

A SPRINNG 2020 ANTHOLOGY

SprinNG

A Nigerian Literary Society

www.SprinNG.org

WHY I WRITE

Contributors:
Select Mentees of
The SprinNG 2020 Fellowship

Compiled and Edited by
SprinNG

Other books in this series:

1. WHY I WRITE: Selected mentees of The SpringNG 2019 Fellowship

WHY I WRITE

(A SPRING 2020 ANTHOLOGY)

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About SprinNG



Website: www.SprinNG.org

SprinNG was cofounded in 2016 by Kanyinsola Olorunnisola and Oyindamola Shoola and it is currently managed by a team of 8. **SprinNG** is a literary **Society** for the **Promotion, Revitalization, and Improvement of New Nigerian Generations** in Writing and Literature.

This anthology is a compilation of writings by select mentees of the 2020 SprinNG fellowship.

The SprinNG Fellowship is a free intensive 6 weeks online mentorship programme for developing writers with great potential and willingness to learn.

- In January 2018, 9 writers were selected to be mentees as the first cohort.
- In August 2018, 20 writers were accepted into the fellowship.
- In 2019, 25 writers were mentored.
- This year, 48 writers completed the fellowship.

This anthology is a representative of the 2020 cohort with writings by 21 of the 50 writers accepted into the fellowship's fourth cohort, 48 of which completed the programme requirements.

Applications for the fellowship open January of every year. Visit www.SprinNG.org/fellowship to learn more.

2020 SprinNG Fellowship Cohort – Mentees

Of the 50 mentees accepted into the programme, here are 48 writers who completed the fellowship's requirement.

1. Abdulrahman Adetunji
2. Abubakar Aliyu
3. Adedayo A. Onabade
4. Adedayo Ademokoya
5. Adenuga Adepeju
6. Adeola Oke
7. Adetola Babalola
8. Ajayi D. Folorunsho
9. Ayomide Akintayo
10. Ayomide D. Oriolowo
11. Busayo Orisasona
12. Chisom C. Iboko
13. Christabel W. Kwalbe
14. Chukwunwike Obi
15. Dorcas Odok
16. Gbotemi Oni
17. Gimbiya Galadima
18. Hammed Sulaiman
19. Humainat Raji
20. Ibukunoluwa Dada
21. Ifemide Omolawal
22. Ijeoma V. Ogbonnaya
23. Islamiyyat A. Asiru
24. Izunna Okafor
25. Jesutofunmi Adetoogun
26. Jola Dipe
27. Jonathan Ayeni
28. Joses Adewara
29. Malik Kolade
30. Mbanulisi O. Gabrielle
31. Moses O. Odejobi
32. Nureni Ibrahim
33. Obinna T-F. Ochem
34. Oghenemaero Olori
35. Ojo O. Emmanuel
36. Okafor J. Oluwadamilare
37. Olagoke F. Oluwatosin
38. Oluwasegun I. Daramola
39. Oluwaseyifunmi Dawodu
40. Onuoha M. Emmanuel
41. Orode O. Elizabeth
42. Rachel Dada
43. Roseline M-A. Okorie
44. Temiloluwa Adeniyi-Aogo
45. Tochukwu N. Daniel
46. Tolulope Dimeji-Olaoye
47. Umar Salman
48. Winifred O. Odunoku

2020 SprinNG Fellowship Mentors

We thank our mentors for participating in this opportunity of service to improve and revitalize Nigerian literature!

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Aanu Jide Ojo | 24. Mbanefo Chibuike |
| 2. Abdulsalam A. Dante | 25. Mesioye Johnson |
| 3. Abimbola Mosobalaje | 26. Michael Akuchie |
| 4. Adedayo Agarau | 27. Michael I. Oladele |
| 5. Adekunle Adebajo | 28. Nome E. Patrick |
| 6. Aremu Adams Adebisi | 29. Ogunfowodu Olufemi |
| 7. Christtie Jay | 30. O-Jeremiah Agbaakin |
| 8. Ebukun G. Ogunyemi | 31. Ola W. Halim |
| 9. Ejiro Lawretta Egba | 32. Olanrewaju Oranyeli |
| 10. Emmanuel Faith | 33. Oluwatobi Adesanya |
| 11. Emmanuel Michael | 34. Pamilerin Jacob |
| 12. Goodness O. Ayoola | 35. Patience Lawal |
| 13. Henneh Kwaku | 36. Salawu Wuraola A. |
| 14. Ishola Abdulwasiu | 37. Seun L. Williams |
| 15. Iyanu Adebisi | 38. Shoola Ifeoluwa |
| 16. Jerry Chiememe | 39. Shoola Oyindamola |
| 17. Jide Badmus | 40. Tola Ijalusi |
| 18. Joseph Wodo | 41. Tomi Adesina |
| 19. Kanyinsola Olorunnisola | 42. Tryphena Yeboah |
| 20. Kehinde Badiru | 43. Tukur Loba Ridwan |
| 21. Kizito Okorowu | 44. Uduak Akpan |
| 22. Kolawole Adebayo | 45. Wale Ayinla |
| 23. Mazpa Ejikem | 46. Wendy Okeke |

*I write because putting down the words, each stroke, syllable,
sentence, paragraph, and fitting them into the white canvas
places me in the same world of ecstasy and awe a mother feels
when she finally holds her baby in her arms.*

Busayo Orisasona

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**'Fire, Fire in My...' by
Onabade, Adedayo Adedoyin**

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/adedayo-adedoyin-onabade

'Fire! Fire! Come down now!' the voices sprang up to our second-floor apartment, alerting us of impending doom. At that moment, I knew what 'in the twink of an eye' meant.

Pandemonium struck. Neighbours scurried to and fro the compound, in a last-minute move to salvage whatever they could. The fifteen-flat building was aflame from the flat in the middle, right beside our apartment. Getting out alive was miracle enough – we were at the most vulnerable position in the building, and I had planned to retire to bed after my family set out on an inter-state trip that Sunday morning.

Days later, I walked into the ruins that remained, the still-searing heat - a testament of what had once been home. With the concerted rubble of wood, bricks, and soot inert beneath my feet, each step I took within those charred walls bore a query in my heart: Is that it? Is life so vain that what mattered at this moment could be gone the very next?

As a teenager, my young mind grappled with this incident and its implications for my family. While it birthed confusion, anger, sadness, and even regret, it spurred something more: I sought

to give words to my thoughts, to draw reflections from the seeming day-to-day trivialities and recreate outcomes.

This new perspective drove me to keep a private journal which, over time, piqued a fascination with human-social experiences.

I write to explore life – the greatest repertoire of influences from which to draw inspiration. I write because I want to know, and I want to tell.

I write to preserve me, to rile you up – yes, you, to keep a record of the things we should not forget. The experiences of victims of the world, like me, like your sister, like the girl next door; we who have been silent too long because tradition says, “This is how it must be done.”

I write to exhale the despair that clutches at our throats, that which if we spoke it we would be termed “too passionate,” “too agitated” and “too zealous” by those who’ve not lifted a finger in the face of wrong or a voice to ask why the world is the way it is. I write that it may testify against them – these words – and highlight what we must know and what we must change so that the world may change.

I write to see beyond the now, to discover what lies beyond our propensity to imagine.

To say why I write is to say who I was before I knew this fate. It is to define who I have become and who I can be, conjuring and

creatively exploring possibilities before they happen – if they ever will.

I write to be a vessel for these stories within me that indeed do write themselves when we begin to fashion eventualities ad infinitum: to kill or to save? To love or to leave?

I write because I want to escape reality; because I want to live many lives in this single one; because the words weave themselves within me, leaping up to speak of experience, of a moment, of a lifetime.

In the words of Susan Sontag, "A writer is someone who pays attention to the world – a writer is a professional observer." I write because all that I observe of the world must be expressed. First, it was a fire in my home; now, it is a fire in my soul.

*Writing is the gasp of breath I take when everything else feels like
a vacuum.*

Abubakar Aliyu

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/abubakar-aliyu

When Love was not Enough by Adedayo Ademokoya

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/adedayo-ademokoya

*"Between what is said and not meant,
and what is meant and not said, most
of love is lost."*

- Kahlil Gibran

Love is everything to me. I write to drown myself in love; to baptize myself until I can hear the "beloved" word from the clouds or perhaps, someone dear.

When the road seems twisted, and every path leads back to the same spot, my love for self, appreciates because that's where my freedom lies. Writing is the way I make myself several things. Many things at once. A lover. A purpose. A bird. A god. A mourner. A pen. A poet. A killer. A dramatist.

My early writings were inspired by neglect. During my late teens, I experienced an insatiable longing for paternal love. I didn't think my father loved me enough. I turned to the ink to rescue me and show me some love. I gave every word emotion so that it can relate to my pains. I made the words into the balm to soothe my wounds. I made meals of words to satisfy my hunger for love.

I killed my dad several times, with ink on paper, before he died. After his death, I began to miss him (I still do). No fights. No arguments. Everywhere was still. The peace I craved for no longer made sense. With that void, I chose the ink again. To make words cuddle me and comfort me in those lonely times.

Since that time, I've been writing. When I write, I make myself a wind stirring the tree of words or a river flowing into the ocean of other people's thoughts. Whichever way, writing is not just a talent, or something borne out of the lack of love for me. It is a passion, a purpose I never get tired of fulfilling.

It comes with the comfort of knowing that when I die, my words will continue to speak and breathe softly with the hope of changing someone's life as the words of others have spoken to me. Writing is rewriting our destinies to outlive us for posterity.

I write to express, not to impress; to inform, not to conform; to inspire, not to aspire. I am a good custodian of my thoughts' values and present them at the right times with the right intentions. I know a word is an egg; when it falls, it becomes ungatherable.

Umar Salman Adeyemi

Author's Bio: www.nigerianwriters.info/umar-salman

**Why I Write by
Obinna Tony-Francis Ochem**

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/obinna-tony-francis-ochem

I write because people need to read. Knowledge is vital, and no one gets it without reading; and without writing, there will be nothing to read.

I write because I am from a minority group, and we need representation. We need more LGBTQ writers to humanize our lived experience; else, there is a danger of a single story. Others have etched a single story of queer people while driving it to fulfil their selfish desires. I write to give them a voice. I write to tell the world that we also love, we can remain virgin and celibate while still queer, we are not attracted to all men, we are not pedophiles. We are like everyday heterosexuals with their various lives. I write because I need to write.

Words are powerful tools that have been used to change the world.

Why I Write by
Adepeju Adenuga

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/adepeju-adenuga

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." - Toni Morrison

today is no different,
she listened in rapt attention,
her lips in imitation as I speak,
her words in response to my bedtime stories,

I write for her,
over and over and over again,
The stories I hear in whispers
I would tell her with my ink.

the rain has stopped,
Once again, the sun smiles at her,
my niece, my muse, I write today in her stead.

People are inhabiting my head. They deserve to be heard, and through them, I have discovered the joy of mere words, the torment, and chaos of their untold stories. As I pick my pen, words get formed from the abyss of emotions. These stories are hidden like a shadow of my thoughts; I fear if I do not write,

I would be haunted daily as I hold conversations with my imaginary friends.

The other day, Grandma saw me speaking to my friends; when she asked, I told her about the three-legged dog, about the other time where I had friends who looked exactly like me but were braver, smarter and who spoke a language different from ours but I could understand them. I spoke of only what I could see. This experience as a seven-year-old child stood out for me.

The next day, my Grandma visited; she had made several consultations and was informed I needed spiritual bathing. I am often sick, and when associated with my active imagination... well, the result: She placed in front of me, a razor blade, a bar of black soap, and the native "Malaam sponge." She decided it is today or no other day.

Since that day, I only spoke about my experience to myself. I wrote in my 2D handwriting notes about all my experiences. I wrote without a plan or hesitation. Words came out like a violent torrent. I had thousands of untold words stuck in my chest, threatening to choke me. The pages of my books became a valve as the river of secret words found a way out.

Now, I only get a visit to the other world, each time there is a downpour. Both worlds get merged, with a bolt of lightning to my heart, I am held spellbound until I pour every word into paper or typed.

I write for those who cannot speak up for themselves, for the crushed ones, for the poor and the helpless both in this world and in the other. I write for you, Amaka, Miracle, Adora, and for me too.

In time, the stories I must tell, the stories I seek to tell, and the ones I have told rage. And until they are out, I do not rest.

I write because I can. But beyond that, I write because I choose to. And I want to because I love to!

Oluwaseyifunmi Dawodu

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**Why I Write by
Chisom C. Iboko**

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/chisom-iboko

"Keep quiet child; this doesn't concern you."

I know a lot for a 5-year-old. I'm invisible. I see what others don't see. I don't know when it began. Was it when mother blamed Sarah for stealing the milk I saw Nwaka take? Or was it later when a stolen pencil found its way into my school bag? The teacher flogged me in front of the class while the pupils chanted 'Thief! Thief!' She never let me defend myself. And for the first time, as I walked back home from school, I waited for the big lorry that usually journeyed through the road that leads home. I remember the lorry once killed a woman, and the incident was on everyone's lips for weeks. It shook everyone. That day, I was going to fling myself in front of that lorry so I would be crushed. I didn't want to go back to school the next day and be called a thief. I wanted my death to be dramatic. I wanted the teacher to feel guilty for mistreating me. I wanted my classmates to miss me. Except for the lorry never showed up that day. It was either then or earlier that I found solace in writing.

They say the pen is mightier than the sword; to me, they are the same. While some find fulfilment in using the sword to get justice, I find satisfaction in ink. I write because it's the only way I can utter profanities against people like my teacher; to defend myself against the boy who lied that he had slept with me and

everyone called me a slut, I hadn't even had my first kiss yet. I write to punish my oppressors - I wasn't blessed with physical strength - the pen became both weapon and shield. With my pen, I reward everyone according to their deeds. I write because if I try to speak in defense, I break down.

For a girl who grew up hearing so many "Quiet woman! Your voice is not needed." The pen really is the only escape. I write because I want to be heard. I refuse to inherit my mother's silence. And all those other women who answered 'Oriaku' but suffered in silence to please society. Do they not see the shadows under her eye? Or the sorrow behind the laughter? I write because of injustice. I write for all those women who are too ashamed or scared to speak for themselves. I write because I need to remind myself what not to become.

I write to save myself from me. You see, I am my greatest enemy. Even though nothing is wrong, I can't seem to be happy. Happiness is an illusion. Where did I inherit this rage from? Why the emptiness? Sometimes I think that maybe, in another life, a time past, I was something. But I can't find the fire that kept me going in that past life, so I write. The fire seems to come from somewhere within and only burns through ink.

I write because if I don't, I will run mad. The images in my head, my wild imaginations, darkest thoughts, and the violence, they will engulf me if I don't release them.

Did you know, I saw the lorry that didn't show up years ago when I was in primary 1? I saw it today, and even though I didn't have

any underlying issues, I still wanted to run into it. But I see the faces of my family, I know losing any of them will dim the little fire inside of me so I can imagine what my death will do to them. So, I stood by the edge, close enough to jump in and far enough to pull away. Do you see the marks on my skin? You wouldn't; I heal fast. I write because if I don't, somehow, the knife never seems far away—a little cut here, a little there, never enough to finish me. Just a pinch to cause pains, which give me relief.

I write because it makes people uncomfortable. For all the things they did and saw but refused to speak against. I love pricking their conscience. Even though they say words don't move them, I know they lie. I see their faces when they think no one is watching, and it makes me happy. They say misery loves company, so I write to share this misery.

To write is to be mindful, to write is to give a voice to a book sitting on the shelf, a kettle shrieking from the touch of heat, an insurgence birthed from within still waters. To write is to hold a diary in my mind, an aching that slowly takes me to the extreme-like madness.

I have discovered that there are stories in everything and everywhere, etched in the crowns of the noble, knitted with dust in the hair of the poor, mixed with sighs from the mouths of the commons.

Ayomide 'Wes Oriolowo

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Rewriting My Ancestry by Dorcas Odok

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/dorcas-odok

I come from a memorial of broken black women who have known the fierce fist of subjugation.

The first time I saw a punch grace their lips, I knew it was the first of many. The women in my life are battered portraits, and I was born in this congregation of women who wear bodies that spell pain: with eyes laden with ever-present grief, and lips full of gory tales, of how society beat them into fine clay—a thing ready to be used, a thing ultimately created for undoing.

I am a thick wound, call me a generational sore hiding in the dense covers of sparkling adjectives, enticing nouns, and verbs that suggest light. My mother calls me 'a blossoming thing.' she tries too hard to shield me from this ancestry, but this is my inheritance. I am the lawful bearer of these past scars. Call me the vector. I wear our scars boldly in my poems—poems are vehicles for self-truths. I show them forth in my stories: they go ahead of me. Don't blame me if you know my scars more than you know me. Think of my scars as my prologue, me as narrator, and my language as a vehicle. So, when I write, my scars go before me as the guiding star in the East.

I write because these words extenuate for a generational pain. They shield the wounds of me, my mother, her mother, and all the descents of black women from whose lineage I became.

My lips quiver; my voice is a dying whisper trying too hard to spill, yet I fail relentlessly. So, I write. I write because my body holds many stories. This is how I have learned to whisper, to stutter, to speak, to unravel the travails lurking within me, and to seek, unassailably, for closure. When I write, I redeem the voices of past broken women seeking to share their stories and their scars.

I write because my lungs need redemption from this wound, breathing inside me. Writing is how I crawl and limp, walk, run, fly; how I heal.

Today, I write because I am angry about many issues that trouble our society. Police brutality, rape, murder, and other social vices make me want to vent, so my pen is my outlet. I have realized over the years that I am constantly evolving with the experiences in my life and the lives of people around me. Therefore, with time, I change, and the reason for my writing changes. If you ask me tomorrow or in some years to come, I will probably have a different reason to write. I write because I change.

Gimbiya Galadima

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/gimbiya-e-galadima

Why I Write by Humainat Raji

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/humainat-raji

Writing is to me what codeine is to a broke drug addict. It is the closest thing to therapy. I write to face my demons, to nurse them to sleep in odd hours of the day. I write to make love to my pains and send out ripples of terror to those who make me cry. I write to document my happiness. I cuddle an album of these memories when depression creeps in. I write to dash out unconditional love to make peace with my mistakes. I write to make sense of the voices in my head. I write to stay alive.

I write to make people feel seen, to permit them to be themselves, and a little more. My pen bleeds when they are in pain. Don't confuse me for a Messiah. I write to point fingers to the guilty and give side-eyes like a proper Yoruba girl that I am. I write to rewrite our culture to dismiss irrational traditions passed down to me. I write to tell stories people are afraid to read. I write to take up spaces, to be one of the voices in their heads, good or bad, their conscience decides. I write to nudge them to admit feelings they are too scared to own. I write to be human.

Call me an addict to the craft. Lock me up in chains next time I see through you. This thing runs in my veins. I can't talk to save my life, but when I write, the world pauses to listen. I write because talking does injustice to some thoughts, giving room

for interruption now and then. I write to choke my readers with my truth, gagging them with words that fill their bellies with unquenchable fire. I write to acknowledge my sensitivity and express my creativity.

Writing is the closest thing to freedom. I write to free myself of assumptions, to make people see me for who I am.

**Why I Write by
Ijeoma Vivian Ogonnaya**

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/ogonnaya-vivian-ijeoma8203

I write because I want to attack. I live in an imperfect society. I believe we can and should do better, but often, I see my people do things or believe in contrary things. At such times I feel powerless to bring about a change, I go to my writings and attack.

I point my fingers at the faces of my elders. I couldn't do that ordinarily, but in my writings, I can. I can stand up to my imaginary grandmother and tell her it is wrong to shake a newborn baby with such vigour that his head might fall off.

I tell my imaginary grand aunt that it is okay for a baby girl not to cut off her full long hair after a year. I even look at my uncle and tell him that I can sweep my house in the night and the spirits will not be annoyed; and that my father can be buried without us his children killing several cows, cooking several bags of rice and running into debts after a big burial and my father will still rest in peace. I do all that in my writings.

I write because I want to contribute or perhaps even lead. When I cannot tell everyone in my street to come out and clean up the street, I'll go into my writing and create an imaginary me that asked everyone to come out and clean the street, and they

did. By doing so, I hope someone will read up that imaginary me and eventually goes to clean his street.

I write because it allows me to give endings and judgments that suits me. It's a savage feeling that I enjoy. Need I apologize for this? So, I can sentence the pedophile Alhaji to death by firing squad or the con-man preacher to death by hanging. I can even make the abusive madam who keeps her housemaid hungry all day to die "by accident." I dish out these judgments in my writings, and I enjoy them.

I have been captured by a mighty hand that makes me paint with words. I am loyal to that hand. I love what it does with me. This is why I write.

Why I Write by Islamiyyat Ayomide Asiru

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/islamiyyat-ayomide-asiru

I consider the creative impulse of writing as a dice, having more sides to it than one. This way, I am not propelled by a single drive but by many forces. It is the way I own my world.

I write for myself. It seems like the only way I can express myself and the pains I feel once in a while. The things I cannot fix with my hands or thought, I fix them through writing. I may fail to put together what is broken, but the craft equips me to process the brokenness, to make meaning of what I will otherwise assume as nothing but an end. It is a source of motivation for me. It brings me hope. On my lonely days, I channel the aggressions to a page. With that, I reveal whatever is hidden in me.

Writing is a beautiful art. Anytime self-doubt comes knocking, a look at the things I have written makes it fade away. Words of hope to encourage me in the darkest seasons, words of joy to relive the memory of good times. Through my writings, I see my worth, and it leaves me with a kind of confidence I have never felt before.

Why I Write by Jesutofunmi Adetoogun

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/jesutofunmi-adetoogun

I write to quiet the noise of many voices twisting me into ever-changing shapes and patterns. Telling me to blur out the lines I've only learned to draw, telling me to silence the voice I've just found. Learn, unlearn, mould, destroy, till I have no semblance to the me that has come to be.

I write to find the blend of colours that feel like home. The shade of the rainbow from which my soul is woven. The voice that is mine, shrill or deep though it may be. I write to find me.

I write to challenge stereotypes. The ones that know all there is to you better than you know yourself. The ones that tell you all you could ever be. The ones that play God with the past, present, and future. Because there never was such a thing as one-size-fits-all or a mould from which all men are made. And we all are blends of imperfections and awesomeness.

I seek a world where everyone is loved and allowed to be just as they are, each unique contribution valued, each flaw gracefully compensated for—a world where prejudice is non-existent. I dream of a world full of understanding, where the difference is not a thing to be preyed upon, and weakness is no cause for fear.

Sometimes, I think I can create the world I seek when I write.

Writing is one of the truest forms of nature, and the earth is a descendant of thoughts that were once written in the mind before it happened.

Dipe Jola

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/dipe-jola

**Obeying the Divine by
Roseline Mgbodichinma Anya Okorie**

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/roseline-mgbodichinma-anya-okorie

They say writing flows in my ancestry; that my mother and the mothers before her wrote on sands, that they registered shivers down the spines of men and scrawled threats into the palm wine keg of the drunkard who dared to beat them even before paper was invented. I write because I want to summon them, to make them have breath in this new world they are not accustomed to, to continue their legacy.

I write to remove the thorns of misogyny for daughters like me, who will walk through tough paths to becoming unbreakable. I want to give them a weapon to bruise society when it tries to shrink them, to make them reject the suffering type of comfort that keeps them in anxiety with its claws around their necks.

**Why I Write by
Temiloluwa Adeniyi-Aogo**

Author's Bio: nigerianwriters.info/temiloluwa-adeniyi-aogo

Words are stubborn. They tumble in their numbers into my mind daily, unabashed, and refuse to let me go. They command me to lend them a voice, and I, a willing puppet dance to their tune.

In writing, I strip naked. I colour my raging emotions in all the shades I please. I sew my tears with words and vent all my anger and frustration. I am free to be terrified to share my fears of failure. I don't have to hide. I don't have to be likeable. There is an ease that comes with letting it all out on paper, knowing that it's not going to judge me or shut me down. Writing helps me be whole in all my complexities, and in doing so, I find the healing my soul craves. I find salvation and redemption for my soul in words.

You Can Call Me God by
Tochukwu Njoku Daniel

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"...that your independence as a writer is your own: do with it exactly what you want. Be fierce with it, and feel free to do things that might confuse others." - Teju Cole

My body knows that these words from Teju Cole's Eight letters to a young writer open it into a little world. It defines why my voice remains stranded on a paper, why I still lust over the pen and scurry back to childhood days when I could hunt for freedom while hiding tomorrow under my fingernails.

The act of writing is my black magic; I could be you, the leper down the road, the gay that saw his lover beaten to a pulp or the ghost picking up pieces of a charred body. I could be the priest at St. Vincent de Paul.

I want to wear the skin of others, and I want to wear it well; I want to drink from the creator's cup, and I want to have my fill. I want the cracks on a widow's heart to rest on my forehead so that I could tell her stories well. I want to run away from my shadow, into something that would give me meaning; feel like the wind, always eavesdropping on every noise and silence, yet still, go unpunished. I have come to accept this truth and write about the many names I lost and find their way only in words.

An accountant won't do anything he wants, and a soldier can't act freely. A writer can. The radical idea of freedom spits fire into me, and I scribble my way through the world. I could put into existence a new world with animals replacing humans. This is what God does; create. I could cause heartbreak or instigate suicide. I guess this is what the devil does too; destroy. This is what my hobby offers me; a spoon from God and a fork from the devil.

When I write, I feel like a spare God scribbling history into the future.

**Why I Write by
Ayomide Akintayo**

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This pen ushers me into dreams where I create evenings with father, the ones where I wipe away the darkness in his eyes as he recounts the civil war and ignites the spark when we discuss the tricks he used on mother, a world where I predict what happens to every creation.

As I write, I guide you into the mind of the young man who proposed to the love of his life yesterday yet killed himself today.

I write to understand the reason why the policeman tells the driver “Aje a wa” even as he collects his 80 percent cut, and to see what makes a man sell his future and that of his children for a bowl of uncooked rice.

On days when I remember how the blood in my leg became lumpy eba because the bus owner fit six benches into a bus that had the capacity of three just as the conductor's spit made a slippery interaction with my mouth because the conductor swore at the unbothered passenger who gave him a thousand naira for a journey worth fifty naira, I write.

I write for the naivety of my grandmother who begged her husband to have more wives because she had no male child.

I write for the silence of my mother who accepted the child of another that she may keep her home.

I write for my friend whose uncle molested at six but was reminded that you don't bite the hand that feeds you, even when it chokes you.

I write for my girls who will walk these streets as queens, knowing their mother fought to rid the street of monsters who preyed on skirts.

I write that I might journey on this path called thought, and maybe I will come back with a gift that liberates us all.

Translation:

Aje a wa meaning *the deity of wealth will visit.*

Thanks for reading.