

# For the school children

This is for all the people of South Africa,  
because we are not so different

**KYLE ALLAN**

**T**HIS is for Nomkhono, a schoolchild, who walks without a smile to school and doesn't wave when I pass, but sees everything. Whose legs walk determinedly to school, not looking for pity from anyone, whose future is uncertain, and whose knowledge is measured in the struggle and patience required to gain something.

She knows a smile is something that is silent like desire, and to wear yourself is to wear the garment of your own struggle, nakedly. This is for all the children of St Joseph's School in New Hanover/uMshwathi, some who walk for many kilometres from forests and farms, fighting for an unguaranteed future.

This is for the people who are statistics on researchers' pages, and flesh and blood suffering on our soil.

This is for my wife's sister and her children and grandchildren who live in Clermont, who are sending the grandchildren to stay with another sister because things are tight. This is for Ma Wonder who makes her living selling second-hand clothes at the Pinetown taxi ranks, then returns home every day to the ironic valleys of Clermont, filled with human experience and pain, and yet so much beauty angrily bursting out into creativity. To sleep there is to live with people's voices in your head, not only your ancestors but those who have been denied power, but are the power.

**T**his is for Sli and Nomzamo, our nieces in Western terms, and yet as Africans we call them our children too. This is for their struggles, bringing up children in a world short of fathers. This is for their future. This is for their self-belief, and their silent struggles with identity. This is for all our mothers, the silent heroes of our revolution.

This is for the people who do not get admitted into universities, but are as innately gifted as those who have had better opportunities in life. This is for all the Chris Hanis and Steve Bikos and Tiros and Tatanes who have been silenced, but return again in our children, stubbornly beautiful.

This is for Sane, working the night shift at Ma Baker. This is for her sense of humour and her *papyosi* (carefree, robust) laughter transcending difficulty. This is for my friends the poets from DUT Riverside and Indumiso campus who are young and have

the courage to lead the fight for arts. Nobody told them to start poetry sessions. Nobody tells them to perform spontaneously in the taxi or waiting at the rank, regardless of who is around. This is for the people who use language to liberate. This is for the people who use taxis every day without complaining, who live equality in their struggles. This is for the news that is not deemed newsworthy, the struggle that is not over to fulfil yourself as a human being.

This is for the revolution screaming out to be expressed. On the walls, on taxis, on signs, on people's clothing. This is for the revolution of our African identity. This is for the poetry of our spiritual hunger unexpressed in mass media. This is for the country of many possibilities as yet unrealised. This is for the prophets of our nation like Zim Nqawana, Moses Molelekwa, Seithamo Motsapi, whose dream lives within our children's breath, hungry.

**T**his is for the people of Swapo informal settlement. This is for true investment in humanity. If investors don't want to invest in your struggle, let them go. There is no value more valuable than humanity. It is the very milk and marrow of civilisation. This is the poem screaming out to be heard in all our dialogue. This is for the jobless who don't belong to any union, for there are no unions for jobless people, only an essential silence of facts. This is for all those silent heroes of our democracy.

This is for the school children I pass every day. This is for my friends and family. This is even for my enemies.

Understand me, we are not so different. Perhaps you will understand someday. When people tell me they search for God, I say the best place to start looking for God is in another human being's eyes. If you want to feel power, touch another human being, warm, finite, alive.

If you want to start a revolution, let it be true revolution, a 180-degree turn to face our humanity. If you want to find wisdom, start in silence, unjudging, prepared for the truth in every form.

• Kyle Allan is a 24-year-old poet, writer, businessperson and festival organiser.