

I am sure the Dunlop company was very pleased when I resigned because the production manager always pointed at me. When I asked him what was wrong, he said: "There is nothing wrong but you are the trouble maker." I always asked him why he didn't come out with what was really wrong but he always pointed at me saying: "You are the trouble maker".

It started when we came back from the strike of 1986. We voted that if the company tried to make a worker sign a warning then everybody must go to that department and sign a warning. At the tube shop the manager gave a warning to three workers, saying that they were very slow. So we all went there.

When I entered the office they were talking and the manager was trying to explain himself to the workers. I walked in and burst into song. The workers started to toi-toi and some jumped on top of the table. What made me laugh was that when we were doing the toi-toi the production manager also tried to do the toi-toi. At the same time his long face was getting cross. I don't know what made him try to toi-toi.

After that he met me in my department and asked where I was working. I answered him: "At Dunlop".

"I know you are working at Dunlop but in which department?"

"In this department."

"Oh, you are a forklift driver."

"Yes, why are you asking?"

"I am just asking."

"Why are you asking me, is there something behind this?"

"No, I am just asking."

After this he always pointed at me, saying: "You are a trouble maker." After that he was not my friend. But then I was not friends with anyone from management because we always had to fight with them. Even before the union came I used to fight with our shop manager because I tried to organise the drivers, as I did around the safety boots.

From then on it was cultural work for me, most of the time. I had started composing izimbongo, which I was totally uncertain about - would the workers approve or not? They did. This influenced many more to emerge from our ranks. Nise Malange, Mi Hlatshwayo and I sat down and discussed our contribution thoroughly. From then on, without us even being able to understand it properly, a cultural movement launched itself all over Natal. I am glad that I had a role in stimulating its development. I am convinced of the brightness of its future.

## THE WHEEL IS TURNING - THE STRUGGLE MOVES FORWARD

1.

Kill them all - the dogs.

Because, they say, they are becoming  
smarter.

They do not discriminate:

the ignorant and the wise - exterminated

But still,

truth remains unchanging  
it cannot change and lying  
causes anger

Our heads - held high

they hide theirs

The struggle moves forward  
backwards never.

2.

The English arrived -  
and we were made ministers of religion  
teachers and clerks  
taught to be kind,  
humble, trusting and full of respect  
but ignorant of the ways our country was governed  
we began losing  
whatever we cherished for hope.

3.

But the wheel is turning  
darkness - ending  
daytime - beginning  
the light has come  
Come freedom  
truth is unchanging  
its colours are stark  
The end of your nights of lying  
is here  
Surely you can see for yourselves...  
Return  
what is not yours  
the rightful owners are demanding it back.

4.

The struggle moves forward  
backwards never  
the wagon wheels turn  
and their sound's echo  
can be heard in our hearts and our souls:  
the rightful owner of the coat  
stands freezing  
rain soaking his bones  
shredded by frost and cold winds  
But you? You are smug  
For your children? Only the best  
and he? the crumbs  
and troubles

a stranger  
coatless in his rightful place.

5.

You were deceived  
by the first man  
who uttered:  
"It is enough...I'm satisfied"  
since then you sat content and comfortable.  
I use similar words  
"It is enough" and,  
"you have enjoyed yourself too long  
Now it's my turn  
return my rightful share!"

6.

The struggle moves forward  
never backwards at all..  
The earth has been gulping innocent blood  
- the first blood spilled in this struggle  
the very same earth we fought to retain  
since then we have noticed your conscience pricking  
your heart has found no peace  
days and nights you use for pacing

7.

You pace up and down  
as ammunition you cargo on innocent people  
Coward  
you are smudging the prospect of light  
Your Casspirs, your teargas and guns  
your vans and your dogs  
do not dampen the fire  
they feed it.

8.

Coward  
You avoid attacking people  
with weapons like your own  
You fear them

But still,  
one day you shall harvest what you have sown  
cursing the day you were born  
This drought infested earth  
will feast on your blood  
What you did unto others  
will be done unto you  
and your armoury of weapons  
shall follow you down  
as the struggle moves forward  
backwards, never.

9.  
And you - Special Branch?  
Who will help you?  
those who have helped you  
have turned into murderers  
turning you into a curse  
on the road to our freedom  
And you even turn onto your own people  
killing them with your own hands  
they say

10.  
But the wagon-wheel turns  
the struggle moves forward  
backwards never.  
Your police and your soldiers  
are sniping at all those fighting for freedom  
but the struggle continues  
The police are detaining and killing  
freedom fighters  
torturing people in unimaginable ways  
yet it does not weaken our struggle  
our struggle is fuelled once more

11.  
So many people detained  
and so many people killed  
that resistance should have been over by now

But the wagon-wheel turns  
rolling forward  
and the struggle continues  
Your rulers' merciless detentions  
and jails  
malfunction  
and the struggle continues

12.

Impimpi remind yourself  
what you are going to do  
when we start taking over  
As victory strikes  
your friends will desert you

13.

Now we are your lambs for slaughter  
We are a torturing game for your friends  
you look on and laugh at us  
when we demand our rights  
when we condemn exploitation  
and shout about our unpaid labours  
you lead us onto paths full of traps  
but your days and those of your friends  
have been numbered  
and your friends will gladly give you away

14.

And then, when our children  
complain of their, gutter education?  
you deliver them for slaughter  
too  
but remember you do not weaken our struggle  
it  
strengthens

15.

The day is near

when your murderous weapons  
will stand witness  
for the higher judges of truth  
who won't be bribed with your money  
and then the filth of your deeds  
will become known  
Then we shall clasp you with  
the steady grip of our hands

16.

Soldiers  
murderers  
you have made orphans of us  
with your guns  
You gain your rewards  
and respect  
for showing no mercy  
and lacking in conscience  
You continue your routine  
of cruelty  
But can't you see  
that it is our struggle  
you're making more respectable daily  
as we march forward?

17.

In the graveyards  
and under black clouds  
people bury their loved ones  
- mourning and shedding their tears  
yet it bothers you little  
you do not sympathise  
you show no remorse  
you pretend to demonstrate bravery  
your rifles are lifted as you snipe at some more  
defenceless people  
unable to fight back

18.

They had them all killed -

like dogs  
they are becoming smarter  
they did not discriminate  
between the wise or the fools  
it matters little whether in celebration  
in tears or in prayer  
it is all the same,  
all game for some sniping  
after all they are all getting smarter.

19.

When we gather,  
singing and orating our movement's slogans,  
we know  
that the souls of the people you have killed  
are with us in the struggle  
Your tyranny cannot overpower our struggle  
ours continues going forward  
- backwards never  
the wheel is turning  
by tomorrow you shall be trying to flee  
but you shall be eating dust  
stamped to the ground like a snake  
- a trying punishment awaits you.

20.

The wheel is turning  
Oppressor - wake up!  
Beware and be conscious of what you are up to  
Tomorrow the throne you occupy  
will become just another seat for others  
the others whom you hate  
will not allow you to forget their injuries  
which you have inflicted  
The wheel is turning  
and there shall be no mercy for those killing  
innocent children.  
The wheel is turning  
freedom is nearer



our strength and our dignity  
- increasing  
we shall conquer  
as your time is coming up.

21.

The struggle moves forward  
backwards, never  
the wheel is turning  
you can hear the creaks of its motion yourself  
Day after day  
your gun's bullets  
pierce the bodies of more freedom-fighters ..  
Piercing the bodies of those who shout  
that you have been enjoying far too much  
for far too long  
According to your logic  
everything should by now have been sorted,  
quiet and under  
control.

22.

Even for those you did not look like an oppressor  
who ignored your actions  
and respected you,  
you are becoming a monster  
they do not trust you anymore  
they do not address you as a friend  
you are becoming an enemy.  
Even those who ignored our struggles  
have opened their eyes in horror  
because you do not discriminate  
and your bullets do not discriminate  
everyone's up for the killing

23.

The blood of the people

finished-off by Amabutho  
has also started to talk  
and to bear witness.

They also are not ashamed to be killing  
people in mourning or prayer  
no feeling of shame when killing our youth  
and people's eyes are opening up to the horrors  
in this state of thieves  
but they only kill the flesh  
the soul remains alive  
and the struggle refuses to die  
the struggle moves forward.

24.

Don't kill  
don't intimidate  
don't be an obstacle to freedom  
if you want the end of our struggle  
then grant the people what they want  
but you can't face this truth  
that's why you kill and intimidate  
that is why you have created walls of darkness  
where you torture all our leaders  
and all those who speak-out the truth

25.

The wheel is turning  
the struggle moves forward  
backwards, never  
the day is drawing closer  
when not a single person shall again  
be killed by your bullets  
but the people you have killed -  
their blood sucked dry  
by this drought-stricken earth,  
all those killed by amabutho  
they will rise up from the graveyards  
and with their bare hands  
shall tear you to shreds  
But you will not die

You will wish you were dead  
but you won't be.

26

The wheel is turning  
the struggle moves forward  
backwards never  
your sun is setting  
your days draw near  
your friends, your allies  
and your propagandists  
they will desert you  
they shall climb on platforms in front of people  
and denounce you.

The struggle continues  
and your Saracens  
your machine-guns and sten-guns  
your aeroplanes  
your Casspirs and your kwela-kwelas  
your teargas  
shall not break our strength

Your day is setting  
Maye, unto you that day.

27.

In this war  
that is being fought around us  
we are not turning back  
we are wading through the blood  
of our kinsfolk  
when one of us falls  
when one gets  
detained  
another freedom-fighter  
of the exploited is born

28

The wheel is turning  
the struggle moves forwrd  
fires are raging

as the enemies  
are worried and cannot sleep  
and cannot eat  
for their stomach rejects food  
because of all the plotting to set us back  
because of the plans to put the fire out  
we continue with vigour  
we say: turn wheel turn  
turn on  
and the flames keep on raging  
and the smoke worries them a lot.

29.

The wheel is turning  
the struggle moves forward  
we are not to lose strength  
we die on the one side  
we rise on the other  
and continue  
on and on with our struggle  
until you become mad  
a lunatic oppressor  
wearing garlands of tree-leaves on your head  
and trying to end off your life  
because the struggle continues  
the wheel is turning.  
we move on.

It was during the 1986 Dunlop strike, when we occupied the factory, that I composed and recited the poem you just have been reading: about the wheel turning and the struggle moving forward. It was also after my friend Toto Dwaba was assassinated and found dead at Umtunzini Sugar Plantation. His hands, one of his ears, one of his eyes and his tongue had been cut from his body. He was the Durban chairperson of the Release Mandela Campaign.

The other workers were very pleased with the poem. After a while one of my co-workers came and asked me to whom was this poem directed. I

answered that the poem was not directed at anyone. It was rather a response to our situation now in the country. He said that I was lying and that the poem was talking about the Kwazulu authorities and government.

I said: "No, it can't be because I am quite ignorant about Kwazulu politics. And anyway the poem could not be against them because they are also being governed by Pretoria, and they also suffer like all black people in South Africa."

He said then that I should write something about the Kwazulu authorities. I said I don't see myself ever doing that because I am ignorant of all these things. My aim was to praise the machine operators, the turners of wheels in the factories, the roadworkers, the diggers of gold and our organisations through which we were progressing. He left me without saying goodbye.

After a Saturday afternoon workshop on a play about M'kumbane, at about eight in the evening I returned to my uncle's place, at Amauti, Inanda. My family said that there had been visitors looking for me who claimed to come from an organisation fighting against the removal of people from their places. They were looking for that poet: me. My family were worried because one of them had a revolver under his jacket and, as my little nephew noticed, the car had a Jo'burg registration number and a KwaZulu Police (ZP) third-party.

I told my kin that those people were no friends of mine and they should not co-operate with them. From then there were many more visits, which made me decide to leave home. I have been uprooted since then.

But I shall keep on praising my brothers and sisters in the factories and shops, mines and farms - and I shall praise no chiefs. Even though the harassment of people is growing faster, the suppression of open political activity has caused confusion, and even though ethnic divisions are re-emerging and life is getting harder. I hope we are known and are remembered, not as a breed of nameless numbers but as people who dreamed of peace, prosperity, togetherness and freedom from exploitation.

## AFRICA'S BLACK BUFALLO

The bull that left its byre when still in its calf stages,  
who followed the rocky paths, followed later by more calves  
meeting on the mountain ridges longing  
for their mother, bellowing and longing  
as they never reached the promised pastures  
they were searching for,  
to live and graze irrespective of their colour.

The black bufallo selected by other bulls,  
To leave the kraal to be apprenticed  
It followed secret trails  
And the others did not see it,  
They heard rumours it was gone.

Outside the kraal, among others it bellows,  
The other bulls give warnings, saying, "it is enough" and  
"homecoming is near"

Apprenticed in Algeria and told to come back home  
Spotted on its arrival by the others  
who complained that it was dangerous to their grounds  
and their families could not sleep at all.

They gathered, declaring it an enemy, declaring war  
They seized it and forced it in isolation on the island of Patima,  
They returned to separate it from its calves, saying,  
it is not safe enough  
from the island of Patima it bellows and the dust goes up  
and the others get unrested by the dust,  
each bellow shows more power  
they throw it into further isolation,  
on top of a mountain of fish  
From such distance there it remembers its calves,  
It bellows and the dust moves up,  
the calves hear and on goes their sturdy stampede  
even some of the others associate with the black bufallo's calves

together they stir up the dust on the paths to the top  
of the mountain of fish

The oppressor leaps and shouts  
that unfortunately, they will never be tolerated while still  
alive

But their stomachs are grumbling and running from worry  
their tails were grass-wet from excretions,  
but still they attack decimating all  
even the milking calves are kicked, stabbed by horns.  
and finished.

But the day is coming,  
The tall grass will be scorched  
and a new season shall start with no lies

Calves from black, brown and white buffalo's are stampeding  
harnesses are cracking, the yokes are left behind  
they do not sleep at nights, they have no place to sleep,  
they do not eat because they have no pasture to graze in,  
they do not drink water,  
because the rivers were diverted and dried  
they are being apprenticed  
they are swaying and beating up dust  
shaking off suffering

Be prepared black buffalo  
the weight of suffering is teetering upon our shoulders.  
to end  
a cruel life beyond belief.