

2021 CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN

A COMPILATION OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES

THE BEAUTY HEREIN

- Legal Page
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- Illustrations by E. Doko
- Message from sponsor

by Effiong Samuel





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The stories published are only of contestants who wanted to be part of this compilation.





BREAKING DOWN 'BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN'

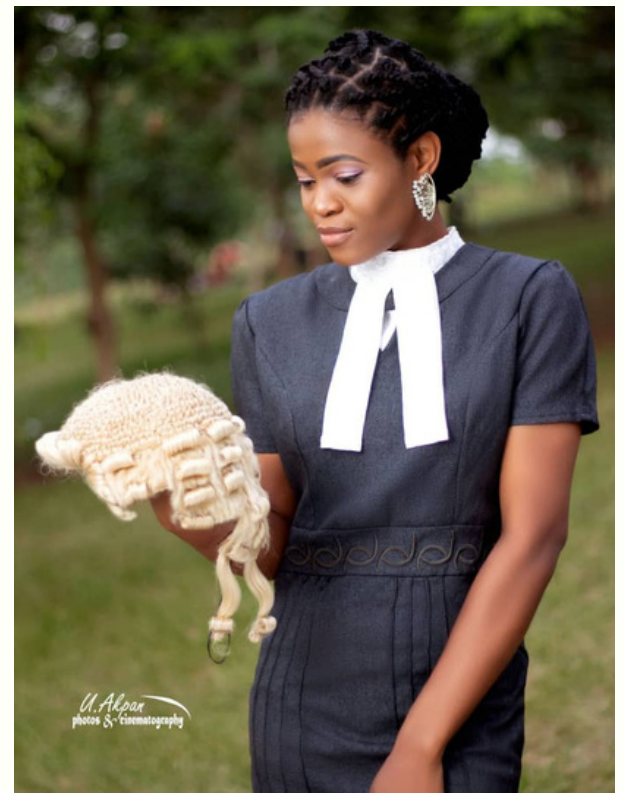
There are many things we think are useless until one day they prove useful; but if items are what this was about, then perhaps pictures of junkyards and abandoned places would have been more suitable. The truth is that we are all like earthenware and carry the “fragile” tag, but there are lives with cracks, there are lives shattered or broken. Situations that cause this and how to find hope are too numerous to list.

Beauty in the Broken is a way of finding something good, positive or even a relief out of a bleak situation. Sometimes, this beauty is a perception or a placed value, but we believe it is inherent too. We wanted this contest to dig up these situations and paint the picture in a creative writing of not more than 200 words, and we did receive over a century of entries in the short period the submission window was open. Expectedly, the stories approached this theme from various angles.

- Beauty in the Broken Contest Team

"There is so much beauty in weaving words. The depth of the stories we received mirrored the truths concealed in the hearts of broken souls. As expected, different Judges reviewed the works from different perspectives; indeed it is/was a beautiful team. I'll like to say that 80% of the entries could have been winning stories, yes, many writers dug out beauty with their pens in this contest: from the theme to the setting, the plot, the diction, the characterization, and tone."

-Nsongurua Hanson, Chair of Judges



Nsongurua Hanson is a legal practitioner, however, she dwells in the literary world. Poetry is her favourite genre. Undoubtedly contributions of prose and play in her literary journey cannot be overemphasized. She has been part of many organizing teams offline and online in the Literary Community

THE UNORTHODOX RULES SENT TO MASQUERADES



INSTRUCTIONS TO STAGE JUDGES INCLUDED:

DO NOT USE A BLUE PENCIL

Writing is the art of painting words on a canvas of space. As you know, some 'mistakes' may be intended, so don't miss-take them. If in doubt, ask and we will be glad to assist.

WATCH OUT FOR TIED KNOTS

If you believed the story of my grandpa being a sailor, you are several nautical miles away from the truth. I love tied knots though. Look out for the best way entries married their chosen captions to their writings and the central theme. This is not bigamy though.

GREY IS NOT A BAD COLOUR

Grey makes you work hard to separate black from white. Some stories are like that. Try to understand the stories. Ask for help with some word not found in the dictionary, they may have deeper meanings than you think.

• MASQUERADES ARE SPIRITS, REMAIN ONE

I grew up believing masquerades were spirits because they are masked. You are a 'spirit' in this sense, remain one and treat the entries with confidentiality. There is something about masquerades, carefulness and expressways I hear in a song.

• DON'T FOLLOW YOUR HEART, FOLLOW YOUR MIND

Some writers can write and get to your heart. It could be because of your personal experience or the experiences of loved ones, but do not judge by emotions.

• DON'T FOLLOW YOUR MIND, FOLLOW YOUR HEART

Lastly, we have tried to cut you down to size by reducing the power you have. You are five (two males, two females and the third will prefer not to say. No, not that, just choice) and there is a confined range of marks you can give as indicated in the attached excel sheet. This will help reduce the weighting effects of your emotions.

If two entries are inseparable in your ranking, give them a joint score, but the next position will be vacant. For instance, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd, 5th, etc.

Many thanks for many things.

They are waiting, and so are we.

Yours pen-fully,

Me and

Beauty in the Broken Contest Team

The Contest 'Was Not A Contest'

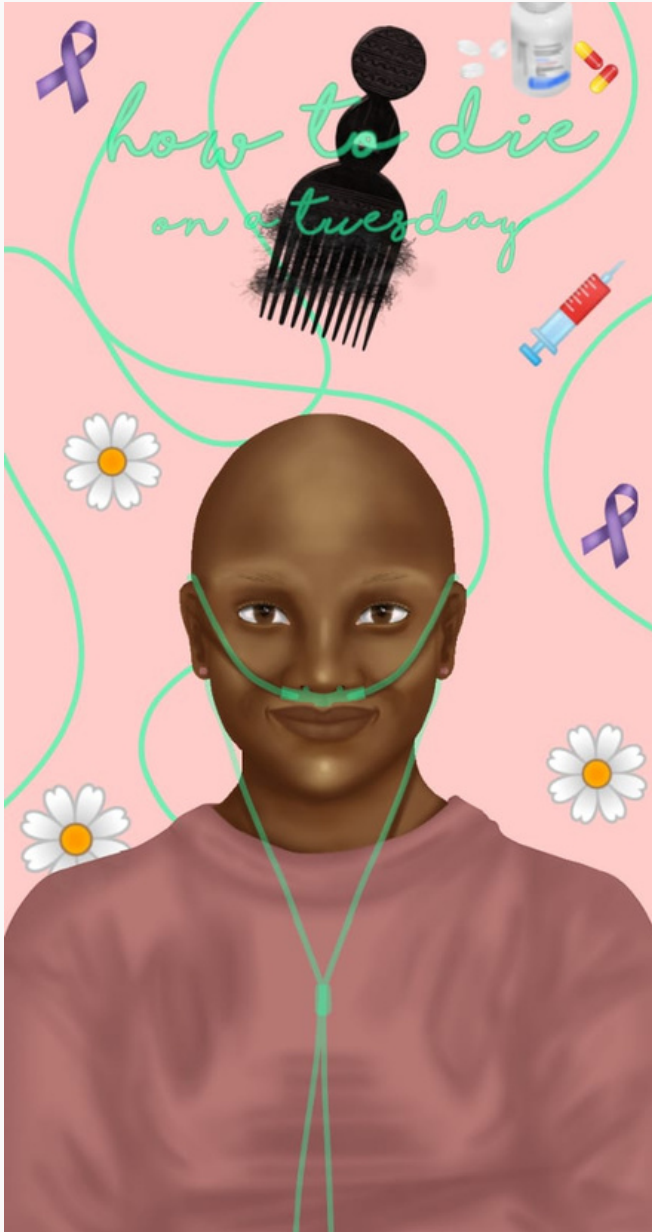
This was not just a contest, it was the story of us. We are broken in one way or the other, all of us are. Going through the inspiration behind some stories moved us to tears. There were inspired by true events and personal experiences. One could not help but admire the courage to come out strong and to tell these stories for others to learn from.

Hope is all we need to survive because circumstances may continue to look for ways to break us. That is why we lock our hands together and pull through the raging storm.

- Effiong Samuel (contest host)

HOW TO DIE ON A TUESDAY

by Akìgbógun Olúwatúnmiṣe



• WINNING STORY

Akìgbógun Olúwatúnmiṣe is a short story writer, he writes about family, death, redemption and the secret lives of animals. He lives in Ìbàdàn with his family. He loves God, his family and Àṣá.



In the beginning, there was the end. An end to life, an end to the beginning and an end to the end itself.

It's what everyone knows - that life will end yet we never know when it'll end.

I guess that's the potent jùjú it uses; uncertainty.

Well, it's been hanging around this Godforsaken hospital since it was built. Gobbling up patients' lives. Today like every day, it hovers and taints the air.

It's here for Kùtùṣà. She sees it in lucid glimpses and she's ready. Finally, she'd be free from this anguish that's tormented her all these times. No more tasteless pills nor chemotherapies. No more tasting pain in her mouth nor staring in the mirror, at the fossil staring back. No more watching chunks of her hair stuck in the teeth of her ṣaláakée nor feeling empty from mourning herself. No more listening to Nonsó force-feed her with possibilities of a miracle. No more.

Today, she betrays her expectations. She never knew she could be this calm while dying. But she is. She keeps that serene face, that small smile to death. Kùtù. She dies smiling. Calm as can be. And in that moment, even death envies her tranquility.

A MOSAIC OF SHARDS

BY SPLENDOR VICTOR



When she was born, no smiles crowned the night. Not even her mother's face. There was silence. It voiced their rejection.

Her father spat. "That thing cannot be my child". Phocomelia, the doctors called it. A condition of being born with underdeveloped limbs. Others branded her a witch, but her grandmother called her, Uyai, meaning beauty. She'd say in vernacular, squeezing a smile through her wrinkled cheeks: "Beauty is not what meets the eyes. It's the heart"

But Uyai never thought herself beautiful, lumbering to walk while her peers sashayed with style. And once she wished she'd never been born.

She'd sit outside her grandmother's hut piecing broken collectibles - plates, spoons, discarded wares - shaping them into portraits of herself. A mosaic of shards. And somehow it gave her meaning, seeing them broken yet whole.

Then a photo of her taken by a tourist photographer, had made it to the internet and was a sensation. It was of her laughing, carefree, cheeks spread wide and eyes like fiery globes of sunlight. She was with her collection of broken things, mending them. And there was beauty in their brokenness. But even more in hers. Kintsugi! As the Japanese called it.

SECOND-PLACED STORY

Splendor Victor is an undergraduate, a creative writer, tutor, poet and lover of art. When He is not writing, he finds pleasure in listening to music or taking long walks. He is fascinated by nature, people and everything that holds beauty.

The story was inspired by a sad reflection of how children born disabled are seen as incomplete, broken and lacking of beauty. The story aims to correct such myopic view and portray beauty as a state that is not constrained by impairment or physical appearance.



HUES ON A PORTRAIT

BY IBEREDEM-ETHAN AKPAN (3RD PLACE)



"My waiting years are now over." She thought, as she pulled out a strand of grey hair from her once long curly black hair.

Her passion was lost in the old skin which carried the same broken heart that loved her son. The death of her husband and only child in a bomb blast at a Christmas party had brought her life to a pause.

She only saw beauty in a painted portrait of herself and her lost family. The piece was next to a flower vase with a collection of roses, a romantic memorabilia from her suitors, but she never considered them.

Years later, the reflection of her smile now brightens the faces of orphans who lost their parents in that attack. She looks through her window and cast a smile. Her foster children, like a garden of assorted flowers with beauty soothing to a broken heart. "Mma-mama!"

They all chorused and clapped cheerfully. She's now satisfied, fully in love with life and at peace with herself. Beyond her brokenness, she's a pillar of hope and a mirror of beauty to many. Her diary now reads; "Worries can't remould broken pieces, but the beauty in the broken pieces can."

Hues On A Portrait was inspired by a picture of a forlorn old woman standing by a window. I imagined what her thoughts carried, then my thoughts became a story of a broken woman who became a pillar of hope and a mirror of beauty to others.

A story of hope.



Iberedem-Ethan Akpan is from Ibiono Ibom in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. He is a devout Christian, a Motivational Public Speaker and a graceful writer. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Physiology from the University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria. He is interested in using arts for social change and human development. He is the author of a weekly Christian lifestyle article- #LoveCalledSeries.

Pa's Alphabet

By Rofiat Abdulsalam

"This is what, who made me."

Dear son,

"Truth,

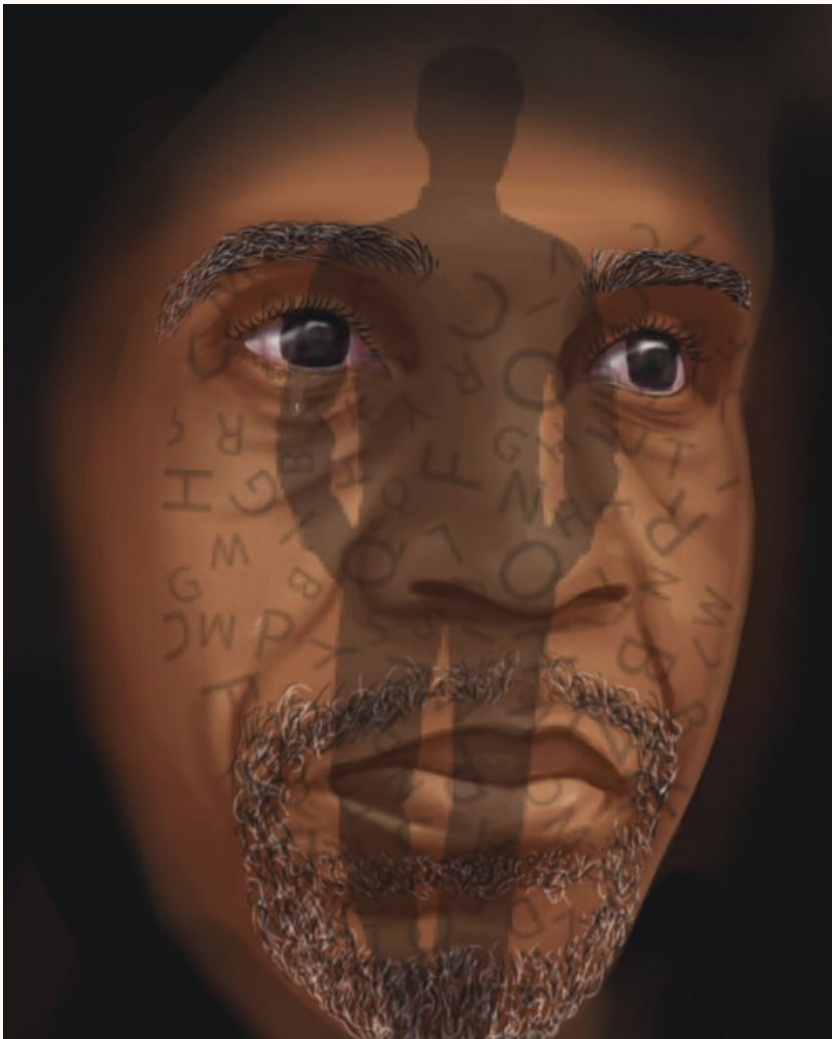
is what we seek when broken."

Don't ever wipe your tears, son. cry out your soul, release your emotions, they are invaluable treasures. There's no future in being unbroken, no life in staying sane. Boys are not stones, I cried when your mother died, I still cry whenever I seek her presence.

Do you remember the answer I gave you when you asked why I became an artist all of a sudden?

The death of my wife made me a creator. Every stroke of my inks on paper symbolises every memory we shared, every tear I've shed alone because she lives in every piece I've written, son. I was a dead artist but being broken resurrected me.

I realized she was more beautiful than I used to think, that I loved her more than anyone else, I realized the truth about her being, the stress of existing as a lover, a wife and a mother. I was broken but I found beauty in the broken. Pick a pen son, write it down, your feelings, find the truth, neither drugs nor sedatives can fill up your diaries. Yours truthfully, Pa Soyinka.



Rofiat is a budding writer and poet finding her way with words, seeking solace in inks while writing about the future and the past.

Inspiration: The classification of humans by humans based on who should stay strong and never break. The faulty perspective in which the 'male' gender is being bathed right from birth, the struggles faced when daggers, arrows and stones are shot at them and the extent they go to to keep up with the façade, the mirage all alone in the dark.



Flavour posed before the cameras and emotions swirled your soul. You chuckled when she announced, "Distinguished dignitaries, this recognition is for my mother." She wrapped her arms round you and whispered, "Love you, mother. Grateful for your offerings of light." Your eyes gave way to dammed tears.

Your mind swept into that dingy memory. Armed bandits had broken into the university's dormitory. They hushed the ladies into a corner and began to rape them. It reached you. You shrieked with disgust as the man groped you. He broke your hymen and you held your breath wishing it ceased completely. Death meant nothing again. The man had hopped on another girl before their ringleader told him to watch their preys. You turned to escape, threw yourself into the claws of death and damned the consequences.

That month passed and your menses didn't come. You hated yourself for daring to become an architect. You escaped, safe the thing unknotting inside you. You prayed for miscarriage every day. The baby finally came, you peeped into her crispy eyes for the first time and joy sated your soul. You mumbled between stifled sobs, "Because you came from a stale place, I'll call you Flavour."



Adesina Ajala is currently on the shortlist of the 2021 Poetically Written Prose Contest. His works have appeared in The Nigeria Review, Agape Review, Ngiga Review, The Shallow Tales Review and elsewhere.

He was 2nd runner-up and winner Shuzia Creative Writing Contest 3rd and 4th editions respectively, co-winner TSWF Writers Prize and two-time winner Fodio Data Stipend for Poetry.

Adesina is a medical doctor and an intending surgeon. Twitter/IG: @adesina_ajala.



BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST. 2021 (6TH PLACE)

TODAY, 4 DAYS LATER

By Toiyo Benjamin

Today, for the first time in my 8 nursery years on earth, I saw my mom smile at my result. Today is 15th of November 2017.

I'm particular of the date not because of how memorable this is to me but because I don't know how long it will take for me to write this.

I was born with a disorder that limits my learning and intellectual abilities. Normal kids have ups, I have Down's.

Like mom kept telling me, I've never been good at anything except dodging the abortion pills she constantly took when she conceived me. Most days I wish those pills didn't fail. 'Today' is not one of those days. Not the day I took 17th position in a class of 30. I've never been that high up, never left last.

I learnt to believe in myself, to trust that I can, no matter how hard and slow the process is. Though I am Down, my hopes are high. I know I can be better; and I know I won't grow up to be like my father - whichever of the four thieves who gang-raped my mother he is, or was, for Death wouldn't be so kind.

The story was born from true life events. In my secondary school years, I met a boy who had Down's syndrome. He was a jolly fellow and went about his activities freely, always laughing. He came last in all tests. I left him in JSS2 because he repeated the class. He was in SS1 when I wrote WAEC. what amazed me was that he never gave up, never felt inferior because of his disabilities.

When I saw the theme of this contest, that boy with a moon shape face appeared in my mind's eye. I write to encourage all battling with disabilities, yes it can be hard and slow, but with determination, you can get there. The boy who became my muse died a year after he wrote WAEC, that's 3 years after I wrote mine. But he wrote, he Won!



MY PARTY, THEIR PINING

BY EZE EDWARD

Dad is gone, the pillar that held our family. "Things have shattered," I heard sympathizers saying to themselves. "He left a daughter in this cruel world," I heard others say. I won't miss something as trivial as daddy's scent, he smelled like a new leather shoe and I didn't know why.

Mama was consoled and I got the pity speeches. They thought daddy cherished me because he fancied me with toys, I have more toys than Santa does in his red socks. Each toy came with a price, a price twisted in a piercing pain.

Daddy did things with his fingers, uttering words that I never understood, they were calming and comforting words amidst the pains but they found ways to choke my throat from letting go a loud cry.

I craved for freedom like the tears when they leave my eyes, but I got threats whenever he's done and was wiping his treacherous fingers. Mummy knew, but after several beatings from dad she chose prayer as her solution. They were answered because dad slept last night and drowned in it. People tagged his death "a drought to the land," but I see roses sprouting in reds.

Eze Edward is a final year Medical Laboratory Science student in Ebonyi state University. Apart from being a writer, he is also a portrait artist.

The Inspiration of the story came from a secret unveiled to me by someone who was under the strong hands of a French wine while fighting tears as she fixed pieces of the story together.



BEAUTY IN BROKENNESS

BY Deborah Umoren



The heart is truly the most honest thing we have. Things seems clearer when we look through the lens of our hearts. Take Audrey for instance, we've known each other for years now and I must say, she is the most beautiful soul I've ever seen.

Tell her that and she'd probably give you the debate of a lifetime.

Audrey is bipolar.

"I'm Broken," she would always say.

When Priscilla, a classmate of ours was in a fix and all her friends left, Audrey was there, she has this stupid super power of being excessively understanding and a good listener amongst others. I have no idea what Audrey did but Priscilla became better and nicer too, and now, a good friend. And there are lots of other people Audrey's touched- The Angel, so it came as a shock when word got out that she'd committed suicide by drowning herself with a note which stated she was too lost to be found. I couldn't do anything even after she'd helped me. But the beautiful soul taught a lesson we intend sharing.

And at this point you'd guess I was in love with Audrey, who wouldn't?

Such, Beauty and compassion from a 'Broken' soul.

Deborah Umoren: A Native Of Akwa Ibom State but based in Rivers State for the best part of her life. Currently schooling in Akwa Ibom state and looking forward to a future in writing. In Love with Music and emotions.

The Inspiration: The 'Beauty in the Broken' Theme and a song.



EARLY TO SLEEP

By Mfon James

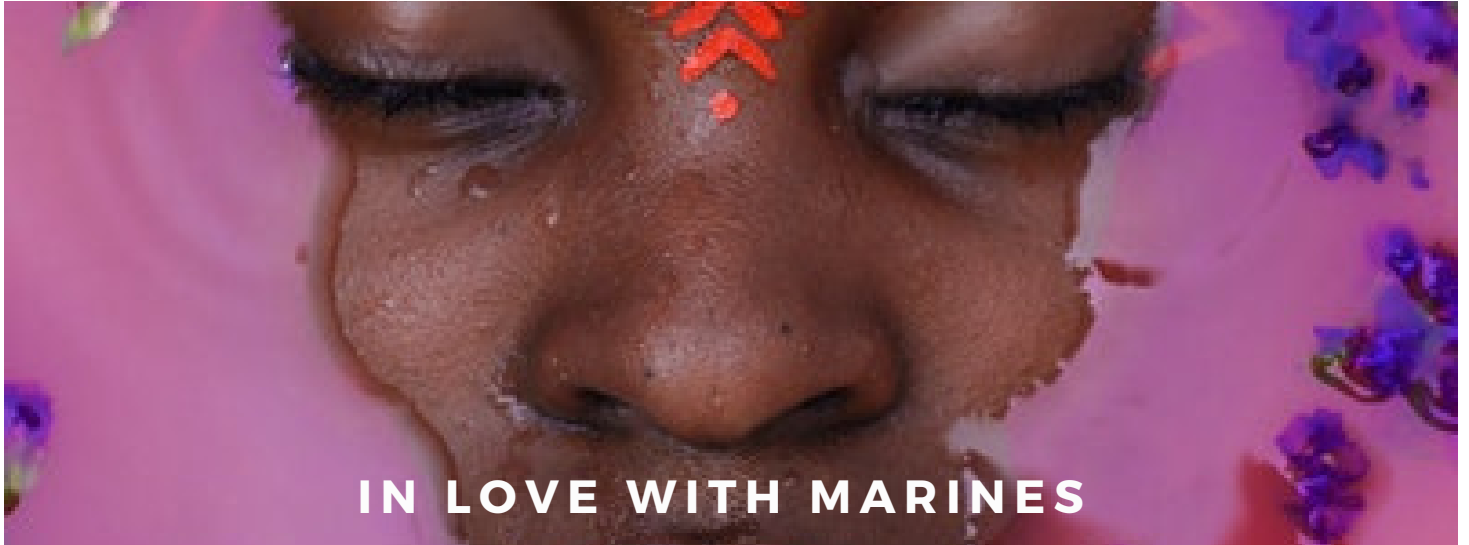


Mfon James is a 'street amateur writer' who believes writing is a silent voice louder than a thousand gunshots. She admires beautiful works of art and is hoping to be a voice someday to the silence many are eating.

The Inspiration: This story was inspired by a true life story. Incidentally, words led to sentences and sentences to stories. Real hurting stories. It was the broken beauty I had sought for long....long long time till deadline.



I turned to see the receptionist hand mum some cash which she stashed on my hands with teary eyes. Her cold soft palms clashing on mine. 'This-is-all-I-could-get'. She said, with shaky sobs between her syllables. I fumbled my hands into my bag to find a napkin for her face. Memories, took me home to my father who kissed us goodbye for a new mistress. The voices from their heated argument hovered my room and I could hear him hit her before she completed each sentence. That was how the devil got an invitation to our house and the love which had been somewhat sweet turned sour. Mother had always had one wish; that I graduate while she's alive and get adorned on NYSC uniform so she could take lots of photos and hang them as medals in our home. In some way, I felt I was the strength she needed to conduce her broken pieces after she was diagnosed of Cervical Cancer. Five years later, I'm standing beside her grave. Shiny and chrome, adorned. On the Uniform she had always wanted to see me on, wondering, if she could sight me from the rain of sand punching her casket.



IN LOVE WITH MARINES

BY MAYMUNAH KADIRI

I love to take long walks, without destinations. They say the longest walk you'll ever take is "life" where the gods give you legs then you walk till death takes them. I took a long walk last night, somewhere down by the river. I paused by the bank, and stared at my reflection, a picture of emptiness stared right back at me. The hurt too heavy, for my eyes to break away. So I kept staring. Then I leapt.

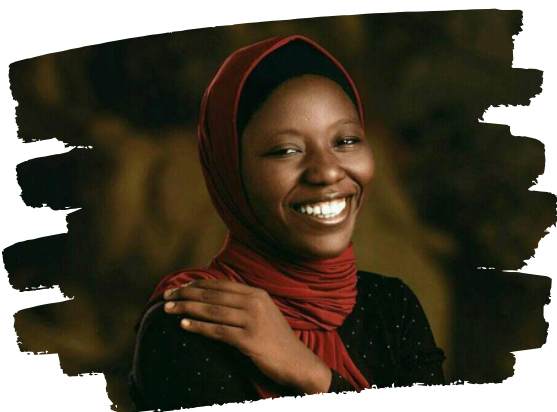
Right into the river and let the water fill my insides, to complete me. It didn't matter that I was crying, for I was one with the pain. The silent flow of the water calmed me and all my nerves melted away.

Then I woke up, with a blend of shock and relief, and a numbness that was comfortable. I looked around the unfamiliar walls of the hospital room, and heard a flutter of some words from the people around me. "Almost drowned" "Scared".

So I shut my eyes, and thought of the unfathomable irony. My shambles in life and life in shambles, and the constant attempts at suicide, yet the unexplainable love seething out of everyone around the hospital bed.

Maymunah Kadiri is a screenwriter, poet and storyteller, feminist and mental health advocate.

She is very passionate about mental health advocacy, and teaching people that it is okay to not be okay. She was inspired by this void of lack of mental health awareness, by the need to fill that abyss, and to share a story about a brokenness we all can relate to.



BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN (STAYING POSITIVE)

By Favour Maduemezia

Taking deep breaths and counting down always helped ease my anxiety. I remained by the stairs counting down from five.

"You! I've always known that entering the University will change you" My mother screamed, taking the results from my hands. The attention of everyone was drawn and they all stared at me with disgust as the words my mother spat led the way for them. I stayed quiet but confused. HIV? me?

"You have opened your legs to the world and it has vomited it's disease inside you"

"Mummy, I'm a virgin" I sobbed.

"Madam, this is not the time for this. You should be glad she found out"

"Over my dead body will you live in my house! Go and pack your things!"

**

"May the soul of our beloved Sister, Mother and Friend Rest in peace"

"Amen" They chorused.

"My Mother journeyed to heaven or hell, I don't know.

She died of AIDS. You're wrong, I didn't transmit it to her, She Gifted it to me"

"What kills faster; disease or disregard?" she asked smiling at the students who looked on in admiration.

It's been 20 years since testing positive and Osasu lives for imparting knowledge.



"In a country like ours where the first cause of HIV/AIDS is traced to SEX ignoring all other causes, I brought into the picture how Ignorant we are not to check and know our health status"
-Favour

Favour Nwamaka Maduemezia is a student of Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State. She is a freelance writer who enjoys writing creative nonfiction, fiction, movie scripts and great contents for businesses; with an experience for over four years, She has written different articles for various blogs and psychology research projects. Aside writing, Favour has a great passion for acting and talking to teenagers and young adults. She is the author of a novel 'Love Wasn't The Crime.'





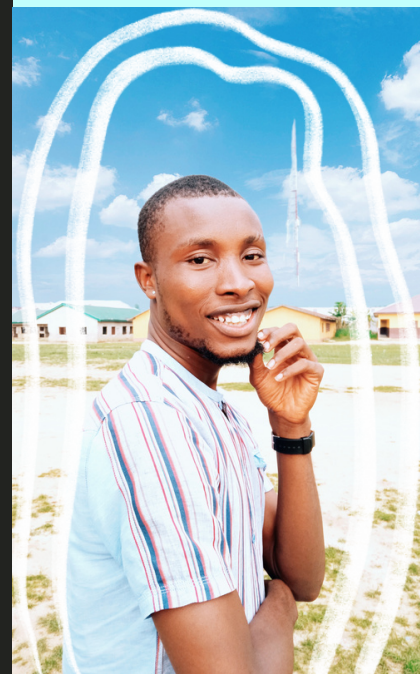
THE LITTLE BUTTERFLY

By Raphael Francis (12th Place)

Evening meets you again, sitting at the entrance of your house, eyes half shut with measured grief, waiting. Today, you do not speak to her as if she is there, or fluff pillows on both sides of your bed, even though only one side has been slept in. Instead, you're flipping through the little story book she likes reading to your three year old boy. A story about a little butterfly in an enchanted garden, who's admired by all the insect, because she's good-hearted. But, one day, the little Butterfly lands by chance on the hooked nose of an evil witch.

Your Baby will never know that the witch turns this sweet butterfly into a nasty insect. Concerned that your Baby might be scared by them, She always skipped those pages where the flying little butterfly —with a spider and a dragonfly for accomplices—terrorized the usually tranquil garden. As you flip through, you wish you could skip these pages of your life the way she skipped the pages of the story. You wished you had a magic wand. You wished she didn't land on cancers witchery's nose. God isn't treating everyone the same. Like sunlight, like rain.

Raphael Francis is a young Nigerian male, whose shoulders are hunched from the weight of unwritten stories in his head. He holds no opinion as strongly as he does his hatred for people who thinks Messi is better than Ronaldo. He loves Afang soup, Cristiano Ronaldo and the video vixen cum dancer who starred in Olamide's "Rock". When he's not writing or re-reading Aniebiet Effiong's "Body of a Boy", he's busy contemplating the various psalms to say for Arsenal to win the EPL.





KINTSUGI

BY SALOME IKOKOYO

A beautiful ceramic jug belonged to the king, his favourite. It was shaped like a human-female pear. Its background was white with intricately designed flowers of blue and pink.

Having tea with some guests one day, his hand pushed the jug over. He tried frantically to catch it before it hit the ground.

But the jug fell, breaking into many shards. The king was heart-broken, abnegating his tea for many days.

Servants informed him of the possibility of having his jug back, it could be sent to China, where it could be restored. The king did just that.

Weeks later, the jug was back, put together using gold as adhesive.

The new jug was more beautiful than the old, with gold lines running through it.

That King was Ashikaga Yoshimasa, an eight century Japanese ruler.

That became the birth of the Japanese Art form KINTSUGI.

Kintsugi is a metaphor for healing. It means that things can break; pottery, glass, relationships, even life itself can seem broken. But once repaired, it is stronger. It also teaches that embracing our flaws and imperfections creates a stronger, and more beautiful piece.

Salome is a Teacher, a passionate one, from Delta State.

She loves reading novels, traveling and had added 'writing Short stories' to her hobbies.

She felt her short stories were not good enough for others to read but saw the contest as an opportunity to have independent assessors grade her writing.



INSPIRATION

"I had a beautiful ceramic jug and a matching tray, part of a dinner set my father had bought when I was sixteen. I had pleaded that particular jug and tray be kept as part of my wedding gifts whenever that would be. But when my family moved, the jug broke. I had to glue the pieces back together and use it as a flower vase."

- Salome

MY BEAUTIFUL PAIN

By Janet Noah



Janet Noah is an undergraduate at the University of Uyo, department of Radiography and Radiation Science. She is a creative writer, ghostwriter and storyteller.

The Inspiration: My volunteer work makes me come in contact with a lot of broken people, I hear their stories.



My uncle would wait for my parents to leave for work and entice me with sweets into his room and touch me in ways that took away my innocence.

The first day it happened, I was just five and could not tell my parents because he had warned me not to. Though tender, he filled my mind with images and videos of things that had 18+ tags such that when he was away, I craved for things I should not have, confused as to why I was no more like every other child.

At sixteen, I was not the sweet little girl. I was a broken and grubby recluse with low self-esteem because when he moved away, my uncle left an eternal scar, I may have been free from his molestation, but I was lost in lust.

When I turned 18, I decided to glue my pieces, to channel the pain into a desire to help others because I saw that there were many people like me.

I joined an NGO, who helped girls cope with the trauma of child abuse. Instead of breeding shame, I used my story to heal, to help others come out strong... and I turned beautiful my broken story, my beautiful pain.



BITTERSWEET LIFE

By Sandra Meribe

Amadi grabbed a nylon and ran to the place where grains of rice had fallen from a leaking sack. He slowly gathered and picked every grain from the floor.

The traders looked incredibly at him. "Oga, that rice wey you dey pack dey contaminated o." Someone said.

"E no concern me. My children go eat rice today."

The "kom kom" sounds from the empty tins the children carried about could be heard from afar.

"Una weldon o." Amadi greeted. The children ran towards him excitedly, screaming, "Daddy Oyo yo!" He hugged them, throwing the youngest towards the sky.

His wife hurried out to greet him. Kneeling slightly, she hugged him. He handed over a black nylon to her and said, "There's rice, some tomatoes and pepper. Cook it with your spicy magic."

On hearing the word rice, the children's faces beamed with joy.

Amadi walked happily with his family, waiting for the rice that would grace their hungry stomach.

Sandra Meribe is a Law Student at Igbinedion University Okada, Edo State. I'm very passionate about knowledge and I enjoy writing.

The Inspiration: While I was at the market, some day, a man was gathering raw rice from the ground into a nylon. Though people looked at him he wasn't bothered. I was touched.



BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN (THE WARRIOR)

By Solomon Maikas



She awakes and plunges herself into the silence of the room. The events of these past months creep with silent bloodstained feet into her brain and reconstruct themselves there with terrible distinctness. Every ticking of the clock seem to be dividing time into separate atoms of agony, each of which is too terrible to be borne. She walks into the bathroom.

You have to let him go, Cecilia, her mother had said to her. He was my only child, mama. She had cried. Splashes of water on bathroom floor. A not-so-large coffin lowered to the ground. Her body jostling forward, a clump of wet soil in her fist, the priest urging her on, "Let it go". She winces at the thoughts that come to her, and uses a towel to wipe her face, as if to erase her memory of the things she ought to have forgotten.

Mama, I am bigger than death whether I survive the surgery or not. Keles last words reecho. She does not remember to clean the rest of her body. Instead, she picks her life amidst the deadweight of grief; her face radiating light from within. My son IS a warrior.

Solomon Maikas is a Nigerian writer and a student of Bayero University, Kano. He currently

resides in Kano, Nigeria. His poems and short stories have appeared in *Two Drops of Ink: A Literary Blog*, *Poemify Magazine*, *Daachiever Blog* & elsewhere. Solomon enjoys listening to *Mali Music* & *Bethel Music*.

LOVE LIVES HERE

BY ONYEMEREIBEYA, PEACE C.

"Busy isn't an excuse for the hurt", I thought, with eyes full of emotions. Why give me a name you don't understand?

.....

My parents were barely ever home, I doubt I suckled my mother's breasts and hate to call her that. My first words were Ma Pa(m)s, unclear for a baby of 7 months. She had nursed a baby boy to puberty, and was everything to him. When I heard of her dismissal, I couldn't bear it so I left home, to find my nanny.

Two fruitless days later, I sat by the roadside fidgeting, when a beauty approached me and offered to house me for a night, Kiara. When we got there, Ma answered the door. That wasn't just the shocker. I saw my supposed parents. I stood at the door, wondering what to do when I heard Mom say she had missed me and wanted me home. I felt it, the pains I had buried within, that Ma had healed with her love. The loneliness.

I looked at Ma, with teary eyes and said to mom, "Ours was a broken home, and the only beauty in it was Ma. You called me Love, my love lives here".



WHAT INSPIRED THE STORY

It's been weeks since I wrote that piece so the inspiration is not clear in my mind. The theme for the year inspired it. When I saw it, I asked myself how something or someone that's broken have beauty. At first, I imagined a broken glass and there was no beauty but blood. Then I knew the broken had to be human to have beauty.

The way the world is now, loved ones are left in the care of strangers all in the pursuit of material things that can help better the lives of those left behind, but that doesn't change the fact that Humans have emotions. I wasn't left in the care of a stranger but I've seen people who have and also seen movies, they grow up broken in a beautiful way. Broken inside but they still work fine.

My pen name is Peace EPJ(her penname) studied Microbiology at the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture.

She believes writing compares with the course because, as she puts it: "Microbiology entails the little organisms in life we can't see with just our eyes and feels that's the same for writing."

Writing is using words instead of a microscope to look deep into the abstract mind of ours, and ink to relay our messages. That's just like Agbona David said, writing is a perfectionist craft."



PERFECT DEMISE

By Anthony Madumere

I received this letter two days to my execution from Chris my co-activist:

“Dear John,

I couldn't find the courage to come see you in prison because I felt guilty. I should have stood by you like I know you would but I had no choice, my family was threatened. I wish I was stronger please forgive my cowardice. You were a voice that refused to be silenced. When we all fled, you stood your ground you were insistent on the demand – our resources must be used to develop our communities no more no less. We will not fight with arms but with our ideas, our voice and doggedness just as you taught us to. like Malala would say – we realize the importance of our voices only when we are silenced. We have risen above the silence and our voice must be heard. There are 2,000 young people ready to achieve our common goal or gladly die trying.

Goodnight our Hero
Chris”

Tears of joy flowed freely from my eyes as I squeezed the letter into my breast pocket. I was ready to embrace death with a big smile for in death, I have given life to thousands. We're winning.

Bio: Anthony Madumere is a graduate of Computer Science from the Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana.

He is a public speaker and creative writer who loves inspiring young minds.

The fiction - Perfect Demise was inspired by the travails of the oppressed.



Cut and Relief

WRITTEN BY CHIAMAKA FRANCISCA NWAQYIBO

Today, we buried my uncle. We were all supposed to wear black but I wore a multi-coloured dress. Please don't judge me yet, I have my reasons. Ever since I was nine, my uncle always visits my room to do what he calls 'adult thing' with me. Even though I would always cry out in pain, it doesn't bother him.

My uncle died leaving behind his wife and son. If there is something I wanted the most, it was revenge. That night of the burial, I went to his son's room. Of course to do the adult thing with him. I kept my uncle's picture in a strategic position. All my thoughts were for him to watch me damage his child the same way he damaged me.

When I touched his face, he opened his eyes, smiled at me and then slept back in my arms. He was the most innocent and beautiful thing I have ever seen. I busted into tears. I saw myself becoming what I hated the most, becoming what terrified and damaged my soul.

I saw myself becoming my uncle, widening the circle of damaged persons like me. I couldn't corrupt this innocence. I realized I needed to break this circle. I needed healing, not revenge and this healing, I must get. Dear God, please help me.



BIO: I am a young writer, playwright and aspiring filmmaker.

I write about issues affecting humanity in its purest form.

Recently, I have been very concerned about gender-based violence, paedophilia and the state of our country Nigeria.

I often call myself a 'writivist' and my activism is reflected in my writings.

I love reading, writing, reflecting, singing, travelling, eating and dancing.



Jumping the Hurdle

WRITTEN BY ADEKOLA MARVELLOUS AYODEJI

My name is Vivian, from my childhood, I have been living a miserable and helpless life and this was not helped by the death of my mother when I was 15. What was left of my peace vanished and I was broken.

I was not an orphan, but fatherless from the age of 7 when the man who caused my birth inflicted on my mind thoughts that I cannot erase, memories too painful to share.

Life showed me its good side for a while when I met Desmond. He was rich, young and blind to my past while shining a bright light into my future... at least this is what I thought until the spots of the leopard became clear after three years. I was not his wife, but one of the many teenage girls used as 'manufacturing machines' in a baby factory.

Today I stand strong like an athlete that has jumped through the hurdles and is standing strong. I see people like myself and use the opportunity to mend their broken pieces.

Adekola Marvellous Ayodeji: I am a Microbiologist || Entrepreneur|| Writer || Song Writer || Motivator || Sexual Puritan.

I was inspired by many who have a hard time Growing up and eventually make it.

A Star in Makoko Slum

	By Udokang, Nsikan Hilary	
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"I heard he suffers from cerebral palsy?" My friend directed his question at me. We were seated on the front porch of our house while conversing about the various initiatives offering supports to the most vulnerable of children in Nigeria and Africa as a whole when memories of a post I read on Facebook some weeks back flashed through my mind. It was a post about a "Chess in slums initiative", hosted by Tunde Onakoya, another successful offshoot from a slum.

It was a chess competition hosted for the poor kids living in the slums of Makoko—the largest floating slum in Africa. Out of the hundreds of vulnerable kids who participated in the various chess tournaments for two weeks, a kid with cerebral palsy emerged as the winner at the end.

"His name was Ferdinand," I said to my friend. I read the surprising reaction on his face. Maybe he assumed I was telling one of my jokes about explorers; presumably a joke about Ferdinand Magellan the Portuguese explorer. But I was serious about the disabled kid from a floating slum, Ferdinand, with the potential to become the next chess master of their generation. A star in a slum.

The writer is a native of Akwa Ibom state and currently resides there. He is currently studying for degree in political science, from Akwa Ibom State University. He is an emerging writer and a published poet; previously published on three magazines.

What Inspired The Story:

I read a post about the chess competitions hosted in the slums in Lagos. I was moved to tears by the story. It also reminded me of my childhood, because I grew up in an environment almost similar to a slum, more of a ghetto.





FINDING BEUTY IN OUR BROKENNESS

WRITTEN BY EUNICE MICHAEL

"The world will patiently wait to hear you speak" was the last thing my mom said to me before taking the giant leap in search for greener pastures and a quest for relevance.

Life hasn't been fair to me and my family, though many have a similar fate. I suffered depression as a child, from school to church, to my friends, relatives... they all saw me worthless. My teachers said I made the easiest things look difficult. Broken was the only word to describe my state then.

After arriving a new city and living with the only person who had little faith in me, I worked 10 times harder, just to prove a point.

Pain became part of me but despite feeling numb I kept going, I wanted something from life.

I expected rejections but then, faith or fate had a better plan for me. I found acceptance, it was like finding beauty in the broken. I found beauty in myself after many years of drowning in self pity. I realized that sometimes, what we need to survive is to find beauty in our brokenness.

Eunice Michael is a writer, poet and spoken word artiste from Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi state, but resides in Kaduna state, Nigeria. She was born at the end of the 20th century and is passionate about art generally.

INSPIRATION FOR STORY: pressure that has pushed a lot of youths into brokenness and how self realization brought them healing.

BEAUTY WITH A DIFFERENCE

By Salome Akpan

A godforsaken childhood — a life of accusations, hatred and humiliations. While every other child had a blissful time in the family, I was accused of being a witch, hence thrown into the streets.

Swayed around like a lost sheep, combed every nook and cranny for crumbs to feed on; I met them in furnished suits and polished sugar coated mouths. They said they've heard of my mire and have come to deliver me. Pleasing and relieving — their words were so convincing and enough to have won my trust.

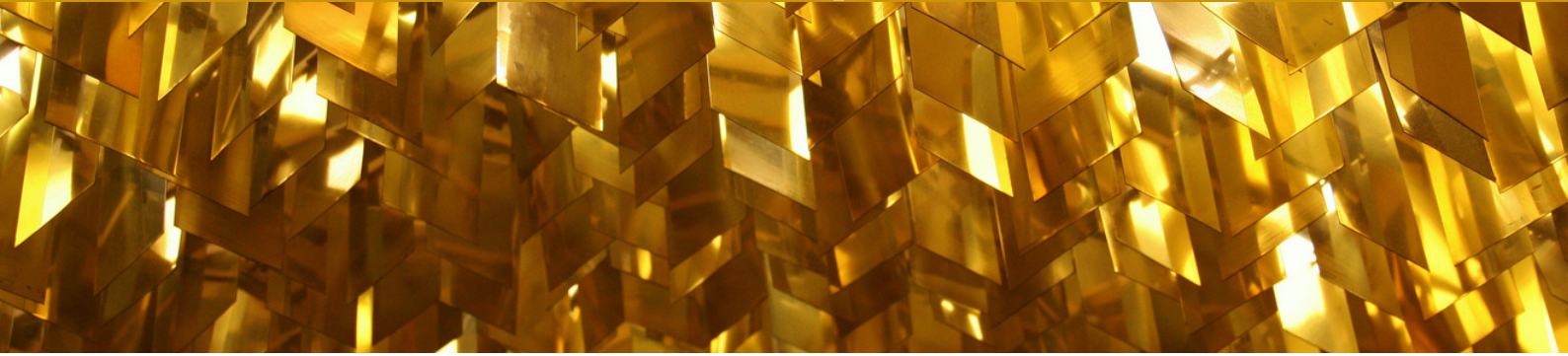
On the night of deliverance, I drank from a bottle given by them and became blank. I tried self defense, but my flesh was subdued, and powerlessly I laid on the floor as they took turns on me. I was barely 10 years old — young and naive.

Mercy said no, and luck shone on me when a family rescued me. Helped mend every broken piece in me; gained a new life and a voice to speak. I am out there with my new family, campaigning against molestation and abuse. Through me, many have experienced joy. Truly, there is beauty in my brokenness and my beauty came with a difference.



BEAUTY IN THE BROKEN-FILLING THE CRACKS WITH GOLD

By Gloria Joseph



As Richard walked in the front door, past the hallway into his room he heard voices so familiar, lines he could recite.

"Oblivious to the fact that I had a vasectomy, you cheated and birthed that bastard. You disgust me!"

" You disgust me more! You deceitful, impotent liar! "

Richard smiled and walked to the mirror, picked a blade, folded his sleeves and stretched out his left arm. Razor cuts neatly arranged like the strokes on a child's counting board adorned his arm.

'No space' he smiled and stretched the right arm. "Day 126. We can take all these in.

No one will know or see. Always smile."

He slowly ran the blade on his arm. It bled. The first drop of blood came with sounds of crashing objects. Richard dashed to his parent's room. Here's where I come in—Everything happened so quickly. Mom reached for me and threw me towards the door. Dad dodged and I went at Richard's right eye.

Eighteen years later, the front door opens, Richard walks in, stoops and picks me up and whispers 'Mending is an art.'

Apparently, Richard met and talked to psychologist who helped him get a better chance at life.

Today, Richard exists as a partially blind potter and I as a Kintsukuroi—a broken pottery repaired by filling the cracks with gold. I was the thrown object—A mug. Both products of broken homes.

GLORIA JOSEPH

A student of University of Uyo, studying Physiology. Loves writing, reading, dancing and playing volleyball.

The inspiration to write this came from the fact that I connect with the Broken, not because I want to fix them (I can't even fix myself) but because we both know what pain feels like and how to paint smiles on our respective faces."

PAINTING BEAUTIFUL STORIES



"The
beauty of
a story lies in the
ability of the mind to
paint a vivid image
of it. That,
I did."

ENIOLA DOKO

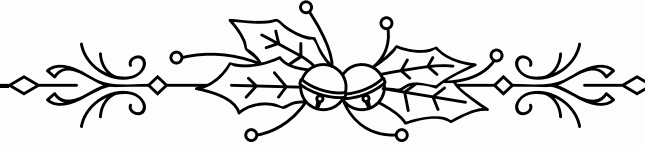
Eniola Doko is a Fashion Illustrator, and as she puts it "an upcoming Illustrator" whose lost hobby of creative writing and passion for reading stories make it easy for her to see words in stories as pictures. She volunteered to illustrate the top stories of the Beauty in the Broken contest as her contribution to it.

Email: deniola3@gmail.com



found this to be Beautiful

When creativity is aimed at touching real lives, then it is beautiful.



We are used to this business

the beautiful business of people!

Many companies carry out different forms of Corporate Social Responsibility activities, and we are involved in several; this though is different and some may think this as unusual.

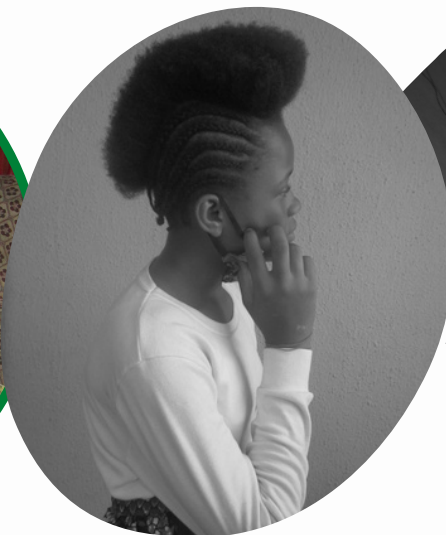
Honestly, the type of business that we do involves people a lot, and we are merged into their lives, helping them to put one foot in front of the other on the path toward their future.

We have met broken people too, and really, we realized that we all are broken in some way and need to look for that spark that gives hope.

We did nothing when our little contribution is compared with the effort of volunteers; starting with our young models Ndiana, Naomi and Euodia... is life not about the future?

Lastly, the stories were not just amazing, but they stirred hearts. We found them not broken, but beautiful.

- Michael Bassey (CEO, Maxxia Consulting Limited)



...expressing arts in its Purest Form

About the author, visit <https://effiongsamuel.art/effiong-samuel/>