

Poetry Series

**James Ogunjimi**  
**- poems -**

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## James Ogunjimi(14/09)

James Ogunjimi is a Nigerian born in Ago-Iwoye town of Ogun State. A poet, social crusader, apostle of change, Industrial Chemist, freelance journalist and revolutionary activist.

# 53 Years From Now

Nigerians want change, but they don't want pain.  
Nigerians cry for better lives, but they leave it all for fate.  
"E go better, e go better", is the age old slogan,  
53 years from now, we'll still be singing the same song.

53 years from now, frowns will still crease our brow.  
53 years from now, our youths will still get slaughtered like fowl.  
53 years from now, our anthem will still be "E go better."  
53 years from now, we'll still be at the rung of the ladder.

53 years from now, our oil will probably have dried up.  
53 years from now, our crops will probably have died off.  
53 years from now, our treasury will probably be empty.  
53 years from now, we'll still have to live with impunity.

53 years from now, war may have ravaged our land.  
53 years from now, we may have spent ourselves fighting a selfish battle.  
53 years from now, we'll be looking back wishing for what is long gone.  
53 years from now, our children may grace our graves with spittle.

We have waited for a messiah for long enough.  
We have sat still living life just the way it was.  
Nigeria must awake from its slumber,  
Or 53 years from now, there'll be nothing left to remember.

James Ogunjimi

# A New Dance

For long have we moved our body to the rhythm of this dance,  
For long have we danced vigorously as people in a trance.  
Yet, despite the swiftness of our feet,  
The dancers are looked at as people who can't keep to beat.

What then can we do?  
Must we continue the dance into our waterloo?  
Or do we forsake the dance of old,  
And set the stage for a new dance of our own?

This dance of shame has gone on for long enough.  
These dancers have been ridiculed by those they love.  
These dance steps need to change,  
Set the stage, people; we have a new dance, with new dancers who have  
overcome their pain.

James Ogunjimi

# Africa Will Rise Again

Weep not for me o African,  
For thy tears in nought will flow.  
Weep rather for the future of your children,  
Whose tears may never cease to flow.

Weep not for me O African,  
The travails thou doth witness are of thy making.  
For when thou ought to have spoken,  
The courage to resist the evil ones thou was lacking.

Weep not for me O African,  
For thy situation doth defy tears.  
Sit not still while your continent is burning,  
Leave not thy land for them to tear.

Weep not for me O African,  
Thy goods on daily basis is looted,  
Thy milk and honey everyday is disappearing,  
How long shalt thou to the wicked be subjected?

Weep not for me O African,  
The ties that bind thee are not yet loose.  
Thy leaders for all thy goods doth yearn,  
Yet thou remain mute.

Weep not for me O African,  
The best of thy children you have lost.  
The best of thy talents have been taken,  
When will they come home to roost?

Weep not for me O African,  
The time of self-pity has elapsed.  
The era of wallowing has ended,  
The walk to freedom has begun.

Weep not for me O African,  
Let the fathers tell their sons.  
Let the mothers tell their daughters,  
Africa will rise again.

Weep not for me O African,  
Weep rather for your children.  
For if this time pass and thou dost not act,  
Thy children forever will be lost.

Weep not for me O African,  
Tell it on the hills, scream it to the mountains.  
Tell it to those who our goods are stealing,  
AFRICA WILL RISE AGAIN! ! !

James Ogunjimi

# Alas! Life Has Been Murdered

I listened to the late night cry of the owl.  
I waited and watched with unabated breath the face of the dog as it scowled.  
I heard in the far distance the constant cooing of the fowl.  
Life has been murdered, I was told.

As I moved to the streets to watch,  
I saw heads bowed and eyes bloodshot.  
If life could cease to be,  
Then what hope have we?

Life has bid us farewell,  
We have signed agreement with death.  
Death is the ultimate price in a fierce quarrel.  
This is what has become of our earth.

For how can life live still and the course of our existence be changed?  
How can life live still and children precede their parents into the grave?  
No, no! Life has ceased to be,  
And with his death goes our will to live.

James Ogunjimi

# Alas! The Gong Has Lost Its Voice

'The change must come,  
The looting must stop.  
This impunity must end,  
If the nation must regain its strength.'  
The gong has sounded faithfully for so long,  
But now, its voice is gone;  
Alas, our gong has lost its voice.

The wife at home, bickering.  
The children hungry, waiting.  
Will your endless babbles bring us money?  
Will the constant rambling about change pay the landlord's fee?  
The gong is lost in thought,  
And now, our gong has lost its voice.

Tell it to the rulers who have no compassion,  
Tell it to the followers whose constant mistakes have enthroned the wrong.  
We have stayed silent for far too long,  
The world is in dire need of more gongs,  
For this our gong has lost his voice.

James Ogunjimi



# Are Those Tears Real?

Are those tears real?

Those cried when caught straight in the act.

Are those tears real?

Those shed when you can no longer deny the facts.

Are those tears real?

The ones dropping at the burial of a staunch enemy who fate has silenced at last.

Are those fears founded?

Those expressed at the beginning of every shady deal.

Are those scars deserved?

The result of an over-expression of how you feel.

Are those years wasted?

The ones spent respecting everyone else's views.

Are these people real?

Those who gullibly follow without thinking.

Can these youths think?

The youths who give blind support to a ship that's sinking.

Is this generation sane?

That of youths who passively accept injustice without blinking.

Will this nation ever be free?

When we fail to act and keep on lingering.

James Ogunjimi

# As The Clock Strikes Twelve

As the clock strikes twelve,  
Yet another completed book is added to life's shelf.  
First will come the greetings and well-wishes,  
And then will come thoughts of happy times and painful memories;  
The thought of what should be that is not,  
The memories of carefully-crafted plans that have all been lost.

As the clock strikes twelve,  
Yet another date is ticked in life's calendar.  
First will come the delicacies, into which we'll delve,  
And then will come reminiscences of the journey so far.  
Thoughts of plans that never lived to see the new moon,  
Memories of resolutions that were gone too soon.

As the clock strikes twelve,  
Yet another page is written in life's journal.  
First will come the hurrahs from friends celebrating amongst themselves,  
And then will come a desire to escape from all the noise to hide under the radar,  
To think thoughts of personal relationships that were handled poorly,  
Memories of fragile hearts that were left hanging loosely.

As the clock strikes twelve,  
Yet another race will start to make sense of this life.  
First will come the brilliant thoughts and hasty scribbles,  
And then will come reluctant cancellations and additional views.  
An unwritten appeal to the universe to let the lofty heights desired be,  
A silent plea to life to make the year one that ushers in fulfilment of dreams.

Happy Birthday to Me!

James Ogunjimi

# As The Day Draws Near

As the day draws near,  
When reality must be confronted,  
When the truth beforetime masked must be laid bare,  
When face to face must come the leader and the led,  
Running from the truth will be an effort in futility;  
Confronting the issues is the only way, really.

As the moment approaches,  
When one must be taken and the other left,  
When to the rocks we'll run seeking to hide in its cleft,  
When progress, though painful must be made in defiance of self-appointed coaches,  
Hiding and living in denial will not do;  
Standing up and facing the facts are the only rules.

As the hour prepares to strike,  
When humanity will be offered a chance to progress or stand still,  
When one by one we'll have a split second to stay down or rise,  
When we can confront and slay our demons or let them live still,  
Retreating in cowardice and fear will not suffice;  
Rising and acting confidently is the only thing that will get us through this.

As the final stage is set,  
When in the face of overwhelming odds, we're expected to win,  
When in the face of powerful foes, we're expected not to fret,  
When we're confronted with just two choices: perish or live,  
We must move on though faced with threats of destruction;  
For even in death, defeat is not an option.

James Ogunjimi

# Chained Tongues, Imprisoned Minds

Chained tongues, imprisoned minds,  
People who have lived their lives their humanity trying to find,  
People who would rather give up than stand up and fight,  
People who have lived too long in darkness they can't see the light.

Chained tongues, imprisoned minds,  
Birds of a feather; they're one of a kind,  
Burdened with problems, living daily in fright,  
Freedom seems now distant, there's no hope in sight.

Chained tongues, imprisoned minds,  
In rudderless ship, the blind leading the blind,  
What else will unite us if not our plight?  
When will we understand that in unity lies our might?

James Ogunjimi

# Don'T Call Me Free (When I'M Still In Chains)

Don't call me free, when chains are all around me.  
Don't call me independent, when on others I still rely.  
Don't call me innocent, when my hands are stained with blood.  
Don't call me free, when I'm still in chains.

Don't preach peace to me, when war is all around me.  
Don't force me to be at peace when you are the architects of war.  
Don't punish me when in anger I fight back.  
Don't call me free, when I'm still in chains.

Don't preach love to me, when hate reigns supreme in your heart.  
Don't teach me to love my neighbour when you have pushed yours away.  
Don't pray for love to fill my heart, when hate now rules in yours.  
Don't call me free, when I'm still in chains.

Don't preach uprightness to me, when your ways are crooked.  
Don't teach me to make my life an open book, when yours are closed and full of dirty secrets.  
Don't pray for me to shun corruption, when you come to equity with stained hands.  
Don't call me free, when I'm still in chains.

Don't preach courage to me, when you are chicken-hearted.  
Don't teach me to stand up and look the world straight in the eye, when your own heads are bent in fear.  
Don't pray for my strength not to fail, when you've been drained of yours.  
Don't call me free, when I'm still in chains.

James Ogunjimi

# Don'T Tell Me We'Re Free

Don't judge us by the Smiling faces  
And conclude we are happy.  
Don't use as examples just a few cases  
And say it's reality.  
For Smiling faces do not mean the same as happy people,  
Neither does smooth talk translate to goodwill.

Don't see the big cars we drive  
And conclude we are rich.  
Don't look at the clothes we have  
And call us the real deal.  
For big cars do not mean the same as rich men,  
Neither does big clothes translate to big men.

Don't look at us 'going places'  
And conclude we can soar.  
Don't look at us like cheetahs running in races  
And expect us to roar.  
For 'going places' does not always mean it's in the right direction,  
Neither does aimless running translate to eventual elevation.

Don't look at our feet without shackles  
And conclude we are free.  
Don't look at our faces without wrinkles  
And say it's the good life we live.  
For the invisibility of chains is no proof of its absence,  
Neither does smooth face translate to a life of rest.

James Ogunjimi

# Enough Of Mere Men

Conformists fall for anything,  
Driven by others' opinions like a leaf in the wind,  
The world is full of men who just want to blend in,  
Men who would sell their voice even if the world'll come to ruin.

History has its heroes, history has its villains,  
History has its record full of men who lived in vain,  
Men who cannot think for themselves or play their own part,  
Men who would rather walk in shadows than forge their own path.

The future will not be built by men without spine,  
The future won't be built by men who only want to wine and dine,  
For history you see, has had its fill of ordinary men;  
The future has no place for mere men.

James Ogunjimi

# Freedom

If you see Freedom,  
Tell him to check himself into the nearest police station.  
The world has been eagerly waiting for him to come;  
For he's the eternal longing of all nations.

Someone called to say they saw him,  
Giving people jobs, then taxing them to death.  
Ripping them off bit by bit till nothing was left;  
I said 'twas not Freedom; 'twas his evil twin.

Another said he saw Freedom,  
In Libyan skies dropping from NATO bombs,  
But few years after buying the democracy America sold;  
There's hardship in the land for young and old.

In 2011, some said they saw Freedom in Nigeria,  
Hoisting party flags with promises of a new era,  
But today he's dancing in Kano and campaigning in Nigerian slums;  
Saying he doesn't give a damn if Baga burns.

I was told Freedom visited South Africa,  
Ended apartheid and freed Mandela,  
Years after, apartheid is gone, but Freedom does not ring;  
They say it's because we are still tied to the West's apron string.

Someone in Washington said he saw Freedom,  
Giving orders and taking the world for a ride.  
He said 'twas he; I said 'twas not;  
And when I looked, 'twas his look alike.

James Ogunjimi



# Gratitude

For the simplest of things;  
A little of that and this.  
For the minute ones called small,  
Named so by those the world calls poor.  
Look well at the hand that never holds back;  
For it belongs to the man that never shall know lack.

For the big favours,  
And the little hands that make it happen.  
For the giant strides taken,  
Helped by the weary shoves of those who labour.  
Here I stand, I have no regrets;  
I am a product of love's toil and sweat.

For those who left us where we were,  
And to those who helped us get where we are.  
For those who sap us daily of the will to live,  
And for those who help us along with loving rebukes.  
History has seats reserved for all to occupy;  
But while some will rejoice; others will have to cry.

For those who inspire us and keep us moving,  
For those we inspire daily and give reasons for living.  
For those who help us push the limits of reason and go beyond the ordinary,  
And for those who are hot on our heels like the hunter after his quarry;  
You are the reason we are where we are;  
It is to you that we owe all we have.

You are all remembered,  
You have all tried.  
I can appreciate you in English and say "Thanks";  
Or go the Spanish way and say "Gracias";.  
You are the reason why night has to disappear when it sees the day;  
You all are the reason I'm still standing today.

James Ogunjimi

# How Did We Get Here?

We are getting to that horrible place.  
Yes, that place where no country wishes to be.  
'Tis a place where no nation wants to be named with.  
A place of violence and fear.

We have arrived at that destination.  
Yes, that destination where no country ever prays to get.  
'Tis a venue where no nation wishes to arrive at.  
A place of disaster and death.

We have reared up that house.  
Yes, a place where no parent wishes for their kids.  
'Tis a place where the children are slain in their youths.  
A place of bloodshed and insecurity.

We have become 'those' people.  
Yes, the people who no longer cringe at the sight of corpses.  
The people who are now used to news of violence and death.  
People who no longer care.

How did we find ourselves here?  
How did we become 'that' nation?  
How did we adapt to violence?

We must retrace our steps.  
We must raise up our voices.  
We must reclaim our land!

James Ogunjimi

# I Choose To Believe In Humanity

I refuse to see the world through a lens of black and white,  
For being white does not mean your motives are right,  
Just as being black does not mean your intents are dark.  
I choose instead to believe in a world where regardless of colour, we all have  
each others' backs,  
I choose to believe in humanity.

I refuse to see the world through the eyes of religion,  
That you're a Christian does not mean you're Christ-like,  
And that you're a Muslim doesn't mean you're going to paradise.  
I choose instead to believe in a world of love and compassion,  
I choose to believe in humanity.

I refuse to see the world through a divide of gender,  
That you're male doesn't mean you'll succeed at all you do,  
And that you're female doesn't make you inferior and fit only to be ruled.  
I choose instead to believe in a world where we all have equal opportunities to go  
far;  
I choose to believe in humanity.

I refuse to see the world through a haze of politics,  
That you're first-world country doesn't give you right to lord your will over the  
world,  
And being a third-world country doesn't make you a beggar, who's always scared  
of diplomatic rods,  
I choose instead to believe in a world where everyone's helped to rise no matter  
the risks,  
I choose to believe in humanity.

James Ogunjimi

# I Want To Be Remembered

I want to be remembered for good. I want to be on the right side of history.

I want to be remembered as a man who never shied away from speaking the truth.

I want to be remembered as a man who never kept quiet in the face of injustice.

I want to be remembered as a man who never cringed in the face of tyranny.

I want to be remembered as a man who gave his all, and did his part for his generation.

I want to be remembered for good.

I want to be remembered as a man who wasn't loved by all, but loved by the few that counted.

I want to be remembered as a man who never sought to please everyone, for that was an impossible task.

I want to be remembered as a man who lightened the burden of the weary and put smiles on the face of the discouraged.

I want to be remembered for good.

I want to be remembered as a man who didn't follow public opinion, but had his own mind.

I want to be remembered as a man who never walked in anyone's path, but cleared his own path, walked there and left footprints.

I want to be remembered as a man who never knelt at the feet of corruption or drank from the cup of illegality.

I want to be remembered for good.

I want to be remembered as a man who loved his country dearly, and helped free it from the grip of bad rulers.

I want to be remembered as a man who toiled and sweated to the end that a new nation will be born.

I want to be remembered as a man who rose and lifted others along with him.

I want to be remembered for good.

I will be remembered.

O yes, I will.

Whether I do good, or it's evil I choose.

I'll rather do good,

So that when posterity will judge,

And history will remember.

I will be remembered for good.

James Ogunjimi

# I Want To...But I Cannot

I want to write of a Nigeria of beautiful sceneries,  
Of happy people living together in peace and harmony;  
Of well-fed people with incredible delicacies,  
I want to write of beggar-less streets and a gainfully employed citizenry,  
Believe me, I want to...but I can't.

I want to write of a nation of responsible leaders,  
Of a population of question-asking followers;  
Of electioneering devoid of killers,  
I want to write of elections that don't end at tribunals,  
Believe me, I want to...but I can't.

I want to write of religions, whose teachings don't leave in the nation's wall,  
cracks,  
Of religious houses that have learnt to give back;  
Of religious leaders whose eyes are not closed to their members' lack,  
I want to write of religious leaders, who speak truth to power at the expense of  
getting political pats on the back,  
Believe me, I want to...but I can't.

James Ogunjimi

# If Only They Could Watch

If only the heroes of our nation dead and buried could watch,  
If only they could see what their labours have been reduced to and how their  
people have become lost,  
Then maybe our ears will be open enough to hear,  
Their shrieks and endless tears.

If only Pa Awolowo could watch,  
And see what his legacy has become.  
If only he could see the fake AWOists that have flooded our nation and rendered  
his life's work of no effect,  
Then maybe our minds will open enough to understand,  
His pain as he views the land.

If only the great Fela could watch,  
And see the generation of youths that he handed the torch,  
If only he could see how silent and cowed his people have become,  
Then maybe our eyes will open enough to see,  
The tears as they roll down his cheeks.

If only MKO could watch,  
And see what democracy has become.  
If only he could see how his people are being robbed blind and killed all in the  
name of democracy,  
Then maybe our understanding will expand enough to imagine,  
The heartache he has had to live with.

If only Gani Fawehinmi could watch,  
And see what the nation has become.  
If only he could see the people he fought side-by-side with now dining at the  
same table with the enemy.  
Then maybe our memories will go back long enough,  
To remember how he gave up his life and fought for the people even when it was  
tough.

If only we will listen,  
To their voices as they chide us.  
If only we will allow ourselves,  
To see their tears as they watch us.  
If only we could open our minds enough,

To understand the meaning of Change.  
Then, maybe  
Just maybe,  
We'll be willing to stand up for what we believe.

James Ogunjimi



# If Our Blood Is What It'll Take

The poor getting poorer, the rich getting richer,  
Justice benched on the sidelines,  
The lofty dreams of our youths they have marred,  
While they live their lives daily with no dime,  
But we'll not quiver or shake,  
We'll reclaim our land even if our blood is what it'll take.

Death tolls growing daily,  
Youths murdered with cut-short destinies,  
Dare we hope for a better society?  
Dare we dream of a better tomorrow?  
Words and pleas will only make our options narrow,  
What it'll take may be a rain of bow and arrows,  
For we must take back our land even if our blood is what it'll take.

We may sit still and watch them complete our dehumanisation,  
We can stand with arms folded watching them destroy our nation,  
We can look on and watch them sacrifice our lives to attain high positions,  
Or we can be resolved to make them shake,  
We must be resolved to get justice or make the land quake,  
We must get back our land even if our blood is what it'll take.

James Ogunjimi

# I'LI Rise

Kept down by the elders' greed,  
Seeing nothing daily but their evil deeds,  
Watching bloody clashes over lands and borders;  
Incessant wars over who gets more than the others.  
But in spite of these I'll rise,  
For I'm an African child, and my future is bright.

Brothers kidnapped by bloodthirsty warlords as child-soldiers,  
Sisters abducted by brainwashed terrorists as child-wives,  
While sons are left to the mercy of the streets to live their lives,  
Daughters are married off as toddlers to the highest bidder.  
But in spite of these I'll rise,  
For I'm an African child and my future is bright.

James Ogunjimi

# Lest We Forget

Lest we forget,  
January 1st, 2012, they removed subsidy on PMS.  
They promised they were going to provide palliatives.  
But our people have been lied to long enough to read the lips of a liar.  
And so they took to the streets in fits of anger.

Lest we forget,  
The people displayed rare unity in the face of a rare enemy.  
The people threw aside the petty bickering that have prevented them from being free.  
They forgot their religious affiliation and counted as nought their tribal differences.  
As men and women, old and young, all wanted the same thing.

Lest we forget,  
The government saw the determination of the people.  
They saw the people defying the scorching heat of the sun,  
They saw people whose thirst for change had defeated the fear of the gun.  
In their determination, the government could see their fall.

Lest we forget,  
As they remained on the streets and forsook their habitation,  
The descendants of Judas Iscariot went behind and wronged the people beyond human comprehension.  
They rendered the labour and sweat of the people of no effect,  
And were prepared to kill the people till no one was left.

Lest we forget,  
They killed our brothers,  
Yeah! Ilorin was where they shed the blood of Muyideen Mustapha.  
They filled our streets with soldiers and threatened to kill us like dogs.  
And yet they are the ones who deceived the people by pretending to be of God.

Lest we forget,  
The resolve we showed then was great.  
Our determination was unique.  
Our quest for change was inspiring.  
We must keep hope alive that we'll see the change we need.

Lest we forget,  
They are not to be trusted.  
Lest we forget, they are not for the people.  
Lest we forget, they have betrayed their own people.  
Lest we forget, system change is the solution.

James Ogunjimi

# Letter From A Rebel

Dear mother,

I know you brought me up in the way of the Bible,  
And yes I know you've prayed for me never to stumble.  
I know you wish I was a child who'll follow in father's footsteps,  
But you see, things don't always go the way we expect.

I know you want the best for me,  
And yes I know it's the good life you want me to live.  
But you see, life plays a fast game on us all,  
Things can't always go the way we want.

I know you think I'm a disappointment,  
And yes I know you still hope I'll seek for atonement.  
But you know every boy becomes a man,  
And every man has to choose on which track he'll run.

I know you wish I can live a life that doesn't entail danger,  
And yes I know you still say that prayer,  
But you see, I'm a rebel, I always have been,  
I can only hope you'll not count it to me as sin.

I know you love me,  
And yes I love you too.  
But you see, once a rebel, always a rebel.  
This is the man I'm meant to be.

James Ogunjimi

# Listen To The Whirlwind

I will consume; Oh yes, I will  
I will ravage; don't doubt me I plead  
I see blood even though the world can't see.  
I see death when life is what your preachers preach.  
I feel it approaching, the consuming anger of the wind.

They want us in chains; will we allow them I ask?  
They like us jobless; should we sit under their tables praying for crumbs to fall  
off their laps?  
They thrive on our fear; should we not dare to take up the fight?  
They like us fighting ourselves; should we not forge our path?

The world stands watching; waiting to see if we'll get it right.  
The helpless kneel praying; hoping we'll neglect our fear.  
The enslavers sit in dark corners watching; keen to see if we'll bring our words to  
life.  
The one question lies hanging: Who will bell the cat?

Listen to the whirlwind as it speaks in clear tones.  
Listen to the whirlwind as it promises to sweep through and pull down their  
poles.  
I will come when the eyes of the people are opened.  
I will sweep through, visit the oppressors and break their stranglehold.

I will not come when timidity still reigns supreme.  
I will not come when your voices are not united in tune.  
I will come when your minds are made up.  
I will come, I am coming, and they will fall.

Listen to the voice of the whirlwind as it promises to the oppressors death.  
Listen, they say, or thy tongue will keep thee deaf.  
The anger of the People will come as a whirlwind; it will cleanse, it will consume.  
Listen; oh listen to the voice of the whirlwind as it calls out in revolutionary  
tunes.

James Ogunjimi

# National Questions

How many victims will our roads claim?  
How many more corpses will coroners proclaim?  
How many goodbyes will we still have to say?  
How much longer will the evil ones reign?

□

From how many more war zones will our feet have to flee?  
How much more bloodshed will our eyes have to see?  
How many more parents will still bury their kids?  
Who will free us from the evil ones' grip?

How many more tears will still have to flow?  
How many more corpses will the pallbearers hold?  
How many of our stories will they leave untold?  
How long will they make grievous our load?

How much longer will we sit still and watch?  
How much longer will they cover our torch?  
When shall we rise up and answer Nigeria's call?  
When will enough really be enough?

James Ogunjimi

# Nigeria Shall Be Free!

Crushed by the weight of the evil ones' greed,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Sinking deeper and deeper in the abyss of misdeeds,  
Nigeria shall be free!

Numbed by pain; they cannot again feel,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Watching the future of the nation felled like trees,  
Nigeria shall be free!

No longer taken serious; now the cause of international gist,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Inside, it's not safe, but then, neither are the streets,  
Nigeria shall be free!

Stealing public money and ruling with impunity,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Bedevilled with leaders who don't care how the people feel,  
Nigeria shall be free!

Travelling round the world with begging bowls; on their knees,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
But Nigeria is not poor; we have more than we need,  
Nigeria shall be free!

Justice has become a myth; freedom exists only in dreams,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
The newspapers dare not report; journalists must not speak,  
Nigeria shall be free!

The Hallowed chambers have become boxing rings,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Here, it's jail for the poor; bail for the rich,  
Nigeria shall be free!

Children and students murdered in their sleep,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Parents crying, friends gnashing their teeth,  
Nigeria shall be free!



Waiting endlessly for a messiah to set us free,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Looking abroad for a salvation that will never be,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
Let us look inward at men true and real,  
For it is only then that Nigeria shall be free!

From western domination,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
From economic exploitation,  
Nigeria shall be free!  
From religious manipulation,  
Nigeria shall be free!

James Ogunjimi

# No Door Is Ever Closed

Life is full of disappointment; life is full of pain,  
Life is full of challenges that would threaten our faith,  
But no matter how many times we are left in life's cold,  
If we look well, no door is ever really closed.

Life is full of people, who don't care where we're from,  
Life is full of friends, who won't be there to break our fall,  
But no matter how many, "Sorry, no vacancy" we are told,  
If we press on, we'll see no door is ever closed.

There will be ups; and yes, there'll be downs,  
There will be times when we can't help but frown,  
But when we accept that we are all travellers on life's road,  
We'll understand why no door is ever really closed.

James Ogunjimi

# Public Servants

We call them public servants,  
They are meant to tend our lands,  
But it's here that the servants eat and are fat,  
While their masters look lean and sad.

We asked for food, we asked for shelter,  
We asked our servants to make our lives better,  
But rather than give us meat they threw to us bones,  
Their only answer to our requests is NO.

For how long can the masters bear the insolence of the public servants?  
Will the time ever come when the masters will take their stand?  
It does not have to be tomorrow or a later date,  
The first step to freedom can be taken today.

James Ogunjimi

# Taking Responsibility

To that which may never be,  
To happiness we may never feel,  
To an unbreakable togetherness the world may never see;  
This isn't me saying goodbye;  
This is me wondering if we could pick up the pieces and have a retry.

To one heart bruised and hurt,  
To another waiting to be crushed,  
To the man tagged evil and feeling lost;  
The balm of gilead have I none;  
And I'm no apostle of robbing peter to pay Paul.

To the laughter cut short midway,  
To the beautiful smiles poisoned day to day,  
To lovely people who want to, but cannot stay;  
This isn't me giving excuses or making apologies;  
This is me owning up and taking responsibility.

James Ogunjimi

# The Writer's Balm

If Every time our souls are barren, we pick up our pen and write,  
We would give up trying to be as famous as Wilbur and Orville Wright,  
For whether we turn to the left or to the right,  
Whether we end up being wrong or right,  
In the final analysis, the end of man is a funeral rite.

If every time we sit and think,  
While trying to find the break in the link,  
We can either cry our heart out in the sink,  
Or we can choose to pick up the pen and use the ink.

If tempted we are to hide our head like crabs,  
If we are made to feel like guinea fowls in the lab,  
We can our pen gently grab,  
And in that moment we'll realise, that covering us is a writer's garb.

If while daily working our lives away on the farm,  
If the scorching heat of the sun has taken away our peace and calm,  
If we suddenly feel like ending it all in the dam,  
We can find solace in writing down a psalm,  
For then we'll discover that right in our palm,  
Lies the writer's balm.

James Ogunjimi

# To Those Who Sit In Dark Places

To those who sit in dark places,  
To plot the downfall of the just.  
To those who gather with hidden faces,  
To cause nothing to the righteous but a fall.  
Posterity says it has not slept or forgotten;  
Nemesis has just one message: 'I am coming.'

To those who sit in high places,  
Looting and stealing collective resources without care.  
To those who fight and leave in their wake broken maces,  
And promise to wreak more havoc without fear.  
The law of 'cause and effect' says: 'I am still active, '  
The grave says: 'Inside me is where you'll live.'

To those who gather in religion's name,  
To destroy, maim and kill.  
To those who deceive the people with clause and phrase,  
To keep them perpetually in need.  
Scripture says: 'The triumph of the wicked is not for long, '  
Life says: 'Remember Abacha and return.'

James Ogunjimi

# We Don'T Need No Western Boots

We don't need no western boots,  
Coming to our land with their minds set to loot.  
We don't need no western boots,  
Troubling our land and acting like crooks.  
Africa lays reeling under these big brothers' rules,  
So, No we don't need any more western boots.

We don't need no western boots,  
Preaching peace and making war look good.  
We don't need no western democracy,  
That we have to pay for with our blood only to discover it's all vanity.  
We don't need no western religion,  
That undermines our culture and fuels the fire of division.  
No, we don't need no western boots,  
For Africa is rising; we're done playing the fool.

We don't need no western boots,  
Killing our leaders and saying it's for our good.  
We don't need no western boots,  
Creating the problems and presenting the solutions.  
We don't need no western rules,  
On how to go about our revolution.  
No, we don't need no western boots,  
From now on, Africa gets to set the rules.

James Ogunjimi

# We'Re Done Crying; We Want Justice

Blood, tears, severed limbs and legs.  
Murder has been done.  
Not on the streets, not in the slums,  
But in the place we call Sacred.

Charred remains, unrecognisable.  
Tearful goodbyes, mass burials, corpse-less coffins.  
Death has struck again.  
Not on the road, not in the sea,  
But right in the sky.

Gaping wounds, lifeless bodies,  
Riddled with bullets and pumped full of lead.  
Death has come visiting yet again.  
Not in the 'hallowed' chambers, not in the government houses,  
But in our ivory towers.

National mourning upon national mourning.  
Our eyeballs are red and bloodshot; we won't cry no more.  
We want no gold or silver, or a piece of the national cake you're eating,  
All we want is justice and nothing more.

Justice; Is that too much to ask for?  
Peace; Is that too much to hope for?  
Our one cry now is for justice.  
We're done crying; we want justice!

James Ogunjimi



# What Does A Nigerian Life Cost?

What, i ask is the cost of a Nigerian life?

Give ear to my words, o rulers,  
Turn not thy ears away thou that art in power.  
Listen and I will ask thee, and let's see if thou canst answer;  
What does a Nigerian life cost?

On a daily basis do diseases send men to their grave,  
3000 people we are told perish of hunger day to day.  
Yet unconcerned are the rulers who loot the money,  
Even when the families are thrown into mourning.  
The money for the hospitals and the drugs have they squandered,  
And I can't but wonder,  
What does a Nigerian life cost?

The roads have ceased to be pliable,  
Death traps are what are now available.  
100 people we are told die daily of road accidents,  
Yet, the money for road construction has been spent.  
Families wail and relatives gnash their teeth,  
From the despair of their hearts they ask,  
What does a Nigerian life cost?

Day by day, we see wastage of lives,  
Death on the streets,  
Death in the air,  
And even death now reigns supreme in our sacred places of worship.  
And yet, no one seems to care,  
Wasted lives to God are crying,  
What does a Nigerian Life cost?

What does a Nigerian life cost?  
20 cenis? 1 million naira?  
Or has it no value at all?

What, i pray thee does a Nigerian life cost?

James Ogunjimi

# What Will History Say?

If like the men who lived in the early days,  
Our words and actions are being recorded.  
If like them, our lives would one day be read by generations yet unborn.  
If like the men of old, our life's work will before the world be laid bare,  
O what will history say about us?  
And what will be posterity's judgement?

If like the men who once trod this path that we now tread,  
Our actions are weighed and revisited.  
If like those who laid the foundations on which we now build,  
Generations yet unborn search to find what legacy we left.  
O what will history say about us?  
And what will be posterity's judgement?

If like the greatest defenders of the defenceless,  
Side by side, our actions and courage are weighed.  
If like those who lived their lives in service of humanity,  
Our choices are re-examined,  
O what will history say about us?  
And what will be posterity's judgement?

When history remembers,  
And posterity is set to judge,  
When light is shone on our actions and decisions,  
What will history say about us?  
And what will be posterity's judgement?

James Ogunjimi

# When The Gong Of Duty Is Beaten

Some will hear, some will not.

Some will understand its message while others will wait for it to be written.

Some will agree with the message while others will find fault.

But we must arise and act even if we were sitting,

When the gong of duty is beaten.

When the gong of duty is beaten,

When it calls us to lift up the standards that are falling,

Even if it'll take us across rivers and lakes,

Even if our last dime it'll take.

We must arise without lingering,

When the gong of duty is beaten.

James Ogunjimi

# When The Hyenas Stop Laughing

Prophet, pray tell, what do you see?

I see an end to evil and its ills,

I see a day when all men can be free,

I see a day when we'll all live and let live,

I see for our nation leaders who won't wait for us to ask before they give.

Prophet, pray tell, when will these be?

It will be the day when life no longer amuse the hyenas they stop laughing,

It will be the day when the frog's voice becomes clear it stops croaking,

It will be the day when the snake is no longer irritated it stops hissing,

It will be the day when the sea and the seashore fight so hard they stop kissing.

Prophet, pray tell, what can we do?

You must not bow out or give up the fight,

You must not pander to evil's threat and its fright,

For darkness you see, must not prevail against light,

No matter how dark it may seem now, an end will come to the night.

James Ogunjimi

# Will We Ever Smile Again?

Wrinkles crease our brow,  
Because we're apprehensive about tomorrow.  
Tears stain our cheek,  
Because we don't know what to expect in the coming weeks.

Our hearts are gripped with fear,  
We run as fast as a deer.  
Our heart aches for peace,  
But dare we hope for it?

Our heart jumps each time we hear the sound of bullets,  
Our heart aches for those whose bodies have been pumped full of lead.  
When, we ask, will we smile again?  
Or will we continue to live in fear day by day?

Who will wipe the tears from our eyes?  
Who can we burden with our cares?  
Is there anyone who will dare speak up in our defence?  
Or will they all sit on the fence?

Will the morning of joy ever dawn in our land?  
Will the children of all tribes and religion ever walk hand in hand?  
Will an end ever come to these questions that we ask?  
Will we, I ask, ever smile again?

James Ogunjimi