder if God will congratulate you for every blood you spill,
Every pain you gift
To the people whose crimes are to be of different beliefs.

The sun will not only rise in the east,
Will not live in the north,
And this earth we are in belongs to no cardinal point.
So wake up, you have blasphemed for too long

A BOY REMIXES THE SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE INTO AN AUBADE FOR PEACE

HASSAN A. USMAN

Here I am, staring at all the red in the news
and grasping my eyes from aching. I pray

silently, beckoning God to rebuild the quietude
that once was, then mutter to myself:

how many more bullets will hit my country
and throw frail bodies into an orifice of

forgotten bones? War equals to budding dreams
punctuated with the mouth of a gun, equals to

an array of voices becoming a map that searches
for home, equals to one dead body leading to

another, equals to dust preluding back to dust.
Look, I want to be a bird lodged in the treetop,

untouched by the outbreak of gunfire, but
isn't this a remake of Judas in the Bible?

The belly of this land hungers for peace, for
a constellation of doves strewn across

the blood-soaked sky. I forgive the enemies.
I forget the remarrying of my mother to a cannon.

In this poem, I let bygones be bygones.
My feet are crossing sand dunes towards
the desert sun— everything can be warm again.

THE SMELL OF WAR.

ZION AYOMIDE SHITTU

The scent of gunpowder burns in the air
as flesh rips open pathways for bullet wounds
till blood spatters burst into fountains
on the same marbles where we preach peace.

The savour of incense still smokes a while
before bodies fall like logs hewn to the ground.
The aroma from the blossoms on the pulpit
entwines in a noisome whiff from heavy sores.

The spice from the steaks are still fresh till
fleeing feet quake and raise dust without quotas.
No one who sees a poisoned spear dart, densely
pocking out the bowels of a woman, says "run".

The tidings of death made bare playgrounds
with stinks from shrinking masses turning bone.
Fear dances savage moves on the hearts of kids.
There is still a small ball and a small frisbee
till darkness creeps upon the sky in a rush,
rips joy off the faces of tree houses.

The redolence of peace I love.
I hate the burns. the rancid ruins of conflict,
the sour spring of bloodshed
the frosty field of dead men.
I hate the smell of war.

FOR EVERY BUS STOP, THERE IS AN EQUAL SPORADIC SHOOT OUT

NNADI SAMUEL

This asthmatic lad pouring his breath into the failed exhaust system of a minibus—

English resting on his tongue,
a vow pinning him to the asphalt granite.

I attest to that verb full of cartridge and deadly spark.
I attest to stray bullets, misplaced hit,
to the hastiness in burial rites.

A middle-aged man tucking in the road's belly
his only son: a heartbreak of a child.

Death comes in tripod:
two ruptured arms and a displaced head shoved under a blanket of ash.

An upturned carcass was once a neat corpse anyways.
And how to account for what rage turns benevolence to a boneyard?

How he laid bone-close to the earth,
till his skin browns the crimson soil;

each mound, a pathway to every foot seeking safety,
as they race, still uniformed in their grief;

boy lacing and re-lacing his heartbeat in the hour
of its panic attack— pulse searching, as the nurse
is rummaging a body for pockets of life.
See, there are no easy routes to resuscitation.

Teenagers, spelling knife backwards.
the scar re-hatching in the ugly fashion
of a camo— blood patterned to roughening.

May God see the wound in all of this:

that the children are sore footed trudging,
maybe aware of their being chased into the slaughter they were born for,

a barrage of slayed teens tucked in the road's belly.

COUNTRY BLUES

FRANKLYN ORODE

Ask my countryman for a feel-good song,
He'll sing for you melodies,
Panting rhythms, the sound of bullets,
High notes the colour of blue,
An endless ballad of brokenness.

Ask my countryman for a dance,
You'll find him tamping his feet,
Etching on warm-blooded earth
The names of forgotten boys
Bearing fronds and hashtags,
Teardrops overflowing the mind bank
Stoking cinders of dear October night.

Ask my countryman for an evening meal,
He'll offer you cups of cold hospitality
And a peppery bowl of lamentations,
Harvests from farmlands left in horror,
A daggered hope overrun by quadrupeds.
His heritage exchanged for a bite of kilishi.

Ask my countryman for a toast,
You'll puke from his cocktail of grief,
A sweet bitter brew of red whines,
Of curses copiously poured
Into fine glasses of benediction.

SONGS OF SONGS

OLAFISOYE-ORAGBADE OLUWATOSIN DAVID

There was still the taste of father's prayers on our tongues
when his body became a well
we had thirsted for too long; water was no longer sufficient.
blood is thicker than water

I remember mother's flesh became a map to peace,
we would hide in her skin with prayers to her heart:
"keep playing music even after this".
music is food for the soul

when our shadows would become Judas
planting goodbye kisses before the sun would.
We weren't man enough to make a life but enough to take one,
a man's enemies are members of his own house

our laughter becomes prisoner buried underneath our tears,
cause we have seen brothers become ghosts like the tears of the gods,
yet we wear badges, the skin of the bullet that ended their lives.
after all, life goes on.

The melodies of bombs, the choruses of bullets singing songs that
whisper to the skin,
the anthem of marching feet:
music is glorious before death.
How bodies became notes - flat on the ground -
from one camp to the other,
from one generation to the other.
"War does not determine who is right - only who is left".

WE SHALL KNOW

UDE VIVIAN CHIDIMMA

If our remains see day break,
If this choice of ours forpasses
The aftermaths of our bravery,
We shall know.

If our soldiers retreat
In their full regalia
With a treaty and our homes placid,
We shall know.

If dawn sees our strong ones
Defect, and home with
shoulders and no forelimb,
We shall know.

If our sisters birth their tears
With curses on the donors,
Their teeth gnashing in pain,
We shall know.

If there is a roof for the young
Or protruding bellies of hunger
In its stead and camps of filth,
We shall know.

if only dusk meets life in us,
We shall know that this quest
Is an evil breeze blowing no good.

Until then, son of the King,
Close your eyes to slumber,
That I may remove your limbs,
So you live for tomorrow limping.

STOP WAR!!!

TANIMONURE RICHARDS ADEWALE

in my father's mouth
I traversed a path of horror
where two brothers burnt
a mother into an awful sore
of the half of a yellow sun.

baptisms of triggers
drowning peace and unity
in the murky red seas
of innocent corpses.

wailing and dying cities
gasping the air of mercy;
battered bodies of rubble wounds
writing the pathetic painful poem
of two brothers at their jugulars.

crazy!

war is a foolish earth.
a very foolish mother
burning her precious children
with the cruel fire of greed
and thick selfishness.

war is the heavy heaven's tears
running a begging river
into the souls of all continents.

"please, spare my children.
fight the monsters in your hearts
and kill their murder of your conscience.

stop war!!!"

WE ARE TIRED

PAUL ABIOLA OKU-OLA

We are tired...
Weary of the noisy sky,
The cannon's cry,
The unending shell,
The incessant quell.

We are tired...
Weary of the tears of the orphan,
The yell of the groaning man,
The sorrowful outburst of the widow,
The continuous sight of unending sorrow.

We are tired...
Weary of the uncertainty engulfing our future,
The fear enrobing our nature,
Our buried motherhood,
Our demolished brotherhood.

We are tired...
Behold:
In bits our joy is washed away every moment.
Beware:
Within minutes
Our beloved lie in empty pits.

SYNOPSIS OF HOW TO END A WAGING WAR.

CHUKWUMA-EKE PACELLA CHIOMA

Today I asked a masked man
how he had picked my identity

and he drew out the scars on my tongue.
He said my polity would perish in

the hands of this unholy war.
War, I mean the simultaneous scenarios of

massacred heads without their bodies
sweeping the belly of Kaduna

or bodies without heads—
scurrying away from the unseen gunmen at Abia,
dressed in the attire of the half-sun.

Then I asked how we could end the desecration of the already bruised
Nigeria. Instead, he draws my gaze to three birds sharing a sky.

'Are you ready to dine with
unity? ' he says ' to bury your tongue and hate?
Listen, child— if you wish to wake tomorrow

without the news of a knifed couple at Abuja
or embrace school without the fear of Chibok's

reincarnation, you must first call your neighbor
brother even if his tongue is foreign in your land

and engage that so-called 'minority' palms
in a rally to the full sun.

I am fit. But are you ready
to end the war too?

PORTRAIT OF A BOY MAKING A SANDCASTLE FOR PEACE'

TOBUN PELUMI OMOFOLAWÉ

I stand on the heart of this poem and dagger it with the fire
underneath my skin.

This is the home where I, a boy, creep out of fear and beg for
peace,

where peace clots and morphs into a tiger shredding things -
breaking bones,

consuming houses, making a country a cemetery of memories
- of how children gathered at the roadside to make roadblocks,
of how the country was a reality striving to live at its zenith.

Each day is a night communing with Hades,
with bombs spinning from the sky like raindrops,
shoving people into the underworld,

and news bathed in red hues of bodies mortified into corpses.
I stand as a boy, mentally extradited by this war,
subjugated by the chaos roaming the streets,

amening the Lord's prayer to sleep, hoping when I awake
everything will be boxed in a dream.
This war is a death sentence by the disaster looming in the air.

The country is tired and itching for truce; so am I,
I want to be a bird once more and fly my way across the street,
I want to be that naive boy, oblivious to pain, to suffering,

and many other things that give pain to the body.
I beg for peace in this home, this poem. I offer a truce,
in hopes to form an alliance and end this war.

PLAYING A GAME OF IFS WITH THE ABSENCE OF MY
BROTHERMEN. REMAINING NAMES ARE; HOME, SHELTER,
WAR, SONG, & POEM.

OLUMIDE MANUEL

If a country is a home
you are to love with the whole
of your mottled heart,
this is uneven and splintered.

If its roads are a shelter against trauma,
the news we heard is wrong.

If it were a war we ought to fight,
It wouldn't be this war.

If it is a poem, each verse
a measure of douse taming the flame

we've kept under the fabrics
of casual corruption,

Then finer it will be as a song,
the melody healing us back to the
lost politics that

the country is ours before we were hers,
before we filled her with many names,

before a name became the gnashing
of history or the shards of democracy

in loops of national traumas.

Still, let's maintain that the country
is not the monster.

The land was green, was milk,
or the promise of one before the bleach
of war and chaos.

Bows and arrows, wailing and sorrows,
Bombs and guns, crying of widows,
Missiles and rifles here and there,
Groans and moans everywhere.

I stared and stared,
Looking at bodies lying dead.
I gazed upon life's emptiness,
Sipping from pity's winepress.

Alas! why the cacophonous sound?
Why the bloodstain on the ground?
Why make our people bleed?
Enough is enough, peace we plead.

Enough is enough, embrace peace.
Stop the war and let the killings cease.
Together, let's stand and unite as one,
Yes, for peace and for the new dawn.

Let's live in one accord, uncombative,
Shunning antagonism, for it is destructive.
Together, let's redefine the value of life
And treat each other without strife.

Once, a mother held her son like a tulip
and he wilted in her very palms. Armed, a father
became a sandpaper, rubbing the triggers
of bullets to shape-shift into sawdust - broken
in shreds and particles till he vanished from the earth.

We said goodbye without waving.

Sages of my land have the right adjective
to describe the wrong noun - war.
'*agha ajoka*,' - war is uglier than the grumpy
looking gelatinous blobfish. It throttles and
breaks our flapping wings of progress.

The scene of the carnage is still
lucid to me like a still water. Time
regurgitates the memories and here
I cry me a river at the reminiscence of
how men with castrated conscience
squeezed living water out of others.

We said goodbye without waving.

Nothing sprouts in a war-torn country;
things there only grope for sunlight.

So, when sages hold out an olive branch at the gory sight of war,
don't call it cowardice. Peace is war
against forces that impede growth here.

So, when sages see the tocsin, they chant
'*ozoemena*' - may it never happen again.

OUR HOME IS A FIELD OF GRENADES

OYELAMI BRIGHT

How long can I hold my breath under this water?
How well do I write a piece that keeps dropping
like tons of cotton on the river that parted our home?
In my father's house,
the wall is the grief of a mother,
whose body is a gallery of scars from a broken home.
In my room,
there was a sound track that reminds me of a boy burning in hell,
that was my mother, and my father cremates its ruins.
In my mother's room,
my mother doesn't have a room,
so each night, she loses herself to the storm that dines on our balcony.
Yesterday, my Pastor spoke about Hades,
and I told him I left there this morning for church,
and from there, I'll be lost and free.
I'm not going back to war with the devil,
but this poem will run home to tell the tale of a broken boy
who limped into the arms of the street.
This poem will be me—
a muezzin crying to God to give this piece
a chance to find our home.
This poem will be a book to my father,
written with blood through my mother's memory,
this poem will be me pleading to him with eyes covered with brimstone-
red,
this poem will be a piece of me crying.
This piece of me is how I started dying at the age of 12.

STOP WAR

OLADIPUPO, OLUWAMUYIWA GABRIEL

In agony, I cry for civilization.
Day and night, blood and corpses in the alley
Children prowling the highway in starvation.
When are we to breathe peace with no injury?

Gone were wars that clutched some homes,
Mothers at home but fathers deceasing alone.
Men no more. Children bent to war troopers.
When can we flee from warfare and its drone?

With tears and sweats hot like the sun
Dwellers live their lives without fun.
Bombing and shooting make us run
Regardless, killed or maimed on the run.

The country's reserve will suffer the loss.
School structure will have to be on pause.
Taxes and levies are the ones to consort,
Yet, martial law will still take its course.

Our future is dulling and dimming.
Youths are becoming more spontaneous
To recoup and restore the world from waning.
Alas! all feats still lead to a war of mutinous.

How can we avoid the endless war train?
The cloud full of blood might rain
A downpour of doom and death and tears.
Mind allowing truce and unity with care?

Cease the ceaseless seizing war and wrath!
War wields the worst wrought warships.
Only the dead have seen the end of the war.

PIECES OF YESTERYEARS.

PEACE NKEIRUKA MADUAKO

The song of a thousand years
Rising in the midst of the land
Where souls lie in dust and ashes
From the ruin of loveless men,
These whisper with their last breath:
"Avenge my blood this day."

The sting of the past rumbles within,
The living pieces of the yesteryears.
Some draw their swords once more
To fight a broken war
Through which hate lives on in us
In the choice we make this day.

We claim love with words,
Yet tread the path of blood
Where many die in the pool of revenge;
Their soles bare under their feet,
Their souls dead within their bones.
The war remains outside the door
From where the saints cry aloud,
"We want to be free from the yesteryears!"

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading this chapbook.

The monthly [Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest \(BPPC\)](#) is a writing contest aimed at rewarding the under-appreciated talent of young Nigerian poets. It was instituted in February 2015 in honour of [Brigitte Poirson](#), a French poet, editor, and lecturer, who has over the years worked assiduously to promote and support of African poetry. You too can be a part of the BPPC initiative by [entering your poems for any of the monthly editions](#).

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