

12 October, 2023.

### PRESS RELEASE

#### Preamble

The 25th edition of the annual Lagos Book & Art Festival LABAF, holds from Monday November 13 to 19, 2023 at Freedom Park, Campbell Street Lagos, and virtually. *NB: Please see below for full briefs on both CORA and the LABAF.*

The theme for the 2023 edition is **THE RESET: History and the Darkling Plain**, and it is designed to reflect on the various critical points in the history of Nigeria-and by extension the histories of rest of Africa and the world- through written texts and performances in drama, music, poetry and the visual arts etc .

The essence is to mine those lessons in the political and cultural history of the nation to plot a progressive direction for its future, as we settle into, and navigate the constructs of a new political dispensation. *NB: Please see full narrative on the theme below*

LABAF commenced in 1999, the year of the nation's return to civil rule.

Though a literary feast of ideas and life in outlook, the festival has over the years, metamorphosed to being a Campaign for LITERACY devoted to heightening interest of the populace to be active participants in the knowledge economy that currently rules transactions in global political, economic and cultural affairs. The festival is focused on three thematic elements: EDUCATION. ENLIGHTENMENT. EMPOWERMENT.

LABAF's main programme iterations include:

- Conversations around ideas contained in the books of the festival – relevant to the theme of the festival
- Readings, Reviews and sessions on Writing and Publishing
- Exhibitions of Books and Visual Arts
- Workshops and Mentoring Sessions for young people
- Performances in Poetry, Drama, Music, Dance etc
- Arthouse celebrations of eminent artistes and culture workers who have registered their names and footprints in the cause of nation building – the idea is to set them up as role models for both old and young people – to inspire hope, motivate them to aspire to greater accomplishments in their chosen careers or vocation

Specifically for young people, the festival also stages

- **Green Festival** - devoted to students in Junior and Senior Secondary schools. This is in partnership with **Children And The Environment, CATE**.
- **CORA Youth Creative Club** -- which yearly congregate youths and young adults from different parts of the countries for mentoring and training in their natural talents and acquired skills. This is in partnership with **Events By Nature**.

## NARRATIVE ON THE THEME

### *The Reset: History and the Darkling Plain*

This thematic guide illuminates our choice of books and the discussions in the course of the festival.

With *The Reset*, LABAF continues the debate around the national question through reviews and discussions of selected books that speak to the theme. The basic tenet is that a nation is imagined at the level of ideas, before it is physically constructed.

The conversations at every LABAF since 2005 have been a set of reviews of arguments about the nation building project and the current status of our collective humanity.

LABAF started in 1999, the year of Nigeria's return to democracy, but it was in 2005, at the 7th edition, for which we chose the theme: *Narrations of Survival*, that we began to purposefully set a theme around which the festival-long conversations would coalesce.

In the last five years however, every theme has been a takeoff, or a riff off the prior year's theme.

In 2020, we examined the nation/the world in a state of flux, a period of languor, so the theme was *A State of Flux*.

In 2021, we (the nation/the planet) had left the state of flux, but we were at a crossroad. So, the festival chose: *A Fork in the Road*.

In 2022, we were glimpsing 2023, a year in which we would go for elections. What better way to prepare everyone's mind for the choices to be made at the polls, than examine the kind of future we wanted for ourselves? LABAF's 2022 theme was thus "*Pathways to the Future*".

### 2023...

**NOW** we have a newly elected government which has taken over an estate nearing a Failed state. The world abroad is in a bigger turmoil than the one that greeted Donald Trump in 2016. To get a grip on how we can reclaim our country, we have to examine where we are coming from.

It is those historical texts that we hope to engage more at the 2023 feast. LABAF 2023 seeks to engage with the past, learn and relearn from it and organize the future. That is why we chose the theme *The Reset: History and the Darkling Plain*.

The word is a much darker plain than Ken Saro-Wiwa glimpsed when he wrote *On A Darkling Plain*, an extended argument against the Biafra war, one of the few texts about the war from the perspective of a minority.

By gifting the festival its theme, the book becomes one of the 15 books of LABAF 2023

Other books that will be discussed in the course of the seven days include

**FICTION:** *SARO*, by Nike Campbell | *Little Suns*, by Zakes Mda | *Dust Child*, by Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai

**NON-FICTION:** *A Measure of Grace*, by Akin Mabogunje | *I'm Still with You*, by Emmanuel Iduma | *Then Spoke the Thunder*, by Peter Enahoro | *The New Map*, by Daniel Yergin | *A Shred of Fear*, by Uche Nwokedi | *An African Abroad*, by Olabisi Ajala | *On a Darkling Plain*, by Ken

Saro Wiwa | *My Odyssey*, by Nnamdi Azikiwe | *Formation: The Making of Nigeria from Jihad to Amalgamation*, by Fola Fagbule & Feyi Faweyinmi

**CORA BOOKTrek:** *Obalende: A Nation in Motion*, by Wale Adeduro | *There is Heaven for Bad Girls*, by Adenrele Niyi | *Time & Chance*, by Adebayo OlowoAke | *and more*

### GREEN FESTIVAL (Students & Youths)

*Native Tales*, by Olamidé Adams | *Cracked*, by Funmi Ilori | *The Green Advocate*, by Alexander Akhigbe | *Bisi Recycle*, by Temiloluwa Adesina | *Captain Excellence and The Great Hall of Knowledge*, by Izehi Anuge | *Mma Made*, by Chinyere Evelyn Ifedora | *Dear Mother*, by Nora Sanya | *How to Talk to Your Child About SEX Without Shame*, by Funmi Alagbe | *The Money People*, by Gbemi Shashore | *The King & the Colony*, by Olasupo Shashore | *Màmá, It's a Girl*, by Stella Damasus | *Not Too Young To Run*, by Ogbu Eme | *NALA - I am Black and Proud*, by Seyi Odewoye | *Better Tommorrow*, by Dotun Famoriyo

### VISUAL ARTS SECTION

- *Timeless Memories: Elastic Effects 2023 - The Man Who Didn't Die in the Face of Tyranny* -- Conceptual/Installation by **Oludamola Adebowale**
- *Boarding 2023* -- conceptual art by **Dili Humphrey Onuzulike (Junkman)**
- *NOTICE, We are here?* Ceramic exhibition by the Visions in Clay Community of ceramic artists
- **Drawing Attention – Exhibition by the Cartoonists Association of Nigeria, CARTAN**
- *I Am A Fish From the Sea* – Performance art by **Jelili Atiku**
- Performance art by **Yussuf Durodola & Friends**

### ARTHOUSE CELEBRATION

The LABAF is also a platform to celebrate eminent workers in, and patrons of the culture sector who clock milestone ages of 60s and above. These are people adjudged by the **CORA ThinkTank** to have used their natural and material resources to contribute to the flowering of the creative space. The idea is to set them up as models of emulation for young and old members of the society to find value in contributing selflessly to the growth of the national economy through the creative industries.

Thanks

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