

Adeyinka Faizah Yetunde

Writing: Age 14-17

"We Who Breathe in Smoke"

We wake to the sound of NEPA!

or silence.

Either way,

the heat never sleeps.

Our classrooms sweat more than we do.

Broken fans,

torn notebooks,

a chalkboard older than the teacher.

Still, we learn—sometimes with empty stomachs,

sometimes with full hearts.

They say we are the future.

But they build nothing for us,

only more fuel stations,

more malls,

more prayers without actions.

We are told to dream big—

but how do you dream

when your roof leaks
and the government steals the umbrella?

Still, I dream.

Not of foreign lands.
But of Lagos, green again.
Of Ojuelegba with trees.
Of air I can breathe,
without coughing up.

I dream of schools where books outnumber rats.
Of leaders that look like us—
not just in skin,
but in struggle.

This pain is mine.
This fire is mine.
But I will not let it burn everything.
I will plant in the cracks,
speak even when unheard,
build with broken things.

We are not waiting for change.
We are the change,

carried on shoulders tired
but still rising.