

# Women who dare



*A collection of poems*

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# Introduction

*Welcome to Women Who Dare. This collection of poems was written by women from Longsight's Women's Voices, a group run by Nadia Siddiqui. The project was funded by New Writing North via the Arts Council Strategic Touring fund and delivered in partnership with Manchester Literature Festival and Longsight Library.*

*The women took part in six creative writing workshops held at Longsight Library. Using the poem "Still I rise" by Maya Angelou as inspiration, along with creative exercises, breathing mindfulness and music, they built up their confidence in themselves and their creative and writing abilities.*

*In these sessions they found out about other women who have dared to achieve despite the odds and they shared with each other women role models from their countries of origin (see page 24 for our list of "women who dare"). Many of the women in women's voices are refugees or asylum seekers, some are dealing with other significant life challenges. The poems they have written open doors into their present, past and future lives.*

*It was wonderful for me to work with these enthusiastic women. Watching them increase in awareness about themselves and write poems that impressed themselves and all of us. We hope these poems will encourage other women to be "brave enough to knock". It is up to us with persistence and daring to open doors, shatter ceilings and dissolve the walls that separate us, remembering by name all the other women who have dared.*

*Shamshad Khan, poet and resilience coach, February 2017*



# Brave enough to knock

*Open new doors  
and push your past away push away  
those people who hate you  
and also those who don't care about you*

*open the door  
to your future to your happiness  
and also for those people who want you in their life*

*the doors will be opened  
to those who are brave enough to knock*

*sometimes opening new doors can lead  
to a beautiful and peaceful life.*

*Nayab Butt*

# Like a sail boat

I am wearing white short pants with a yellow top

I am standing outside playing with my friends

I can see white sand

I ask does my gentleness upset you?

just because I am quiet

you think you can treat me anyhow

The sky is blue with a lot of birds flying everywhere

and I am like a sail boat

you know sail boats travel everywhere

Do you think you can pull me down?

No

you cannot control me

I can travel everywhere.

Muibat Babajide



# Flight of an asylum seeker

*A bird sometimes changes its place  
it looks for a place under a bridge to go in when it is raining  
like a homeless bird I go to look for a place to sleep*

*Asylum seekers together we feel strong  
we can fight together  
to raise money for private lawyers to defend our cases*

*With different reasons they refused my case  
but I am strong  
I am joyful  
like a soaring bird from Congo D.R.C.  
in this changing freedom and asylum seekers' country*

*Philomene Mujinga*



# The beauty of being a stone

*I am a stone.*

*Sometimes people throw me this way  
sometimes they throw me that way  
and then they leave*

*from time to time life is like a stone.*

*Some people who are close to our hearts  
play with us and we can do nothing*

*because a stone is something that has no life.*

*It is people's pass-time to play and then discard a stone.  
The beauty of a stone is  
that people can do what they like with a stone.*

*The strength is that if you throw it up  
it goes up  
throw it down it goes down*

*but for me it makes no difference.*

*I am strong and still like a stone.*

*Farzana Butt*

*(translated from Urdu by Shamshad Khan)*



# Now and then

*I remember wearing a pretty pink frilly dress  
I feel I don't have any weight  
I am very light same as a fairy*

*I am inside my grandmum's house and I am playing  
near a pool in a beautiful garden full of flowers  
I smell Jasmine and Geraniums  
I see mosaic blocks grey and black  
and I jump on them one by one*

*I smell my mum's delicious food  
I smell pencils being sharpened  
and I smell my mum's perfume*

*Now and then I ask myself what's wrong with my life  
what happened in my life*

*If I am going to get to be eighty or ninety years old  
I will be in a warm house  
I sit in an armchair  
I put one soft cushion on it to rest  
and a white blanket to cover my feet.*

*Jila Mozoun*

# My beautiful grandma Chief Alice Ahwinahwi

*My pillar, my foundation, my cooling fan  
my mother, my father, my three in one*

*I call you my foundation  
because you made me into the beautiful  
and confident woman I am today  
you single-handedly brought me up  
guided me since I was three weeks old*

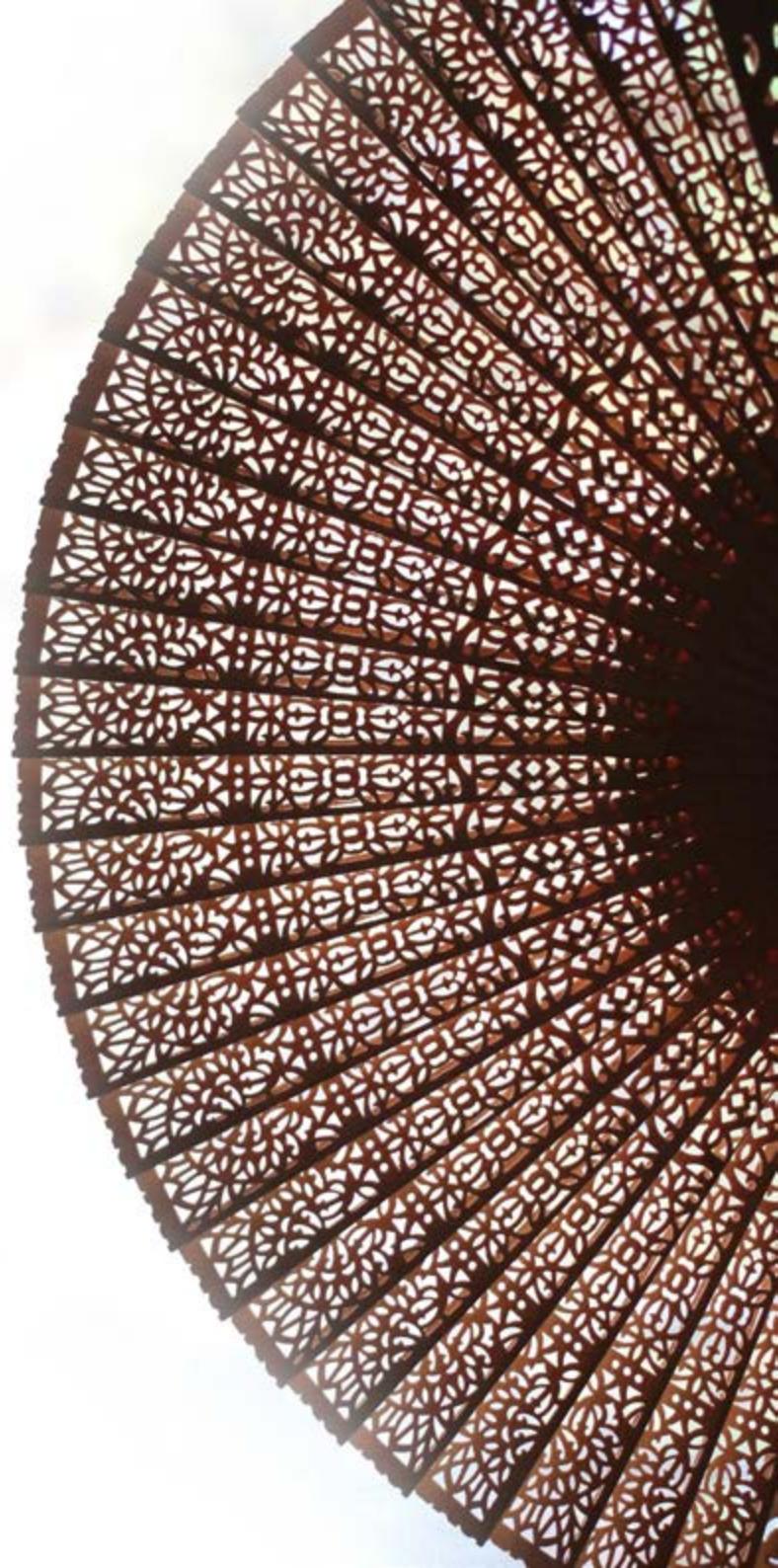
*You are my pillar  
you hold the roof over my house and protect me  
from being homeless*

*I call you my fan  
because your love cools me down  
when I am hot and frustrated*

*They say there is a reason  
they say that time will heal  
but neither time nor reason  
will change the way I feel*

*No-one knows the heartache that lies behind my smile  
and though I cannot see you grandma  
you are my pillar, my foundation, my cooling fan.*

Angela Orugbo



# Sands of time

*Age five I am playing in the red sand  
I am wearing a short dress*

*In 2015 I was looking for a place I could learn sewing  
I met a lady  
I explained my situation with the Home Office  
I want to learn  
she gave me courage*

*When I am age seventy  
I will be with my grandchild by God's grace  
in my beautiful house with green colour walls.*

*Lara Olamide*



# Talking to the bully

*Wearing a burgundy school uniform  
in class in my classroom  
with my classmates sitting at my desk  
don't remember the colour of the ground  
the smell of play-dough*

*the sky is blue with some clouds  
the shape of a face*

*I tell the truth and you don't believe me  
I can't beat you and I am not joining you*

*I will string you out to dry and silence you with my honesty.*

*Angie Deopersad*

# I made it

*Does my carriage offend you?  
do you think all you said to bring me  
down will ever move me a bit?  
No it won't*

*rather it will get me  
Strong  
just like a hard rock I am so sturdy*

*the intimidations  
the staff of the council have given me  
is more than enough  
for someone to run mad*

*but I see it  
as sounds of music I need to dance to  
for it is a stage  
of another challenge in my life*

*the story of my life  
in the beginning was quite depressing  
but whatever you did*

*still I made it.*

*Abimbola Adebiyi*

# The silent one

*I am the silent one*

*I speak with my hands not my voice  
the cerebral woman in a sea of tranquility*

*I am a rock in the sea*

*I am strong enough  
I get weathered by the storm  
shaped by the sea  
my past has made me  
tough like a flaming phoenix I rise  
to live love and be happy again.*

*Andrea Taylor-Haynes*



# Women who dared

*Kudirat Abiola,*

*Nigerian Business woman and philanthropist. She and later her husband were assassinated, her husband had been elected president.*

*Fatima Abdul Karim,*

*Nigerian journalist on themes of crime and politics.*

*Althea Gibson,*

*the first African American woman tennis player to play and win US tours and Wimbledon in 1957.*

*Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson,*

*British Paralympic medal holder, sports personality and wheelchair racer.*

*Noor Inayat Khan,*

*Russian (Indian and American heritage) first woman radio spy to be sent into Nazi occupied France; captured, tortured and finally executed. She was posthumously awarded the George Cross for bravery.*

*Lata Mangeshkar,*

*Indian legendary playback singer of over a thousand Hindi films, she was recognised in her lifetime for her contribution to the film industry.*

*Barbara Mc Dougall,*

*Canadian Minister, held posts including immigration and equality for women.*

*Oumou Sangare,*

*Malian Grammy Award winning singer and song writer, raising social justice issues.*

*Nasrin Sotoudeh,*

*Iranian human rights lawyer, who was imprisoned because of her campaigning work.*

*Malala Yousafzai,*

*Pakistani girls' education rights campaigner and youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize*

*So many women have achieved great things despite the odds against them. Who would you add to the list of women who have dared?*

# Feedback

*from women who attended the writing course.*

*“I feel peace, and writing with my own pen I am happy.”*

*“I feel so alert each time I am here and I learn more.”*

*“My feelings have been so amazing from the first day of this treasured project. I am so happy to be part of it. It brings back positivity to me.”*

*“I do feel more strong and confident about myself.”*

# Credits and thanks

*To all the women who have taken part and contributed and to the partners and funders:*

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# Women who dare

