

Editors:

CHINUA EZENWA-OHAETO  
BRIDGETTE JAMES

CHAPBOOK REVIEWS

POETRY

STORIES

EDITION 5

# PENNERED IN RAGE

Pictured: Henry Opeyemi

NEW  
FEATURES

ART

INTERVIEWS

ESSAYS

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# AMPLIFYING

Marginalised Voices



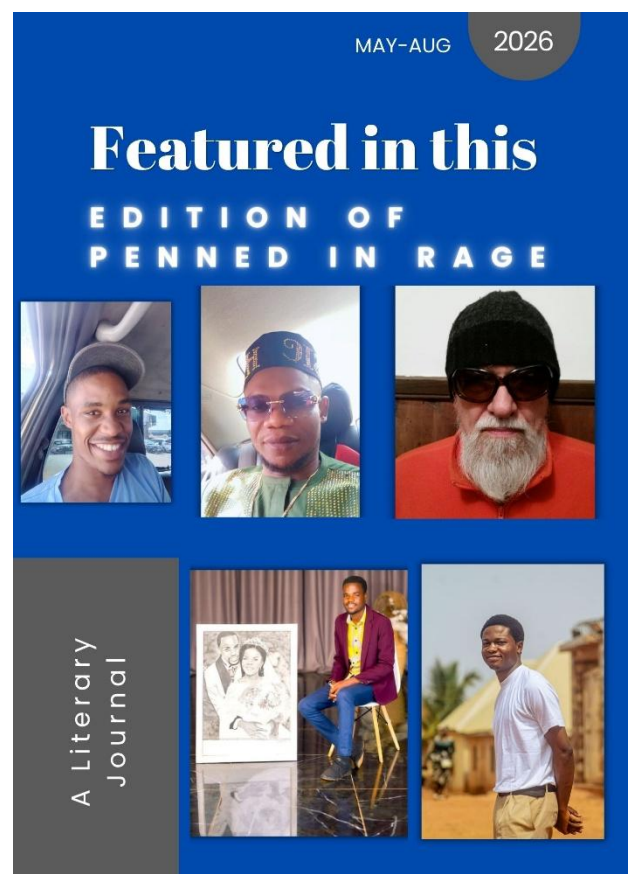
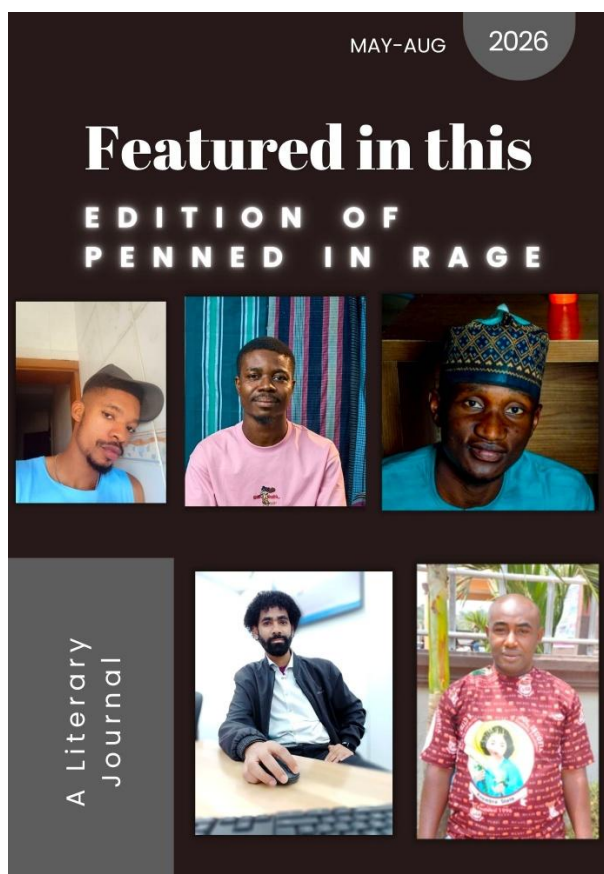
ESTABLISHED IN JANUARY 2025

## POETRY, STORIES

Essays, Art & Chapbook Reviews

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## 1. Editorial by Chinua Ezenwa-Ohaeto

Literature has always demanded from us the gift of expression. A poem, a story, or any form of genuine expression is a medium through which we understand ourselves more clearly. Through them, we examine the present and return to the past, our history, hunger, desire, shame, displacement, and other complexities and burdens of being human. This edition of *Penned in Rage* has these fingerprints. The works gathered here emerge from distinct emotional landscapes and are bound by the urgency to be seen and also heard.

In assembling this issue, I observed that the contributors in this edition touched on various aspects of human endeavours. In “Not Our Kind,” Debelu Nnazoba crafts a metaphysical meditation on exile and otherness. The figure at the center of the poem presents a society obsessed with categorization and ownership. The poem’s brilliance lies in its restraint. These lines, “The crowd fears no stranger— / only the mirror / that will not flatter,” remain haunting because they reveal our fear of being seen and of confronting things about ourselves, we would rather leave untouched. Peter Ezeh’s “What Do They See When They Look at Me?” continues this interrogation of identity but from within the fractured consciousness of a speaker struggling against external projections. The poem examines the struggle of many young people navigating societies eager to reduce them to failures. The repeated refrain— “What do they see when they look at me?”— functions as an existential cry against misrecognition.

Elsewhere in this issue, love is tragically explored from the angle of social expectation. Musa Bin Imran Al-iqitisady’s “It Is Not Over Until Ralia Loves Me” progresses with the emotional cadence of oral storytelling. Set against the dust-filled streets of Hadejia. Bashir, the main character, loves Ralia sincerely, almost painfully so, but sincerity alone cannot overcome the rigid design of class expectations. The story seems to project the realization that effort and goodness are sometimes insufficient in an unequal world, a

reality some persons would argue, still remains embarrassingly relevant today.



**Photo: Chinua Enzwa-Ohaeto**

Colin James’ “A Collaborative Coincidence” embraces surrealism and fragmentation through mythic, memory-laden expressions that were versed in unexpected ways. Likewise, Obiotika Wilfred Toochukwu’s “The Sparrow That Rejected Her Song” draws on allegory and spiritual connotations to examine the intricacies of human longing. Thabani Denzel Nkosi’s “Nobody is Asking You to Be a Superhuman” speaks directly to the pressures of modern existence, especially the impossible expectations placed upon ordinary people trying simply to survive.

Again and again, these writers wonderfully point us towards the irreducible need for tenderness and connection. And as you read through this issue of *Penned in Rage*, I hope you allow these works to unsettle you where necessary and comfort you where possible. I hope you linger over the lines. I hope you recognize fragments of yourself within these pages. Most importantly, I hope you go away, reminded about the power of language and the beautiful things we can achieve with it.

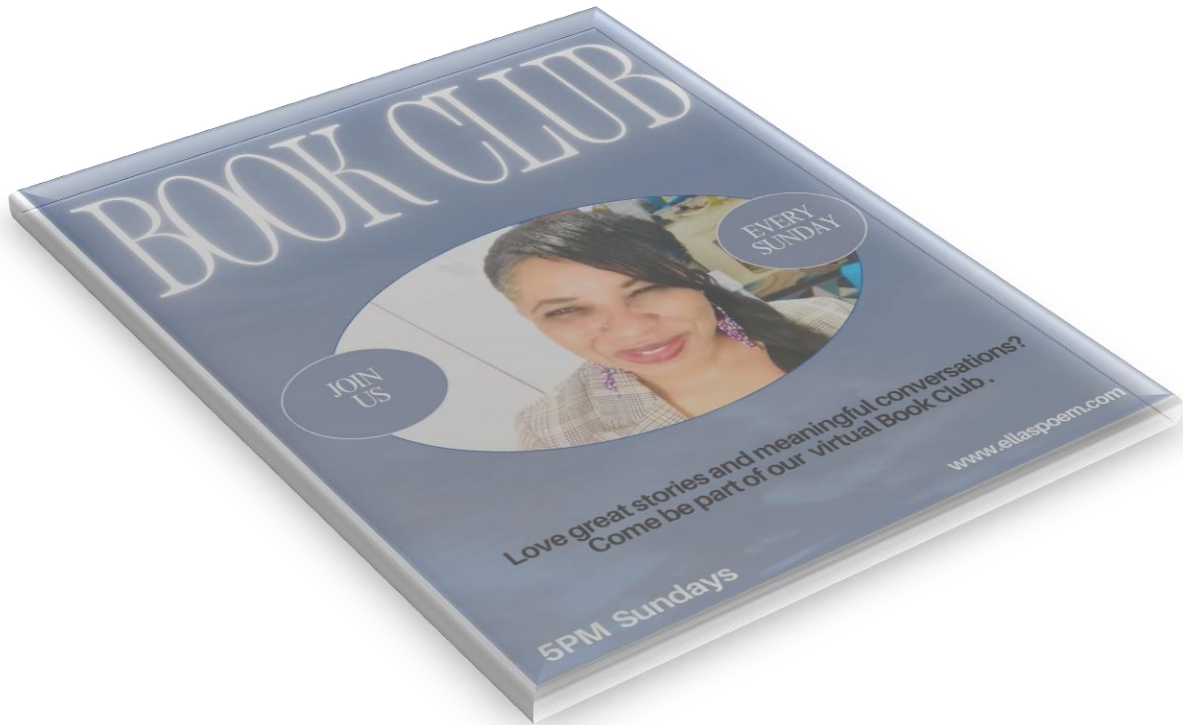
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## ABOUT THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Chinua Ezenwa-Ohaeto is an Igbo and Nigerian poet, fiction and nonfiction writer, and essayist, exploring the themes of culture, religion, lineage, ancestry, divination (dibia afa), post-colonialism, migration and the complexities of existence. His full-length poetry collection, *The Naming*, was published on December 1, 2025, with African Poetry Book Fund via Nebraska press. *The Naming* explores the movements, excesses, and extremes of existing as a postmodern individual, connecting these experiences to familial ancestry and lineage.

The poems in this collection examine the various ways one remains tied to their ancestors which spanned eleven generations by re-imagining memories, history, childhood, homestead, kinship, migration, and the intersections of the past, present, and possible futures. Through this exploration, the collection seeks to rebuild a world that doesn't merely replicate realities but reinvents, enshrines, and re-stories them.



Please Join Us for Book club on Selected Sundays, LIVE at 5PM  
on X (Formerly Twitter & Facebook)

## 2. What Do We Talk About, When We Talk About Rejecting Generative AI?

An Essay by CHISOM UMEH



Five months ago, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA) updated its Nebula Award eligibility information, stating that, “Works that used LLMs at any point during the writing process must disclose this upon acceptance of the nomination, and the nature of the technology’s use will be made clear to voters on the final ballot.”

This update immediately drew the attention of writers and editors including Premea Mohammed, Meg Elison, [Neil Clarke](#)<sup>1</sup>, and more. They unanimously criticized this new addition to the Nebula Award eligibility information for its subtle permission of AI-assisted or generated works. The SFWA’s statement that “...the nature of the technology’s use will be made clear to voters on the final ballot” meant that works would

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<sup>1</sup> Reference List

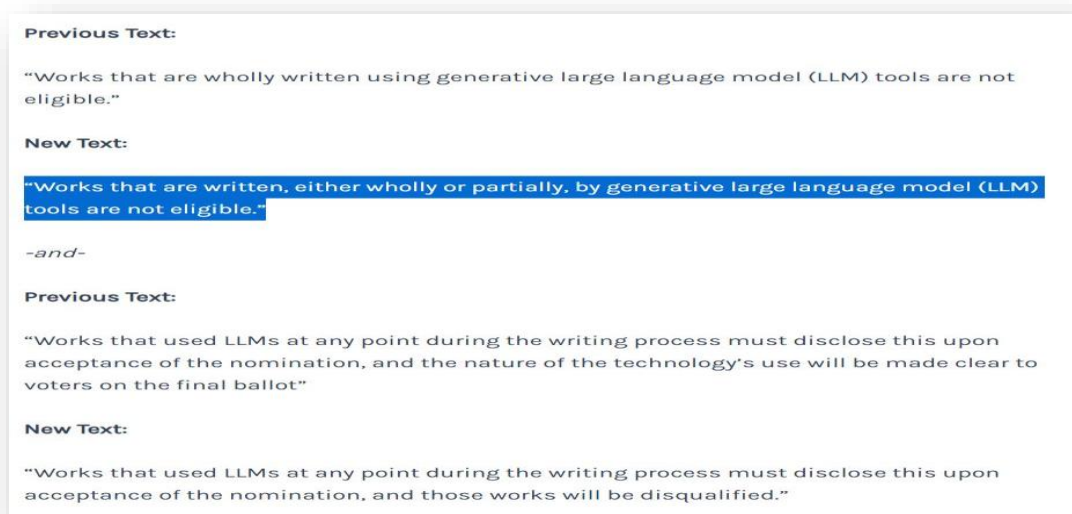
be allowed to stay on the ballot even though their authors had confirmed AI usage in their creation.

After writers correctly pointed this out, the SFWA rewrote the rules again and informed its members and the general public of its latest position on the issue within a matter of hours. They apologized<sup>2</sup> for the implications of the earlier wording and assured every one of their strict stance against AI usage. The updated rule read:

“Works that are written, either wholly or partially, by generative large language model (LLM) tools are not eligible.”

Unfortunately, even though the SFWA has now taken a hard, rather than passive, stance on the matter, this inevitably creates the problem of people not being transparent about their AI usage.

Very recently, Jamir Nazir, a Trinidadian writer whose work was published on Granta after winning the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Caribbean region, was suspected by readers of using AI to either generate the story in full, or in part. They



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<sup>2</sup> Reference List

provided several pieces of evidence<sup>3</sup> within the story to back up their claims, many of which seemed valid. They also called out the Prize judges for letting such a work slip through. Many others, though, maintained that the writing didn't look like anything a human couldn't create and labelled the accusations a witch hunt. Granta and the Commonwealth Foundation released statements backing both the publication of the work and the integrity of the writer, respectively. The story is still up and can be read here<sup>4</sup>.

I think we genuinely have a problem on our hands.

The only definitive way to confirm that a piece was the product of an algorithm is, unfortunately, a direct confession from the creator. Not AI checkers nor our intuition. But, in the absence of the writer admitting their usage of AI themselves as the SFWA requires, an action which would be as common as a thief returning their "hard-earned" steal, what do the rest of us do?

When we don't have the luxury of a guilty plea, do we continue to sit around and publish or vote everything that comes our way just because we can't prove anything for certain?

Of course, there's a real danger of throwing the baby with the bathwater. We can, in the process of expressing our hate for a machine owned by capitalist billionaires, misjudge a human-written story and greatly harm an innocent writer who was only trying to be experimental with their work.

But, consider what this may mean if dubious AI 'writers' learn of the inability of the writing community to definitively dismiss anything. They'd know that, if the work

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<sup>3</sup> Reference List

<sup>4</sup> Reference List

somehow gets published, after all is said and done, we'd still pay them and leave it on our sites, no matter how many writers raise suspicions of the origins of the work.

If, in a case like Jamir Nazir's, whose work was replete with telltale generative AI patterns (from meaningless and over-the-top metaphors, negative parallelisms, his author photo being generated by AI, to his LinkedIn chock-full of AI advocacy), we are still divided on the matter, then on what grounds could we ever prosecute any future "writer" whose work has similar problems?

I'm not in any way suggesting that this is an easy problem to solve or that I have some one-size-fits-all solution. I admit that it is a tricky issue that requires a lot of thinking through and caution. In fact, one may weigh the harm that could potentially be done to a writer if indeed they have been accused falsely and their reputation marred, against the harm that would happen to the writing/reading community if one AI work is actually published, and conclude that the former is more severe since there's an actual person involved, and the latter is almost nearly a victimless crime (in the case of Jamir Nazir, neither the Commonwealth Foundation nor Granta accept being wronged. So, who, really, is the victim?) Therefore, they may wonder what anyone stands to gain by constantly policing submitted works for AI usage.

But then, we'd have to ask ourselves, what is the point of doing literature? What is the purpose of art? Why do we bother translating our unique human experiences into stories if anyone at all can type prompts into a computer and an algorithm fakes it for them?

What do we mean when we talk about rejecting generative AI in literature if we lack the willpower to enforce that rejection when the

preponderance of the evidence tilts that way? My sincere hope is that we find a meaningful and lasting solution to this.

A tiny hole can sink a ship. I pray we recognize those holes when we see them, and when we do recognize them, we have it in us to plug them. It may be one story today that we let slide. But that singular piece can open the door for a deluge that'll drown all our endeavours.

### Reference List of Cited Links

- I. [Post by @clarkesworldmagazine.com — Bluesky](#)
- II. [Press Release - December 22, 2025 - SFWA - The Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Association](#)
- III. [AI scandal engulfs prestigious short story prize after multiple entrants accused of fabricating work | The Independent](#)
- IV. [The Serpent in the Grove | Jamir Nazir | Granta](#)

### About the Writer

CHISOM UMEH is a Nigerian fiction writer and poet. His short stories have been featured on Omenana, Apex, Clarkesworld, Year's Best African Speculative Fiction 2023, African Ghosts anthology, Isele, Mythaxis, Scifi Shorts, and elsewhere. His short story, "Ancestors's Gift" won the 2024 Tractor Beam short story contest and longlisted for the British Science Fiction Association Awards. He was a finalist for the Seattle Worldcon Short Story Contest and is the winner of the 2025 Nommo Award for Best African Speculative Fiction Short Story.

Read Feature Online at: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#chisom-umeh>

# NEWS

## COMPETITION & PUBLICATION NEWS

*We have three formats of an Amazon KDP published book Available.*

*Title: The Razor Wire of Exile. The Annual Bridgette James Poetry Competition, 2026 Winners' Anthology*

*Link:*  
<https://amzn.eu/d/072rqKKJ>



**Graphics - Bridgette James**

Authors: Bee James (Author), Janine Milne (Author), Damilola Oyedeji (Author), Yuwinn A Kraukamp (Author), Michael Excel Chinagorom (Author), Edinam Denoo (Author), Brett Anderson (Author), Mosimiloluwa Dorcas Kupoluyi (Author), Chinua Ezenwa Ohaeto (Author) and 43 more.



“In every poem featured in this anthology, the writer has toyed with English; a global language

which historically has been used to disempower ‘othered’ language communities such as ones in the African continent.”

### **3. A Collaborative Coincidence**

by COLIN JAMES

The fence posts of Grenoble, France  
6 to 8 feet removed to ensure stability.  
High wind areas shorten the distance between.  
Chestnut and Acacia wood,  
Scotch Pine treated with copper  
are resistant to isoptera.  
Common flowers such as The  
Murderer's Wife bloom here.  
Renewed sightings of a gnarly monk  
curtailed the overuse of french words  
in describing our previous blase existence.  
We were now formally discriminate  
as to witnessing those blurry features  
beneath his signature wide brimmed hat.  
A large nose or productive profile,  
long beard over Freudian cloak.  
The smell of cavities and ancient humus.  
Wide, somnolent stuttering gait.  
He had been accused of cannibalizing  
a hiker's remains with surrealistic tact.  
Is thought to be wintering near Dijon  
his rainy season, annually, brings him back.

*He had been accused of cannibalizing  
a hiker's remains with surrealistic tact.*

SOURCE — 'A Collaborative Coincidence,' by Colin James



Credits: Omansang Miner, PIXABAY

## About the Poet

COLIN JAMES has several chapbooks of poems, *Dreams of The Really Annoying* from Writers Knight Press and *A Thoroughness Not Deprived of Absurdity* from Pisces's Porch Press and book of poems, *Resisting Probability*, from Sagging Meniscus Press. He lives in Massachusetts with two cats, Dorothy and Jane.

### **Read Online at:**

<https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinrage-may-aug2026#colin-james-a-collaborative-coincidence>



# NEWS



Congratulations to the 2025 Poetry Champion, Osahon Osa, who has been accepted into the Château d'Orquevaux Artists and Writers Residency. The award comes with the Denis Diderot Grant which will be applied towards the residency, scheduled to run for two weeks in January 2027.

On behalf of the Chateau Residency team you have been accepted to the Château d'Orquevaux Artists & Writers Residency in Champagne-Ardenne, France!

#### **4. The Currency of Fresh Music**

by HENRY OPEYEMI

There are memories you don't  
touch outside your father's house.

A black bullet primed by paucity  
cutting through the drowsy music  
of dead flowers.

There are still broken bones in these  
stories. I walked into mother's

shadow—a shamrock of British  
ancestry under the melody of  
old skin. How we left our newborns  
to carry their own stillness into  
different halves.

Mother said Kaduna is a killer of dreams,  
that you only appear before it with the  
currency of fresh music. My heart is a gallery  
of decomposed gunshots. The heaviness in  
our eyes waxed cold, praying the elegy  
into a discotheque, wrestling through the  
water and painted bloodworms, as we  
watch our garden of bees grow wild.

Where is the euphoria in  
keeping this darkness alive?

What was our joy before the world  
became a flood of chaos?

A prayerless cathedral.

The prophet never told us that the  
hope of glory would fade from its brightness.

Uncertainties—hymnals of devotional thoughts:  
whatever we desire is an illusion reborn in filth.

Into the stillness of a poltergeist,  
what could be darker—

the gunpowder or the smoke?

Outcries from the basement of  
an empty street, a gathering of  
frenzied ghosts through the landscape

of visible things. Old Biafra war  
lingers through cobbled streets;

its greyness holds gold coins in

it's trouser pockets. For the second time

I thought of Biafra as father's misfortune.

O boomerang shattered, O Portraits stretched across  
horizons of a watershed—of what use is healing when  
your wound is a door to my paradise?

## About the Poet

Henry Opeyemi is a Nigerian writer and poet, who wants to someday sell out the 02 Arena as a performance poet. He is the author of two poetry chapbooks 'Autopsy of Old Fractured Wounds' (Ghost City Press 2024) and 'The Volume of Constant Screams' (Cat Courtyard Press 2025). His work has appeared on Poetry Column–NND, One Poem Only, The Primer, Ghost City Press and elsewhere. When he is not writing, he is teaching hearing impaired kids how to play chess.



Read online at:

<https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#henry-opeyemi-the-currency-of-fresh-music>

(Photo: Lagos, Nigeria)





### About the Next Poet

ETHAN BRAMWELL is a 31-year-old South African poet. His poem, 'Horseback' was shortlisted in the 2026 *Bridgette James Poetry Competition*.

Featured at: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#ethan-mramwell-mirage>

## 5. Mirage

by ETHAN BRAMWELL

What is this inexplicable feeling—

Inaudible

Like the joy around me is morose,

Unimportant

I miss the visage of the person that stood before me,

I've grown—

Outgrown

My hair, and every little part of me

The frame, now bare,

Windowless pane

Breathless stained glass,

Purely tyrannical

Unintelligible—

Gross demeanour

Stoic, encompassing

Naked rear doorframe

I've tweaked the design,

Fluorescent no more,

Dull—

Aching,

Achilles

The counter,

Tick tock,

Kitchen sink

Pink floss—

Toothless

Brush

Fruitless, I bear no resemblance but for yonder passed

There I stand a mirror image—

Mirage

Driftless, Titanic

Titan, yet mustard like

Spreading seeds of doubt over my cloudy mood

Marooned in my shell—

Cancer to his Capricorn



MUSA IMRANA is a story writer born in the city of Hadejia, Jigawa State of Nigeria, He had his primary Education at Jama'are Islamiyya Primary school from 2008 to 1014 and high school Education at Senior Secondary School Shagari. He

is currently an undergraduate student of Economics in Sule University Jigawa State. He is Hausa. He has engaged himself in many activities of diverse aspects, such as informal education, local occupation and lot more.

Featured Online at: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#musa-bin-imran-al-iqitisady%C2%A0>

## **6. It Is Not Over Until Ralia Loves Me by Musa**

by MUSA BIN IMRAN AL-IQITISADY

The first time Bashir saw Ralia, the harmattan wind was blowing dust through the streets of Hadejia like forgotten prayers. The town was alive with the usual evening sounds—children chasing old bicycle tires, traders folding their mats in Kasuwar kara market, and the distant echo of the Maghrib adhan rising softly from the mosque near the riverbank.

Ralia stood beside her mother at a fabric stall, adjusting the edge of her blue veil as the wind fought against it. Bashir had gone there to deliver bags of rice for Alhaji Maikudi, the wealthy merchant he worked for. But the moment he saw her face, everything else disappeared.

Not because she was the most beautiful girl in Hadejia—though many said she was—but because sadness already lived in her eyes.

“Who is she?” Bashir asked quietly.

His friend, Nura, laughed. “Kai, Bashir. That is Ralia, daughter of Alhaji Balarabe. Forget her. Girls like that do not marry boys who carry rice under the sun.”

But Bashir could not forget her.

From that day, he began searching for reasons to pass through her street. Sometimes he would see her fetching water with other girls in the early morning. Sometimes he saw her standing outside their compound after isha, greeting elderly women respectfully.

“Assalamu alaikum, Hajiya,” she would say softly.

And every time Bashir saw her, something inside him tightened.

He was poor, yes. His father had died years ago, leaving him to care for his sick mother and two younger sisters. He never finished secondary school because survival became more important than education. Yet his heart carried dreams too large for his pocket.

One evening after Isha prayer, Bashir gathered courage and approached her near the narrow dusty path behind the mosque.

“Ralia,” he called gently.

She turned slowly, startled.

“I know this may sound strange,” he said nervously, “but I have carried your image in my heart for many months.”

Ralia lowered her eyes immediately.

“People are watching,” she whispered.

“I do not fear people.”

“But I do,” she replied.

Still, she did not walk away.

That small moment became the beginning of their secret love.

Days turned into months. Bashir would wait for her near the old neem tree after evening lessons. Sometimes they spoke only for a few minutes before she hurried home. Other times, they shared long conversations beneath the pale moonlight of Hadejia skies.

~

Ralia loved the way Bashir listened carefully whenever she spoke. He loved the softness in her voice whenever she said his name.

“Bashir,” she once told him, “My father will never accept this.”

“Then I will work harder,” he replied quickly. “I will become somebody.”

“You do not understand my family.”

“I understand love.”

Ralia smiled sadly.

In Northern towns like Hadejia, love alone was rarely enough.

Her father, Alhaji Balarabe, was respected across Jigawa. Wealthy cattle owners greeted him with deep respect. Politicians visited his compound during elections. His daughters were expected to marry men of status, men with cars, lands, and family influence.

Not boys who smelled of sweat and rice dust

When rumors of Bashir and Ralia began spreading through the community, her mother became worried.

“Ralia,” Hajiya Balarabe warned one evening, “people are talking. A girl’s dignity is like an egg. Once broken, it cannot be repaired.”

Ralia remained silent.

Then came the day everything changed.

A wealthy businessman from Kano, Alhaji Musa Dantata, arrived seeking Ralia’s hand in marriage for his son, Sadiq. The family celebrated immediately. Women filled the compound with laughter and congratulations.

But inside her room, Ralia cried until dawn.

When she finally met Bashir near the riverbank, her face looked empty.

“They want me to marry Sadiq,” she whispered.

Bashir stared at her as if the earth had cracked open beneath him.

“No.”

“My father has agreed already.”

“Then tell him you love me.”

“You know I cannot.”

“Why?”

“Because I am his daughter.”

Bashir’s voice broke. “And what am I?”

Ralia’s tears rolled silently.

“You are the only thing my heart ever chose.”

For weeks, Bashir fought desperately against fate. He worked day and night, carrying goods, repairing bicycles, even traveling to nearby villages searching for extra work. He wanted money, dignity, something worthy enough to stand before Alhaji Balarabe.

But poverty is cruel. The harder he ran, the more it mocked him. One afternoon, he finally gathered courage and visited Ralia's father.

The compound was large and quiet. Goats wandered near the entrance while elderly men discussed politics beneath a mango tree.

Alhaji Balarabe listened coldly as Bashir spoke.

"I love your daughter," Bashir said carefully. "I may not have wealth now, but I am hardworking. I will spend my life making her happy."

The old man looked at him for a long moment.

Then he laughed softly.

"Young man, love does not feed a family."

"I can work."

"You can struggle," Alhaji corrected. "My daughter was not raised for suffering."

Bashir swallowed painfully.

"Please, Alhaji."

"No."

That single word destroyed something inside him.

The wedding preparations continued quickly. Drummers arrived. Tailors moved in and out of the compound. Women sang traditional songs late into the night.

Meanwhile, Bashir disappeared from public gatherings. He stopped joking with friends. He stopped playing football near the school field. Even his mother noticed the silence eating him alive.

One rainy evening, Ralia secretly came to see him.

He sat outside his small house under a leaking roof, staring into darkness.

“Bashir,” she called softly.

When he looked at her, his eyes were red from sleepless nights.

“I came to say goodbye.”

He shook his head slowly. “No. It is not over until Ralia loves me.”

She began crying immediately.

“I already love you.”

“Then stay.”

“You know I cannot.”

“Then run away with me.”

Ralia stepped backward as though slapped.

“You want me to shame my family?”

“I want you to choose us!”

Silence fell heavily between them.

Then she whispered the cruellest truth.

“In our world, Bashir... love is not always enough.”

The wedding took place three days later. The entire town celebrated. Expensive cars filled the streets. Bright fabrics danced beneath the afternoon sun. People praised the union between two respected families.

But Bashir stayed hidden inside his room.

That night, while wedding drums echoed through Hadejia, Bashir walked alone toward the river outside town. The rain had started again, soft and endless.

Nobody saw him except an old fisherman passing in the dark.

The next morning, they found Bashir’s sandals near the riverbank.

His body appeared two days later.

Hadejia fell silent with shock.

Even the market women spoke in whispers.

Ralia heard the news while sitting beside her new husband's family. At first, she refused to believe it. Then someone mentioned the river.

She collapsed immediately.

For many years afterward, people still remembered Bashir. Some said he was foolish for dying because of love. Others blamed poverty. A few blamed Ralia.

But every rainy season, when the river overflowed and the wind carried dust through Hadejia again, old people remembered the boy who loved beyond reason.

And inside a large house in Kano, Ralia sometimes woke at night hearing his voice one final time:

“It is not over until Ralia loves me.”

But by then, it already was.

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Virtual  
**DEBATE**

Bridgette James  
Moderator

Chimezie Chika  
Keynote Speaker

**HOW TO Spot  
AI in Stories  
& Poems**

Sunday 5th July 2026  
19:30 BST - ZOOM

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**Keynote Speaker, Chimezie Chika** is a culture journalist and writer of fiction and nonfiction, and a senior writer for *Afrocritik*. His works have appeared in or forthcoming from, amongst other places, *The Shallow Tales Review*, *The Republic*, *Lolwe*, *Iskanchi Mag*, *Isele Magazine*, *Efiko Magazine*, *Brittle Paper*, and *Afrocritik*. He was a 2021 Fellow of the Ebedi International Writer’s Residency in Iseyin, Nigeria. He currently heads the literature department at *Afrocritik* and is the Fiction Editor of *Ngiga Review* and currently resides in Nigeria.



## About the Next Poet

OBIOTIKA WILFRED TOOCHUKWU is a Nigerian upcoming and emerging creative writer. He has written published fiction and non-fiction stories. As a poet, social commentator and public affairs analyst; his works resonate in both local and international journals and magazines.

## 7. **The Sparrow That Rejected Her Song** (A Long Poem)

by OBIOTIKA WILFRED TOOCHUKWU

The small bird in a maiden's open palms  
refused the language of defeat.  
No flutter, no ornamental dance  
only a stillness heavy with knowing.

It would not sing for pity  
nor rehearse the music of surrender.  
Ashamed of silence, it borrowed pride,  
feathering itself in borrowed colours.

Above, the sky arranged its choir  
angels of wing and wind  
and the parrot, bright-tongued courier,  
counted messages like beads of survival.

Morning came without chorus.  
Each bird hid inside the green grammar of vines,  
avoiding the eye of the open sky.  
Even the fig tree stood abandoned  
its curse a shadow none would name.

Only one watched from a distance,  
spinning stillness like a turbine,  
learning the discipline of quiet.

The smaller birds studied altitude  
how the heavy ones cut through air,  
how wings negotiate space without collision.  
The *nza* rose in sudden festivals of flight,  
a trembling script written across the sky.

Elsewhere, men lifted new songs  
praising the fall of another,  
calling it victory.

Eagles withdrew into hunger,  
fasting themselves into power,  
returning like thunder to their own shadows.

Voices gathered for burial  
hymns stitched with borrowed hope,  
mouths asking for oil in empty seasons.

Bitterness grew feathers.  
Ego learned to perch.  
Rivalry sharpened its beak.

Bird against bird  
a turning without harvest —  
labour that builds no barn.

Yet the pelican opens her breast,  
making sacrifice a form of music.  
The owl keeps watch with iron eyes.  
And somewhere, the sparrow remembers

a song is not noise,  
but the courage to live  
without becoming the predator.

Read Online at: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#obiotika-too-chukwu-the-sparrow-that-rejected-her-song>

# Competition News

## Janine Milne Wins the 2026 Bridgette James Poetry Competition



A Literature and Creative Writing graduate from University of South Africa/UNISA. Janine Milne's poetry has appeared in Sol Plaatje European Poetry Award anthologies and Stanzas. She won the 2026 *Bridgette James Poetry Competition* as well as the 2017 MacGregor Poetry Prize. She has published short fiction in *Short Sharp Stories*, *Bloody Parchment*, and *Lemonwood Quarterly*.

# THE RAZOR WIRE OF EXILE

## **PUBLICATION NEWS**

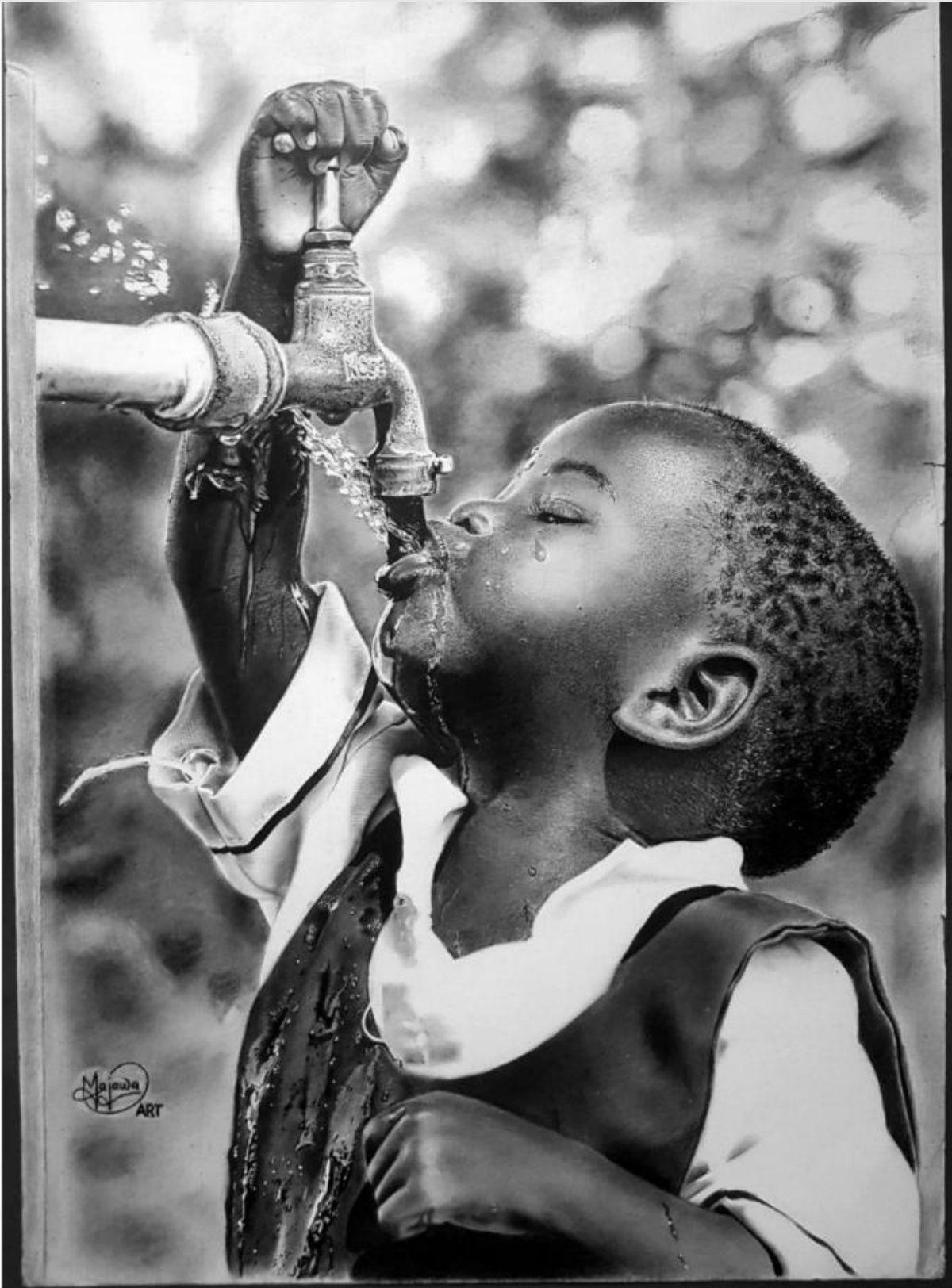
**The 2026 Winners Anthology is  
Available to Buy on Amazon &  
Download free**

Email: [Pennedinrage@outlook.com](mailto:Pennedinrage@outlook.com) for a PDF

Ellaspoems.com

Promoting Reading Across Africa

The 2026 Bridgette James Poetry Competition  
Winners' Anthology





**8. Art by**

KUMBUKANI CHAWINGA, a pencil artist, poet and a violinist from Malawi.

Featured Online at: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#kannie-jr-chawinga-art>





### **About the Next Poet**

Peter Ezeh is a Nigerian student who writes poems and fiction. A longtime author of unpublished works, he is drawn to mystery, melancholy, and the quiet complexities of human emotion, crafting stories and verses that linger long after the final line.

## **9. What Do They See When They Look at Me?**

by PETER EZEH

A reminder of life's frailty, a symbol of the old,

Like a hearth used but now cold,

of a story told without lustre.

What do they see when they look at me?

A roaring gust of confusion, a dynamite,

filled with close-up wall of destiny, short dreams, easily fulfilled, a depiction of a typical teenager,

Reckless abandon personified, a sleepy dreamer, like the livestock, in Jesus' manger, a hero of thought, a king of the dreamland.

What do they see when they look at me?

A shadowy figure cloaked in hateful spite,

a force of nature, revenge's delight,

tick-tock the clocks tick, as I plot my revenge, plots thick,

A smiley face, forgiving and benignant, a face that beckons "bully me, would you",

swollen cheeks, swollen eyes, swollen stomachs, the songs of midnight aches.

A little genius, the devil's spawn.

A little demon who pays back in the day's dawn

What do they see when they look at me? I do not know.

What do they see when they look at me? Can die in a dusty room from death's own rope.

In a twirling world of uncertainties,  
in a world of deception, and standards of many quantities.  
In a world where the lamb is adored, and the lion feared,  
both put in a cage, the sheep for the lion reared?

I do not seek the unseemly praise of feeble consciousness,  
nor the tempting lure of patterned speech, fancy and flavoured, filled with  
maliciousness.

Now? I bring a mirror to the halls of men, and in the limelight, when they look upon me,  
what do they see?

They see a sort of resemblance, the very epitome of their being,  
Filled with hate, envy, and pride, with a touch of what could have been.

No longer a crystal visor to see through.

What do they see when they look at me?

Frankly, I do not care.

Read Online at: URL: <https://ellaspoems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#peter-chukwuka-ezeh%C2%A0>

**10. A Short Review of BRETT ANDERSON’S Poem: ‘What Privilege,’ published in *The Razor Wire of Exile* (2026)**



By CHUKWUEBUKA ONYISHI, Poetry Editor, *Penned in Rage Journal* (Pictured)

Brett Anderson’s “What Privilege,” opens with a satirical interrogation of race and class, where assumptions about social hierarchy are quietly destabilised. I am drawn to how the speaker repeatedly resists the idea of privilege even as the poem carefully reveals how deeply embedded it is in his everyday life. The poem’s rhetorical persona is established early through repetition. The recurring use of “hoping” in lines such as “*hoping someone will notice me,*” “*hoping someone will throw*

*the ball to me,*” and “*hoping someday there’ll be call to me*” conveys a figure who sees himself as marginalised and overlooked. Yet this apparent vulnerability is gradually undermined by the poem’s later revelations of wealth, land ownership, and social power. Anderson uses repetition not only to create rhythm but also to construct a self-pitying character whose claims become increasingly ironic. This tension is handled with control and subtle humour, which allows the critique to



Image by [https://pixabay.com/users/jodeko-6015443/?utm\\_source=link-attribution&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=image&utm\\_content=5996329](https://pixabay.com/users/jodeko-6015443/?utm_source=link-attribution&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=image&utm_content=5996329) Jolanda de Koning from [https://pixabay.com//?utm\\_source=link-attribution&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=image&utm\\_content=5996329](https://pixabay.com//?utm_source=link-attribution&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=image&utm_content=5996329) Pixabay

develop through antithesis rather than assertion. The result becomes a narrative perspective that feels both conversational and revealing, drawing

the reader into complicity with its limitations. Anderson's use of colloquial language further strengthens this satirical tension.



**Photo: Poet, Brett Anderson**

The non-literal question, “*What privilege?*” delivered “*with an entitled chuckle,*” captures the poem’s central identity. The casual, conversational tone also suggests honesty and immediacy, even when the word “entitled” clearly exposes the very privilege the speaker attempts to deny. This juxtaposition between denial and exposure allows the satirical tensions to emerge organically from the speaker’s own language rather than

from overt authorial judgement. The poem’s social setting is reinforced by its use of names—*Phumeza, Chibale, Tinashe, and Cebile*—which lend specificity to the daily labour and economic relationships being depicted. These details support its portrayal of social hierarchy and power. Anderson’s linguistic choices also extend to its visual and typographic style. The consistent use of lower-case “i” contributes to the informal, self-effacing tone of the persona, even as the speaker describes possessing “*all the money,*” “*all the land,*” and “*all the positions of power.*” This visual humility contrasts with the magnitude of authority being described by deepening the poem’s ironic structure and reinforcing its critique of privilege.



*“It also draws on ordinary routines,  
which adds to its overall effectiveness.”*

In a broader context, the poem engages with recent international public claims by the U.S. President Donald Trump suggesting that white South Africans face systemic persecution. These claims have been widely contested, and Anderson’s poem enters this charged terrain indirectly. The speaker employs satire to expose how status can remain invisible to those who benefit from it, even when confronted with signs of inequality. While a few passages could benefit from more concise writing, these are still minor issues in an otherwise controlled and audacious piece. I am particularly impressed by the poet's use of narrative grace, irony, and comic tone, especially in how his introspection leaves a lasting sense of avoidance and internal contradiction, while exposing how privilege itself is recognised, denied, and also quietly sustained.

\*What Privilege might be a play on the expression: white privilege.

Read Feature Online at: <https://ellaspoems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#review-of-brett-andersons-what-privilege-by-chukwuebuka>

## 11. What Privilege

by BRETT ANDERSON

seven percent of the people in my land look like me  
so I must be standing somewhere on the fringes, right?  
hoping someone will notice me  
hoping someone will throw the ball to me  
hoping someday there'll be a call to me  
hoping against hope some chips will fall to me  
just a lonely little leaf drifting along  
on this torrential wave

feels strange then that when I lift my hand to my head  
it feels like i am the one wearing the crown  
that when the majority dare to lift their eyes  
to take a glimpse of me  
they're looking up, not looking down  
that i, or people who could be mistaken for me  
have all the money  
and all the land  
and all the positions of power  
eating out of my hand

“What privilege?” i ask, with an entitled chuckle  
as Phumeza passes me my morning coffee  
before continuing with her job of cleaning my house  
I think of the ridiculousness of it all  
as I cast my eye on Chibale through the window  
who is busying himself in my garden  
making sure everything is neat

i am entitled to spend time thinking about that question  
as Tinashe (*God is with us*) fills my car with petrol  
not thinking for a second that he will never own  
any one of the vehicles he dutifully feeds  
for just about enough money  
to spill some scraps on to the dinner table

and it starts to gnaw at me  
so much so that i miss the greeting from Cebile (*rich*)

as she packs my luxury coffee and leg of lamb into separate bags  
to make enough for her family to enjoy some beans tonight

'how dare they accuse me of privilege'  
i am right angry now  
as I dive into my socials to make my wrath known  
but all this has made me quite tired  
and so I flop down on to the couch and reach for the remote

## About the Poet

Brett "Fish" Anderson is a writer, improviser, speaker, and poet, but above all tries to be a lover of God and people, trying to spend his life becoming a better version of himself and motivating others to work to make the world a better place for everyone who lives in it. He is the author of two books, one of which is a Poetry collection titled: *Not water, JUST ICE!*

Read Online at: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#review-of-brett-andersons-what-privilege-by-chukwuebuka>

## **12. Nobody is Asking You to Be a Superhuman**

by THABANI DENZEL NKOSI

*Nobody is asking you to be a superhuman*

at the same time nobody's asking you to save their lives

but you're welcome if you want to go out of your way

to be fair and square

you're not allowed to join this circle or circumference

or at least not now

later, you won't be in time

so the sooner, just to get it over and done

withhold your judgement

reserve your expressions

be unafraid to dance like nobody's watching

sing like you're in the shower

take your shoes off....

if this was our house, then we were going to walk...

wait hold that thought!

split second decisions

never had the time to decide

what?

Black, White and Russians would sound very fluent maybe eloquent

if they were in our company

not all company is good for, I was advised

all I was trying to do is escape without waking up the guards

but there is always a catch!

in life there are contributing factors

in other words, no matter the situation

every action has a deadline date  
so we take steps, stepping stones  
of course, they all have to be turned around  
patiently waiting for mine to respond  
for now, i can't say word is bond  
just trying to be as James as bond  
good luck broke boy *who? where? what? how Sobona Khona*  
*Ninjan?*  
I'm only human and that must be acknowledged  
(considered is your background if not surround sounds)  
*where you lay your smart head, is it safe?*  
*what's the right time to call, a day or a night shift?*  
  
*The tone of your skin.*



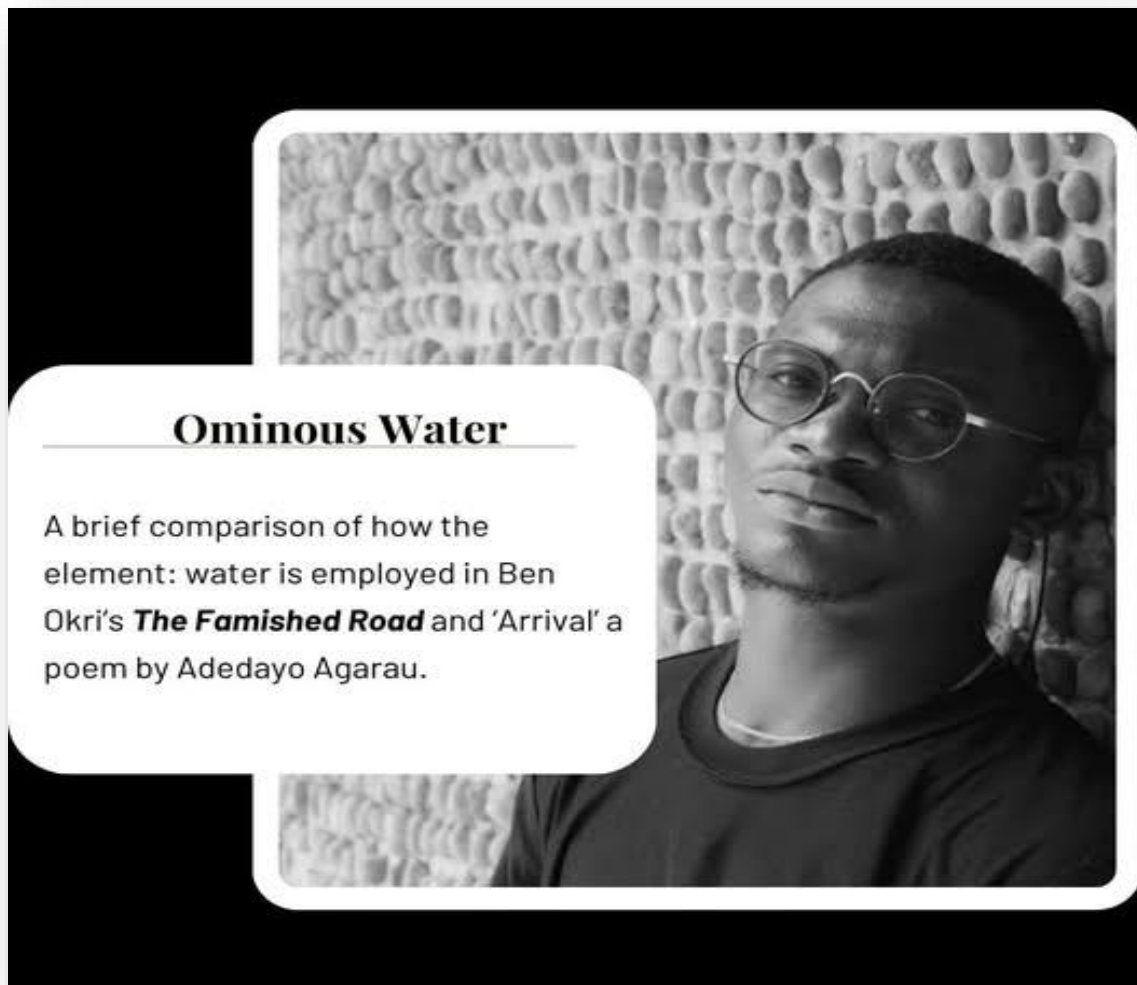
## About the Poet

THABANI DENZEL NKOSI is a Durbanite writer from a suburb called Newlands West. He is an aspiring student of the creative writing subject. In pursuit of being a bilingual author, he does however share his thoughts with peers if presented with an opportunity as a spoken word poet. Winding down the clock by frequenting the library. He says there's no place he would rather be.

**Featured Online here:** <https://ellaspoems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#thabani-nkosi-nobody-is-asking-you-to-be-a-superhuman>

13. A brief Comparison of How the Element: Water is Employed in Sir Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) and in 'Arrival' (2024) a Poem by Adedayo Agarua (also Published in *the years of blood*, 2025).

By BRIDGETTE JAMES



If water has an ominous or menacing effect in the work of Sir Ben Okri then how do you describe its properties in the long poem of Adedayo Agarau's- 'Arrival'?<sup>5</sup>

'Water is a relevant and a significant variable that is also germane to the understanding of Yorùbá peoples' identity, culture and religion,' writes Mr George Olusola Ajibade (of the Department of

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<sup>5</sup> Reference List

Linguistics and African Languages, at Obáfemi Awolowo University in Ilé-Ifè, Nigeria.<sup>6</sup>

If water and water bodies hold such deep significance in Yoruba folklore, no wonder Adedayo Agarau references it in his poem.

How about Igbo, Ben Okri in *The Famished Road*? Shall we just say the use of water as a mystical force is prevalent in west African Literature? And how about British Zambian Penguin-published poet: Kayo Chingonyi and his use of a water body in a now-infamous poem (in the UK) ‘Kumukanda’, (2017), don’t the boys of Kayo’s tribe have to cross a river to die and come back grown?

Therefore, a belief in the sacred fetish of water is embedded in sub-Saharan belief-systems and thus that belief has snorkelled its way into African Literature.

Water is a destructive force. Water offers transformation. Water cleanses and renews one. Water is used by creatives in Nigeria to create myths.

Let’s unleash my favourite quote of all time- which you’d have had me use if you’re a long-term Facebook page follower.

‘In the beginning there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out into the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry.’

SOURCE— Page 3, *The Famished Road*, (Okri,1991)<sup>7</sup>

Doesn’t that tell you rivers have the power to change form and engulf people? Isn’t that river the journey of life marred with challenges in sub-Saharan Africa? Doesn’t Azaro the protagonist in Ben Okri’s novel in question have to traverse the river to flee from spirits in the other world?

In fact, water in the form of a river is an inanimate character of its own accord in *The Famished Road*. Hold that thought because in Adedayo Agarau’s poem, ‘Arrival’, water is a main character. ‘Arrival’ mentions pouring rain in line two, giving me the heebie-jeebies. I’m so sacred of the premonition something bad is going to happen. Why am I not surprised that, that villainous great aunt of Adedayo is preparing a noxious substance out of love for him? I’m reminded of the alteration to Madam Koto who went from offering spirit-child Azaro food to wanting to exterminate Azaro and his dad, once she became corrupted by wealth and politics.

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<sup>6</sup> Reference List

<sup>7</sup> Reference List

Likewise, in Adedayo's poem I am permeated with fear for the infant-protagonist when the river's current leads 'into a sand house.' Oh God! Will this child drown? Can he swim? That sandy house is only going to crumble. This family cannot survive. As in *The Famished Road*, there's another universe under the river in 'Arrival.'

'the cities floating beneath me'

SOURCE— 'Arrival,' *the years of blood*, 2026<sup>8</sup>

Do you believe in the underworld of water?

In 'Arrival' the character rain, becomes a river then a sea: 'the sea collects me from the sand house.' We expect that perhaps it saved the infant-narrator because his mother ends up putting him to bed.

I leave you with a quote from Ben Okri's, *The Famished Road*:

'The river hurled its waters on the coral shores, the water turned into spray, and in the spray, I saw my spirit companions.'

SOURCE — Page 494, *The Famished Road* (Okri, 1991)

## Reference List

1. Two Poems by Adedayo Agarau, Published in Isele Magazine [Online] Available at: <https://iselemagazine.com/2024/12/06/two-poems-adedayo-agarau/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2026)
2. Ajibade G O (2021) 'Water Symbolism in Yorùbá Folklore and Culture' in ResearchGate [Online] Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357592748\\_Water\\_Symbolism\\_in\\_Yoruba\\_Folklore\\_and\\_Culture1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357592748_Water_Symbolism_in_Yoruba_Folklore_and_Culture1) (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2026)
3. Ben Okri *The Famished Road* (1991), Penguin Random House UK
4. Agarau A (2025), *the years of blood* Poetic Justice Institute, Fordham University Press New York

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<sup>8</sup> Reference List



## About the Next Poet

**Chidebelu Emmanuel Nnazoba**, known as Deb Angel, is an Igbo-born Nigerian metaphysical poet whose satirical and reflective poetry explores society, identity, and human contradictions through humour, irony, and philosophical depth.

### **Featured Online at:**

<https://ellaspoems.com/penned-inragemay-aug2026#chidebelu-emmanuel-nnazoba-the-witness>

**14. Not Our Kind** by CHIDEBELU EMMANUEL NNAZOB

He came where stones keep  
counsel—  
not as guest, but question.

The market asked for name, clan,  
price.  
He paid in silence.

For markets trade in echoes;  
Silence closes accounts.

They asked the river's source.  
He pointed to thirst.

Thus, the crowd concluded:  
*not our kind.*

They fenced him with names:  
alien, omen, error.

Name refused him;  
he became presence.

Unlicensed presence  
unsettles the licensed.

The tribe trusts what can be  
buried:  
bones, titles, fathers.

Where dust  
outranks blood,  
he is no stranger—  
only witness.

What escapes record  
is called danger.

He spoke nothing.  
Yet silence accused.

The crowd fears no stranger—  
only the mirror  
that will not flatter.

He was that mirror:  
no sermon,  
only an unpurchased gaze.

Thus, the verdict came:  
*not our kind.*

But earth knows no stranger.  
Root asks for no passport.

The market: danger.  
The earth: witness.

Between those judgments  
stands every exile.

## 15. The Witness

by CHIDEBELU EMMANUEL NNAZOBA

The vulture is hated

for honesty.

He eats what the feast denies,

cleans what pride perfumes.

The village calls him filthy

while dining on decorated rot.

The outcast tends

what polite mouths bury.

He handles the carcass of truth.

For this,

the perfumed accuse him.

Decency is often deodorised decay.

The moth reads garments

better than priests.

It finds the weak thread

in the robe of honour.

The clan wears seamless belonging

stitched from slogans,

patched with ritual.

He notices the tear.

Worse—

he touches it.

No society forgives the hand

that proves the fabric mortal.

The many weighs worth

by what glitters.

He measures absence—

missing grain,

missing truth,

missing soul.

Such knowledge is outlawed.

The crowd can pardon vice

but not revelation.

## 16. The Ghost of My Beyond

by ETETE OTUOKON

Every night, my soul reawakens —  
and he, the other me, smiles wider than I ever can.

He is lighter.

Freer.

Whole again.

Because she is there.

Waiting for him.

The one I lost.

The one I cannot stop seeing.

In my dreams, she still remembers my name.

Her hands still fit mine  
like promises never broken.

Her voice still calls me love —  
and every time,  
I fall for the lie of the dream.

But when I wake,  
my room is cold.  
My bed is wet  
with the tears shed for my ghost  
I don't even remember crying.

And I realize —  
I've lost her all over again.

This has been going on for months.

I pray until my knees ache.  
I fast until my body trembles.

I sit across from therapists who nod  
and tell me time heals all wounds.

But time only feeds the dream —  
makes it sharper,  
crueller.

And I can't tell anyone.

How could I?

They'd say I sound weak,  
pathetic — obsessed even —  
but it's not obsession,  
it's invasion.

It's not my doing.

## About the Poet

**Etete otuokon** is a poet, songwriter from Nigeria. He battles mental health issues, and he is the result of a toxic household. When he writes a piece, he feels alive and he wants to live again.

URL: <https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#etete-otuokon-the-ghost-of-my-beyond>

*An interview with*

# ETETE OTUOKON

*Poet & Singer*



**Tell us about yourself in a few words please.**

I am a writer from Nigeria, but I am a poet first and foremost. I do not enjoy mundane living; I believe life is meant to be lived properly. I enjoy writing stories, poems, and music. I sometimes struggle with opening up, but these creative mediums help me pass my message across.

**What inspired your latest single: 'Do What I Want?'**

I was inspired to write "Do What I Want" because for most of my life, I had been doing exactly what I was told to do by others. This song is a declaration that I want to live for myself now.

**What genre of music is that please?**

The genre is Melodic Rap / R&B.

**How does poetry writing influence your song writing?**

For me, music is simply poetry with a voice and a beat behind it. Because of my poetic background, both my poems and my songs naturally lean into a very nostalgic, emotional, and reflective depth.

**Do you set most of your poems to music?**

No, I do not set most of my poems to music. I have two distinct sides to me—the poetic side and the musical side. But at the end of the day, it is all art, and I love both.

## 17. Loveland

by DR T. DALLAS SAYLOR

On the hardwood floor I respond with reaching. Tell me about the stall in the club's bathroom, the way you pinned his knight to the white queen, lipstick running down the bottle after class. Takes, takes, gets captured: the pawn breaks in the wrong bed, stains satin sheets. You dab white-out on the side of the fridge, draw a win & a shot. I love love that hangs, ruffles the muzzle. I could almost hike the suburbs with you, resetting your bare stomach, my 3D crotch, to the first fireball, the spare green spirit. In photo booths he chokes on yes, another. He shoves the pieces in pen cases, jamming the base of the rook with his thumb like a slug that just won't load, piece o' shit. How a young man sweats after sex, his two fists running off to Loveland, & laughs like a face-painted clown.

### About the Poet

**Dr T. Dallas Saylor** (he/they) is the author of three poetry collections: *Starfish* (Glass Lyre Press, 2025), *Holy Little Masochisms* (Pen & Leaf Press, forthcoming 2027), & *Dragon Year* (Word Works, forthcoming 2027), & his work is on Twitter: @dallas\_saylor.



Read Feature Online at:

<https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#t-dallas-saylor-loveland>



Credits: PIXABAY

## 18. About Tshegofatjo Makhafola



“i am last night's memory stuck  
between the pastor's teeth.  
i am his after nine o'clock secret  
he gargles with repentance.  
a corinthians six verse nine  
transgression.’

— Queer by Tshegofatjo  
Makhafola, *The Razor Wire of  
Exile* (2026)

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Tshegofatjo Makhafola is a South African poet, writer, and award-winning spoken word artist based in Johannesburg. Known for exploring themes of Blackness and queerness, he won the Poetry Africa and Windy brow slam in 2023. His work appears in publications such as New Contrast, Poetry Potion, and Bath Magg, often highlighting deep, emotive storytelling.

## 19. Visit the Ezenwa Ohaeto African Traditional Poems Page

**A**thi Mpaka, known to the stage as "Athi-the: Poetry," is a talented wordsmith from the vibrant city of Mthatha. With a passion for performance poetry, Athi has been weaving words into magic, captivating audiences with his unique voice and perspective.

Honed through years of experience and training, Athi's craft is a reflection of his sharp mind and quick wit. His poetry explores themes of identity, culture, and social justice, resonating deeply with those who hear him speak.

As a stage performer, Athi brings energy and conviction to every

performance, leaving a lasting impact on all who witness his art. With a

growing presence in the poetry scene, Athi is undoubtedly one to watch.



<https://ellaspoems.com/ezenwa-ohaetoafricanpoemsrepository#athi-mpaka>

**20. BBC Culture Has Listed the 100 Best British Books.**  
I've Read Seven of them. Have *You* Read Any?

100. The Code of the Woosters (PG Wodehouse, 1938)
99. There but for the (Ali Smith, 2011)
98. Under the Volcano (Malcolm Lowry, 1947)
97. The Chronicles of Narnia (CS Lewis, 1949-1954)
96. Memoirs of a Survivor (Doris Lessing, 1974)
95. The Buddha of Suburbia (Hanif Kureishi, 1990)
94. The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (James Hogg, 1824)
93. Lord of the Flies (William Golding, 1954)
92. Cold Comfort Farm (Stella Gibbons, 1932)
91. The Forsyte Saga (John Galsworthy, 1922)
90. The Woman in White (Wilkie Collins, 1859)
89. The Horse's Mouth (Joyce Cary, 1944)
88. The Death of the Heart (Elizabeth Bowen, 1938)
87. The Old Wives' Tale (Arnold Bennett, 1908)
86. A Legacy (Sybille Bedford, 1956)
85. Regeneration Trilogy (Pat Barker, 1991-1995)
84. Scoop (Evelyn Waugh, 1938)
83. Barchester Towers (Anthony Trollope, 1857)
82. The Patrick Melrose Novels (Edward St Aubyn, 1992-2012)
81. The Jewel in the Crown (Paul Scott, 1966)
80. Excellent Women (Barbara Pym, 1952)
79. His Dark Materials (Philip Pullman, 1995-2000)
78. A House for Mr Biswas (VS Naipaul, 1961)
77. Of Human Bondage (W Somerset Maugham, 1915)
76. Small Island (Andrea Levy, 2004)
75. Women in Love (DH Lawrence, 1920)
74. The Mayor of Casterbridge (Thomas Hardy, 1886)
73. The Blue Flower (Penelope Fitzgerald, 1995)
72. The Heart of the Matter (Graham Greene, 1948)
71. Old Filth (Jane Gardam, 2004)
70. Daniel Deronda (George Eliot, 1876)
69. Nostromo (Joseph Conrad, 1904)
68. A Clockwork Orange (Anthony Burgess, 1962)
67. Crash (JG Ballard 1973)
66. Sense and Sensibility (Jane Austen, 1811)
65. Orlando (Virginia Woolf, 1928)
64. The Way We Live Now (Anthony Trollope, 1875)
63. The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie (Muriel Spark, 1961)
62. Animal Farm (George Orwell, 1945)
61. The Sea, The Sea (Iris Murdoch, 1978)
60. Sons and Lovers (DH Lawrence, 1913)
59. The Line of Beauty (Alan Hollinghurst, 2004)
58. Loving (Henry Green, 1945)
57. Parade's End (Ford Madox Ford, 1924-1928)
56. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit (Jeanette Winterson, 1985)
55. Gulliver's Travels (Jonathan Swift, 1726)
54. NW (Zadie Smith, 2012)
53. Wide Sargasso Sea (Jean Rhys, 1966)
52. New Grub Street (George Gissing, 1891)
51. Tess of the d'Urbervilles (Thomas Hardy, 1891)

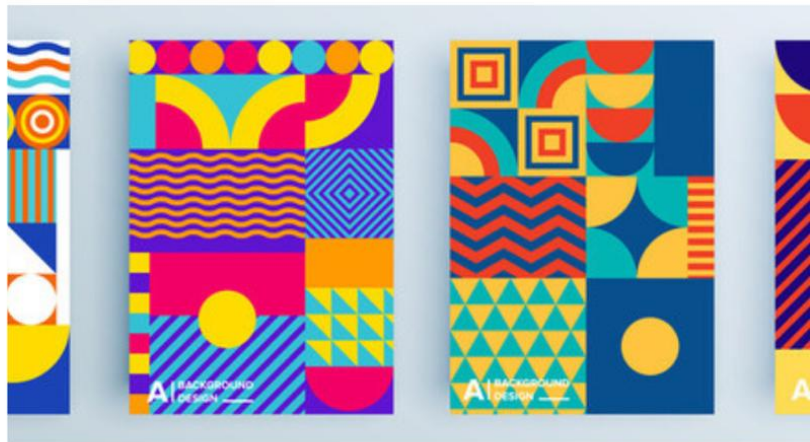
50. A Passage to India (EM Forster, 1924)
49. Possession (AS Byatt, 1990)
48. Lucky Jim (Kingsley Amis, 1954)
47. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (Laurence Sterne, 1759)
46. Midnight's Children (Salman Rushdie, 1981)
45. The Little Stranger (Sarah Waters, 2009)
44. Wolf Hall (Hilary Mantel, 2009)
43. The Swimming Pool Library (Alan Hollinghurst, 1988)
42. Brighton Rock (Graham Greene, 1938)
41. Dombey and Son (Charles Dickens, 1848)
40. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll, 1865)
39. The Sense of an Ending (Julian Barnes, 2011)
38. The Passion (Jeanette Winterson, 1987)
37. Decline and Fall (Evelyn Waugh, 1928)
36. A Dance to the Music of Time (Anthony Powell, 1951-1975)
35. Remainder (Tom McCarthy, 2005)
34. Never Let Me Go (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2005)
33. The Wind in the Willows (Kenneth Grahame, 1908)
32. A Room with a View (EM Forster, 1908)
31. The End of the Affair (Graham Greene, 1951)
30. Moll Flanders (Daniel Defoe, 1722)
29. Brick Lane (Monica Ali, 2003)
28. Villette (Charlotte Brontë, 1853)
27. Robinson Crusoe (Daniel Defoe, 1719)
26. The Lord of the Rings (JRR Tolkien, 1954)
25. White Teeth (Zadie Smith, 2000)
24. The Golden Notebook (Doris Lessing, 1962)
23. Jude the Obscure (Thomas Hardy, 1895)
22. The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling (Henry Fielding, 1749)
21. Heart of Darkness (Joseph Conrad, 1899)
20. Persuasion (Jane Austen, 1817)
19. Emma (Jane Austen, 1815)
18. Remains of the Day (Kazuo Ishiguro, 1989)
17. Howards End (EM Forster, 1910)
16. The Waves (Virginia Woolf, 1931)
15. Atonement (Ian McEwan, 2001)
14. Clarissa (Samuel Richardson, 1748)
13. The Good Soldier (Ford Madox Ford, 1915)
12. Nineteen Eighty-Four (George Orwell, 1949)
11. Pride and Prejudice (Jane Austen, 1813)
10. Vanity Fair (William Makepeace Thackeray, 1848)
9. Frankenstein (Mary Shelley, 1818)
8. David Copperfield (Charles Dickens, 1850)
7. Wuthering Heights (Emily Brontë, 1847)
6. Bleak House (Charles Dickens, 1853)
5. Jane Eyre (Charlotte Brontë, 1847)
4. Great Expectations (Charles Dickens, 1861)
3. Mrs. Dalloway (Virginia Woolf, 1925)
2. To the Lighthouse (Virginia Woolf, 1927)
1. Middlemarch (George Eliot, 1874)

MAY-AUG

2026

# Penned in Rage

EDITION 5

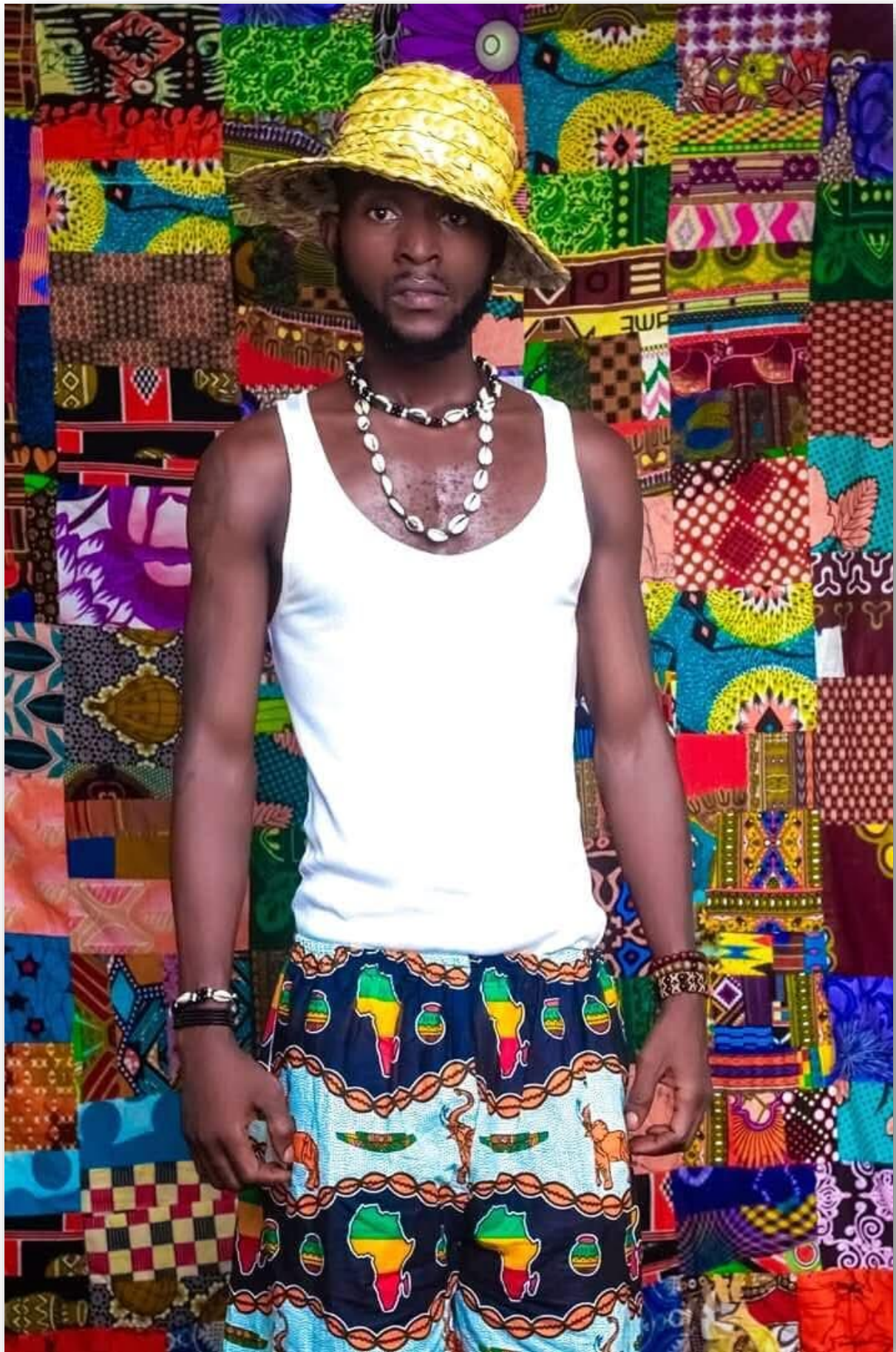


A Literary  
Journal

**L**iterature has always demanded from us the gift of expression. A poem, a story, or any form of genuine expression is a medium through which we understand ourselves more clearly.

*Through them, we examine the present and return to the past, our history, hunger, desire, shame, displacement, and other complexities and burdens of being human. This edition of Penned in Rage has these fingerprints.*

**Edited by Chinua Ezenwa- Ohaeto & Bridgette James**



## 21. Musician TAMBA JOHNSON (Pictured)

Listen to 'True Confession,' Here:

<https://ellaspoeems.com/pennedinragemay-aug2026#tamba-johnson>

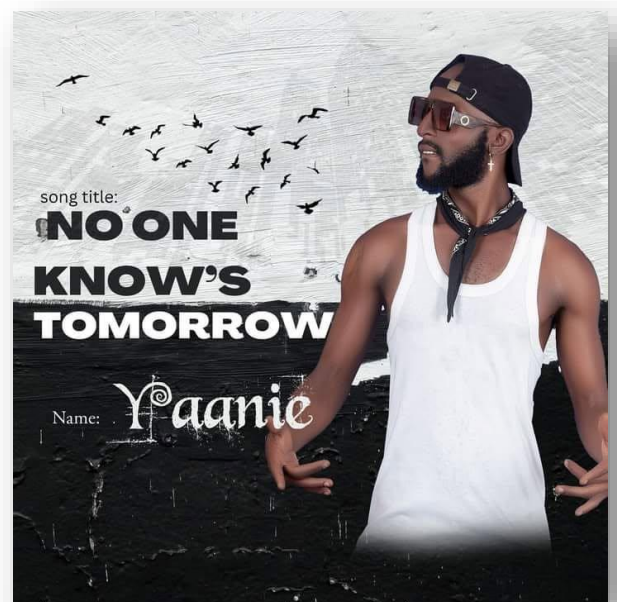
### Tell us about yourself

I'm Tamba S. Johnson. My stage name is Yaanie. I'm a Liberian Sierra Leonean My father is from Liberia, and my mother is a Sierra Leonean from Kailahun district kissy Teng chiefdom My father is from Lofa County,

I sing and rap in my native languages are Kissi, Liberian Koloqua, Krio and English.

### How do you use your music to represent your community?

I use my music to educate my people and to speak about our daily lives, struggles, our culture and traditions. I'm not making much money from my music. But I'm not discouraged about that I keep pushing still.



## 23. VACANCY: Journalist/Blogger

(Based in South Africa/Botswana et cetera)

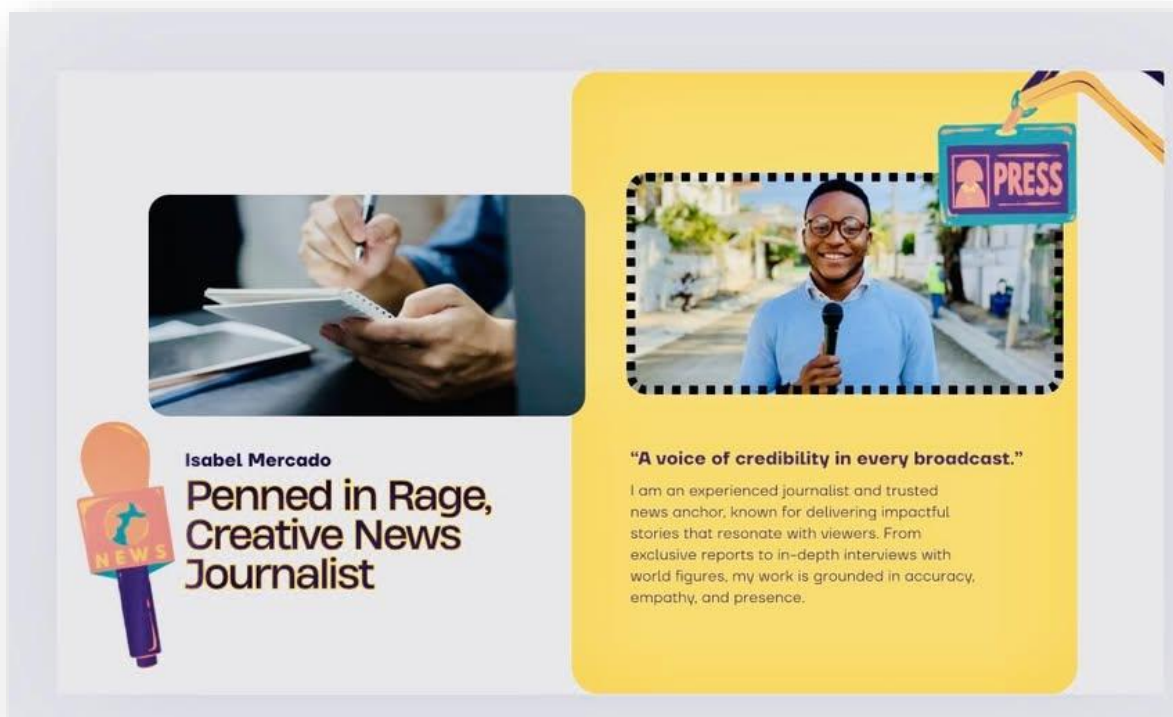
**Penned in Rage Journal Needs a Journalist Blogger** to Report Once a Month, on News and Issues Affecting Creatives in Sub-Saharan Africa. Your Report Should Be Factual but Creative. Respondent Must Write & Speak Fluent English and Have a Device to Take Original Photographs. (By definition, the term: creatives means musicians, writers, artists, et cetera.)

**Start Date:** 1/07/2026 (ongoing) Length of Report: up to a Thousand Words Maximum.

### Terms & Conditions

A Token Fee of \$5.00 Will be Paid per Feature. Expressions of Interest to:

[pennedinrage@outlook.com](mailto:pennedinrage@outlook.com)



**Isabel Mercado**  
**Penned in Rage,  
Creative News  
Journalist**

**"A voice of credibility in every broadcast."**

I am an experienced journalist and trusted news anchor, known for delivering impactful stories that resonate with viewers. From exclusive reports to in-depth interviews with world figures, my work is grounded in accuracy, empathy, and presence.