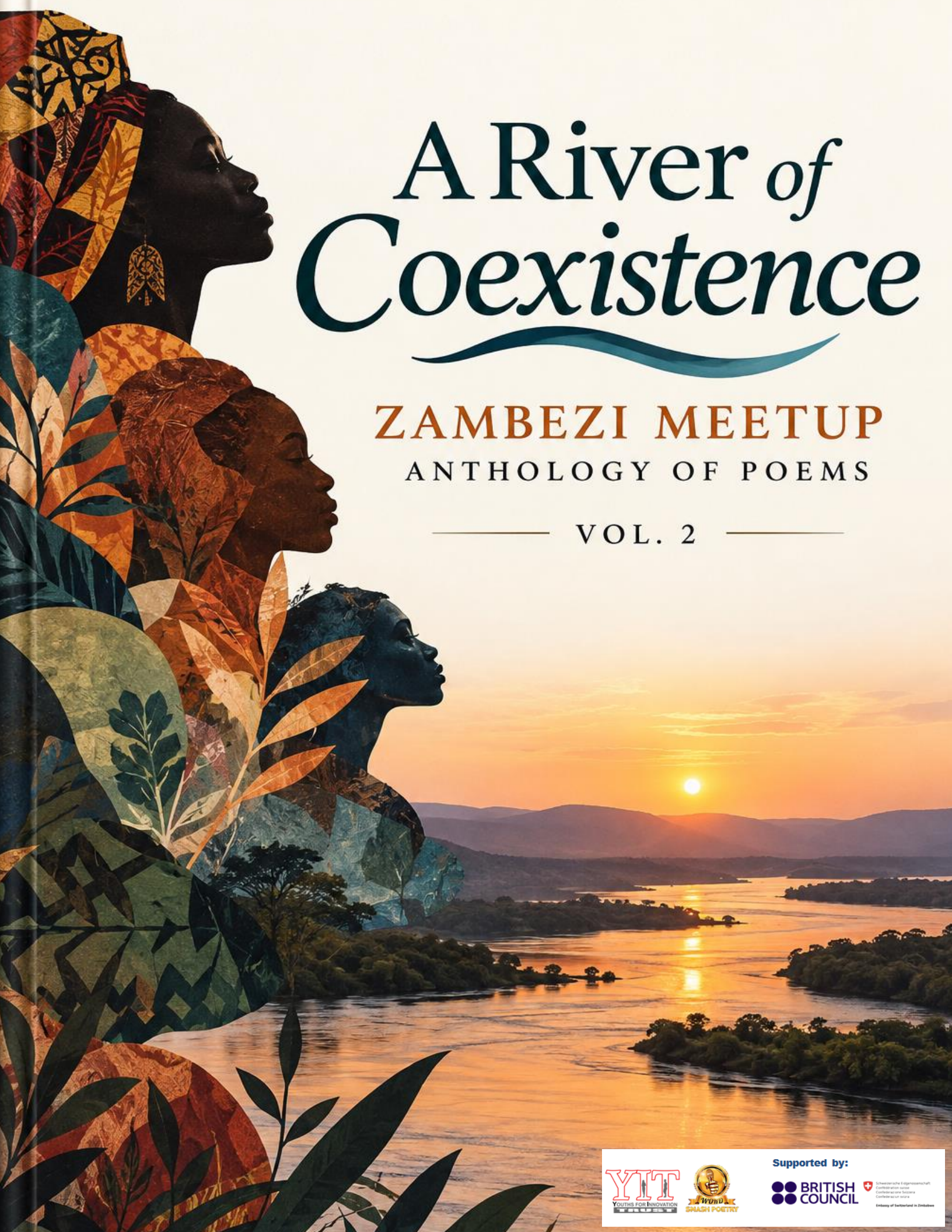


A River of Coexistence

ZAMBEZI MEETUP

ANTHOLOGY OF POEMS

VOL. 2

Supported by:

BRITISH COUNCIL

Embassy of Switzerland in Zimbabwe

CONTENTS

JAFARI POE'TREE

1. **THE SOIL CALLS BACK HER CHILD**
2. **WE EXIST AS ONE**
3. **THE WAY OF THE WATER**
4. **WHAT THEN SHALL WE DO**
5. **I PONDER QUIETLY**

SONKOMOSE

1. **LALELA**
2. **TELEPATHY ACROSS CULTURES**
3. **INZILO LISIKO**
4. **A WOMAN CALLED ZAMBEZI**
5. **UMFAZI OMHLOPHE**

LWAZI MTHEMBO

1. **UNGUBANI**
2. **CO-EXISTENCE**
3. **VUKA**
4. **AMANZII**
5. **CULTURE AND NATURE ARE ONE**

IVYICS IVYANATE

1. **DO NOT DIE**
2. **HOME**
3. **ONE LAST DISTRACTION**
4. **ROOTS**
5. **UNITY IS THE GLUE THAT BINDS US**

LORRAINE SICELO MANGENA "LOLOE"

1. **WE SHARE THIS SOIL**
2. **THE COUNCIL OF BEASTS**
3. **WHEN THE RIVER REMEMBERS US**
4. **WHEN THE MACHINES CAME TO THE WATER**
5. **TWO HANDS, ONE SKY**

ESSINELLY

1. **WHERE THE RIVER REMEMBERS**
2. **THE LANGUAGE OF TOMORROW**
3. **WHERE BRIDGES BEGIN**
4. **BEFORE THE ECHO FADES**

FOREWORD

The second volume of the Zambezi Meetup Residency comes at a time when the need to listen to one another, to our communities, and to the natural world has never been more important. **A River of Coexistence** brings together the voices of young women artists whose words travel across borders, languages, cultures, and generations, reminding us that what separates us on maps does not necessarily separate us in life. The Zambezi has always been more than a river. It is a meeting place, a source of life, a witness to history, and a bridge between communities. It moves across boundaries without recognising the lines that human beings have drawn between one another. In this anthology, the river becomes both landscape and metaphor carrying stories of belonging, identity, memory, nature, love, struggle, and hope.

The poems in this volume ask us to reconsider what it means to coexist. They invite us to look beyond differences in language, culture, nationality, gender, and circumstance, and to recognise the connections that bind us together. They speak of shared soil, shared skies, shared waters and shared histories. They remind us that coexistence does not require us to become the same; rather, it asks us to make room for our differences while recognising our shared humanity.

This volume also carries a strong conversation about our relationship with nature. From elephants and birds to forests, water and the soil beneath our feet, the poets remind us that humanity is not separate from the natural world. We are part of it. The river, in these poems, becomes a teacher flowing without discrimination, giving without asking who deserves its waters, and reminding us that life thrives through connection.

The Zambezi Meetup Residency is therefore not simply a creative exchange. It is a space where young women can meet across borders, share their experiences, learn from one another and imagine futures that are more connected, just and compassionate. Through poetry, these artists transform personal encounters into collective reflection and turn artistic expression into a bridge between communities.

As you read these poems, may you hear the river beneath their words. May you recognise the stories that are different from yours, but also the feelings that are familiar. May these voices encourage us to protect our cultures, honour our histories, care for our environment, and build relationships that do not stop at borders.

This anthology is an invitation to remember that coexistence is not merely about living beside one another. It is about seeing one another, listening to one another, learning from one another, and choosing to build together**.**

May the river continue to flow.

May the stories continue to travel.

And may we continue to find one another across the shores.

JAFARI POE'TREE



Born Nachimata Deborah Jafari in Livingstone, Zambia, she is a Poet, Singer, Songwriter, Storyteller, Creative Director and Mental Health Advocate. Her journey ignited in 2022, during her second year of university. That first solo performance cracked something open. And she hasn't stopped since winning first place in solo female poetry three years running, 2023 to 2025. She's devoted to more than art. She's devoted to impact using her platform to spread awareness, knowledge, and real change in social sectors and policy.

THE SOIL CALLS BACK HER CHILD

I almost forgot how it felt to hear history from a living ancestor
I almost forgot what my copper skin represented
I almost forgot the treacherous mountains and hill trailed for me to carry my name with pride
Carefully, I now have been fashioned and cleaned, shaving off unwanted debris
And hairs to craft a tangent hide.
A system designed to confuse, capture and imprison the mind
Give me chance, Nati give me space
Of course I am one of a kind
When I say " I" ,I mean the bloodied hands and feet that tracked the Kalahari, the Sahara to get here
The great names almost forging history
That united the nation we now know as Africa
Before borders even existed.
The great ancestors that taught what we knew as our birthright before science discovered it
Yes, of course I mean my people
I almost forgot my mother tongue, this concrete jungle that has caged us
Exists even in our minds
But hey, we are proudly wearing our bondages with pride
No more, I say, No more
They kill the mind, before we ourselves kill the soul
The soul calls back her child, but deaf have our ears gone
It is time to remember, time to recover and time to break free
And come home
The soil calls back her child

WE EXIST AS ONE

I saw a figure that seemed rare
and not easily seen calmly walk past and enter a residence.
I saw "pumba" even though that isn't actually his name.

A beast termed as "warthog" casually
crossing the street and life moves on
No noise, no chaos, no people chasing it
and no poacher in site.
I saw a large cattle crawl, empty
Protecting nothing yet, but warding off something intentional.
a mother carrying water over her head and her baby on her back. Standing, resting in
A tree shade.
I am an ant Though small, but hey
watch where you step will you
A wild plant growing so gracefully on a residence.

I sat under a tree to give applause
to the creator.

a beast, any and human
all significantly different but live as one
One is rare prey, the other the most
hardworking and the latter, one is both the
creator and destroyer.

We were told stories by our elders of how
the hare outsmarted the hyena, or how the
rabbit ran faster than the tortoise
Nature was the fuel reminding us of
our roots.
"manzi yakonka mfolo" of course
wherever we go, we are still connected
to what we are who we are
the same python you chase or kill is the
same that eats the rats and keep
pest away
Where are we without Nature
Where are you without the proper
Synchronicity with nature
the air, the water, the food,
the mother ,earth and nature grants
You -
We are simply the branches of the same tree.

THE WAY OF THE WATER

I take no final form,
For I have a tendency of flowing
where and however I please
I nourish the earth from the
darkest depths
I nourish this land.
I take many forms,
As many ask, who existed
before whom?
I existed before existence
became the term of life
I flow in peculiar channel
Sipping through cracks till I
become a waterfall
the natural beauty and wonder
you admire

The same natural wonders
pulling different cultures and
races at one point
yet you forget, I flow in you
from your skin, you call me Sweat
from your eyes, I am the tears
of joy and sorrow
I am in you, with you, for you
I am you , I am the Elephant
that treks the corridors of the
savannah
I never forget, even though you
may forget me.
I flow in all lands, all beings
that you may know
Just like the elephant, I am your
strength and beauty
I lead the way and show you
the road that leads to home
I am the elephant, just as I am you
I take no permanent form, I
exist in all .
When the birds need direction
I show them the way home, I flow
in them just as I flow in you.
I take many forms, but I still
exist as I am
the ancestors never had boundaries
I watched as they grew in number
they never discriminated, they protected
me
I guided them in my forms
When I was the tree, I gave them
water and reminded them not to
cut me down
I poured down my rains in their
seasons to nourish the land
I called all my beast forms
back home, when I thunder and
pour my waters
I take many forms, for I call myself to myself

when I am a monkey, I pick
and nibble and whatever I can
find
I do not wish to fight or quarrel
remember
I am the monkey, the elephant
Just as much as I am you.
I take many forms
But I remain as I am
I am you as you are me
I am the way of the water
For I exist as ALL

WHAT THEN SHALL WE DO

there was laughter
the kind that dances in the
wind as it blows
there was laughter
the elephants, the baboons, the
Lions and the people all celebrated together
there was laughter
the trees swayed in singular
motion
as the wind brushed their leaves and the
branches danced as if a choir
conducted
there was joy
as the children ran around
playing games of tag
there was joy
as peace finally returned
to a land deserted and deemed
barren
There was unity
as the people spoke one tongue
and protected nature
There was unity
as the animals roamed free
without fear, and the children
were taught to protect them
There was unity
as travelers were welcomed
in any household, fed, clothed
and a warm bed for their rest
And there was war
The greedy began sipping through
cracks of the nations taking
more than what was due to them
to them it was a game
they killed not only the spirit
they slaughtered the very beasts
they swore to protect
in the name of spirituality and
trophy
what then -- what then when
the land no longer bears fruit
what then -- when all beasts
are extinct
what then -- when the people
lose their soul
what then shall we do?
what then when nature gives
up --
what then when the sky comes
crushing down due to our
Failures
Todii....what then shall we do ?!

I PONDER QUIETLY

I sit quietly, in my mind
I see myself with grey hairs and blurred vision
telling stories to the children.
I giggle to myself, thinking it silly to even
ponder on such thoughts
Then I remembered the words my mother told
me once
"Nyamula mutu poyenda ,usakaleke koswe kuku
dyela pa mbale" ....
Raise your head when you walk , don't allow a
rat to eat from your plate .
The parable wasn't really making sense in my
younger days but
As I have grown order I realized it made a lot of
sense
The world will strive to crush what they don't
understand, eat and steal from what they didn't
work for

Stolen identity
Stolen heritage
Stolen culture
Stolen treasure.
Half our history is in foreign museums displayed with so much carefulness
Half our land doesn't remember its identity
It's roots
It's origin
Yet, we allow strange ways of life to dictate our community.

They feared us , they FEAR US
We are powerful, smart and deeply rooted to who we are
They learned their identity through our ways
Because they didn't have an identity of their own
.
Alangizi alikuti ....where's our Teacher !!!!
I sat quietly and imagined my death ,
Will my friends mourn or celebrate my life
Will my family choose not to forget me even in our next life cycle
Will there be disputes of who or what has authority over my remains .
Or will I be forgotten entirely.
I sat quietly, then I heard aBanda has died , so short is the cycle of life .
But till this Hour , I sat and remembered kompisi , A man vested
In time .
A man self taught and yet never forgotten his origin
His roots .
He's knowledge and skills are from our ancestors
Fear creeps ,will we have he's wisdom passed on or will it die with him
He has travelled the world yet according to society
He is not educated but
Scientists ask him for the ways of old and roots to treat disease

I sat quietly under the tree and saw how the creator Shows humor through everything.
I wonder

Are we trapped in a cycle or we trapped ourselves in a routine for comfort
While technology slowly replaces the jobs and skills of each human
They say it's here to "help simplify our living
Because it's predictable and easy for life .
But are sure we are safe
Countries fighting each other for petty reasons
I sat quietly and thought....how ironic it is I am seated while far off in another nation are mass killings and bombings.
Well , well the gift of life is invaluable

SONKOMOSE



Lyndah "Sonkomose" Sibanda is a multi award-winning praise poet, actress, dancer and storyteller, and a member of renowned music and dance ensemble Sunduza. She rose to prominence in 2015 after joining Sunduza. Since then, Sonkomose has performed locally and internationally, headlining at Poetry Africa Festival, KwaMashu Cultural Exchange, and So Creative Summit in South Africa. In Zimbabwe, she has featured at US Embassy Showcase, British Council Culture Week, Intwasa Arts Festival, and Bulawayo Arts Festival. Through powerful storytelling and performance, Sonkomose inspires, preserves culture, and connects communities

LALELA

Eita ollah
Ntwana yami funda fundiseka
Lalela
Sigiya ngesiyithi njengoluntu
Ngithi vuku'uphakame
Awubungazi ngani ubuhle bayo
Elabampunga lithi ziyagezana
Ngeqiniso
Ungasihlakulela siyakuhlelela
Wasithelela siyathel' uthuthuke
OGatsheni Bamphatha ngesizotha usondokhulu
OVodloza bayasikhothamela esaswela amabala
Ovezi kabawudli umlenze wayo
OThobela ephalwayo bayizila ukufa
Inzilo lisiko

Ezile msila lezile ngaja
zivez'ubuyithi
Ngoba sethiwa ngazo
Umhlaba lole sibeletho
Zimbila ntabanye
KuyahlonitshwA
Kuyavikelwa ukuze
Kukuvukele

TELEPATHY ACROSS CULTURES

Ndebele, Shona ,Tonga, and others
with an undisputable need to rely on others for survival.
The Need for unity regardless of our
Roots
As the roots built us for we are Bantu
Born and bred
By nature, naturally we are of the soil
Driven by sympathy and empathy
Across cultures there is telepathy
Recognition an undisputable fact that we are one
Our totems are the greatest preservers of the nature
A tapestry of tales
Woven through time
Rich in detail and meaning so prime
Our handmade craft reflect on our culture and richness of our soil
For We own the tales the white heads tell
So cherish the germs
Of mosi oyathunya/manzantothola

A WOMAN CALLED ZAMBEZI

Where I come from,
there is a place that resembles a Black woman
strong, resilient, beautiful, and extraordinary.

Like a bride she wears a veil.
Very few can figure how it's woven:
threads of mist, of river-breath, of centuries.and
no man knows here face

Her figure is flawless.
Unlike Shakira's hips,
hers lie between Zambia and Zimbabwe,
a geography of belonging that refuses division.

Like a brown skin girl
She has mastered coexistence
to be claimed by two and owned by none,
to let two tongues, two nations,
drink from the same bosom without jealousy,
to turn a falling into a feeding.

She is the original lesson:
that power can be soft,
that falling can be holy,
that to coexist is not to be still
but to thunder, together.

UMFAZI OMHLOPHE

Kube kuyangami
Bengizomkhuphela ezilamalunda
Ezilinani elingaphutshiyo
Ngime phambikwakhe ngi giye
ngiqolotshe,ngihaye ubuhle bakhe
Kodwa ngizwa ngisesaba
Ngoba angiyena we silisa

Ubuhle bakhe abuzwisiseki
Isimilosakhe asichazeki
Ijwabulakhe libutshelezi
Lembethwe zinwele ezimhlophe
Ingubo yakhe yinkungu efiphalis’indalo yonke
isale izibuza isimo sayo

Isimo sakhe siyindidamadoda
Sikutshiya ujuluka ngoba ephefumula amazolo
Iphimbolakhe kalipholanga liyaqhakaza
Kutshotshobale izizwe
Muhle macele onke
Lumfazi omhlophe uyindlovukazi
Elomqhele womchilo wamakhosikazi

LWAZI MTHEMBO



Lwazi Mthembo is a 20-year-old poet, Theatre and Filming Actress who believes words are weapons. She uses her voice to dismantle systems that silence and oppress people. GBV, toxic masculinity, and suffocating cultural norms are all on her hit list. But Lwazi is not only fire and fury. She is also a voice for love, peace, and unity. Through poetry, stage, and screen, she sparks honest conversations, inspires change, and invites her audience to join the movement. Her work does three things: it challenges broken systems, it heals wounded hearts, and it unites communities through truth, courage, and hope.

UNGUBANI?

NgiyiNkanyezi Eyaqhakaza Entathakusa
Imithandazo Yaphendulwa
Ukusa Kwafika Sengamhlophe
Kwathiwa NguNdlelaZimhlophe
Ngoba Ephethe UkuKhanya
Ngimuhle Ukwedlula iLanga
Iphimbo Lamii Limemeza Kusabele Izizwe
Kulilizele Izalukazi,Kuvuke AmaDlabuzane
Ngivumeleni Ngigiye,Ngihaye,Ngigide
Ngiliciko Kwezamasiko
Ulimi Lwami Luyaxaka
Lukbamba Xhaka,Ulalele,Ngikulalele
Ngingumthombo Ogobhoza Ulwazi Lwesintu
Emazweni Ngidumile Ngobuntu
NginguMaDube,UMthembo Ozithembayo....
Ngembethe Izangelo ZaboKhokho
Yaqala KoBabaMkhulu,BayiDlulisela
OBaba

Namhlanje Kukimi,Yimvelaphi Leyo
Ngizalwa YiSizwe Esimnyama
Injabulo yami iphezu kwamagama
Ngihambe ibanga kuzembone inhlanga
Namhla Sibambene
Ngincele ulwazi olungamisani legolide
Ngizaligodla
Iskhumbuzo sokuthi ukufunda akupheli
Ngisuswe ubulembu Emehlweni
Amagumbi amane,athwele izizwe
Singabantu banye siyafana
Sidalwe Ngokufana Asiphilisane Mzala!

Umzuzwana siphenduke amathe lolimi
Ungafunga siyelamana
Siyazwana
Vele umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu
Ngabo ngibe ngumuntu
Ngafunda Ubuntu Lemvelo
Ngizadlulisela Abanye

Kukonke Ngithi
Be kind. Stand together.
Our differences make us strong.
This is co-existance

CO-EXISTENCE

Injabulo yami iphezu kwamagama
Ngihambe ibanga kuzembone inhlanga
Namhla Sibambene
Ngincele ulwazi olungamisani legolide
Iskhumbuzo sokuthi ukufunda akupheli
Ngisuswe ubulembu emehlweni
Umzuzwana siphenduke amathe lolimi
Ungafunga siyelamana
Besizwana
Ngabo ngibe ngumuntu
Ngafunda Ubuntu Lemvelo
Libelifitshane iBanga Besihamba Sonke
Kungela Sizungu
Bezisitsha Lizelitshone
Kungela Ndlala Besiqephunelana
Uthando Lwabo Lwehlule
Iskhumba LoLimi
Imncele Lamasiko
BangFanekiso Ungacitshekiyo
They are a reminder that together we are strong
When we stand as one we cannot fall.
Our language carries our story
Our culture is our home.
Different faces one heart
Memories keep us close
Coexistence makes our bond grow stronger,
Friendship lights the way for all of us.
Because together, we are one and a family.

VUKA

Vuka,phaphama,phakama
Zithintithe uyesbukwenii uziJonge
Vusa lesosilo ekade salala
Sembethe amandla empumelelo
Sula inyembezii lezithukuthu,
Uvuse amalangabii ethemba
Ubuso bakho bubeyiNkazimulo Yombuso Wakho
Zijonge -Ungazideleli,Ungazideli,Uzithande
-Khanyisa lelokhandlela Elisebunyamenii
Ekujulenii kweyakho inhliziyo leNgqondo
Uthixo uvumile namhlanje,
Hambo zama
Ithuba ulalo lokufeza amaphupho lezifiso zakho
Ungahlehlelii emuva
Ukwehluleka lezinhlungu Yimpilo,Ungalilahlii iThemba
Hlakanipha,uhloniphe
Lapho Okuzalunga Khona
Ungakhohlwa ukubonga

CULTURE AND NATURE ARE ONE

Culture and nature are one,
"Do not cut ichithamuzi" they say,
That’s how we preserve.
Old forests still stand like elders, tall and wise.

Prayers by the water bodies run.
Believed to reside ancient beings that bring life.
We leave them undisturbed.
We respect as our forefathers did.
Springs are fenced, wetlands left to hold the rain.
Water is life.

Bathi uBuhle BeNdoda ZiNkomo Zayo
Livestock is wealth, cared for like a child.
It brings a voice, high status and power.
In ceremonies to celebrate and mourn.
We uphold traditions and create memories every year.

Our affirmation words align with nature:
Bafanisa uBuhle Okwelanga Liphuma.
We pride in our totems, hence appreciating the beauty of nature.

Nature and man have co-existed for generations.
Let us respect the old ways, welcome the new.
Clean the environment, harvest the rain.
Live with wildlife, not in pain.
Teach the children through song and story.

We do not own.
We belong.
Taboos, myths and all have been passed through generations.
When nature is alive and breathing, so is our culture.
Sustainability is a legacy built together.

AMANZII

Amanzii ayaphilisa
Aphinde abulale
Ayimvelenh le mhla ethambile
Ekhukhule imphefumulo mhla ehlokoma ngolaka

Siwadinga nxa engekho
Siwakhumbule sesiwomile
Siwasole nxa engcolile
Siwancome ehlambulukile

EQinisweni mntanami
Umuntu ufana lamanzi
Muhle ephinde ebemubi kwabanye
Bazathi umuhle okwempophoma mhla ugezile
Ubaba Okwamanzi Olwandle

Mhla Ukhafula Amalahle
Bakthanda namhla,bekzonde ksasa
Bekuqathakathekise nxa bekdinga
Bekukhumbule Mhla ungekho
Bekudinge SebeleNkinga

Izikhukhula LokuHlokoma
Kwempilo kuzabuya
Ngeke Ubaqede Abantu
Ungapheli iThemba
Khumbula imfundiso yami yamanzi

IVYICS IVYANATE



Vyane Nayame is a spoken word artist whose stage name is Ivyics Ivyanate. She enjoys creative spaces and believes that art is a media through which peace, hope, knowledge and life can be shared. She writes her poetry from the streams of hope and has performed on various platforms including TEDx Copperbelt, Wordsmash, WordMine, Colourculture and many other spaces. She enjoys reading, baking and poetry. Her favorite line is "You, are Never alone". For Ivyics, poetry is a reminder that life can be lived in full.

DO NOT DIE

“Do not die”
Said the horse to the grass.
“Do not die”
Echoed the donkey
“Please… do not die,” cried the cow and goat.
For without you, there is no I.

“Do not dry “
Whispered the earth to the sea.
With despair held closely as the only existing hope.
Do not dry or else we will die.
Do not deprive our checks of your kisses.
Your being ignites us into living things
“Do not dry!”
Cried the grass to the river.
For without you, there is no I.

Do Not Die
Dear love of mine.
Stay one more day,
For you carry the weight of my being and occupy every space in this heart of mine
So please, do not die; for without you…

HOME

I have never been here before
Yet,
It feels so familiar.
This man I certainly do not know, and yet his voice; my father’s soul, a man who strongly believes in himself.
I have never been here
But
I can hear the foot stamps in the kraal; late nights filled with drums, beat to awaken the earth with life. Hearts thumping to the dances of the massacred for their next move.
I have never been
Like this
At peace, at ease. Not in a hurry like the wind in search of space, here I am the space, already found.
I have never
Lived.
In a moment.
Now I bask in my current breath.
Not longing for the previous breath I just took or eager for the next about to be taken…
I have

But this to say about hoME, It's neither place nor person.
It's you.
For long, I too have searched for hoME; but it's always been ME.

ONE LAST DISTRACTION

Isn't it hilarious, that despite us know that more than half of our being is water we still do not see the need to care for these water bodies.
We make use of them as best we see fit, we continue to exist as the most distractive beings, we trash dirt and call ourselves clean.
Isn't it funny, how we play with our extinction?
We cut down trees knowing fully well we need the oxygen they give to continue existing.
Our daily bread is one last distraction.

For centuries, we've often asked who fits to be called neighbor so as to know whom to love.
Definition" whosoever is in your sight".
For decades, we have been victims of monsters that surprisingly live with us. For a wide range of crimes committed by those, we once loved.
For years, we've created monsters to fight.
Molded them with our harsh words cast as jokes.
Put spells of sentences said without much thought. And curved with our tongues life into the eardrums of another ignoring that these become echoes they never asked for.
We the bouncing baby boys turned into angry fathers who won't fathom your pitiful excuse of the need for love and company How could we, when our programming code was for us to be tough.
Pride has tied our tongues tight so no kind can words escape.
We take it and wonder how long we will last when our daily bread is one last distraction

Ever tried meditating in a pit latrine?
We feed our mind nothing more than screens.
We gamble on junk food and stand shocked at our dying heartbeats,
We dress our best; to receive their sympathy.
We cut wounds so that time can heal us.
We claim to love what we have been told to like.
We are the impact and the glue and our common craving is one last distraction.

ROOTS

Does the loss of leaves turn a tree into stone?
Does the absence of fruits make a mango tree barren?'
Imagine having to judge someone by what you can and cannot see.

I think that there is beauty in failing.
For, if water remained too scared to fail, would there be streams, rivers or lake.
Why should you then constantly conscious choose to remain the same?
Do your not know, that Stagnant waters rot.
I feel there is always victory in every fail.

For how long will you feast on the praised potential?
Why judge your value by what you have been told?
Do you not see the richness of the stones in your own yard?
So why allow strangers to pick flowers in your own garden.

Change requires you to be a shape shifter.
Like water filling any shape and form without losing itself.
We too can embrace technology and evolve without having to cut off our roots.
How else can we grow if we decide to cut our roots off simply coz we are too ashamed of the dirt from whence we came? Where else wold you rather have, the roots be if not in dirt?

Evolving does not mean forgetting who we are technology should enhance our lives not otherwise.
For, what is a five Ngwee worth if it cannot change?

UTU NTUNSE

I remember what harmony looked like.
I recall the warmth of peace like the morning sun kissing my cheeks.
Back then when we listened and engraved our elders teaching onto our hearts.
Received blessings for paths ahead of time.
We lived as humble beings yet full of pride for we knew who we were.
Not until we played the game of Ponya ntole, where all we wanted was what others had.
Always hunger for the bone in your friends' hands while ignoring the chunk of meat in your own.
Ala tala uloleshe ifyo kwete; Wilakumbwa mukamubiyo, wilakumbwa fyabene.

With the passing of time came the passing of tides, tribes and traditions.
We let our greed pick up meals we couldn't chew .
Made room for all strange things excluding our own traditions.
In own great pursuit to evolve we threw our value away, schooled our decency into fashion, and morality into rights.
How I wish, I could remember it all.
The feeling of peace like the taste of Ulumanda after taking a malaria pill.
How I wish, I too could have the memory of an elephant.
Maybe I, could remember home.
Kanshi Nibwebo Nani Nga ta waishiba nekoufu?

How can you believe HIs STORY, if it was written by another?

For long, you have been called poor and yet every day you see men of every race eager to invest in your poverty.
How blind will you continue to be?
Can you not at least see that you have all you need, right in your palms?
Why allow the ones, who did not live your life, tell it?
Indeed, As long as the lion cannot write the hunter will always be innocent.
Uwakanwa, talubile.
Who are we to blame?
We accept food we are not ready to digest.
We cut down all our tress and now we face soil erosion.
We flood our streams with dirt and now our land dies of thirst
We throw the teachings of our ancestors and busk in the heat of cultural erosion.
We have made extinct every creature we could eat.
Our hunger for wealth has created landslides and death.
Ukwali Nsonke, Takwafwile Muntu

UNITY IS THE GLUE THAT BINDS HUMANITY

Not welded in iron, but woven in breath.
It is the quiet promise between strangers
It is the roots that bind the soil we walk on,
Deep, unseen, tangled beneath our feet.
Drinking from the same river,
Fed by the same rain.

It is the force that safeguards our gems,
The drums that tell our stories
The patterns in the basket,
The inganekwane told under one moon.
Keeps our children from forgetting their imvelaphi

When division comes like drought,
Unity becomes the umthombo
When voices grow loud to tear apart
Unity becomes the softer answer
We are not meant to be one leaf
We are meant to be one tree
Many branches, one true

Many songs, one sky

So let the glue hold.
Let the rootss go deeper.
Let the gems be guarded.
For on this soil born and bred,
We only stand when we stand together.

LORRAINE SICELO MANGENA “LOLOE”



Lorraine is 25 years old. She is a poet and a previously published author. Her work of art mainly focuses on Women and Youth empowerment. She is a human rights advocate. She is a longstanding member of the Loziba Movement who has been part of several poetry shows and slams addressing gender equality and social justice.

WE SHARE THIS SOIL

We do not speak the same tongue,
yet our drums answer each other at dusk.
Beyond our diverse characteristics,
we trade salt for stories at the crossroads.
Borders cut the map, not the blood.
A neighbour’s fire warms my child,
my grief is carried in another mother’s song.
In Africa, we are not strangers.
We are different verses of the same prayer.

THE COUNCIL OF BEASTS

At the waterhole, the world makes peace.
Elephant drinks first, slow and ancient.
Zebra waits, stripes trembling but unafraid.
Impala, warthog, dove — all names in one sentence.
No crown here, only thirst.
The lion sleeps with a full belly,
and the meadow breathes because no one claimed it all.
Nature wrote the treaty long ago:
Take what you need. Leave the rest to live.

Can nature live without each other?
They say:
"INdlovu ayisindwa ngumboko wayo,"
"Umthwentwe uhlaba usamila,"
"Umfazi yimbokodo,"

Nature speaks to each other,
Nature explains each other,
Nature coexistence means all.

WHEN THE RIVER REMEMBERS US

We used to ask the baobab before we built.
We planted when the rains whispered first.
When the rains sent lightnings, then my mama told me to find the best protection under the Gumtree,
Victoria Falls did not roar to be admired —
she roared to remind us we are small.
Mosi-oa-Tunya: The Smoke That Thunders.
She gives mist to our faces and fish to our nets,
and asks only that we do not take her bones.
When we cut the forest, the wind forgets our names.
When we listen, the earth writes us back into the story.

Walking With Livingstone

Victoria Falls + Wildlife safaris in David Livingstone_
I follow footprints older than roads.
David Livingstone walked here with a Bible in one hand,
and wonder in the other.
Now our jeep moves quiet through mopane,
and the guide lifts his hand: -shhh...
A herd crosses — dust, thunder, life.
Victoria Falls ahead, a white curtain tearing the sky.
We do not conquer this place.
We borrow its awe for an afternoon,
and carry it home in our chests.

WHEN THE MACHINES CAME TO THE WATER

Blueprints in hand, promises in their mouths
“progress”, “development”, “a road to somewhere”.
But this was already somewhere.
This was the place where elephants came to drink.
Where grandmothers with wrinkled skin and tusks
led their babies down the same path for a hundred years.
Where the mud remembered footprints bigger than men.

Now the sign says: No Entry.

The elephants stand at the edge and wait.
They do not read the signs.
They only know thirst.
They only know this was home.

Who will tell the calf that “development”
means walking ten more kilometers in the sun?
Who will tell the river that concrete
is heavier than memory?

We build, yes.
But must we build by br…

TWO HANDS, ONE SKY

They told her the sky had a ceiling.
They told him the sky had no room for tears.
So she built ladders from silence.
So he learned to carry water and weight.
In the same house, two different weathers.
She leads meetings, then cooks the dinner.
He holds the baby, then hides the fear.
She is called “too much” for speaking.
He is called “too soft” for feeling.
She apologizes for taking space.
He apologizes for needing rest.

They were handed scripts before they had voices.
Blue for him. Pink for her.
Strength for him. Softness for her.
But the world is not made of two colors.
It is made of dusk and dawn, thunder and rain.

Coexistence is not easy.
It is unlearning the lies we were fed …

ESSINELLY



Esinelly Hermosa Lubingu is a Zambian youth reporter, presenter, writer, poet, storyteller, and advocate passionate about youth empowerment, community development, and positive social change. She is a Business Administration student at African Christian University and works in media as a news reporter and presenter. Through writing, poetry, storytelling, and advocacy, Esinelly amplifies the voices of young people, women, and communities. She is committed to using media, creativity, and leadership to inspire action and contribute to sustainable development across Africa.

WHERE THE RIVER REMEMBERS

The road was more than a road-
It was a classroom without walls.

Small houses stood with quiet dignity,
Cattle walked with patient rhythm,
Trees stretched their arms to the heavens,
And the forest whispered stories
Older than time itself.

Then we met an elder.

Not dressed in titles,
But clothed in wisdom.
Not carrying certificates,
But carrying generations.

He spoke, and history found a voice.

He reminded us
That before the maps,
Before the fences,
Before the borders,
There were people.
There was family.
There was home.

The river never asks,
"Which country are you from?"
The wind never chooses
Who deserves its song.

Nature has always known
What humanity sometimes forgets
That we grow stronger
When we walk together.

So I leave this journey
Not only with photographs,
But with purpose.

To honour the land,
To protect our stories,
To cherish our heritage,
And to become a generation
That builds bridges
Instead of boundaries.

Because the greatest journey
Is not the one along the road

It is the one
That brings hearts together.

THE LANGUAGE OF TOMORROW

Tomorrow does not speak
with one tongue.

It borrows the laughter
of children chasing dreams,
the wisdom
of wrinkled hands,
the rhythm
of drums from distant villages,
and the silence
of forests that have watched
generations come and go.

Tomorrow asks us one question:
Can we live together
without losing ourselves?
I answer
Yes.

Because unity
does not erase identity.
A river remains a river
even as it joins the sea.

I have seen strangers
become family
through a shared meal,
a shared journey,
a shared story.

The strongest bridge
was never built from steel.
It was built
from trust.

Let kindness
be our common language.
Let respect
be our shared currency.
Let compassion
be the passport
that opens every door.

We inherit
different names,
different songs,
different traditions.

But we also inherit
one sky,
one earth,
one chance
to leave this world
better than we found it.

So may tomorrow remember us
not as the generation
that built higher walls,

but as the generation
that chose
understanding over judgment,
hope over fear,
community over division.

Because the future
is never created
by one voice.

It is written
by many hearts
beating
toward the same horizon.

WHERE BRIDGES BEGIN

"Before the world learned to divide itself, nature had already mastered the art of belonging."

Before borders learned to speak,
before maps divided hearts,
before fences interrupted the horizon,
before history drew lines
that even rivers refused to remember,

there was a current,
ancient and patient,
flowing through generations
like a timeless song.

There was the mighty Zambezi.
She never stopped
to ask,
"Where are you from?"

She never questioned
the colour of your skin,
the language on your tongue,
the tribe you belonged to,
or the flag you carried.

She simply flowed.
She welcomed every reflection
the child chasing butterflies,
the grandmother carrying generations in her voice,
the fisherman casting hope into her waters,
the elephant crossing with quiet confidence,
the bird soaring without a passport,
the crocodile basking beneath the sun,
the tree stretching its arms toward the sky,
the stranger,
the neighbour,
the dreamer.

To the river,
every life mattered.

She carried canoes,
dreams,
songs,
laughter,
memories,
and sometimes tears.

She carried stories
from one shore
to another,
proving that water
never asks permission
to unite what humanity
tries so hard to separate.

Tell me—

If one river
can embrace
a thousand streams,
why can't humanity
embrace one another?

If the forest survives
because every tree
protects the same soil,

why do we believe
that another person's success
must become our defeat?

If birds
can share one sky,

if fish
can swim in the same waters,

if the stars
can shine together
without competing
for the night,

why do we struggle
to celebrate
the light
inside someone else?

BEFORE THE ECHO FADES

The river never asked who owned the land, or which side deserved its water. To her, every shore was home.

“Madzi alibe tsankho.” Water has no favourites.

The wind crosses borders without a passport, and the rain falls without asking where we belong.

Yet humanity still builds walls where nature has built bridges.

A woman can raise a nation, yet still be denied a seat at the table. But rivers never apologise for flowing, and neither should women for rising.

“Amayi ndi mtima wa dziko.” A woman is the heartbeat of a nation.

The elephants taught us strength, not through noise, but patience; not through standing alone, but through protecting the herd.

And when the road fell silent, we learned that even broken journeys can lead to beautiful lessons.

Six women, six voices, different stories, one shared purpose. For art is not about being the same, but allowing every voice to be heard.

“Pamodzi tili amphamvu.” Together, we are stronger.

Perhaps that is why a forest is never just one tree, and a river never belongs to one shore.

Life is a journey, and before the echoes fade, may we be remembered for choosing bridges over walls, compassion over comfort, and humanity over division.

Bonus poems from the co-curator…

MUSA MOYO

At a Lodge in Zambezi

The birds of the sky sang to me—
They chose to perch on my window.

Imagine, I grew up eating these delicacies.
Why do they choose to give me sweet music?
Why are they making me feel so good
without chewing them after roasting them?

Has nature become this arrogant?
Is nature this stubborn now?

The birds continue to belt out tune
after tune, like Yo Maps' Vibes on Vibes;
so cool like Oliver Mtukudzi's strings,
so crooning like PK Chishala,
and soothing like the Cool Crooners.

These birds actually come to eat
my vegetables.
If not the veggies,
they eat the insects
that eat my vegetables.

This is a weird world:
eat or be eaten,
or eat while being eaten.

Isigiqathuvi

He majestically modelled off the road
I checked him with an eagle's eye
Because for where he stops my security lies
He knows through smell where it is

I pay attention like paying a debtor.
He lands, he stops, he rolls, he is happy.
I am alert, I am aware.
The biggest of the five is nearby.

I prepare my camera for a shoot.
I prepare to see the biggest of the five.

Welcome to Zambezi,
Where humans and nature meet-up
To co-exist.

by Musa Moyo (The Protest Poet)

Credits / Publication Details

Title: *A River of Coexistence – Zambezi Meetup Anthology of Poems, Vol. 2*
Project: Zambezi Meetup Residency – Volume 2
Produced by: Youth for Innovation Trust (YIT) and Wordsmash Poetry Movement
In collaboration with: Residency artists and partners in Zimbabwe and Zambia
Supported by: British Council and the Embassy of Switzerland in Zimbabwe
Publication year: 2026
Place of publication: Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Contributors:

Jafari Poe'Tree
Sonkomose
Lwazi Mthembo
Ivyics Ivyanate
Lorraine Sicelo Mangena "LoloE"
Esinelly

Residency Coordinators:
Musa Moyo
Thando Gwinji

Genre: Poetry Anthology

Language: English, with selected indigenous language expressions

Edition: Volume 2

Copyright notice: All poems in this anthology remain the intellectual property of their respective authors. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form without proper acknowledgement of the authors and the producing organisation, except for purposes of review, research, or educational use with full attribution.

Contact: Youth for Innovation Trust
programs@youthforinnovation.com
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Supported by: