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BornTroWay Bariga Revvs Up...

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WORKSHOP

By Yinka Olatunbosun

On October 13, talented boys and girls drawn from Bishop Ajayi Crowther Senior Grammar School and C.M.S. Girls School, Bariga will be set for the performance that they have trained all week for. The show is part of the project called BornTroWay, a community-centred initiative that uses the tool of art as a unique form of re-orientation for the youths and the vulnerable. Participants are usually between ages 15 and 22.

Co-founded by Ilaria Chessa and Ade Bantu, BornTroWay is a mobile art clinic with workshops as therapy for creative thinking and action. It offers opportunity for learning music, dance and acting without a cost. Last week, this reporter witnessed the audition process that lasted for several hours inside the school premises.

Audition usually has the same drill: a contestant gets a task and performs it. Sometimes, stage fright kicks in and you end up rapping when all you are told is "sing". At the school, a lot of students who showed up for the audition displayed all manners of dance techniques. Asides from "Shoki" and the "Shakiti Bobo Dance" showcased by the students, one dance that shares border with sheer insanity is "scatter".

They never stopped amusing Segun Adefila, one of the facilitators at the seven-day art training, who deemed it fit to say precisely what the initiative is targeted at.

"We are using the medium of the art to engage young people. It is not for the mere purpose of engagement but to find out the issues bothering them and show them the various ways of expressing those issues. The project has taken place in several places. We started from Ajegunle, Oshodi, Bariga, Port Harcourt, South Africa, Obalende. This is quite an exception, you know. We have never selected participants from a school. In other places we would just go into the community and seek out fresh talents. We are looking for school drop-outs, indigent students and other vulnerable young people who are idle," he said.

Come Wednesday, the successful students, presumably 45, will perform before their parents, friends and school mates. Adefila also explained the nature of the training and how it would be executed.

"Training is usually broken down into three classes that run simultaneously. Eda Oto is taking music, AJ Dagga Torlah is taking poetry.

We break them down into these three classes. We have lunch break. It starts from 9am till 4pm and it is free for all participants. The young people enjoy themselves but the issue is sustainability. We train them but what happens after that? We usually discover a lot of talents. But the structures are not in place to support them as much as we wish. But for us, the most important thing for us is to sow that seed of creativity," he said.

In spite of the challenges that he highlighted, there are some who have benefitted and have developed themselves beyond the training. "Kemi from Ajegunle is one of the leading poets today. She is a beneficiary of the BornTroWay Project. Even if they later veer into other professions, we hope that the lessons they have learnt in interpersonal and group interactions here will come in handy," he assured.

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