

## Lament for Nigeria

In response to the Lekki massacre, inspired by the words of [Seun Kuti](#) and [Aisha Yesufu](#)

dear god  
I come from two countries  
one is thirsty  
the other is on fire  
both need water  
-warsan shire

A new moon rose up in the ember months over Nigeria  
A new spring burst forth as the fires fell over Nigeria  
To God I complain of the pain in my heart over Nigeria  
Because of the loss of family, my friends over Nigeria  
My eyes fill with tears, hot, heavy as lead over Nigeria  
But what good are tears for the bullet-pierced dead all over Nigeria?  
The lions are silent, the eagles have fled over Nigeria  
My grief turns me away from my bed over Nigeria  
Nigeria is dead, long reign her people over Nigeria  
But she's long been dead, vultures overhead all over Nigeria  
Fighting for carrion, squawking with bald heads, all over Nigeria  
As they carry on, feasting on the dead all over Nigeria  
This poem was written and traced in the blood all over Nigeria  
That's reddened the skies, our eyes, and the mud all over Nigeria  
Tears flow ceaselessly, flooding all the streams all over Nigeria  
Grief's withered the hearts, and dried out our dreams all over Nigeria  
How many dark nights have swallowed up screams all over Nigeria?  
How many have vanished, never to be seen, all over Nigeria?  
How many have fled the hunger, the dread, all over Nigeria?  
How many enslaved, with chains on their heads all over Nigeria?  
How many have died, how many more bled, all over Nigeria?  
How many have lied, how many misled, all over Nigeria?  
How many gone blind, how many lives shed, all over Nigeria?  
How many prayers un—heard stories misread all over Nigeria?  
And how many sighs like smoke still yet rise all over Nigeria?  
How many more till we stand tall once more over Nigeria?  
But God will not change our state until we, all over Nigeria  
'Till we change our state, decide to be free all over Nigeria  
For it is no sin to lament and grieve all over Nigeria  
The sin is for us to stay on our knees all over Nigeria  
Will we be slaves or will we be free all over Nigeria?  
Who's sacrificed for whose gluttonous greed all over Nigeria?  
Olorun! give youth the wisdom we need all over Nigeria  
To uproot oppression, corruption's disease all over Nigeria  
And give our elders the eyes that can see, all over Nigeria  
The root is rotten, so down fall the trees all over Nigeria  
Long fingers and robes, eyes never at rest, all over Nigeria  
The arms of the law serve these masters the best, all over Nigeria

The nation was built to steal our wealth all over Nigeria  
     Can you make a gun a fountain of health all over Nigeria?  
 The leopard changed skin, but not his dark spots all over Nigeria  
     Is it a wonder he never gets caught all over Nigeria?  
 But one day the prey go catch the hunter all over Nigeria  
     Is this just proverb, or this na today, all over Nigeria?  
 Our leaders are fingers of an empty glove all over Nigeria  
     Keeping the hands clean that pillage and reave all over Nigeria  
 Oyinbo chop, plump up on the pain all over Nigeria  
     Their glove sated with the palm oil stains all over Nigeria  
 Our life has flowed out into foreign banks all over Nigeria  
     Now Kwara, Oya, overruns its banks all over Nigeria  
 Orimili rise, sweep rubbish aside all over Nigeria  
     Maayo Jaaliba come drown all the lies all over Nigeria  
 Eeepa! Oya, the mother of nine, all over Nigeria  
     Let winds of change leave no place left to hide all over Nigeria  
 Eṣu Eḷẹgbara, who tests every side all over Nigeria  
     Take the sacrifice and transform our lives all over Nigeria  
 Move us beyond strife, man of the crossroads, all over Nigeria  
     Dance to the drum and tickle its toes all over Nigeria  
 Untie our feet, transform our sorrows all over Nigeria  
     Speak with power, turn back all the blows all over Nigeria  
 Confound all of those killing us on your road<sup>1</sup> and all over Nigeria  
     Let it be so, Aṣẹ, a maa n sọ, all over Nigeria  
 Ogun! ti n ru minimini, all over Nigeria  
     Who bathes in the blood of his enemies, all over Nigeria  
 Take up your cutlass and open the way all over Nigeria  
     The liars have come to mock and to play all over Nigeria  
 Devour the dogs, split them where they stand all over Nigeria  
     Let truth and justice return to the land all over Nigeria  
 Kabiyesi! Oronigbagbe all over Nigeria  
     Oba to ko so, let your thunder fall all over Nigeria  
 Lightning touches heaven as it touches earth all over Nigeria  
     Ewe Ilere, dry tears with fire's mirth all over Nigeria  
 Oḅaluae sweep illness away all over Nigeria  
     The pox and the cancer that's stolen our days all over Nigeria  
 Oṣun, Iya mi, leader of women all over Nigeria  
     Stop the marauding invaders again all over Nigeria  
 Wealthy mother, with dye, beads, and fans all over Nigeria  
     O flowing water, with your strong, long hands<sup>2</sup> all over Nigeria  
 Heal us, revive us, help us understand all over Nigeria  
     O re yeye o, bring peace to the land all over Nigeria  
 Orunmila, Eḷeri Ipin wa all over Nigeria  
     Aboru boye, aboru bo ṣiṣẹ all over Nigeria

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<sup>1</sup> Ojuelegba, a suburb in Lagos and site of police killings during the protests.

<sup>2</sup> *Fowo gbogborogbo*

Mightier-than-charms, please mend our bad heads all over Nigeria  
Grant us wisdom, let's not lose the thread all over Nigeria  
Eḽeda ma sun! Ori iya mi all over Nigeria  
Awake and fight! cut through bush for me all over Nigeria  
Chineke me! How many must die all over Nigeria?  
The earth is stuffed full, the sun will not rise over Nigeria  
The ground is bleeding, the air choked will flies all over Nigeria  
Achikwu oji<sup>3</sup>, come, now is your time, all over Nigeria

Jesu, come clear out the temples again all over Nigeria  
The moneylenders pretend they're your friends all over Nigeria  
They blaspheme your name and slaughter your flock all over Nigeria  
Hiding behind scriptures they shamelessly mock all over Nigeria

Is this not the land that holds walis' bones all over Nigeria?  
Is this not where Queen Amina laid stones all over Nigeria?  
Where Kalumfardo and then Sokoto all over Nigeria  
Raised banners of truth and fought the shadows all over Nigeria?  
Did not the Shehu, Bello, Asma'u all over Nigeria  
Fight with their lives and their pens for truth all over Nigeria?  
Would they be slaves of Lugard's estate ruling over Nigeria?  
Or would they revolt against the mandate of an unjust Nigeria?  
Is there a way to travel swiftly from all over Nigeria  
to justice and tranquil prosperity spread all over Nigeria?  
If not, then put this charade to bed—it's over for Nigeria  
The proud lions and great ones all fled, overwhelmed by Nigeria  
Compatriots arise, Protest! Disobey! For all over Nigeria  
The unjust laws of unjust men are killing our Nigeria  
Is this alright? Tell me is this OK? To die all over Nigeria?  
If not, E ba mi soro soke tonight all over Nigeria

In this year of Ogundimeji, we ask safety for our Nigeria  
Make our legs strong, we've suffered too long, all for this Nigeria  
Our diaspora, our people at home, fighting for this Nigeria  
This time will be the cradle or grave for this our Nigeria  
We seek refuge in God from the evils that swarm all over Nigeria  
And blessings upon the best of us all from all over Nigeria  
As long as a new moon continues to rise over our Nigeria  
As long as the rain comes down from the skies over our Nigeria

-Oludamini Ogunnaike  
October 21, 2020

A thread on [how to support the protests](#)  
For more information, follow [@feminist.co](#): <https://feministcoalition2020.com/>

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<sup>3</sup> An Igbo black masquerade that punishes criminals