



WAKAKOSHA
— I'M WORTH IT —

THERE IS A TREASURE IN ME

Poetry on overcoming
self-stigma from
young people living with
HIV in Zimbabwe

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Foreword

“Those dreams are made realizable through our poems that give us the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare.” – Audre Lorde

Poetry is a medium in which we strive to articulate, in a few thoughtfully chosen words, the depth of our lives. Employing language in an attempt to express what seems inexpressible – our hopes, our dreams, our personal truths, our moments of transformation, our love – is no mean feat. But, as Audre Lorde explains, poetry is a “vital necessity of our existence” in how it can illuminate our true selves. Through poetry, one can discover the treasure within them – their own, authentic voice.

The poems in this collection reveal five authentic voices. Written during the Wakakosha (‘You’re Worth It’) course delivered by Beyond Stigma and Zvandiri in Harare, Zimbabwe last year, the poems serve as testaments to the resilience and optimism of the young people who wrote them. While they vary in style, the poems all map the same journey: out of self-stigma and into self-love. It is clear from the following testimonies that in celebrating their personhood in all its complexities, the poets found for themselves a way of being beyond shame, guilt and fear. Discovering our own intrinsic self-worth through language has the power to transform how we see ourselves and allows us to envision a brighter future beyond stigma.

We sincerely thank the young poets who wrote these beautiful poems – your bravery and talent combined is an unstoppable force.

Enjoy!

The Beyond Stigma and Zvandiri Team, March 2023

Poets' Testimonies

Samantha

"When I wrote my poem, in that moment, I was heartbroken, did not have confidence, looked down on myself and I felt like crying because life felt hard. After finishing the poem I was happy because I felt lighter, like a heavy weight was removed. In that moment I felt good, confident, calm and open."

Takudzwa

"I had forgotten who I am, so this [poetry writing] reminded me that I can be successful and I can achieve all that I want and go beyond. What I just had/have to do is stand up and fight for my identity."

Thomas

"I felt so inspired when I was writing my poem and I experienced some supernatural relief inside my heart as I was writing."

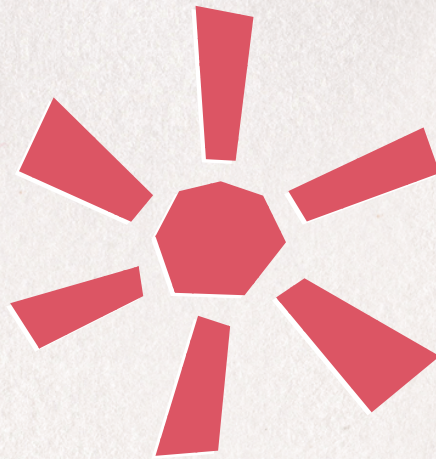
Tadiwanashe

"Writing the poem was too difficult and also too painful because I was recalling all those bad memories and putting them down on paper as a poem but after writing it down I was feeling relieved and stress free too."

Patience

"It was a bit difficult but I enjoyed doing it. I felt like [writing and talking about it] lifted a heavy burden in me."

**Life,
Life,
Life,
Life.**



**Life is hard
Life is sorrow
Life is full of pain.
Life is wonderful,
Life is love
Life is happiness
Life is grateful.**

**Without all this,
there is no life
so we have to thank God
for the life.
Life is good.**

**by Patience. Harare,
November 2022**

Life. There is life in me.
I am just a living being.
I have hope in life because life is
all I have.
I love my life but the worst part of
life is I don't
know what is coming up next.
Though I love my life sometimes I
don't trust my life because life can
mess me up at some point
Above all, I am just a living being.



by Thomas. Harare,
November 2022



I love myself, I love my life.
I realise that you are strong
and you can do it.
I feel it right now
that in future you are ready
to help others
And I see that
You can and must
speak in front of everyone
And you are ready to teach them
How to turn things around before
judging
And I see in the future
Everyone will be happy and peaceful.



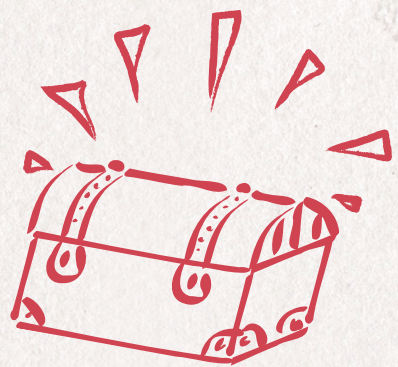
by Samantha. Harare,
November 2022

The life I'm living today
Shows me that the future is very
bright.
One day I'm gonna be the father of
the fatherless.
I'm going to give love
to those who seek it
and care and support
to those who need it.



by Tadiwanashe. Harare,
November 2022

How amazing it is
to be a part of the royal blood.
The whole kingdom bows to you and
respects you
and you are trapped and still
haven't figured out who you are.
It's like being an heir to the
throne
but the treasure of glory
has not yet been found.



Be on your quest
and be ready to discover
the power and the potential in you.
You are not a failure.
Greatness is your portion
and part of your life.
There is a treasure in me.
My life is about discovery.

by Takudzwa. Harare,
November 2022



The journey from self-stigma to self-worth



Thank you to our partners and supporters for their continuous support:



Judith O'Brien

Audre Lorde quotations from *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press, 2007, pgs 45, 47.

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