



Social Justice Themes in Song and Verse from Africa and the Diaspora
May 20, 2023 | 2:00 – 4:00 pm
The National Museum of Language
Prince George's County Memorial Library System
Greenbelt Branch, 11 Crescent Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770

[“It’s Movement Time” by Las Cafeteras, United States](#)

Your history books got it all wrong,
so I come to you with this song.
In 1810 con el gran grito de pasión
Se levantaron con razón
Black and brown fighting together, on a day I’ll always remember

En el 5 de Mayo con el grito de gallo
Black, white, and brown bleeding together
on a day I’ll always remember

Cause really, it hasn’t been that long
So just in case Kat Williams has you guessin’
Let me kick y’all down with a little history lesson

In the 19th Century, while the US promoted degradation,
annihilation with its military and US navy
Mexico was getting rid of the caste system, voted for its first indigenous president,
even getting rid of legalized slavery

The Underground Railroad also ran south
Which led Black folks to freedom
With Mexico right there, to receive them

In 1910 it was Mexican men, with Pancho Villa and Zapata
Fighting for Tierra, Libertad y Techo
With Adelitas on the front lines with bullets across their pecho

In the year 1946, it was the Mendez family that fought against segregation in schools,
Cause before that, they treated us like fools
Pushing us out into Gangs, Wars and Drugs,
And then they get pissed off at us!
When we become Crips and Bloods,
Traviesos, zoot suiters, pachucos, folkloristas, punks, bomberas,
Jaraneras in the heat, jaraneros with a bomb ass beat,
Talking about what’s really going on in the streets.

In the 60’s in the streets of Oakland, California, Black Panthers organized for answers
Young Lords in New York fought against wars

The Stonewall Rebellion remained true to the rights of the LGBTQ
A.I.M who was down with native rights with no shame in their game

Brown Berets in LA learning how to fight, and doing what's right
In the Campos of California, Fillipinos were the first ones to lay down the boycott
Screaming in solidarity, ISANG Bk SAK!
One rise, One fall, you come for one, you come for all!

And today, Arizona and Alabama don't play
Carving out racist laws like it's make out of clay

I stand with Emmitt, Trayvon, Oscar, and Bell
With my mentor, Mumia up in the cell
Telling you I'd rather be blind that to stay quiet on a day where my people are hunt down like prey

Cause my ability to breathe is directly connected to my ability to see
That it's not about me, never was, never will be
It's about 'WE'
It's time to move y'all
It's Movement Time!

Plowing and Sowing <i>Ancient Egyptian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
<p><i>hru nefer, tutu qebu, na en 'ahu her 'ath, ta pet her 'art en 'ab-en, bak-en en pa ser as-tu, pa h'ati, kherp na en 'ahu, mek pa h'a 'ah'a her peter</i> <i>khenems as-tu em baku, tche-ek uh'a-en er nu nefer</i> <i>'au-'a er 'art hau her baku en pa ser geru uza 'an ha paheri maa kheru er atep na en usekhu em ta sekhet: djetch-ef en na en 'ahuti, as-ten, ta aht petet-t'a, kher pa hapaa urt</i> <i>djetch-sen 'ary-en, mek-en; em 'ar sentch her ta aht, si nefert'a urt</i> <i>neferui peru en re-ek pay-'a sher'a; renpet nefert shut em setchebu, senbet semu neb; kher na en behesu nefer er khet nebt</i></p>	<p>A fine day, one is cool, the oxen are drawing, the heaven is doing according to our hearts, let us work for the noble! Hasten, leader, forward with the oxen! behold the prince is standing and looking on. Friend, hasten at the work, let us finish in good time. I shall do more than the work due to the noble: be silent. The prince Paheri, deceased, proceeds to load the barges in the river-meadow: he says to the farm-laborers, "Hasten ye, the corn fields are broken up: the Nile was very great". Say, "We are doing so, behold us; fear not for the corn-fields, they are very good". Twice excellent is your exclamation, my son! the year is good, free of ills; healthy in all herbs; and the calves are excellent beyond anything.</p>
Reaping <i>Ancient Egyptian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
<p><i>'ar 'an-ek n'a 11009 nuk se-khem-'a set as-tu em 'ar 'asha-re, pa 'aa as en 'ahuti khen en usheb, djetch-sen hru pen nefer per em ta, ta mehyt pert'a, ta pet her 'art en 'ab en, bak-en mert 'ab-en</i> <i>'amem n'a u'at tchet, mek 'a-en em mesheru; em 'ar na en kehesu en sef, ger em pa heru</i></p>	<p>If you bring me 11009 [sheaves], I am the man to strip them all. Quick, do not chatter, you old quack of a laborer. In answering chant they say, "This is a good day, come out onto the land", "the north wind has come out", "the sky is doing according to our heart", "let us work and bind firm our heart". Give me a hand; behold we shall come in the evening, do not repeat the meanness of yesterday, cease it today.</p>
Threshing <i>Ancient Egyptian</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
<p><i>'as-ten, meh retchui-ten, pa mu 'au, peh-ef na en qen'au</i> <i>'au pa shu shemu, tche-tu en pa shu sunt 'at em remu</i> <i>en ursh pa neb'a her remen-'a retchui? su 'ab-'a</i> <i>he-ten en-ten (sep senu), 'ahu, he-ten en-ten, he-ten en-ten; tcheha er 'am, 'at en nebu-ten; em ertche urtch en 'ab-ten: tutu qeb</i></p>	<p>Hasten ye, quicken your feet: the water is coming, and will soon reach the baskets. The sun is hot, may the sun be given fish in payment for the corn. Does not the pole stay all day on my shoulder very firmly? That is my wish. Thresh for yourselves, thresh for yourselves, oxen: thresh for yourselves, thresh for yourselves: straw to eat, corn for your masters: let not your hearts be still: it is cool.</p>

Complaint

Traditional Lomwe Women's Song – Mozambique

Elomwe	English Translation
Kohaw'oye,	I suffer, I do
Oyi-ya-e-e	<i>Oyi-ya-e-e</i>
Kohaw'oye,	I suffer, I do
Kohawa, murima onanla	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Miyano thitho?	What's to be done?
Kohawa, murima onanla	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Nochochi nakalimi Kohawa, murima onanla	I cultivate my cotton
Alulo, alulo etokwa, Kohawa, murima onanla	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
oPoma iwe keliwo Kohawa, murima onanla	Picking, picking a whole basketful
Kinyiviwo nekomi	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Kohawa, murima onanla Miyo wupuwela-ay	I've taken it to the Boma there
Oyi-ya-e-e	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Kohaw'oye	They've given me five escudos
Kohawa, murima onanla Ayakali hali	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Kohawa, murima onanla oLuapo iwe keli	When I reflect on all this
Kohawa, murima onanla Olapawaya lapi	<i>Oyi-ya-e-e</i>
Kohawa, murima onanla Alikintaki muhali ali	I suffer, I do
Kohawa, murima onanla Evinyekali makivo	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Kohawa, murima onanla Wapulisiya keli	My husband, that man
Kohawa, murima onanla Anamiwa matani	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Kohawa, murima onanla Miyo wupuwela-ay	He went there to Luabo
Oyi-ya-e-e	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
Kohaw'oye	He went to work, work hard
Kohawa, murima onanla	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
	He broke off some sugarcane to eat (2)
	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
	Leaving work, he was arrested
	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
	He was taken to the police
	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
	He was beaten on the hand
	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>
	When I reflect on all this
	<i>Oyi-ya-e-e</i>
	I suffer, I do
	<i>I suffer, my heart is weeping</i>

“With Whom Shall I Sing,”

[Traditional Maseko Ngoni song, Malawi, 19th century](#)

Ngoni	English
Ati Wanthu awiri ndomwenu Angoni Ndawiri ndomwenu Ndawiri ndomwenu Msaka mzilimbani? Pakhomo pomwepo Ndawiri ndomwenu Ndawiri ndomwenu Msaka mzilimbana? Pakhomo pomwepo Ndiyimba ndi yani? Ngoma anyamata akukana Nkosi yalamula.	These are two the same two people The same two The same two Thus why do you fight each other? At the homestead The same two The same two Thus why do you fight each other? At the homestead With whom shall I sing? The Inkosi has ordered.
Eeee pepa Sato Pepa Chisale Eeee Chikhwangwa eeeee...	Sorry Sato Sorry Chisale Chikhwangwa eeeee...
Ndiyimba ndi yani Nkosi yalamula Anyamata akukana Nkosi yalamula Wanthu ndi awiri Makosana Ndiyimba ndi yani Ine Nkosi yalamula.	Whom shall I sing with? The Inkosi has ordered The boys are refusing The Inkosi has ordered Two are people With whom shall I sing? The Inkosi has ordered.

Three Poems by Abdilatif Abdalla –

Performed in Swahili (Kimvita dialect) by the author

Kuno Kunena	Speaking Out
<p>Kuno kunena kwa nini, kukanikomeya kuno? Kwani kunena kunani, kukashikwa kani vino? Kani iso na kiini, na kuninuniya mno Kanama nako kunena, kwaonekana ni kuwi</p> <p>Kana na kuku kunena, kunenwa kakutakiwi Kuna wanakokuona, kunena kwamba si kuwi Kunena wakikuona, kukuita kawakawi Kunena kana kwanuka, nikukome kukunena?</p>	<p>Why has speaking out provoked my imprisonment? What therein compelled my confinement? Invalid insistence incited anger against me Apparently speaking out is viewed with contempt</p> <p>Speaking out may be distasteful to some Yet others do not regard it negatively Encountering each other, they hesitate not to embrace So if speaking out stinks, should I shut up?</p>

*Written July 19, 1970 by **Abdilatif Abdalla** in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, Nairobi, Kenya
 Translated by Kelly Askew and Abdilatif Abdalla, 30 October, 2014, Ann Arbor, MI*

Siwati	Conviction
<p>Siwati nshishiyelo, siwati; kwani niwate? Siwati ni lilo hilo, ‘talishika kwa vyovyote Siwati ni mimi nalo, hapano au popote Hadi kaburini sote, mimi nalo tufukiwe</p> <p>Siwati ngaadhibiwa, adhabu kila mifano Siwati ningaambiwa, ‘tapawa kila kinono Siwati lililo sawa, silibandui mkono Hata ningaumwa meno, mkono siubandui</p> <p>Siwati si ushindani, mukasema nashindana Siwati ifahamuni, sababuye waungwana Siwati ndangu imani, niithaminiyo sana Na kuiwata naona, itakuwa ni muhali</p> <p>Siwati nimeradhiwa, kufikwa na kila mawi Siwati ningaambiwa, niaminiyo hayawi Siwati kisha nikawa, kama nzi; hivyo siwi Thamama nakariri siwi, na Mngu nisaidiya</p>	<p>I will not abandon it, that which I hold dear. Why should I abandon it? I will not abandon it. I'll hold fast to my conviction, come what may I will not abandon it, it and I will never part, here or anywhere 'Til in the same grave we are together buried.</p> <p>I will not abandon it, even if suffering all manner of punishment I will not abandon it, even if told that I'll be handsomely rewarded I will not abandon it, that which is right, my hand will not relinquish it Even if severely bitten, my hand will not let go.</p> <p>I will not abandon it. Think not that I am simply being stubborn I will not abandon it, O you people understand the reason why I will not abandon it, for this is my conviction, which I hold so dear And to abandon it, just like that, would be impossible.</p>

	<p>I will not abandon it, prepared I am to face every danger I will not abandon it, even if told I believe in fantasies I will not abandon it and then become like a fly – that I'll never be Indeed I repeat: that I'll never be. So help me God!</p>
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*Written March 14, 1970 by Abdilatif Abdalla in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, Nairobi, Kenya
 Translated by Kelly Askew and Abdilatif Abdalla, Berlin, 2013*

Mamba	Crocodile
<p>Nami nambe, niwe kama waambao Niupambe, upendeze wasomao Niufumbe, wafumbuwe wawezao</p> <p>Kuna mamba, mtoni metakabari Ajigamba, na kujiona hodari Yuwaamba, kwamba ‘taishi dahari</p> <p>Memughuri, ghururi za kipumbavu Afikiri, hataishiwa na nguvu Takaburi, hakika ni maangavu</p> <p>Akumbuke, siku yake ikifika Roho yake, ajuwe itamtoka Nguvu zake, kikomoche zitafika</p> <p>Afahamu, mtu hajuwi la kesho Hatadumu, angatumiya vitisho Maadamu, lenye mwanzo lina mwisho</p>	<p>I too have words; I'll join those already speaking I'll gild my verse so it pleases those who're reading; Untwist these words, for their sense may be misleading.</p> <p>There's a croc gliding smugly down the river, A boastful sop who believes he's brave and clever. He loves to talk, tells the world he'll live forever.</p> <p>With fool's conceit he strings himself along, Sustains belief that he'll always be this strong, But self-deceit and pride can only last so long.</p> <p>He should know, someday he'll breathe his last. He too will go, once his die's been cast. Time will show his power finally passed.</p> <p>What lies ahead none of us can comprehend; What fate has set, no show of fierceness can transcend. Don't forget: what has a start must have an end.</p>

*Written March 23, 1970 by Abdilatif Abdalla in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, Nairobi, Kenya
 Translated by Meg Arenberg*

“Patria y Vida” by Youtel, Cuba, 2021

[Performed via video recording by the artist.](#)

Patria y Vida – Homeland and Life	English Translation
<p>[Intro: Randy (Gente de Zona)] Y eres tú mi canto de sirena Porque con tu voz se van mis penas Y este sentimiento ya está añejo Tú me dueles tanto aunque estés lejos [Yotuel] Hoy yo te invito a caminar por mis solares Pa’ demostrarte de que sirven tus ideales Somos humanos aunque no pensemos iguales No nos tratemos ni dañemos como animales Esta es mi forma de decírtelo Lloro mi pueblo y siento yo su voz Tú cinco nueve, yo doble dos Sesenta años trancado el dominó Bombo’ y platillo a los quinientos de La Habana Mientras en casa en las cazuelas ya no tienen jama ¿Qué celebramos si la gente anda deprisa? Cambiando al Che Guevara y a Martí por la divisa Todo ha cambiado, ya no es lo mismo Entre tú y yo, hay un abismo Publicidad de un paraíso en Varadero Mientras las madres lloran por sus hijos que se fueron</p> <p>[Chorus: Gente de Zona and Yotuel] Se acabó, tú cinco nueve, yo doble dos Ya se acabó, sesenta años trancado el dominó, mira Se acabó, tú cinco nueve, yo doble dos Ya se acabó, sesenta años trancado el dominó</p> <p>[Descemer Bueno] Somos artistas, somos sensibilidad La historia verdadera, no la mal contada Somos la dignidad de un pueblo entero pisoteada A punta de pistola y de palabras que aún son nada</p> <p>[Alexander (Gente de Zona)] No más mentiras, mi pueblo pide libertad, no más doctrinas</p>	<p>[Intro: Randy (Gente de Zona)] And you are my siren song Because your voice takes away my sorrows And this feeling is already old You hurt so much even though you are far away [Yotuel] Today I invite you to walk my streets To show you what your ideals are good for We are human even if we do not think alike Let’s not treat or harm each other like animals This is my way of telling you My people cry and I hear their voice You’re five nine, I am double two Sixty years with the domino stuck Great fanfare for Havana’s five hundred While at home pots no longer have food in them What are we celebrating if people walk fast Exchanging Che Guevara and Martí for “the currency”? Everything has changed, nothing is the same Between you and me, there is an abyss Advertising a paradise in Varadero While mothers cry for their children who have gone</p> <p>[Chorus: Gente de Zona and Yotuel] It’s over, you’re five nine, I’m double two It’s already over, sixty years with the domino stuck, see It’s over, you’re five nine, I’m double two It’s already over, 60 years with the domino stuck</p> <p>[Descemer Bueno] We are artists, we are sensitivity The true story, not lies We are the trampled dignity of an entire people Under the barrel of a gun and words that mean nothing yet</p> <p>[Alexander (Gente de Zona)] No more lies, my people demand freedom, no more doctrines Let’s no longer shout “Homeland and Death”, but rather “Homeland and Life”</p>

Patria y Vida – Homeland and Life	English Translation
<p>Ya no gritemos “Patria y Muerte” sino “Patria y Vida” Y empezar a construir lo que soñamos, lo que destruyeron con sus manos...</p> <p>[Randy (Gente de Zona)] Que no siga corriendo la sangre, por querer pensar diferente ¿Quién le dijo que Cuba es de ustedes, si mi Cuba es de toda mi gente?</p> <p>[Chorus: Gente de Zona and Descemer Bueno] Se acabó, ya se venció tu tiempo, se rompió el silencio Ya se acabó, ya se acabó la risa y el llanto ya está corriendo Se acabó, y no tenemos miedo, se acabó el engaño Ya se acabó, son sesenta y dos haciendo daño</p> <p>[Maykel Osorbo] Allí vivimos con la incertidumbre del pasado, plantado Quince amigos puestos, listos pa’ morirnos Izamos la bandera todavía la represión del régimen al día Anamely Ramos firme con su poesía Omara Ruiz Urquiola dándonos aliento, de vida Rompieron nuestra puerta, violaron nuestro templo Y el mundo ‘tá consciente de que el movimiento San Isidro continúa puesto</p> <p>[El Funky] Seguimos en las mismas, la seguridad metiendo prisma Esas cosas a mi como me indignan, se acabó el enigma Ya ‘sa tu revolución maligna, soy funky style aquí tienes mi firma</p> <p>Ya ustedes están sobrando ya no le queda, ya se van bajando El pueblo se cansó de estar aguantando, un nuevo amanecer estamos esperando</p>	<p>And start building what we dream of, what they destroyed with their hands [Randy (Gente de Zona)] Let no more blood be shed, for wanting to think differently Who told you that Cuba is yours, when my Cuba belongs to all my people? [Chorus: Gente de Zona and Descemer Bueno] It’s over, your time is up, the silence is broken It is over, laughter is over and the cries are running It’s over, and we are not afraid, the deceit is over It is over now, its sixty two causing harm [Maykel Osorbo] There we lived with the uncertainty of the past, waiting Fifteen assigned friends, ready to see us die We hoist the flag, the regime’s repression still in course Anamely Ramos, steadfast with her poetry Omara Ruiz Urquiola encouraging us, giving us life They broke down our door, they violated our temple And the world is aware that the San Isidro Movement continues to be resolved [El Funky] Things continue the same, security attacking us Oh how these things outrage me, the enigma is over Enough with your evil revolution, I am funky style, here’s my signature You are now redundant, you don’t fit in, you’re on your way down The people are tired of taking it, we are awaiting a new dawn</p> <p>[Chorus: Gente de Zona and Yotuel] It’s over, you’re five nine, I’m double two It is over now, sixty years with the domino stuck, see It’s over, you’re five nine, I’m double two It’s over, sixty years with the domino stuck [Outro: All]</p>

Patria y Vida – Homeland and Life	English Translation
<p>[Chorus: Gente de Zona and Yotuel] Se acabó, tú cinco nueve, yo doble dos</p> <p>Ya se acabó, sesenta años trancado el dominó, mira Se acabó, tú cinco nueve, yo doble dos Ya se acabó, sesenta años trancado el dominó</p> <p>[Outro: All] Patria y Vida Patria y Vida Patria y Vida</p> <p>(Sesenta años trancado el dominó)</p>	<p>Homeland and Life Homeland and Life Homeland and Life (Sixty years with the domino stuck)</p> <p>English Translation by Gabriela Jatene</p>
<p>Translation Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You're five nine, I am double two</i>: A reference to the year 1959 and the year 2020 • <i>Sixty years with the domino stuck</i>: This sentence is a reference to the Cold War notion that countries would turn Communist one after the other – like dominos. Cuba was the first domino, but it got stuck – no one else followed through into communism. • <i>The currency</i>: Meaning US dollars – this is drawing attention to the fact that Cuba is effectively dollarized. 	

Echoes of Colonialism

“Song of the Machila Bearers,” [*traditional Lomwe song, Mozambique, approx. 1915*](#)

Original in Lomwe; performed in English by Jill Robbins and Arao Ameny.

Song of the Machila Bearers - Lomwe	English
<i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
O — o, <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	O — o, You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
O — o, <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	O — o, You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Mwakuviheke!	Pick it up, quickly!
<i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Mwakuveke!	Come quickly!
<i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Machira anamochimakiwa: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	The machila must be carried along fast: You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Munamoroliwa nyuwo: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You’ll be helped now, you will: You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Vava hihano munamoroliwa: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You’ll be helped in just a moment: You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Munamoroliwa hihanovava. <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	Here, now, you’ll be helped You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Amulejiki! Muruwi amuleki? <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	Servants! Where are you, you servants? You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Mwalele amachilero! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	Tell the bearers! You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Epareyo yaworole akwaya: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	This group must go to help the others: You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
(Kinamuriha!) <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You! Hurry up there! (We’ll drop it!) You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!
Akunya yarwele olampwa! (Olimela akuya! Anamulapwa valiyai)	White people came to be worked for! (Heavy white men! People have to work for them, that’s true.)
<i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Mwakuveke, mwakuveke! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i>	You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old! Come quickly, come quickly! You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!

Song of the Machila Bearers - Lomwe	English
<p>Nvele vate! Nele vate vo! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Akunya anarwa olelo yala: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Mwakuveke! (Mitiya!) <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Mitiya nampiya: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Ntala! (Mwakuveke. Mwakuveke!) <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Akunya vanja! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Machira! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Yarwele olampwa! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Machilero! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Wakisa murana! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Otimaka! <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Mitiya nampiya vana Mochema: <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i> Vana Mochema, vana Mochema! (Mwakuve! kinamuriha!) <i>Munanlela okono muloka muluvanle!</i></p>	<p>Sweep the yard! That one! Sweep the yard! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Those white men are coming here today: <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Come quickly! (It's midday!) <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> At midday, we'll arrive: <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Hunger! (Hurry! Hurry!) <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> The white men are eating! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Machila! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> You must work at this job! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Bearer! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Keep your backbone steady! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> Run! <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> At midday, well arrive at Mochema: <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i> At Mochema, at Mochema! (Hurry! I'm going to drop it!) <i>You weep, you sleep stiffly, when you are old!</i></p>

“Here Comes Ruy’s Steamer” by Fernando Nicolas

[Mozambique, 1975](#)

ChiSena	English
Apa Shitima ya Ruy A-a-ay Tawani A-a-ay Tawani Machambero! A-a-ay Tawani machambero!	Here comes Ruy’s steamer A-a-ay Run away A-a-ay Run away, gardeners! A-a-ay Run away, gardeners!
Nda mutawe baba-ay Nda mutawe mama Nda mutawe baba-ay baba	You must run, father You must run, mother You must run, mother, father
Nda mutawe baba-ay Nda mutawe mama Nda mutawe mudzi mo-ay-ay	You must run, father You must run, mother You must run from that village
Abale mutawe mudzi mo A baba, mudzi mwafika chizimo Baba, mutawe mwene mo.	Brothers, you must run from that village Father, a devil has descended on the village Father, you must run from that place
A baba, abale, Shitima A baba, abale, Shitima A baba, abale, Shitima	Fathers, brothers, the steamer Fathers, brothers, the steamer Fathers, brothers, the steamer
A-ay Baba gopa Pirira A-ay Baba gopa Pirira A-ay Baba gopa Pirira	Father, fear for Pirira Father, fear for Pirira Father, fear for Pirira
Ay-mutawe mutawe Mutawire mutawe mutawire Ay-baba, ay mutawire, ay baba.	You must run, you must run Run. You must run. Run. Father, you must run fast, father
Ay, mutawe mudzi mo Say-mutawe mudzi mo Mutaya nipa zanu zo	You must run from that village You must run from that village Get rid of that kachasu of yours (1)
Ay-abwera nsupai-ay Ay-abwera nsupai-ay Ay-abwera nsupai-ay	The cypaes have come (2) The cypaes have come The cypaes have come
Ay, munamangwa lero Ay, munamangwa lero	You’ll be tied up today You’ll be tied up today

ChiSena	English
Ay, munamangwa lero	You'll be tied up today
Ay-baba-ay Adapenga nipa lero Ay-mutawe baba-ay	Father You who are brewing kachasu today You must run away father
Mama-ay, ndisafamba-ay Munamangwa na ngume Mama-ay, mwamala Pirira lero	Mother, I always have nightmares You'll be tied up with rope Mother, you Pirira people are finished today
Mama-ay, ndava mwapakiswa Mama-ay, ndava mwapakiswa Mama-ay, ndava mwapakiswa	Mother, I've heard you've been shipped away Mother, I've heard you've been shipped away Mother, I've heard you've been shipped away
Ay-ay, pakira mwapakira Ay-ay, pakira mwapakira Mwapakiswa pa Shitima.	Gone aboard, you've gone aboard Gone aboard, you've gone aboard You've been shipped away in the steamer.
Apa Shitima ya Ruy A-a-ay Tawani A-a-ay Tawani Machambero! A-a-ay Tawani machambero!	Here comes Ruy's steamer A-a-ay Run away A-a-ay Run away, gardeners! A-a-ay Run away, gardeners!

Notes

- 1 *Kachasu*: a spirit distilled from the fruit of the cashew tree. It's production was illegal.
- 2 *Cypaes*, or Sepoys: the "native" (that is, African) police, employed by the local administrator. i.e., taken under arrest in Rui's steamer

Man of the Millennium - Mfie Apem Nipatitire by Adjei Agyai-Baah, Ghana, 2021

Performed in Twi via recording by author (with accompaniment by drummers); performed in English by Greg Nedved.

Mfie Apem Nipatitire	Man of the Millennium
<p>Ofiraa n’ani wɔ n’anisoadehunu nti na obubuu n’apɛ wɔ n’anamɔntuo mu na ɔhwan n’ase akonwa wɔ berɛ a ɔtiaa ne nan akyi na ɔsan nso kaa ne ntanban fam senea ɔrentumi ntu nkɔsunsan ntenkyea ne nkoasom mu ntoma a na wɔde afira abibiman.</p> <p>Na ɔpam n’ano senea ɛbeyɛ na ɔrentumi ɛne abibiman nkaɛɛ no ntumi nto kɛsɛ maa no wui wɔ asaase pradaa bi so a ɔkɔɔ wɔn mmoa wɔ berɛ bi a atwam.</p> <p>Na wɔhunuu sɛ na ɔkuta adwene kɛsɛɛ a na ɛboro ne ti ketewa kwankoraa sɔɔ nanso wɔantumi anka n’abodin anhyɛ: “abibirem barima kokoɔdurufɔɔ”.</p> <p>Na saa berɛyi ne saman gyina atweneɛ a ɔretwen na ɔrehwe nneɛma berɛ a ne nsa ano nnwuma abeyɛ ahonini a ɛrehunahuna nea ɔnni anisoadehunu.</p>	<p>They blinded him For his vision And crippled him For his movement They removed his chair When he stood up And clipped his wings from flying high To tear through the cloak Of injustice and oppression.</p> <p>They sealed his mouth From sending brotherly messages of unity And made him die in a barren land Where he once sprinkled some seeds of hope.</p> <p>They saw his brain too big To be housed in his smallish skull But could not deny him a place of honor: “African’s man of the millennium”</p> <p>And now his ghost stands on guard Humbly watching and waiting As his mighty works Have become hunters Haunting the visionless!</p>

Introduction to Identity: Poems of Langston Hughes

<p>Beggar Boy <i>By Langston Hughes</i></p>	<p>Niño Pordiosero <i>Spanish Translation</i></p>
<p>What is there within this beggar lad That I can neither hear nor feel nor see, That I can neither know nor understand And still it calls to me?</p> <p>Is not he but a shadow in the sun— A bit of clay, brown, ugly, given life? And yet he plays upon his flute a wild free tune As if Fate had not bled him with her knife!</p>	<p>¿Qué habrá dentro de este chico pordiosero Que yo no puedo oír ni ver ni sentir, Que no puedo saber ni comprender Pero que me sigue llamando?</p> <p>¿Será que no es más que una sombra en el sol — Un trozo de arcilla, marrón, feo, que recibió vida? ¡Mas sigue tocando con su flauta un son alocado y libre Como si el Destino no lo hubiera desangrado ya con su puñal! <i>(Translation by Patricia Bejarano Fisher)</i></p>

<p>Cross <i>By Langston Hughes</i></p>	<p>Cruce <i>Spanish Translation</i></p>
<p>My old man’s a white old man And my old mother’s black. If ever I cursed my white old man I take my curses back.</p> <p>If ever I cursed my black old mother And wished she were in hell, I’m sorry for that evil wish And now I wish her well.</p> <p>My old man died in a fine big house. My ma died in a shack. I wonder where I’m gonna die, Being neither white nor black?</p>	<p>Mi viejo es un hombre blanco Y mi vieja, mujer negra. Si alguna vez maldije a mi viejo blanco Retiro mi maldición.</p> <p>Si a mi vieja negra llegué a maldecir Y a los infiernos la envié, Lamento ese mal deseo Y hoy le auguro todo bien.</p> <p>Mi viejo murió en gran casa. Mi mama en un cuchitril. Me pregunto dónde iré a morir yo, Que ni blanco ni negro soy... <i>(Translation by Patricia Bejarano Fisher)</i></p>

<p>Lament for Dark Peoples <i>By Langston Hughes</i></p>	<p>Lamento por las gentes oscuras</p>
<p>I was a red man one time, But the white men came. I was a black man, too. But the white men came.</p> <p>They drove me out of the forest. They took me away from the jungles. I lost my trees. I lost my silver moons.</p>	<p>Fui un hombre rojo alguna vez, Pero llegaron los blancos. Fui un hombre negro también, Pero los blancos llegaron.</p> <p>Me echaron de los bosques. Me arrancaron de las selvas. Perdí mis árboles. Perdí mis lunas de plata.</p>

Lament for Dark Peoples <i>By Langston Hughes</i>	Lamento por las gentes oscuras
Now they've caged me In the circus of civilization. Now I herd with the many— Caged in the circus of civilization.	Ahora me han enjaulado en el circo de la civilización. Ahora ando en manada con la multitud Enjaulada en el circo de la civilización. <i>(Translation by Patricia Bejarano Fisher)</i>
The Jester <i>By Langston Hughes</i>	The Jester (El Bufón)
I hold tragedy In one hand And in the other Comedy,— Masks for the soul. Laugh with me. You would laugh! Weep with me. You would weep! Tears are my laughter. Laughter in my pain. Cry at my grinning mouth, If you will. Laugh at my sorrow's reign. I am the Black Jester, The dumb clown of the world, The booted, booted fool of silly men. Once I was wise. Shall I be wise again?	En una mano Llevo la tragedia Y en la otra La comedia,— Máscaras para el alma. Rían conmigo. ¡Y cómo reirían! Lloren conmigo. ¡Y cómo llorarían! Las lágrimas son mi risa. La risa es mi dolor. Lloren si quieren Al ver mi boca risueña. Rían al ver el reino de mi pena. Soy el Bufón Negro, El payaso bufo del mundo, El botado, el tonto botado de hombres necios. **** Fui sabio antes. ¿Será que lo vuelvo a ser? <i>(Translation by Patricia Bejarano Fisher)</i>

This section will conclude with a recording of **Langston Hughes reading “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,”** one of his most famous poems. [YouTube Video](#)

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Identity, Ethnicity and Gender: From Tradition to the 21st Century

“Lantern and glass,” traditional Ethiopian poem

Performed in Amharic and English by Workneh Getasew.

<p>ፋኖስ እና ብርጭቆው Fanosi ina birich'ik'owi <i>Traditional Ethiopian Poem (Amharic)</i></p>	<p>The flame and the glass <i>English Translation</i></p>
<p>1. አንድ የፋኖስ መብራት በስራው የኮራ፤ Anidi yefanosi mebirati besirawi yekora 2. እንዲህ ሲል ተጣላ ከብርጭቆ ጋራ፤ Inidīhu sīli tet'ala kebirich'ik'o gara 3. እኔ ነኝ መብራቱ ብርሃን የምሰጥ፤ Inē nenyi mebiratu birihani yemiset'i 4. ጨለማን አጥፍቼ የምገላልጥ፤ Ch'elemāni āt'ifichē yemigelaliti, 5. አንተ ግን እፊት እንዲህ ተደንቅረህ፤ Anite gini ifitē inidīhi tedenik'irehi, 6. ዙርያዬን ከበኸኝ እንዲያው ተገትረህ፤ Zuriyayēni kebehenyi inidīyawī tegetirehi 7. አልገባኝም እኔ የምትሰራው ስራ፤ Aligebanyimi inē yemitiserawi sira, 8. ብርሃኔ ሩቅ ደርሶ ደምቆ እንዳያበራ፤ Birihanē ruki deriso demiko inidayabera, 9. እንቅፋት እየሆንህ ስራዬን አታጥፋ፤ Inik'ifati iyehonihi sirayēni ātat'ifa 10. ገለል በል ከፊት ብርሃኔ ይሰፋ። Geleli beli kefitē birihanē yisifa. ብርጭቆው birichikowi 11. አገልግሎቴማ ከሆነህ ጥፋት፤ Ageligilotēma kehonebihi t'ifati 12. እውነትማ ላንተ ከሆንኩህ እንቅፋት፤ Iwinetima lanite kehonikuih inik'ifati, 13. ልሂድልህ እሺ ቦታ ልልቀቅልህ፤ Lihīdilihi ishī bota lilik'ek'ilīhi, 14. እንደልብህ አብራ እንደፍላጎትህ። Inidelibihi ābira inidefilagotihī 15. ብርጭቆው ተናግሮ ሲለቅለት ቦታ፤ Birichikowi tenagirow sīlekileti bota 16. Kegoni yenefese yenefasi shiwita, ኬንኔ ይነፈሱ ይነፋሱ ሺዊታ 17. መጣና መብራቱን አጠፋው ባንድ አፍታ፤ Metana mebiratuni ātefawī banidī āfīta, 18. የንቃት ደረጃው ዝቅ በማለቱ፤ Yenikati derejawī ziki bemaletu 19. መለየት አቅቶት ጥቅሙን ከጉዳቱ፤ Meleyeti āk'itoti t'ik'imuni kegudatu 20. ተባብሮ መስራትን ያደርገዋል ከንቱ። Tebabiro mesiratini yaderigewali kenit</p>	<p>The flame is prideful of his work, Thus he started an altercation with the glass I'm the light, I give lumination, I turn off the dark, I open the light, You, glass, are trespassing, you are not welcome, You are circling around abrasively in my face I don't understand, how you work your work, My light reaches far, but you hinder my brightness You are an obstacle, you are ruining my work, Go away, let my light go further.</p> <p>The glass</p> <p>If my service is a mistake, If your belief is that I'm an obstacle I will leave, I will give you your space Burn as bright as your heart desires. When the glass spoke this and let the flame go Suddenly, from the side a gust of wind came, The gust of wind turned off the light in a split second. The flame was not very wise, He couldn't distinguish the cost and benefits, Now it's too late to work TOGETHER.</p>

“Spring in New Hampshire” by Claude McKay, Jamaica, 1920

Performed in English by Greg Nedved; performed in Spanish by Linda Thompson.

<p>Spring in New Hampshire <i>By Claude McKay</i></p>	<p>La Primavera en New Hampshire <i>By Claude McKay</i></p>
<p>Too green the springing April grass, Too blue the silver-speckled sky, For me to linger here, alas, While happy winds go laughing by, Wasting the golden hours indoors, Washing windows and scrubbing floors.</p> <p>Too wonderful the April night, Too faintly sweet the first May flowers, The stars too gloriously bright, For me to spend the evening hours, When fields are fresh and streams are leaping, Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.</p>	<p>Demasiado verde la naciente hierba primaveral de abril, Demasiado azul el cielo, punteado de plata Para demorarme aquí, pobre de mí, Mientras vientos alegres pasan riendo, Y yo pierdo las horas doradas adentro, Lavando ventanas y fregando pisos.</p> <p>Demasiado maravillosa la noche de abril, Demasiado dulce el ligero olor de las primeras flores de mayo, Las estrellas demasiado brillantes y gloriosas Para yo pasar las horas del crepúsculo, Cuando los campos están frescos y los arroyos saltan, Fatigado, agotado, durmiendo apenas.</p> <p><i>(Translation by Linda Murphy Marshall)</i></p>

“Listen, Compatriots!” by Nontsizi Mgqwetho, South Africa, 1924*Original in Xhosa; performed in English by Arao Ameny.*

Xhosa – Pulapulani Makowetu	Listen, Compatriots! <i><u>By Nontsizi Mgqwetho (original in Xhosa - South Africa)</u></i>
<p>Ndiyigxotile i Kresmesi, no Nyaka Omdala kwano Nibidyala ngezibongo. Ndizaku zibonga mna ke ngoku ndandule ke kwakona ukuqala into entsha. Camaguni!</p> <p>Taru! Nontsizi dumezweni ngentsholo Nto ezibongo ziyintlaninge yezwe Indlovu ke ayisindwa ngumboko wayo Awu! Taru! Sikukukazi piko e Afrika.</p> <p>Esikusela amatole aze engemki Emke nezinye intaka eziwadlayo Uyaziwa lilizwe nambakazi yezulu Enqenwe nazi Mbongi zada zaxelelana.</p> <p>Wugqwetele Mgqwetho lomhlaba ka Palo Beta izizwe ngesitunzi zidangale Uliramncwa akuvelwa ngasemva Nabakwaziyo babeta besotuka.</p> <p>Taru! Mdakakazi omabalaziziba Ovumba linuka okwenyoka yomlambo Camagu! Nawe Ndlovu edla Pezulu Uzibhalile noko Inkomo zakwa Mgqwetho.</p> <p>Taru! Nontsizi bulembu e Afrika Obuyepuzela emazantsi namaza Wak’ubeka ngonyawo weva ubuhlungu Wahiliza ngomlomo wawiselwa pantsi.</p> <p>Taru! Nontsizi bulembu e Afrika Ozihluba izibongo ekuhlени Zitsho nentaba zelizwe zikangelane Xa wapuka imbambo macala omabini.</p> <p>Taru! Mdakakazi ngqele ese Lundini Enje ngayo Imibete yase Herimone Ndakhubeka ndibheka emlungwini Awu! Ndeva sendibanjwa ngamadindala.</p> <p>Taru Mbongikazi Flamingo ka Vaaibom Esunduza inyawo xa isukayo</p>	<p>I launched Christmas, the old year and the new year, with praise poems. Now I’m going to sing my own praises, and then I’ll move on again to start something new. Mercy, all of you!</p> <p>Peace, Nontsizi, renowned for your chanting, Your poems are the nation’s bounty. No elephant finds its own trunk clumsy. Oh peace, hen of Africa with sheltering wing!</p> <p>Hen shepherding chicks Safe from the grasp of birds of prey, You are known by the nation and by heaven’s maidens. Poets were so moved that they told each other about you.</p> <p>Upset Phalo’s land, Mgqwetho, Cast your shadow on nations and sap their strength. You are a beast that does not stay in the background. Those in the know tremble in tackling you.</p> <p>Peace, dusky woman with the colors of pools, Your stench reeks like the river snake. Mercy! Elephant browsing top shoots, You’ve made a name for Mgqwetho.</p> <p>Peace, Nontsizi, African maize tufts Waving beneath the breeze, You stubbed your toe and felt the pain. A slip of the tongue and they stomped on you.</p> <p>Peace, Nontsizi, African maize tufts, You strip poetry bare and expose it And the nation’s mountains face one another As you sway from side to side.</p> <p>Peace, dusky woman, Drakensberg snow Like morning dew on Mount Hermon. I stumbled in walking with whites:</p>

Xhosa – Pulapulani Makowetu	Listen, Compatriots! <i><u>By Nontsizi Mqgqwetho (original in Xhosa - South Africa)</u></i>
<p>Esunduza inyawo xa ihlalayo Zipume izilo zonke zigcakamele.</p> <p>Taru! Dadakazi lendada ze Afrika Ub'hib'hinxha lwentombi esinqe sibi Awu! Nontsizi bulembu e Afrika Akusoze wende nezinto zigoso.</p> <p>Taru! Mbongikazi piko le Afrika Sudukani bo arha ndabonelelwa Taru! Somikazi lomti wekiwane Ubonga noko side sipel' isoya.</p> <p>Taru! Nontsizi bulembu e Afrika Izishumane mazambat' amabhayi Kuba ayaziwa Iminyanya yakowenu Akungetshati ungabhinqi zik'ak'a</p> <p>Zipi Intombi zenu Izwi liyintoni Sigqibe lomhlaba sifuna ukwenda Salahla amak'azi salahla amakaya Namhla sizizigudu kwa namabhungela.</p> <p>Imfundo yintoni bapi onyana benu Bagqibe lamazwe befun' inikisi Yona nto ifunwa zintaka inkuku Kusa ziqondele kuhlwe zingay' boni</p> <p>Taru! Nontsizi ntsasa enemizila Egqibe izinga zonke iprofetsha Awu! Taru! Sanusekazi se zibongo Nalo neramncwa liwabul' amaphiko.</p> <p>Taru! "Chizama!" Odlu inyama rwada Ayaziwa neminyanya yakowenu Mazibuye ke! Indlovu zidle ekaya Zingalala ezindle zilahlekile.</p> <p>Taru! Nontsizi intombi ka Sandile Mntana wenkosi kwinkosi zakwa Ngqika Kubonga amakosi not amabhungexe Watshiswa zinduku kumataf' akwa Ngqika.</p> <p>Awu! Taru! Nontsizi bulembu e Afrika Ntokazi etsho ngentlombe ezimnandi</p>	<p>Oh! I felt the cops' cuffs on me.</p> <p>Peace, woman poet, Vaaibom's flamingo, Which thrusts its feet forward for take-off. Which thrusts its feet backward to land: All the animals rise up.</p> <p>Peace, duck of the African thickets, Ungainly girl with ill-shaped frame. Oh, Nontsizi, African maize tufts, With crooked legs like yours you'll never marry!</p> <p>Peace, woman poet of Africa with sheltering wing. Make way! Alas, I was used. Peace, starling perched in a fig tree, Your poetry puts feminine wiles to rest.</p> <p>Peace, Nontsizi, African maize tufts, Let spinsters again wear bodices For no one knows your ancestors: Without skin skirts there'll be no marriage.</p> <p>Where are your daughters? What do you say? "We roamed the countryside searching for marriage, We abandoned the women and we abandoned our dowry, Now we're milked though calf less, living with nobodies."</p> <p>What's education? Where are your sons? They roamed the land in search of nothing, Chickens scratching for scraps, Eager at dawn, at dusk empty-handed.</p> <p>Peace, Nontsizi, match-stick legs marked From roaming through thorn brakes prophesying; Oh, peace, poetic diviner, Watch out, the wild bird's flapping its wings.</p> <p>Peace, Chizama, who eats her meat raw; No one knows your ancestors, May the browsing elephants make it home:</p>

Xhosa – Pulapulani Makowetu	Listen, Compatriots! <i><u>By Nontsizi Mqgqwetho (original in Xhosa - South Africa)</u></i>
<p>Zitsho zidume nendonga ze Afrika Arha hai abhitye onke amadodana.</p> <p>Mhlana wafa Nontsizi losibekela Hashe lenkumanda loba lilahlekile Awu! Taru! Nangaye u Ntsikana Owayegqibe zonke izinga eprofetsha.</p> <p>Camagu! Sinungunungu Esingcwele Nantso ke into eyatshiwo ngu Ntsikana Yobomvana abarola ngamadolo Beza nobugqi bela ngela Mampondo.</p> <p>Lalinywa zinqwelo zomlilo elobawo Abe u Ntu engenandawo yokulima Canaguni! Mazulu! Camagu Mhlabane Camagu! Ke Langa! Camagu! Nawe Nyanga.</p> <p>Nini amagosa awasipeteyo Yinyusen' ingxelo iye ko Pezulu Nisitetelele nide nicokise Soya pina? Ngwenya enesiziba.</p> <p>Sitshatshela Esikulu se Afrika Nanko u Ntu esiza enenyembezi Vumani! Siyavuma! Kwi Ngqongqo Yomnqamlezo Siyavuma! Ewe ngenyani! Siyavuma!</p> <p>Awu! Yatsho Imbabala yolwantinge Ezivutulula zimise nenkowane.</p> <p>Gqob'ha empandeni Nalo izwe loyihlo Lusisivivinya sayo imishologu.</p> <p>Watsho Umavelelunguzwa ngabe Nduku into ekangelwa Nangumbane kube situkutezi. Camagu!</p>	<p>If they stay in the open they're lost.</p> <p>Peace, Nontsizi, Sandile's daughter, Child of one of the Ngqika chiefs. You were thrashed on the Ngqika plains For praising chiefs and not commoners.</p> <p>Oh peace, Nontsizi, African maize tufts, Woman, Africa's walls are throbbing With the sound of your lovely parties: Oh shame! All the young men wither.</p> <p>The day of your death will darken, Nontsizi, The commando's horse will lose its way. Oh, peace! And to you, Ntsikana, Who roamed through thorn brakes prophesying.</p> <p>Mercy, Awesome Saint! This is what Ntsikana spoke of: Little red people down on their knees, Casting spells when they come to the Mpondo.</p> <p>The land was plowed by our fathers' tractors And the black had no place to plough. Mercy, Heavens! Mercy, Earth! Mercy then, Sun! And mercy, Moon!</p> <p>You all keep our final accounts, Present the report to the Highest Power, Make a careful case for us, Where else will we go Crocodile of the Pool?</p> <p>Mighty Champions of Africa, There's the black approaching in tears. "Do you all agree?" "We agree! By the Cross's Victor! We agree! Yes, in truth, we agree!"</p> <p>Oh! So says the enigmatic forest buck: Toadstools reach up when she's through scratching.</p> <p>Keep scooping from the cask: There lies the land of your ancestors, Harassed by evil spirits.</p>

Xhosa – Pulapulani Makowetu	Listen, Compatriots! <i><u>By Nontsizi Mggwetho (original in Xhosa - South Africa)</u></i>
	These are the words of those spied on By those bearing arms, Who watch her even by lightning. Mercy!

“Home is a Woman” by Arao Ameny, Uganda, 2018

Performed in English live by the author; performed in Spanish by Linda Thompson.

Home is a Woman <i>By Arao Ameny</i>	El Hogar es una Mujer) <i>(Translation by Linda Murphy Marshall)</i>
<p>Before I enter the matatu for the drive to Kampala then Lira the driver stops me to tell me he’s never seen me on this route “you must live outside” I remember I live outside my own country I pretend not to hear and he says it again, this time behind a cigarette and a smile he asks me “who are your people? who is your father? your grandfather?” saying he may know my people I tell him my mother’s name and her mother’s name and my great-grandmothers’ names I tell him about the names of the land they could not inherit unless their brothers or fathers or husbands gave it to them I name and map the land, from that tree to the edge of the river I tell him where my great-grandmothers were born where my grandmothers were born where my mother was born I hum the names of the women in my family over and over again like a forgotten prayer a forbidden song he asks again “who are your forefathers, you girl?” I ask him “and who gave birth to them?” and I say the names of the women who gave birth to them our ride is silent from Kampala to Lira he gives me a curious glance from the rearview mirror at my many faces looking at me while I hold on to my suitcase while I carry all the women living inside of me I carry them home</p>	<p>Antes de subir al matatu* Para viajar a Kampala, y luego a Lira el conductor me detiene para decirme que nunca me ha visto en esta ruta. “Debes vivir afuera.” Recuerdo que vivo fuera de mi propio país. Finjo no oír y él lo repite, esta vez detrás de un cigarro y una sonrisa. Me pregunta “¿quiénes son tu gente? ¿quién es tu padre? ¿tu abuelo?” y dice que puede ser que conozca a mi gente. Le digo el nombre de mi madre y el nombre de su madre y los nombres de mis bisabuelas. Le cuento los nombres de la tierra que ellas no podían heredar a menos que sus hermanos o padres o maridos se la dieran. Nombro y mapeo la tierra, desde ese árbol hasta la orilla del río. Le digo donde nacieron mis bisabuelas, donde nacieron mis abuelas, donde nació mi madre. Tarareo los nombres de las mujeres de mi familia una y otra vez como una oración olvidada, una canción prohibida. El vuelve a preguntarme “¿Quiénes son tus antepasados, chica?” Yo le pregunto “¿Y quién los parió a ellos?” Nuestro viaje desde Kampala hasta Lira es en silencio. Me mira con curiosidad desde el espejo retrovisor, mis múltiples caras, me mira mientras agarro mi maleta, mientras llevo a todas las mujeres que viven</p>

Home is a Woman <i>By Arao Ameny</i>	El Hogar es una Mujer) <i>(Translation by Linda Murphy Marshall)</i>
	dentro de mí. Las llevo a casa. <i>*Matatu = un matatu es un tipo de autobús pequeño que es popular en Kenya, Tanzania, y Uganda, un modo de transportación barata que lleva muchos pasajeros.</i>

“When You Return,” by Macaulay Oluseyi Akinbami, Nigeria, 2008

[Performed in English with Yoruba elements via recording by the author.](#) (YouTube)

Sojourner to far-flung climes;
 When you return,
 Will you remember the evening songs
 Chorused by chirping under the baobab tree?
 Will you still remember the fame of the great hunter
 Whose courage put the forest sprite to flight?
 Earning him the most beautiful virgin in the land
 When you return,
 Will you remember the fable of the wraith
 That forced our forefathers away from the farm at dusk?
 Will you still dip your hands in “Aro” to make “Àdìrẹ” for our dear mother?(1)
 Will you?
 The market still a beehive of activities
 Every market day is as rustic as you left it,
 Our women the same, untainted by the new ways
 Our men have not also fared any better,
 Still suspicious of the innovations of the town people
 Our children are not ashamed of showing off their beauty for the world to see,
 The harrowing cries of our virgins still pierce the night,
 As they fall under the mutilators knives
 Will you still remember how to savor “Iyan” (2)
 Pounded with the sweats of the maidens and
 Molded with “Egusi” from earthenware? (3)
 When you return,
 Will you not now be repulsed with “Ila” (4)
 That soup which you handled with such mastery with “Amala” (5)
 The leaves from the forest still keep us strong and virile,
 Their medicines have not offered any hope to all our ailments,
 When you return,
 Teach us not new things about our Land
 O sojourner,
 When you return from the distant land of subjugation
 That dungeon that robbed us of our cultures and creeds.

Footnotes

- (1) Aro is the source of the indigo-dye which is used to create Àdìrẹ cloth.
 (2) Iyan: A paste for food made from Yam.
 (3) Egusi: A soup made from the melon seed.
 (4) Ila: A gelatinous soup made from Okra.
 (5) Amala: A paste for food made from Yam flower.
 First published April 7, 2008

“Fate” by Adeniyi Odukoya, Nigeria, 2022

Performed in English via recording by the author; drummers to provide accompaniment.

birds fall into penury the city sells to beckon the gaze of god father left mother a gun & a wound the gun untouchable the wound her eyes the wound her squint the wound her death the wound touchable in its reflect of delineation her words never betrayed the ethics of lust tenderness unhindered breaking forth into a moon hiding perfectly inside the hunt of an owl a photographed horror of love stalking a venomous gazelle saying feast upon this flesh a man will become my grief his dreams in reincarnated forms children my they say the wind the millies of its roar are echoes by the tears of widows listening shards stroked light up a candle feet lay into journeys fitted into creases outlawed by the reckon of fate they hide her in a room they call her a witch the blonde tulip holding the shell of a snail the dark hallway into woe they wear his name in their teething brawls which means where does his death come from ask the keyhole to say where the light comes from in yoruba: Ni bo ni iku e ti wa rinse her scalp into a calabash ask her to call his name seven times over a tied cork I witness from this unfolding the possession of greed the miscreant misogyny the name that episticides a woman into a man's finger-tiddling at school calls love instead of my name him in my dream the next morning I wear his skull I point a knife at his eyes I wear his wrists chase him into my nightmare a boy kill I wear his body I choose to walk outside of the sail of my mother's fate

“Self-portrait with phonemic analysis,” Abdulkareem Abdulkareem, Nigeria, 2022
Performed in English via recording by the author; drummers to provide accompaniment.

I kneel at the Calvary,
 the sun—pelting on my skin like a rainstorm
of fragmented pieces of glass,
 I drag my self towards a crucifix
where phonology says:
[a boy] —> [a broken boy] / [grief]—[grief]
I think myself a guitar’s string
blessing the threnodies of the aches in this poem,
 who will crush pomegranates
into juice for me?
 Who will beat the bush of this boy into
a floral garden of roses?
 Who will pour joy like a fricative sound
into the living of this boy?
I seek the rule to the deletion of grieving, where:
[grief] —> [deleted] / [bliss]—[bliss]
Where I will sleep through the night
 without the body of a knife lurking in my dreams.
Where I will sleep through the night
 without drowning in the pool of my own fears.
Where I will sleep through the night
 & not wake up as a butterfly’s wing.
But insertion says:
[insert]—> [grief] / [bliss]—[bliss] of a boy.
Recently, I touch things & they flower out a
monochrome
of death & my father—how he squeezed life out of him
like an orange.
Dear poet, when will you stop performing an autopsy
 with poems on all the broken things you know,
especially including yourself?
This poem, a psych ward, this poem, a psych nurse
which grew from your psyche.
 Like a wood frog, I’m still holding my pee
through hours, through the night
where pain is a bagpiper blowing its pipe
to me in these times of war.

“Privilege Is...” by Aneesah Lawrence, United States, 2021

Performed in English via recording by the author; drummers to provide accompaniment.

And the headline read "U.S. Capitol Riot"

in the description, there was a word that jumped off of the page and into my mouth when I realized the word had been too painful to swallow, it crawled down my throat anyway playing hopscotch in my stomach until I was finally able to disgorge it from my system there before me was the word protestors not thugs, criminals, or even rioters

but protestors

someone, please hand me some scrabble letters so I can rearrange protestors into privilege

You see, privilege is not knowing what it's like to have an adrenaline rush when you hear sirens

privilege is your parents telling you to come home before dark because they don't want you out late,

not because they want to be able to hear your voice again

privilege is being able to complement the word parent with an "s"

I hope this isn't easy to digest

Privilege is not being treated differently because you have an actual cultural background and yes, I said actual cultural background

emphasis on the word actual

hold on let me rewind, slow down, and code switch

before I become the next "angry black woman" on your social media feed who actually isn't angry but honest

she's blunt

real

genuine

fed up with the world playing the quiet game because the winner is always the one who stays silent, right

privilege is getting to sleep at night and not having to worry about the interruption of death by the men in blue

privilege is having a non-functioning brake light and receiving assistance but for those of us who aren't so privileged, that non-functioning brake light is a one-way ticket to the grave

privilege is getting to go outside and play with a toy gun

because they're only pretend

right

Privilege is having the opportunity to walk outside with whatever type of clothing you choose and not being identified as sketchy

later to be identified as dead

privilege is telling your mother you're going to the store to buy a snack and that you'll be back but for those of us who aren't so privileged, that is nothing but another broken promise

Privilege is being put on death row for a crime you actually committed

and no, I do not support the death penalty

privilege is not having to include disclaimers

Privilege is seldom attending funerals because there aren't dead bodies dropping in your community
 like flies
 privileged is saying "I can't breathe" and having someone listen
 Privilege is not having to remember a never-ending list of individuals on the list titled "Say Their
 Names"
 Privilege is disrespecting a nation and being called a protestor
 but for those of us who aren't so privileged
 who protested peacefully against injustice we're thugs
 rioters
 criminals
 disturbances to the peace
 another dead body to join our ancestors in the ground
 You know I could never quite spell the word privilege
 not because I'm ignorant, but because the words are structured into a concept I can't identify with
 Ladies and gentlemen, privilege is getting to take everything I just said and forget it in a matter of
 minutes
 because none of what I said fits into your reality
 but for those of us who aren't so privileged, we don't have that liberty

“Uncovered” by Aneesah Lawrence, United States, 2022

Performed in English via recording by the author; drummers to provide accompaniment.

My Blackness is an intersection between Black Muslim and woman
 A triple threat of no regrets
 Nor will I forget the debt that my ancestors paid for me to be here
 I walk as a silhouette
 Some know me to be a duet so they call me the Melanin Hijabi
 My Blackness is not simply synonymous with struggle, racism and pain Because my Blackness is a
 dichotomy and honestly on the other side of that is love
 Breaking rules is my speciality
 And i'm so smooth the way I execute is never a criminality
 I know your thinking how my words flow so organically
 I attribute all greatness to Allah
 Ar-Raheem, Al-Quddus, Al-Muhaymin
 And sporadically he sprinkles some of his phonominality my way
 Someone once told me my Blackness carries a negative connotation
 A narrative that paints Black as having no time to love
 They said you are rebellious for doing so
 My Blackness replied If I'm a rebel than I'll be the Malcom X to your Martin Luther King Because my
 Blackness shines so bright that it is lovable in fall, winter, summer, and spring And the love that I have
 for my Blackness ain't just a fling
 Baby this thing is everlasting
 So who are you to tell me I am unlovable