

# the revolution is a woman

Toni Stuart

*A collective poem compiled and written by Toni Stuart at the 4th African Feminist Forum, 10-12 April 2016, in Harare, Zimbabwe. The poem uses words, phrases, ideas and thoughts shared by the women throughout the forum.*

the revolution is a woman  
 a black, queer, radical,  
 Azania House-occupying,  
 sjambok-wielding  
 Tahir Square-protesting raised fist

pumping, bashing, smashing, tearing  
 down patriarchs' invisible walls

the revolution is a woman  
 a hijab-wearing  
 veil-discarding, veil-reclaiming  
 church-going, silent-praying, God-denying voice

piercing through the obsidian night  
 to reach always for the light on the horizon's edge

the revolution is a woman  
 reworking the histories that have shaped her:  
 fashioning the steel of a broken arm into a power salute  
 moulding her violated waist into an unapologetic swerving hip  
 shattering the chains of a shackled ankle into a defiant dancing leg

clearing the rubble under which her daughter's soul is buried  
her relentless fingers scratched and bruised  
to let the light sear this seed, turning cement into soil

this work that breaks her heart  
this works that feeds her soul

the revolution is a woman  
loving a woman in the shadows  
so she can love her children with some safety in the light  
praying for strength to defend her love against the pulpit  
arguing for her right to defend her love against the bench

the revolution is a woman  
who speaks not only for herself  
hear her sing:

*this land is woman's land*  
*this continent is woman's continent*  
*we will never tire*  
*we are proudly queer*

teeth biting back at the hand muffling her voice  
until she breaks free into a ceaseless whispered prayer for love  
and unending ululation for liberation

the revolution is a woman  
born into the light of feminist fires  
standing in the flames of rage and love  
burning tirelessly so her sisters will not die sad

the revolution is a woman  
fighting (loving)  
fighting (loving)  
fighting (loving)  
for the soul of Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Ghana, Zimbabwe,  
Tanzania, Occupied Azania, Benin, Mauritania, Zambia, Mozambique,

Swaziland, Angola, Niger, DRC, Liberia, Sudan, Egypt, Congo Brazzaville,  
Senegal, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Central  
African Republic, Kenya, Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda, Guinea, Togo

the revolution is a woman  
fighting (loving)  
fighting (loving)  
fighting (loving)  
for the soul of the world

