

The thing about water scarcity

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Prompt:

Climate Change Writing Competition 2022



13



17

When the first rain of 2017 fell in my city, the roof of my house stretched out like a tongue collecting the rain. The drops gathered themselves on the corrugations of the aluminum sheets, trailed down lithely and emptied into the buckets we had placed underneath it. The air tasted of petrichor. The earth, moistened by the rain soaked up as much water as it could, turning the hardened red clay earth to a bed of mud.

The previous months had been dry without any rain. Harmattan, the driest season in Nigeria regularly blooms in October and ends in early February of the next year. The winds are the prime indicators of the season, blowing sand thousands of miles from the Saharan Desert. You could always hear it unfold itself like it was unwrapping a gift, spreading around everything it could touch then grating the sand into dust. If you wore a skirt or oversized clothing, the wind walked through it and its coldness will sting your skin.

When the winds stretched into March, my family thought nothing much about the season persisting, thinking it would soon return to torpor. In April, weeds turned golden and thin, farmlands were brown with dust, all the water scurried away into the earth. The efforts of the winds were gradual, heaving every tincture of moisture left in the earth, taking with it most of the humidity in the air, turning our skins hard and dry, dusting on our eyelashes with films of dust. Our buckets ran empty of water quickly. Kitchen basins were filled with nothing more than dust, our clothes stood in piles every week, layered in dust every time. This new reality was a shift in normality, and like a shadow, it walked into our lives. Even birds and lizards came by frequently, tipping their tiny heads into the bowl of water we leave for our dogs.

By April, the winds had stilled and the air became warmer. Most leaves on trees that survived the Harmattan winds turned flaccid

and brown. It became routine to rake the surrounding of dead leaves and dried fruits every morning. While we heavily relied on the well in our backyard as our source of water, what we had feared most dawned on us. The water became harder to reach when we tossed a bucket into the well. Brown colored water touching the soil bed became our daily use till finally, one day, I remember looking down into the well and staring at the soil bed holding only mud. It didn't take long before farmers voices reached the newspapers. Rice, a staple grain had turned to the new gold. Maize was silver. Their costs doubled and prices in the market fluctuated each week - hiking up until you could only eat according to your penny. This was the severest impact we had felt. Food was expensive. Hunger, a psychological and physical torture left a poor person's pocket empty and his belly unsatisfied. It was then the link between water scarcity, hunger and a nationwide economic recession led to a concrete phenomenon - climate change.

I learnt its meaning from lengthy Biology notes and articles. From those materials, I'd read about how ordered conditions of Earth's climate was changing and how global warming melts glaciers and causes sea levels to rise. It was from there I'd learned that the ozone layer was thinning. The accumulation of these information overtime has developed a sense of "awareness" to me. I ask myself; What will happen if rainfalls were only a few inches a year and the wells dried out? How will people survive in that condition? What can I do to prevent 2017 from happening again?

More communities will continue to face the harsh effects of water scarcity if nothing is done about this climate change impact. There are not many voices that can speak about it because they don't have the voices to.

To help victims of climate change impact, I believe steps have to be taken, whether small or big. By constructing boreholes, visiting and aiding people and environments impacted by climate change, these little steps can be taken by leaders in COP 27 to impel climate change activism. COP 27 will be another futile attempt to attend to environmental issues if these little steps are ignored. If our voices are not listened to again, this will be another one of our failures to humanity and our environment.

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