



Boys Must Be Boys: (Childhood Reminiscences)

Efe F. Isibor-Guobadia

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This book, “Boys Must Be Boys”, by the poet-playwright, Efe Isibor-Guobadia, will evoke pleasant nostalgia in the hearts of that generation of Nigerians born within the years 1940 to 1950. Especially for those who grew up in the Edo-Delta regions of this period, the escapades of the boys of Agbado Street axis is representative of all the boyhood adventures of those halcyon times; the years which spanned the closing days of the 2nd World War in which their fathers became men and West Africa exposed its social system to Western Education and modern civilization. Since Camara Laye’s “African Child”, there has not been any book in this genre that compares with what Efe Isibor-Guobadia has done in “Boys Must Be Boys”. The author presents in this book a refreshingly original approach to modern African literary expression to with an eye for details, an endearing heart for truth and an alert head for communication. “Boys Must Be Boys” is the reminiscences of a boy, told by a man who now has children of his own, and in his desire to communicate with his own ‘boys’ who must be Boys, he has spoken a very unique and apt language, and spoken it from the perspective of boy who was a Boy. The pupils of the famous St. James’s Anglican Foreigners’ Primary School (‘Aforeena’) now Agbado Primary School, represent a generation of bridge-builders stretched all over the “west African Costal Atlantic community in which boys – “Who Must Be Boys” were becoming men whose umbilical cord were the last to be sewn in the indigenous culture of a land changing inexorably in historically dialectic evolution. What child, in the then Midwestern Nigeria in particular and, West Africa generally, did not play the “Snake Hoax”, hunt with catapults, fly the ubiquitous paper kite, give grandmother invigorating tantrums? The Agbado Street urchins did all these and more – they made bird cages that were castles, manufactured candles and ‘spirit light’ that mesmerized the old and the young, and grew, surprisingly, positively, to become in later years, men of substance as a result of their capacity to have been boys who “Must Be Boys”. Efe Isibor-Guobadia and the Agbado Street gang were not truants, even though he states otherwise in this self-effacing, candid, and straight faced book. The moral for boys of today, who MUST BE BOYS, is that the boys of whom “Boys Must Be Boys” is written, were boys who excelled in everything - academics most of all. They all became top professionals when they so choose that, and even those who fell by the way side, fell with moral dignity! “Boys Must Be Boys” will serve as sound education for our millennium boys, who must be Boys in a roller-coasting millennium. Not only African boys, but all boys will find themselves in “Boys Must Be Boys.” Efe Isibor-Guobadia is deeply religious. He describes himself as a ‘Communicant Marian Roman Catholic’. His grounding in Latin, his B.A. (Hons) in English from the University of Ife 1974, a Master’s degree in Business Administration from the University of Benin and his many years as lecturer in English and Literature in English at the Institute of Continuing Education, Benin City, show refreshingly too in his management of this work. The author has taken pains to keep his language within the ken of the secondarily literate in English. However, young readers, for whom this book is written, primarily, will find a rich glossary to help them with improving vocabulary from references contained at the end of the book – a boom for African students of English language expression. The title will also serve as pleasant reading for much higher echelons of the Nigerian literati. Frank ‘Zulu’ Nomayo.

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