

# IN POOR LAGOS DISTRICT, 'SLUM PARTY' BRINGS HOPE AND LIFE



A dancer spits fire during a slum party at Oworonshoki district of Lagos. —AFP photos



Dancers perform during the Slum party at Oworonshoki district of Lagos.



People dance with outfits made of plastic wastes during a slum party at Oworonshoki district of Lagos.



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A man walks on a wood walkway at Oworonshoki district of Lagos.

To the rhythm of drums, two plastic giants whirl and kick up dust in an alleyway in Oworonshoki, one of the poorer districts of Lagos, Nigeria's megalopolis economic capital. From shanty houses of wood and tin, inhabitants poke their heads outside, and watch wide-eyed as the strange procession bounces past. Soon, the whole street sways and joins the dancers, whose costumes are crafted entirely from plastic bottles collected from the neighborhood streets. The "Slum Party" kicks off with a burst of music, dance and the flames of a fire breathing act. For three years, a collective of 10 young Nigerian performers has sought to improve the lives of Oworonshoki's residents through dance, hoping to change the reputation of an area once blighted by gang violence.

"In 2019, Oworonshoki was facing a lot of security challenges, and no one was going out in street anymore," said Valu, one of the creators of the "Slum Party" that is held once a year. "We started to dance in the street, so that the people won't be afraid anymore and they started to go back in the street," said Valu, a professional dancer whose real name is Sunday Ozegebe Obiajulu. "We started to bring life again." Throughout the year, the collective organizes dance workshops for children and fitness activities for women in the district. "I just used to stay all day long with my kids at home, but now because of them I do something different, I feel like I exist," said



Dancers perform during the Slum party. Martha Eze, 37, who dances later in the party.

## Wealth next to poverty

Oworonshoki is located at the foot of the Third Mainland bridge, Africa's second largest, that stretches 12 kilometres above the Lagos Lagoon. In sub-Saharan Africa's largest city where one in two residents lives in poverty, wealthy island districts with swank fashion and restaurants are a world away from the poor mainland districts like Oworonshoki. In the distance from Oworonshoki across a stretch of the waterways surrounding Lagos, residents can see Banana Island, an exclusive, private Lagos enclave of villas and residences.



Dancers of Ennovate Dance House perform in a street during a slum party.

In Oworonshoki, the only dollars visible are those printed on the shirt of a teenage boy wiggling his legs to "Peru", a song by Nigerian singer Fireboy. "I'm in San Francisco jamming... I just arrived from Miami," the children sing along to the lyrics dancing barefoot. Even one of the city's daily power cuts that stopped the music dead did not spoil the party: the audience kept dancing. "We have a lot of fun today, I love dancing," said Beke Olamileken, a 16-year-old boy who dreams of becoming an actor.

## Make a difference

More than a simple performance, organizers

also see "Slum party" as a tool for political awareness. "I want to show that you can make a difference with simple actions on the ground," Valu said. Last year, a video showing Valu dancing in a huge mud puddle in front of a police officer to denounce the disastrous state of the roads, was a hit on social media. During the "Slum party", next to the dance floor, on the steps of a ruined house, the collective planted cardboard gravestones, inscribed with the words "People", "Wealth", "Rights", "Security" and "Peace".

Dancer Henry Bethel Wisdom ties his body with an orange rope, and improvises a performance that freezes the crowd. The artist soars into the air, trying to get out of the improvised cemetery, but is caught by his associates who drag him back with rope. None of the dancers makes any reference to it, but the performance recalls the massive protest movement against police violence that gripped southern Nigeria in October last year.

Thousands of young people took to the streets to demand an end to human rights abuses and corruption, before being suppressed by the security forces. "We feel like we are slaves of our government, what we need is security wealth and peace," said Olamide Ballyqueen, one of the dancers. "We don't want to suffer like our parents and we definitely don't want them to suffer like us," she said pointing to the crowds of young children. —AFP

## Prince William reveals taste for AC/DC in podcast



Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge plays table tennis during his visit to CATCH, a youth-led charity in Leeds, northern England. —AFP

Britain's Prince William has revealed himself as an unlikely headbanger in a podcast in which he talks of his love for Australian hardrockers AC/DC. The song featured on "Prince William: Time To Walk", recorded for Apple, in which he gives an audio walking tour around the Sandringham royal estate in east England and plays his favorite tracks. The prince said that he listens to the band's driving 1990 anthem "Thunderstruck" to ease himself into the working week. "There's nothing better on a Monday morning, when you're bleary-eyed after the weekend and trying to get back into the grind of the week," said the second-in-line to the throne.

William also talked of his mother, princess Diana, cranking up the volume on US singer Tina Turner's 1980s-era hit "The Best" to alleviate anxiety driving him and Harry back to boarding school after holidays. "My mother, she'd be driving along, singing along at the top of her voice" in a "real family moment", he said, adding that the police protection officer in the car with them would sometimes join in. The celebrity podcast project aims to encourage people to walk more and reap mental health benefits. The father of three also talked about his children, saying Princess Charlotte, six, loves dancing to Colombian star Shakira's 2010 song "Waka Waka" with "a lot of hip movements", while her younger brother Louis, three, tries to copy her. The podcast will be available to hear for free today on the Apple Music 1 radio station, with the tech giant giving donations to the prince's chosen charities. —AFP

## Cheryl cancels podcast as it doesn't 'feel right' after Sarah Harding's death

Cheryl has cancelled her 'You, Me & R&B' podcast for the BBC because it "didn't feel right" to "revisit" it following the passing of her Girls Aloud bandmate Sarah Harding. The series for Radio 2 was set to be 12-episodes long with the 38-year-old singer discussing her passion for music and her favorite artists. However, she took a break from recording the podcast in the summer, after Sarah lost her battle with cancer in September, at the age of 39, and now she doesn't feel it's appropriate for her to share the series. The 'Fight For This Love' hitmaker told fans on her Instagram Stories: "It was to be recorded around the same time as Sarah's passing. I took a break from everything then, including the series, and it just didn't feel right to revisit it again..." "Thank you again for all of your love and support these past couple months."

Cheryl took to Instagram after Sarah's death was announced and admitted she was still in a state of "disbelief". She wrote at the time: "Although we

knew this day would arrive I am somehow still feeling at a loss for words that our stunning, unique, crazy, quirky, kind and soft hearted girl has departed. As I try to navigate my way through these painfully strange and horribly unfamiliar waves of disbelief and finality I am experiencing, I wanted to extend my condolences to all of our GA fans. We were like an extended family for so long and we know so many of you by name. I wanted to make sure you knew just how much your love and continued support meant to Sarah through her most vulnerable times. (sic)"

The 'Love Machine' hitmaker explained that Sarah felt heartened by the support of her fans amid her cancer battle. Her Instagram post continued: "She was so grateful and you really lifted her spirits when she needed you most [praying emoji] I also realize so many will be deeply affected by the circumstances of Sarah's passing... I am sending you all so much love [broken heart emoji] I love you Sarah... farewell (sic)". —BangShowbiz



Cheryl



Pink

## Pink gives terminally ill fan her dying wish with Zoom call

Pink helped a terminally ill fan tick off an item on her bucket list. The 'Who Knew' hitmaker jumped on Zoom with 63-year-old superfan Diane Berberian, who has bone cancer and is being cared for at a hospice, and made her dream come true. In a clip of their conversation posted to Facebook, Diane told the pop megastar: "You've made my day. I don't even know what's on my bucket list now, because you were so far at the top. All the other things started to happen so it's kinda like, 'Okay, I'll think of somethin' else!'" Her idol told her: "You have a kind of bravery that I don't understand. 'You're bringing comfort to other people while you're walking through this.'"

Diane shared with the 'Trouble' hitmaker that lis-

tening to her music has got her through her battle with the disease. The athlete said: "I always say I'm climbing the stairway to heaven now." "Most of my days start with the song of the day and it's a Pink song usually. "When I race, it's always a Pink song." She concluded: "Pink, I love you, I love everything about you." The music star making her fan's wish come true comes after she urged people to "count your blessings" as she insisted "most setbacks are actually just pauses and opportunities to recalibrate." Pink opened up about meeting "a woman with cerebral palsy who summits 13,000 ft mountains in her chair", and learning "about a blind man that summits Mt Everest".

And while revealing she had a "brutal first week" of recovery from hip surgery, she said last month: "It is humbling for a very independent person like myself to be rendered physically unable and dependent, even if for a couple of months. "I'm learning the gift of accepting help. My journey will be quick and intentional. And I will make a full recovery. For that I am so blessed. "I'm impressed by those that face real, hard challenges, and alchemize their situation into something magical, or meaningful. (sic)" —Bang Showbiz