

Climate Cardinals x ChallengeUS Future Leaders Competition Winter 2025

David Chukwuebuka Achibiri

Creative Writing Entry - Poetry

A Plankton Died In Its Final Age

Author's Note: The Plankton's Warning

My poem explores the philosophical and spiritual “damning” that happens when humans prioritise resource extraction over conservation and existence. The key moment that shaped my approach to this poem and its goal for climate action was a realization of scale. The combustion of ancient, microscopic life (planktons for oil) is what fuels our modern *Jagun Jagun* (warriors) of industry. For me, climate crisis binds humanity to the destruction of the “Eden” that sustains us.

While this poem reflects the gravity of our current trajectory, it serves as a foundation for my climate goals. I believe that we cannot fix the environment until we address the blindness to accountability seen in the poem. My poem addresses this in a niche but global way:

- By integrating concepts like the Yoruba *jagun jagun* and the Norse *jotun*, I aim to communicate climate urgency across cultural boundaries, showing that this is a universal human tragedy requiring a universal response.
- Just as the poem centers on the plankton, my leadership focus is on protecting the "smallest" and most vulnerable parts of our ecosystem—such as marine microorganisms—which are often ignored in large-scale industrial planning.
- Finally, I will use creative storytelling to move the climate conversation from dry statistics to moral imperatives, forcing a confrontation with the "price paid" for our current progress.

A Plankton Died in Its Final Age

A Plankton died in its final age,
Hereby damning the man.
No man can see heaven if such a thing,
an absence of grace for Adam's race.

When the first wells of black viscous
met the ocean's breast,
summoning the Phlegethon,
and the first roman candle lit,
knighting this vessel—jagun jagun—
soldiers of death to what was Eden.

Come, throw chains round the necks of life's progeny,
unaware this paper cord holds your soul, too.
Then unearth all that shines beneath the sun,
washed clean with red wine,
the silent jotun's gift.

Trample the vineyards, turn them to graves;
their kindness the tombstone.
On this tombstone, we sealed our fates,
stretching our chains to lessen their hold.
The price paid: our conscience,
blind to shame turned mission.

To slay this plane,
Whilst we seize all it has.

A plankton died in its final age,
And no man can see heaven.