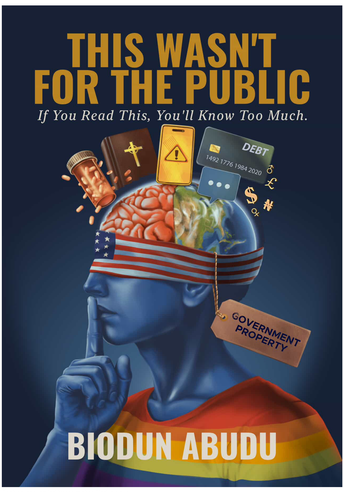
FEATURES

BN Book Excerpt: This Wasn't For The Public by Biodun Abudu

Published 15 hours ago on July 2, 2026
By BellaNaija Features



Book cover supplied by the author, Biodun Abudu.

Growing up in Aguda, Surulere made me believe almost everything could be traced back to a family curse. If a marriage failed, it was a family curse. If someone struggled financially, it was a family curse. If a woman could not conceive, if a child fell sick repeatedly, if a student failed an examination, somewhere in the conversation, a family curse would eventually appear. The idea was so common that it became part of how many people understood life. Long before I understood concepts such as generational trauma, conditioning, emotional inheritance, or learned behaviour, I understood curses.

Looking back, I understand why the idea was so powerful. Families pass down many things. Some pass down land, names, recipes, stories, and traditions. Others pass down something far less visible. They pass down patterns, fears and wounds that were never properly addressed.

I grew up watching people talk about inheritance in ways that went beyond money or property. Across Nigeria and throughout the African diaspora, it is often an unspoken belief that families carry more than DNA. They carry unfinished prayers, unspoken betrayals, unpaid debts, violence that was buried instead of healed, and decisions made in desperation. Many people believe those things continue to affect future generations. When those patterns repeat often enough, people stop calling it coincidence; it becomes a familial adoption, a curse: A family where marriages rarely survive. A family where financial stability never seems to last. A family where addiction, abandonment, conflict, or estrangement appears generation after generation. When people see the same outcomes repeating themselves over decades, it becomes natural to search for explanations beyond one individual.

Church played a major role in shaping how many of us understood those explanations.

Some of my earliest memories involve hearing prayers against bloodline curses, ancestral attacks, and generational bondage. Entire services sometimes seemed devoted to breaking spiritual chains supposedly passed down through families. People prayed against battles they believed began long before they were born. They fasted, attended deliverance services, and searched for answers to problems that felt bigger than themselves.

Even when I was in boarding school, similar messages appeared. Students were often taught that recurring setbacks could have spiritual roots. Poor grades, repeated illness, delays, disappointments, and family struggles were sometimes discussed through the lens of inherited spiritual problems. The solution was usually presented in familiar terms: more prayer, more fasting, more deliverance.

As a child, I accepted these ideas because everyone around me seemed to.

As an adult, I began asking different questions. What if some of the struggles we inherit are not necessarily supernatural punishments but learned behaviours that continue because nobody ever challenges them? What if some of the problems we spend years praying against are also problems that require honest self-examination?

One of the biggest observations I have made over the years is that people are often quicker to investigate spiritual explanations than behavioural ones. If every woman in a family experiences relationship problems, the first explanation is often a generational curse. Very few people stop to ask whether unhealthy communication patterns, family interference, unresolved trauma, or harmful beliefs about relationships might also be contributing factors.

The same thing happens with other recurring issues. Families sometimes blame curses for financial instability without examining spending habits. They blame spiritual attacks for conflict without examining how anger, silence, control, or emotional neglect have been passed from one generation to the next. In some cases, the behaviour itself becomes invisible because it has existed for so long that it feels normal.

That realisation changed how I viewed the conversation around family curses. It did not make me dismiss spiritual beliefs, nor did it make me believe every explanation can be reduced to psychology. Instead, it forced me to recognise that inheritance is more complicated than most of us are taught.

A father who chooses violence teaches fear as a native language. A mother who survives through bitterness may unintentionally pass that bitterness forward as a survival strategy. A household built on silence teaches children to swallow their emotions. Families pass down beliefs about love, conflict, discipline, success, and self-worth just as surely as they pass down physical characteristics.

The older I get, the more I realise that inheritance extends far beyond bloodlines. Sometimes what we inherit is a way of seeing the world. Sometimes it is a wound that nobody acknowledged. Sometimes it is a coping mechanism that once helped someone survive but now prevents someone else from healing.

What surpised me me was how much time and energy people invested in fighting problems they believed had spiritual origins. In many churches, the prayer line was often longer than the line for practical solutions. People arrived carrying hospital reports, family problems, financial struggles and relationship issues. They were looking for explanations, and in many cases, the explanation offered was a family curse.

I remember watching people spend years trying to break patterns they could not fully understand. Some believed their struggles were connected to decisions made by parents, grandparents, or relatives they had never met. Others believed they were paying the price for spiritual agreements they never made themselves. The details varied, but the underlying fear was often the same: the belief that something had gone wrong long before they arrived and that forces outside their control were shaping their lives.

What I have realised is how the discussion around generational curses became so dominant that it overshadowed discussions about accountability, healing, education, emotional intelligence, and personal responsibility. People became experts at identifying spiritual attacks but struggled to identify destructive behaviours. They could recognise a curse but not always a pattern.

This does not mean spiritual explanations are automatically wrong. Many people hold sincere religious beliefs, and faith remains an important source of comfort, strength and meaning. But what if some of the things we called curses were actually consequences of wounds that had never been addressed?

Addiction can repeat itself across generations. Abuse can repeat itself. Absence can repeat itself. Silence can repeat itself. Poverty can repeat itself. Children who grow up learning survival instead of safety often carry those lessons into adulthood. Girls may learn endurance before they learn choice. Boys may learn anger before they learn emotional language. Over time, these patterns become so familiar that they feel normal, even when they are causing harm.

Whether we describe these experiences as generational trauma, family conditioning, inherited behaviour, or family curses, the pattern itself remains difficult to ignore. The mind carries lessons learned in childhood. Families often repeat behaviours not because they consciously choose to, but because those behaviours were modelled repeatedly and rarely challenged.

Perhaps this is why every family eventually produces someone who asks uncomfortable questions. Every lineage eventually produces someone who becomes unwilling to accept the story exactly as it was handed to them. They are not necessarily rebellious people. More often, they are simply awake. They are the people who refuse silence. They are the people who choose therapy when previous generations chose secrecy. They are the people who name abuse instead of protecting reputation. They are the people who decide that survival alone is not enough and that healing matters too.

Unfortunately, these individuals are not always celebrated. Challenging a family pattern can come at a cost. It may create tension with relatives who view questioning as disrespect. It may lead to accusations of being ungrateful or disloyal. It may require establishing boundaries that others do not understand. In some cases, it creates distance between people who genuinely love one another but fundamentally disagree about what healing requires.

Sometimes breaking a pattern does not look like dramatic confrontation. Sometimes it looks like choosing not to repeat what was done to you. Sometimes it looks like refusing to normalise behaviour that caused pain. Sometimes it looks like protecting your peace when previous generations were taught to sacrifice theirs.

– – –

This excerpt was published as BellaNaija's commitment to supporting creatives. BellaNaija is not responsible for the content of external sites, news culled therefrom and content supplied by a third party.

RELATED TOPICS: #BIODUN ABUDU #BN BOOK EXCERPT

DON'T MISS
Our Favourite Tiny Desk Concert Performances by Nigerian Artists

BellaNaija Features
Telling stories that matter.

YOU MAY LIKE

BN Book Excerpt: A Tale of an African Executive & His African Dream Team – in Corporate America by Vibrah

BN Book Excerpt: When Tomorrow Found Us by Pearl Ehigiametor

BN Book Excerpt: The Book of Remembered Things by Abubakar Adam Ibrahim

TRENDING VIDEOS

Watch Nigerian Scholar Nnabuike Chisom Deliver a Graduation Speech in Fluent Mandarin in China

Owambe Mood Board Alert! Toke Makinwa's Red and Yellow Looks Deserve a Spot on Your Pinterest Board

BN Book Excerpt: This Wasn't For The Public by Biodun Abudu

Kelly Rowland, Chloe Bailey & Teyana Taylor Lead the Best-Dressed List at the BET Awards

Ozoz Sokoh Makes History as the First Nigerian Cookbook Author to Win a James Beard Award

Who Is Lionnel Mpasi? Meet the DR Congo Goalkeeper Who Nearly Stopped England at the 2026 World Cup

© 2026 BellaNaija. All rights reserved
BellaNaija is not responsible for the content of external sites and news culled therefrom.