

INTIMATE NEGROCIATIONS

BODÉ OWA

PREFACE

This is a collection of ruminations that I had during the making of the theatre piece "Negrociations".

It consists of short, short stories, commentaries on existential fear, opinions and poems, sometimes with an erotic tint.

Arriving at a decision to write this book, took a mammoth jump over a grumbling cliché; the threat of being labelled a hate breeder and a class divider.

This book is not a manual on how to sell a war nor an explanation of how to use a sophisticated weapon.

Nobody can breed hate. It's already there. Open your window and see hate going down the street, waving to you. It's everywhere.

Class divider? You need tools to divide a society – structural tools – not mere talk. It's been done in 1885-1886, in Berlin, when and where modern Africa was shredded and patented. If those present at the conference were still alive today, they might shed some light on how they did it.

You need guns and machines, horses and swords. You need empires to go into countries, to destroy, to rape and to plunder. Mere talk doesn't pull or force down ladies underwear, it doesn't capture people to make them slaves.

It doesn't erase cultures and authentic identities. It doesn't rip pregnant bellies open.

It doesn't castrate slaves.

This book is entitled *Intimate Negrociations*, not to demonise any group of people but to empathise with the disadvantaged people of colour.

It is a way of signalling that they must not expect solutions to come from outside their group. Not from the United Nations. Not from the IMF. Not from the World bank.

Certainly not from the negotiations created, conducted and chaired by all these organisations, but by the negotiations made within their own group – to focus on dismantling the structural tools holding them down in penury.

Whenever two black people meet on the street – anywhere in the world – they nod, murmur and smile.

It is so beautiful to see that arrant smile; the recognition of a shared pain.

Unfortunately, the love suggested by that panoptic smile is only skin-deep. Merely! The fact that someone shares the same skin or even the same parents with you, does not mean that that person is keen to protect your life. He is prepared to erase your life for any person he shares a religion with.

Africa is burning!

As long as we don't cover our hair or skin with any chemical agent and with any tale-telling symbols. As long as we don't part our smiling lips to reveal the language of which grand master we belong to, that murmur, that nod and that all-encompassing smile would be sufficient to rekindle our original, unadulterated love; the one that was

there before Romans seized us and named our land after a general called, Scipio Africanus, or vice versa; naming him after our land.

Our beloved ancestors bathed in the monumental rivers of Zambezi, Nile, Niger, Benue, Jubba, Caledon, Congo...

As long as our history books still chant the name of a certain Mungo, as the discoverer of any of those rivers, we will never develop.

Our rewired minds will forever remain caged, bound and gagged by foreign doctrines – blindfolded – and without the mental capacity that is empathetic to our ancestors. No amount of hours spent in science laboratories solving theorems and equations will help us. We need to be us, not the worthless imitations and ridiculous clones of our oppressors! Our history books – just like everyone's else's – ought to highlight and glorify our ancestors, not demonise them.

The only miracle my heart prays for, is that Africa, will one day release herself from the chafing chains.

For Biola, Bisi, Buki and Bayo
– with love



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I am sick and tired of being sick and tired

– Fannie Lou Hamer

YOUR ESSENCE

Your essence...

is...

not the gaze in your eyes

Not the smile resting gently on your lips

Not your delicate ears

Not your easy nose

Not just the polite face they all travel on...

But in the warm, eloquent neck

that your polite face swivels and depends on,

as it turns to glow and giggle,

whenever I whisper your name,

A-F-R-I-C-A.

STATUS

I am one of the fools
held down by rules
One of the fools
dragged through schools
One of the accredited tools
in the good books of crooks
Trained to bamboozle
Ready to rob corpses of their jewels
and fit to mask all actions harsh and cruel
I am that I am
A fool. A crook. A tool.
In the nooks and the hooks.
Out of school
I sit on a higher stool
I dribble and drool
Like a mule,
I remain,
forever,
one of the decorated fools.

ASHE (AMEN)

When I was young I learnt from my parents' books that there were places called, holy lands. I realised that no country on my continent was one of them. Fifty-four countries, not a single holy land among them. I looked around me and I saw wars (all pre-fabricated and perfectly packaged), and the destruction caused by those wars. I was instructed to avoid the sins trapped in my traditions, I peeped at the toxic waste and the army bases dropped in our backyard and I was told to spit out our language.

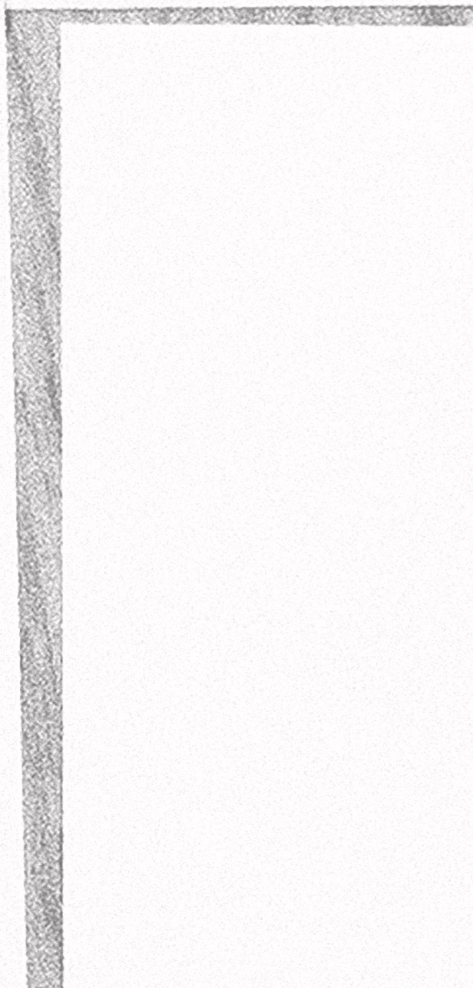
I scrutinised all our national holidays – from January to December – none of my ancestors was eligible for a single day! I longed to visit a holy land, one day. I prayed to God to rescue and forgive my unholy land. I longed to travel. Escape! I longed to go to a blessed land where people were holy, 24 hours a day, every single second. A holy land, where there were no men trained as soldiers to kill other humans; where there was no army, no defence ministry and no budget earmarked for weapons of mass destruction.

A holy land that would never contemplate on dropping bombs on vulnerable small lands. A land of only blameless, righteous men, where none of them looked down on other human beings, where no-one was a threat to underaged children.

Now, I am so glad that I finally grew up.

That I am no longer naive!

Now, I just love my continent, unconditionally!!!



DEMO-CRAZY

Whenever I am asked to define democracy, I do not need to scratch my mind. Neither do I need to flip through the pages of my dictionary. I can define it even in my sleep. Democracy is, watching children foam in their mouths and die of chemical weapons just because adults love to behave irresponsibly and childishly. Democracy has accomplished only one thing: it has proven that the words, human and race, can never come together to form one word or phrase, they can never belong together. It has proven that the human race is a dangerous, horrendous joke!

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INTIMATE NEGOCIATIONS

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You might wonder: 'could these stories
be true experiences of the author?'

'Yes'

or

'No,

it doesn't matter.'

The words in the texts that Bodé Owa has written for *Intimate Negrociations* are not cloaked in any glamorous gowns, they are bare naked. They release a reality which confronts without aggressive shouting or fierce moralising.

Bodé is passionate about social justice and equity, about his culture and continent, about the world. It is very obvious in this book which contains love notes to Africa, and which, though filled with humor, doesn't shy away from uncomfortable topics like racism and the continuing legacies of colonialism. Negrociations invites us into its writer's rage and into his passion, and challenges us to work for a better world.

— Chika Unigwe

