

# YOU ARE WOMAN!

## Part 1<sup>1</sup>

### PRINCESS MAGOGO

*You are woman:*

***The nation's bounty*<sup>2</sup> and peerless imbongi;**

**You use music to shake the**

**citadels of power:**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

### NOKUTHELA DUBE<sup>3</sup>

*You are woman:*

**refusing to be mere “helpmeet”,**

**Singing of “Africa – my native land”<sup>4</sup>,**

**and now buried in a marked grave<sup>5</sup>:**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

### PHYLLIS NAIDOO

*You are woman:*

**claiming self and identity**

**in the hallowed ancestry of**

**sacrifice:**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

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<sup>1</sup>Some of the women in Part 1 here are named and discussed in the *Agenda* Focus Essay: “Herstory: Writing women into South African history.” By the Oral History Unit of the Department of Arts and Culture. The contributors are Mthunzi Zungu, Nozipho Manqele, Calda de Vries, Thato Molefe and Muziwandile Hadebe.

<sup>2</sup> Title of book on Nontsizi Mgqwetho [Xhosa Poet] by Jeff Guy.

<sup>3</sup> See Heather Hughes’ biography, *First President – A life of John L Dube, founding president of the ANC*. Jacana, Johannesburg, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Poem written by Nokuthela Dube [née Mdimma].

<sup>5</sup> Professor Cherif Keita [US] discovered Dube’s unmarked grave.

**CHARLOTTE MANYE MAXEKE**

*You are woman:*

**Extolling the “new African woman”,  
long before our time, restoring Black women  
against alienation from land and self.**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**BESSIE HEAD**

*You are woman:*

**bewitched child of the rainwind,  
you turn the broken shards of  
memory into poetry:**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**PHILA NDWANDWE**

*You are woman:*

**We are bereft of words for your valour;  
lifting the spear of the nation<sup>6</sup>,**

**You refuse to betray the comrades:**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**VICTORIA MXENGE**

*You are woman:*

**axed for your courage and  
for your stand**

**at the assassin’s hand;**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**ELA GANDHI**

**YOU ARE WOMAN:**

**Warrior for Peace,**

**From leading the Defiance Campaigns to the present struggles,**

**You have never wavered:**

**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

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<sup>6</sup> Phila Ndwandwe was an MK Commander murdered by SA Security Police members in 1986.

**HELEN JOSEPH<sup>7</sup>**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN:**  
**leading armies of women<sup>8</sup>**  
**against the might of Strijdom.**  
**Your name is emblazoned: MOTHER OF THE STRUGGLE”:<sup>9</sup>**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**LILIAN NGOYI**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN:**  
**Joining the brotherhood on an equal footing;<sup>10</sup>**  
**Defying apartheid’s laws and**  
**Rallying women into untold solidarity:**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**FRANCES BAARD**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN:**  
**From the Freedom Charter to the**  
**Women’s March to the Treason Trial,**  
**Your spirit was not banned<sup>11</sup>:**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

**SONIA BUNTING**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN –**  
**Warrior for peace,**  
**Undiminished by imprisonment, banning, house arrest;**  
**You stood tall on the platform at Kliptown<sup>12</sup>.**  
**YOU ARE WOMAN.**

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<sup>7</sup> Among the women directly connected to The Freedom Charter were Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi, Ray Alexander [a founder of FEDSAW, and trade-union organizer], Dora Tamana [a founder of FEDSAW, and its national secretary], Frances Baard, and Sonia Bunting.

<sup>8</sup> Helen Joseph was one of the leaders of the 1956 Women’s March.

<sup>9</sup> Title given to Helen Joseph in the anti-apartheid movement.

<sup>10</sup> Lillian Ngoyi was among the first women to be admitted to the national executive of the ANC.

<sup>11</sup> Title of book by Frances Baard. 1986. *My Spirit is Not Banned* [Zimbabwe Publishing House:Harare].

<sup>12</sup> Sonia Bunting was a platform speaker at the Congress of the People at Kliptown.

## **PART 2<sup>13</sup>**

### **MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM, SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky -  
Against the chains of tradition  
And the bondage of patriarchy,  
You railed and rallied,  
Refusing to be silenced,  
Muzzled, or handcuffed.**

### **MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM, SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky -  
You refused the indignity  
of slavery  
Denials of your voice,  
Denials of your birthright  
in the land of your birth.**

### **MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM, SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky -  
You strode in fearless protest  
Against the stone towers of power,  
Braved the wrath  
Of police batons,  
teargas and guns.**

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<sup>13</sup> Part 2 is an attempt to encapsulate the various individual contributions to the Agenda journal number.

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**  
Under the southern sky -  
You marched before us,  
Refusing to live your years  
as A TALE  
THAT IS TOLD<sup>14</sup>,  
Outcasts in  
*his story*.

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**  
Under the southern sky -  
Weeping beyond the grave,  
For the *revolutionary petunias*<sup>15</sup>  
Now trampled on,  
Victories won and lost,  
Betrayals each new day...

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**  
Under the southern sky -  
Your daughters today  
Are telling of your sacrifice;  
Stories with soul<sup>16</sup>,  
Embroidered in our quilts<sup>17</sup>,  
And on our parchments  
Stained with blood.

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<sup>14</sup> Title of Isabel Hofmeyr's book, *We spend our years as a tale that is told - Oral Historical narrative in a South African Chiefdom*. From Psalm 90:9.

<sup>15</sup> Reference to Alice Walker's book of poems .

<sup>16</sup> See Sarojini Nadar's paper in journal.

<sup>17</sup> See Puleng Segalo's paper in journal.

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky -  
Your daughters of virtue in virtual spaces are  
Dispelling the myths of  
“The African woman”<sup>18</sup>,  
Made to order by thought tyrants and  
Homophobic  
Bullies.**

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky –  
Your daughters today are  
weaving *the unsayable*:<sup>19</sup>  
anguished for bodies  
scripted with *warrior marks*<sup>20</sup>,  
Prisoners of ritual, and  
“the family name”...**

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky –  
Your daughters today are  
storming the memory archives<sup>21</sup>,  
Crossing the faultlines in  
liberation history  
to expand the Freedom Charter.**

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<sup>18</sup> See Kagure Mugo and Chritel Antonites’ paper in journal.

<sup>19</sup> See paper by Puleng Segalo in journal. Reference to Annie G Rogers [2007] *The Unsayable: The Hidden Language of Trauma*.

<sup>20</sup> Reference to Alice Walker’s book and Female Genital Mutilation

<sup>21</sup> See paper by Rozena Maart, Itumeleng Mafatshe and Zanele Hlope in journal. Also see paper by Claudia Mitchell and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan on feminist research methodology.

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky –  
Your daughters today,  
gazing at their body cages,<sup>22</sup>  
*small moving parts*,<sup>23</sup>  
inscribed surfaces,  
traced with language  
and ideas, dogma,<sup>24</sup>assaults on the psyche,<sup>25</sup>  
are writing the body anew, and  
shaking off the shackles...**

**MOTHERS OF OUR FREEDOM,  
SISTERS OF YESTERDAY**

**Under the southern sky –  
Your daughters today,  
“*outside in the teaching machine*”<sup>26</sup>.  
Are waging new battles,  
Storming the barricades of the  
ivory tower,  
Refusing to be *outsiders within*.<sup>27</sup>**

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<sup>22</sup> See paper by Akinyi M Ocholla in journal.

<sup>23</sup> See paper by Sally-Ann Murray in journal.

<sup>24</sup> See papers by Immaculee Harushimana and Safiyya Goga in journal.

<sup>25</sup> See paper by Shirley Mthetwa-Sommers in journal.

<sup>26</sup> See paper by Grace Idahosa and Louise Vincent in journal. [Quote is from Spivak]

<sup>27</sup> Quote in Idahosa and Vincent paper is from Patricia Hill Collins.

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