

TODAY by Nise Malange

Everyone who has died
Is here today
Those who died in the struggle of the people
Are here
Singing with us -
They are holding our hands,
Just that touch
Moving through all our bodies
Like a bloodstream.

Biko
Is here today
Neil Agget
Who died for the liberation of workers
Is here today
Ephraim Shabalala
Who died
The system's victim
Is here today
Andries Raditsela
Who died
For us all
Is here today,
with us
sharing.
This day with us.

Those who died as oppressors are here -
They weep about their past
Their hands are swollen
They cannot hold our hands
I can feel their cold breath
Brushing my shoulders.

Our babies and children who died
Because of the system
Are here playing around
On this day
They are observing and learning
From us for their next lives.

Our brothers and sisters,
Mothers and fathers
Who died confused,
Without making up their minds
Are here today
They want to put their arms around us and sing:
"Hlanganani Basebenzi"

The oppressors, the killers,
The murderers, assassins,
The traitors, the impimpis
All those who were against our people's freedom
- Are wandering among us
They are looking closely
Into our eyes
They want to speak
To us about what they have done
But there is no way for us
To be aware of their presence.
Away oppressor
Away traitor
Go away
Go away,
All those who were against peace and justice,
Must go away from us today.
Today!

This poem is from a book of poems by Alfred Qabula, Mi S'dumo Hlatswayo and Nise Malange. These poets are involved in cultural work with COSATU. This book is called "Black Mamba Rising - South African Worker Poets in Struggle" and is available from Worker Resistance and Culture Publications, Department of Sociology, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban.

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