

OVERVIEW OF RIM SPRING SCHOOL

The Robben Island Museum (RIM), Public Heritage Education Department (PHED) is tasked with creating awareness of the multi-layered history of Robben Island (RI) through its educational programmes that are offered both to young and adult learners. One of the RIM programmes that impart knowledge to young learners is the Spring School, a RIM flagship programme.

The Spring School (SS) started in 1998 to promote knowledge on aspects of heritage and the history of Robben Island as a microcosm of the broader South Africa. SS is offered by the RIM - PHED in collaboration with schools, educators, museums and young learners from all the provinces of South Africa including countries on the continent and beyond such as, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

The programme is aimed at promoting the notion of Robben Island being a place of continued learning and education, beyond the borders of the Island. It provides a platform for young learners to engage in a deeper understanding of heritage and its related fields. It also provides a unique opportunity for career information within the heritage sector. The training workshops are designed in such way that the learners can implement the acquired skills in projects in their own communities. In this way, they will not only be of benefit to themselves and their schools, but also to the broader communities.

Various learning methodologies are used to facilitate learning. Some of the methods used previously are:

1. Research – Oral, documents, photographs, maps
2. Creative electives – creative writing, music and dance, t-shirt printing, graffiti and creative design, cartoons and poems
3. Discussions/debates
4. “Knowledge Hunt”

Through these Creative Electives learners produce material that is conserved for future use in other RIM PHED programmes. This helps in making information accessible to learners who could not have the opportunity to be part of the Spring School. In the light of the above, RIM PHED decided to publish the poems, written by Spring School learners over the last 20 years, in the hope that it will promote the culture of reading. It will also help others understand the heritage and history of Robben Island through the eyes of Young people.



Poem	Poet/author	Year written
We Will Not Forget About You June Sixteen	Oupa	2002
On his way-A tribute to Dikgang Moseneke	Zanele Jele, Nonkululeko Nkosi Vukile Nkukwana	2002
Democracy has Really Worked in Changing South Africa	Nonhlanhla Tshabalala	2002
It was a World of Tears	Zanele Jele	2002
Going the Extra Mile	Nonkululeko Nkosi	2002
I love this Game	Nonkululeko Nkosi	2002
Take Your Wings and Help Others to Fly	Promise Mthembu	2002
Then and Now	Dino Aldera	2011
A Thought	Dino Aldera	2011
The Experience	Tsholo Shounyane	2011
Where to Shall I be Going	Melanie Smith	2011
Human, the Triumph	Karolien Schade	2011
Finding Freedom in the Waves	Nompumelelo Myeko	2011
Return to Robben Island	Lusani Sumbana	2011
Understanding	Melanie Smith	2011
The diverse Apple Box	Karolien Schade	2011
Magic	Tsholo Shounyane	2011

WE WILL NOT FORGET ABOUT YOU JUNE SIXTEENTH

By

Oupa - 2002

You are gone June sixteenth

Seventy six

Gone but not forgotten

Gone and will never never ever come back again

Is with minds

Imaginations – that us heirs (young generation)

Live you your legacy

Is with pain thousand questions

That our eyes keep leaking

Memories of passed heroes and heroines

Not forgetting

Crippled brothers and sisters

And you ! You son of Makhubu

Mbuyisa Makhubu

You are gone June sixteen seventy six

But your legacy lives on

We will not forget, no we will not forget you

Even though speaking about you

makes us cry

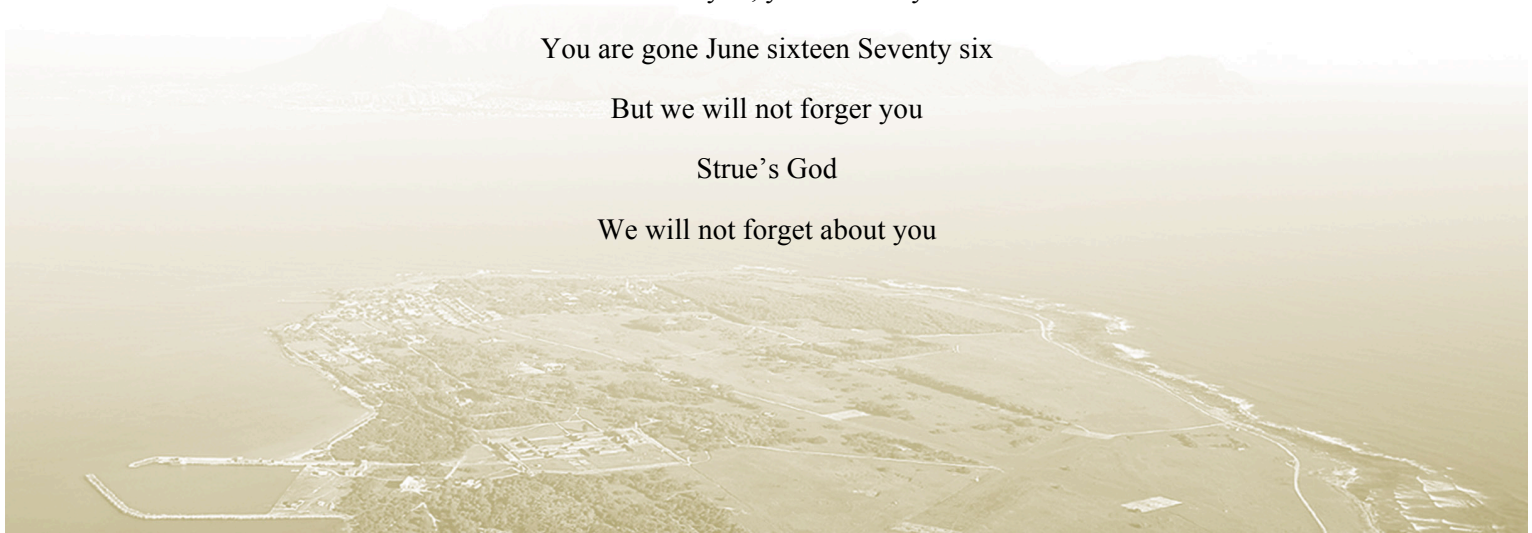
We feel you, your brutality

You are gone June sixteen Seventy six

But we will not forger you

Strue's God

We will not forget about you



ON HIS WAY: A tribute to DIKGANG MOSENEKE

By

Zanele Jele, Nonkululeko Tshabalala & Vukile Nkukwana - 2002

Awakened by a ray light that seeps through the curtain landing on his face, he must get up for a long journey awaits him. An instinct instructs him, that this journey to be taken will present a contrast of events.

On his face are fords, forged by the thoughts occupying his mind.

He lifts his head and glares up to the sky as if to communicate with the heavens that are believed to hold a thousand truths.

He steps out and is received by nature's song. A song that inspire him to push forth.

But as he carries he's confronted....

I am sitting in this cell its 9:30. I would have been in the history class listening to Mr Mabuso tell me how the Van Riebeecks arrived in the Cape. How they made my life so much better. Looking across the class to the front row, there she was beautiful. Nomthandazo. She could have been my girlfriend. Now I am stucked on the Island for ten years. I did not want to go to prison , all I wanted was to help set my people free, free from oppression.

This year I would have been in mainland

planning what to wear to the matric celebration. Maybe Nomthandazo would have been my partner to the celebration. And now I have to push and brake these rocks.

How traumatic all this is for me, watching my old man, man I address as baba, being beaten by these men.

It was 5 O clock in the morning, When a guard came to me and told me that I'm leaving, I'm going home. I was rejoicing because I'm going to see my family and friends. But I knew inside my heart that even if they are releasing me, I'm not going to relax. I'm going to fight until the end. I will fight for freedom in our land.



DEMOCRACY HAS REALLY WORKED IN CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

By

Nonhlanhla Tshabalala - 2002

Crime has reached an epidemic rate

It is murdering our hopes

It is destroying our tendency,

to always take the rightful view

Its tearing at the fabric of our society

Mandela has tried all to achieve

One nation, one soul.

All that is been gunned down in cold blood

Suddenly I see a change in our beloved S. A, Why!

We, the people of South Africa

Recognise the injustices of our past

Honour those who suffered for justice, freedom in our land

Respect those who worked to build,

Develop our beloved country.

We believe that SA belongs to all who live in it

United in our diversity.

Improve the quality of life of all citizens

Free the potential of each person

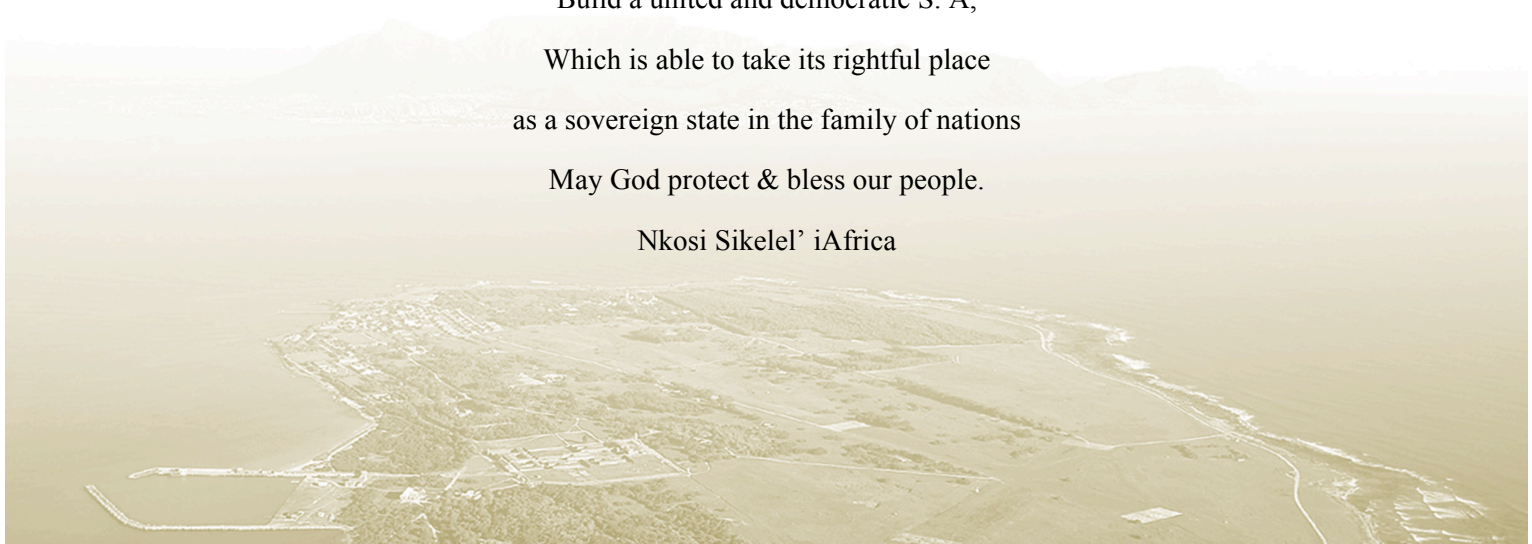
Build a united and democratic S. A,

Which is able to take its rightful place

as a sovereign state in the family of nations

May God protect & bless our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica



IT WAS A WORLD OF TEARS

By

Zanele Jele - 2002

Living in a world of sorrow

Could not say what I want

Just like an animal in a cage

Probably tomato sauce is very nice to my people

Maybe red colour is their favourite

Maybe they have seen red doves of pain and suffering

Maybe the years I have lived in this world

I have never seen the usage of political fudge

Maybe peace exist only at night

When you are asleep

That is why comrade owl does not cry of pain

It was a world of tears



GOING THE EXTRA MILE

By

Nonkululeko Nkosi - 2002

It was a long walk to freedom
With hate, prejudice and fear,
Not much to be celebrated,
But a lot to be sacrificed,
After each savage, hysterical episode,
With strength needed to go the extra mile.

Patience, perseverance and peacefulness,
Essential weapons in times of darkness,
Where there is not much hope,
But a need for that strength
To go the extra mile.

You have come a long way
And in the end the victor.
Where life is no more regrettable
But a beautiful song
And thoughts of pride
Where going the extra mile made a difference



I LOVE THIS GAME

By

Nonkululeko Nkosi - 2002

A nation so strong
Unpredictable, a perfect melancholy

A joyful song
Its people united as one

Celebrations, triumph
Equally shared
For our heroes
Have yet again, done us proud
And we unite and be one.

Rugby, tennis, soccer,
Netball, hockey, softball,
Cricket, Athletics
We all have one thing to say
I love this game



TAKE YOUR WINGS AND HELP OTHERS TO FLY

By

Promise Mthembu - 2002

Take your wings; and help others to fly

Take your hand and stop those who cry

Take your halo; and end the pretence

Take your lips; and say what makes sense

Take your strength; and help those who are weak

Take your voice; and help them to speak

Take your spirit; all shining bright

Take your guiding; and guide the night

Take your hand; and lead the rest

Take your wisdom; and say what is best

Take your teachings; from the lessons of today

Take your tomorrow; be what it may

Take your eyes; help all to see

Take your life; be the best you can be



THEN AND NOW

By

Dino Aldera - 2011

Then

Robben Island was a leper colony in the 1880s, a military base during the Second World War and a prison during the Apartheid era. Now the Island is a World Heritage Site, a symbol of freedom, and a source of inspiration for many South Africans.

During the Apartheid era, male political prisoners were sent to Robben Island to serve their jail sentence. The boat trip to the Island was a very traumatic experience for most prisoners, as they travelled on an old boat and some of them had not even seen the sea before.

I have written the following poem in the first person, as one of the political prisoners on his journey to Robben Island. By doing this I hope to capture the feelings of anxiety, anger, and fear which the prisoners must have experienced.

In contrast to this poem, our experience on the Robben Island Ferry was one of excitement, joy and anticipation. While the prisoners were about to be incarcerated on the Island, we were about to embark on a mind opening expedition. In a sense, our minds were being freed of all our misconceptions and misjudgements.

All is still

Silently swaying;

Back and forth;

From the pain that might be –

To the pain that is

The cold rain beats down on my colder face

Mixing with my tears;

Slowly dropping;

Washing away my rationality –

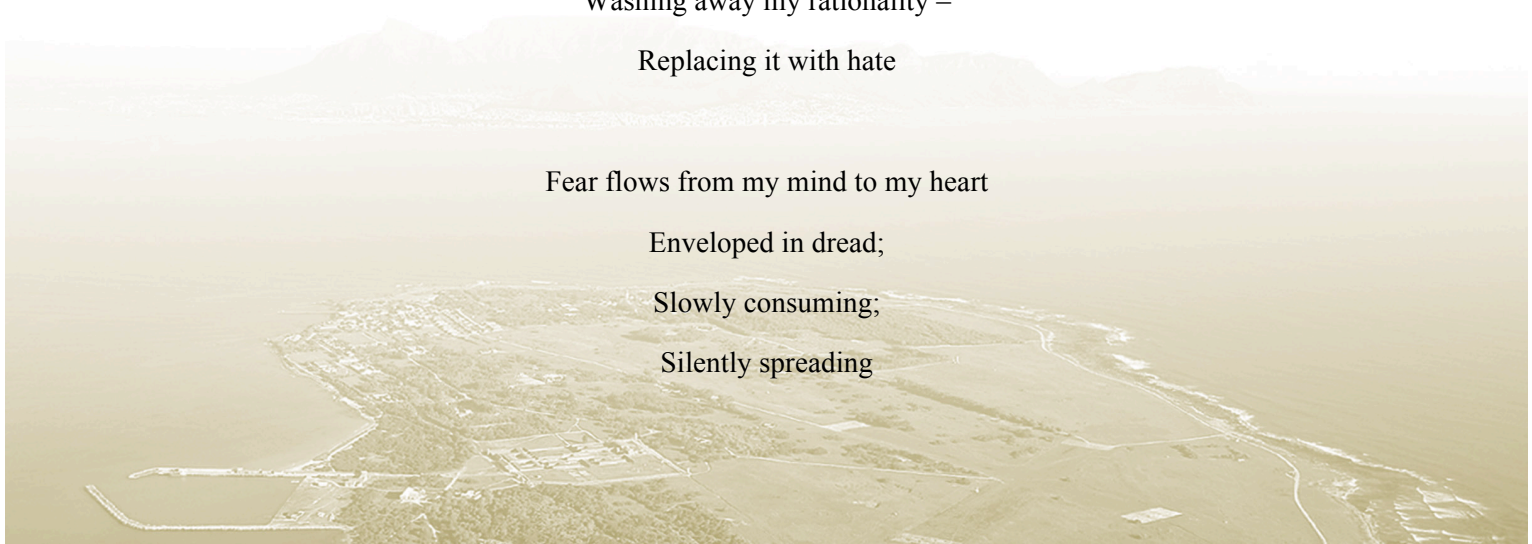
Replacing it with hate

Fear flows from my mind to my heart

Enveloped in dread;

Slowly consuming;

Silently spreading



Guards watching;
A smile hidden in each eye;
I'm alone –
All alone;
Trapped on my floating prison
Now



A THOUGHT

By

Dino Aldera - 2011

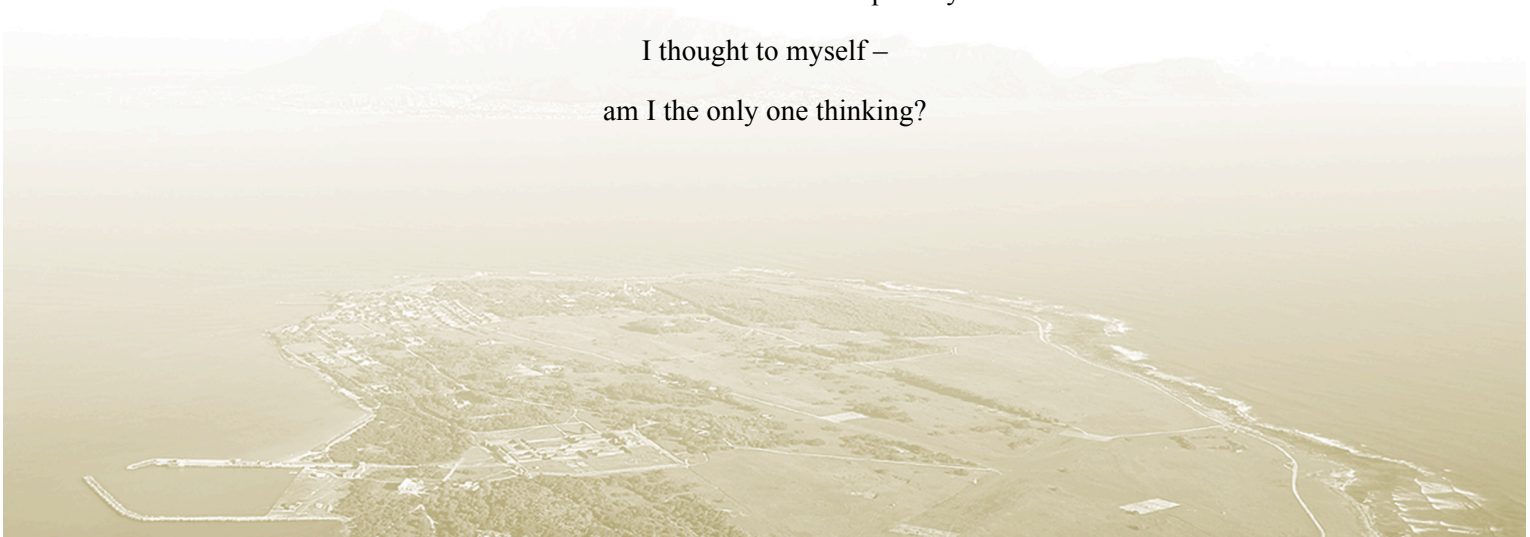
As I stood there looking;
Looking at the cardboard walls;
the broken beds;
the paneless windows;
I thought

As I sat there reflecting;
Reflecting on the poverty;
the hardship;
the inequality;
I thought

As I lay there feeling;
Feeling the pain;
the suffering
the injustice;
I thought

I thought about our hard-fought freedom;
Where it's hiding.
I thought about how some men live in luxury –
while their brothers die in poverty.

I thought to myself –
am I the only one thinking?



THE EXPERIENCE

By

Tsholo Shounyane - 2011

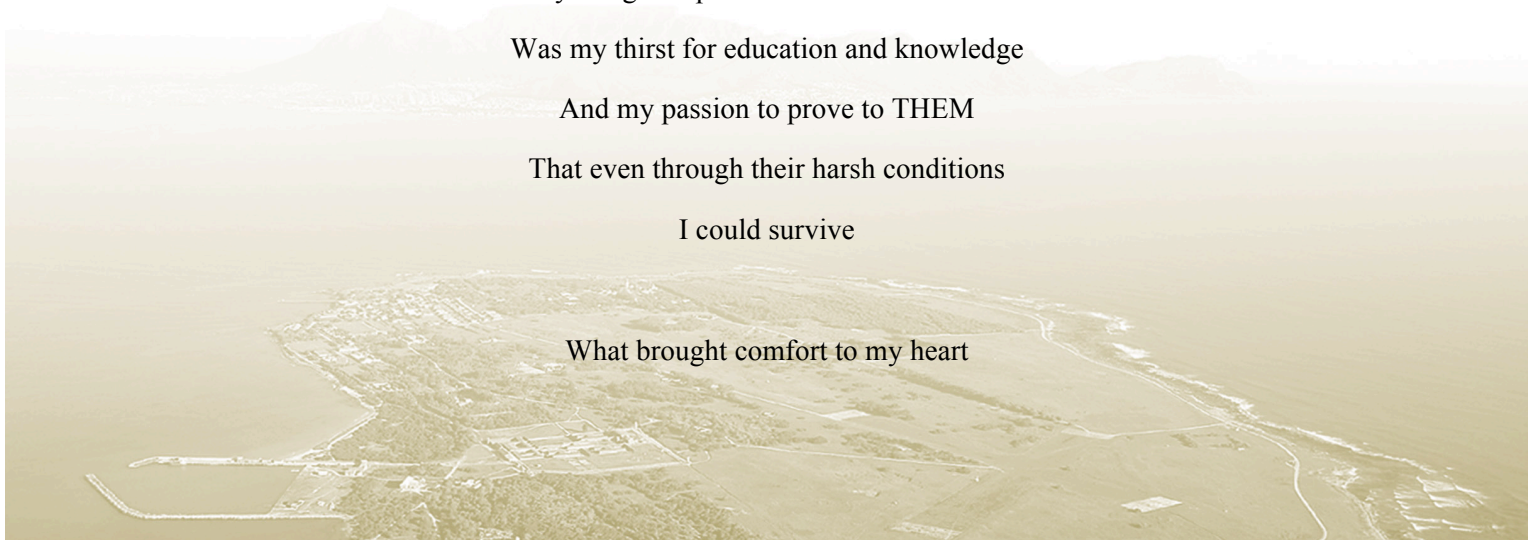
I finally got off a boat
That seemed to sail forever
I shook at the thought of the cruelty and pain
That was about to come my way

They gave me sandals, shorts and a shirt
To clothe me on rainy days
I didn't dare protest
As I'd receive a mocking laugh
Or a slap in the face
None of them cared as I shook bitterly
Because of the cold

We walked, the eighty of us,
With the terrifying music of stomp and shackle
Stomp and shackle
To a minute cell which,
Not after long, reeked of stale air
And we could each, slowly,
Sense ourselves beginning to die

The only thing that prevented me from rock bottom
Was my thirst for education and knowledge
And my passion to prove to THEM
That even through their harsh conditions
I could survive

What brought comfort to my heart



Was that I didn't need to use my voice
To be able to talk
With the vast varieties of religion
And ethnic groups

It would've been easy to withdraw in intimidation
Because of the fear of not being understood
And being frowned upon for what I was

But I went along to see that
All I needed to receive was a smile
So that I'd be able to read
What was in my comrade's heart
How the way he kicked that ball
Or his strategy in chess
Showed me how similar we really were



WHERE TO SHALL I BE GOING

By

Melanie Smith - 2011

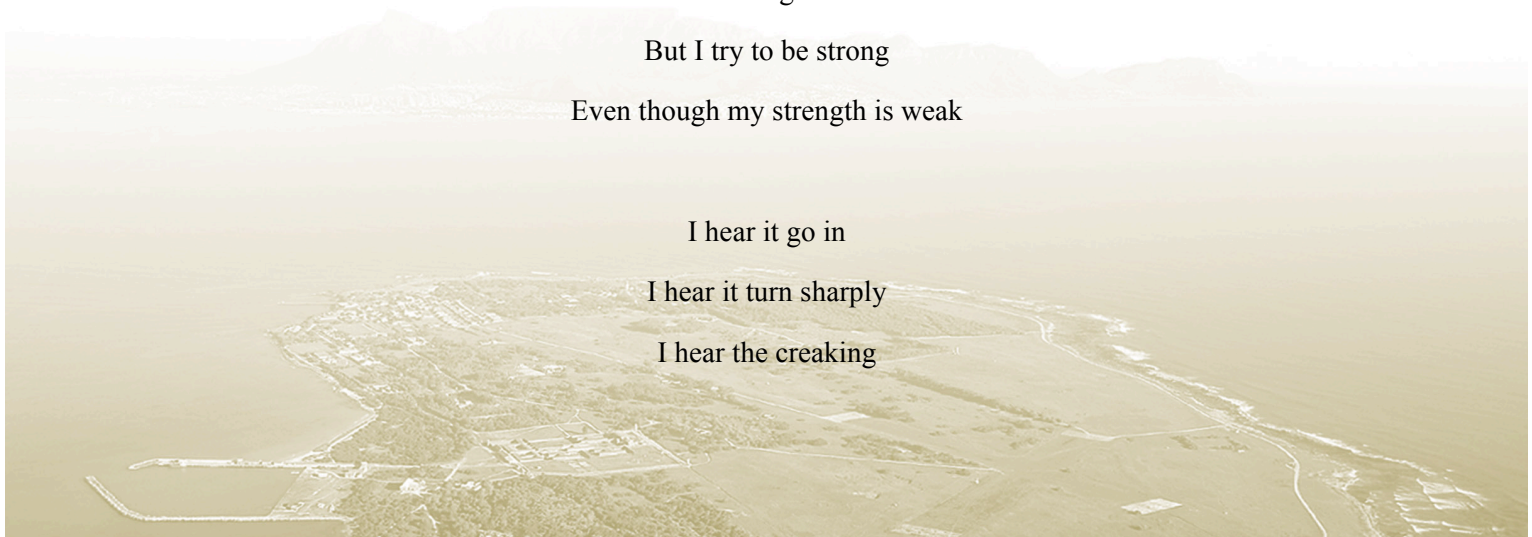
I feel the cold
From the hard
Unforgiving floor
Penetrating my skin
And encompassing my bones

The damp on the wall
A symbol of neglect
The silence of our restrictions
Enclosing slowly in on me
And the continuous murmurs
From my aching stomach
Like my oppressor's harsh reality
Eating monotonously from inside

A warden comes closer
His footsteps echoing
Sounding like the devil
Laughing shamelessly at me

The fear in me is rising
Of what might come
But I try to be strong
Even though my strength is weak

I hear it go in
I hear it turn sharply
I hear the creaking



Than unbearable silence

I'm too scared to look up

Too scared to shiver

Too scared to ask

Even to breathe

My confusion is running high

The life in me stirring

The oppression off my shoulders

Like a new lease on life

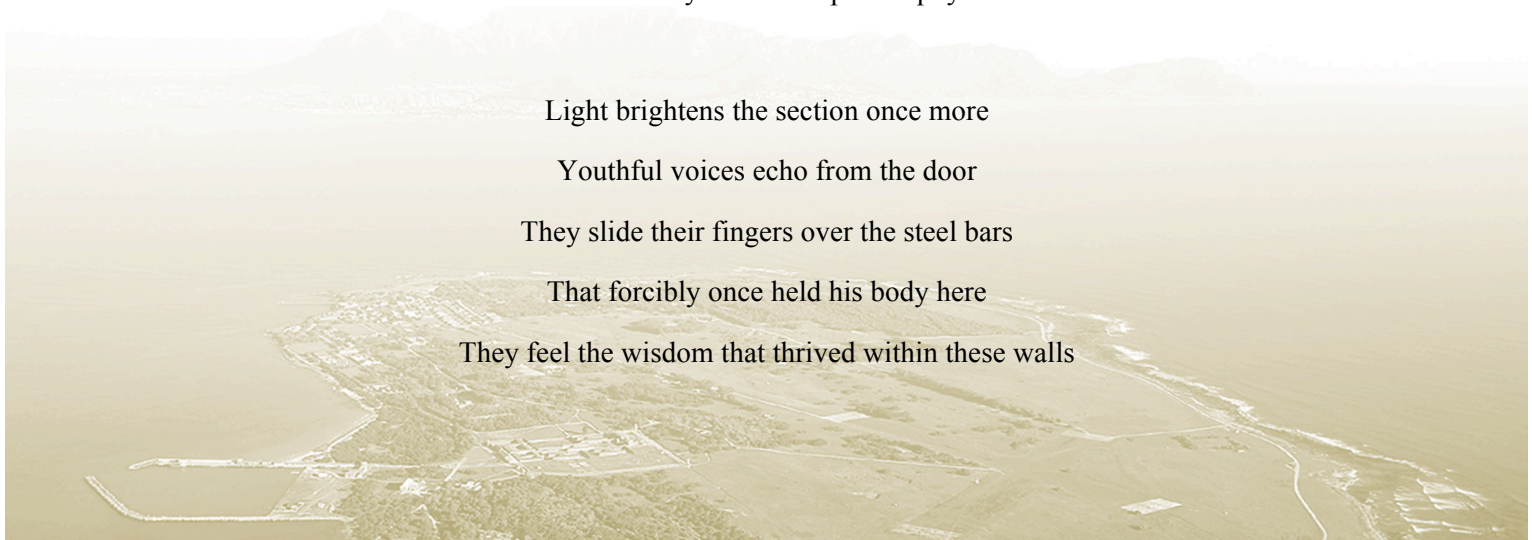


HUMAN, THE TRIUMPH

By

Karolien Schade - 2011

Darkness has silenced the section once more
As he stares at the ceiling on his mat on the floor
He clings on to the steel bars that forcingly hold his body here
His future lies outside these walls
Falling asleep makes his fantasy clear
Fortnight after fortnight
Slowly crept by
Crawling, crying
Even twilight would die
Held in the mercy of a stranger
Submissive towards infinite pain
Hurt from the inside out
A struggle to staying sane
Is his belief a crime?
Is there no logic in law?
But in the future of time
He knows his freedom will flaw
Solemn words dwell his mind
Injustice made them blind
Human, he is too
Held captive by words of authority
Set free by dreams of philosophy
Light brightens the section once more
Youthful voices echo from the door
They slide their fingers over the steel bars
That forcibly once held his body here
They feel the wisdom that thrived within these walls



They sense the fight for freedom clear

One fortnight, one fortnight

They witnessed just one

Skipping, singing

Young hearts on the run

Freedom lingering in the evening air

Struck with emotions from the fight

So we unravel our past and birth

As the new moon glides through the night

Their beliefs are respected

And considered by law

Their freedom is protected

And in unity they flow

Human, they are too

Demanding answers from authority

And they, presently, living in the freedom

Of his captivity

Celebrating his philosophy

Yet one memory gathers us all

Our past, our present, our rise and our fall

Humans, yes, we have become

Telepathically meeting

Our lives become one

Untouched, speaking our beginning has come

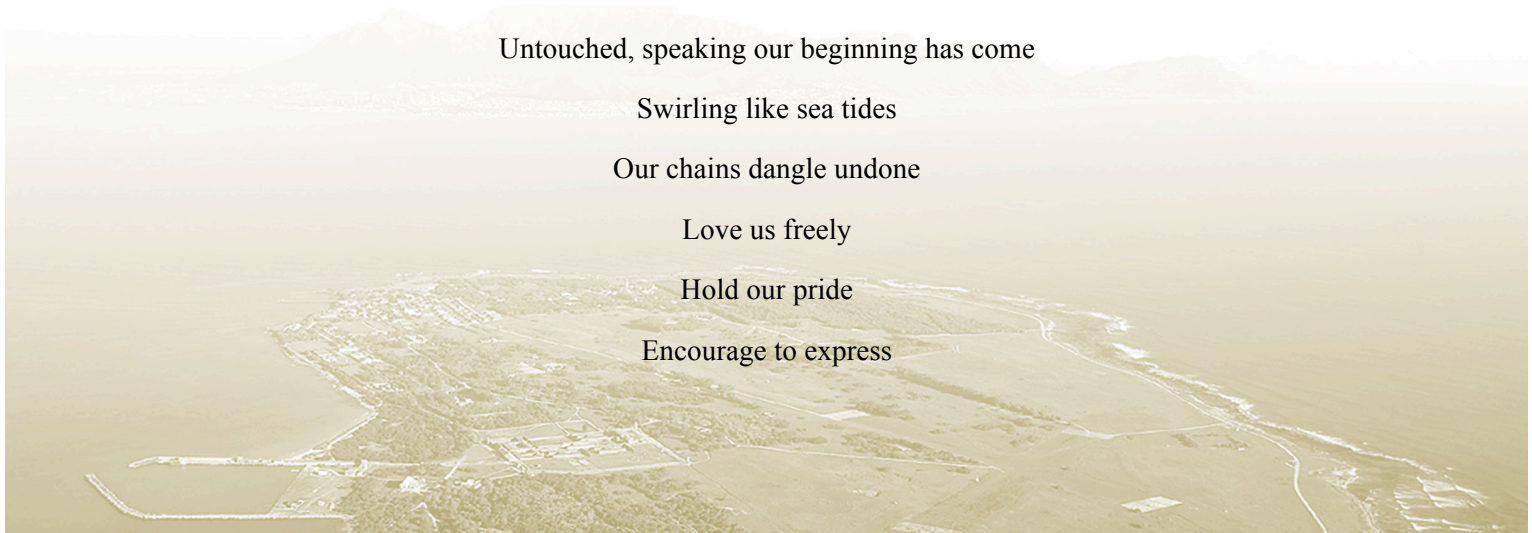
Swirling like sea tides

Our chains dangle undone

Love us freely

Hold our pride

Encourage to express



Our talents inside

Hold us dearly

Tenderly soothe

The aching and burning

The wounds and the bruise

This our spirit

Where freedom shreds the skies

South Africa, our homeland

Where internal freedom lies



FINDING FREEDOM IN THE WAVES

By

Nompumelelo Myeko - 2011

Music is a universal language, but what if the lyrics don't say what you mean?
If the rhythm is a rough and roaring one, how do you say : "Hold and comfort me,
because I 'm scared?"

I don't know anyone on this boat, but we have something in common. We are all swaying as one to
the motion of the sea.

From the beach, the waters had always been inviting. I could see the white fingers beckon me as the
waves gently broke. So I overstepped the "Slegs Blankes" sign.

And now I 'm watching my freedom drift away from me. Even if I were to be blind folded, I could
still see it go,

The taste, smell and sound are so distinct.

"Hold on", the waves seem to whisper, " be strong. Soon you 'll be free and
be able to do as you please"

Then everything calms down and the waves comfort me

ssssssssshhhhhhh



RETURN TO ROBBEN ISLAND

By

Lusani Sumbana - 2011

Interview with Modise Phekonyane – an Ex – political prisoner of Robben Island.

“ I couldn’t believe it. The feeling was mutual and I cannot exactly tell how I felt. I just cried like a baby as I saw how beautiful Robben Island had become”

This was Modise Phekonyane’s expression after he returned to the island for the second time in his life, after suffering years of oppression and depression at the Robben Island Prison.

To him, everything had completely changed – from the boat trip to the atmosphere to the people. Robben Island had, in an instant, become a place of hope and a symbol of victory, not only to South Africans, but to the entire world.

The people were now bound by one thing and that was love. He could see it in the people’s eyes. They were filled with love and compassion.

“ When I first came here as a political prisoner in the late 70’s, I was only 18 and I could feel the tension, hatred and separation between the so – called blacks and whites” he recalls, as he took a step out off the boat as he had enjoyed his ride.

This was the complete opposite from when he first came here as a political prisoner. The experience was scary as he did not even know where he was going. He was just in the deep, dark sea right in the middle of nowhere. Silence filled the whole boat and everybody’s face showed confusion and fear.

Coming to the Island, for Modise, brings back a lot of memories, both wonderful and terrible.

For him it was amazing how sport united and bound people of different races, religion and culture, just as it’s doing today. The unfortunate part was that the sport was played once a week. With Tokyo Sexwale and Terror Lekota as his mentors in his life. “Tokyo and Terror were just like fathers to me and I’ve grown to be a man, because of them.”

Robben Island for him has become a symbol of hope and victory to the world. This poem shows the change of Robben Island from a place of suffering and torment:

Robben Island

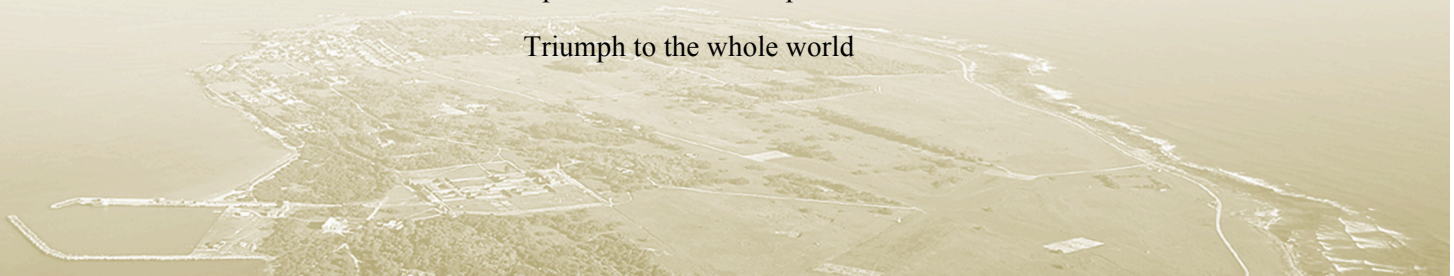
From Europe, America to Asia

The world looks down

At a very small, but significant, unique Island

A place that reflects hope and

Triumph to the whole world



A place that shines from the rest
Whose victory can be felt from within
Robben Island
An Island unlike others
Speaks powerfully to the world
Its building and evergreen trees
Aren't well known for the beauty
But for the triumph and hope they reflect
Robben Island
You are a world heritage site



UNDERSTANDING

By

Melanie Smith - 2011

I listen to the stories
With tears in my soul
Of the life that was lived
Under power of ignorance

I try to compose myself
I try to look strong
With difficulty I stand
Trying passionately to understand

And now I can be thankful
Now I can appreciate
The lessons to be learnt
From these amazing people

Of how to be responsible
In the use of my freedom
That so many fought for
When hope seemed but a dream

And now I can leave
With strength to go forward
And freely unite
With my diverse nation



THE DIVERSE APPLE BOX

By

Karolien Schade - 2011

The wind blows we scatter after our written words, the essence of freedom as we see it today. In the cells, when a warden confiscates your papers on the essence of freedom, you cannot scatter after it, you can merely watch as the officers mockingly read your crippled words. “ Look at you!” they disgustedly comment, but you are too weak to open your mouth and defend your spirit. You must remember that they cannot control your mind..... Thus you feel sorry for them for holding you here. For a moment , though, you hate them. You wonder how they can do this. Then you forgive them, because you realise, being the unfortunate creatures that they are, they are too scared to be themselves. They fear getting lost and hurt. They fear living a life without power, as much as you fear such immature people being in control of your life, they fear being you.

But things are different now, here, on the island we have learned for our history. We will treasure this as a memory in our mental apple box and side by side, you and I will carry the apple box into our future. Whenever our lives pressure us, we look into the apple box, we learn from our mistakes and better ourselves.



MAGIC

By

Tsholo Shounyane - 2011

We beat our fists upon this drum

And show our kinds of voodoo

We strum our base and show our face

And manifest the crafts that we choose

I smile in anticipation

As I see the magic

About to be put to life

By the ones of my nation

I watch us smile

And show our style

And rejoice as we move away from stagnation

We use our diverse colours

As the painting of a new picture has begun

You see, with our voices

We harmonize to a new song that's now sung

Our essence mixed with vanilla, chocolate

And caramel sweet

How it's so easy for us all

To dance to the rhythm

Of one drum beat

Listen to us roar

As we wear our colours as uniform

Our unity in hand – clap

Could overpower any storm

Happy to say

That I woke up one day



And said that I am big – boned
My lips are thick and I'm proud
And how the blue in someone else's eye
Is something to boast about
And how different we can all
In different tongues
Sing our praises loud

Yes, we can show the world
That we have our own kind of rhyme
Though the tongue of your mother
Is not that of mine
We can read each other's hearts
As our language is smile

We add our own spice
To the powers we possess
To such beauty
There is no contest

We all add essence
To the "moet" we brew in our big pot
And how, if one is a fallen soldier,
We lift them up
And stand as their rock
We beat our fists upon this drum
And show our kinds of voodoo
We strum our base and show our face
And manifest the crafts that we choose

