

# **I Am An African**

**Favourite Africa Poems**

**By Wayne Visser**

Fifth Edition

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to the people of Africa, who never cease to amaze and inspire with their colourful diversity, their warm humanity, their unquenchable hope, their tireless resilience and their indomitable spirit.

## **Fiction Books by Wayne Visser**

I Am An African: Favourite Africa Poems

Wishing Leaves: Favourite Nature Poems

Seize the Day: Favourite Inspirational  
Poems

String, Donuts, Bubbles and Me: Favourite  
Philosophical Poems

African Dream: Inspiring Words & Images  
from the Luminous Continent

Icarus: Favourite Love Poems

Life in Transit: Favourite Travel & Tribute  
Poems

## **Non-fiction Books by Wayne Visser**

Beyond Reasonable Greed

South Africa: Reasons to Believe

Corporate Citizenship in Africa

Business Frontiers

The A to Z of Corporate Social  
Responsibility

Making A Difference

Landmarks for Sustainability

The Top 50 Sustainability Books

The World Guide to CSR

The Age of Responsibility

The Quest for Sustainable Business

Corporate Sustainability & Responsibility

CSR 2.0

Disrupting the Future

This is Tomorrow

Sustainable Frontiers

The CSR International Research  
Compendium

The World Guide to Sustainable Enterprise

## About the Author

Wayne Visser was born in Zimbabwe and has lived most of his life in South Africa and the UK. He is a writer, academic, social entrepreneur, professional speaker and amateur artist.

Wayne has a deep love for Africa, its people and its wildlife, which is given voice through this collection. His views on Africa are best summed up in his own words:

*I am an African  
Not because I was born there  
But because my heart beats with Africa's  
I am an African  
Not because my skin is black  
But because my mind is engaged by Africa  
I am an African  
Not because I live on its soil  
But because my soul is at home in Africa*

Wayne hosts a blog called Poets of Africa, where poets inspired by the great continent and its people can share their work.

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## **I Am An African**

I am an African  
Not because I was born there  
But because my heart beats with Africa's  
I am an African  
Not because my skin is black  
But because my mind is engaged by Africa  
I am an African  
Not because I live on its soil  
But because my soul is at home in Africa

When Africa weeps for her children  
My cheeks are stained with tears  
When Africa honours her elders  
My head is bowed in respect  
When Africa mourns for her victims  
My hands are joined in prayer  
When Africa celebrates her triumphs  
My feet are alive with dancing

I am an African  
For her blue skies take my breath away  
And my hope for the future is bright  
I am an African  
For her people greet me as family  
And teach me the meaning of community  
I am an African  
For her wildness quenches my spirit  
And brings me closer to the source of life

When the music of Africa beats in the wind  
My blood pulses to its rhythm  
And I become the essence of sound  
When the colours of Africa dazzle in the sun  
My senses drink in its rainbow  
And I become the palette of nature  
When the stories of Africa echo round the  
fire  
My feet walk in its pathways  
And I become the footprints of history

I am an African  
Because she is the cradle of our birth  
And nurtures an ancient wisdom  
I am an African  
Because she lives in the world's shadow  
And bursts with a radiant luminosity  
I am an African  
Because she is the land of tomorrow  
And I recognise her gifts as sacred.

## **Africa**

Gondwana  
Born of Pangaea  
When separation first began  
Like a unicell dividing

Africa  
Split from India  
And from America parted  
Cut adrift and subsiding

Birthplace  
Of all humankind  
Whose seed has been scattered  
Far from the *Ma* tree

Dark space  
That light left behind  
From progress that mattered  
In the quest to be free

Battleground  
Of tribe against tribe  
Whose rivers of tears  
Still bloodstain the sand

Whisper sound  
Of fate's changing tide  
As hope's rising years  
Unify this great land.

## **Wild Africa**

### *I. Awareness*

Africa wakes up, hungry  
She prowls in packs and preys  
She wakes up wild and wary  
And hides in herds to graze

Lurking low, Africa waits  
She leaps out with surprise  
She sets her traps for bait  
And casts her dewy eyes

Africa takes off, soaring  
She rides on wings and prayer  
She tweets and hoots, imploring  
And swoops down from the air

Lying still, Africa blinks  
She twitches in her manger  
She shuts one eye and thinks  
She listens out for danger

## *II. Renewal*

Baking sun and bright blue skies  
Tinder sparks to flame  
Blazing grass and fearful eyes  
Of creatures wild and tame

Thunderbolts and flashing cloud  
Torrential rain and flood  
Quenching pools and splashing shroud  
Roll-playing in the mud

Pitter-drops and patter-sounds  
Amidst the mist and showers  
Blossom-bursts and splatter-grounds  
All painted bright with flowers

Mating calls in season's heat  
New playgrounds for the young  
Rhyming with new reason's beat  
Fun frolics in the sun

### *III. Diversity*

Africa, stretching far and wide  
Herds migrate with season's tide  
Hippos snort, crocs lie in wait  
Most survive, some meet their fate

Africa, living wild and free  
Monkeys swing from tree to tree  
Warthogs squeal and lions roar  
Dolphins leap and eagles soar

Africa, teeming great and small  
Lank giraffes and bugs that crawl  
Zebras mix with wildebeest  
Hyenas laugh while vultures feast

Africa, joining earth and sky  
Gorillas nest and springboks fly  
Elephants rumble, wise as sages  
Life joins life across the ages

#### *IV. Freedom*

Rising from the dusty plain  
With hope in every burst of rain  
This land of everlasting strife  
This Africa, our source of life

Breaking out of rusty chains  
With wildness flowing in her veins  
This land where all creation roam  
This Africa, our common home

Reaching out across the years  
With echoed genes and veils of tears  
This land of skulls and mystery  
This Africa, our history

Forever feral, never tamed  
With restless destiny unnamed  
This land of the eternal child  
This Africa, forever wild.

### **If These Stones Could Whisper**

*Robben Island, South Africa*

If these stones could whisper  
What secrets would they tell?  
Would it be of aeons past  
When all the sky was fiery rain  
And lava flowed and rock congealed  
To sculpt this coastal plain?  
Or would they speak of great divides  
When land was rent asunder  
By tidal waves and raging winds  
And peals of angry thunder?

If these stones could whisper  
What things would they recall?  
Would it be the first Man's cry  
A babe within the cradle  
Or infants playing bow and arrow  
In hunts that turned to fable?  
Would they see a restless child  
That set down roots to grow  
To write and read, to build and shape  
To plant and reap and sow?

If these stones could whisper  
What stories would they weave?  
Would it be rebellious years  
When teen-Man spread his wings  
Tempestuous times of selfish pride  
Of war and slaves and kings?  
Or is the recollection fresh  
With recent tragic days  
When clashing adult siblings  
Each went their separate ways?

If these stones could whisper  
What legends would they share?  
Would it be of island tales  
Of untamed wilds and virgin sand  
Or merchants from across the bay  
Who scavenged rocks and mined the land?  
And what of deformed outcasts  
To whom the world was blind  
Repelled for their unsightliness  
And banished out of mind?

If these stones could whisper  
What phantoms would they know?  
Would it be of men in cages  
Charged with heinous crime  
Or heroes of the struggle  
Condemned to quarry lime?  
And what of tin-pot jailors  
Imprisoned by their fiefdom  
And all the inmates counting steps  
Along their walk to freedom?

If these stones could whisper  
What triumph would they shout?  
Would it be of dawning days  
Where time's great lessons can be learned  
A sanctuary, a hope-filled space  
Of future visions born and yearned?  
The stones echo with silence  
Mute with the wisdom of worlds unmet  
But if these stones could whisper  
They'd say: always forgive, never forget!

### **Lost City of Gold**

*Mapungubwe, South Africa*

Mapungubwe, rise once more  
Up from the south Limpopo shore  
Let now your ancient tale be told  
Of those who built the Place of Gold

Mapungubwe, on the hill  
Your royal tombstones tell us still  
Of treasures lost and fortunes made  
Before you star-kissed kingdom's fade

Mapungubwe, we can trace  
A thousand year old trading base  
Exchanging gold and ivory  
For spices, silks and rainbow beads

Mapungubwe, let us sing  
The praises of your gilded king  
Whose golden rhino, staff and bowl  
Your riches to this day extol

Mapungubwe, formed to be  
A civilised society  
And guided by a higher fate  
You midwifed our first nation state

Mapungubwe, we proclaim  
The untold glories of your name  
And to this day your lofty brand  
Bestows top honours in this land

Mapungubwe, see it's true  
That from your seed a great tree grew  
With sturdy roots and fruits sublime  
And branches across space and time.

## **Women of Africa**

Women of Africa  
In the land of bow and spear  
Of chieftain and warrior  
Of hunter and hunted  
You are the silent gatherer  
The unsung provider  
The hidden basket  
We raise you up  
And speak your praise

In the shifting sands of power  
You are the pyramid of constancy  
Standing firm  
Against the fierce winds of time

On the endless plains of possibility  
You are the gentle matriarch  
Leading the way  
Through the fickle seasons of life

In the thirsty dust of desperation  
You are the baobab of sustenance  
Rooted deep  
In the quenching earth of faith

You gather the tears of the world  
And in the midst of mourning  
You find reason to smile

You gather the tribes of the world  
And in the chaos of squabbling  
You sow seeds of community

You gather the stories of the world  
And in the firelight of remembrance  
You keep the spirit burning

Women of Africa  
The music of every place  
Moves to your swaying hips  
And shakes to your stamping feet

Women of Africa  
The children of every time  
Suckle on your ample bosom  
And fall asleep to your lullaby

Women of Africa  
The victims of every tragedy  
Seek solace in your arms  
And find comfort in your voice

You gather the light of the world  
And in the darkest caves of evil  
You spread your luminescence

You gather the orphans of the world  
And in the villages of your heart  
You give them a place to call home

You gather the elders of the world  
And in the sacred councils of trust  
You show us a better way

When our past dries to a trickle  
You are the river delta  
That reunites our memories  
With the sea of history

When our days are drought stricken  
You are the tireless pestle  
That grinds our hardship  
Into the flour of wisdom

When our future lies in shadow  
You are the wild prophetess  
That divines our destiny  
In the pattern of bones

Women of Africa  
In a world of folly and fear  
Of division and diversion  
Of begetting and forgetting  
You are the mighty gatherer  
The harvester of wholeness  
The maker of peace  
We honour you this day  
And forever more.

## **Sahara**

*Tunisia*

A silky dust devours the miles ahead  
Between the barely living and the dead  
The thirsty sun sucks every dewy drop  
Up from the bare-ribbed sand dunes'  
barren crop

Yet strung across the shimmering mirage  
A silent camel-beaded entourage  
Comes bearing treasured spices, oils and  
balms  
To green oases under shaded palms

Along these trails our history is told  
As stories trade and mysteries unfold  
Connecting East and West in common  
cause  
And teaching from the book of Nature's  
laws.

### **Cave of the Gods**

*Sterkfontein, South Africa*

What is this place?  
This home of the stromatolite  
Which breathed oxygen into life  
When the planet still steamed toxic?

What is this place?  
This womb of the mammals  
Which found warmth in their blood  
When reptiles still ruled the land?

What is this place?  
This cradle of the ape-man  
Who walked erect on the ground  
When the jungles still favoured swinging?

What is this place?  
This crucible of the stone-man  
Who tamed the wild red flower  
When nature still feared incineration?

What is this place?  
This forge of the iron-man  
Who amplified power in their hands  
When the elements still tested survival?

What is this place?  
This valley of the ancestors  
Who discovered strength in community  
When civilization still wanted nurturing?

What is this place?  
This tomb of the warriors  
Who fought the battle for dignity  
When prejudice was still a formidable foe?

What is this place?  
This site of world heritage  
Which celebrates creation's genesis  
When the world still craves rebirth?

What is this place?  
This cave of the gods  
Who dream humanity into the future  
When evolution is still an embryo?

### **Little Foot**

Your footprints in the rock  
Supplied a vital clue  
A key that might unlock  
The mystery of you

They take us on a journey  
Back four million years  
A branching of the life-tree  
When ape-man first appears

Aeons passed in slumber  
Left undisturbed by time  
Until Man's blast of thunder  
Exposed the hollow lime

Even then the shadows hid  
In caves of Sterkfontein  
The world's first hominid -  
Your secret still remained

Until the revelation  
By digger Robert Clarke  
Brought you commendation  
And freedom from the dark

Upon an outstretched arm  
Your weary head still rested  
And soon your shortened palm  
Sparked theories now contested

Your waking in the valley  
Takes science to the brink  
Could you really be  
The fated missing link?

Of you will books be written  
Your sleep has turned to fame  
Your progeny are smitten  
And echo your proud name

Little Foot you have trod  
Our path of history  
Forever after we are shod  
With your humanity.

### **Sangoma in Our Closet**

There's a *sangoma* in our closet  
At the office beneath the stair  
Most think that she's a little crazy  
Taking daily refuge there  
They see her through their bias:  
The 'girl' who makes us tea  
The messenger, the general help -  
Why, who else could she be?

There's a *sangoma* in our closet  
But no one seems to care  
In ignorance they shake their heads  
They smile, try not to stare  
Their arrogance has blinded them  
To her secret, sacred role:  
Revered within her community  
As a doctor of the soul

There's a *sangoma* in our closet  
Whose beliefs we'll never share  
Schooled in ancient mystic lore  
In magic foul and fair  
Around her neck is loosely strung  
Symbolic beads and string  
An initiate in ways of power -  
To dance, divine and sing

There's a *sangoma* in our closet,  
A sight both strange and rare  
In semi-dark she conjures dreams  
And whispers words of prayer  
She listens as her ancestors  
Give counsel true and wise  
She contemplates life's mysteries  
Not least her divergent lives.

## **A Dragon's Tale**

*South Africa*

Breathing smoke, the dragon wakes  
Yawning fire, and sighing quakes  
Blinking storms, with eyes aglow  
Spitting floods of lava flow

With arching back of shifting scales  
And clawing hands of fingered shales  
With Grabben skin of Trapp basalt  
And crevassed frown of geo-fault

Its Lowveld feet and Highveld chest  
And Great Escarpment's rising breast  
Its Kalahari appetite  
And Mountain Kingdom's heady height

Hemmed in by sea, it roams the plains  
At Tswaing a footprint still remains  
While carcass bones of fossil prey  
Still litter mud and Karoo clay

Aeons pass, the dragon sleeps  
Dreaming of the hoard it keeps  
With gold and diamonds in its plunder  
Blissful snores vibrate as thunder.

## **Shine, Africa, Shine!**

### *I. The Dark Continent*

Africa – the dark continent:  
So named by explorers  
Because the candle of their knowledge  
Was feeble and flickering;  
Because their ignorance  
Was a void of deep space.

Africa – the dark continent:  
So named by conquerors  
Because the torch of their mission  
Was sordid and smoking;  
Because their prejudice  
Was a cave of grey ghouls.

Africa – the dark continent:  
So named by scholars  
Because the lamp of their enquiry  
Was paltry and passing;  
Because their theories  
Were coded in white and black.

## *II. Enemies Of The Sun*

Africa is the continent of light,  
But there are enemies of the sun:  
Despots who snuff out flames,  
Gangsters who skulk in alleys  
And traders who deal in darkness.

Africa is the continent of light,  
But there are crevices of shade:  
Valleys where black blood flows,  
Corridors where corruption festers  
And markets where slavery sells.

Africa is the continent of light,  
But there is darkness, it is true:  
For every beam casts its shadow,  
Every sun has its eclipse  
And there is no day without night.

### *III. The Day of Dawning*

Africa's day is dawning,  
So let those who talk of shadows  
Bring their light to bear;  
And those who proclaim darkness  
Open their eyes wider.

Africa's day is dawning,  
So let those who feed the night  
Find themselves cold and hungry;  
And those who steal the light  
Find themselves alone and imprisoned.

Africa's day is dawning,  
So let those who pedal black fear  
Discover the beauty of sunrise;  
And those who dwell in tunnels  
Find their inner flame.

#### *IV. The Land Of Sunshine*

Africa is the land of sunshine  
Where topaz skies stretch out  
From here-now to forever  
And each scarlet sunrise  
Renews faith, hope and life.

Africa is the hearth of firelight  
Where dancing flames leap up  
For distant starry dreams  
And glowing orange embers  
Warm the hands of friendship.

Africa is the pot of rainbows  
Where every pregnant storm cloud  
Crackles with electricity  
And each shroud of grey mist  
Shimmers iridescent.

*V. The Shining Continent*

Shine, Africa, shine!  
Nourish our shared earth  
And feed our common roots;  
Green our tree of life  
And bear sweet fruits of peace.

Shine, Africa, shine!  
Spark our imagination  
And confound us with your brilliance;  
Flame our deepest desires  
And dazzle us with your colours.

Shine, Africa, shine!  
Fire our greatest passions  
And empower us with your stories;  
Blaze brightly on our soul quest  
And inspire us with your light.

## **Ode to the Elephant**

Your sacred image looms large  
Painted on the rough canvass of Africa  
Traced in the shifting sands of imagination  
Etched into the hidden caves of the soul

The herd moves as one  
Graceful skaters gliding across the  
    shimmering mirage of dusty desert  
    pans  
Misty shadows playing hide and seek in the  
    shrouded valley forests  
Granite boulders in magical motion over the  
    mottled bushveld plains

You are one of Eden's first-born  
Survivor of frozen time  
Grown old and wise  
Before men learned to crawl

The air trembles in harmonic rapture  
As you chant your esoteric song  
And the earth shudders in shameful guilt  
As you trumpet your just anger

You are the maker of roads  
The planter of gardens  
And the builder of dams

Your trail of destruction  
Is the path of creation  
For all that follow in your wake

Death brings sorrow and mourning  
Life heralds the joy of cheeky youth  
In between, an invisible web of caring is  
strung  
And a sacred maze of kith and kin is trod.

Oh, great icon of this Earth  
Memory of our faded past  
Conscience of our troubled present  
Prophet of our hopeful future  
Lead us in your gentle footsteps  
On the journey to our greater selves.

### **Africa Calls to Me**

Africa calls to me  
With the beat of her drums that mark my  
days  
And the words of her poets that guide my  
ways  
With the crash of the waves that hug her  
shores  
And the sounds of the rain that soak her  
pores

Africa calls to me  
With the tears of mothers that stain her soil  
And the laughter of children that ease her  
toil  
With the rattle of guns that pierce her calm  
And the bustle of streets that sing her  
psalm

The sounds of Africa  
Are the cries of the world's forgotten child  
Taking us back into the womb of creation

The sounds of Africa  
Are the songs of the world's untamed wild  
Filling our ears with hymns of oblation

The sounds of Africa  
Are the screams of the world's disturbing  
fears  
Begging us to embrace transformation

The sounds of Africa  
Are the words of the world's neglected seers  
Pointing us to the star of salvation

Africa speaks to me  
Through the babble of markets on the  
breeze  
And the lament of hawkers so forlorn  
Through the heaving of fishers on the seas  
And the hoot of taxis at dusk and dawn

Africa speaks to me  
Through the roar of lions basking at noon  
And the snigger of hyenas in the night  
Through the rumble of elephants in tune  
And the stir of gorillas out of sight

The sounds of Africa  
Are the lashing of slaves that haunt her  
past  
And the victory songs of those who are free

The sounds of Africa  
Are the crumbling of ways that cannot last  
And the hopes for new possibilities

The sounds of Africa  
Are the whispers in a din of despair  
And the tunes in a maze of lost and found

The sounds of Africa  
Are the notes in the symphony we share  
And the joy in a land of light and sound

Africa calls to me  
With the cry of eagles that frees my soul  
And the hush of sand dunes that soothes  
my mind  
With the call of loeries that makes me  
whole  
And the cicadas drone that blots out time

Africa calls to me  
With the crackle of fires that light her skies  
And the rustle of leaves that swish her  
sighs  
With the chant of her songs that move my  
feet  
And the pulse of her heart that makes mine  
beat.

**First People**

*Tribute to the San Bushmen of Southern  
Africa*

First people of this ancient land  
Last exiles in the desert sand  
To you we owe our destiny  
Our struggle to be wild and free

We call you Hunter, Bushmen, San  
You sowed the seeds of primal Man  
A gentler race we have not known  
See how your legacy has grown

For millennia you lived in peace  
In harmony with nature's beasts  
With tools of sinew, wood and stone  
And crafts of egg-shell, quill and bone

Hunting game and digging roots  
Tapping trees and plucking fruits  
Theatre nights 'round dancing fires  
Singing clicks to starry spires

You chose the way of archers' bow  
Of hunters' grace - the art of flow:  
To give and take and see the whole  
To honour life and feed the soul

You felt the weather in your bones  
And sensed earth's subtle undertones  
You heard the stars whisper 'tsau! tsau!'  
And rode the wind, we know not how

The landscape generations trod  
Recalls to us your Mantis god  
Windswept by myths and scattered tales  
And prints revealed on dusty trails

Then came the time of racial blight  
A target for both black and white  
The hunter turned to hunted prey  
Pre-dawning your extinction day

You were the masters of the hunt  
But progress left your arrows blunt  
And tracking skills that reigned supreme  
Are all but lost in history's stream

Yet even now your soul still breathes  
On cave walls and in rocky cleaves  
In ochre, charcoal, mud and lime  
Your images still transcend time

We see your smile in every face  
Whose eyes reflect that thirsty place  
In wrinkled elders old as earth  
Whose wisdom joins us with our birth

First people of this ancient land  
If we could only understand  
Your honoured ways still hold the key  
To setting all our spirits free.

## **African Dream**

My Africa!

As white-hot skies give way to bloodshot  
red  
I breathe a sigh and rest my laden head  
As dark descends and blinking stars pierce  
through  
I close my weary eyes and dream of you

I dream a dream of genesis  
Of teeming wildlife on the plains  
I hear a tale of Eden's bliss  
Of sparks of knowledge fanned to flames

I dream a dream of beating drums  
Of painted caves and hunters' bow  
I hear the voice of ancient ones  
Who weave the web of what we know

I dream a dream of exodus  
Of journeys over land and sea  
I hear the song of restlessness  
That swells with longing to be free

I run with cheetahs, graze with deer  
I hunt with lions, know no fear  
I soar with eagles, hide in dales  
I swim with dolphins, sing with whales

I throb with music in the air  
I see the swirl of rainbow flair  
I feel the stomp of dancing feet  
I sweat with fever's tropic heat

I gaze into the firelight  
I sit in silence, pure delight  
I listen to the elders' words  
I rise upon the wings of birds

The rivers are flowing  
The brown dust turned to green  
The harvests are growing  
In my African dream

The fathers are yearning  
The mothers' love redeems  
The children are learning  
In my African dream

The peace-buds are blooming  
The hope-streets freshly clean  
The love-stalls are booming  
In my African dream

As visions fade, all blurred and bled  
My world unwinds like loosened thread  
As daylight breaks and jet sky turns to blue  
I wake refreshed with glorious dreams of  
    you

My Africa!

## **African Odyssey**

### *Botswana*

Beneath the boundless African sky –  
Unblemished blue overhead  
And sun-bleached white on the horizon –  
There is an endless African road:  
Stretched long and shimmering straight  
Tirelessly chasing its own vanishing point

Crossing the vast African bush –  
Khaki-clad with stone buttons flashing  
    silver  
And mottled coat of green-brown and  
    yellow-red –  
There is a rusty African bus:  
A melting pot of tenacious travellers  
Bubbling with the bright colours of  
    adventure

They find a snaking African river –  
A watery ribbon teeming with life  
That quenches all who visit its cool shores –  
Fraying into a wide African delta:  
A floating Eden world  
With arms wide open in swampy embrace

En route are remote African towns –  
Echoing with fish-eagle cries of freedom  
And donkey-plodding hopes for the future –  
Nurturing countless African dreams:  
Termite-mound aspirations reaching  
    skyward  
And ferry-chugging crossings to peace and  
    prosperity

Among them is a wistful African poet –  
At home in the bushveld of his birth  
And at rest in the sands of the wilderness –  
In search of eternal African mysteries:  
The eroded ways of ancient flow-lines  
And native answers to thirsty questions.

### **Baobab: Africa's Tree of Life**

At the heart of the African plain  
Stands an elder strong and sage:  
A survivor of sunshine and rain  
And mute witness to many an age

But this is no ordinary tree  
For her trunk is hollow inside  
And hidden unseen she keeps  
The secret of her native tribe

For her cave is a place of birth  
A haven safe from danger  
This womb of Mother Earth  
Is Africa's child manger

The Baobab stands proud and strong  
She serves her clan as midwife  
It's been thus generations long  
She's Africa's great Tree of Life.

## **Where the World Once Began**

*Egypt*

### *I. Flight of Time*

Soaring like a god on wings Isis-blessed  
In search of beginnings - a mystical quest  
O'er newly wed mountains and islands  
    estranged  
'Cross deserts of water - my Horus-eye  
    ranged

In a flash I catch sight of her delta arms  
    wide  
She bids me fair welcome, this patchwork  
    clad bride  
With gold sand swept hair and brown sun  
    baked tan  
I am meeting my maker - where the world  
    once began

## *II. Cacophony of Cairo*

The City Victorious bustles and teems  
With the chaos of life near bursting its  
seams

Hooter blasts mingle with chant-calls to  
pray -

A whirling sound dervish that's danced  
every day

The dead and the living find shelter in  
tombs

The skyline is punctured with crosses and  
moons

While the tranquil Nile whispers of history  
unfurled -

The lotus bud blooming of the civilised  
world

### *III. Era of Gold*

The speaking stones echo down canyons of  
time ...

The vulture and cobra are shown  
intertwined

Two crowns worn together - the red and the  
white

As the kingdoms of upper and lower unite

The floodplains turn fertile and peace fills  
the sky

From the golden creator, the gods multiply

The sun is discovered in Earth's cavern  
womb

The word crystallises in temple and tomb

#### *IV. Pyramids of Knowledge*

Blocks hewn from stone form steps up to  
heaven

In praise of the sun - the spirit to leaven  
The chambers within are sanctums of peace  
Where the body can sleep and the soul find  
release

Resting content beneath the great shadows  
three

The lion of wisdom holds life's precious key  
Reflecting the dawn on his time honoured  
face

Weathered with patience - great guardian of  
grace

*V. Monuments of Glory*

Amidst all the rubble and ruins of old  
Legends still linger and stories are told  
Of glory and power, of order and law  
Of beautiful cities and triumphs of war

The towering pylons conceal a great hall  
Where a petrified forest of papyrus stands  
tall  
Obelisks and statues rise regal with pride  
Protecting the family of gods safe inside

*VI. Valley of Kings*

The dusty white mountains and valleys  
converse

In whispers of secrets hid under the earth  
Of tunnels and treasures and sarcophagi  
Of caves where the queens and the kings  
came to die

The tombs tell their stories in rainbow relief  
Of ochre and kohl, green, blue and gold leaf  
The walls speak of journeys from this world  
to nether

Of Judgement that weighs each heart  
against a feather

*VII. River of Life*

Tufted green palm trees cling to the shores  
Barely escaping the desert's hot claws  
Farmers and fishermen battle the haze  
Beneath the envious eyes of the limestone  
cliffs' gaze

On the blissful blue water drift swans  
graced in white -  
The sails of *felukas* shine billowing bright  
The Nile's ebb and flow are now slaves to  
the sluice  
As the people and river search hard for a  
truce

*VIII. Legacy of Ramses II*

For three generations he ruled from the  
throne  
Constructing and carving his likeness in  
stone  
From statues colossi, his praise song still  
rings -  
The original Gulliver, a giant among kings  
  
Still awesome the sight, though millennia  
have passed:  
The mountain of worship whose face is  
unmasked  
Where horses and chariots do battle for  
kings  
Beneath the protection of the gods'  
outstretched wings

*IX. Vision of Rebirth*

Centuries trickle, as the future is frayed  
Kingdoms erode and dynasties fade  
The sacred ankh's buried beneath aeons of  
sand  
Its destiny resting in time's patient hands

But the soul winds are changing, a gold  
sun's on the rise  
The snake is uncoiling, the bird again flies  
From death, life takes breath, we feel the  
birth pang  
And emerge recreated - from where the  
world once began.

## **African Time**

I'm living my days in African time  
I'm walking the ways of season and rhyme  
I'm weaving the maze of culture and crime  
I'm soaking the rays of scattered sunshine

You think that I'm slow  
You think that I'm lazy  
You think I don't know  
You think that I'm crazy

But I'm beating my drum to African time  
I'm hearing the hum of friends on the line  
I'm counting the sum of blessings I find  
I'm tracing the crumbs of love left behind

You think that I'm late  
You think that I'm aimless  
You think I don't rate  
You think that I'm nameless

Still I'm setting my pace to African time  
My life's not a race for the clock or bell  
chime  
I'm moving with grace on a mission sublime  
I'm claiming back space for African time.

### **I Know a Place in Africa**

I know a place in Africa  
Where I can feel the sun on my back  
And the sand between my barefoot toes  
Where I can hear the gulls on the breeze  
And the waves crash on the endless shore

I know a place in Africa  
Where the mountains touch the skies of  
blue  
And the valleys shelter vines of green  
Where the trees spread out a cloth of  
mauve  
And the bushveld wears a coat of beige

I know a place in Africa  
Where I can hear the voice of thunder gods  
And watch their lightening spears thrown to  
earth  
Where I can breathe the scent of rain  
clouds  
And taste the sweet dew of dusty drops

This is the place of wildness  
Of evolution and dinosaurs  
Where life began and mankind first rose  
Of living fossils and elephants  
Where lions roar and springbok herds leap

This is the place of struggle  
Of desert plains and thorn trees  
Where pathways end and hunters see signs  
Of horizons and frontiers  
Where journeys start and sunsets bleed red

This is the place of freedom  
Of exploration and pioneers  
Where darkness loomed and light saw us  
through  
Of living legends and miracles  
Where daybreak came and hope now shines  
bright

My heart is at home in Africa  
Where the sound of drums beat in my chest  
And the songs of time ring in my ears  
Where the rainbow mist glows in my eyes  
And the smiles of friends make me welcome

My mind is at ease in Africa  
Where the people still live close to the soil  
And the seasons mark my changing moods  
Where the markets hustle with trading  
And creation keeps its own slow time

My soul is at peace in Africa  
For her streams bring lifeblood to my veins  
And her winds bring healing to my dreams  
For when the tale of this land is told  
Her destiny and mine are as one.

## **Africa's Pride**

*Ghana*

Basking in the welcome  
Walking in the rain  
Soaking up the sunshine  
Gazing on the plain

Port of slaves  
Place of gold  
Seeds of youth  
Roots of old

Markets on the pavement  
Traders on the street  
Worship under treetops  
Beggars' twisted feet

Forts be cursed  
Ships of yoke  
Lakes of thirst  
Chains be broke

Motor shops where JESUS SAVES  
Banks where GOD'S AT REST  
Mini-Mart's where MARY PRAYS -  
Retail's heaven blessed

Grazing goats  
Cows in pens  
Roaming dogs  
Free range hens

Bridges in the forest  
Primates shy and rare  
Anthills in the village  
Bird songs on the air

Plates of rice  
Laced with salt  
Blends of spice  
Brews of malt

Fashion on the sidewalk  
Music in the heat  
Gridlock on the roadway  
Dancing to the beat

Adinkra signs  
Ashanti kings  
Changing times  
Freedom's wings

Looking to the future  
Seeing hope-filled eyes  
Sensing newfound vision  
In Africa's deep pride.

## **I Weep for Africa**

I weep for Africa –  
And my tears water the ground  
Where the tree of life first took hold  
And its severed roots still spread wide

I weep for Africa –  
And my tears salt the wounds  
Where the battle for freedom first was  
fought  
And its fallen heroes still lie scattered

I weep for Africa –  
And my tears mark the stain  
Where the blackness of slavery left its trail  
And the rust of chains still bleed red

I weep for the invisible:  
For all those who still live in darkness  
Because the light of the world's media is  
dim  
And poverty's face does not sell

I weep for the forgotten:  
For all those who died nameless  
Because the eye of the world's memory is  
    blind  
And history only remembers the conquerors

I weep for the ignored:  
For all those who cry out in vain  
Because the ear of the world's commerce is  
    deaf  
And free trade is freedom for the few

I weep for Africa –  
Whose mountains are scarred by greed  
And whose deltas are slick with corruption  
Because power is like cancer

I weep for Africa -  
Whose valleys are lined with graves  
And whose rivers flow with blood  
Because revenge feeds on itself

I weep for Africa –  
Whose villages are skeletons of mud  
And whose cities are phantoms of dust  
Because progress leaves many homeless

I weep for the mothers:  
For all those who cradle sickness  
Because their compassion does not pay  
And life still has a price tag

I weep for the fathers:  
For all those who sweat for food  
Because the forges of industry are infernal  
And labour is still just a commodity

I weep for the children:  
For all those who grow up too soon  
Because the killer virus reaps a bitter  
harvest  
And childhood is still a luxury

I weep for Africa –  
But not tears of pity  
For this is a land of countless assets  
And a people of abundant resourcefulness

I weep for Africa –  
But not tears of despair  
For this is a land of vast potential  
And a people of inextinguishable hope

I weep for Africa –  
But not tears of judgement  
For this is a place with its own destiny  
And a people whose sun is on the rise

Yet for my forgetting of her ancient ways  
And my ignorance of her hidden secrets  
For my deafness to her fireside stories  
Africa weeps for me too

And for my dwelling in her shadows past  
And my cutting loose her community ties  
For my arrogance looking from the outside  
in  
Africa weeps for me too

Yes, for turning my back on her wild spirit  
And bleaching the arc of her rainbow vision  
For my veil of salty tears shed for her  
Africa weeps for me too.

### **Place of the Skull**

*Okavango, Botswana*

In this sacred place  
Where kindred still roam  
And rivers embrace  
Your ancestral home  
Once you were king  
Over all that you saw  
From the dry dusty plains  
To the wet muddy shore

Now you are silent  
Your head on the sand  
The guardian of pilgrims  
Who visit your land  
Yet still you awake  
'Round the campfire at night  
When the flames kiss your face  
And your eyes dance with light

Then you speak to the shadows  
Of the wisdom of ages  
Of the secrets of wildness  
And the passion that rages  
In this home of the spirit  
In this circle of stones  
We are blessed by the gift  
Of your skull and crossbones.

## **Prayer for Africa**

Dear God  
For the love of Africa  
Hear my prayer

Africa is the cradle of your creation  
Therefore, grant me patience  
To nurture growth and goodness  
In this great land

Africa is the rainbow of your heavens  
Therefore, grant me tolerance  
To celebrate difference and diversity  
Across this wide continent

Africa is the drumbeat of your heart  
Therefore, grant me courage  
To offer comfort and compassion  
In the face of her people's trials

To the prisons of poverty in Africa  
Let me bring the liberation of choice  
And to the deserts of her suffering  
Cool streams of relief

To the tunnels of deception in Africa  
Let me bring lamps of truth  
And to the jungles of her conflict  
Flags of reconciliation

To the caves of despair in Africa  
Let me bring voices of hope  
And to the swamps of her fear  
Whispers of comfort

Wherever Africa teaches her children  
Share the lessons of my fading past  
And where she dreams of tomorrow  
Set my feet on the path of progress

Wherever Africa raises her leaders  
Judge my support by democracy's voice  
And where she breathes in community  
Join my breath with inspiration

Wherever Africa cherishes her wilderness  
Mark my celebration of nature's bounty  
And where she cares for her people  
Watch my spirit swell with love

For the love of Africa  
Hear my prayer  
Dear God.

### **African Pace**

Far from the cities  
And far from the streets  
Far from the people  
Is where my heart beats  
It beats in slow time  
In the vast open space  
It beats out the rhyme  
Of an African pace

With the sun baking down  
And the buzz of blue flies  
With chirping cicadas  
And gentle breeze sighs  
There's no need to rush  
No deadlines to chase  
Just the slow steady pulse  
Of an African pace

The cool of the morning  
The heat of high noon  
The balm of the sunset  
The silk of the moon  
The stars' steady march  
The rivers' etched face  
The life loving rhythm  
Of an African pace.

## **Canyon of Mirrors**

*Fish River Canyon, Namibia*

### *I. Stop the Clocks*

We descend through aeons  
Layer by layer  
Swallowed by the ancient snake  
Wandering along the arteries of our thirsty  
Mother

Stop the impatient clocks!  
Enter into geological time  
Strip off the manic masks of civilization  
Step into soul land

Invisible life weaves the fabric of our path  
Footprints upon dusty spoor  
Clawed and cloven

Scorching sun  
Refreshing river  
Rest brings relief to muscles strained  
Untrained

A symphony of silence settles  
A veil of red rays ushers in the bride of  
darkness  
Her black dress laced with sequin stars  
Her shadowed neck hung with lunar  
pendant

We dance into our dreams ...  
And awake to a new world

## *II. We Are Alive*

We winch ourselves out of cosy cocoons  
Creaking with rusted joints and aching  
limbs  
Until motion oils and massages us forward  
On our wilful march

Slipping and sliding  
Splashing and crashing  
Stumbling and tumbling ...

We bruise  
We bleed  
And know we are alive

Across shimmering stone and shifting sand  
Beneath searing sun and crumbling cliff

Through the barren bad-lands  
The sombre sad-lands  
The curséd mad-lands!

Every drop of energy sucked and sapped  
'Til at last we call a halt

The swallows dip and dive  
The fish eagle cries  
We have survived!

The fire licks our wounds

### *III. That Sinking Feeling*

Scenery blurs beneath the unforgiving blaze

Quicksand tugs at our ankles  
Rock shards stab at our feet  
The elusive horizon taunts us  
The eternal “why” haunts us

A regal heron and nervous hare take flight  
Bright, cheerful flowers bloom  
Where there seems no right to life

The desert erupts into a gushing waterfall  
Flowing down to majestic pools and  
    through intricate channels  
With the fluid hand of a master sculptor  
Inviting respite from pain and progress  
The icy river injects life back into our numb  
    senses

The sun bows out to thunderous riverine  
    applause

*IV. A Promise of Out*

Over the hump and into the canyon funnel  
As sentry baboons bark: Intruder alert!  
Klipspringers glide across the ragged stage  
    like graceful ballerinas -  
The wasteland blues are behind

Our ephemeral thoughts and mood are  
lighter  
But our feet must still plod painfully  
onward  
Through unforgiving terrain  
Every step a burden of weight and pressure

Spiral etchings on the jet-black plastic  
rockscape  
Hint at travellers gone before  
Perhaps ancient

A pair of fish eagles ride the thermals  
With mocking grace and ease  
At peace with land, water, sky

The watchful crags let slip their eroded  
disguise ...  
Sphinx, tusker, leopard, ape ...  
Then shimmy back to inanimate rock once  
more

At last, the distant peninsular summit  
Explodes into expectant view:  
Home on the rise  
A promise of out

*V. The Final Ascent*

We rise early  
Teetering on the fragile cusp between night  
and day  
With finishing fever pulsing in our veins

The towering landscape flows beneath our  
eager tread  
As we succumb to the magnetic pull of  
civilisation  
Amidst vivid visions of all that is familiar  
and comfortable

Human prints and scattered litter show the  
way  
The gift of orange seems heaven sent  
Our turbo fuel for the final ascent

Step by step, we drum  
The slow, steady rhythm of the climb  
Driven by an unquenchable inner fount  
Of strength and hope

Peering faces over the ledge  
Are all the reassurance we need  
To soar on chill-wind and chain  
And clasp our holy grail

We are done  
We have endured

Taking our old life back  
Is our just reward

Yet after the canyon of mirrors  
We see through new eyes.

## **Swahili Spice**

*Tanzania*

*Jambo!*

Greetings from Dar es Salaam:

Eternal harbour of peace ...

Dusty roads and diesel fumes

Pungent fish and fragrant blooms

Cauldron markets, bubbling  
trade

Vibrant fabrics, crafts  
handmade

*Karibu!*

Welcome in Zanzibar:

Exotic island of spice ...

Azure skies and brooding clouds

Baking sun and thunder shrouds

Coastal mangroves, palm-lined  
shores

Exotic spices, wood-carved  
doors

*Rafiki!*

Friend of Africa:

Continent of passion ...

Shaking tops and swaying hips  
Clapping hands and whistling lips

Frothing rhythms, stamping feet  
Pulsing music, living beat

*Kwaheri!*

Farewell to Bagamoyo:

Place of crushed hearts ...

Ancient merchants, trading routes  
Bartered treasures, plundered loots

Faded portraits, shadowed past  
Rusted shackles, free at last.

## **Music of Africa**

Music is the heartbeat of Africa  
And as we drum  
So we are drummed  
By the pulse of Africa

We celebrate  
As we stamp our feet  
We celebrate  
As we join the beat  
The beat for Africa

Music is the harmony of Africa  
And as we sing  
So we are sung  
By the melody of Africa

We celebrate  
As we sing our song  
We celebrate  
As we hum along  
We hum for Africa

Music is the glue of Africa  
And as we bind  
So we are bound  
By the unity of Africa

We celebrate  
As we join our hands  
We celebrate  
As we link our lands  
We link for Africa

Music is the movement of Africa  
And as we move  
So we are moved  
By the life of Africa

We celebrate  
As we band for Africa  
We celebrate  
As we stand for Africa  
We stand for Africa.

### **African Vine**

The roots of Africa are deep  
Her branches spread wide and low  
Her fruits are bitter-sweet  
She is the vine on which we grow.

## **Mandela and De Klerk**

*South Africa*

Divergent paths by twists of fate  
Ordained to meet, then separate  
High branches grown from different stems  
That intertwined to make amends

Who are these sons of destiny  
That changed the course of history?  
Who are these dons of liberty  
That led their people to be free?

Mandela – from the Themba clan  
Among the hills of Transkei land –  
Was schooled to be a royal chief  
But chose instead the golden Reef

De Klerk – of Afrikaaner stock  
That staked their claim to Transvaal's rock  
–

Was steeped in National Party depths  
And followed in his father's steps

Both knocked upon unopened doors  
Both tipped the scales of unjust laws  
And each was raised to lofty heights  
By willing hands and vexing plights

Mandela – asked to fight the ground  
Where dignity was beaten down  
De Klerk – compelled to guard the fort  
Of privilege that the past had bought

The stage was set for black and white  
To go to war or lose the fight  
There was no neutral ground to stand  
Each corner backed their leading man

Mandela raised the nation's spear  
The State replied midst rising fear  
The 'Pimpernel' was put on trial  
And banished to the Cape's bleak isle

For twenty seven years and more  
The battle raged upon the shore  
Until De Klerk set Nelson free  
To take their place in history

Negotiations followed swift  
To heal the wounds and mend the rift  
And even while blood soaked the ground  
A partnership was sought and found

Until the day – that happy dawn –  
A rainbow nation's dream was born  
We owe a debt of thanks and praise  
To those who led us through the maze

Mandela brought great unity  
And showed that truth can set us free  
His lack of spite inspires us still  
To strive to serve a higher will

De Klerk's great gift was letting go  
And having faith that trust can grow  
He showed that change is like a seed  
That knows no bounds of race or creed

And so we raise our voice and say:  
We celebrate upon this day  
Two heroes of democracy  
Who rescued our humanity.

## **God Bless Africa**

God bless Africa  
For she is the seed of humanity  
And I am the future through her

When her roots sprout, I am born  
And as her leaves unfurl, I grow  
When her branches spread, I learn  
And as her flowers bud, I bloom

God bless Africa  
For she is the fire of creation  
And I am transformed through her

When her problems loom, I am challenged  
And when her solutions hide, I search  
As her suffering inflames, I burn  
And as her fever subsides, I rejuvenate.

## **African Idea**

Africa wakes –  
It boils and bubbles  
It stews and steams  
Swathed and swaddled  
In wisps of melting mists  
And the feathered blue skies  
Of my inner eyes

This Africa –  
Drenched in sun and sorrow  
Stretched in time and place  
Bridging north and south  
Cleaving tribe from tribe  
Birthing a prodigal progeny –  
Alive in my mind

Africa moves –  
It spawns and spews  
It morphs and multiplies  
Enhanced and entangled  
In human chains of need greed  
And white lightning webs  
Of synapses firing

This Africa –  
Shadowed in war and want  
Bursting with light and longing  
Dancing dust clouds around fires  
Beating drum songs of desires  
Endlessly en-route –  
On my famished road

Africa sleeps –  
It drifts and disperses  
It seeds and suckles  
Soothed and silent  
In fields of ripening toil  
And the wandering blotch-herds  
Of scattered thoughts

This Africa –  
Whispered in myths and mysteries  
Cradling its loves and losses  
Chanting with hope and defiance  
Hawking praise and prophecy  
Woven in patchwork tales –  
Echoed in my prose

But is Africa real?  
This Africa of mind and magic  
This Africa of dreams and dust  
This luminous continent  
Glowing in the dark interior  
Of my gold-threaded caves –  
This Africa of my psyche

Is Africa fact?  
This Africa of books and bards  
This Africa of fables and fiction  
This luscious land mass  
Teeming with the wild life  
Of my untamed frontiers –  
This Africa of my stories

Is Africa true?  
This Africa of tongue and touch  
This Africa of nose and noise  
This muddled melting pot  
Spicing the pallid palette  
Of my doldrum days –  
This Africa of my senses

Yes! Africa lives –  
Africa breathes and beats and blooms  
Africa strives and thrives and jives  
Africa shakes and aches and breaks  
Africa weeps and rises and leaps  
Africa sings and soars on the wings  
Of my imagination

This is *Africa*  
This is *my* Africa  
This is my Africa *imagined*  
This is my *imaginary* Africa  
This is my *image* of Africa  
This is my *idea* of Africa  
This is my *African idea*.

## **Colours in the Dust**

### *Morocco*

I leave behind the dusty brown  
Of narrow streets and sun-fired clay  
Back home to England's verdant town  
Of scholars' spires and skies of grey

I leave behind the market maze  
Where every hue is stacked and strung  
And count the march of Christmas days  
In gleaming malls with carols sung

I leave behind the emerald bliss  
Of gardens in the golden sand  
And smile to see the blooms I miss  
Still traced upon my lover's hand

I leave behind the hooded eyes  
Of faces drawn like timeless maps  
And brush the mask of my disguise  
With bright new paint across the cracks.

## **Genesis**

Out of the void of anticipation  
Out of the time before time began  
Out of the fire that sparked creation  
Out of the earth that rooted a clan

Africa swirled  
Africa spun  
Africa world  
Africa one

Out of the lava of molten streams  
Out of the swamps of fetid earth  
Out of the semiotic dreams  
Out of the soils of fecund birth

Africa rose  
Africa spread  
Africa chose  
Africa bled

From frothing seas and putrid ponds  
With plankton tide and Pisces spawn  
Life bloomed and bred and burst with  
fronds  
And oceans glowed with Darwin's dawn

Africa yawned  
Africa breathed  
Africa formed  
Africa seethed

From fertile plains and sandy shores  
Some creatures crept and leapt to flight  
With fleeting flanks and razor claws  
While others learned to walk upright.

## **Lagos Lives**

*Lagos, Nigeria*

Lagos lives  
Seeding and sprawling  
Steaming and smoking  
Grasping at the shoreline  
Gasping at the skyline  
Clinging to its oil-slicked ropes  
And singing of its toil-stripped hopes

Praise be!  
To the God who sets His people free  
To the fiery preacher on TV  
To the Sunday throng that still believe  
Praise be!  
To the beggar and the banker  
To the fisher and the swanker  
To the struggler and the smuggler  
Praise be!

Lagos breathes  
Coughing and crooning  
Swaggering and swooning  
Shouting at the winners  
Flouting all the sinners  
Unleashing hope with soaring psalms  
And greasing all the outstretched palms

Praise be!  
To the Son who died upon the tree  
To the light that makes the blind to see  
To the ear that hears each prayerful plea  
Praise be!  
To the leaders and the bleeders  
To the hackers and the slackers  
To the hoppers and the jokers  
Praise be!

Lagos moves  
Churning and chugging  
Squirming and slugging  
Jamming on the highways  
Cramming in the byways  
Convulsing to the market mob  
And pulsing to the Fela throb

Praise be!  
To the Ghost who lit the flame in thee  
To the Word of heavenly decree  
To the Three in One and One in Three  
Praise be!  
To the movers and the shakers  
To the moguls and the fakers  
To the dealers and the healers  
Praise be!

Lagos lives  
And breathes  
And moves  
To a rhythm of its own  
To an ancient mystic poem  
To a purpose yet unknown  
Lagos moves  
And breathes  
And lives.

## **We Africans**

We Africans  
We, the spark of creation  
We, first nation of nations  
Remember us  
For you flow from our ancestral streams  
And your hopes are what mirror our  
dreams

We Africans  
We, the crossers of high seas  
We, the keepers of memories  
Remember us  
For you pulse with the blood of our veins  
And you cry with the fear of our pains

We're born, we rise  
We open our eyes  
We crawl, we walk  
We're learning to talk

We Africans  
We, the fathers of hungry hands  
We, the mothers of thirsty lands  
Join with us  
For your toil is sweat on our furrowed brow  
And your guilt is shame for our here and  
now

We Africans  
We, the sons of rusty chains  
We, the daughters of dried-up rains  
Join with us  
For your suffering leaves tears in our eyes  
And your great escape is our freedom's rise

We plant, we reap  
We strive, we weep  
We serve, we slave  
We hope, we brave

We Africans  
We, the farmers of the plains  
We, the hunters of the rains  
Stand with us  
For your food is our planted gorge  
And your iron is our fiery forge

We Africans  
We, the nomads of the sand  
We, the stewards of the land  
Stand with us  
For your drink is our handpicked beans  
And your wealth is our tunnelled seams

We dig, we drill  
We bend our will  
We melt, we mould  
We bleed for gold

We Africans  
We, the soldiers of the thorny cross  
We, the seekers of the pantheons lost  
Rise with us  
For your chapels enact our daily  
    sacraments  
And your deities fill our starry firmaments

We Africans  
We, the pilgrims of the crescent moon  
We, the students of our earthly swoon  
Rise with us  
For your mosques echo our calls to prayer  
And your mission is our promise to care

We kneel, we pray  
We sing, we slay  
We lift our pain  
We praise His name

We Africans  
We, the singers of life's sorrow  
We, the lovers of tomorrow  
Reunite us  
For your maps are our patterned mosaic  
And your home is our ancient namesake

We Africans  
We, the dancers of our freedoms  
We, the voices of new seasons  
Reunite us  
For your culture is our rainbow display  
And your genes are our twined DNA

We drum, we beat  
We stamp our feet  
We weave, we thread  
We love, we wed

We Africans  
We, the refugees of futile fighting  
We, the tribes of lands uniting  
Welcome us  
For as you gain so we have lost  
And what we give is without cost

We Africans  
We, the migrants of opportunity  
We, the leaders of the fair and free  
Welcome us  
For as we join as fragile friends  
So we prosper in the end

We move, we tread  
We search, we spread  
We fit, we fight  
We claim our right

We Africans  
We, the archers of the starry sky  
We, the askers of the question why  
Celebrate with us  
For the dawn is strung with morning dew  
And our time has come to start anew

We Africans  
We, the scatterlings of the rising sun  
We, all proud Africans, every one  
Celebrate with us  
For our future fate is far from done  
And we are all Africans, every one.

## **From Whence We Come**

*South Africa*

Hear the names  
From whence we come  
Honour the tribes  
That make us one

We hear your name –  
Venda, Lobedu, Pedi  
Ndebele, Kgatla, Ngwato  
Tlokwa, Kwena, Hurutshe –  
We speak your fame

We hear your name –  
Ngwaketse, Thembu, Ndlambe  
Ncqika, Gcaleka, Bomvana  
Mpondo, Mpondomise, Zizi –  
We speak your fame

We hear your name –  
Behle, Qwabe, Mthetwa  
Ndwandwe, Hlubi, Phuthing  
Pulana, Thembe, Swazi –  
We speak your fame

We hear your name –  
Portugal, Holland, Britain  
Malaysia, France, Germany  
India, Italy, Middle-East –  
We speak your fame

Hear the names  
Of our mother tongue  
Speak of the words  
That make us one

We hear you speak –  
Venda, North Sotho, Swazi  
South Sotho, Tsonga, Tswana  
Ndebele, Xhosa, Zulu –  
Your words we keep

We hear you speak –  
Afrikaans, Arabic, English  
German, Greek, Hebrew,  
Hindi, Italian, Portuguese –  
Your words we keep

These are the streams  
From whence we come  
These are the dreams  
That make us one.

## **Africa Proud**

I stand upright and tall –  
No more bowed back  
No more bent knees  
I look straight ahead –  
No more downcast eyes  
No more cowering glances  
For I am Africa Proud

See me:  
My name is Africa  
And I am rising to greet you  
I am leading the way  
And I am Proud

Extend me your hand –  
In friendship, not pity  
In peace, not trickery  
Send me your prayers –  
In communion, not guilt  
In hope, not resignation  
For I am Africa Proud

Hear me:  
My name is Africa  
And I am calling to welcome you  
I am waiting to embrace you  
And I am Proud

I dance wild and free –  
No more slave chains  
No more puppet strings  
I sing loud and strong –  
No more lamentation  
No more discord  
For I am Africa Proud

Feel me:  
My name is Africa  
And I am drumming to wake you  
I am singing to inspire you  
And I am Proud

Bring me your gifts –  
Of fair trade, not charity  
Of respect, not advice  
Show me your spirit –  
Of community, not greed  
Of faith, not fear  
For I am Africa Proud

Join me:  
My name is Africa  
And I am seeding the future  
I am shining with beauty  
And I am Proud.

### **Free Us To Be Free**

Free us to be free –  
Because so much progress  
Has been blind to our beauty  
Because so much advice  
Has been deaf to our song  
Because we will only be free  
When we take responsibility  
For ourselves

Free us to be free –  
Because so many leaders  
Have been corrupted by power  
Because so many followers  
Have been weakened by need  
Because we will only be free  
When we write the history  
Of our people

Free us to be free –  
Because we are out of sync  
With the beat of the world  
Because we are out of step  
With the march of civilization  
Because we will only be free  
When we dance the melody  
Of our land

Free us to be free –  
Because too many problems  
Began as gifts from others  
Because too many solutions  
Have not been home grown  
Because we will only be free  
When we follow the decree  
Of our hearts

So if you really care  
As much as you say  
Pray, let us go  
To find our own way  
Free us to be free –  
Free to fly the nest of ideology  
Free to fight for the dreams  
Of our children.

## **Africa's Big Five**

### *I. Lion*

Expectant black to watchful grey  
Then bleeding streaks of red

A regal roar to break the day -  
The pride has killed and fed  
A shaggy mane in silhouette  
Content to strut and purr

Across the plains of Africa  
The wild and wary stir

## *II. Giraffe*

Pink-purple bruises blotch the sky  
Then heal to soothing blue

Green feathered leaves, a long lashed eye  
Amidst the thorny dew  
An outstretched neck with velvet spots  
Intent to reach and browse

Acacia trees of Africa  
Extend their welcome boughs

### *III. Rhinoceros*

Fierce-fiery eye of golden white  
Looks down with withering gaze

Half-blinded beasts escape the light  
Their shapes a shimmering haze  
A horn-cursed head dips low to charge -  
Vain bid to stay alive

Great sanctuaries of Africa  
Fight battles to survive

*IV. Buffalo*

Puce-pregnant clouds to thunder storm  
Then swathes of orange blush

A jostling mass of muscled form -  
The knot becomes a crush  
A head-flick scoop on spear-sharp horns  
Inflicts a fatal blow

Migrating herds of Africa  
Maintain the ebb and flow

*V. Elephant*

Dry-dusty sand to muddy pool  
Then slurp and splash and spray

A trumpet squeal of blissful cool -  
The herd's come out to play  
A flap of ears, a trunk raised high -  
It's time to take roll-call

Wild watering holes of Africa  
Quench creatures great and small.

## **Ancestral Streams**

*South Africa*

A drop in the north  
A trickle heading south  
A stream spreading out  
A tide without end  
Still the river flows

Nguni of the south  
Nurturing the soil  
Gathering the herd  
Winning the battles  
Still the river flows

Venda of the north  
Mining the earth  
Ruling the mountain  
Taming the crocodile  
Still the river flows

Tsonga of the east  
Trading the goods  
Guarding the port  
Touching the globe  
Still the river flows

Sotho-Tswana of the west  
Crafting the stone  
Building the cities  
Cultivating the leaf  
Still the river flows

Lemba of the centre  
Smelting the ore  
Making the tools  
Honouring the Jews  
Still the river flows

Ancestral streams  
Coursing through our veins  
Wellspring of our nation  
Quenching this thirsty land  
Still the river flows.

## **Island of Africa**

### *Madagascar*

Memories of Gondwana fade  
The ancient world torn apart:  
As rock plates and craters  
Start shifting; slow-drifting –  
And outcasts and misfits  
Roll Darwin's loaded dice

Mysteries wait in forest mazes  
Riddles lurk in muddled minds:  
As creatures and questions  
Hang suspended; half-blended –  
And sky-roots and theories  
Sprout upended; distended

Morning wails with jungle mails  
Passed along with echoed songs:  
As lemurs and pilgrims  
Pay homage; seek forage –  
And creepies and crawlies  
Wait under wraps; bait traps

Feathered skies grace weathered eyes  
Ragged roads bear jagged loads:  
As farmers and traders  
Nurture shoots; count loots –  
And children and chickens  
Peck, strut and stray; role-play

Islands calm with ylang-ylang balm  
Beaches lure with palm-tree cure:  
As vampires and tourists  
Suck sleepers; play peepers –  
And fishers and wishers  
Net dinner; get thinner

Insects tease upon amber seas  
Rivers snake into muddy lakes:  
As cloud-dew and prayers  
Flood green fields; bear yields –  
And erosion and corruption  
Bleed red sands; stain hands

Visions of Madagascar shine  
The light of hopes refracted:  
As habits and habitats  
Start changing; rearranging –  
And guardians and dreamers  
Gaze into Attenborough's crystal ball.

### **Child of Africa**

I am a child of Africa –  
Young and wild and free  
I play on streets of sunny hope  
And feed on dusty dreams  
I am a child of Africa –  
Young and bold and bright  
I think a million sparkling thoughts  
And wish on shooting stars

I do not want your pity  
For I am not a helpless pup  
I do not want your charity  
For I will thrive at first chance  
I do not want your mistrust  
For being young is not a crime  
I do not want your prejudice  
For that is your prison not mine

You will know me  
Not by the colour of my skin  
But by the spectrum of my ideas  
For I am Africa's child  
You will know me  
Not by the name of my tribe  
But by the poetry of my ideals  
For I am Africa's child

I may look young  
But I am older than you  
For I was born at the beginning of time  
I may look weak  
But I am stronger than you  
For I was weaned on the milk of the sun  
I may look simple  
But I am smarter than you  
For I was schooled at the knee of wise  
elders

You will know me  
Not by the poverty of my means  
But by the wealth of my ends  
For I am Africa's child  
You will know me  
Not by the shadows of my past  
But by the brilliance of my future  
For I am Africa's child

I do not want your visions  
For I have dreams of my own  
I do not want your fears  
For I have monsters enough  
I do not want your leftovers  
For I have freshly baked needs  
I do not want your playthings  
For I have imagination aplenty

I am a child of Africa -  
Young and shy and sweet  
I smile to hide my nervous pride  
And laugh with crystal joy  
I am a child of Africa -  
Young and hip and cool  
I dance my way to destiny  
And rise on wings of change.

### **African Pilgrimage**

I have walked the long trail of history  
And arrived at this day: triumphant!  
I have worn the dead yoke of oppression  
And arrived at this day: free at last!

I hear the rhythm of drums –  
Will you join me in my celebration of life?  
I see the colours of change –  
Will you join me in my vision of hope?

I have sung the ancient song of the stars  
And arrived at this time: awestruck!  
I have heard the wild call of creation  
And arrived at this time: expectant!

I taste the salt-sweet of justice –  
Will you join me in my banquet of faith?  
I feel the fire of belonging –  
Will you join me in my village of love?

I have tracked the fresh footprints of nature  
And arrived at this place: one life!  
We are joined by the sacred web of our  
ancestors  
And arrive at this place: one tribe!

## **Gathering the Past**

*Tribute to the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*

### *I. Spectre Song*

Recall the ghosts  
Of GuriQua  
Who walked the coasts  
Of Helena

Recall the day  
Of CochoQua  
Who found the bay  
Of Saldanha

Recall the place  
Of Khoi-Khoi past  
With faded face  
In shadows cast

Recall the name  
Of Adam Kok  
And what remains  
Of Baster stock

Recall the sound  
Of clicking tongue  
Whose notes abound  
In songs still sung

*II. Rich Harvest*

Tamer of beasts  
Patron of feasts  
Guardian of earth  
Giver of birth

Tender of sheep  
Sower who reaps  
Herder of cattle  
Farmer who battles

Wearer of thongs  
Dancer of songs  
Tribes who find-seek  
Clans who click-speak

Hunter of roots  
Bearer of fruits  
Master of whale-traps  
Reader of wind-maps

People of chiefs  
Reaper of sheafs  
Makers of law  
Harvest no more

*III. Melting Pot*

From dry salt lakes  
To southwest sands  
Their dust-path snakes  
Through time-baked lands

They were the first  
Pastoralists found  
With seed dispersed  
On nurturing ground

Left in their wake  
Cape beaches are strewn  
With clay-moulded shapes  
And tools from iron hewn

Cut with the scythe  
Of settlers' disease  
Fate's bitter tithe  
Still haunts the sea-breeze

Those who survive  
Reconcile their lot  
To mix and thrive  
In the melting pot.

## **Africa Untamed**

Africa is wild:

A land untamed

A people unshamed

A life unrestrained

Yet there are those who would tame Africa

Who would break her unbridled spirit

Who would cage her soaring mind

Who would chain her flexing body

Rest assured:

They will fail

Like so many before them

And so many yet to come

For Africa is a savage hunter

Forever hungry for the next kill

Always preying on her weakest

Stained red in tooth and claw

Africa is free:

A land unyoked

A people uncloaked

A life unrevoked

Yet there are those who would prune Africa  
Who would neaten her untidy people  
Who would lop off her thorny tribes  
Who would fortify her porous borders

Be assured:  
They will fail  
Like countless before them  
And countless yet to come  
For Africa is a sprawling jungle  
Entangled with human tendrils  
Locked in a deadly struggle for life  
All competing for a place in the sun

Africa is changing:  
A land evolving  
A people resolving  
A life revolving  
Yet there are those who would calm Africa  
Who would tranquillise her young agitators  
Who would defuse her creative tensions  
Who would dampen down her wild passions

Remain assured:  
They will fail  
Like generations before them  
And generations yet to come  
For Africa is a raging tempest  
Howling with dreams and desires  
Thundering with anger and pain  
Flashing with imagination and inspiration

Africa may be many things –  
Wild and free and changing –  
But there is one thing Africa is not:  
Africa is not for taming.

## **Land of the Sun**

I'll never give up  
On this land of the sun  
Where the people are many  
And the spirit is one

There's a battle that's raging  
Of the dark and the light  
Which side are you choosing?  
Will you stand up and fight?

I'll never turn back  
On this place of the bow  
Where the long walk to freedom  
Has a long way to go

There's a new revolution  
Of what's wrong and what's right  
Will you question the leaders?  
Will you root out the blight?

I'll never let go  
Of this home of the wild  
Where the beasts roam the plains  
And the hope's in a child

There's a struggle unended  
Of the days and the nights  
Will you be strong together?  
Will you rise to great heights?

I'll never give up  
On this cradle of life  
Where the problems are many  
And the future shines bright.

## **African Renaissance**

A single seed, on fertile ground  
That's how it all got started  
A single seed, nothing profound  
No heroes crowned or martyred

The revolution will not come  
From barren speeches made on high  
The battle will be fought and won  
In ghetto streets and fields gone dry

Soon, from this ravaged land will rise  
A homestead built on ruins of war  
As children celebrate the prize  
Of peace that lets their spirit soar

A single seed, that sets down roots  
And dreams of swirling colours bright  
A single seed, that sends out shoots  
And bursts into a world of light

The rising up will not be planned  
By men in suits and greasy palms  
The sign will flash from hand to hand  
On factory floors and peasant farms

Soon, learning and empowering  
Will break the chains of slavery  
The men will dance and women sing  
An end to jails of poverty

One seed becomes a million scattered  
Far and wide across the sands  
And like a million raindrops splattered  
Dust will change to verdant lands

The waking up will not be quiet  
As drums beat loud with new decree  
The dawning is a glorious riot  
Of people marching to be free

Soon, from this cradle, bells will ring  
To spread glad tidings round the earth  
A brand new story will begin:  
This renaissance – a second birth.