

# MIWALA

The artwork is a vertical composition. At the top, the word 'MIWALA' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below the text is a large, expressive painting of a woman's face. The face is rendered in shades of brown and red, with a wide, open mouth showing teeth and a bright red tongue. The eyes are dark and looking forward. The background is a complex mix of warm colors—yellows, oranges, and reds—with a prominent blue cross shape overlaid on the upper part of the face. The overall style is expressive and emotional, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, textured appearance.

*POEMS BY WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS*

# MWALA (THE ROCK)



A collection of poems by Women Human Rights Defenders  
from Southern Africa.

**COMPILED BY:** Word Smash Poetry Movement  
**Edited by:** Bhekumusa Moyo and Gerry Sikazwe  
**Cover Design by:** Vinchi Arts E:chiwalavincentc@gmail.com

©Copyright – Word Smash Poetry Movement. No part of this book may be distributed, posted, or reproduced in similar form by digital or mechanical means without prior written permission of the publisher, however, reading loud on the street, performing, reciting in campaigns or sleep does not need permission at all.



Attribution-NonCommercial  
CC BY-NC

©WSP2021

Email: [words@wordsmashpoetrymovement.org](mailto:words@wordsmashpoetrymovement.org)

Cell:+260960669132

---

## ORDER OF POEMS

---

'Voice and Protect' <i>by Ekta Somera</i>	7
'The Women Who Dared To Be' <i>by Mpumalanga Zwane</i>	8
'I am a Rock' <i>by Carla-Ann Makumbe</i>	9
'Silent Cries' <i>by Margaret Chideme</i>	10
'Double Standard' <i>by Tanyaradzwa Tiffany Nyikadzino</i>	11
'A Steady Gallop' <i>by Priscilla Cynthia Chieza</i>	12
'My Voice' <i>by Vanessa Chilufya</i>	13
'Defining Peace' <i>by Kiesha Hill</i>	14
'Twisted Thieves' <i>by Senetisiwe Ginindza</i>	15
'My History Book' <i>by Mary Chikondi Chiselembwe</i>	16
'I am The Future' <i>by Judith Mumba</i>	17
'Trees of Life' <i>by El. Sunshine</i>	18
'I am "Mwala"' <i>by Atiyya Dudhat</i>	19
'Do They Remember?' <i>by Shekainah banda</i>	20
'Her Race' <i>by Kachusha Nkosha</i>	21
'This Society' <i>by Vanessa Chisakula</i>	22
'Song of Hope' <i>by Zahida Wahab</i>	23
'The Sea' <i>by Beezae</i>	24
'Ever Since' <i>by Loveness Kashika</i>	25
'Metamorphic' <i>by Siddhi Pillay</i>	26
'Tlapa Le Ikadileng' <i>by Poko Boswa</i>	27
'Warrior' <i>by Beverley Abrahams</i>	28
'Acid Victim' <i>by Seema Prusty</i>	29
'What I Hate About Being A Woman' <i>by Soulani</i>	30
'Phenomenally, A Woman' <i>by Mwamba Chomba</i>	31
'Without A Crown, She Queens' <i>by Kekeletso Maryam Mphuthi</i>	32
'She Is' <i>by Patricia Ngoma</i>	33
'This World' <i>by Theresa Mulenga</i>	34
'Breaking systems' <i>by Lubaletu</i>	35
'Writings on Stone' <i>by Shula Mwana Mphande</i>	36
'Alt-Imagery' <i>by Julyana Phiri</i>	37

---

## INTRODUCTION

This Anthology is part of the **Mwala Campaign** by **Word Smash Poetry Movement** with support from **Oxfam International** through **#IMatter**.

There was no intention to publish a collection, however, the strong voices refused to stay on the website hence this project. It has to be noted that, none of the poets in this collection were paid or coerced to be part, but, it is through their volition and belief to speak out as **Women Human Rights Defenders** in the month of **Women, Security and Peace**, an act that humbled us at **Word Smash Poetry Movement**.

It was not an easy process going through the emotions, the anger, the celebrations and bravery contained in each line. This is a true show that; **Women Can and Women Will !!** as long as the ground is levelled.

We would love to thank **Oxfam** and **IMatter** for the support, guidance and direction and then we want to salute the amazing WHRD who decided to open up through their pens.

*"Poetry is a language"-TPP'18*



**Bhekumusa Moyo**

Word Smash Poetry Movement Regional Coordinator

WEB: [www.wordsmashpoetrymovement.org](http://www.wordsmashpoetrymovement.org)

EMAIL: [wordsmashpoetry@gmail.com](mailto:wordsmashpoetry@gmail.com)

EMAIL: [words@wordsmashpoetrymovement.org](mailto:words@wordsmashpoetrymovement.org)

**Word Smash Poetry Movement (WSP)** is a creative free expression Southern African youth Artists Social-Enterprise. Its main thrust is to provide a platform for young creative activists and Artists to speak truth to power through spoken word. As a social movement, **Word Smash Poetry Movement** was established in August 2017 and was later legally listed as a social business in February 2019 for administrative purposes but remains fluid and an energetic Social Movement. We amplify the stage works on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Wordsmashpoetrymovement/>.

**Word Smash Poetry Movement** was founded to improve communication and impacts of communication efforts by using creative messaging and deliveries. At first, it was just a club of conscience and free-expressing creatives and later it became helpful to other institutions intending to communicate better. It was founded by young award-winning creative writers, performance word artists, celebrated Videographers, and media content creators. From that day in a low-lit corner to today and tomorrow, Word Smash endeavours to represent creative, innovative, and impactful communication which through our four years of existence has proven to be the only 360-degree approach to communication. It is a mix of carefree creativity and careful purpose.

WEBSITE: [www.wordsmashpoetrymovement.org](http://www.wordsmashpoetrymovement.org)

## DEDICATION

To all the Women Human Rights Defenders around the world  
who risk their lives and social portfolios to speak truth to  
power even during trying times.

**‘Voice and Protect’** by Ekta Somera

Your voice is a weapon  
use it to protect  
our right to education  
for silence is deafening  
and we are a generation  
in the motion of learning

A whisper is enough  
to educate people  
it is not wise to scream  
but sometimes a shout  
is necessary to express  
our right to freedom

*Ekta Somera is the author of Made in Poetry, a collection of poetry and prose. She is a part-time criminology major and a full-time visionary leader. From writing and reviewing books to hosting a radio show and making a difference, she fulfils her passion to inspire young people through various youth initiatives and community service. Ekta lives by the words of Martin Luther King Jr. “If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.”*

**‘The Women Who Dared To Be’ by Mpumalanga Zwane**

Our feet pound the ground; pound the yams;  
Stir up the maize in boiling water—hearts pounding  
To sustain; to renew; to revive; to bring forth new life,  
Not just with our wombs; but with our minds; our hearts  
We are the water that sustains,  
The winds that stir change: serving knowledge on a platter:  
Pounding fists attached to voices shouting in unison  
Declaring that our lives matter  
Our wombs, breasts and thighs are just a single factor of our  
humanity  
But more than all of that—We Are | I Am: Woman—  
Life bearing—life sustaining—the Storm and the Calm before and  
after  
We Are Radical Woman—we wear our voices as a mantel;  
Exercising our choice so others will be empowered to do the same  
Passing on our light like a candle  
Be it our choice for equal rights, equal recognition  
Or just our right to be human  
We are Women Rights Defenders—Forever and Ever Will Be:  
We stand, erecting an army of women. Declaring, Believing, Living  
As more than just bodies, we are Women: Women who Matter!

*Mpumalanga Zwane is a Spoken Word Poet and part-time model who always aims to touch at least one life through her words and work. She is an activist at heart, pan-African thought, women issues and identity form focal themes of her poetry. Outside of poetry, Mpumalanga is a BA (Hons) Social Science graduate from the African Leadership University and plays various roles in the civic space, including co-founding a youth empowerment NGO mentoring and disseminating information to bridge socioeconomic inequalities. In her spare time, she draws and dances while singing off key to her favorite songs.*



**'I am a Rock'** by *Carla-Ann Makumbe*

She is Xena reincarnated as she battles the forces of shadows  
Of words cutting into her skin with whips leaving her bruised  
And yet she refuses to be broken.  
She is the centre of a storm toppling the covers of women  
Whose dreams were marginalized to the kitchen,  
Of women whose voices were silenced  
And as she struts still those she stands for spit on her like vipers  
Their venom sometimes steers its way into her heart but not for long  
For hers she left in the hands of destiny.

She is the model of the waving flag at a home port  
She is the vessel which the higher power has  
Bestowed the power of Deborah  
Her dancing tongue moves rocks from women stuck  
Beneath avalanche debris  
Her strength so contagious and yet still battle lines are drawn  
Yet still difference make her be found wanting and oh to be brave  
To sacrifice that which you do not have  
Just so hands can be joined as she says...  
I am a Rock

*Carla-Ann Makumbe is a poet based in South Africa but originally from Gweru. She is the author of an Anthology of poems called Patricia I Had To Man Up. Carla-Ann's words seek to touch hearts and make an impact where women are concerned. She is passionate about women and children's rights. Some of her works can also be found in Loud Thoughts and One Poem Project.*

**‘Silent Cries’** by Margaret Chideme

Female, black...African, female and black  
3 minority qualities rolled into one, with wings  
Clutched, born with an illusion to fly  
“Why r u so daring, shut up!!! Think you are a man?  
Real women walk with their heads bowed down”  
African, female and black, so much more to hide!  
Inner stride bold, outer crawl cold, audacious admired usually?  
Rather, audacious, deserving of a smacking to put you “right”  
Fate in those who “own” you, their rights earned  
By a last name, by birth or by a couple of thousands or cows paid  
A misstep, a mishap, a mistake, who cares?  
Reality is, it’s there, never fully equally human as a man  
African, female and black...born a slave  
Never mind the seemingly curse, the silent cries  
There is royalty to that name, royalty  
To the purpose, African...Female and Black!!!  
Daring and audacious, could be qualities of greatness instead.  
Hail Oh Female Black African Queen, remind them!!!!  
Remind yourself of your price, priceless, never believe otherwise.

*Margaret Chideme is a business woman and a single mother. She loves to indulge in colorful boundless creative writing as a tool to dive into taboo topics in the African culture. She has a blog called Maggie’s Diary where she pours out her uncensored thoughts, memories and personal experiences. She just launched an anthology of raw poetry called First Thirty about lust and love, pain and abuse, divorce, womanhood, searching and rediscovery.*

**‘Double Standard’** by Tanyaradzwa Tiffany Nyikadzino

Compromise.  
Lies in the hands of a woman  
Because she’s so used to bearing pain  
In giving birth  
So, she can bear the pain  
In being hurt  
Women.

Epitome of submissive  
To male dominance  
Because her heart is born caring, sharing  
Her very little with you  
But.  
He can’t compromise

*Tiffany is 23 years old. She grew up as her own confidante and harbor for her thoughts and feelings. She learnt to cope through poetry, and has bloomed into a profound spoken word artist known as Efuru- daughter of heaven. Efuru’s poetry is a story of life and it paints a picture of how she sees the world through the lens of her eyes. Through exploring her talent, she has managed to venture into authorship and has published an anthology- Loud Thoughts (February 2020) with 7 other poets. She’s publishing her own anthology in November this year.*

**‘A Steady Gallop’** by *Priscilla Cynthia Chieza*

They call us crazy because we shout the loudest  
Try to lock us up when we stand up in protest  
Rural folk ignore us and call us immodest  
They say a woman should just submit and suffer in silence  
But with passion and determination we press on in Ernest  
Speaking boldly for ‘her’ who has become choice less  
We are the voice of the voiceless  
Sometimes penniless, but we keep on nonetheless,  
The cause is worth it, her worth is priceless  
A ray of hope flickers, as we come together our unity triggers  
A change of mindsets and shedding of blinkers  
With new eyes the world begins to see that true acts of humanity  
Are enshrined in upholding women’s rights and dignity.

*Priscilla Cynthia Chieza, otherwise known in spoken-word poetry circles as PrisCynth, lives and writes from Zimbabwe.*

**‘My Voice’** by *Vanessa Chilufya*

My mouth knows neither injustice nor shame  
My nose knows not how to smell inequality  
My tongue is embroiled in truth, justice  
For I speak what is right  
I speak for my rights  
I speak for those who speak in silence  
I kill discrimination using the gun of love, equality  
I refuse to feed my rights rotten silence,  
Voicing out is the only food my rights shall eat.

*Vanessa Chilufya is a poetess, actress, writer, who hails from a small town of Kanyama. She is a recipient of several awards, including Defense and Security Festival Best Actress Award and NASAAZ best female reciter (Poetry). She believes that poetry is a tool one can use to educate, empower, and speak for the voiceless. She motivates young people to speak truth to power through poetry.*

**‘Defining Peace’ by Kiesha Hill**

Do they know peace is not a place to rest your head? Or that it’s not the absence of war?

Do little girls at the vegetable stall wish for more for their younger sisters? Do they wish for a better life than the one life too often gives them? It is a damned existence when you can’t see beyond the everyday sacrifice of youth for more time to learn to hate existence. To not have the words to beg for reprieve from suffering. When you don’t even know that your existence is suffering. And even now give them a pen and they won’t know how to spell HELP.... Or SAVE ME. Or PLEASE..... Or even their own name.... A long life isn’t always a good life when you haven’t been dealt a kind hand. No one deserves to be left behind, who told us there isn’t enough room in the future for everyone..... Why did we believe them? The struggles femininity faces patriarchy deepens them. You see, some problems need to be gendered to be addressed or at least classed so that they are faced for what they are. WOMEN. SECURITY. PEACE. Read that again or PEACE. SECURITY. WOMEN

*Kiesha Hill is a Zambian poet. Kiesha has been writing poetry since 2016. Kiesha has always had a passion for writing and Word Smash Poetry has given her sanctuary to voice out on key issues happening around her society. Kiesha is a child of immigrants; she believes everyone deserves a moment of peace and sanity. She currently pursues her Poetry practice with Color Culture in Lusaka.*

**‘Twisted Thieves’** by *Senetisiwe Ginindza*

You are whole and prolific,  
A sacred spirit,  
An abundant soul and holy temple.

Why else would they wait for you to muffle your mind,  
Your guard to sleep before they steal your glory?

Thieves have an eye for what they wish they had, green with envy.  
I hope you catch them red-handed every time.

For they will steal from you first,  
Then ask for you later,  
Hoping you don’t remember.

You show your teeth,  
They see a ticket to a feast,  
Beware of these twisted thieves!

Familiarity breeds contempt.  
A smile doesn’t exempt consent.

*Senetisiwe Ginindza is a poet and performer from the rural area Zandondo in Eswatini. Her poems are inspired by the human experience and delve into the dark and light of it. Her craft has developed into theatrical enactments and a captivating flow of body movements, as an additional way of storytelling through her poems. Locally, she has performed at several events including the renowned MTN Bushfire Digital Festival. She has worked with Standard bank and United Nations Women for the #HeforShe Campaign, which advocates for gender equality in the workplace. Outside her native country, she has performed at the South African National Arts Festival and Mozambique’s Poetas D’alma International Festival for Poetry and Performing Arts. Her most recent appearance was at the African Crossroads event, with a poetry and movement piece on the topic of climate change.*

**‘My History Book’** by *Mary Chikondi Chiselembwe*

This is my history book-  
In my history book women are the front liners, the fighters,  
the inventors of great inventions-  
making History since Day One.

History cannot be un-lived  
History cannot be unlearned, changed or altered for what it is-  
What we have read, what we have heard

It has created a magma composition of different women  
born from pain and sullen with bitterness:  
Forgive women for not learning to be serene.

A woman’s ‘NO’ means she’s disrespectful,  
her ‘YES’ means she’s uncultured, her body means consent.  
And a marriage certificate signifies nullification of all her freedom.

Like an animal on its way to slaughter  
she draws silence from her pain and she  
buries her voice in the fangs of society  
as it pushes her back and calls her a witch.

[But] here is a different woman, a rock.

*Mary Chikondi Chiselembwe is a feminist, activist and poet who believes in changing ideologies that are barriers to the economic, political and social development of the country and the world at large , she conveys her message through her poetry which is her greatest platform for activism*



**'I am The Future'** by *Judith Mumba*

Living in a world where a woman is considered to be an art of work for men and the kitchen has not only brought down our confidence but also of the FUTURE. They say the future is female, so how do you expect the future to be like when the FUTURE is being killed and abused each and every time the clock ticks. I am human I deserve to be treated equally, equal social rights and opportunities 'coz I have learnt that my body is not an art of work for men. I have learnt that I can do what a man can do and even better 'coz I'M THE FUTURE.

*Judith Mumba lives in and writes from Lusaka, Zambia.*

**‘Trees of Life’** by *El. Sunshine*

For us to eat the sweet fruits  
Of freedom. You went through a lot.  
Floods of hate & war  
Hell full of anger, because you  
Want your children to eat

You stood hard & strong  
To feed equality & Empowerment  
To teach us, women of tomorrow  
How to stand up and fight. We  
Thank you for being strong for us

For building us a better tomorrow  
For removing the broken glass on  
Our way to the better forever, tomorrow.  
Prosperity and success ahead of you  
Strength and power, you are the champ.

*Esmie Puledi, El sunshine, is a South African writer born on 24th July. From a small village in Limpopo. She started writing at the age of 14 and has not published any of her writings yet but looking forward to it. She is looking forward to the journey of writing and learning and growing as a young writer.*

*She is one of the authors of the book Dark lanes of the city (mirroring the contemporary individuals) edited by Shivani Adha.*

**‘I am “Mwala”’** by *Atiyya Dudhat*

You may not hear me, but I am your voice,  
It is me that has heard the millions of cries and the scared pleas of  
NO!  
in Indignation, against humiliation, more tribulation.  
I have embodied them all, and become one.

You may not see me, but I am in the mirror,  
It is me that has seen the countless blows to a woman’s self-esteem.  
I have been bruised by the hits and became hard.  
Yet, I want you to remain tender-hearted,  
for the future of tomorrow, the birth of new beginnings.

You may not know me, but I am with you  
I have understood the greed of impotent powers, and been pushed  
to the edge of insanity in flight and fright, broken but undefeated.  
I stand strong. Know that your power will not die.  
Wathint’ Abafazi, Wathint’ Imbokotho. You strike a woman, you  
strike a rock.  
Know that I am ‘Mwala’, forever inside you.

*Atiyya Dudhat, is a clinical counselor, author, educationist, entrepreneur and NLP Coach Mentor. Over two decades of industry experience in wellness, education and media have infused her with the love for uplifting community. She is a South African ex-Magazine editor, author, KG principal, founder of two NPO’s, and a book publisher. The first three letters of her name ATI are testament to her signature motto, “Aim to Inspire & Achieve the Impossible!”*

**‘Do They Remember?’** by *Shekainah banda*

Do they remember when cross belts were the only thing and tints  
The only dominant shade of colour on our portraits?  
There were no females in government,  
Employment was on the bias of gender.  
Told to surrender our ambitions and trade our voice for standing  
By pots and changing diapers.  
[Do they remember]  
When there were no laws to speak for us?  
All we were remembered for was multiplying generations.  
You need to know that independence did not just break our men’s  
chains  
But the confines on the female kind, the women, the wing, the  
revolution, the answer.

*Shekainah Banda* writes from and lives in Lusaka, Zambia.

**‘Her Race’** by *Kachusha Nkossa*

As hard, as the rock hit by Moses’ rod,  
So is our warrior.  
She works up wondering,  
What will work today?

Stop! This is not for women!  
You are not the first one,  
They tried and failed,  
Imagine the president going on maternity leave?

A thought of it can cause birds to collide;  
She hears them whisper.  
All she wants, is equal representation,  
Her feminine voice to echo in men’s world.

She moves confidently,  
With a hope of a better tomorrow.  
She has succeeded in policies  
That enable equal participation,

Numbers of female engineers have increased, more girls are in  
school,  
Pregnant girls have access to education too.  
Yet, she won’t rest until she sees more female presidents.  
She is a woman advocate! She is everything!

***Kachusha Nkossa**, is a Zambian nurse/midwife, who is passionate about adolescents health and women’s rights. She has been working for the Zambian ministry of health for 9years. She is a member of the Women’s Global Health Zambian chapter, where she is getting more experience on how to best be an advocate. Recently she did a small, breakfast with adolescents on women’s rights with focus on gender based violence. She is an upcoming poet with her first poem published in the October edition of the African Writers Magazine entitled ‘Rooted Roots’.*

---

**‘This Society’** by *Vanessa Chisakula*

Unjust systems towards women have not left the room  
It’s now in a shape of a wall clock  
Counting days and reminding women to get married  
It’s now a social media post  
Telling women how to behave

There is a trace of God in her eyes  
Bruised palms from lifting weights around her  
Where there is a God  
She is a woman  
Women succumbing to suffering are there  
Living among us  
They are those we call mothers, sisters, daughters and friends  
Silently suffering like its religion

Society is a very judgmental congregation  
Yet women preach peace from the podium  
Front lining movements and championing as women rights  
defenders  
Gender based violence just got a facelift  
Made it to news blogs and they call them Survivor stories so they  
can have news  
Systematic oppression just found a way to get comfortable  
A way to make the acts a little more stylish  
Making suffering glamorous  
Worthy of Consumption

This woman in pen, will never bend to this oppression  
Only the ink will curve as she carves a correct culture.

*Vanessa is the Co-founder and National Coordinator of Word  
Smash Poetry – a movement that encourages creative free  
expression among Southern African youth “artists” and promotes  
social Pan Africanism.*

**‘Song of Hope’** by *Zahida Wahab*

Owesifazane – your powerful voice echoes reverberating hope.  
With your raised fist you make the air sing a melancholic song of  
struggle of your tears  
And the tears of every mother, daughter, sister and friend.

Your feet never stop moving towards  
emancipation for all women.  
Your heart beats in tune to the rhythm of your dreams for a country  
where the scourge of abuse and discrimination cease to cast ominous  
shadows for every woman whose light is dimmed but you continue  
to inspire, to relentlessly fight so that the light of all women shines  
forever bright...

*Glossary: Owesifazane means Woman*

**Zahida Wahab** is an educator and a published poet and writer. Her literary offerings are published in *Womandla 1* and has been selected for *Womandla 2*. She is also a contributing writer for an online magazine and assists many Non-governmental and Community based organizations with public relations and compering of events. her 2 poems on ‘Indenture’ featured as part of the 160th celebration of the Arrival of Indentured labourers. She is a former columnist and Radio presenter as well as the ‘voice’ for the Chatsworth Child and Family Welfare Charity Fair. Zahida currently serves as a trustee for the Chatsworhty Regional Hospice Association. She is committed to promoting Reading and is a Funda Leader at the Nalibali. She is passionate about the empowerment of the women and protection of children and is actively engaged in counselling and empowerment programmes.

**'The Sea' by Beezae**

The tide is rising  
Wave goodbye to the sea  
Watch the sunset on the horizon.

Pull out legs from jaws  
Be injured or die at shore  
Survivors already remember your name.

These are dangerous waters  
They seem shallow but run deep  
But I see you diving in regardless.

*Beezae is a poet from the Kingdom of Eswatini. She started her journey in 2016 as a vocalist in the Uniswa Poetry Society where she later started writing and reciting her poems on their shows. She then joined the Manzini shows called the Line Up. In 2018 she was part of the pioneers behind an outdoor poetry show called Secret sessions at Uniswa. There she gained an understanding of what went into putting together a successful show. During her time at Uneswa she sang during Earth Hour and MTN Rhymes and Laughter.*

*Beezae recently was awarded with the Patron and President's award at the MTN SWAMA 2020.*

---



**‘Ever Since’** by *Loveness Kashika*

Ever since, she has hoped to find her belonging  
Praying the violence won't fully shutter her already known silence  
For despite the strides towards gender equality,  
She still strives for her place in this world called the comfort zone  
But still won't end her war zone at her place of work.

She too wants to rest from all the tradition,  
Religion, frustration of the family and all  
The multi-dimensional eyes looking for her.

Sad right, sad how she is but only valued for being sexually  
productive,  
Sad just how no one knows how irritating it is to be cat called,  
Sad of how her cries are known but unnoticed.  
Maybe we are still living with conversations that have stayed for  
hundreds of years.

In a world where consideration is limited, she too wants to be  
considered.

*Loveness Kashika is a young poet aspiring to learn, teach, and live through poetry. She lives in and writes from Livingstone.*

**‘Metamorphic’** by Siddhi Pillay

Once buried under erosion, we bound together  
jagged pieces of what life was  
and never should have been

We seared the surface, enlightening the earth  
that feminine flow will harden  
to the feet and fear of men

But we’ll not be defined as the settled or quieted fire  
Our presence and force are not  
functions of past folly

Watch us crystallize the better parts of this existence  
as marble monuments to what  
we could and will be.

*Siddhi Pillay is an aspiring writer and systems thinker. She is passionate about intersecting the Arts and Sciences, using a systems thinking approach, to innovate society. She has written two children’s books and one anthology of poems for adults. She is currently a World Literacy Ambassador-in-training and has started Lit. Leaders SA with a small group of dynamic changemakers to improve literacy in the country. She is a past winner of the Chaeli Campaign National Poetry Award (2014) and the Cultural and Creative Careers Festival Writing Competition at the University of Edinburgh (2019).*

**‘Tlapa Le Ikadileng’ by Poko Boswa**

I am a woman, Mwala, the rock  
Ke tlapa le ikadileng, I am the unbreakable rock  
We have scars like tattoos in our sacred landmark  
We have prints of swollen wounds in heart  
We have fallen holes of grief and pain  
But we are robust because we are women!

A woman, phenomenal woman  
Her endless tears become her comfort  
Her body knows the whips,  
The force of semen hellhole rage between her treasured land  
The rumbling and gurgling noise of her stomach day and night  
The endless haunt of Godzilla  
My people together we rise, let’s our pens ground  
Let’s our pens speak out for us and save our motherland  
Africa the birthplace of mankind!

*Gorata Mighty Ntshwabi aka Poko Boswa is a Botswana citizen, a registered stage and page poetess who believes in hard work and fortitude for success. She specializes in both traditional and contemporary poetry. Gorata is a Gender Rights, Culture and Arts Activist who believes in freedom of expression and resilience. Her goal is to advocate for the promotion of gender equality through any platform, inspire the young generation and unearth talent from grassroots. She is an author of an English poetry book “Exploring the Roots Poetry my Heritage, Living Arts” published in 2016. She believes that poetry is Educational, Therapeutic and Recreational!*

**‘Warrior’** by Beverley Abrahams

Peeling back layers of guilt and regret  
Like flaking paint off old walls  
Looking for that core resistance  
That sacred bit that never falls  
Taking that mortality and draping it wide  
Letting it cover you in renewed pride

I lean, stumble and sometimes fail  
Working through tears and lingering pain  
But fortitude grows when love is planted  
Those seeds in others doubled, supplanted!  
I sow words of poetry in hungry minds  
Looking to release gender-based violence  
Tears turn to pearls as hearts tumble and crack  
And a new warrior is born, each time I step back!

*Beverley Abrahams is a poet, teacher of English, and an activist against gender-based violence. She has worked with the UK based charity DD4P- Daughter’s Destined for Purpose for 6 years now, using poetry to highlight issues of GBV amongst youth in Zimbabwe. She believes that empowering children in the fight against gender-based violence is our hope for the future. She is a survivor of GBV.*

**‘Acid Victim’** by *Seema Prusty*

He thought I would lose all grace,  
And to the world, I would be a disgrace,  
When he threw acid on my face.

Contorting in grimace of pain,  
I wasn’t sure if I were anymore sane,  
Such was a nightmare that did happen!

‘Rot alone’- he had given the dictum,  
But I refused to be the acid victim,  
Time would answer the conundrum.

From wriggling in pain to suffering in silence,  
Facing every treatment with valiance,  
I vowed never to let anyone corrode my resilience.

My life is useless – the society was dilly dallying.  
‘He marred my face, but not my heart – was my finding.  
I went on to heal girls like me, for I found in that my true calling!

*Seema Prusty is a feminist from India, who is currently based in Saudi Arabia.*

**‘What I Hate About Being A Woman’ by Souhani**

I’m the kind of woman who hates spending time in the mirror  
Too long as much as I hate photos or taking selfies,  
I hate Valentine’s because somehow it mostly seems to come when  
I’m single and I hate having to attend family weddings because then  
I’ll have to deal with people asking when I’m also getting married,  
And I hate being called beautiful yet always having to avoid the  
back seat  
On the bus and feeling like I need to apologize for my love handles  
and thick thighs  
And for growing up in a world much smaller than I,  
And I hate how I can’t walk alone at night,  
How at any given time or place I could suffer from rape,  
Or get video tapped being stripped, punched and kicked and I hate  
it,  
I hate how my body is seen as an object,  
How ISIS keeps kidnapping girls and selling them off as sex slaves  
to its soldiers,  
Or how society has drawn borders of where we can and can’t go,  
What we can and can’t be,  
And how love and submission have been confused with giving and  
obeying orders,  
How I pretty much have to spend half my life being taught  
How to be a good wife only to end up with a man who hits me,  
And in the end, eventually kills me.

*Solani Sibeso is a poet from Ndola, Copperbelt Province. She is a Pharmaceutical representative by profession. She started writing and reciting poetry in 2015 after pouncing on a poetry radio show dubbed Soul Tuesday that used to air on Joy FM. It was love at first sound, and she has been writing since and later joined The Poetic Juice Kitwe in 2018 and Colour Culture Lusaka in 2020 where she is currently learning and exploring other forms of literary art such as fiction writing.*

**‘Phenomenally a Woman’** by *Mwamba Chomba*

The fear she possesses is hidden in her eyes which emanates from  
her thoughts  
her body isn’t made for model suit fashionable clothes  
but yet when you try to stretch your hand across her hip  
you can feel the span  
her skin isn’t bleached  
her melanin pop up with a little acne on her forehead  
she is an african child with bigger responsibilities in her hands  
she tries to use her thought as a pen and her palms as her book  
she uses her chigno as site to dump all  
the negativity and brush it off together with the end strands of her  
hair  
that is me  
as Dr Maya would say  
I am a woman phenomenally  
phenomenal woman,  
That is me

*Mwamba Chomba is a student at Evelyn Hone College pursuing Environmental health. She is a writer and orator in motivation speaking. It has always being her passion to speak to the world the power of the thoughts. She lives and writes from Lusaka, Zambia.*

**‘Without A Crown, She Queens’** by Kekeletso Maryam Mphuthi

A blow of the soul,  
A creation from the soil,  
A body of flesh and bones,  
Running inside her, flows the blood,  
Making her human enough,  
A human woman with all due rights reserved,  
Who queens without a crown,  
Because her queen-hood is in her femininity,  
Because her queen-hood is in her woman-hood,  
Unapologetic African woman,  
Holding the knife from its sharp,  
Walking on African soil with her head up,  
A phenomenal woman, ready to give it all, despite breaking downs,  
A mother to the born and to be born, nurturer and pure love giver,  
Yes, without a crown, she queens, unapologetic woman.

*Kekeletso Maryam Mphuthi is a Master in Education Management and Leadership (MEDL) Candidate, Candidate Attorney, Advanced Master Mentor, General, Marriage, Relationship, Mental Health and Addiction Counsellor, Transformation Life & Neuro Linguistic Programming- NLP Coach, an Author and an Entrepreneur.*



**‘She Is’** by *Patricia Ngoma*

The voice of the little girl who still is unable to understand  
NO does not always translate to disrespect or selfishness.  
She is...a hand to hold, a shoulder to cry on when the weight  
of the world gets heavy for the boy who’s been raised  
to believe his ability to endure physical and emotional abuse  
is what makes him a “man”.  
She is a ray of hope to the ones to whom “light at the end of the  
tunnel”  
is but a myth.  
She is a pillar to many, men and women whose rights are violated  
for simply being man or woman...  
their cries inaudible yet deafening.  
She holds the lamp, shining a light on a path for all taking a turn  
from a darkness of their past  
She is...an oasis all can come to when the desert sun begins to burn,  
a safe space free from any form of stigmatization.  
She is a warrior...her willingness to fight for what’s right  
can only be approached.  
She is an inspiration to young fighters, her resilience they seek to  
emulate  
She is an embodiment of love, care, compassion, determination.  
When all else comes crashing down, you can count on her to stand  
by those who need a companion most.  
She is many things but above all.....she is a ROCK.

*Patricia Ngoma is a 22 year old writer and poet who is currently a student. Poetry to her is not only an art of expression but more of a form of therapy. She is very open to learning and hopes to use her ability to write, to advocate for mental health and children’s rights. She started writing back in high school.*

**‘This World’** by *Theresa Mulenga*

We live in a world that has no shame  
    in a society that has no care  
Women are tripped and they fall  
They remain stuck under shoes of lawlessness-  
Of men and their systems who love to see  
Inequality strangling necks of girls and women,  
Women stuck in sands of naivety and inferiority  
That requires them to serve than be equally served.

When we dare speak out, our tongues get bruised  
When we keep quiet, our spines get broken  
Laden with so much abuse, we suffer, in silence  
Silence is not comfort, silence is eternal pain-  
Every woman must know and enjoy their rights.

*Theresa Mulenga is a Social influencer, Artist, Youth Advocate, Humanitarian, Feminist, and Peace Ambassador. She volunteers her time to fight for marginalized groups of society and believes a fair world can be attained through meaningful participation. She writes her poetry privately from Lusaka, Zambia*

## **BREAKING SYSTEMS**

I have become a better person  
Feminism taught me how to cry,  
I learnt how to embrace my scars  
Scars marked on me by systems  
Systems imposed on me by society  
Society that expects me to be a girl  
A girl who is expected to be a mother  
A mother expected to be a grandmother-  
Despite all the slavery, I am expected to rise,  
Like the sun in winter-I cooled for children  
Like the sun in summer - I scotched the system  
Like a lioness, I roar and demand equality  
before I break my back pleasing systems  
Systems created to push me down  
I rise like a Woman, I rise for Women #WoMandla  
Women of courage, RISE and show yourselves

*Lubalethu Moyo\* is daughter to a Zimbabwean father and Zambian mother, she is currently reading for a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science at Oxford University. Her poetry borders around female trees and African history.*

**'Writings on Stone'** by *Shula Mwana Mphande*

You are the font of writings on stone  
Morphology of life and peace, freedom in breath  
Typeset to the rhythm of joy's essence.  
Star-like, you brighten skies and warm nights.  
Yes, sometimes these waters want to break you  
To crush your letters into full stops and commas.  
Yes, sometimes they'll manage to drown you  
Deep in worry and abuse, but do not worry.  
Your form is not sinkable, and if it does sink  
Your forms are not killable, and if it does die know  
Your form is not tears and weakness, dying skin, or fainting smile.  
Above these waters, you will always raise riding storms.  
For you are the fonts of writings on stone,  
The expression of order over chaos, rebirth over ruin.  
Wind-like, you set free all you touch,  
And teach all you meet how to leap above the waves.

*Shula Mwana Mphande(Them) is a female force that uses their poetry to restore the balance that truth and fairness bring to society. They write from Kalulushi of Copperbelt, in Zambia.*

**‘Alt-Imagery’** by *Julyana Phiri*

We refuse to be marble floors, concrete walls  
We refuse to be plastic cups, carrier bags

Anything that means bottom and less  
Anything that spells 'weakness' and "ruined"

We refuse to be ignored, to not be seen  
We refuse to be touched, and yet not felt

These policies are about us, but not us  
They seem concerned but don't care

We refuse to only unite in statistics  
We refuse to only be seen in death

Today, tomorrow we are here and strong  
Today, tomorrow sing us in songs, hear us.

*Julyana Phiri is a Lusaka-based poet, devoted to a life social commentary. She uses her voice to seek answers regarding the socio-economic state of her community and country. Currently, she is reading French at the University of Zambia.*

A CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY BY WORD  
SMASH POETRY WITH SUPPORT FROM  
OXFAM INTERNATIONAL THROUGH  
#IMATTER



“A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult.” —*Melinda Gates, philanthropist*

END