

Poetry Submission Sixfold

1. White of a Different Color
2. The Token
3. My Two Feet
4. Love At The Bus Stop
5. Arms Race

White of a Different Color

My body
Is a temple of deception.
It bears false witness to who I am;
A thief.
Stealing a life meant for someone else,
When I should cry
Freedom is what politics tricked the world into giving me
New clothes to cover what runs in my veins
A shame so deep it swallows the scream
Of broken dreams and coughs of coal
Told to go back from whence I came
I blame a whitewashed lynching
Inching
Closer and closer to my family tree.
An ancestry of curly haired pendulums
Seek justice.
They called us “free whites”.
Despite the missing piece
The one which will never fit
Yet we sit on the tops of palates
Stacked on docks of New Orleans
It seems our broken backs cracked
Open an opportunity knocking
On our tenement doors
That is completely out of reach

Because no matter how I fold the map

I can't make our horizons meet.

Together like praying hands

Because I'm not drawn to scale

I am a white of a different color

The Token

Zimbe Mbube zimbe

Stop Lion stop

They come for you

In robes of stealth

And crown of cunning.

Lay wait in the brush, *Mbube*

Awash with sun-kissed yellow.

In the jungle the mighty jungle the lion sleeps tonight

Mbube sleeps with one eye open

While the mighty jungle preys

Poaching tokens of unsuspecting victory.

Mbube Solomon Linda

A token

minority

exploitation

Forever reminded by

The namesake of the thief

Near the village the peaceful village the lion sleeps tonight

It takes village

To crowd tradition

To crowd spirit

As quietly as the jungle breathes

With the anticipation of the next breath

Hush my darling, don't fear, my darling, the lion sleeps tonight

No, don't fear the lion

Fear the jungle

Wild vines of twisted intention

Hang low

For the village

Planting strange fruit

Uyimbube

You are a lion

Scavenging scraps like a vulture

Uyimbube

You are a lion

We heard your roar

Amathamsanqa, Mbube, Amathmsanqa (A math am sankammbue amathmsanka

Good Luck, Lion, Good Luck

Uyimbube, Mama, uyimbube
You're a lion, Mama, You're a lion
Protect your future kings
Ransoms paid for lives that matter
To a kingdom stolen yet holds pride
Swallowed to keep legacy safe

Uyimbube, Mama, uyimbube
You're a lion, Mama, You're a lion

Kusukela Kudala kuloku kuthiwa (koo soo Keyla kooda la koolo kuk thiwa)
Long long ago people used to say
All men are created equal
Opportunities to employ
Restraint
When a man wears a hoodie
Or plays loud music
Or can't breathe
Or sings a Zulu hunting song
And dance we gave him
While wearing a wedding dress of white privilege
With garters of twisted jungle vines
Waiting to be thrown to the next generation

Njalo Ekuseni Uya Waletha Amathamsanqa (Neejaloo Ekusenny uya walletha a math am sanqa)
Every morning you bring us good luck
Quiet huntress
Putting food on the table
Setting
The example of the provider
Fierce protector
Crying for each injustice
Remind us to stand in our truth
Be told from the mountain top
Of a nation created from your bosom

ziqhenye ngokuthi ungubani, Mbube (zik hen yay ngo kuthee un goo bany MMbue)
Be proud of who you are, lion

Lala Kalhe, Mbube Lala Kalhe (la la kal hey mmbue la la kal hey)
Sleep well, Lion, sleep well.

My Two Feet

The stupidest thing you can do
is rupture a tendon in an empty parking lot of a Motel 6.
They brag “they leave the light on for you”
which was in no way consolation as you collapse from your leg’s implosion
Into a crumpled heap next to the crumpled receipt you tossed
Now whispering “isn’t this ironic?”

The second most stupid thing you can do
is ask for help from an senile couple
Walking their chihuahua, named Bootsie, in a stroller.

Ma’am Can you stand?

Pain
Sears up my leg like a zipper caught on my knee where
My weight laughs as it bullies my knee into buckling
the receipt, still pissed tells me to reconsider Weight Watchers.

Ma’am can you stand?

On your own two feet
without help
Even when you know a car
Is worth less than sticker
but salesman talks over you

Ma’am can you stand?

Up for your right to choose
When it’s right to have a family
You’re more than a breeding ground
Breeding is for dogs in strollers
Named Bootsie

Ma’am can you stand?

A chance at landing that job without landing in his bed

Ma’am can you stand?

The way media portrays body image
Showing off people like commodity
But then does an expose on human trafficking.

Ma'am can you stand?

The drive to the hospital with Bootsie

Ma'am can you stand?

the senile couple who took you to admissions

...at the county college...

Before they realized "hospital admissions" wasn't in the gps

Ma'am can you stand?

Watch over the children

separated from their parents

Looking for a better life

Ma'am can you stand?

Down

Retreat

Resign on discrimination being your thread of existence

Sewing up the one leg you can stand on as a crutch to not go any further

No. No I can't.

The pain passed on to my present propels me into the future

Stronger

Resilient

Healed

The woman's talking head in the passenger seat

Didn't realize the revolution in the back seat

Fuming at her interview questions

"Do you have a husband?"

"You're such a pretty girl. Are you looking?"

As her audience passes her by at precisely 25 miles per hour.

We finally got to the hospital

She had one last question..

Ma'am, can you stand?

Yes. Yes, I can.

On my one leg that's stronger than both of yours.

Love At The Bus Stop

Love stood at the bus stop waiting to leave
She had enough of whoever, whatever or whenever
While thoughts whispered desire
To touch, to hold, to understand.
The bus lowered in a curtsy
With opened doors in presentation to royalty
Reach back and take my hand
Drag my chances of fully knowing
Fully knowing
Love.
Is it graffiti on a bridge?
Proclaiming devotion beyond age and wear?
Or a couple's initials in wet cement?
Ignored by people who never staring at a phone?
Or is it bouquets at the bodega?
With flowers blossoming to admire the sun?
I've come undone
Scheduling love's departures and arrivals
I've come undone
With pick-ups and drop offs
I've come undone
With delays and detours
I've come undone
Watching love leave me at a bus stop.
I've come undone
I've come undone
I've come undone.

Arms Race

I held a gun...tight
Without fanfare.
It sat cold, vacant, and soulless
Waiting for me to breathe life into its barrel.

I trembled
Waiting to divide into
Left, right, red, blue, and the whites of their eyes
Staring at me.
Staring at my right to bear
Arms which pulled the trigger on this metal of freedom
The Great Deception
The Emancipation Exploitation

I wake up to the songs of birds
Luring me to the sunrise.
Tears left by the mourning doves
Evaporate before they hit the ground
Running away from my neighbors
Who want nothing more than to see me gone
Because a true patriot believes in the 13th Amendment
While being enslaved by the Second
And definitely doesn't raise a son to kneel at the National Anthem
Even though my son doesn't say "Touchdown" when he raises his arms
But "Don't shoot."

When does bear arms means another hug?
Or tan lines left by K-Mart T-shirt your Momma bought you?
Or a 5-year-old's drawing of furry appendages holding a salmon
Swimming upstream against the current political divide?
Why can't it be a well-formed militia of arms linked together
To keep the homeless warm at night.
With a flame's smoke blowing under corporate doors
Instead of up our asses
Into the mouths of dragons
Peddling the lie that the enemy is out there
When it's already inside us all.