

**COMBATING SOCIO INEQUALITY IN NIYI OSUNDARE'S *VILLAGE VOICES* AND TANURE OJAIDE'S *THE TALE OF THE HARMATTAN***

**BY**

**IGHODARO VICTORY OSAKPOLOR**

**ART1608577**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE,**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,**

**BENIN CITY,**

**JUNE 2021**

**COMBATING SOCIO INEQUALITY IN NIYI OSUNDARE'S *VILLAGE VOICES* AND TANURE OJAIDE'S *THE TALE OF THE HARMATTAN***

**BY**

**IGHODARO VICTORY OSAKPOLOR**

**ART1608577**

**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE.**

**JUNE 2021**

## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by Ighodaro Victory Osakpolor in the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin City and is adequate in scope and quality for the partial fulfillment of the B.A (Hons.) degree in English and Literature.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. Clement Odia**  
*Project Supervisor*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. Adekunle P. Mamudu**  
*Head of Department*

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

I humbly dedicate this work to Almighty God, my parents and brothers for their tough love and support.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

With great joy in my heart, I thank God who made my existence possible, for His underserved kindness.

I equally appreciate the supreme support and attention of my supervisor, Dr. Clement Odia which made this project a reality. I equally thank my lecturers who impacted practical and creative knowledge on me.

My Parents are a great blessing to me; Pastor and Pastor (Mrs.) Ighodaro. I remain grateful to all my family members for their love and care, financial support and mostly for believing in me. God bless you so much.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Title Page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	i
Certification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Acknowledgement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
Table of contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vi
Abstract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vii
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>											
1.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.1	Purpose of Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2	Scope of Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.3	Methodology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.4	Theoretical Background	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1.5	Review of Related Scholarship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
1.6	Thesis Statement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>											
2.0	Protest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>											
3.0	Empowerment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>											
4.0	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
	Work cited	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31

## **ABSTRACT**

This essay seeks to combat social inequalities through the poetry of Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare through protest, empowerment and mass mobilisation. Both poets through their collection of poems express dissatisfaction over the socio economic situation among the rural dwellers which has eaten deep in the rural areas and made unemployment to be hundred percent guarantee and the well being of the people difficult. This essay seek to redress so many issues like embezzling of the public funds, causing social inequalities, lack of infrastructure etc these has been the issues with the rural people for a very long while and it is still very much around us till date. Also corruption is another ill constantly impeding the growth and development in Africa communities. The research method applied in this long essay is a qualitative research method as findings from the studies and other secondary material from dictionaries, journals, internets etc., indicates that, all Africans are basically facing discriminations as blacks. Also the theory adopted for this essay is the social inequalities theory.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Purpose of Study

The work looks at Tanure Ojaide and Niyi Osundare views on combating social inequalities through poetry. *Village Voices* and *The Tale of the Harmattan* would be copiously surveyed and analyzed to see how the social inequalities ate combating social inequalities include protest, empowerment, and mass mobilization. This research work pays close attention to the effects of social inequalities, in the society and various ways and attempts that drive towards fighting against inequalities.

#### 1.2 Scope of Study

This study is limited to the examination of socio inequality in Tanure Ojaide's *The Tale of the Harmattan* and Niyi Osundare's *Village Voices*. However, reference will be idle to relevant critical essays to the study.

#### 1.3 Methodology

This study adopts an in-depth critical textual examination of novels to enable the researcher through significant passages for illustration. It also uses qualitative research method. Relevant scholarly comments from textbooks, articles, journals and libraries are referred to for elucidation of ideas.

## 1.4 Theoretical Background

This essay concentrates on social inequalities, social inequalities is an area within sociology that occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation, that engender specific patterns along lives of socially defined categories of persons. It is the differentiation preference of access of social goods in the society, brought about by power, religion kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity of outcome.

In the years after 1945, post war was a construction mightily boosted modern intellectual ambitions to scientifically explain patterns of Human societies from both the beginning of human and projecting forwards in to the future. Social inequalities are found in almost every society. Social inequalities is shaped by arrange of structural factors like geographical location or citizenship status, and are often underpinned by cultural discourses and identities defining. For example whether the poor are deserving or undeserving.

Social inequalities can be classified as into egalitarian societies ranked society and stratified society and Edgar Watson, Max Weber uses social classes to examine wealth and status. In his opinion; "Social class is strongly. Associated with prestige and privileges. Social inequalities has been debated from the time of Aristotle and Plato to Reusseau karl marx, Max weber and innumerable contemporary authors. Social inequality results from a society organized by hierarchies of class, race, and gender that unequally distributes access to resources and rights.

It can manifest in a variety of ways, like income and wealth inequality, unequal access to education and cultural resources, and differential treatment by the police and judicial system, among others. Social inequality goes hand in hand with social stratification. Social inequality

results from a society organized by hierarchies of class, race, and gender that unequally distributes access to resources and rights.

Social inequality is characterized by the existence of unequal opportunities and rewards for different social positions or statuses within a group or society. It contains structured and recurrent patterns of conditions, distributions of goods, wealth, opportunities, rewards, and punishments. Racism, for example, is understood to be a phenomenon whereby access to rights and resources is unfairly distributed across racial lines. In the context of the United States, people of color typically experience racism, which benefits white people by conferring on them white privilege, which allows them greater access to rights and resources than other Americans.

There are two main ways to measure social inequality: Inequality of conditions, Inequality of opportunities. Inequality of conditions refers to the unequal distribution of income, wealth, and material goods. Housing, for example, is inequality of conditions with the homeless and those living in housing projects sitting at the bottom of the hierarchy while those living in multi-million dollar mansions sit at the top.

Another example is at the level of whole communities, where some are poor, unstable, and plagued by violence, while others are invested in by businesses and government so that they thrive and provide safe, secure, and happy conditions for their inhabitants. Inequality of opportunities refers to the unequal distribution of life chances across individuals. This is reflected in measures such as level of education, health status, and treatment by the criminal justice system.

Discrimination of an individual, community, and institutional levels is a major part of the process of reproducing social inequalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality. For example,

women are systematically paid less than men for doing the same work. There are two main views of social inequality within sociology. One view aligns with the functionalist theory, and the other aligns with conflict theory. Functionalist theorists believe that inequality is inevitable and desirable and plays an important function in society. Important positions in society require more training and thus should receive more rewards. Social inequality and social stratification, according to this view, lead to a meritocracy based on ability.

Conflict theorists, on the other hand, view inequality as resulting from groups with power dominating less powerful groups. They believe that social inequality prevents and hinders societal progress as those in power repress the powerless people to maintain the status quo. In today's world, this work of domination is achieved primarily through the power of ideology, our thoughts, values, beliefs, worldviews, norms, and expectations, through a process known as cultural hegemony.

Sociologically, social inequality can be studied as a social problem that encompasses three dimensions: structural conditions, ideological supports, and social reforms. Structural conditions include things that can be objectively measured and that contribute to social inequality. Sociologists study how things like educational attainment, wealth, poverty, occupations, and power lead to social inequality between individuals and groups of people.

Ideological supports include ideas and assumptions that support the social inequality present in a society. Sociologists examine how things such as formal laws, public policies, and dominant values both lead to social inequality, and help sustain it. For example, consider this discussion of the role that words and the ideas attached to them play in this process.

Social reforms are things such as organized resistance, protest groups, and social movements. Sociologists study how these social reforms help shape or change social inequality that exists in a society, as well as their origins, impact, and long-term effects.

Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation, that engender specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories of persons. It is the differentiation preference of access of social goods in the society brought about by power, religion, kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class. Social inequality usually implies to the lack of equality of outcome, but may alternatively be conceptualized in terms of the lack of equality of access to opportunity. The social rights include labor market, the source of income, health care, and freedom of speech, education, political representation, and participation.

Social inequality linked to economic inequality , usually described on the basis of the unequal distribution of income or wealth , is a frequently studied type of social inequality. Although the disciplines of economics and sociology generally use different theoretical approaches to examine and explain economic inequality, both fields are actively involved in researching this inequality. However, social and natural resources other than purely economic resources are also unevenly distributed in most societies and may contribute to social status. Norms of allocation can also affect the distribution of rights and privileges, social power , access to public goods such as education or the judicial system, adequate housing , transportation , credit and financial services such as banking and other social goods and services .

Many societies worldwide claim to be meritocracies —that is, that their societies exclusively distribute resources on the basis of merit. The term "meritocracy" was coined by

Michael Young in his 1958 dystopian essay " The Rise of the Meritocracy" to demonstrate the social dysfunctions that he anticipated arising in societies where the elites believe that they are successful entirely on the basis of merit, so the adoption of this term into English without negative connotations is ironic;

Although, In many cases, social inequality is linked to racial inequality, ethnic inequality, and gender inequality as well as other social statuses and these forms can be related to corruption.

Social inequality is found in almost every society. Social inequality is shaped by a range of structural factors, such as geographical location or citizenship status, and are often underpinned by cultural discourses and identities defining, for example, whether the poor are 'deserving' or 'undeserving'. In simple societies, those that have few social roles and statuses occupied by its members, social inequality may be very low. In tribal societies, for example, a tribal head or chieftain may hold some privileges, use some tools, or wear marks of office to which others do not have access, but the daily life of the chieftain is very much like the daily life of any other tribal member. Anthropologists identify such highly egalitarian cultures as "kinship -oriented", which appear to value social harmony more than wealth or status. These cultures are contrasted with materially oriented cultures in which status and wealth are prized and competition and conflict are common. Kinship-oriented cultures may actively work to prevent social hierarchies from developing because they believe that could lead to conflict and instability. In today's world, most of our population lives in more complex than simple societies. As social complexity increases, inequality tends to increase along with a widening gap between the poorest and the most wealthy members of society. Certain types of social classes and nationalities are finding themselves in a tough spot with where they fit into the social system and because of this they are experiencing social inequality.

Social inequality can be classified into egalitarian societies, ranked society, and stratified society and Edgar Watson, The Perse School. Egalitarian societies are those communities advocating for social equality through equal opportunities and rights, hence no discrimination. People with special skills were not viewed as superior compared to the rest. The leaders do not have the power they only have influence. The norms and the beliefs the egalitarian society holds are for sharing equally and equal participation. Simply there are no classes.

Stratified society is societies which horizontally ranked into the upper class, middle class, and lower class. The classification is regarding wealth, power, and prestige. The upper class are mostly the leaders and are the most influential in the society. It's possible for a person in the society to move from one stratum to the other. The social status is also hereditary from one generation to the next.

Political inequality is the difference brought about by the ability to access governmental resources which therefore have no civic equality. In treatment and responsibility differences, some people benefit more and can quickly receive more privileges than others. In working stations, some are given more responsibilities and hence better compensation and more benefits than the rest even when equally qualified. . Life inequality is brought about by the disparity of opportunities which, if present, improve a person's life quality. Finally, income and wealth inequality is the disparity due to what an individual can earn on a daily basis contributing to their total revenue either monthly or yearly.

The major examples of social inequality include income gap, gender inequality, health care, and social class. In health care, some individuals receive better and more professional care compared to others. They are also expected to pay more for these services. Social class

differential comes evident during the public gathering where upper-class people given the best places to seat, the hospitality they receive and the first priorities they receive.

Furthermore, in some views inequality is natural but shouldn't affect certain fundamental human needs , human rights and the initial chances given to individuals (e.g. by education ) and is out of proportions due to various problematic systemic structures.

Max Weber uses social classes to examine wealth and status. For him, social class is strongly associated with prestige and privileges. It may explain social reproduction, the tendency of social classes to remain stable across generations maintaining most of their inequalities as well. Such inequalities include differences in income, wealth, access to education, pension levels, social status, and socio-economic safety-net. In general, social class can be defined as a large category of similarly ranked people located in a hierarchy and distinguished from other large categories in the hierarchy by such traits as occupation, education, income, and wealth.

In modern Western societies, inequalities are often broadly classified into three major divisions of social class: upper class, middle class, and lower class. Each of these classes can be further subdivided into smaller classes (e.g. "upper middle"). Members of different classes have varied access to financial resources, which affects their placement in the social stratification system. Class, race, and gender are forms of stratification that bring inequality and determine the difference in allocation of societal rewards. Occupation is the primary determinant of a person class since it affects their lifestyle, opportunities, culture, and kind of people one associates with. Class based families include the lower class who are the poor in the society. They have limited opportunities. Working classes are those people in blue-collar jobs and usually, affect the economic level of a nation. The Middle classes are those who rely mostly on wives' employment

and depend on credits from the bank and medical coverage. The upper middle class are professionals who are strong because of economic resources and supportive institutions.

Additionally, the upper class usually is the wealthy families who have economic power due to accumulative wealth from families but not and not hard earned income. Social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of society about social class, wealth, political influence. A society can be politically stratified based on authority and power, economically stratified based on income level and wealth, occupational stratification about one's occupation. Some roles for examples doctors, engineers, lawyers are highly ranked, and thus they give orders while the rest receive the orders. There are three systems of social stratification which are the caste system, estates system, and class system. Castes system usually ascribed to children during birth whereby one receives the same stratification as of that of their parents. The caste system has been linked to religion and thus permanent. The stratification may be superior or inferior and thus influences the occupation and the social roles assigned to a person. Estate system is a state or society where people in this state were required to work on their land to receive some services like military protection. Communities ranked according to the nobility of their lords. The class system is about income inequality and socio-political status. People can move the classes when they increase their level of income or if they have authority. People are expected to maximize their innate abilities and possessions. Social stratification characteristics include its universal, social, ancient, it's in diverse forms and also consequential.

## 1.5 Review of Related Scholarship

Using Niyi Osundare's *Village Voices* as study case, it is observed that while it is truly a post-modernist practice that throws up a unique response to the contemporary reality and cultural consciousness, it is seen as a post-colonialist posturing that serves the purpose of enhancing the effect of the traditional aesthetics quality of modern Nigerian literature while at the same time taking it to another level of aesthetics and nuance.

John Ayomide, states that Niyi Osundare is one of the fecund poets that have risen from Africa today. A Nigerian, of Yoruba extraction, his poetry is richly colored by common expressions of traditional life (like proverb and songs) which reflects the worldview of his people. Besides, his poem *Village Voices* is accessible because in it he assumes the voice of the unlettered peasants and villagers who speak plain without feigning sophistication and he calls for equality. His themes are many and varied they range from a preoccupation with the poor and downtrodden in the society to an engagement with African's socio-political problems and a revolutionary vision that will bring about a new Africa. In all these, Osundare's is not blind to his physical environment. In fact, most of Osundare's poetry dwells on the impoverishment and decay of the rural communities. His fourth collection of poetry, *The Eye of the Earth* is entirely devoted to Mother-Earth and other forms of physical nation.

Accordingly, Osundare arrived on the literary scene at a time which shaped and prepared him for the task of freeing up poetry from the prison-house of obscurity in which the Soyinka generation was said to have put it. The socio-cultural and historical background or context of Osundare's emergence – family, schooling, village setting, prevailing ideology, et cetera – went a long way in molding and shaping him for the kind of poetry for which he has come to be

known, namely: the poetry of performance. But before we go into details of his unique kind of poetry, it is proper for us to, first and foremost, pause to reflect on the shaping/gustative impact of these features of his development both as a man and, more to our purpose, a poet.

According to John William from Lagos State University, he States that Niyi's poem is one that speaks for the common man. According to him, the poet in *Village Voices* shows anger and speak out over the oppression and corruption by some top officials in the Nigeria communities making the very average man to go through pain and inequalities of the worst order.

Nneibufe Philip comments on *Village Voices* as a poem that fights for the poor masses and Niyi Osundare is one of Nigeria's most prolific poets whose works have contributed significantly to the growth of a Nigerian poetic tradition. His appearance on the literary scene has brought a new direction to the development of poetic activity. This is seen in his radical approach to social, political and economic themes and in his in-depth exploration with the aim of bringing equality to all through his poems.

Oshomah Obems comments on *The Tale of the Harmattan* as Ojaide's fifteenth poetry publication. Part one of the book, much like Ojaide's previous poetry collections, narrates and reflects on local issues with global implications. We are introduced to the disturbing tale of the oil saga that continues to plague Nigeria's national conscience. Ojaide references an array of struggles for a clean environment, multinational sensitivity to local people in their business dealings, minority rights, rights of people to be treated as humans, and the legacy of grandmothers. But what makes this section of the book fulfilling is not the attention given to issues overlapping politics but the poet's well-crafted and memorable lines.

According to Johnson Joan, she states that Tanure Ojaide's book of poems, *The Tale of the Harmattan*, offers poetry readers and those familiar with his opus a critical insight of the dismal socio-political and economic conditions of Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Oil exploration and its devastating effects on the environment and the human family form the bulk of the poet's concerns. The poems range in style and form; however, what makes the collection a publication of substance is the poet's ability to examine contemporary issues with the eyes of a witness and the sincerity of one driven by empathy.

Alice Doki, observes that the African poet occupies a very prominent and unique place in the literary firmament in his capacity to use orature as a medium to re-enter the essence of his tradition and culture. According to Doki, the African poet stands tall above others because of "his ability to employ in African poetry elements from African flora and fauna and devices from traditional African images." (30). His imagery, themes and symbolisms are also drawn from a communally accessible pool and he can express himself in a truly African idiom. He observes that what distinguishes the African poet from the European poet is that "Africans are more closer to the natural environment than the West are. The African poet, he opined does not distinguish himself absolutely from other objects of nature such as, fauna, flora, mountain, etc. On the contrary, the European poet is detached from the object and this tendency tends to isolate man from his environment. It is from this attribute that African world view that we can better appreciate the greatness of African poetry and creativity. These same attributes have earned the African an eminent place on the literary map. Doki's position may be true to a point but not wholly.

Above all, Ojaide uses literature for environmentalist purposes. He places premium on the biotic community—its sustainability and preservation. Glissant, the Caribbean writer and

poet offered a statement that yet again corroborates this literary pattern that Ojaide is committed to: “aesthetics of the earth” . It is a literary blueprint that is environmentally conscious and ecologically sensitive to the plights of the people and their environment. In this light, Ojaide reasons with Aldo Leopold, the American ecologist, who said in his classic work, *A Sand County Almanac* that “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1966: 262). With the emergence of eco-criticism, Ojaide’s writings have come to be considered environmentally conscious texts because they show serious connection with the natural world as well as foreground how man’s activities affect his environment and ecology. In arguing this, the author points out that Ojaide’s poems dealing with nature are a direct outcome of his physical observation growing up in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. In this sense, Ojaide’s Green Wave poetics or activism that he mainly engages in with his eco-poetry is borne out of the harsh living conditions of his people. He thus envisions change as a function of environmentally committed literature. In buttressing this, a Nigerian environmental expert, Ojakorotu, affirms that: This activism can be attributed to frustration (on the part of the region) arising from both state and oil companies’ negligence and destruction of the Niger delta’s ecology, which is the basic structure that supports life in the region, as elsewhere. It may be said that the struggle by the people of the region has been predicated on certain fundamental issues, namely: their exclusion or marginalization in terms of access to oil revenue; their struggle. Therefore, this essay will be working both poems and using the means of protest (mass mobilization) and empowerment as a means to fight socio-inequalities in the society

## 1.6 Thesis Statement

Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide through their texts, 'Village Voices' and The Tale of Harmattan employ protest (mass mobilization) and empowerment as means of combating social inequalities through poetry.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PROTEST

According to Legal Dictionary, Free Dictionary defines a protest as a formal declaration whereby a person expresses a personal objection or disapproval of an act. A written statement, made by a notary, at the request of a holder of a bill or a note that describes the bill or note and declares that on a certain day the instrument was presented for, and refused, payment.

A protest is generally made to save some right that would be waived unless a negative opinion was expressly voiced. Taxes are often paid under protest, an action by which a taxpayer reserves the right to recover the amount paid if he has sufficient evidence to prevail. A protest can also mean a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.

Osundare and Ojaide express concern for the socio-economic situation among rural dwellers. Thus, analyzing the unpleasant realities in the rural areas, the poets highlight the contradictions in the lives of rural folk. Their poems come close to a survey of moral virtues, which still exist among rural communities. In many ways, some of the poems are a general revolt against economic exploitation. In a different way, it reflects the poets' background in rural Ikere-Ekiti and Niger Delta.

Social inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through norms of allocation, that engender specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories of persons. It is also the differentiation preference of access of social goods in the society brought about by power, religion, kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and class. Social inequality usually implies to the lack of equality of outcome, but may alternatively be conceptualized in terms of the lack of equality of access to opportunity.

In the poem “The Land Of Unease” a poem under the collection *Village Voices* the persona in his local settings tries to explain to his readers the hardship and discrimination they face as a people in their community as a result of the fact that they are not as wealthy as the people in authority and so they get the spoil of every good thing that comes around through distribution:

“That land never knows peace where a few have too much  
And many none at all the yam of this world  
Is enough for all mouths which pay daily homage  
To the god of the throat enough for the aged  
Awaiting day's dusk and the young peeping  
At tomorrow from mothers' backs the big knives push bellies bloated by excess  
The small die hungry deaths in village streets  
And when we ask why they say fingers are not equal  
We ask again why have a few chosen to be thumbs  
And the many other's omodändinri?  
Clinging precariously To the periphery of the palm? (46)

From the extract above, it is very clear that the persona is not happy with the way things are being shared among the people. According to him ‘the land never knows peace’ because some few persons have more than enough and majority of the masses do not have anything to show for “none at all of this yam”. The persona is not happy that many of the people are dying of hunger and few individuals have more than enough as a result of social inequality which is resulting to many people dying of hunger and starvation. For emphasis sake, the persona asked for the second time, in line eight and nine, “We ask again why have a few chosen to be thumbs And the many other's omodändinri?”

The persona asked a question in order to re-emphasize the fact that the rich thinks it's right to amass public funds to the detriment of the poor and all they do is keep stealing because they believe that the poor man as "Omodindiri" have no say at all in any decision they take in the process of distribution.

In another poem, "The Prisoner's Song" (p.24), the persona uses a dangerous image of the prison where innocent and the less guilty suffer from "the famine of freedom." The chains, bigger doors with bigger padlocks, barbed wire and cages are clear manifestation of human suffering created by men of authority and influence in the society. The poem affirms the solidness of the prison-house as an oppressive and unjust place where enemies of the state are kept under the custody of warders. The warder, clearly refers to "Son of Tanimola," who obeys orders absent-mindedly from a man of money from the city/ who wanted a private cocoa plantation (p.25). The greediness of these politicians continues to witch-hunt the villagers' life, as it occurs in the final stanza of the poem which reads:

"Your father became ruthless  
like a bird without a nest  
your mother sold firewood  
to put up some heat in your following hearth" (p.25).

As a result of this constant suffer and hardship, the persona seeks freedom for his people through protest. In the poem "For My Grandchild" we see how the persona through his grandmother seeks freedom from the oppressors by staging a protest which is one of the means of fighting social inequality. According to the persona:

"My children have had no  
Scholarships; they can't fish or tap rubber  
As I once did,

The river transformed into a snake of a tomb  
And the forest fraught with flares and fumes.  
With crude oil gushing into slave ships  
Refurbished as free-market super-tankers,  
The government assures people  
Of development with proceeds from export  
And spot market deals.  
No jobs for the graduates in the oil sector  
Even as wells litter the family's farmlands.  
In the daily dearth of prospects staring at all,  
Mobile policemen brandish guns in the sun  
And, from a safe distance above the ground,  
Hired retired marines keep the pipelines safe. (56)

The persona through this poem, is fighting for his grandchild reminiscing how the olden days is where scholarship always come to them without stress, they can go into the river and do their fishing activities without chemical in the river as then, they could fish and at the same time tap rubbers and enjoy themselves as he once did but now, the government have taken over everywhere leaving the whole community in mess, as the river where he normally goes to do his daily activities as been transformed into a snake of a tomb and now the forest is contaminated with fluids and crude oil. The persona goes on to express grieve that the government even go as far as assuring them of development with proceeds of what they get from the people's products exported to other countries but all in vain as they end up not developing the communities they steal from leaving the people in the community in total disarray. The persona goes on to express his anger over the graduates in their community who do not have jobs as graduate and that there

is no cooperate social responsibility from the government as police are always seen shooting at any slit chance they have. The persona goes on in the next stanza saying that:

“Villages of imploring eyes marching,  
Hands upraised with green-leafed branches, mowed down.  
CNN & BBC embedded with Chevron and Shell  
Report that local women, stripping before cameras  
To save their dying children and men, are primitive.  
In their secure wings they know not Ogoni's agonies.  
With my grandchild born, the new Stone Age  
Of a nation very black in the books has begun  
With refilled slave ships refurbished as super-tankers  
Anchored at Escravos and poaching inland as centuries ago.”(57)

The persona goes on to say that as a result of this social inequality and injustice happening in the community women are reportedly seen on CNN and BBC conducting a mass protest in a naked mood with green leafs branches with their hands up on cameras walking all around with the sole aim of saving the lives of their children and grandchildren from this wicked act by the people in authority and seeking fair distribution of the proceeds that they are suppose to have.

(Leopald, 1966: 262), argues that Ojaide’s poems deals with nature and that it is a direct outcome of his physical observation growing up in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In this sense, Ojaide’s green wave poetics or activism that he mainly engages in with his poetry is borne

out of the harsh living conditions of his people. Thus he envisions change as a function for his people.

In buttressing this, a Nigerian environmental expert, Ojakorotu, affirms that:

“this activism can be attributed to frustration (on the part of the region) arising from both state and oil companies’ negligence and destruction of the Niger Delta’s ecology, which is the basic structure that supports life in the region, as elsewhere. It may be said that the struggle by the people of the region have been predicted on certain fundamental issues, namely: their exclusion or marginalization in terms of access to oil revenue, their struggle for greater access to resource sharing and egregious human rights violation (Ojakorotu, 2008: 93).

Furthermore, Niyi Osundare’s poem “A Villager’s Protest” is a poem of protest over the wicked act of those in authority. According to the persona:

“They come more times than the eye bats its lid  
When they need your vote at cockcrow  
At noon at sundown when red rays  
Are bidding farewell to the western sky  
They come armed with sweet words  
Inflated promises and a chest that bribes  
With countess prostrations like the agama on the rock  
We’ll build schools we’ll build hospitals  
We’ll bring water to every backyard  
And turn all nights into day  
We’ll turn every footpath into a motorway  
And fashion out a duty from every hamlet  
We’ll give the farmer the best for his sweat  
And make poverty a thing of the past

They come they talk they promise” (60)

According to Niyi, Another reference to the plight of the ordinary citizens, “A Villagers Protest” continues with the sensitization to the people about the corrupt politicians. Like in the “Land of Unease” Osundare affirms the sharp practices engaged by heartless politicians in their attempt to achieve their selfish interests he says that this politicians before assuming the role as the head they promise the masses everything good, telling them that they promise to build good roads, affordable bills, good hospitals, the best of education with standard class rooms, the best rates to the farmers and everyone will have good lives but in the end will not carry any of the promises stipulated as manifesto

“Now in and promises forgotten  
Fat cars, juicy damsels and the best there is  
In the world of softness consume fat salaries  
And constituency allowances  
The mouth now is too honorable  
To greet, the belly too obese to bend  
Our man becomes a locust seen but once  
In several seasons  
His Mercedes thunders through the streets  
Our dust-laden mats announce the departure  
Of the man of power Esura grows swollen-headed  
And outgrows the prestigious belly of the mortar  
The wasp power-stung enters a race of waists  
Men of deep unwisdom knowing not that  
Power is the bird of the forest  
Which nests on one tree today  
Ant tomorrow pitches its tent”  
On another, another rain will fall its clouds and

Already gathering the distant wayfarer  
Will come seeking shelter in huts long neglected.

The persona calls out everyone in his community to say no to a bad government that will promise heaven on Earth in the end will do nothing when they go in and that all they do is enriched themselves and relatives. Drives the most expensive cars, carry sweet ladies and embezzle public funds and loot funds meant for the people. According to the persona he urge the people to stand up against such people as this will only result in less development and more hardship to the people in the region. Osundare express a concern for the social situations within the rural setup. He exposes the contradictions that exist between the city life and the rural bucolic tradition ( Na'Allah 2003:276).

The politicians come to the village square with countless programmes, bribes and inflated promises, which remain unfulfilled forever. The Mercedes Benz is the highest executive car possessed by politicians through ill-gotten wealth. They always drive through the nooks and crannies of the village to convince the villagers that they are for the people. The politicians also tour the country-side chanting antipoverty programmes such as Health is Wealth, Farming for Wealth, National poverty Eradication Programme, Job for All whose impact on ordinary citizens is too far from the truth. This gap is too wide to be bridged. From all indications, the villagers have realized such tricks. The poet describes them as “men of deep unwisdom”. Unknown to these politicians power is slippery

## CHAPTER THREE

### EMPOWERMENT

According to Cambridge Dictionary, empowerment is the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you. Merriam-Webster dictionary also define empowerment as the act or action of empowering someone or something. To grant power, right, authority to perform various acts or duties.

In the both collection of poems, both poets speak against the social inequalities going on in their community and advise the people in authority to practice cooperate social responsibility and also delegating of duties to some of them so as to help to develop their community. Before embarking on any program that will better the people the persona tries to ask if there is anyone from them that is against them but pretends to be supportive. Similarly, in the poem, “Feigning Rebel” the poem is certainly interested in the elimination of social vices and pretentious behavior. He begins by asking:

“Tell us  
Are you real revolutionaries?  
Or feigning kings  
Waiting for crowns?  
We have been roused  
Countless times  
By mask rebels of the night  
Telling us the system is bad  
And the only way it should go is down (p.90)

It shows that fake revolutionaries take part in the activities of the nation. At the end of the day, they loot government treasuries in the name of contracts and other unnecessary expenses. Sometimes these kinds of people are referred to as comrade as they head trade unions and non-governmental organizations. The poet wonders about the sincerity of these people. In a real sense, they pretend to be what they are not.

In the final stanza of the poem, he repeats the question which reaffirms his apparently displeasure with the unscrupulous behavior of the rebel. The poet perceives the action of the rebel as abnormal behavior. He doubts the integrity of their as they are claimed to be “friends of the poor.” The enumeration of decay and poverty in these lines explains that Osundare’s sympathy with the violated and true patriots finds its most articulate expression here:

“What it means to wake up  
Without a penny  
To live without a roof  
In a family of disease and misery we ought  
  
They had arrived  
Who know the agony  
Of soles without shoes” (p.20).

The above account of misconducts are clear indices of failure of leadership that is obtainable in rural and urban centres. The rate of poverty is very high, where some people live in a family of disease and misery. The problem of the betrayal of trust and inhumanity extracted from the feigning rebel is alarming. That is why the poet dissociates himself from such acts of misconduct. He considers self-discipline and hard work embarked upon by real revolutionaries

will displace the dictator and “feigning kings” waiting desperately for their own share. The images of fire, sun, darkness, harmattan, daybreak and dawn in this poem indicate some unpleasant realities and possibilities of hope in the struggle to eliminate all forms of injustices.

The poet here portrays a sensitive individual who bears with the situation of his people. He paints a picture of grief, sadness and suffering in the voices of rural peasants who are the real victims. The poet also reveals the identity of masked rebels countless times as they appear with false impressions of helping the villagers. But the moment they achieve their aim, they reveal their true identity. The villagers have suffered several times from the hands of these masked rebels. Osundare alerts them to find out who are the actual revolutionaries. It is like a new military leader who came to power as a result of harmful policies that bombard the well-being of citizens. This is exactly what happened in Equatorial Guinea and Republic of Niger recently.

According to an Online “Survey Company On Promoting Empowerment Of People” a division of the United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development states that:

*Empowering people by giving them a good education that will prepare them to have a carrier and to hold a job that will make them more confident, give them the chance to learn from others, allow them to earn a good living to help their children to live a better life.*

*They go on to say that certain liberties exercised by the state and other ruling elites (private/commercial interests) that have an exploitation impact would be curtailed when decision-making regarding use of local resources is owned at the local level. This in turn would mean that leverage or negotiation power is equalized and thus resource sharing equalized. Hence poverty reduction would hopefully ensue.*

In addition to this, In Akintunde, Come Home”, the city where Akintunde lives seems to be a potential destroyer of human life. The images and symbols in the poem reveal a village of natural disaster occupied by the exploited majority. He writes:

“Come back here where the walls are mud  
And meatless meals quiet the howling  
Stomach Come back here Where dreams  
Spun on campaign promises Snap in the  
Noisy bellies of belching parliaments” (.22-23).

Still on the same theme of rural poverty and how to empower the youth, Adagbonyin notices that: Village Voices focuses on the village and its rich cultural and tradition, its music and laughter. In addition to this, it accentuates Osundare’s perception of poetry as relevance, participation and Performance. (1992:26)

The foregoing excerpt sums up the poet’s historical consciousness on traditional life. He is constantly sensitive to the plight of peasants. The volume provides us with a panoramic view of rural poverty and its consequences to the nation’s development. Here, the violent revolution and determination of villagers and collective will are symbolized by a series of powerful images.

Okunoye (2005:165) also recognizes that “their collective voices articulated in this case by a number of the indigenous elite gives expression to their damnable attitude and practices.” The last stanza of the poem “Akintunde, Come Home” ends with an interesting Yoruba proverb which states: Akintunde, Come Home for though a man’s penis is small he will not borrow a bigger one to fill up his wife’s nagging mouth (p.23)

In this stanza, the persona's preoccupation is with the need to understand the condition of his people and the existing gap between the haves and the have-nots and ways to empower the less privilege people. This is achieved by virtue of his understanding of Yoruba oral poetics, as explained:

My Vision, I think is going to be constant.  
I can't see any way I can collude with injustice:  
I don't see any way I could be settled. So in  
Terms of subject matter, our world will keep  
On producing what there is to be written  
About. I think I will like to sharpen the lyrical  
Edge of my poetry (1996:123).

In Tanure's poem "New Birth" he speaks with confidence of a new community, state and country. According to him, he says that there will be new moon and everything will be delegated to the right channels and people and things will go well again. He states that:

I am a snake just sloughed  
The burden of bygone years  
I stand Resplendent In my new skin  
A new rain has fallen Carrying last year's debris  
In virile rivulets to meet the might ocean  
Earth, unyoked,

In the extract above from the first stanza, the persona says although he once face bad and corrupt people who made life unbearable and not worth living but that's 'bygone' according to him as he is resplendent in his new skin which symbolizes hope because a new rain has fallen which is a symbol of empowerment to them and the old and corrupt officials are no more. He goes on to say in the next stanza that:

Breathes through every pore  
Dusted feet swing to the rapturous rhythm  
Of vibrating roofs a new river is here  
Beckoning boatmen for new  
Boats a new moon enlightens  
The sky dismissing the tired darkness  
Of yester nights.

Furthermore, the persona speaks in joy as he believes everything will return to normal as a new river is here, the people have been empowered and authorities has been delegated to their own people who will eventually bring the change the people seek. He goes on to say that the sky dismissing the tired darkness which is a symbol of hope after the corrupt hands have been displaced and put in their place and now the community can now 'boost of a new moon'

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion both poets Niyi Osundare and Tanure Ojaide speaks about the social inequalities the people in their communities face which is according to them, is a firsthand injustice as their resources are being used without any thing given to them in return or providing affordable amenities for them in form of cooperate social responsibility.

According to James Oshomah a philosopher from Lagos State University says that Ojaide is a man who believes in his people and always on the lookout for the development of his rural community as he has experienced firsthand depression from the people in authority, he write most times to sensitize his readers about the wicked act being done to them by the government of the day (2016:37)

Also, Commenting on Osundare's sympathy with the poverty-stricken majority, Biodun Jeyifo (1988:318) observes that: the dispossession of the majority of our people and more specifically of the rural producers, may, in fact, be said to be the grand theme of Osundare's poetry. In Osundare's poems, he uses highly irresistible images and symbols to expose the attitude and practices of political leaders, which scatter people into waterless holes. It is no longer a myth, the military dictator's burning days of horror are back. The masses cast their votes for local and national figures, they fall sick or die from the denial of hope. There are no jobs to engage the youths while politicians live in happiness. It is unfortunate that retired generals and greedy politicians continue to manipulate the electorate. Most African leaders ride into office on a popular horse and depart on a stretcher of the disappointment of and condemnation by their subjects and the international community. That paralysis in leadership has virtually frozen service delivery, decision and policy making. Despite the presence of anti-people

decrees promulgated by military dictatorship across the continent, there is a wave of attacks on the ruling class in the poetry of the 1980s.

Dr. Ngozi Okonja-Iwela, the former Minister of Finance and former World Bank executive in charge of Asia and Africa, agreed that, in general, poverty is still wide spread throughout Nigeria because of social inequalities and despite the increase in oil prices. Some signs of Nigeria's new wealth are evident, particularly in Lagos and Abuja, where there is growing number of new cars on newly constructed roads driving past new hotels, restaurants and voices relate that our people do not benefit from the wealth extracted from their land. They live in abject poverty even though farm products and oil wealth led to a huge boost in the economy. There is also a big gap between the rich and the poor and that gap is increasing.

And finally, according to the persona, the only way to curb or fight this social inequalities and injustices in the Nigeria community is through mass protest and in the end empowerment for the people through delegating roles to competent and sincere people who will fight for the common man in return.

## WORK CITED

Adagbonyin, A. S. *Niyi Osundare: Essay and Interview*, London: Longman ,1996.

Abdu, S. *Poetry of the People's Republic: Reading the Poetry of Niyi*, 2003.

Ayodeji Isaac Shittu, *Plurimediality and Interact Aesthetics in Niyi Osundare's Village Voices*, 2021.

Nwagbara, U. *Political power and intellectual activism in Tanure Ojaide's The Activist*. *Nebula: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Scholarshi*, Vol. 5, no. 4, 2008: pp.225-253.

Ogoanah, N.F. *Interview. I am a Humanist: Niyi Osundare on the poetry of Niyi Osundare*. *West African Review*, vol. 4, no.1: 2003, pp.3-6.

Ogude, J. *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*. Pluto Press, 1999.

Ojaide, T. *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*. Malthouse, 1990.

Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Theory of Mass Mobilization*, 2020. pp. 11-27.

Okoro, D. *Ojaide Sings the Tale of the Harmattan from Cape Town*. 2007.

Web. 12 August 2010. <http://www.africanwriter.com/articles/227/1/ojaide-sings-the-tale> ,Osundare, Kano: Benchmark Publishers.