

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 road¹ 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 hands² 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 ṣiṣe all over Nigeria

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

² *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
Eḷeda 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 oji³, 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/>

³ An Igbo black masquerade that punishes criminals