



**CLOUDS OF
BLACK ARE COMING
AND OTHER POEMS**

Jaki Seroke

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Dedication

*For Don Mattera, who could have been a Poet
Laureate of a People's Azania*

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Author Biography

Jaki Stone Seroke is a political stalwart of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. He started writing poetry in high school and used the medium to mobilise and raise consciousness of the 1976 student uprising. He was a state guest at Modderbee Prison, Johannesburg Prison and Robben Island maximum security prison during the apartheid era. He is a military veteran of the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) and published his memoir, *Zwelethu – Our Land*, in 2021.

Introduction

Poetry is the soul of any language, the simple beauty in the sound and the syntax expressed to make meaningful messages, similar to the drum pounding from the gut, coming from the heavy pain of existential oppression to echoes blowing in the wind, in the rustle of falling dry leaves, in the pure silence observed in the dance of floating feathers in the air, sometimes in the heartbeat of an unborn baby, in the guitar played by a funky musician early in the morning, disturbing the peace of graves, and the bully by tinpot tyrants made weak and defeated by a string of stinging words, in any language, in any experience, deep in the ghetto, in prison, the flowing river, or parched desolate earth, in any way at any time.

Poems of resistance are the lexicon of a people with their eyes on the prize of freedom, they know of no right to obey an illegitimate law, they show no respect for those who subjugate and oppress and prohibit, maim and murder and censor and stifle, detain and kill, pillage, plunder, impose and suppress.

Poetry of the struggle for national liberation is sometimes formless, bland and direct, to the point. Like inverted magic of words gone bonkers. It at times throws overboard the strictures of art and literature to start from scratch, to make anew a beautiful art and literature of the people.

This is the story of poetry of the dusty streets. It knows the corners, the double-ups, the thoroughfares, the nooks and crannies. It knows its creator's rage, it can almost predict or plan for tomorrow – with a burning tyre. It is based on *content*, the subject matter; and it deliberately violates *form* to create a sense of belonging, of its own pentameter, rhythm, blues, yin, yang, hip-hop, tap dance and a deep-rooted willingness to make pretty out of the ugly.

Es'kia Mphahlele, doyen of African Literature, a sage, taught us that a poem is a vehicle of emotion motivated by a rational understanding of experience, condensing words and experiences, bringing an indivisible whole in the poet's sensibility, poetry as a lively feeling of situations and poetry as the power to express them as images rather than logic.

This is what helped freedom fighters, workers, poor and landless peasants, and all other mass-based groupings in society to identify with the struggle for national liberation. The Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) cadres recited their works in the bush to keep their spirits high, discipline high and morale high.

Clouds of Black are Coming. It could be that the dust of Soweto, the peach trees of Wattville, the dongas of Alex, an out-of-sorts Mpumalanga, the single male hostels of Langa and Gugulethu, and the villages dotted in the backwaters of the vast hinterland, it could be that they die, you know, to rise up again, in poetry. It could be that they never die. Never die. It could be that they bring harmony, and the restoration of the land to its poetic owners. It could be. The rainmakers are coming.

This offering of poems from 1976 to the present, throughout my personal growth, was a long time coming. Enjoy.

Jaki Seroke

Saying Yes

Time and time again
On the wooden stage floor
When the maroon velvet curtain opens
Appears a man made of planks
With neat holes on his hands
Holes on the soles of his feet
With a hole on his brainless head
Where the strings are neatly
Attached / assembled / arranged
To make him dance / perform / talk
Without even his very own voice

Again and again
Them who pull the strings
Who call the tune
Them who made the
Man made by planks
Without bones / flesh / blood
Without a soul to call his own

Them who made him
Jive the wooden dance
And talk the language of
Forked tongues / empty promises
Convincing pipe dreams
Of happy family homes
And baked meat pies in the sky
When you die again
And again and again

Now and again
The string pullers of diagonal street
Of bosberaad escapades
Of the praetorian union buildings
Nodding to the yes man
Loving the closing song of lamentations
Liking the din of applause
Laughing on their way to the bank
Carrying heavier nuggets and wider grins
Now and again
Time after time
Dusting off the sawdust
Made out of the plank
They've cut and planed
From the trees in
The bushveld of Mpumalanga

Time and again
The grinning owners
Applaud the yes man
For saying yes
Again and yes / again
Ad infinitum

I cry for you

(In memoriam: Zodwa Mshibe)

For all we know
The midnight sky
Might have witnessed
The brute throttle you
Fangs to your skin to sip your blood
When the scales had flaked
Down from your blinded eyes
And as a result
He mightily shoved you
In a demented show of love
down to the ground
from the balcony
of the eleventh floor

I cry for you
Noble daughter of Azania
The fearful maniac / mad masculinity
Gone to the rubbish bin
Insidious like a germ

Loving to be deadly
But to be deadly to loving you
And you with a belly-deep sigh
Gave your hand but
He took the whole arm
Loving you none
Hurting a wish
For joyous peace
Killed it / killing it still
For sweet nothing
I cry for you / soul sister
I'm standing with you.

For all we know
When you caught his eyes
The moon might have smiled
The breeze enthralled
Three robins cooing
Not knowing the morphing
Of a man who lost his soul
And became a zombie
Dead alive / monstrous
From gentle to bewildered beast
Within a fraction of a second
Agent of the grim reaper
Who stole your smile
Beautiful daughter
And we / comrades bereft of you
cry for you

Mistaken identity

(For Paris Mashile)

we were inexplicably mistaken
for tree dwelling squirrel monkeys
unanchored / indolent natives
godless / unmoored
kite without a string
loathsome / cursed descendants
of ham / unstuck glue
snot nosed praise singers
bubonic plague / phuzamandla
mbunyana / bad and mad
rumble in the jungle
empty tins / fumbling
narrow native nationalists

only for them to usurp
the gold and diamonds
in their ox wagons
traversing / our rivers / our mountains
platinum / cattle / elephants

the seas / oh the seas
and renaming them after
their aristocrats / trekkers
our lilies in the valley / waterfalls
the suns and the wind
the sacred grounds
endowed to us
by our ancestors

we are seriously mistaken
for randy human weeds
tokens / teddy bears
bloody lazy Aids carrying
kaffirs / traitors
at the world trade centre
man friday / house niggers
dogs in the manger
rats and mice
running without end
in a bad smelling sewer
good for nothing
gravy train
wannabes
only on the pain
of their envy
of the love and
intimacy we have
with the soil / with our

african personality
human dignity / honour
with our indigenous selves

they deliberately mis-take us
for trouble makers
in the morning fog
of the african revolution
when we are rainmakers
drenching / blessing
our parched land

Zinga Mattera

I hand to you for your debilitating pain
A sliced blade of aloe vera
To smooth your aging bones
To unlock the blood blockade
To relieve your heavy crucifixion
In the desolation of the Kgalagadi

I give your compassionate soul
This string of heartfelt words
In place of a halting gratitude
In place of gold and silver trinkets
For your inspiring momentous courage
During the dark and dingy days

I confer with you my word coach
To you the poet laureate of Azania
To speak with rooted trees
To hold your ground like the oak
To listen to your inner voice / uncorrupted
Your clean soul of a newborn child

I proffer milk and bananas
For your parched throat
For your grumbling stomach
Man they say she must eat
The kleva is running late
Which is never a bad start for us

I wish you long life bra Zinga
As Allah wills it / so shall it be
Pain is your daily sidekick
Echoes of a poet never die
The kernel of wisdom rings true
Once memory stays forever alive

Clouds Of Black Are Coming

(Tlhaki Joe Lekganyane)

They have darkened slowly and ripened
Coming together / going apart
Pushing like dark grey paper kites in the wind
Tails swinging for attention in an unadorned sky
They have to rob the sun of its hard day
For our work / the seed scattered
During spring's unending miseries of staying
During a struggle for rising and saying our say
The clouds of black have to happen
The woollen spongy silvery strips of breath
Have to make a way for the bold coming
The mighty push off in the coming of the wind
The light reasonably / peaceably
Having to give up the ghost / to birth anew
While the seeds of spinach beans and wheat
Break with the shameful past of storms
As the clouds of black gather for us all
And rain the rain on fertile soil
we have to pray for the showers brother

for no such thing as lightning should frighten us
the sun shall rise again for us
light will soon be back from tomorrow
in the new season of joy and abundant smiles
at the rendezvous of struggle heroes
a place called home

Whooping The Facets Of Knowledge

Who are you, solitary dumb voice
So interminably hoarse like the
Grass wafting on unattended graves
Who are you, my dear comrade?

Who are you, barefooted 'mntwana
Denied the nipples of Africa's breast,
Cradled in the sunshine
Of the alien intellectualism?

Who are you, my ebony-eyed inamorata
Shading your sweet-breath into the
Scented airs of spurious civilisations?
Beautiful lass, give me primal sanities.

Who are you, divinest brother of all,
Warbling echoes of the spirits,
Blending yourself with the clouds
That perplex the want of my soul?

Who are you, sponging snail-politician
Asking for what you own and
Embargoing your brother's songs
Sung in the pain of wounded throats?

Who are you, mysterious brother
Eating and drinking brotherhood with me,
A motor-mouth that excretes information?
Are you so cunning a chameleon?

Who are you, universal – famous humanity
So like me, so like him, yet so snobbishly
So inventively cosmetic, so blue
In the colour of your veins, O humanity

Our Points Of View

I goofed.
You can't do anything right.
She said nothing about that.

I am argumentative.
You are belligerent.
She enjoys a lovely discussion.

I am a creature of many moods.
You are temperamental.
Mama, she is real cool.

I have a healthy sense of self-esteem.
Who do you think you are, anyway.
She is not conceited.

I am 'Me'
You are 'you'
She is Azania.

How Was I Born

(For MaJoe's last born, Mapule)

Was I born
A dearest object
Of binding affection?
Or for a story and a song
In an ill-harmonised and unmelodious land?
Or as a brother of a man
In the human family?
Or from my mother's womb
To a mute agony of despair
Until I am entombed?
Maybe I was born
To live, and just be me
Me, myself.

We Presume

(For our unborn baby)

we presume
that your presence will
be the flames on the torch
of our love / that your
navel string would
be buried in the soil
black green and gold

we presume
that you will not lead
our name into the fleshpots
of glamorous rot / the pursuit
of blood dripping coins

your big bold eyes
will see all there is
audacious and astute
in the dead of night
at the break of dawn

we presume
that you would come
to stay / bounciful /
that you are the baby
undaunted by sepulchral
gestures / moulded
into a stubborn will
to be free

April 1988
Johannesburg Prison

Why Will They Not Let Us Be?

(For Bennie Bunsee)

why would they care
those praetorian control freaks bellowing
bombastic hot air
through their noses / their ears and big mouths /
pitchforks at the ready
in a hurry to destroy with abandon the verdant
land the deep blue sea the flow of water
the green of the vegetation
the life of all the species
they unashamedly call the wilderness

why will they not
let us be / to sift through the mazes of memory
our ancient civilisation of azania the magic in our
palms
the susurrations of ancestral blood
the talking crocodiles / the prolonged roar of the
lion / the faint ululation
of the mothers in the village

we built mapungubwe the scores of buffaloes
feel our heartbeats / the great
lakes know our names / the Nile valley
remembers our footprints
the kahlamba mountains keep the deep secrets
of our fathers / the west winds sing for us

we now have to bestow to our children's children
the fighting courage in a soldier's heart
we now have to salute the dawn staying put /
staying ordinary staying true / saying
what we have always
had to say / by the fireside

why would they not let us be to do on our own
whenever we want to do
on what we own / working out the pain of
elongated drought praying for soft rains
tilling the fat fertile fields painting the rocks /
chanting reciting / recalling mother earth's
habitual giving / dismantling the shackles of the
mind
at long last / setting ourselves free to roam with
the wind

why will they not let us be
those smoked tongued luciferians reaping from
the fruits
of our motherland
while we stand barehanded they
rattle on in the open

with idle prattle / with diabolical lies grunting to
push us further down into the cauldron of fire
laughing out loud in the morning hating us
bitterly from deep
inside their hearts cosy and contented with
stolen property
we are all that be
the cradle of humankind
the welcoming hamlet of peace the giving
people / we are
all that be / but appears not to be

Makube Njalo

(For Ntombizodwa Nkosi – 14 July 2017)

beauty rarely seen
but yearned for / sought after
original / concentrate
undiluted / pure
and innocent

the skin
of the texture
the eyes
of the soul
the nature
of breath
the antelope
with its gaze
into the far distance
far ahead of yesterday

beauty is in ebony
in good blood of the brains in
legacy and inheritance
in the rediscovered moons

weary but woke
reticent but focused
seeing / knowing
and understanding
'let it be', they said
from deep within
from the gut
of the inside

of our ancestry / 'let
it be' / makube
njalo / kude kube
kuna phakade
makube njalo

What Is Still To Be Done?

what with such confusing verbiage
what with these abstract lofty explanations
making no sense / no meaning
to see the way / our way clear
today and every other day
of the tangible sacrifices made
by blood / tears / sweat / power
to ring in the material changes
to rid us of the colossal robbery
what more still needs to be said and done?

what is still to be done
before the sun rises
to end with immediate effect
the nightmare of misogynist
raping our wives / daughters
beating to death our sisters
terrorising to hell our communities
of the have nots / the poorest

we have talked about this horror
all night and all day
what is to be done now / this minute?

what's to be done
in the break of the morning
with the two six bandits among us
the judas iscariot tribesmen
who utter cheap white lies
and a penumbra of
uncertainties and empty promises
with false smiles plastered on their faces?

what must we do
by the crack of noon
to disentangle for good
the tissues of lies coming
from these pretenders
who say they were the first among
the early guerrillas in the fight
we have waged in the dark of thick woods?

what will we make of it
on the altar of redemption
without repairing the devastation of the settlers /
healing the bleeding wounds
the crying indignities
the violation of our mothers

the broken possibilities for peace
what will we do as we come nearer
to the altar of truth?

what is still to be done
with a pack of confidence tricksters
a filthy monstrosity wearing sheepskins
signing up neocolonised afrika

into long odious debts
which stretch as long as the python
ready to strangulate to death
any living hope to do
what is for long undone
for us to live our real lives again?

what is to be done
before the sun sets
so that when the ogres attack us
they find us united in action
confronting what remains undone
snatching back with the
determination of talons
doing what must be done
to take what belongs back to
where every single iota belongs?

I'm Not Understanding

blimey / according constitution
myself and my family
have right to clean bills of humanity
for drinking water and good house
and educate my clever little girls
but me and mine have nowhere
to live nothing to eat no money
no job no nothing

jislaaik / according leadership
we are free to talk and talk and
talk saying our mind without fears
without favours without jealous
for the rich with new cars
with spare wheels on the back
just like that / exactly just like that

moerskund / in Marikana 2012
the miners asked for twelve thousand

five hundred basic
they talk and talk and stayaway
instead they get shot them blind-blind
at the base of the koppie
the police they shoot all day
i'm not understanding
what happened to the right to talk
i'm not understanding

my god / i'm not understanding
we vote and cross out apartheid
we vote for change to change
the nonsense and bring in the new
to make everybody happy
but no one really is
no one actually changed
the leadership / the false priests
worse for wear
tricks up their sleeves / blimey
i'm not understanding

they made the rich larneys / they stay rich / the
poor
darkies forever very poor / without nothing to
show
for the new south Africa
sure / i am not understanding
the water from above

is so scarce we have to buy it
water people g-d given water people
i'm not understanding

the people they suffer very bad
not according struggle and freedom
kanti how does it work
are the top in the past
not supposed to be down in the future
are the filthy rich not to be asked
why they get to be having more
than the rest of us
i'm not understanding sir

Under The Bluegum Tree

(With Mahlubandile Jr Ntabeni)

as the fiery sun bakes mother earth
and the asphalt streets rise up in anger
as parched throats risk running more drier
and the rumbling in our bellies cries out
as the scornful glares pounce upon us
and some pious eyes say we should supplicate
as we know very well broer
there's everything for us
under the bluegum tree

it could have been the ultimate end
one fateful day in the eastern cape
along with old comrade mangqangwana
on the dark and deadly road
stretched long like a python
when its messenger of death
with ugly stumps of shorn horns
and a tail to match
came hoping to take our lives

but we happened to see
its sickening mirth at the miss
that could have been the end of us

under the peace of the bluegum tree
and the sanctuary for freedom of the birds
the rustle of falling leaves
and barks piecing off by inches
renewing and regenerating themselves
to grow back again
into the bluegum family

we breathe again / healing ourselves
take charge again / talking and laughing
breaking bread again / eating heartily
from the same bowl
together today and tomorrow
under the bluegum tree

we live to face life again broer
and to try once more
again and again in camaraderie
until victory
under the bluegum tree

The Child Did Not Return

the child did not return
from school down the road
the child was last seen
at ten in the morning
through a hole
in the rotten corrugated iron
another school child saw the child
slip into the pit latrine
desperately crying for help
raising the right hand
falling face down
into the faeces

the child did not return
from an aimless walk
playing with an imaginary friend
in the cape flats
they went across the waste ground
but the ugly red-eyed ogre

on two human legs
thought it best to whisk
the child away

the child did not return
from the long journey
to find the baby's mama
they alighted the train
at park station
the grand mother said
'the child was here now now'
the whereabouts of the child
are not known / tu / tu / tu
the child vanished
just like that

the child did not return
the child was no more
the heart was savagely ripped off
tears of the whole village
could not run dry
and the future of their children
was a big let down
flaking out in the sand
blowing in the wind
without the child

This Thing Of Ours

(In memory of Bra Vusi Make)

this thing of ours
is never talked about
though its dear life is seeded in
the up and down of our own lives

at times it gives a sinking feeling
of despair and defeat
all going horribly wrong
at times it pulls and pushes
giving and taking
sometimes it's a gigantic spirit
of simmering coal fire
determined to fight
the fight against colonial conquest
out on the open plains of the lowveld
around the corner in the concrete jungle
and in the fields of blood
of our beloved but occupied azania

this thing of ours
rebounds like a virus when we are
in health rather than in sickness
without rhyming reason
without timing and style
but then tends to spit out its very own
into the wild harsh of the sewerage

this thing is ours
vusi make / nyathi pokela / mfanasekhaya
gqobhose / desai / maphumzana sibeko
to embody and breathe lifeblood
into its impoverished
and thinned entrails
to inspire and conspire
to see to its everlasting flow
into the hearts and minds
of the many with aspirations
for peace / harmony / plenty

this thing of ours
is truly of our very own
with deepened roots
from our great grandmothers
to their grandchildren
to their great great offsprings
forever more

Sing Sibongile

Sing Sibongile

sing for someone forlorn and homeless
supping sorrow from
the big spoon of wild winds
somewhere in the meadow
in the veld of promises aplenty
sing for someone whose eyes face east
of the indigo sky
praying and hoping
to make it somehow someday

Sing blackbird

healer of the solitude
nightingale of the walking wounded
noble daughter of the soil
soar and sing
ma mngoma
like the skylark sister birds
cooing

twittering
dove tailing
yearning for lasting peace
in the twilight shadow of the valley
of a thousand hills

Jazz it up with sojourner truth
mama ella
princess magogo
ka dinizulu

sarah vaughan
beyond the middle passage
yonder at the congo square
and back again on the motherland
from where we are all borne
our folk songs
our ancient evenings
in the pain of a dim memory
of the silhouetted matsiks manaka
bullhorn of performed poetry music
immortal but secret

Sing my suster
sing my ma se kind
the home baked lullabies of old
softly like the beat of rain
the heart pulsating as ever green

here and now
twinkling toes dancing on the stoep
only as we know how

Sing Sibongile
sing sister
love birds are mating
the ripening soil is cracking all smiles
booted soldiers are trekking back home
bloom is about to burst forth

thanks g-d
harvest is happening
the toddlers have said it too
sing my sister
sing

Mask

my face resembles
the mask carved out
from the deeply rooted stinkwood
native to the land
of my ancestors

my mask is my face
is my mask of ages
it is never by itself
it is always peopled
by the stomping feet
of my unmapped village

my bulging almond eyes
an elephant's memory of rolling
ancient years / oral and truthful
streams flowing down my cheeks
the gift in the crest in the totem

my face / my mask
is singed / windswept

roughened and strengthened
by the blazing sun
the spirits in the winds
seasoned and scoured
by the sweet waters
the mettle of the revolution
only known by crocodiles

my mask is me
in a silhouette
in an everlasting heartbeat
as in the sounds of the mother drum
talking to the people

Testimony

(For Essop Patel, poet and advocate)

can we carry the burden
and the joy of saying
the true name of
each thing / are we
capable to be the
arbiter of all that
is just and irreversible

or do we soak our
hands with pomp in
clean waters / to drip dry
in sunny complacency
barrelled into silence

are we able to bear
testimony against the
scourge of racism / pillage /
deceit / against these men
from nowhere who lacerate

our lives and render
our children the world's
imbeciles / disinherited

June 1988

Johannesburg Prison

Without

(For Stokwana)

I love you without any reason
without questions / without why
without what / without when
without jealous / without speaking
without any doubt / without my
unconfirmed confirmation at dusk
without a whiff simmering in the pots
without the golden nuggets in my calloused
hands / without shame
without sight of the splendoured thing
in the wings of a bird soaring
in the clear blue sky
without any fear of the enemy
without thorns in the stem
of a silky red rose / without your quiet
response / without the stolen land
without a downpour of tears peeled
from the sky / without skipping
a heartbeat / without saying my say
I still love you hooray without you

Era

(For George Moyo)

some were engirthed with a canopy
of remorse some among us cried
like crocodiles some listened to the hokum
of 'instigators and tomato sauce' some
licked their fingers after a clutch

at the burnt bridges others immediately
dumped everything another slipped down
with the night other faces went
stony in twilight's eye yet
another preferred to baas this our people's land

Tragedy

on second-floor citadel / on existence
earned by partitions / on the gravity
of repression / we are given to bog
among stainless steel rape pork smell
section twenty-nine mushrooms possession of

koffiehuis whatnot / our fate tolls in the
fabric of time / on the second floor
citadel / benoni – then kempton park
thousands of men waxed in single tragedy

July 1979

Modderbee Prison

Explanatory notes and translations

Saying Yes

A bosberaad is 'bush summit', a meeting of leaders at a retreat that is remote from urban centres, intended to provide participants with the chance to focus undisturbed on difficult issues.

I Cry for You

Zodwa Mshibe was a brilliant journalist murdered by a jealous boyfriend in 1986. She worked in the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) underground structures.

Azania is the name given to South Africa by members of the PAC.

Mistaken Identity

Paris Mashile is an electrical engineer and digital communications expert, a comrade, friend and former colleague in the defence industry.

Among speakers of the isiNtu (Bantu) languages, phuzamandla is the name for an instant, highly nutritious, fortified soup powder. It is a high-energy food that is great as porridge or a drink. Made from natural ingredients, it increases mental and physical activity, especially for people engaged in strenuous sport or work.

Mbunyana is steamed bread supplied in the mining compound and hostels.

'Kaffirs' is a derogatory term used by racists when speaking about African people.

Zinga Mattera

Donato Francisco Mattera was a South African poet, polyglot, journalist and anti-apartheid activist. In the 1970s, he became involved in the politics of Black Consciousness and helped to form the Union of Black Journalists. As a result of his political activities, the South African government banned him from 1973 to 1982.

Bra Zinga, as he was also affectionately known, authored numerous books, including a memoir, poetry collections, short stories and children's stories.

Kgalagadi is SeTswana for 'land of the thirst', a geographical area located in Southern Africa. It may also refer to the Kgalagadi District in Botswana.

The term 'kleva' refers to an intelligent or street-smart person. It is derived from the English word 'clever' but altered so that it can be used while speaking other languages in South Africa.

Clouds of Black are Coming

Thhaki Joe Lekganyane is a friend and comrade-in-arms in APLA internal underground structures and the PAC.

Whooping the Facets of Knowledge

Mntwana is derived from the Zulu word 'Umntwana', meaning child.

Why Will They Not Let Us Be?

Bennie Bunsee joined the PAC in the early 1960s and underwent military training in China. After spending decades in exile, he returned to South Africa in the early 1990s, where he served as PAC parliamentary caucus research officer and media liaison officer to the then justice minister, Dullah Omar. He died in 2015.

Mapungubwe (meaning 'hill of the jackal') is an Iron Age archaeological site in Limpopo province on the border between South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana, 75 kilometres from Messina. It sits close to the point where the Limpopo and Shashe rivers meet. The site was 'discovered' on 31 December 1932, when a local informant, Mowena, led E.S.J. van Graan, his son and three others to Greefswald farm on Mapungubwe Hill.

uKhalamba Drakensberg Mountains – meaning 'barrier of spears' in Zulu. Early settlers called it the Drakensberge, because they believed it resembled a dragon's back. Khalamba is the old Nguni name for the Drakensberg.

Makube Njalo

Makube Njalo is an Nguni phrase meaning 'let it be so'. The phrase is from the Lord's Prayer: 'Let your will be done'. In this respect, it may refer to the declaration of the political will to realise the freedom of black people in apartheid South Africa.

I'm Not Understanding

Jislaaik is an Afrikaans exclamation conveying any of a range of feelings: wonder, delight, admiration, approval, distress, dismay, anger, reproval or regret.

Moerskund is an Afrikaans word for 'nut job'.

The Marikana Massacre occurred at Marikana in the North West province, South Africa, on 16 August 2012. The South African Police Service (SAPS) opened fire on a crowd of striking mineworkers, killing 34 people and seriously injuring 78.

A koppie is a small hill in an otherwise flat area.

'Larneys' is a pejorative term for rich white people in South Africa. Bosses.

'Darkies' is an offensive and outdated term to describe African people.

'Kanti' is a word used when you are trying to understand something. It means meanwhile.

Under the Bluegum Tree

'Broer' is an Afrikaans word for brother.

Comrade Mangqangwana is a Poqo (later renamed APLA) stalwart, PAC leader and a military veteran based in Komani, Queenstown, in the Eastern Cape.

The Child Did Not Return

South Africa has a history of people, especially small children in schools, drowning and dying in pit latrines. Some examples include the death of five-year-old Michael Komape in 2014. He fell into a pit toilet at the Mahlodumela Primary School in Limpopo and drowned. Mtunu died in 2017 after the walls of a toilet at Dalasile Primary School in the Eastern Cape collapsed on him. In 2018, five-year-old Lumka Mketwa fell into a pit toilet at her school, the Luna Primary School in the Eastern Cape, and drowned.

This Thing of Ours

David Maphumzana Sibeko was born on 26 August 1938 in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. He was a journalist, insurance agent, political prisoner, exile, member of the PAC leadership, PAC's chief representative in East Africa, head of the PAC's mission to Europe and the Americas, and PAC's permanent observer at the United Nations. He was killed on 10 June 1979 in Dar es Salaam.

Sing Sibongile

Sibongile is Zulu for 'we are thankful'.

Sibongile Khumalo, who was born on 24 September 1957 and passed away on 28 January 2021, was a South African singer and songwriter. She sang classical, opera and traditional choral South African music. Her maiden name was Mngoma. In Zulu culture, females are sometimes referred to by their maiden name as a term of endearment.

Princess Constance Magogo Sibilile Mantithi Ngangezinye kaDinuzulu was a Zulu princess and artist, mother to Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Princess Magogo was a singer, composed classical music and played

various instruments: a calabash and an isithontolo (a stringed bow). In 2000, Opera Africa commissioned Sibongile Khumalo to compose an opera on the story of Magogo. Khumalo featured as the lead.

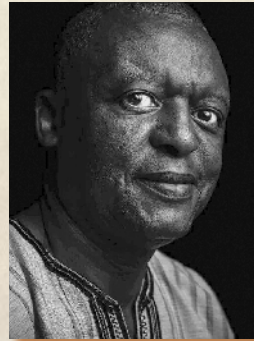
Sarah Vaughan was born on 27 March 1924 and passed away on 3 April 1990. She was an American jazz singer.

Matsemela Manaka (1956–1998) was a South African playwright, poet and artist. He began his career in the mid-1970s and was influenced by the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement. Among his plays, the most distinguished are *Egoli: City of Gold* and *Children of Asazi*.

CLOUDS OF BLACK ARE COMING AND OTHER POEMS

Clouds of Black are Coming. It could be that the dust of Soweto, the peach trees of Wattville, the dongas of Alex, an out-of-sorts Mpumalanga, the single male hostels of Langa and Gugulethu, and the villages dotted in the backwaters of the vast hinterland, it could be that they die, you know, to rise again, in poetry. It could be that they never die. Never die. It could be that they bring harmony and the restoration of the land to its poetic owners. It could be. The rainmakers are coming.

This offering of poems from 1976 to the present, throughout my personal growth, was a long time coming. Enjoy.



Jaki Seroke



military veterans

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