

LET ME SLEEP

Christiana Obaro

INTRODUCTION

This poem came as a reflection of my life events, at a time when most of the events were very sad. I wish at that time I had alternatives or other options I could have taken, that could have necessitated a different outcome. I was living in fear then, sometimes I just can't tell why I was, afraid, my soul was filled with anxiety, even anti-depressant drugs proved abortive. I tried to live each day as it came, afraid of the next. I just had to write. The punctuation marks in this poem enable me to say the poem in my own rhythm, rhyming it to my thoughts.

She turns, restless, back and forth, struggling through the night, she wants to sleep, she tries to sleep. The day ahead is long. She tries to stand, the cock is crowing, yet she cannot stand, she is tired, sleepy, through the night she has tried to sleep, waking up was a fight. How do you sleep, yet not sleep, wake, yet can't stand? I hear you sleep, to rest, but she sleeps and slumps. I want to wake, I want to run, I want to live, and not scream. When will I be, be a woman? I waddle through the mud, the quicksand where I was born. Every day I live, with a wish, I see people around sink, as we wade together. People close to me, people I will remember. Come to save me, take my hand. My voice echoed through the hills. Britain came; with a tail of Visa, I was told it is a monster, an empire, part of the monsters that turned my land into this mud. But here she is, offering me her tail, a way out, out of this mud. I grab it; I see no monster, I see a saviour flying in red, white, and blue, for once I smile, see my mud down below, I have escaped, have gone. My Saviour oh my Saviour, should I follow her to her nest, should I jump off somewhere, someplace I will feel safer, a place without a reputation of monsters. Down below, I see a woman, like myself wrapped in colours of green, white and orange. She is so beautiful, with kind eyes. I let loose, I land, it is soft; I am saved, should I build, a house, should I live right now, let me sleep, let me wake. But the sand is soft, maybe too soft. I am sinking, I can't understand. I see her she has many children, the hateful ones are called right-wings, they all fear them, and they all scream You can't sleep, you can't wake. Your mud is not entirely all muddy. Some parts are hard. Go back to your mud, our ground is all hard, we made it hard, now we sleep, not like you. It's your fault, we don't share. Go away. Oh, Let them stay, let them work, I hear some Irish say. We share, and we love, we are Irish not sinners. Ok, Ok, you can work, says a Flanagan, he is Irish, he listens. Thank you, oh thank you, I know the pressure from Mr. Right.

But please never forget, as I lie still awake, see my mud, I see no land, let me sleep let me wake, I am all tired, let me sleep.

TIME

Christiana Obaro

INTRODUCTION

I came to Ireland at the age of 26, I would say that was the prime of my life, to seek solace, explore and define my true person, but somehow the situation with passing years locked down my spirit, breaking me for a crime I seem not to remember (or probably the crime of being a human), and it was like I had all this while I stood by my window and watched time pass me by, day after day.

I stared at the time as it passed me by, I waved at it to stop and wait for me.

Wait, let me come out of my present, this present so you can continue again.

It only smiled and kept moving slowly on.

I looked back in time and saw myself once a beautiful young girl, living in a troubled world with a wish, how can I get out of here?

Here, where there is so much hatred, danger, and discrimination?

I prayed to be in a place where there was peace, police protection, constant electricity, food to eat, and a school fit enough for everyone to attend.

In the midst of my suffering and loss the sun smiled back at me, and I left my trouble zone in a dream I have always dreamt.

But my dream became blurry and confusing.

Lawyers appeared, immigration surfaced, questioning officers restricted laws to keep me controlled.

I could not understand it, they tried to make me understand, I tried to understand, but it was my dream and there were monsters in it.

They say they are here to help but I am in chains, it so confusing but that is how I feel.

Time waved as I grew older, I see it packing my dreams away smiling gently but surely.

Please stop, break my chains or stop the time.

I promise I will not be a foreigner in my next life.

I promise to be born Irish, for I love this land so much.

If you can please tell the time to stop or break my chains let me wake up from my bed without fear, fear of being yanked out from my bed in the middle of the night or fear of seeing my dreams go by in time.

I was asked the happiest day of my life I thought hard, I thought far, I felt I could not remember; then I remembered, I had none, I am still waiting.

For the happiest day of my life will be the day I will get the letter from the Ministry.

A letter that says: you can sleep well now my child don't be afraid, you are no longer at risk of being thrown back into your past.

You are now free to walk in the streets of Ireland and live like every other.

But for now I still stare at my lonely window, seeing time pass me by, carting away my dreams ever so slowly but surely.

RIGHTS

Christiana Obaro

INTRODUCTION

The first three paragraphs signify the way I felt as an asylum seeker, and I am guessing other asylum seekers in my position felt the very same. I simplify it this way: "black skin, no money (poverty), asylum seeker, migrant" equal disaster divided by a profound public hate.

The next four paragraphs were written as per my perception of how the very rich in our society treat the less privileged, and make numerous excuses as to why, and try at the same time to justify their actions, helping them to feel less guilt for the ill-treatment they give to others. I think there is always plenty for everyone in the world. After all, why do we need all the fame, power, money, when life is so short-lived?

"One good deed to someone in need can make you a legendary icon to generations after them."

He looked at her with scorn and pushed her out the bed, you stink, get out of here. You weren't saying that a minute ago, she whimpered as she tried to cover herself. What did you say he thundered as his fist met her face with a smack, illiterate get out of here before I blind you?

They are always asking for money he scorned as he gulped down another pint, propping himself up on the high stool. Yeah and they contribute nothing, said his friend signalling the barman for another round. They are all illiterates and good for nothing.

She tried her best to clean the room properly, hoping that he would be pleased, but knowing that was just a dream. She wept quietly as she bathed the kids, why was she even born she thought. She swallowed her tears fast and smiled quickly as she heard him open the door.

She peered through the window with her martini gently raised on her fingertip, her big diamond ring glittering through the streak of sunlight coming through the curtains. That dirty Mrs. Buksy. I wonder why she won't sell off that smelly old smack of a house and move out of this neighbourhood, her presence is reducing the value of the real estate. Her frown deepened as she sighted a dusty old van stopping close to her fence and Mrs Buksy's grandkids jumped out, screaming happily, those dirty, loud illiterates, I wonder why the council wouldn't do something about their kin littering the neighbourhood, they should have further restrictive laws.

The party was in full swing, champagne bottles popped in every corner, the ballroom was well lit with beautiful people all expensively dressed. The shabby little man sneaked in through the kitchen back door with his five-year-old daughter. He groped in his pocket and brought out his worn-out food bag. As fast as a mouse, they started emptying the leftovers from the plates just brought in, their eyes darting in all directions, scared.

The handsomely dressed celebrant has just been given the news; stop the music, he yelled, everybody stopped. The whole hall came to a hush as they all stared at him. I have just received news that infiltrators have just invaded the house, we have a crisis at hand. They are in the kitchen right now stealing our hard-earned food.

A silent gasp could be heard throughout the hall. Then the whispers, I wonder why they cannot stay in their houses, why can't they go back to their shit-hole.

Once there lived a wise man, on whom many titles have been bestowed.

His voice can be heard saying, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers.

It is easy to blame others for their conditions and praise ourselves for our good fortunes, we forget a game is always just as good as the cards we were dealt.

I hear people blame the rich for the poverty of the poor. They say the rich exploit the poor, they ask for equality, cry for equality, yet can't believe that a rich country like theirs, could be responsible for the poverty of the poor countries. Maybe we see you as the rich. Why not equality for all, the real all.

Rights, what does it even mean, when you believe if we all have equal right you will lose your right. When you give me the right to work, you believe I will take your job or your right to work. If you give me the right to live here I will take your right to your culture. Where else in history has the one percent culture dominated the 99, I know not.

Look into your heart and ask, what are you really afraid of? I come to you because I am distressed, you keep me in a part of town your youths wish not to live, and put me in a room shared with a stranger. I thank you for the bed space and food, only to look through the window and see protest. We have homeless and they should be given my bed space. Or maybe they don't want it because I want to be like them, that is all I have been asking for, to have residency rights like them, to have work rights like them, a white skin like them, so nobody scorns when I walk by.

Rights is a wonderful word, a word I might never fully understand and pitifully, maybe my children too.

Ireland my dear Ireland, isn't it strange that I love Ireland more than some Irish, some Irish feel inferior to some Australians or Americans even the British. To these Irish I say come on. I could go elsewhere but came to Ireland, Ireland to me is the best country in the world, it is not how urban or technology advanced a country is, but how proud and in love you are about the place.

Look into yourselves and be the best that you are. See beyond my colour and your fear, you are great travellers and you know the world. Teach others how to be human and let them follow you. A society is reflected in its treatment of all.

Men were once scared that if they gave equal rights to women, they would lose everything and the world would become chaotic. What happened when they did.

I see no more organized women in the world, like the Irish women, when they come together to say a Yes, it stands. You know what it's like to have no rights, why then will you stand with policies which give less right to others. Whatever excuse you could give, the men had given. Say No to unequal right for mankind, say No to fear. Every challenge has a solution, think hard enough, and you will find it.

Be me, let me be you, smile to me so I can be permitted to smile to you. Work with your government, believe me they are still among the top ten best in the world, irrespective of all their faults.

I will end by saying:

No matter what happens to me and my family in our asylum journey, always remember I have never loved a country like I love Ireland.

Christiana Obaro

Christiana Obaro is a mother of four: three boys and a girl. She came to Ireland in 2014 with her husband and three children after the unfortunate death of her mother. She has been through many harrowing experiences that have come to shape her poetry: from the death of her dad when she was 12 to the religious clashes she experienced in the north of Nigeria where she was born.

The five years she spent in direct provision with her family gave her deeper insight into different facets of life. It showed her the best of humans, where total strangers could just give you a house, food to live on, and security, while also showing her the side of humanity that fears what they don't know. She saw the innate desire of groups that wish to tame and control people lives.

All her experiences have culminated in an expression of herself through poetry, bringing out a side of her that she herself never knew was there. Today alongside writing poetry, Christiana is studying for a degree in Nursing at University College Dublin, while also taking another degree program in Healthcare online with the University of the People.

Christiana has written numerous poems, both privately and for the public. She had read her poems on so many occasions, which has led her to giving a talk in Dáil Éireann.

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