

brittle paper

cleaver thoughts⁷ @Funmi... · 5/29/22 ...
I get that maybe it's because it's a new book, but the copies of her book outnumbering the copies of a book written by an actual Nigerian historian on Nigeria is very apt symbolism for what's going on rn and what some of my country people are trying to deny.

shugagrl ✨ ✨ ✨ @
This is not her story. She should invent the word and use it. Look for actual art. This is rubbish.

Dolapo @dollarpad · 5/29/22 ...
Nigerians are just wicked. I remember us tagging CNN and many international media houses during this protest to help tell our struggle. Now it's a problem. I'm just confused.

Taofeekat Adebayo
This book is false. It's by authors who have written about police brutality in Nigeria. Many Mungo Park to be. Moreover there are many publications on why "Soro-Soke" is not a struggle.

Ladona_Scents_of Abuja · 5/29/22 ...
See this clown said she named Nigerian

SPEAK UP

ONE YEAR AFTER THE CONTROVERSY

... sentiments of race, she has arguably done nothing wrong. If you say she took ownership of a name that doesn't belong to her, how'd she do that? Who owns the name btw? & What makes it off-limits?

The author doesn't understand the meaning of soro soro. This book that it means soro soro actually means "spite". This alone is making

Victor @Innovictor · 5/29/22 ...
This is another attempt to colonize, hijack and rewrite a people's history. Don't just get mad, find this book on Amazon and leave a review about her attempt to profit from the pain, frustration, and death of Nigerian youths!

yves_o @yemmmmyy
This is the real soro soro anthology. The other woman is a faux. This was written by us who are not another person profiting because they are worried about yourselves from slavery.

OYINDAMOLA SHOOLA

nwachinememerem Ka mbu 🌟 · 5/29/22 ...
Dis is exactly d opposite of wat hapened

TABLE OF CONTENT

SEMI-COLON – A FOREWORD	04
PART I Knowing What to Believe	06
PART II When Anger Prevents You from Hearing Your Own Voice	11
PART III A Disruption of an African Story: An Interview with Trish Lorenz	19
ABOUT THE AUTHOR Oyindamola Shoola	31

“*Soro Soke* is a commendable and bold study into youth identity and politics in Nigeria, full of insights on popular culture and creativity, passion and politics. Trish Lorenz’s sympathy aligns with the desire of Nigerian youth activists committed to positive transformation. The author’s voice successfully captures the aspirations of young

In particular, growing urbanisation and access to new technology are defining this generation. Enabled by the megacities in which they live and by access to technological advances – which together offer opportunities that were out of reach or simply did not exist for previous cohorts – a creative, entrepreneurial and self-assured generation is emerging; global in outlook but rooted in and proud of their Nigerian and African identity. This cohort exhibits a confident outspokenness and a tendency for creative disruption, leading me to name them the *Soro Soke* generation (*Soro Soke* means ‘speak out’ in the Yoruba language).

“I wish this book existed when I was writing *Welcome to Lagos*. Trish Lorenz has done an excellent job of collating the hopes, dreams and frustrations of the young people of Lagos. They’re savvy, ambitious and they won’t take no for an answer. Watch out world. The soro soke generation is coming.”

CHIBUNDU ONUZO, AUTHOR OF *WELCOME TO LAGOS*, *SANKOFA* AND *THE SPIDER KING’S DAUGHTER*

WINNER
OF THE NINE DOTS PRIZE 2021/2022

SEMI-COLON: A FOREWORD

For over a year, I pondered why this series was worth writing, and countless reasons came to mind. Most important of all was that I understood the grief behind the backlash and simultaneously, knew a perspective that many others didn't know about the book, *Soro Soke*, and its author, Trish Lorenz. Before the book was published and during her research, I was one of several others interviewed to shed light on how younger generations are taking non-traditional paths with entrepreneurship to create opportunities for others and revitalize the country.

Having been in a similar situation where my work was taken out of context and misinformation about who I was spread, I remembered what I wished and pleaded for at that moment. As obvious as it may present, what I desired wasn't redemption, it wasn't for someone else to blindly agree with my perspective, it was a simple wish that they would read and understand my work, in full context and alignment with my established intention before making a judgment.

Moreso, as a curious individual and tireless overthinker, the awareness of the wealth of things I do not know overwhelms me. Despite my wild imagination, I have become more careful to assume that even the obvious is seen. As a result, I cling dearly to the things I am sure of with evidence, and scramble for any knowledge that I can get because I know what a privilege it is to have access to information and, even more nobly, to be informed.

Over the past year, the conversations I had gave evidence of misalignment, be it with those who read or didn't read the book, or those who disagreed or agreed with the author. I found their perspectives more individualized, especially for those who deemed this publication and some of its words a misstep. Still, their anger unified in an experience that shook us all – the End SARS movement and the 2020 Lekki Massacre.

Since then, we've been left with many feelings, but the most obvious is the sense of hopelessness. We've also been left with a weighted void mourning not just the loss of lives but a deferring and diminishing hope for change to happen in our nation. And for the few things we have clung to, memories of the good times marching, reminiscence of loved ones, voters' rights, a slogan, a phrase, a word to be taken without permission or agreement, seems vicious to anyone grieving.

When I reflect on some of the positive takeaways of the End SARS Movement, it was seeing businesses and organizations led by young people rising to the occasion. It was seeing people unite to become a force of change. It was the hope, possibility, and evidence through several good deeds that Nigeria could be better than it is. So, to see all of that become less visible is shattering.

In 2021, I reviewed Chimamanda Adichie's "Notes on Grief," and wrote an essay about how grief feels a lot like a semi-colon. It is like something invaluable has happened, but nothing stops and everything has to continue. I captured how continuation is a tradition that doesn't ask for permission.

The popular reaction to the publication of Soro Soke and its assumed intention put a lot of full stops where a semi-colon might have been appropriate. All I ask for is a semi-colon, not to start from scratch and erase your convictions but to continue with an open mind. A more important step would be to continue the empowering, innovative, and change-driven actions the EndSARS Movement ignited, and the growth of the nation that the Soro Soke book echoes.

This 3-part series begins with my experience of taking a critical thinking course at New York University that reshaped how I absorb, engage, question, and believe information. It continues with my review of Soro Soke and a realignment of several mistruths that engulfed the book and its author. This series then wraps up with a detailed interview with Trish Lorenz, re-establishing her intentions of a book that echoes our victories and losses, and most importantly, makes Nigerians the heroes of their own story.

In continuing this conversation with others, it has been even more enlightening to see the diverse paths one can take. This is not just a conversation about words but more for anyone curious enough to read and understand Lorenz's work in full context and alignment with her established intention before making a judgment.



PART I

KNOWING WHAT TO SAY AND BELIEVE

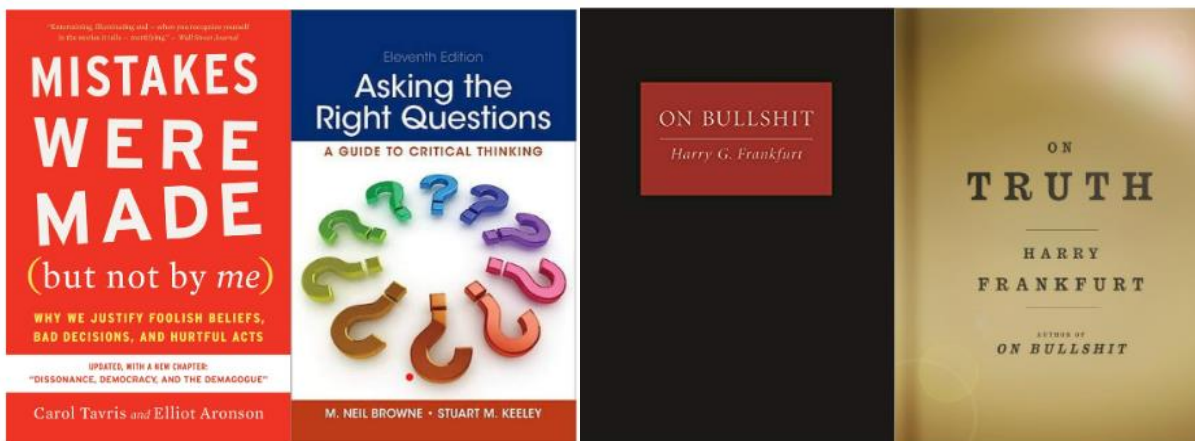


In my first semester at New York University, I registered for a Critical Thinking course taught by Professor Mary Busbee. Like every college student, I spent time on Rate My Professor that summer, reading through the terrible reviews the students had left about the course and the professor. So, it wasn't surprising that on the first day of the class, the professor declared that almost half the students would drop the course by the third class. To her, that was the tradition. We started as 20 students but by the third class, we were 12, with only 2 black female students.

As an immigrant to the United States and since I had a taste of higher education in Nigeria at the University of Ilorin, it seemed like an unnecessary privilege to only have to take 3-5 courses per semester, be able to choose a class that one likes and have the autonomy of dropping a course if one disliked it for any reason. So, regardless of the terrible feedback I read online about a course or a professor, the Nigerian in me was determined to not only stick through but learn my money's worth and get an A+ grade out of it.

Professor Busbee taught us not to be easily swayed by available or popular information, to question things, to read fully and listen attentively for fallacies or truths, and effectively communicate our perspectives. We read and analyzed 4 books that would forever change my mindset and life:

- *Mistakes Were Made (but Not by Me)* – by Carol Tavis and Elliot Aronson
- *Asking the Right Questions – A Guide to Critical Thinking* by M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keely
- *On Bullshit* by Harry G. Frankfurt
- *On Truth* by Harry G. Frankfurt



Simultaneously, we studied fallacies and propaganda, highlighting the impact of notable people like Martin Luther King Jr. and analyzing his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." The best part of the class was the liberty to try and share if we knew what to say, the encouragement to listen when we didn't, the curiosity to question things, and the cautiousness to be informed so that we could understand the exchange of dialogue, ideology, and perspectives. To say my mindset never remained the same after this course is an understatement. I preserved all my

course notes, often returning to them to remind myself of my biases and hindsight on critical issues.

While at NYU, I interned at several publishing companies because I was curious about the book publishing process and, more importantly, how information was made available to the world. Unlike the trade publishing companies, my final internship was at Elsevier – a leading research, science, and academic publisher. It was eye-opening to compare the book selection process for publication at Hachette Book Group or Simon and Shuster to Elsevier. At Elsevier, I was even more fascinated by the extensive process of selecting and validating researchers and data for projects like nanotechnology. I saw the layers of approval needed before research, data, or information could be released as facts that others could learn from.

With this consciousness, I finally pinpointed why I feel disgusted at assumptions, poorly stated or untrue facts, incomplete information, and generalizations. It is no longer scarce to come across a video on social media where someone with a microphone, often on a podcast, says, "We don't talk about this enough" or "There isn't enough information about that" or throws a generalization either in number or context like "90% of men do ABC..." or "Africans are XYZ..." to make their point sound true, essential, and urgent.

Notably, the dependency of mass action on leading opinions by a few people scares me. It scares me how until the leading voices of certain movements say or do something new or provoking, some people don't often think for themselves or engage with the topic and issues independently. Even with that, the urgencies of such moments force many to participate in unrealistic and non-lasting solutions to repeating problems.

One skill I learned from Professor Busbee's Critical Thinking course was the art of patience in the face of propaganda and how time truly tells. Notice how these conversations, like a tidal rise and falls, move water to the shore and then pull back. Many make statements and then retreat to the comfort of their homes until something else regarding that topic happens. Professor Busbee helped us realize that we must not jump on every popular bandwagon. With this cautiousness, I learned that the loudest, most heard, or influential voices aren't always the wisest or most informed ones to drive the action necessary for a sustainable change that benefits the people with the most-urgent need.

Most importantly, I re-learned what I assumed we already knew; Google searches, content creators, podcasts, tweets by famous people, quotes, op-eds, personal experiences, nonfiction, and our feelings about history do not qualify as research, facts, or truth. Especially interning at Elsevier, I began to have a different level of intellectual respect for people who did peer-reviewed and published research on various life and world-changing topics.

In conversing with other classmates, I gained more confidence in saying I can listen and hear you out respectfully, but I am not obligated to agree, believe, accept, or fight for other people's causes, perspectives, and convictions, especially when there is too much evidence to prove a lack of complete truth or fact. Notably, some are convicted about the wrong things or, sometimes, the right things but misuse their passion and platforms in the wrong ways. For some, the loudness of their convictions is often confused for its truth and this society of

tolerance, participation, and acceptance we encourage dangerously equips and spreads their misinformation or misguided actions.

By the third week of class, when we started forming discussion groups, my longing for safety in familiarity and likeness almost convinced me that I must be in the same group as the other black female student simply because I saw the Asian students form one group and the white students form another. However, I consciously refused that notion. Like this class and our groups, facing what's new, unknown, unfamiliar, and potentially disagreeable is scary. By the end of that semester and even now, I could only imagine how much more terrifying it would be to live in a world with this much information and accessibility but very little knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to share and apply in a right, ethical, and justifiable way.

Information itself lacks power without application. The more I am conscious of the power of being informed and conviction of belief, either shared by speaking or writing, the more fearful I am of its misuse and misunderstanding. Seeing how cruel and unforgiving our world can be, especially on the internet, makes me even more anxious about being a voice of or for anything in this world. This series continues with my review of *Soro Soke* and a realignment of several mistruths that circulated the book and its author, Trish Lorenz.



Servant of Truth @JJ2758... · 5/28/22 ...
Dear Nigerians,
The author and the publisher of this book did nothing wrong. This is not the case of plagiarism. As a revolutionary concept, "sore soke" has been publicized and is readily available in the media. As such, the author of this book was free to use it.

asampete nwanyi oma 🌞 · 5/28/22 ...
This woman won \$100,000 and a book deal based on her response to a "thought-provoking" question only to go on and blatantly misrepresent the struggles of Nigerian youth.

Sickening.

Gboyega O. Adeoya @gbo... · 5/29/22 ...
No tonal marks. Skewed narrative right from the jump. Take it off the shelves.

Sarewagba @Sarewagba_lit · 5/29/22 ...
So @Cambridge_Uni @CUPBookshop and @NineDotsPrize collaborate with a white woman to appropriate and steal the ideas of Nigerians, Africans and Blacks at large?

Sounds like a gathering of racist and slavery-leaning bigots to me.

UG @mangemman22 · 5/28/22 ...
If they asked you to pronounce the phrase, you will flop without shame.

Do you realize that you are robbing a generation a right to an experience that took their lives and made many refugees?

Balqis @_balqisbaby · 5/29/22 ...
Is there a way we can call for this book to be unpublished??
Like a petition or something
Your forefathers stole from us, you still think u can also steal from our generation
Soro Soke generation, was a named coined, used by we Nigerian youths

What a disrespect
Nigerians

Nwoke Abacha of Abuja · 5/29/22 ...
What nonsense is this?
Nigerian lawyers where are you? Here is meat to make money from. What absolute nonsense

DavyEOfficial @DavidOch... · 5/28/22 ...
Take this book down or expect more angrier voices by daybreak

cleaver thoughts7 @Funmi... · 5/29/22 ...
I get that maybe it's because it's a new book, but the copies of her book outnumbering the copies of a book written by an actual Nigerian historian on Nigeria is very apt symbolism for what's going on rn and what some of my country people are trying to deny.

Dolapo @dollarpad · 5/29/22 ...
Nigerians are just wicked.
I remember us tagging CNN and many international media houses during this protest to help tell our struggle.
Now it's a problem. I'm just confused.

Ladona_Scents_of_Abuja · 5/29/22 ...
See this clown said she named Nigerian youth SORO SOKE generation.
Oloriburuku
You didn't make one single tweet supporting the movement but now you are trying to cash out from something you know nothing about just like your people has been doing for years. Ashiere koni da fu e

Emekaizen @CFNwosu_esq · 5/29/22 ...
What I find quite interesting about this scenario is that if we move beyond sentiments of race, she has arguably done nothing wrong. If you say she took ownership of a name that doesn't belong to her, how'd she do that? Who owns the name btw? & What makes it off-limits?

Victor @Innovictor · 5/29/22 ...
This is another attempt to colonize, hijack and rewrite a people's history.
Don't just get mad, find this book on Amazon and leave a review about her attempt to profit from the pain, frustration, and death of Nigerian youths!

nwachinemerem Ka mbu 🇳🇮 · 5/29/22 ...
Dis is exactly d opposite of wat hapened durin endsars protest. "soro soke" hw did u arrive @ ur conclusion. Hw did u perform ur research on dis? Did u interview pple if yes wia dey d right pple 2 interview?. Dis is lik me here in nig claimin 2 b authority concernin issues in U.S

orisha @Adukebey_ · 5/29/22 ...
young disruptors? y'all caucasians who are involved in this are sick

omob @_omob · 5/29/22 ...
White people writing and getting credit for black stories and experiences in this day and age will forever me weird to 🤔🤔

Chichi is always in pain · 5/28/22 ...
Thief! Onye oshiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!!!!!! Thief!
Thief!

shugagrl ✨ ✨ @Dawnub... · 5/29/22 ...
This is not her story to tell. She also didn't invent the word and read up an article. Look for actual articles and stop this rubbish

Taofeekat Adebola Ajayi · 5/30/22 ...
This book is false. There are several local authors who have more knowledge about police brutality in Nigeria. We don't need any Mungo Park to falsify our story. Moreover there are newspapers publications on what really happened. "Soro-Soke" is not just a phase but a struggle.

Rowyal Highness. @Rowy... · 5/30/22 ...
There were Nigerians here saying we don't gatekeep the other day. Well, expect more bullsh_t like this if we don't gatekeep. They'll take what they learned from us, repackage it, take all the credit, and get very rich too. That's what they've done throughout history

Maryam 🦋 @AO_Maryam · 5/28/22 ...
The author doesn't even know the actual meaning of soro soke, she wrote in her book that it means "speak out" while it actually means "speak up"
This alone is making me angry

yves_o @yemmmmyyyy · 5/29/22 ...
This is the real soro soke #EndSARS anthology. The other one written by the yt woman is a faux. This is our real story written by us who can relate. Do not allow another person profit off your struggle because they are white. Nigerians release yourselves from slave mentality.

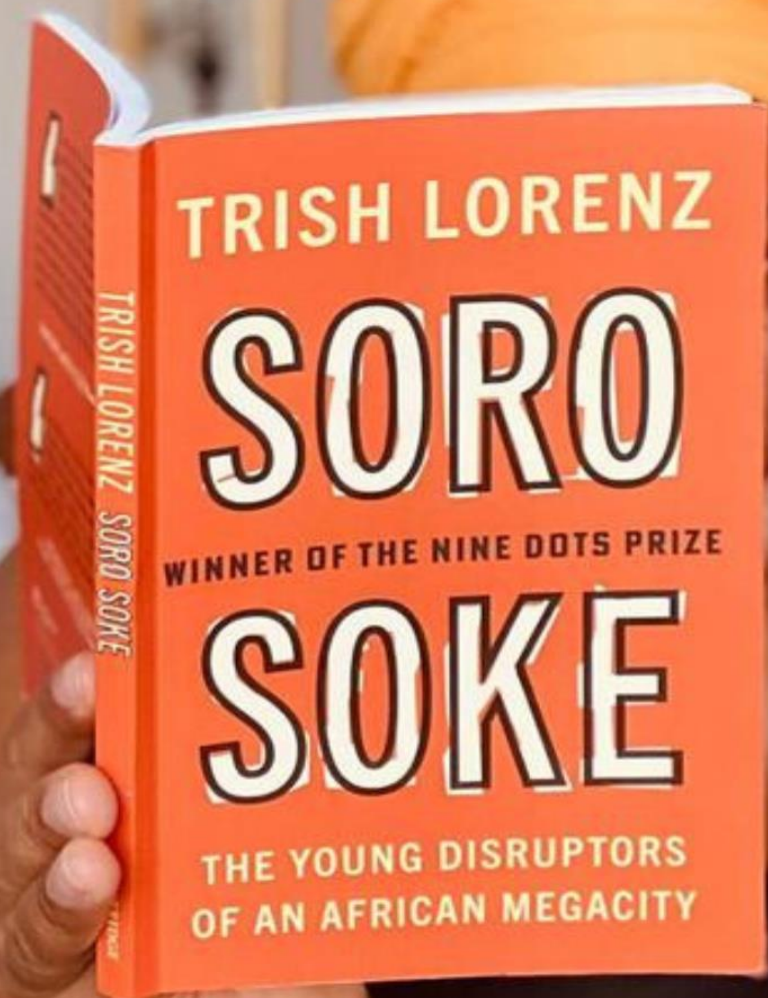


BUY A BOOK
Keep children off the street
ORDER NOW

Kaeto Owoh @kaeto_owoh · 5/29/22 ...
This is troubling.
Don't we do research anymore?

PART II

**WHEN ANGER PREVENTS YOU FROM
HEARING YOUR OWN VOICE**





The concept of Africa in your head is different to the one that is in mine, so if I make it, you might not see it for what it is.

Chekwube Okonkwo

The Co-founder and Art Director of Magic Carpet Studios

In 2019, I found myself in a similar situation as Trish Lorenz where someone, without reading my work, determined I was a bad person from the title of a piece that was a satire. In a later article addressing the controversy, I wrote about the problem with online jungle justice and how dangerous it is when misinformed people lead a conversation, especially when they claim to be victims. So, when two friends sent me screenshots and links to Twitter, sharing their arguments against the book, *Soro Soke* by Trish Lorenz about a year ago, I immediately knew something was off.

Firstly, I knew something was wrong about how the conversation was handled because, before the conversation even started, I had proof they had not read the book; therefore, their argument was based on transferred emotions rather than truth. I was one of 30+ Nigerians whose interview was featured in the book. They didn't even know that the book was a collection of interview features of young Nigerians in their generation despite the book cover and subtitle clearly stating so. They had been too fixated on the exact phrase other people found a reason to be angry about. In a further discussion with another friend, we agreed that the anger some people displayed on Twitter was about the mass shooting of unarmed protesters and youth at the Lekki toll gate in 2020. This campaign captured a lot of issues beyond police brutality that we wanted to change.



Nigerians are very tenacious and hard-working because there are a lot of things against us. If you can survive in Nigeria, you can survive anywhere. I think of myself over the last 10 years and imagine if I was in a space where we didn't have electricity issues and when you want to start a business, they don't put a lot of tax and regulations. Housing is expensive, it's hard to live a decent life. But people go through all this and still manage to build lives for themselves. I think our situation has strengthened us. We push on regardless. We are young, we are not like our parents' generation, where you can shut us down. My dream is to put Nigeria at the forefront, to help people understand that we have people here who are amazing animators, amazing designers, to export Nigerian talent, to make them see us. That's the future I want to see.

Omobolanle Banwo

Founder of the Female Designer Movement

While I was proud of the voices speaking up ever since the EndSARS protests, I was equally disappointed at its misuse in this case. During the protest period, an older Nigerian woman in her 50s told me she was proud of us, my generation. We speak up, and we're not the generation of "Ka a sha ma gba fun Olorun," meaning accepting that God destined our misfortunes. But seeing the one-sided and often untrue arguments against Soro Soke and Lorenz go around social media for months, for once, I wished people chose patience first. Worse, when phrases like slavery, racism, and oppression are thrown about, it is easy to assume the victim's position without investigation. At some point, when someone else would bring a new argument to me about the book, I would just tell them to go read it from cover to cover before conversing with me; because it is of no point arguing with someone about what they've been misinformed. Often than not, they would come back to disagree with their own presumptions and initial protests. However, the damage of their presumptions and anger expressed online would have already been done and be irreversible.

To call Soro Soke a well-written book capturing the stories of young disruptors of an African megacity is an understatement. Knowing Lorenz from the interview when she was doing research for the book and understanding what inspired it, as well as the funding prize of her research, the Nine Dots, it hurt even more to see how we all missed an excellent opportunity to spotlight a generation of people who are doing well, intending to move the country forward in diverse industries. Unlike many claimed, this book didn't steal the voice of young Nigerians but amplified the perspectives of solution-driven young Nigerian entrepreneurs leading change in their niche.



Art is another way to really make sense of your world and to share that experience with people. You are transacting culturally with art. We all come from a different culture. You give me your experience, I give you my experience, visually. And we keep adding to the beauty of the world, we keep adding to conversations around diversity and culture.

Jacon Osinachi Igwe
Digital Visual Artist described as Africa's Foremost Crypto Artist

In a conversation with a friend who claimed Trish Lorenz's Soro Soke stole the spotlight from the End SARS Anthology titled Soro Soke and edited by Jumoke Verissimo and James Yeku, I begged to differ. The anthology, published months earlier, had the chance to thrive in the spotlight; plus, it is a poetry anthology of protest and resistance, while Trish's version, in addition to those qualities, is a journalistic effort of hope and revival that's equally needed for the future of the country. Plus, this isn't the first time in the publishing world that two books would bear the same title, hence why we have ISBNs, and there were more books titled Soro Soke published during and after EndSARS. Notably, if this were a competition of which book is more worthy of publication, I would have hoped the energy against Lorenz's version would convert into significant sales and engagement of Verissimo and Yeku's version, but did it?

Because many people don't really care to read and research, even if it would be profitable to those they are fighting for.

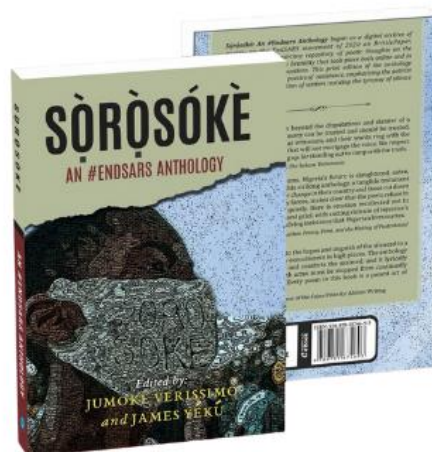
Unlike others who claimed that Soro Soke by Trish Lorenz never acknowledged the events that made the phrase Soro Soke famous, Chapter 8, titled "The Hashtag Generation," does. There, Lorenz captures the moments surrounding October 20th. This chapter, one of the book's longest, included images from the protest, one that even said Soro Soke and gave room to different young Nigerians like Osinachi, Rinu Odiala, Uzor, and more who shared their own experience with SARS and why #EndSARS was a country-shaking moment. Particularly, it credited the women of The Feminist Coalition, who gave the world an example of positive and collective accountability and showed what change can look like if we have good leaders.



There are so many needs here that it is easy to become a herd.
You just have to step forward and address them.

John Obidi
Founder of Headstart Africa

Finally, I shared that just like a muse is indiscriminatory, every good idea is on the table until someone pursues it. Except for online interviews I have seen here and there, I am yet to find a Nigerian platform sponsoring a research-focused prize like Nine Dots – which was and is open to anyone, including Nigerians who want to take on the challenge. I have yet to see a book focused on young Nigerian entrepreneurs, one I wish I had access to, as a guide of hope when I started my business journey at the age of 18. But have I seen many anthologies and poems about the plights of Nigerians against the country and its leaders? Yes. The month of October is full of them. So, to say this book is undeserving of its place and not a stand-out or stand-alone would be a lie. This book was also a FREE download to increase accessibility, unlike people claimed it was a mere capitalist gesture.



A country thrives on the foundation of its business owners and entrepreneurs who disrupt outdated processes and propose new paths – which is what *Soro Soke* was about. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala’s famous 2007 Ted Talk titled, *Want to Help Africa? Do Business Here*, captures it well. Most importantly, a nation thrives when people tell its story in an informed, truthful, accessible, and action-empowering way, as Lorenz did. The EndSARS movement was enough evidence of our immeasurable power and impact as youth when we collaborate. We unified and spoke about the change we wanted for Nigeria which Lorenz further captured by interviewing young Nigerian leaders in several industries, because if we don’t even know them, how can we support them?



It’s not just a problem with leadership. We, the people, are also problematic and oppressive. The average Nigerian has a very disturbing way of thinking about women and queer people.

Uyaiedu Ikpe-Etim
Film Director and Screenwriter

Trish Lorenz’s book is a disrupting and eye-opening gift for many curious enough to go beyond the misleading conversation that people who never read the book started. This book didn’t unjustly victimize Nigerians as many claimed; instead, it emphasizes them as heroes of their nation, highlighting the excellent work that young Nigerians do to push the country forward. Reading the book fully and understanding its value made it even easier to forgive what people deemed as theft of language which I saw as an echo of our voice.

This is not a piece of redemption, and I know you’ll wonder, why write about this now, over a year later? Reviewing *Soro Soke*, from a distance to the false assumptions made about it and its author allowed me to see how unfair it is to be reduced to a single story that overshadowed all the impacting and uplifting voices of young Nigerian entrepreneurs captured in it.



For me, like many other Nigerians who are entrepreneurial, we didn’t start by trying to change the world, we were just trying to survive’, he says. ‘I was very focused on how much money I could make for a very long time. I wanted to prove to everybody I could make lots of money like [Mark Zuckerberg] did. But it wasn’t until I got to a place in my life where I started to understand that technology represents an opportunity to serve people that I really got my big break. The big idea, the big lesson I learned from building businesses like Andela and Flutterwave, is that embedded in the challenges are the opportunities. So, take a crazy challenge like youth unemployment and turn it into an opportunity for remote working. Take an incredible challenge like financial exclusion and turn it into an opportunity for global payments. Do the things that are

only possible to do here. You can still make money this way if that's what you care about. But this is about more than making money: it is a service to the country. It's about building a path to a future where prosperity is within everyone's reach.

Iyinoluwa Aboyeji

Co-founder of Andela and Former Managing Director of Flutterwave

I would have thought we learned enough from Chimamanda Adichie's "The Danger of a Single Story," where she said, "*It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power... Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.*" What is not as quoted from Chimamanda's *Ted Talk* is the end where she said, "*When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.*" As we celebrate another independence, it is worth acknowledging the young people making an impact in their niche that Lorenz captured with *Soro Soke*.



In hindsight, I will say my biggest achievement has been learning that it takes creativity, ingenuity, and a sense of mission and purpose to contest an election as a young person and to remain in the race till the end. I have also learnt that young people seeking elective positions must stay true to their guiding principles. Without that, it is quite easy to either get discouraged or influenced to join the bandwagon of politrickians.

Fortunes Paul Okoronkwo

Contested the Government Election in his Home State of Aba for the Progressive People's Congress in 2019

It takes a lot of courage to stand against something like we all did during the EndSARS protests. It takes even more courage to stand for something true and just when loyalty to our assumptions, misinformation, or our own people is the real opposition. This series wraps up with a detailed interview with Lorenz, re-establishing her intentions of *Soro Soke*, a book that echoes our victories and acknowledges our losses, and most importantly, makes Nigerians the heroes of their own story and great nation.

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In our history, if you go back to pre-colonial era, women were actually in charge of things, they were part of the community, had authority. We had women kings and women chiefs and women who held titles, who were in charge of different sectors within communities. But as you go through the colonial era it was the men that were sent to school, only the men, and power and access were given to men, and the women were just sent back to the home. The culture now is not the culture of where we started from. We are holding on to Western culture; this wasn't really our culture. Younger women understand that there are certain things that marginalise them in terms of their thinking about what they can do, and they are trying to change that whole narrative. It's a long-term battle, but it starts now. We are speaking out more. We are calling things out. We are in the face of people we need to be in the face of. And dare I say, maybe we are a bit harsh and forceful, but we are speaking up, we are questioning things, and are getting people to stop and think.

Priscilla Eke

A Ph.D. Researcher on Nigeria's Gender Gap in Leadership

I am not entitled to anyone's agreement with this book or my perspective. However, what I hope is the simplest and non-costly effort anyone can make before choosing a side which is to read the whole book, not *without* judgment but *before* judgment. Here is the [FREE download of *Soro Soko*](#) which only takes a few hours to read.





EXCERPT FROM *SORO SOKE*

The young people you will meet in this book are, in the main, aged between 20 and 35. They are as different from their parents and grandparents as Western Gen Z are from Boomers. Although they share much in common with their Western counterparts, far more so than was the case a generation ago, they also inhabit a different world with different challenges and different opportunities. And in talking with this cohort, a distinct generation emerges – creative, entrepreneurial, self-assured, and hopeful; they are global in outlook but rooted in and proud of their Nigerian and African identity.

They also exhibit a confident outspokenness and a tendency for creative disruption. Enabled by the megacities in which they live and by access to technological advances – which together offer opportunities that were out of reach or simply did not exist for previous cohorts – this is a generation that is finding its voice and speaking out. This is the Soro Soke generation.

- Trish Lorenz





PART III

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
TRISH LORENZ**



This detailed interview with Trish Lorenz re-establishes her intentions of *Soro Soke*, a book that echoes our victories and acknowledges our losses, and most importantly, makes Nigerians the heroes of their own story and great nation.

Berlin-based journalist Trish Lorenz was announced as the 2020/2021 Nine Dots Prize winner for her compelling and well-evidenced response. Lorenz's winning essay argued that no question of what it means to be young in the 21st century should overlook the significant youth populations of sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Focusing on Nigeria as a case study – one of the youngest countries in the world, where more than 42% of the population is under 14 years old – she conducted in-depth interviews and discussions with the youth population to explore the topics such as the role urbanization is playing in defining this generation, and how this generation is, in turn, redefining the notion of an African city. Included in the exploration was the emergence of a distinct generational identity across music, fashion, design, art, and culture, and how this generation is employing technological solutions to become self-sufficient and solve pan-African and global issues. She also looked at the discrepancy between the average age of the population and the age of its leaders, who are amongst the oldest in the world. She focused on the activists challenging traditional societal norms and carving out a new vision of what it means to be African.

Lorenz has been a journalist for more than 15 years. She is a regular contributor to titles including *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Telegraph*, and her reporting has included covering stories in Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Formerly a design columnist at *The Independent* and the Lisbon correspondent for *Monocle* magazine, she covers subjects ranging from design, art, and culture to travel, politics, and human interest. Before moving to Berlin, she lived in Lisbon for eight years, working as a correspondent in Portugal and the Portuguese-speaking world, a role that involved travel and reporting on African Portuguese-speaking countries such as Cape Verde.

In this interview, Lorenz and I discuss the *Soro Soke* research, reception, and future plans.



Oyindamola Shoola: You won the 2020/2021 Nine Dots Prize with an outstanding response to the question, *“What does it mean to be young in an aging world?”* In the first chapter, you captured how *“by 2100, almost half of the world’s youth are expected to be from Africa, and the continent’s share of the global population is projected to grow from roughly 17 percent in 2017 to around 40 percent...”* What was the most insightful part of your research and collaboration with experts to obtain these facts?

Trish Lorenz: What emerged in my research is that new and transformational forces – including access to technology – are reshaping lifestyles, life choices, economic opportunities, values, and culture for young Nigerians. As you say, technology lies at the heart of what it means to be young, enabling youth across the continent to unearth novel solutions to some of the world’s more intractable problems. For young Nigerians, leveraging the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not about copying traditional approaches from the West but conceiving, creating, and delivering entirely new, pan-African solutions. Entrepreneurial at heart, this generation is focused on turning problems into business opportunities and does so with a sense of social justice.

Being young also means having a strong sense of identity. Enabled by their creativity and by the possibility of setting their own narratives, young Nigerians are celebrating their identity and using their music, fashion, literature, and film to inspire the rest of the world. And although they are facing very real and challenging issues, being young also means having an underlying sense of hope. A 2021 UNICEF survey found that 57 percent of young people aged 15 to 24 feel the world is progressing toward a better future. Particularly in the Global South, young people are more positive and globally-minded than those over 40. This was reflected in the people I spoke with, too. Born into a digital, interconnected, and diverse reality, they see a world that is largely a better place than the one their parents grew up in.

Oyindamola Shoola: I am always curious about every writer's process of coming up with their work. That is sometimes more interesting than the outcome itself. What was the process of creating Soro Soke? How many people did you interview, and for how long?

Trish Lorenz: As is probably the case with many books, Soro Soke was a long time incubation. I have travelled across Africa as a journalist for over ten years, visiting countries in the north, south, and west (not so much in the east). And every time I visited, I met so many inspiring and interesting young people, and I noticed, especially in comparison to the UK and Germany, where I mostly live, how youthful Sub-Saharan Africa is and how positive, creative, and entrepreneurial its young people are. I was always pitching stories about this to editors in the Global North, but somehow, they didn't quite believe this reality or had their own ideas about what Africa is and how it should be covered. This frustrated me. And when I saw the Nine Dots question, I thought it was the perfect moment to write a different kind of story about young Africans.

After I won the prize, I spent around 6 weeks in Nigeria, and I also spoke with young Nigerians (both diaspora and living in Nigeria) and with academics and population specialists, and other researchers. All in all, I spoke with more than 50 people, and of course, there was a lot of desk research too. The Nine Dots prize has a fast turnaround, so I had less than 7 months to actually write the book.

Oyindamola Shoola: You could have conducted your research in any other country and focused on any other age group. Why Lagos, Nigeria, and its youth?

Trish Lorenz: I decided to focus on Nigeria because it is such an important country, both in Africa and across the world. Often called the Giant of Africa, Nigeria is home to one in six Sub-Saharan Africans and is currently the seventh most populated country in the world. Its population is projected to surpass that of the United States shortly before 2050; at this point, it will be the world's third-largest country. It is also one of the youngest countries in the world: more than 42 percent of Nigerians are under 14, and half the population is under 19. Because my work was about young people, I wanted a country with a large youth population. And Nigeria also has a very diverse population, too, so there were many different perspectives to tap into.

On top of these demographic reasons, Nigeria is also an economic and political powerhouse. *The Economist* calls the country 'the continent's most boisterous democracy.' It is the region's largest economy, generating a quarter of Africa's GDP – three of the continent's four fintech Unicorns (start-ups valued at more than US\$1bn) are Nigerian; it has a strong entrepreneurial culture; and an important creative sector across music, film, fashion, and literature. All of these reasons made it the perfect place to begin to start to explore the experiences of young Africans.

I've travelled quite extensively across Africa, but I hadn't been to Lagos or Nigeria before winning the Nine Dots Prize. Lagos was very much on my list of places to visit – one of the world's great cities, with an amazing cultural scene and fabulous food, and so much energy and verve. I loved it, and Abuja too.

Oyindamola Shoola: In the book's first chapter, you wrote, *“Social media also plays an outsize role. Access to social media is enabling young Nigerians to tell their own stories and engage on equal terms with those on the same platforms in the West. It has opened this generation to wider possibilities and viewpoints and is facilitating a growing recognition of what is no longer tolerable within their society, helping to create a generation that is both increasingly frustrated and willing to call out the injustices it faces.”* First, was this in the initial version of the book? Second, did you anticipate the reactions you received on social media toward the book? If not, how did you envision the book would have been received?

Trish Lorenz: Yes, this sentence and the chapter on the importance of social media were always included in the book. In my conversations with young Nigerians, social media emerged as a very important tool for communicating, advocating, organizing, and more. It is a real game-changer in so many ways – culturally, socially, politically – and has enabled young people to stand up and speak up for their rights and viewpoints in a way that previous generations haven't been able to.

Perhaps I was naïve, but I didn't expect the reaction I received. Although I had hoped for comments and feedback on the subjects the book raised, I didn't expect that my identity as a white woman author would have such a significant impact.

Oyindamola Shoola: As a journalist with 15+ years of experience, you are very familiar with the ethics of the field and even, in the simplest terms, the dangers of a single story. In the US, during elections or times when fundamental movements happen like #BLM, #Metoo, or even the COVID-19, top media platforms and journalists are often accused of telling a one-sided story to drive engagement or a particular reaction from its viewers. What goal did you want to accomplish with this book?

Trish Lorenz: The book wasn't exactly about taking sides; it was more about telling stories that I think are not often told by the media in the Global North. As you say, Africa has been subject to profoundly damaging misconceptions since white foreigners first encountered it. Slavery and subjugation, the carving up of an entire continent without the consent of its people, the imposition of imperial borders based on nothing more than the political expediency of European powers all set up a historic legacy more damaging than elsewhere on the globe. Africa's myriad peoples and cultures have long been dismissed or disregarded in the Global North. Across literature, film, news, and even academia, the continent is almost invariably portrayed as poor and bereft of history and opportunity. This vision of Africa is a white creation, initially politically useful in justifying plunder and colonialism and more recently to enable a more subtle, but no more benign, western dominance. It was never a true vision of the continent, and it is totally wrong and myopic today.

I wanted the book to challenge readers in the Global North to see a different picture, a truer picture, of the life and dreams, ambitions, fears, and hopes of urban African youth. Because I'm a journalist, the way I thought I could best do that is by letting young Nigerians talk, by letting them tell their own stories.

Oyindamola Shoola: One of my favorite quotes about truths is by post-modernist Harry Frankfurt, who wrote, *“To establish and sustain an advanced culture, we need to avoid being debilitated either by error or ignorance. We need to know – and, of course, we must also understand how to make productive use of – a great many truths.”* If you could clarify one misunderstanding that circled online and surrounded the publication of your work, what would it be and why?

Trish Lorenz: The misunderstanding around the title is the one thing I wish I could clarify. People thought I had stolen it or appropriated it for my benefit. In fact, before the book was published, there was some resistance to using [Soro Soke](#) because the publishers felt it might be too difficult for non-Nigerian audiences to understand. My editor and I argued strongly for it because we felt it showed that the book focused on young Nigerians and that their voices were the basis of the book; that this book belonged to them. [Soro Soke](#) is so clearly a phrase that belongs to young Nigerians, it shows their strength and outspoken desire for change, and we chose it in solidarity and support. I was devastated that it turned out to have the opposite effect.

Oyindamola Shoola: Another favorite quote about truths is by David Foster Wallace — *“The truth will set you free. But not until it is finished with you.”* What lessons and resolutions did this experience bring to you?

Trish Lorenz: I haven't heard it before, but I love this quote! What I learned... well, writing [Soro Soke](#) reinforced my belief that young Africans are amazing. They are resilient, creative, ambitious, hardworking, passionate for change, and entrepreneurial. They are the future of the world. My resolution is to keep writing balanced, honest, and unbiased views of the amazing people of the continent and to challenge, in whatever ways I can, the global structures that continue to hamper the full potential of young Africans.

Oyindamola Shoola: You won the prize from the Nine Dots, which is rightfully yours as it would have been for any other winner. What did the award equip you to do? And why was the book a free download?

Trish Lorenz: Along with the practicalities of funding the research and writing the book, winning an award like this is very important for building confidence and self-belief. Writing can be a lonely business, and the award gave me encouragement that I am on the right path.

The 9 Dots books are always free to download because the prize is very keen that anyone can read them. It's not about making a profit from sales but about distributing ideas widely and broadly so that as many people as possible can read, comment, think about, and develop the ideas raised in them. ([Soro Soke](#) is the third book in the 9 Dots series, the fourth will be out in 2024).

Oyindamola Shoola: What was your favorite part and happiest moment in creating Soro Soke, from applying to the Nine Dots prize to publishing the book?

Trish Lorenz: My favorite part was definitely my visit to Nigeria. I loved every minute of my time in Lagos and Abuja. I met so many interesting people, both cities are inspiring and energizing, and I learned so much. The food is amazing too :-)

Oyindamola Shoola: If you hadn't won the Nine Dots, would you have pursued the Soro Soke project, or was this just one of those serendipities where an idea aligned with the prize and your availability for research?

Trish Lorenz: As I said earlier, I'd been thinking about it for a long time, but without the prize, I don't think it would have happened when it did – the prize enabled me to fund the trip, the research, and the writing and without that, I wouldn't have been able to afford to do it.

Oyindamola Shoola: There is an African proverb that says, “*Until the lion tells the story, the hunter will always be the hero.*” The protectiveness of the phrase *Soro Soke* and even African stories from being told by foreigners has primarily resulted from history when our stories or stories about us have been erased or poorly told by colonizers of African countries. Seeing how the book was mostly quotes and excerpts from your interview with several young Nigerians, who did you intend as the voice of the book, you, the author, or the interviewees? And why?

Trish Lorenz: This book was always meant to be written from the perspective of young Nigerians. I see myself as simply the megaphone that projects their voices to an audience in the Global North. As a journalist, I strongly believe that letting people tell their own stories in their own words is the only way to reach some kind of truth.

Oyindamola Shoola: You seem to enjoy traveling, not only for work but as a lifestyle, and you moved to Berlin in early 2020. Before that, you lived in Lisbon for eight years. When traveling, what conscious effort do you take in assimilating, associating with, and adapting to the new country’s culture and people? What measures did you take towards this project focused on Nigeria and its culture?

Trish Lorenz: I do love traveling. I’ve lived in Australia, India, Britain, Spain, Portugal, and Germany and have traveled very extensively (70+ countries). I’ve written about many of those countries and have interviewed and spoken to people ranging from prime ministers and business leaders to poets, artists, farmers, shopkeepers, hoteliers, designers, and housekeepers. My personal belief is that all over the world, people have more in common than that which differentiates them, but of course, I always consider cultural norms around how I dress, how I present myself, and how I address the people I meet. I treat people with respect and courtesy. I spend time learning about what is culturally important, and if I’m unsure, I always ask how best to proceed in a situation.

Before I traveled to Nigeria, I read many books (fiction and nonfiction) and spoke to diaspora Nigerians so that I know what to expect, how to behave and what to wear, etc. Once I arrived, all the Nigerians I met made me feel incredibly welcome. They were helpful and friendly, and interested in the project. Many people went out of their way to introduce me to family and friends and invited me to share a meal. It was a great experience.

Oyindamola Shoola: What was the most surprising and interesting thing about Nigerian culture and its people based on your engagements for this project?

Trish Lorenz: One of the most interesting things to me was the strength of entrepreneurial spirit in Nigeria. Everyone has a business or a side hustle and so many great ideas. There's a real energy and a willingness to disrupt existing systems, both to create change and to make some money. I was also interested in how strongly religious young Nigerians are too. Faith, across all religions, seems intrinsic to life, and that's something you don't see so much in the Global North.

Oyindamola Shoola: This is your first book. With your 15+ years of journalistic work, you had the option of choosing a range of topics. Reflecting on the past year, if you could re-write your first book, what would it be and why, or would it still be Soro Soke? What would you have done differently, if anything?

Trish Lorenz: I'm very happy that the first book I wrote was on a subject so close to my heart and something I felt was important to say, so no, I wouldn't change the fact that Soro Soke was my first. Perhaps I would have chosen a different title because I think the anger/frustration/protectiveness around the title obscured some of the positive things the book has to say.

Oyindamola Shoola: I am currently reading Dorothy Parker's *Enough Rope* – a collection of simple satirical poems. What book are you reading, and how did you learn about it or choose it? What's it about, and would you recommend it to someone else?

Trish Lorenz: One book that I'm reading right now is called *Imperium*. It's a history of Soviet Russia by a Polish journalist called Ryszard Kapuściński. I live in Berlin, and the Ukraine war feels very close to us (Kyiv is less than 1000 km away), and although this book was written in the early 1990s, it has a lot of interesting contexts about Russia and how/why/what is driving this war. It's very interesting and well written, and I think it's helping me understand some background to what's happening.

Oyindamola Shoola: What is an untold or less-known story of a place or people you have always wanted to pursue and bring to light as a journalist? And why?

Trish Lorenz: Everyone thinks Australia is all about Sydney, the Opera House, and the beaches, but I grew up in a very remote, deep outback of Australia. I feel that it's a part of the world that isn't fully understood or well represented, both in terms of the natural world (it's an amazing arid/desert landscape) and the people who live there.

Oyindamola Shoola: What career would you have pursued if you weren't or couldn't become a journalist or writer?

Trish Lorenz: That's a tricky one! Writing was always my thing. Maybe I would have been a librarian; if I'm not writing, I love reading. Or perhaps a politician – I am often frustrated by the quality of leadership!

Oyindamola Shoola: What projects are you working on now?

Trish Lorenz: I'm currently writing a series of crime fiction novels (the first two are already published, two more to come) under my crime-writing pseudonym Patricia Wolf. When that project is finished later in 2024, I'm hoping to apply for consulting roles as a researcher and policy adviser for government/NGOs to help influence and drive a progressive policy agenda, particularly around migration, in the EU.

Oyindamola Shoola: Thank you so much for sharing your time and shedding more light to the publication of Soro Soke. I hope this series brings the clarity that will encourage many to download and read the full book, Soro Soke.

About Author



Oyindamola Shoola received an associate degree in Psychology from the City University of New York (CUNY): Bronx Community College in 2017. In 2020, She graduated from New York University with a bachelor's degree in Organizational Behavior and Change. She is finishing a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, poetry at the American University.

While pursuing her bachelor's degree, she gained experience interning at several top trade and academic publishing companies such as Elsevier, Simon and Schuster at 37Ink, and Hachette Book Group. She has additional experience serving as a student co-editor for the New York University SPS Dovetail Magazine (Spring 2019) and book reviewer with a Nigerian publisher named WRR - Authorpedia.

Her writings including fiction, op-ed articles, and poetry have been published through several literary platforms and magazines like Black Fox, Phi Theta Kappa's Nota Bene, Authorpedia, Dovetail, Kalahari Review, and others.

Part-time, she is a freelancer, Op-Ed blogger, and Co-founder of SprinNG, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting Nigerian writers. She is also the Co-Founder of Imole Consulting, dedicated to empowering professionals at all levels to reach their full potential.

Books and chapbooks by Oyindamola include To Bee a Honey, The Silence We Eat, Heartbeat, Now, I Want to Remember, Forget It, and But Here You Are.

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