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## BIOGRAPHY

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By Chukwunwike Ossai

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**TONY UCHENNA UBESIE**

# Tony Uchenna Ubesie: The Igbo Novelist, Biafran Voice, and Cultural Torchbearer

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**T**ony Uchenna Ubesie (1949-1994) is a big name in Igbo Literature. He also fought as a Biafran soldier during the Nigerian Civil War. He's also a very serious cultural person who loves everything about the Igbo language and tradition. It comes from Achi, in Enugwu State, Nigeria. This man has good knowledge even in writing. He wrote plenty books, does radio broadcasts, and teaches people. Because of all this, he is respected in society today.

Ubesie was born on February 22, 1949 in Achi inside Enugwu State. As he grew, he heard plenty of stories, proverbs, and Igbo traditions. All these things prompted him later to write books in the Igbo Language.

He attended the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), a good university in Nigeria. Even when people don't know what he studied, his time in school coincided with Nigeria's post-colonization problems. War also started during that period. The mixture of Education and Culture helped Ubesie write about stories that could speak for Igbo people.

During the Nigerian Civil War. (1967-1970)

When Biafra seceded from Nigeria, the war began in 1967. Ubesie was still a young man cause he joined the Biafran army. He saw war with his own eyes, people suffered, hunger almost finished everyone, and most people died..Even if we do not know the exact role he played in the Army, many Biafran soldiers learned how to fight with little

training and the use of local weapons like the ogbunigwe.

Ubesie also helped in broadcasting and writing to boost the Biafran cause. The war shows him the strength of the Igbo people. The spirit is called Onye Aghala Nwanne Ya (Do not leave your brother). Later on, Ubesie used this experience to write better stories.

**Writing Career** Immediately the war ended, Ubesie used writing to heal the wound of war. He wrote over 18 novels, numerous poems, and other stories—all in the Igbo Language. People wrote in English just for fame, but Ubesie stood on his ground to write for Igbo. His stories are not just interesting; they also teach people about Igbo values and cultures.

1. IKEA Ruo Oge Ya O Daa (1973) – Talked about how life is seasonal. Change would always come. 2. Ukpaka Miiri Onye Ubiam (1974) -shows the importance of community support. 3. Amiri Oku E Ji Egbu Mbe (1975) -Used a story that has a deep meaning to talk about society. 4. Ukpaka Okpoko Buuru (1975) – Talks about betrayal and ambition. 5. Juo Obinna (1976) – Story of Post-War Struggle. 6. Isi Akwu Dara N’ala (1977) -Talks about pain and how to bounce back. 7. Okokporo (1988) -One of his last books still hammers on moral and cultural lessons.

Ubesie used most Igbo proverbs, idioms and deep story techniques. He uses characters like farmer, market, woman, or elder to teach big messages. His topics are mostly about:

1. How the Igbo people stood on their ground again after the war. 2. How people helped each other (Onye Aghala Nwanne Ya) 3. Protecting the Igbo language and culture 4. Preaching against vices like greed or betrayal.

Aside from writing, Ubesie also hosts radio programs. He literally works in Biafra and some other Igbo stations after the war. On the radio, he talks about Igbo tradition, shares poems, and tells stories. People who listen to him on the radio know he’s a lover of the Igbo

culture.

Ubesie died on February 11, 1994. Even at 44 years of age, he made a massive impact in his short time. His books are recommended and used in Universities all over Nigeria and beyond. Scholars always studied his books because his writings had deep meaning.

Ubesie inspired other Igbo writers to write in the Igbo language. He showed that one doesn't necessarily need to write in English to convey a sensible message.

Ubesie's story is similar to that of the Igbo traders who rebuilt the Aba and Onitsha markets after the war. It's just like Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda, who tell Igbo stories through books. His book is like an Igbo apprenticeship, also known as Igba Boi. It passes knowledge and culture to the next generation. This was how he used writing and radio to help the Igbos stand again.

He still had Challenges because he wrote for the Igbos. Mainstream publishers promoted him less. The economy in Igbo land after the war still didn't help publish his books either. And because he died young, he didn't have the chance to mentor most young writers or write more books.

Tony Uchenna Ubesie is not just a writer- he's a soldier, culture promoter, and an Igbo Legend. War shaped the way he saw life, and he used writing to tell stories of survival and unity. Through books like *Ukpana Okpoko Buuru* and *Juo Obinna*. He saved the Igbo language from dying and showed how strong our culture is.

Ubesie's life and work are a perfect example of Onye Aghala Nwanne Ya. He wrote and spoke to lift his people. Thirty years after he died, he's still an Inspiration. He shows that when we live in unity and hold one another, nobody walks alone.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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An enthusiast in tech with deep passion for studying and showcasing the vibrant cultural heritage of southern Nigeria . Combining my skill with my obsession towards African history and traditions to create contributions that impacts the digital space.



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*History worth reading.*

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