



BLACK VOICES

J A D E D W O R D S . C O M

JN'
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LISTEN TO THE VOICES

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JADE NOVELIST

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*“Nobody can teach me who I am.
You can describe parts of me,
but who I am - and what I need - is something I have to find out myself.”*

— Chinua Achebe

In the beginning there was black,
And black had no messiah.

We had our customs and traditions
We prayed to our forefathers because
they had better insight to what awaited us
on the other side.

But then one day it came...

Two thousand years of misinterpreted
and incomplete transcripts
Carefully picked apart at pulpits
To make sure it only says what they
need it to say.

They presented it and called it The
Word...

"Slaves be good to your earthly
master's"

"And then a darkness came upon them"

Nowhere has dark been praised.

We were told to obey
to serve to be good.
To always be good slaves

All to save our souls.
The souls master said we don't have
because we are savage beasts.

Who did we pray to before white Jesus
came with the colonizers?

Who did we worship, before the bible
was shipped across our land?

Who did we thank for our daily bread
before we were taught the Lords Prayer?

Take a moment to think about it before
you bow your heads...

Now let us pray...

Our history is good enough to
make a profit

So tourists get it all but our
curriculum's are deprived

It's implied that being
cultured was a foreign concept

And our tales are stripped of
African empires which thrived

Because refining our culture
was the only thing they needed

Finding pleasure in separating
those who were kindred

Why is it that I went to an
institution known as school

Shaped by a furnace known as
"teacher"

From malleable to rigid,
stuck in versions of my history
my ancestors can't relate to.

I learn about events which
don't address my roots

And I can only know as much
as I am exposed to

But my desire to know more
of my history may have revealed

bitter truths,

that an overhaul in school-
taught history is long overdue.

All we want is equality not revenge.. I said.
Speaking to a room of white elites
Or perhaps they were deaf for my statement was met
with a resounding moment of silence
I was not recognized like MPs in parliaments..

All we want is equality not revenge.. I said again
Only this time screaming at the top of my lungs
But still...
Nothing!
Not a single word, gesture or sound to acknowledge
me
I was still not recognized like I wore Harry Potter's
invisible cloak

All we want is equality not revenge... I repeated
And finally a voice came from the room
"We heard you man, now get off the stage"
Followed by a howling "Booo"
So I stood there.. firm
Hoping to get my point across

All we want is equality not revenge!!!.. I yelled
And the room went quiet again..
A few seconds later..
Someone burst into laughter..
"Luister van die popeye, wat se jy kaffirkie"
And soon they all followed suit..

They laughed so hard, as if my statement had been the
funniest thing they've ever heard
And to my surprise I pointed a black brother with a
suit amongst them..
Raised my fist to signal to him that we have a message
to convey..
He stood there looking at me like he didn't recognize
"people like me"

My brother, tell them..

All we want is equality not revenge
But he too did not recognize me..
In actual fact, he did not recognize himself..

"These people are so annoying, they think that
everything comes easy... we work and they want to reap
the fruits of our labour".. he muttered.

"These people?".. I thought..
Black man with a shade as dark as I refers to me as
"these people"
I was ready to die..
I had seen it all..
Pillow fights that ended as murder scenes
Dark clouds transforming day to night in an instant..
I'd seen the Sun kiss the moon and the clouds dance to
celebrate that union.
I'd heard thunders reciting poetry without a single
sign of rain in sight.
I'd seen the 7 colours of the rainbow in reachable
distance.
I'd seen mountains move
I'd seen a rose grow from concrete..
I'd seen a sunflower grow at night and night flowers
blossom in daylight
I'd seen every King get their head cut off

I had seen it all..

But never had I seen a black brother refer to his own as
"these people"

So I pleaded with my ancestors..
Tell God to allow me to perish for I have seen it all..

But before I depart.. let it be known.

All we want is equality not revenge
For if revenge was our motive..
None of them would survive..
But all of them would pay the Ultimate price..

So as I plead to the powers that be..
May we all be treated right
For it is not revenge we seek..
We just want to freely live our lives

Sit down
Be silent
We know what's best
For you
We don't need your opinion.

So sit down
Be silent
Don't say a word.
Your word doesn't matter.

It is nothing
We decide what you need
We decide who you are.
Since
You are beneath us.
Your lives, worthless.
We decide.
We are superior.
We are not you.
We may both bleed red.
But our red matters more than yours
Because our skin is lighter than yours.
So sit down, black man.
Be silent
You don't matter.

Trying to infuse modernism with
cultural conservatism
We are losing ourselves..
Our true religion segregated from the
world by urbanisation
We are labelled cannibalistic cave men
when we practice our cultural traditions.
Our indifferences makes people
uncomfortable
Yet they keep stealing from that which
they so profoundly hate.
Research methodologies designed to
disprove the superiority of my melanin
genes
My history tampered with to promote
white supremacy..
So it seems..
And yet, they keep stealing from that
which they find inferior.

Images of a White God are all that the
black man sees
And images of evolving monkeys tend
to represent me

Worshipping a European being for
speaking our languages
But when we speak theirs, it's never
celebrated..
How ironic is it that centuries later we
still don't have an education system that
teaches Africans about Africa?..
Truly our nation is devastated..

We've somehow been made nightmares
of our ancestors dreams.

I was taught to follow the system but I learned to rebel
Grew up on religion
later realised that God wasn't there
The worst kind of prison isn't being locked in a cell
Its when you refuse to wake up
and find a God in yourself.

First things first! How is it freedom of speech if I can't stand in front masses and raise my views with no intension of offending anyone but telling nothing but the whole truth about my beliefs.

How is it freedom of association if there are still restrictions as to who do you talk to, because of who is superior and inferior? If the card of black and white is continuously raised now and again. When will we blend with everyone like the correct match of our skin's foundation and never show any marks of being different.

It's not freedom if men of authority still think that a woman can only be effective and efficient on their backs. If men can take advantage of a woman's need for survival; the extent they'd go to just to provide for their little ones.

It's not freedom, if rubber bullets are solution to shut people up; if there are wounds that need to be disinfected; blood to be spilt; lives lost just for us to get what's be rightfully ours – our land , our education. What kind of freedom is this if parents still need to identify bodies of their sons and daughters that are lying the streets surrounded by a pool of blood. Sidewalks flowing blood like it's blood river.

Those who survived the short sharp metals that could have instantly took their lives if it was a hit on target are locked behind bars for fighting for what they believe in and exodus 9:1 was forgotten. "let my people go".

It's not freedom if our brothers and sister still take the remaining of what's left of our land, the gold and putting it in their mouth just to justify their understanding of our forefathers' struggle.

It's not freedom if our actions and words that we utter are questioned, if not questioned we are constantly reminded of where we are coming from – how we were liberated. If that's your definition of freedom then – you, yourself are not liberated, not free. It's time to think without shackles.

Signed,
Pogiso P. Mokwena

We've always worn chains

When we were ripped from our home lands and stuffed in the hulls of your ships.
Laying next to the rotting corpses of our brothers and sisters who didn't make it...

We wore chains

When we were marched cross country to be sold at your auctions
our feet cut and bleeding
the sun on our skin beating
while you rode dragging us behind your high horse...

We wore chains

While we worked tirelessly in your fields
While you cut off our toes and whipped our backs because all we wanted to do is run
free...

We wore chains.

You see me and I see you,
and we share skin shades,
so the pain never really fades

We connect through ancestry and tragedy,
birthed of the same continent and you felt it right take take from me.

We met by chance or rather unfortunate circumstance,
I was trying to get to a better place and you saw me as your way to get there.

I asked you to consider the family I had to feed,
you were more worried about your next fix
So gun to my head, thoughts racing through my mind
I ask why the one to put the knife in my back always has to look like me?

A Foreigner To Thyself | Andre Lefu

For too long I was a foreigner in my own land
Living the life of a European being
I didn't know myself
My mind led to believe that black is the lesser
I aspired to be white
For too long I was a foreigner in my own skin
Resonating with that which did not represent me
I lost myself
Until a wise man introduced me to an African child

My true self

He said "they already hate you for existing, why do you then have to give them more
reason to find you insignificant?"

Love yourself

There is a war coming, I can smell it on
my breath
and taste it on my skin. I can feel it in
my bones
and hear it in my thoughts because the
battlefield
is my body, a body full of scars. A body
clothed
with skin the sun burns so much,
sometimes it has
to take shade under the moon. A body
that has
become the shooting target for life's
tragedies
more than its blessings. A body I call
home
is also the city of God where the earth
and the wind come to worship His
creation.

But in the interim there is a war coming
so I'm preparing for my first kill to
protect
my body and its essence
I'm rehearsing in repetition to kill off
the parts of me
that were planted to make me feel
strange
about the shade of my face, like this
isn't the image
of the one who made the night and day

I'm rehearsing to be better, that even
though I'm
as dark as the night, my thoughts and
self
will shine brighter than the stars. I'm
rehearsing
but I don't get to stay too long in my
desired future
before I'm reminded by a voice that I'd
die before
the battle begins, that deep within me
I'm still a boy, a boy who is just far
away from home
desperately wishing to smell his
mother's cooking once again.

There is a war coming but I already feel
defeated
I feel like I'm drowning and the only
way I know to stay afloat
is to write my prayers as poems to God
reshaping my reality with the words I
conjure
so today they call me a poet because
whenever
I speak they see the universe sitting on
the tip of my tongue
nodding to every word I utter but no,
I'm not a poet
I'm a warrior, who sharpen his blade
with every verse he writes.

Response To Soetry | Mpho Mofokeng

This is a response to Soetry's poem titled "Knees"

This is for
The heavens and hell
In which I've lived in
This is for the tired and the dreamers
This is for the bigot and homophobes
Who have taught me to loath myself

I forgive you
I forgive you because I don't have to be good
The kind of good you approve of

I don't have to crawl on my knees,
For a thousand miles across the world seeking your approval

I just have to let go and live
Let the soft animal of my body
Love what it love

Depression is a black female, powerful yet often undermined.
I often hear that "this is a man's world" and I say it would still be nothing
Without women of color.
Just because my tears are not bloody doesn't mean I am not hurting
If seeds were to be planted on the corner of my eyes this would be a season of harvest
Because it rained, it pour and the seeds have bared fruits, fruits that aren't sweet but sour
You've watched me walking down the aisle heading to the altar
Just to get married to depression and anxiety as the pastor and you still
Didn't say anything when you were asked "is there any objection to this unity?",
You kept quiet and your silence was a blessing, though you said you don't believe in same sex
marriage
Your silence blessed us and so we got married.

She's the "man" of the house, her word is final and what goes
She's controlling, has power over me, constantly reminding me to wear my smile as a mask
Every time I go out living my life like it's a masquerade party that even my loudest cry isn't heard.
I got back home to an angry wife because I tried confiding in someone who didn't even understand
the
Kind of abusive relationship I am in. My wife is like a White man always calling shots and I a
typical
Black man who is always doing the killing, killing and so I killed myself.

You call suicide an act of selfishness but it's not, it's not about you so I don't expect you to
understand
But this was the only chance I got to escape, I am sorry but I could take yet another breath of this
toxic air around me. Best believe that my love for you will never die, I will always love you even with
my lifeless heart and be your guardian angel, try to protect you from what I couldn't protect myself
from.

With Love
Pogiso P Mokwena

It seems that only beauty trends,
that explains why mostly missing girls who are beautiful
trend

Only broken homes are worth noting
So fathers who are trying go unnoticed

Crime is seen as culture now, practiced by blacks mostly
So when the white man does it he is allowed a chance to
defend himself

There's no such thing as a protest, just black people with
signs making no sense
Ingrates with majority yet never exercising authority

Mixed messages fill conversations,
comfortable with things staying the same but begging for
change
because those who can do, do nothing and those who do
nothing loot their brothers

Those who can do, are digital warriors
called to arms by that AM alarm and dismissed when
"5% remaining" takes over their vision

Guided by impulsive decisions, investing in temporary
"i'm happy right now", forgetting tomorrow is another
chance for sorrow.

Wait,
what am I really trying to say?

I write pain
From the pieces of my broken heart
The ink travels through my veins
Leaving a trail of bloody stains
As I fail to navigate through the meaning of the word
that is your title
All I see is darkness
On my souls would be reflection

I write pain
From the pieces of broken relationships
Where I satisfied the role of serving as leftovers
For the longest time I wanted to amend the recipe
and substitute the missing ingredient
I tried different concoctions to mask my imperfections
But never did they make life without you sweeter
I'm still searching
Stuck with a bad taste after every kiss,
stumbling through the dark alleys
Asking strange man,
"have you seen my daddy?"

I write pain
From the bits and pieces of my mother's stories
Stories she hates revisiting
Always trying her best to give me the answers I need
She has never failed to cover your role
But failed to make me understand, "if he loves me, why
isn't he here?"

I write pain.

i will start off by cleaning my
room thoroughly,
leaving everything spotless.
destroy all the letters we used to
exchange in english class.
burn the museum of t-shirts and
hoodies left behind by past loves that
my mother won't recognise.
bury all the evidence of the real
me,
the me i want no one to know.

only 2% of people who overdose
on medication succeed.
so i need to find a better method.
slit my arm, bleed to death?
i curse the heaven's for not
answering my prayers.

universe, let me die.
take me to a happier place.
a place where i can sleep
peacefully.

a place without nightmares.
somewhere i can enjoy a meal
without thinking about my figure.

let me die, take me to a better
place.
somewhere i can cry when i'm sad,
and not worry when i'm too
happy.
a place where this excruciating
sadness doesn't exist.
where i can feel what i feel,
instead of feeling nothing at all.

this nothingness is painful.
my heart is a burden i walk
around with.
my scars have turned into rocks.
the heaviness is what i can never
get used to.
i'm woken up by heart aches, i
don't know another good morning.

for as long as i have lived,
happiness has been a rarity.
i cannot recall exactly when i
allowed depression into my home.

when depression arrived,
it left the door open.
soon after, i had many unwanted
guests.

self harm: she made herself
comfortable.
she was the companion on whom i
relied.

at 4am when i found no rest,
she wrapped her arms around me.

bipolar: he was like an abusive
lover.
he reaked of toxicity.

stole my voice,
made me question myself.
"be silent," he would say.
"you're crazy"

anxiety: my universe.
stole all forms of stability.
known for ripping the carpet from
beneath me.
hated peace.
loved breaking the unbroken.

until i woke up and said,
"no more!"
depression, you have no place
here.
self harm, leave me.
anxiety, let me rest.

Black Jesus,
Can you do more than watch from
your throne
Or are you so invested in african
time
that you feel your delay is justified?

I hurt and I bleed
I tear and I hurt,
Waiting for you to remember me as
more than someone who still owes
debts of sin

Waiting for you to answer prayer
phone calls instead of dancing to our
broken hearted praises
Or does "Thank you for your
blessings" sound sweeter to your ears
when said from lips glossed with salty
tears?

Can I speak in my mother tongue
and you understand me
Or does your blood only cover those
whose lineage hails from across the sea?

So I hear through the headlines
that while you may have met me,
encountered me, accosted me, harassed
me, violated me, excited me, titilated
me,
you still don't quite know how I
really work, what makes me tick
Really?
Who here has never seen a vagina?
Thought so...

So on a normal day, I like to silently
go about my thing.
Quietly
Minding my own business
Basically chilling.
Not even thinking about you
Or sex, for that matter.

You see, just like the wind howls
at the height of autumn or the
surprise of summer rains, my vagina
dances to its own rhythm,
Dictated by a mind of its own
depending on the situation,
And what time of the month it is.

On a really good day,
(You see whatever is going on in my
head or being felt by the rest of my
body, my vagina's mood takes a hit too)
I look forward to soft touches,
gently massages,
Excitement full stop.
When he gets lost in me
The sweet bits between my thighs
A familiar home of moans
Welcoming
The way we met was rather random
I wasn't looking for him
He simply landed in my mentions
one afternoon.
The smile of recognition
Confirmed what we both knew
Our mistaken paths had to cross
In a mingled hug and kiss
Awkward
But simply sunny
And real
Definitely a moment of yes!
My body agrees!

Silence

They expected struggle but I fed them
silence
I knew my words would have no effect,
so I offered them something they
couldn't dispute
or twist to fit the narrative

Silence

There was no he to their she said
No man blaming the "victim"
No "she said she was old enough"
and "she wanted it too"
Just silence

Silence

I knew it was waiting for me after the
cell would close
I needed it before it got too loud
And those who weren't there exercise
their voices

Silence,

Was what would part from my lips if I
took the stand
But to her my eyes will whisper an
apology,
that i'm sorry she felt the best way to
hurt me was by accusing me of hurting her
in that way.

But there are times, moments
When I simply don't feel like it
Moments when I'm simply not turned on
Or even craving that kind of attention
Not from you
So when I say no, I really mean it.
My vagina simply isn't willing

You see today I wasn't in the mood
But because
He dared to touch me, even though I kept
saying no
I must respond and be the good girl he
needs me to be
His mouth pressed against my neck
doesn't help at all

The poisonous stench of anger
clings to my skin
I allow it to fill my chest until I can't
breathe
My pensive hands paralysed by fear

Cause me to murder him a thousand
times in my head
So for now I've chosen to forget
How I cringe every time the memories
blind me
How the shame envelopes me
Even though I didn't ask for it
Even though he was the one who violated
me
I'm here left with the invisible scars
Reminders of that moment
Those seconds you dared to corner me
Paralysed me with just a touch
Unwanted
Not asked for
I stare at the blank pages
Ears dulled by the din of the full room
I dither
Unable to find the words
That will convince them
What I say is true
That on that day
I chose to say no

I am too drained to even figure out my feelings
Because there are too many emotions flooding in all at once.
What is even more frustrating is the fact that I failed to see that you are
A two timing schemer, lied straight to my face didn't even wait for me
To turn my back around maybe that would hurt a lot less.

You said that I am too narrow minded to see and understand that victory for one is victory to
all,
Hell I am too angry to make sense of that line. I grew up knowing "injury to one is injury to
all"
I am saying this because I am a victim of a justice system failing yet again, still stand here
with
Physical, mental and emotional scares.
One caused by the magistrate's decision that still feels like a sharp knife to my chest "She is
too young to testify"

You are too young to understand how life deals with people, Yeah! Try being sexually
abused by that one person who was supposed to be taking care of you for ten full whole years,
forcing you to be sexually mature while you could be enjoying your youth like any other
teenager. Now I am here left with letters under my bed, letters directed to mommy trying to
explain to mommy why I hate being left home alone le Malome, why sometimes I have so much
anger, letters that mommy's eyes never got to see. Try keeping a secret about being raped two
times in one year by your two friends, maybe I am too trusting. Don't you think that is a little
bit too much for a twenty-two year old to handle?

They say less is more, more is less whatever the case, and I can only give you what I have
nothing more, nothing less. I will never be enough for everyone and it's ok, I am content with
the fact that I was loved at my darkest somebody shared their blood just for me to be saved and
to be where I am today. You said I am too pretty for a fat lady, well I am here representing all
ladies made of song and dance, dipped in milk and honey, do believe me when I say I still love
you and don't say I Love you TOO.

After a rough night of being psychotic
My parents called a pastor that kept rebuking me
as if I'm a demon
With pent up anger I screamed
I am not Satan I just want to die or escape
And my family kept praying as my tears clouded
my eyes
at their lack of understanding of my life that
revolves around them.

It was approximately 7 years and 6 months
When last I had no attachments engraved to my name
Back then I was just a girl
Since then
I've been diagnosed with schizophrenia which later led to Bipolar Manic Disorder

A bit weird but I still fit the mould of being unique
My first episode triggered old wounds I thought I'd let lay when I picked myself up My first love, touched me where he
shouldn't
and forcibly kissed me like he shouldn't
When in pain, I lack emotional intelligence
The first time I met a psychiatrist
I had stabbed my chest with the intent of ending it all
That night they sent me to a psychiatric hospital
My worst fear was being caged in with people as lost but found as I am

I have tried officially 7 times
The noose cut loose
Pills were flushed out using drip
Too little helium intake prevented me from floating to the pearly gates I still have trails on my wrists from the journeys
the blade took Stabbing where I missed my jugular and scarred my esophagus
And memories of a bruised ankle owing to my failed attempt at staircase gymnastics It seems I'm bad at dying in the
physical sense

It is said that time heals even the worst of wounds But I was never sick
I was merely misunderstood
I'm black, so it confused them
Especially the religious fanatics
that said my psychosis is demonic
Having a mental illness has always been a struggle
but It's funny how the color dictates how people perceive my condition

I try harder at school so my sickness is not excuse for failure I have seen love and pain
People praying I stay but my will to live hanging by a thread I have felt rejection by those who were meant to stay
I have loved and lost Cried and mourned
This disease I blame for my flaws but who am I without what you call a hallucination, Who am I without my psychosis?
I cling to it like dear life because I am unique with my illusions,
I have friends that never leave, regardless of the "bad" illusions
I am finally not alone
I have a home with my distorted reality I am tainted but in a beautiful manner

i know how your mind drives you into dark holes,
in the dark you are accompanied by self loathe,
the masochist in you robs you of all the happiness you
had.
please know that i will be there.

yes, at your saddest,
i will be there.
to cry, to mourn all your losses.
to hold parts of your pain for you.
i know i will never be able to hold all your hurt
but i will try and when i fail,
i will try again
and at the very least,
i will be there.

when you are drowning in tears,
i will try to save you
and when i can't,
i will drown with you because
your pain is mine
i will be there.

i will show up.
when you scratch your wounds
leaving them open

when they sting uncontrollably.
i will be there to kiss them.
i may not know how to heal your wounds
but i will be there.

i will try not to be a source of pain
and i may not ever succeed at comforting you
but in your darkness i will sit with you
in the silence
when the only sound present
is your aching heart.
i will be there.

when the trauma of your past
creeps up on you
when memories haunt you in
the form of bad dreams
i may not know how to heal you
but i will be there.

i am made of broken pieces
and i don't have much to offer.
but never doubt, never question
whether i will be there.
because i will.

I keep writing these words hoping
that one day they reach you.

And give you lessons about love
that the textbooks won't teach you.

Each day I live
I wish to live no more
Each tear that I drop
I wish I could laugh the more

I am afraid of the man to whom I am married
Even when I try not to be worried
Whenever I see him I am always terrified
Maybe I am under qualified
For he is never satisfied
In this marriage and I am rigidified

At my home I am always busied
Never can you meet me beautified
For my in-laws have allied
To this I have testified
For in my own house i have been astonished

I mourn with on the inside
and smile with the crowd
In my loneliness I weep
While in their presence I laugh

I hurt on the inside
Whilst on the outside I rejoice

Should I go
Or should I stay
I question myself
My parents beg me to stay
My in-laws caution me to stay
He has paid his bride price
They say
I am his property he claims

Who will live for my kids
I ask
What kind of life will they have without me
Will they have, I ponder
I am only a woman, so I weep
I too have been forced into this role
Being a mother and wife at this age
Is never a simple task
I guess I was never ready.

The many nights I had,
with cold
as my companion made me older,
so much life slipped through me,
I remember the hours I waited for you and
you
didn't show up

Countless moments as I held my head,
thinking of how to trap you
made me a wounded animal losing
strength,
many times I walked alone
with stars teasing me,
and the moon turning yellow
for I was depressed

The many lies you told me,
kept me worrying of how you are
or of how you slept

yet you were to alive to cause
so much pain to me
maybe you knew I wouldn't handle myself
when you loved me not,
so it's better I know nothing

The day i was deceased while I would still
breath,
the hours I went dead when you kept on
saying sorry
and I too in love that I had to forgive
I had no choice since I remained a puppet
under your hands

Though I felt more younger the times you
said you loved me
and i thought I had another chance to live,
when we were together but know
the days you never loved me and I felt it,
were the days i died.

Dear Darling Person
I don't know the exact moment I
fell in love with you.
It could have been the first time
I saw you.
You smiled a big smile and
introduced yourself
Or it could have been the first
time you gave me a hug.
Long, tight, healing hugs.
It could have been the first time
you held my hand when we walked
together.
Your hand fit perfectly in mine.
Two halves of a whole
We both felt the zing of
electricity coursing through us
But were too shy to
acknowledge the spark.

It may have been the first time
your lips touched mine.
When sparks flew all round.
I don't know when it was that I
fell in love with you.
But I know the exact moment I
realised that I was in too deep.
The morning sun was streaming
through the curtains
The sounds of nature creating a
lullaby.
You opened your eyes.
And looked into my sleep
deprived eyes and said, "I love you
crazy person."
That's when I knew for sure
You were it for me.

She said love is sacrifice,
I said I wanted more and so she
took you away.

She couldn't have me
and so she felt I couldn't know
you.

I said I wanted more for me,
I never got around to saying
more what,
whether it was opportunities or
a chance to be happy too
I said I wanted more for me

but in truth I needed to be more
for you.

She said love is sacrifice,
So I sacrifice my pride daily
and fall to my knees begging
that hopefully she tells you about
me

Not the man who couldn't love
her but the one who felt a peaceful
upbringing was worth more than
court battles and upfront animosity.

Love and pain are entwined,
love is the flower that blooms,
pain is the root that searches,
like a tree with its roots deeply
embedded,
its leaves and flowers skying to the
heavens,
It grows as a whole,
As above...so below.
Love is infinite,
it knows no limits,
it feels no emptiness,
it fills every space that it meets,
it deepens the already deep,
widens the already wide,
strengthens the bond that flows
unceasingly.
Love is like the ocean and the sea,
love is like water...in you and in me,
love is everything that is,
it makes and creates forms in itself,
it becomes self empowered within self,
love is the Creator,
it creates creators who create craters.

Love

love was inside of me all along,
it was hiding in the shadows,
fearfully tucking itself behind thick curtains,
it was there all along,
how did i miss it?

i seeked it in everyone around me,
including strangers,
looked for it in my work,
i tried to cultivate it through unripe,
disingenuous sweet nothings to myself,
and i failed, because it was in me all along.

you know that feeling of searching for
something,
for what seems like forever,
just to find it in your hand,
how it dawns on you,
the time you wasted,
wasted in anguish,
just to find love right there,
within reach.

the day i realised love,
i also discovered it.
i shook it firmly by the hand.

i made sure to look it in the eye,
because i wasn't guaranteed a second chance
with love.

so i made sure to introduce myself,
hoping to leave a decent impression,
forging a confident version of myself,
wishing love would choose to stay,
wondering if love would consider me.

i had just met love.
but love meant everything to me.
love was the feeling you get when eating ice
cream.

love was straight A's.
love was sunflowers and rainbows.
love was seeing your mother after a long day.

love made me whole,
it didn't remove my pain,
it healed my wounds,
but never erased the scars.
love felt like everything is going to be okay.

when love introduced itself,
it said,
i am you.
thank you for finally recognising me.

Black - Intro | Nelisa Ngqulana

My black skin stretches so far
I barely feel the pain anymore
While my soul longs for moments of quietness
Of stillness
My body knows the drill
Got to stay awake
Got to stay vigilant
Because danger lingers
Even when the Sun's out

Growing up I never liked how I looked
I never met the world's definition of attractive
I was never "handsome" unless I wore a suit
And I was never "necessary" unless I got better grades than my
counter parts
So because I couldn't wear a suit all the time I chose to succumb to
the teachers pet domain

Be smart,
be present,
just don't expect to be noticed

Those with fairer skin took all the glory, it was automatic. For once
a black man faced a problem related to skin tone and it didn't have to
do with race. From film to music, role models had one thing in
common, they were lighter than me.

I saw them on the cover of magazines, on television screens and
overnight things changed and slowly yet in an instant they were
replaced with people who looked more like me. Our bodies and
builds were different but I could see myself in someone else and it felt
good until the voices in my head reminded me that trends come and
go.

Now my "beautiful" is a statement. Instead of handsome I'm
"chocolate". I moved from being the invisible man to being the flavor
of the day and waiting for the next trend to roll in. Dark skin is
beautiful today, so maybe I should just celebrate that we even get a
turn.

— Still Learning
Jade

Drip

Drop

Weary

Sweaty

Blobs of black

Chart a roadmap

A winding maze

With no end

Flip

Flop

The uncertain

Breeds doubt

Because

Blobs of black

Are worthless beings

But still

The patter of tiny toes

And echoes of childish laughter

Are constant reminders

That blobs of black

Are gold mines of potential.

My journey of self started with love,
love of self expressed in selfishness,
love denied to those that sought me,

hiding behind closed pages,
feelings wrapped colorfully...dead
within.

My love for self was a hidden well,
deep within a wretched soul dwells,

longing for a love I couldn't feel,

I sought solace in blowing trees,

captured there was a high I felt.

It divulged truths about self,
the journey that had began ages past,

started again with an acceptance of
self,

my black skin I mocked and hated,
I embraced with the truth revealed.

For yea are gods,
black like the earth you tread upon,

black like the roots that dig
nourishment,

black like the tempest that devours
all,

black like the color that is and isn't.

This black ruled nations,
this black created civilizations,

this black made history,

this black is a creator,

this black is a god.

If we are angels before birth,
then I believe God and I spoke before I was sent
to earth

We had a conversation and somethings we agreed
on and others were out of my control

My height and weight was left to Him

The shade of my eyes would be borrowed from
my parents

And as the outline of my being began to form

When asked what hues should be used to paint
over my soul

I said colour me beautiful

Colour me black.

My pain tells me I am alone - two tiny feet planted on the earth and every step I take is a picture to burn. I've learnt to collect the sound of laughter like it were rain- cusp it in my hands and find a safe place for it. Because good things are always being taken away from me- sometimes it's my father, sometimes it's a five-year old poem. Sometimes it's a boy who believes my body is a map and touching is the only way to arrive. Here are a list of things that died before I could learn to say mama:

- i. trust- because everyone else has been hurt twice (and more)
- ii patience- because God listens faster than He speaks and I need answers- now
- iii. joy- because no child should have to see death/ weave a tribute/ wear the confusion of a thousand questions and have everyone say "everything will be fine"
- iv, peace- because after the storm, there're more winds coming and I do not remember the feel of stillness

When the storm comes and things break down at my feet, I do not talk about the bodies. Because people wouldn't believe there's a body for every storm. I wrap them up with my shaky hands and bury them inside the ground- one more part of me gone missing. Many times, the body weeps, wanting to stay alive for a little while. But where I'm from, dead things don't belong among the living. We let go like holding on makes us sick/ like a little hope will destroy us/ like healing will never find its way us. Many times, we're the fire at the edge of the map, burning out the lines and wondering why we never make it home alive.

we grow and create versions of ourselves that we like.
deep inside us lies the little girl who waits on her father to come back home.
today is the day, today he will miss me,
want me.
behind her smile lives a teenager who needed more hugs and less coldness
from her mother.

we grow and learn how to forge confidence.
we learn our angles, we familiarise ourselves with tools that will turn 3 into 8.
baggy t-shirts don't expose my belly.
my skin doesn't look too bad with this filter.
maybe if i make them laugh they won't notice how insecure i am.

we grow and we admit that we hate a lot of things about ourselves.
our crooked smiles, our flabby arms,
our inability to converse with ease.
how no one ever notices us.
no one really cares.

we grow and we accept that we aren't the lucky ones.
who are pretty enough to be taken seriously.
the ones that are cared for or valued.
so we live in the shadows.
we always play it safe.

Galaxies collide peacefully behind her eyes

My birth giver,

Storms formed in each thought,

My mother

She is the whisper of revolution.

Everything defiant,

My mother

Her hair reaches for heaven,

Cursing gravity

She does not speak conformity,

My mother

She is a church in a constant prayer

God clutches to the body of her voice,

Birthgiver.

Reflections are images of our creation
forged in the likeness of our truths and lies
So, I see a lot of similarities when I look
into the eyes of a black man. I see dark
I see cracks, I see marks of abuse
that numbs him to any current pain
I see a broken man who is slipping
but dabbles in humor to comfort his soul
and thinks holding the breath of his memories
is the best way he can inhale relief.

I also see his sisters, wives and daughters
who go to bed with dreams of
their brothers, husbands and fathers
becoming better men. Men who are not
children of their fears.

Reflections are images of our creation
that often travel in a reversed direction
of our truths and lies. So, I believe Him when He said "let us make man in our
own image"
Because I see God whenever I look into the mirror
with skin as dark as the night
and eyes that burn brighter than the stars
But I also see Him getting lost in a crowd of a thousand faces of me. While
whispering, "I am who I am".

Inspired by Heather Robertson's poem "Beneath The Skin"

My skin is full of secretes
Broken by the struggles of humanity
Shattered into pieces smaller than the seas sand,
But I prefer to live in this way
Every part of me is different from the other,
As it is different from other people,
And that is okay
Because I sometimes search beneath it
And I feel at the heart of it all
A love of humanity.

I like girls...

Easy to write, hard to say

I like girls...

An honest truth, they don't want to hear

I like girls...

So that means no mother daughter bonding over pregnancy scares

An awkward talk about first times

Explaining why I prefer fingers over sausages

And making them mad because I was now a triple threat

A woman, black and queer

I like girls

So now I prepare for the stereotypes and the ignorant types

The "Sex with a man can change your mind", the "So you don't believe
in God"

and the "Were you rejected that much" types

I like girls

My kingdom has no need for a king on a throne

and it upsets many,

they find fault in my preference

Maybe they feel only love between opposites can work.

The feminist in me,
can't relate to the woman in you.

But I think it's due to my lack of understanding,
I thought your road towards empowerment was for upliftment
Not knowing that the price you'd pay would be my opinion

Somewhere between hello and goodbye,
I disagreed with you and you saw me as enemy
I don't know if it was when I said a man can love and be faithful,
that not every father is absent by choice
Or maybe it was when I spewed that I believe in gender equality but setting
your salary was beyond me
Because like you I'm still applying for jobs and getting turned down for no
experience
If I had no dick, would my truths get preference?

But I digress,
I'm getting attuned to the feminist in me not relating to the woman in you.
So I never know what to say other than sorry for their actions,
and I forgive you for your mindset.
It's sad that anything contradictory is seen as an attack on your womanhood
and now we use tragedies as ammunition when the sexes battle.
You're slowly drifting from who you said you'd be and I'm running out of
ways to be more than a mere obstacle to you.

LISTEN TO THE VOICES