

WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES



*And the day came, when the risk to remain tight in
a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.*



This book is dedicated to

Philane

Who made a choice to 'go back home'

Rest peacefully little brother

Walk A Mile In My Shoes

Foreward

In 2000 FXB South Africa launched its first after school program in Alexandra Township for orphans and vulnerable children. Today we have 7 after school programs in Johannesburg, Witbank and the Western Cape, catering for over 500 youth aged between 12 and 19 years old. Our primary objective at FXB South Africa is to empower young people to lead healthy, responsible lives. Our children are provided with nutritional and psychosocial support and encouraged to follow their hearts and their dreams. Our youth are given life skills, trained as peer educators in the HIV/Aids field and many become peer educators in alcohol and substance abuse as well.

Coming from impoverished families, and some youngsters having lost both parents and now taking care of themselves and younger siblings, leaves many wounds to be healed and hardships to be dealt with. Learning to trust, open up and let go of past and present hurts are dealt with in various ways - from group and individual counselling, to the practice of all forms of 'art therapy'. Writing is encouraged and thus, a collection of thoughts, hopes, dreams and letting go of past hurts, is collected in the following pages, as part of a healing process. We are honoured that these youngsters have entrusted us to put together this book, sharing intimate glimpses into their lives. Through their tears and pain we have all cried together, stood together and grown together. We watch in awe as we witness their courage, strength and determination to make a better life for themselves, their country and a brighter new tomorrow.

Blossom on !

*Stevie Megens
Country Director*

A BETTER LIFE

I'm crying tears of a broken heart
Oh because I have no parents.
I remember the day mom passed away - in the morning.
I left her at home,
 She told me she was okay and I must go to school.
During break time at school I saw two ladies -
 They were gossiping that someone in my street has passed away.
At the afternoon I went home -
I open the door
I saw my father and my sister crying.
I ask, ... what happened ?
Oh! they told me, mom's gone.
I have a feeling to run away and I did ran away.
I have a feeling she'd come back and I return home.
Oh, I saw something worse -
 Dad had colaps [collapsed] !
The pain that I have that I don't have both parents.
Oh God, please make a plan
So we can live a better life !

Bheki Mphande (15) Witbank

ALL ABOUT MYSELF

I feel happy about my status

And I don't care what they say

about my status and my life.

As long as I am still living and a human being

And I feel good about myself

And I live like everyone in the world

Those who tell me

....you have HIV

I don't care what they say

I don't care if they don't play with me

I don't care about them.

Ntabiseng Tshabalala (15) Soweto

AN END TO LIFE

It was so difficult !

It was so terrible !

After she heard those words.... *HIV Positive !*

Those words broke her heart -

We all tried to say..... 'don't cry....'

She tried to kill herself

She tried to stab herself.....

But she couldn't.

That, all because of one person.....

A person who raped her.

She screamed all these years,

Trying to make that be the past

But finally she found help

By telling her teacher.

Zakhele Selane (15) Witbank

ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH

You had a girl down

Against her will

Take off her clothes - against her will

Lay her down on dried brown grass.

There you go

Putting your heavy body on top of her

As young as she is.....

.... as innocent as she is.

You have sex with her

Against her will

You feel relieved and proud.....

..... and you call yourself a man!

While she is left alone in pain -

While she is full of depression.

And you are proud to call yourself

..... a man !

YOU ARE NOT A MAN, BUT A FOOL

L.N. (16) Orlando

BE YOURSELF

Be yourself

Don't try to be who you are not

Just to impress people around you

For them to love you

Let them love you or hate you for who you are -

The greatest person you can be lies within you

No matter how poor you are

Just be strong

What matters is where you are going

Do you want a better life or not ?

Ask yourself who are you ?

God made you that way because he knows you're beautiful

Don't let people live your life for you

Don't make your life miserable because of those people saying bad things about you

It's never too late to look backwards with gratitude,

Upwards with confidence

And forward with hope !

Be yourself in a good positive way,

Tough times don't last forever -

But tough people do.....

Lil Hloni (15) Alexandra

CHALLENGES ARE PART OF LIFE

Have you ever felt as if the world is against you
Because of the many challenges that you face in your life ?
Just know that you are not alone.
Having challenges, it's a normal thing faced by everyone.

Don't be deceived by the smiles
You get across the road.
If these people can tell you about their problems
You might even count yourself.

Problems are part of life
The important thing
When faced with challenges,
Is to have the right attitude.

I just want to urge everyone out there
Who is going through a difficult time
At the moment,
Not to give up or lose hope.

God did not bring you to suffer,
He is not cruel -
everything has a purpose.

As long as you are still alive,
just keep on fighting
And know that after every challenge,
Comes a Blessing.

Christie Khohlakala (17) Cape Town

DISABLED CHILDREN

Because I am different

Do not scorn me.

Because your eyes are afraid

Do not look away

Even though I may not talk

I have feelings

Even though I may not see

I am perceptive

Because we are different

It is this difference which integrates us with you

And makes our world vice versa

Because we are different

Accept us

Our strengths are your weaknesses

Mbali Seemela (16) Alexandra

GIVE ME A REASON

Give me a reason why not to hate you

Give me a reason to let you go free

As I am trapped by your body.

You took everything I believed in

You took my dreams away from me

I can still feel your hands as you touch me

I can still hear your voice saying :

".....SSSSSSHHH, it will be over soon !

How can it be over

I travel with it every time, wherever I go.

As I try to forget it, it will always be trapped

In my mind.

As you made me a prisoner

in my own body

Give it back,

Maybe I'll let you walk free.

Give it all back !

..... my childhood, my virginity.....

And maybe I'll be free from your body,

even your eyes

RAPE IS NEVER GOOD FOR ME

L. N. Orlando (16)

JACK'S STORY

One day me and my friends, we were take [ing] care of the goats in the forest..... I mean a BIG forest. One day we found ourself [ves] in trouble of [being] taken by the gouest [ghost] to [a] dumping side [site]. We slep [slept] there and it was too far than homes [from our homes]. Guess what ?, that gouest [ghost] it was a baby, because we found a skeleton of a baby under the tree. Then we ran home and tell [told] our parents. They call the police and solve that problem. I was scared, very scared Even the parents of [my] friend, they take him to his cousin because of what happen[ed]. I [will] never forget.

Jack H. (18) Witbank

THE DAY I WILL NEVER FORGET

It was 6am, early in the morning, there was morning mist. We heard a loud crack - bang! Someone said it's thunder..... It was the sound of a gun. It only took a few minutes of madness and we opened the door. We saw a pool of blood and silence took place - we were all shocked! Then we all screamed and cried. It was like a dream, but no, it was reality! We were all heartbroken, we couldn't resist the pain, it was so awful. That's when I realised that life is so unpredictable. With just one blink of an eye, we lost our father ! With one blink of an eye, poverty was our daily routine ! With one blink of an eye, my mother became a widow and these tears were engraved deep in our heart. The pain I will never forget, it's a pain that never fades, though people say we are gonna get through this, but no, I don't think so.

I watched my dad dying next to me. I couldn't do anything. The best I did was to cry.

This, I will never forget.

Zinhle - (17) - Witbank

LIFE IS FULL OF CHALLENGES

Life is full of challenges

So challenge it

Be patient

Be focused

Don't be fooled out there.

Be creative

Have respect

And stand on your own.

Be careful !!!!

And don't be careless.

Manage your time

The world is busy.....

Busy as bees busy making honey.

Wake up !!!!

The sun is shining

You need to shine too

Life is full of challenges !

Khanyisile Nxumalo (16) Alexandra

LIFE

Life is a celebration

Life inspires others

Life is an inspiration

Life is unique

Life makes a person intelligent

Life is a journey untold, but to be heard

Life is a tale with a sad ending

Life is enjoyable - but in a correct way

With a pen and paper life can be told -

You just need to be patient

Makhabane Mohale (14) Orlando

MAKE EVERY DAY A DAY OF ACTIVISM AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILD ABUSE

It is confusing me why we have "16 Days of Activism Against Women and Child Abuse" because we always become rape[d] and abuse[d]. But why should we have 16 Days of Activism because when we go to report rape and abuse they don't take it serious, but when it comes to 16 Days of Activism they take action. Why ?..... because the person that had be [been] rape [d] and abuse [d] before 16 Days of Activism [is] still the same person that have been rape [d] on 16 Days of Activism, but they are not treating them as same. We don't know why we needs to make 16 Days of Activism Against Women and Child Abuse !

HOW HARD IT IS TO LOOSE YOUR PARENT

It [s] so painful cause every time I am playing music that my mother use to love, should I cry ?

I cry ever time I think about my parent [s]. Every time when my friends [are] talking about they [their] parent [s]..... what they parent have buy them..... what was I sapos [supposed] to do ? Should I talk about my granny..... but why ?..... because they are talking about they [their] really [real] parent. Or should I go away from them, but,..... why is this happening to me ? The [there] is no really [real] resoun [reason] I miss my parents every time.

Ayanda Mbanjwa (16) Witbank

MAMA

Mama,
The time you left
I was so angry and sad
I thought it was over for me.
Mama, you were there for me
When I needed you.
You were there
When things went wrong for me.
Mama, I need you.
Mama, I'm so sad.
Mama, why did you die
So soon.....
I think I won't survive
Without you.
I'm a needy child,
A child who needs her Mama.
Mama, there are times
Where there is no food
For me to eat !
Mama, there are days
Where I feel cold,
And miss your warmness.
Mama, Why? Why did you leave me.
Why did you leave ?
It's always hard for me -
Mama, why ?
I wish I had died
In your womb,
Or died the moment I was born -
Because Mama, I'm alone !
Mama, when you left,
My siblings became my enemies,
They are not there for me,
But Mama, You were there for me.
Mama, why did you hold me on your knees
Why did you feed me at your breast ?
You should have let me die !
Mama, if I had died with you,
I would be at peace now.
Mama..... I miss you.

Lerato Mokoena (19) Pimville/Soweto

HOMELESS

I am homeless....
But they say I am a 'street kid'
'A street fan.....', they say.

Bridges are my unlimited homes
Card boxes are my bed and blankets
Rubbish bins are 'my food' and 'wear' shops.

Any family is my family, and when they are enough of me
They send me back to my relative,
 'street'
Once again. I am homeless.

I am a street fan
I am a street kid
I am homeless.

Ntshidiseng Mabe (16) Orlando

FOREVER HOME ALONE

It has been years since I've been
Holding these keys in my hands,
Locking and unlocking the door once again,
Going in and out of the house,
Touching the door from inside to the outside.
Long time,
hard cravings,
Nothing to fear
but only one thing to look after....
Myself !

Something to give more than to receive,
No attitude to act for, but pleasure to give.
Things can come and go, but this will always be there.

I suppose there must be someone besides me
Someone to give me hope
But not a rope to hang myself with

We always talk about love,
But if love doesn't act with comfort,
It won't work the way it's supposed to be.
If love doesn't react with patience
It won't be strong the way it is used to be.

It's like letting a butterfly die
While squeezing it in your hand.
It's good to catch and release rather than
Catch and kill.

When's everyone coming back ?
If not, I suppose this is supposed to be this way.
I love it I love it not !

Thabile Nyapele (16) Alexandra

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

We are always blaming poverty
For bad things.
I don't think we need to !
The more we love blame poverty !
The more we are encouraging our teenagers to fall pregnant
Because they know that their parents are going to say
..... 'It's nothing but poverty !'
Teenage pregnancy is a sin because it means no sex before marriage
And it has its own consequence.
Teenagers stop adding responsibilities for yourselves.

Phumza Sinqumbu (16) Alexandra

USE YOUR OWN TIME

Tick Tock
Tick tock
Tick tock
Tick tock
Tick tock
Time is so precious
Time should not be wasted
Make sure that you use and utilize every minute,
second.....milli-second
that is coming your way.
Giving up is not a solution
It is a long way back.....
So always look forward
Since the golden and precious moment
Is just sitting on standby
Waiting for you to grab it.....
So it is up to you, as an individual
Whether you have sufficient power
To brighten your future
As there is no one who could do it better
Than you !
Tick tock
Tick tock
Use your own time wisely.

Caroline Shondlani (15) Orlando

WHY DO WE FAIL

Every individual should try and think about this.
We do not fail because we are forgetful
We do not fail because we are incapable
We do not fail because we cannot do certain things
We mostly fail because we allow the world to judge us !
Only God has the potential to judge us, no matter what !
So let the world play its part
And God, His as well.
We fail because we listen to our competitors.
What are we thinking - that they will cheer us up ?
No, they are here to destroy us
And satisfy themselves.
If we want to pass
We should try not to listen
To our competitors.

Caroline Shondlani (15) Orlando

HAVE COURAGE

Have courage
My beloved nation
Fight the endless war
Until the last drop of blood
Is sucked by the
Ever thirsty ground.
Let us be one
The bones in our bodies
Can form a structure
Stronger than titanium alone.
We will be a force
To be reckoned with
A super natural force
That nobody can contain
But if we are scattered
We will be similar
To a needle in a haystack
So let us join forces
And fight !

Siyanda Dubazana (15) Pimville/Soweto

MY TEARS

Inside I'm crying...feeling the pain in my life
Trying to live my life to the fullest.
But this pain is killing me
Slowly and softly,
I'm dying of bleeding inside

Oh tears, son of depression
You got yourself in me,
You stood there to strike,
You killed my joy and happiness.
I'm dying of bleeding inside

You are one - but you have power to destroy us all
You make sure that you leave scars in our lives
You leave us with wounds that will never heal
We try to be distant from you, to stay away from you
But we get comfortable along the way - and forget that you are a hunter.....

You completely destroyed me,
but I will never give you a chance
to destroy my dreams...
I will fight you until I die !
I'm dying of bleeding inside

Lord God,
.... answer my prayers
...wipe away my tears
...give me strength to fight and win this battle
I'm tired of bleeding inside

Sihle Magaela - Coordinator Dunbar after school program - Witbank

A 'POEM' FOR AFXB

AFXB, a beautiful home
The child is love you
Because you help us
But do not give up
I am happy because you are love and hope
And I'm [I] know you love us child[ren]
I'm do this because I love you AFXB
It's because you love orphans

Nkosinathi Mthethwa (15) Witbank

THE SUN

Wow, u so beautiful !

U beautiful when you come

U beautiful when you get out

U clean every day

U clean every time.

We can see you !

When you come

We laugh!

When you go

We go with you.

Jabulile Mthembu (14) Witbank

MAMA COME BACK

Imibuzo have turned out to be my daily food -
When I go to bed - ngilala nginemibuzo [I sleep with a lot of questions]
When I go to school - ngilala nginemibuzo [I have a lot of questions]
I ask myself ; Ukthi, why do I have to suffer
When I have a father who owns a business ?
Kanti Mama, why did you leave me ?
Why should I have to live to suffer your consequences ?
I've got relatives,
 But they walk far away from me
 Because they think that I'm also HIV positive -
 Just like you were.
Why didn't you tell them that I'm HIV negative ?
Mama, I'm being persecuted.....
Mama, I'm being discriminated
As for me the word 'life' has changed to be a 'file'.
If only you could see the miserable life that I'm living.
 Shame on me !
Mama can't you ask God to give you a second chance ?
Mzali wami, [my friend] come back..... if only to spend your last day
 with me.....

Melva Timbane (19) Soweto

MAY HEAVEN FORGIVE YOU

May Heaven forgive you
For breaking my heart
You told me you loved me
You lied from the start.
The kisses you gave me
Were only for fun.
May Heaven forgive you
For what you have done.
May Heaven forgive you
For what you have done
You chowed me with your feeling
Of heartache and pain
I still think of you
When I walk in the rain
May Heaven forgive you
Cause my heart never can.

L.M (16) Orlando

WHO SHOULD WE BLAME ?

I am asking you, who should we blame or where should we go ?
Should I say....., who should we blame
because all my wishes have been destroyed by my blood or by my people,
who do I blame or
who should we blame.
They always said you strike a woman , you strike a rock -
but, do you see that in their action or by the way they do things ?

WHO SHOULD WE BLAME?

When my brothers have turned into dangerous animals 'xa bekuxhela okwenja'
What's happened to this country ?
What has happened to ubuntu ?
What turned us into an animal planet ?
Why can't they define the wrong and rights

WHO SHOULD WE BLAME?

I am crying out loud to you my brothers
I am crying out louder to you my sisters
I am crying out louder to you my parents

Enough is enough !

If you listen to this poem -
you'll feel the pain....
wake up!
and make the difference to the world.

Aphiwe Hill (16) - Cape Town

MY DRUM

My drum,
You beat next to my ears
The volume keeps me wondering
I can hear the beat from the hills
Mountains and valleys of Mpumalanga.
Talented, perfect and handed over the
beauty of Africa -
the rhythm of ubuntu,
the real melody to witness South Africa from the past
to the generations,
from skin to melody and dance!
Too proud to be an African
Not ashamed to show your colour and respect
To the people of the land
Your friends were kings and queens and presidents
But now you are a friend of mine.
Many, many years ago our ancestors
Made you the leader of their people
Learning your rhythm is what we get
From our parents and their parents.
Who am I without you by my side.
Your skin, beauty, remembers me the history of Africans
Too beautiful to hide yourself
And too good to be ashamed
Yes this is who you are
You are the real historical drum in Africa
Respect is what you deserve

Thabile Nyapele (16) Alexandra

My Father

My father was the sick person. When I come back to [from] school he say he [is] hungry. He said he need some water. When my mother come home my father voice was down. My mother greet him. He said, I can[’t] talk, I have tonetills (toncilitis) in my mouth. On Sunday my mother take him to Ackerville [clinic]. Dr. M give him the medicine for tonetills - go deep into her [his] mouth all. On Saturday 12 February 2011, on 8 o’clock, they took [him] into the clinic. The clinic transfer him to hospital. [They] discharge him to sleep over there. She say they will help him on Monday, in Valentines Day.

She [he] die on 13 February 2011. We buried him on 19 February 2011. Rest in peace..... Ngwenya, Mtimande, Bhambolunye, Zimbali, Zibuya, Khabo nine, Shogwe Madonsela,Dlamini, Azithathani. [Honouring ancestral names in respect to her father]

Karabo Ngwenya (12) Witbank

MY NAME IS SO PRECIOUS TO ME

My name is so precious to me.

My name represents me

My name says a lot about me.

You think it's just a name.....

But my name is unique !

My name means a lot to me.

When I am awarded

.... they will call my name,

So the name that they have awarded...

It's not *just* a name -

It's *gold* that they have awarded me with.....

That's my name so precious !

Khanyisile Nxumalo (16) Alexandra

My Story

My mother dody (died) in 2009 July and now I [am] staying with my grandmother in Ext. 14. My uncle hit me every day before I go to school. I wash my uncles closes [clothes]. If I finish my uncle hit me - he say to me don't go to school, make my food and clean my bedroom and go to town. I say, I don't have money uncle. My uncle say GO !! If my uncle shout me, I am crying.

MS - Age 11 - Witbank

HAPPINESS AND LONELINESS

I sometimes wonder how
I ended up in this world -
This world of happiness,
This world of loneliness.
One moment I feel happy
And ready to jump to the moon -
The next, I feel empty and
Lonely inside.
When I'm happy, I do not care
what others think and say -
I just do what I want
And I own me, at my own time.
But suddenly, when I'm happy
And my life is full of happiness,
Loneliness always looks for other ways
Back into my life.
I promised myself one thing.....
From now on,
The doors of loneliness are closed
And only happiness will be allowed
Into my life.

Caroline Shondlani (15) Orlando

MY STORY

Father, brother, why are you abusing me ?
You think this thing is good if you do this to me.
You know that you are abusing me
.... you hurt me and destroy my life.
You do bad things to me -
You beat me each and every day and you rape me !
Then you show me the gun
You say to me if I tell someone you will kill me.
You know what ? I'm not your wife, so stop what you are doing.
What kind of a person are you.....
And you don't see that you are destroying my life.
You don't mind if this is very wrong or not.
You don't care about me and my life.

MF (13) Witbank

MY STRUGGLE

A day has come, and a day will pass,

For the voice of no confusion to be heard -

For the traumatised mind to route out

What was meant to be

Private !

A day will forever shine

In the presence of darkness

Freedom Day !

It is a day for us

To celebrate !

A day for human expressions to be totally heard and listened to

A day to emancipate ourselves from this mental slavery

And to flush the system

That destroys our lives

POVERTY!

..... Ohhhhhh Poverty !

Mduduzi Khumalo (17) Soweto

WHY WE WORK WITH CHILDREN

No one cared -
And through poetry they found love.
No one listened -
Through their poetry they will be heard.
As time unfolds
Their stories will be worth more than gold
And they shall pride themselves one day
When reading this book to their grandkids, when they are old.

Mitchell Peter - Coordinator Orlando After School

POVERTY

Who are you to pressurise me
Who are you to give me thoughts
that I don't want to think about.
The mere fact is that every time
you come to my mind
you destroy my dreams
You burn all the goals that I have set.
you make me think about thoughts that are unthinkable
[like] asking myself - what will my next meal be..... will I ever have one.
Now is time to cross the line
Time up - poverty !
This is my time
And I'm gonna use it wisely.
If I may ask,
Who are you
To judge my thoughts, my life ?
Who are you to control my life..... whowho.....?
You are something that's untouchable,
Though you touch people's lives, you hurt them.
Apologies to you is something that you don't consider in life,
But for me, it will come to an end.....
Sala Kahle..... poverty ! [farewell poverty]

Lucia (17) Orlando

BE STRONG AND UNDERSTAND

Let me remember that I am working with minds,
the minds of youth.
The most precious people
in the community, who sometimes
are aggressive or violent
because of poverty.

Sometimes I am weak -
I feel that I am weak
And I cry when I hear things
And I can't help all people.
Yes it's a challenge,
a challenge !

It's what I am - no,
It's not like that.....
It's what I think
Who I am !

How can I treat other people....
Give me the power to understand them -
Those beautiful flowers
I work with
My precious youth, my people, my community !

Let me be strong
Give me strength
And understanding....
Understanding.
Yes I am,
I am.

Sonto Manyathi - Soweto After School Coordinator

SEXUAL ABUSE

Where's my dignity

Where's my priority

More than that

Where's my future ?

The first time you saw me

You smile, inside hiding bad deeds

Always following me everywhere.

I remember that day you pulled me down

..... Didn't care whether I was crying or not.

What happened to people's guilty conscience -

Father's raping daughters

Brothers raping sisters

Uncle's raping their nieces

Where's ubuntu ? where's ubudlwane ? [companionship]

We are living in fear

In an abusive country

But together we can stop that.

The power is in our hands!

BN (15) Witbank

STREET KIDS

'Pray for them'

Children are crying in the darkness

Which they hate.....

Which brings not hope.....

Pray For Them.

Children who sleep under cardboard

To warm their bare bodies.....

And eat in the rubbish bins.....

Pray For Them.

Children that are sleeping in the pipes

When it is raining.....

And when it is cold, they wear a box to cover their bodies.....

Pray For Them.

Children who don't have homes and parents

Children who are running away from home.

God Be My Guest !

God those children need your support.

God, please help them to get a new life.

Tymon Mphande (12) Witbank

TEENAGERS ARE AMAZING

Teenagers are amazing
I wish the world could see
Just how beautiful we are
I wish they could take back
All the cynical things they said
And see how much we shine
Be positive instead !
Remark on our radiant smiles
And the difference we make in the world
All the chances we take
Each and every day
Yet desperately wanting to stay.
I wish they could remember
How tough our lives can be
The promises that are broken
The violence that we see
Hoping they will notice
Those changes we have made
Of the power that we hold.
I hope the world will notice that
What some have already seen
Teenagers are amazing people
Who are struggling to follow their dream.

Zola Umfakadolo (16) Cape Town

THE MEANING OF RETHABILE (HAPPINESS)

Happiness is when you rejoice -

Enjoy everything about life and about yourself.

Happiness is what you are proud of

Happiness is what you enjoy,

Happiness begins anywhere, anytime.....

Happiness is the beginning of a good life.

Once you don't have happiness in you

Then you don't enjoy what you are doing.....

And you are not confident about yourself.

Rethabile Thoahlane (16) Alexandra

THE REAL ME

Don't judge me by my shape
Don't define me by my size
Don't define me by what you think is beauty in your eyes
I am what I am and these
 are my perfect imperfections.
Take a look at me from head to toe,
There is no fake in me
I was founded by the God Almighty
My feet are both grounded in my true destination of success,
 founded by the God Almighty
I am like the Amarula tree -
Strong like a lion
You may cut my branches
You may even pluck a leaf
But I stand still.
You may cut my branches
But you cannot destroy my future
Who are you to judge me
Who are you to tell me
How to live my life.

Caroline Shondlani (16) Orlando

THE REAL 'I'

How do I live and break free

When my heart is full of hate -

How do I smile

While my soul is torn apart.

I am lost within my own soul -

Trapped by my own identity -

I am ruled by rage, confusion

And a heart with no forgiveness!

Mduduzi Khumalo (17) Soweto

TO SAY I'M SORRY

Maybe sorry is not enough
But it's the best I can do.
I can't take back what I did
But I can change who and what
I can be.
I hope asking for your acceptance
And not for your forgiveness
Is not too much to ask.
I hope and wish I can take back
What I did....
But I can't ! Sorry !
I'm a human being
Made a mistake
But don't judge me
Because I've hurt you.
Don't hate me
Because I'm not perfect.
Sorry !

Anonymous - Witbank

WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY

The thing that makes me to be happy is when I remember in 29 May 2010 my mother go into town and buy for me a cake and buy a dress and a simba chips. And if they come back in the home they say;..... happy birthday my child..... and sing the song say happy birthday to you. I will never forget that day.

Andile Ratau (13) Witbank

WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE ME

Who are you to judge me ?

Who are you to tell me about my background ?

We will never be the same.

Even if you wear expensive clothes.....

Who are you to judge me ?

My future is brighter than yours....

You think you are high class.....

Walking on a red carpet

But who are you to judge me ?

I always smile as you smile

and who are you to judge me ?

I walk with pride and dignity

So who are you to judge me ?

Khanyisile (16) Alexandra

WHO DO I TURN TO ?

Who do I turn to

Who do I turn to when the world has turned against me ?

Who do I turn to when my friends become my enemies ?

When my home seems like a prison

When I turn into a prisoner in my own home

..... who do I turn to ?

Who do I turn to.....

When my father, fathers my child ?

When I feel like a product ready to be sold ?

Where my mother doesn't listen or care about me

Where my room seems and feels like the only safest place to be

.....who do I turn to ?

Who do I turn to.....

Where everywhere I go

I don't feel safe

Where I feel like I'm in a dark hole

..... who do I turn to ?

..... who do I turn to ?

Xoliswa (17) Cape Town

WHY ME ?

I am a nobody
I have no future
I never get the time to think
About the life ahead of me

All I can think about
Is that big, black, scary man
On top of my body
Touching and feeling me all over
As if he owns My Body

All I can think about
Is that big, black, scary man
Sleeping with me,
by force
as if I were his wife

I am hopeless
My dreams are all gone
I have lost my goals
Why ?
 because of only one man
 And he is still alive

The dirty dustbins
Are my shops
The streets are my home
Nobody ever acknowledges me

Begging is my religion
Why ?
 Because of only one man
 And he's still alive.

There are times when I wonder
Why was I created by God ?
Why did my mother give birth to me?

Was I born to suffer
Was I born to struggle

My life is a mess
I have lost my dignity

Why?

*Because of only one man
And he is still alive.*

And yet in my life
There is still a question mark
And the big question is

Why Me ?

Wendy (16) Cape Town

WHY SHOULD I

Why should I

Wish that every night was not dark

the pain, the agony, wasn't there.

Why should I

wish that tomorrow never comes.

Every day my mind splits into a dozen pieces

as I fight the illusion that clouds my mind.

I'm worn out

trying to solve problems

but never succeeding.

I keep fighting a war

that cannot be won.....

but never giving up.

Siyanda Dubazana (15) Soweto

WOMANS ARE MARVELOUS

Woman is a key that controls everything.
Without woman in this world, there will be no love.
Their life was better [bitter] to the core,
But a woman comes now [and] life is better for everyone.

A woman is a star that shines for everyone -
Woman is a [an] errow [arrow] that shows a good direction.
A woman is a shadow that reflex [reflects] happiness, as
A woman is the neck of a house that manages the head, and all [the] body.
Womans are marvellous !

In Sesotho we say ;
"Mosadi kesi phutho soditchaba !

Without woman, this country would fall apart.

In Sizulu we say ;
Wathinta abafazi wathinta imbhokodo !

Womans are special,
Especially mothers -
[they] are managers, teachers and healers.

Womans are marvellous !

Zinhle Motsepe (17) Witbank

YOU MADE ME

You created me
You made me the person that I am today.
You made me see the wrong things,
You made me realise something in life,
Realise that in life, there are ups and downs.
Everyone on this planet has their ups and downs

You made me see things that others can't see.
You made me see, or realise, myself as a person in front of others.
You made me trust myself because it is the only thing that everyone must do.
Some people will talk bad or good things about you - 'pay no mind to them'
So you made me that person -
A person who has self confidence,
A person who stands for her or his rights and says - enough is enough

I am a person today because of you....
I am a person today who has dignity,
I am the person I am because of you.
I can stand for my own rights each and every day - because you taught me how to do it !
You gave me power - the power that the others don't have.
I am where I am today - because of you.
You made me with a purpose

Yonela Dyantyi (16) - Cape Town

WOMEN AS A BASIC ELEMENT ON EARTH

Therefore, this generation lives because a seed was planted on a fertile land.

The germination took place and life underwent a metamorphosis.

The new offspring got deposited in the warm and safe arms;

Then it grazed on the fertile land which gave strength for survival.

Therefore, women [are] worth being dignified as rocks !

Sunday Phiri (18) - Witbank

XHENOPHOBIA

XHENOPHOBIA - oooh what a word !

What a bitter word when said

What a dis - tasteful taste

When dead

You sing with pride

While stretching your empty words

Busy painting your black lives

White !

You sing "Nkosi sikele Afrika

Whilst killing your African

brothers and sisters.

They say South Africa

it's a democratic and free country ?

Mduduzi Khumalo (17) Soweto

WHEN DEATH REACHES ME

When death reaches me
You will think that I am gone, yet I won't be....
Many of you will stand before my body and cry.
Do not cry for me when you see my casket go down, for I will not be there.....
But my flesh will be !
Do not be distressed
For I will not have left you, but left this world to be with God.

I'll be in a place where there are greener pastures;
I'll be lying in a green grass, resting and waiting for you to come.
My soul will be sleeping, relishing and listening to the most peaceful music ever.
A world where there is no discrimination and conflicts,
A place where there are no droughts and thunders,
Laying in a house that never falls
And reaping from a garden that never runs dry of fruits and vegetables.

Do not slaughter sheep and cows for me when I'm dead
Because I know your sorrows.
Do not bow to me and ask for blessings from me
For I still will not have changed to be Jesus.
My dear family members, do not weep for me
When death reaches me
Because you knew all along that the one who has borrowed me to you
Will come back and take me to be with Him.

Melva Timbane (19) Soweto

MY BLESSINGS

I've walked this road for many years
I've loved, I've laughedshed many tears.
The friends I've lost, the friends I've gained
Lasting memories. All remain.
Upon my lips I speak your names,
Within my heart - your love remains.

Phillip dear, you brought such cheer
To those whose lives you touched that year.
"Mom, am I still beautiful..... and how's my hair"
Your last words spoken with still such flair.
Your mom recalled with love and pride
How beautiful you were the night you died.

Adriaan, my precious child,
You were so young when you died.
At 24 you left this earth
Joyful in your 'coming birth'.
You opened up my heart to see
The beauty of what death could be.

Leonard, Angela, Jan and Sean
Les and Barry, Johan and Paul
I honour all of you tonight
You touched my life and left a light
That burns still brightly on this earth
Though you've all claimed your rightful births.

Natalie, sweet beautiful girl
Your glowing eyes, your long brown curls.
How you used to 'strut your stuff'
Your love, your hope, your zest for life.
You called for me the day you died
I was honoured to be there at your side.
I touched you as you gave a sigh
Goodbye my friend - Dear One - Goodbye!

Trev, my "Special Angel", - my dearest friend,
I've left you for the very end -
In having healed yourself, I know
You were here to help us heal and grow.
Thank You Child of God tonight
For sharing all your Love and Light.

A line or two just to say :
I love and miss you more each day.

And now, "My Blessings", from above,
May you all rest in Eternal Love.

Blessed Be.

(In Commemoration of World Aids Day / Lest we forget)

Stevie Megens - Country Director

YOUR PROVIDER

I am the future,
The King of my destiny.
I am the word of wisdom
That encourages the hopeless wonderers -
The protector of the weak
And hope for the hopeless.
The one you can trust - and stay the same
In a world that changes shape
As life goes on.
I am a ruler, a chief....
The guide to a better life
Oh yes ! I am your
Provider.

Siyanda Dubazana (15) Soweto

MY WORST NIGHT

I remember the day my father beated me as if I am nothing, and when I try to ask him 'why are you beating me', he says 'did you come late'. And it was not late..... I tried to explain and I tried to talk to him but he wouldn't listen. He kept beating me with everything he found near him. I tried to scream, I tried, but no one was listening. Love laughed at me ! At times I sit by myself - I cry constantly - but when I close my eyes, I remember the day, the day my father beated me and I ask myself '.... Why should I forgive and forget things that you have done to me. They will never be washed away or be sealed by anyone, but yet because of love, I will forgive you.

Lesaya (16) Witbank

BELONG

In search for the meaning of life,
We seek acceptance and approval of other people.
Longing to belong we allow dictators to materialise our mission towards life,
Only to be imprisoned by social demands.
Recovering from slavery, we relapse from individuality
As being ourselves isn't satisfying to others.
Forgetting that day makes way for the night -
Constipated by life, we continue longing to belong
To someone, somewhere or something -
Trying to understand the complexity of life
We give in to imitated portraits of religion, culture and policies -
Deceived by desire, we wonder what lies beyond our vision of reality

Sipho Ramakhula (21) Former Alex After School participant and present day
volunteer in the Alex program

FXB Staff :

"Walk a mile in my shoes" is a journey of suffering, pain, poverty, pleading, joy, hope and peace. By walking a mile in their shoes, I am proud, motivated and inspired by their love and passion.

Eric Duma - Coordinator Alexandra After School

Working with our youth brings to mind the words of 'Magic'Johnson. "... All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them". So too, I quote Zig Ziglar who said :

"...when you put faith, hope and love together, you can raise positive kids in a negative world...."

Mamsy Nkosi - Coordinator Jeremiah Mdaka After School - Witbank

Our children are like stars - they brighten our lives.....

Nontombi Mamkeli - Coordinator Mfuleni After School, Cape Town

.....'like the sun, our youth rise through poetry to enlighten the world...'

Mitchell Peter - Coordinator Orlando After School

'... Love is all there is' *Stevie Megens - Country Director*

'..... healing is the road to success...' *Maki Makunyane - Social Worker*

'.....I am - sooo proud ...' *Sonto Manyathi - Coordinator Soweto After School*

"...wealth is not a mansion filled with gold - wealth is children growing up on the right path..."

Fikile Khumalo - Coordinator Moruti Makuse After School Witbank

'... In life one must not focus only on what you achieve - it's also important to be fulfilled...'

Sihle Magaela - Coordinator Dunbar After School - Witbank

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Anglo American Chairman's Fund
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The Trafigura Foundation
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MTN SA Foundation
Airports Company South Africa

Winnie Ngwekasi Primary School - Soweto
Ditau Primary School - Orlando/Soweto
Jeremiah Mdaka Primary School - Witbank
Moruti Makuse Primary School - Witbank
Dunbar Primary School - Witbank
Mfuleni High School - Cape Town
Mfuleni Primary School - Cape Town

Walk A Mile In My Shoes is the second collection of poems and stories written by the youth who attend the FXB (Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud) South Africa, after school programs. These are orphaned and vulnerable children aged between 12 and 18 years old who live in Alexandra Township, Soweto, Witbank and the Western Cape.



Francois-Xavier Bagnoud

About FXB International

The Association carries the name of Francois-Xavier Bagnoud, a helicopter pilot specialized in rescue operations, who dedicated his life to providing assistance to others. He lost his life at the age of 24 years during a helicopter-borne mission in Mali. In 1989, his mother, Albina du Boisouvray, his family and their friends founded the Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) in order to pursue, in the field of development, the rescue missions that he led, and perpetuate the values of generosity and compassion that guided his life.

The mission of FXB International is to fight poverty and Aids, and to support orphans and vulnerable children left in the wake of the AIDS pandemic.

FXB offers comprehensive support to the families and communities that care for them and fights for their basic rights.

FXB is represented in 16 countries around the world. It currently operates around one hundred programs and FXB Villages.

The overall strategy of FXB International is the practical implementation of the inextricable link between Health and Human Rights in the daily lives of its beneficiaries. FXB provides sustainable and grassroots solutions that combat the dual crises of poverty and AIDS.

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