



**INTERNATIONAL
HUMAN
RIGHTS ART
MOVEMENT**



**AFRICAN HUMAN
RIGHTS SPOKEN
WORDS CONTEST**



Honorable Mention

We Want To Be Children, Not Brides! By Gugulethu Matshazi, Zimbabwe

See the piece [HERE](#)

Gugulethu Matshazi Dube, a 19-year-old female poet hailing from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, resides at 3434 Magwegwe North in the same city. Employing poetry as a powerful tool for activism and advocacy, I have harbored a deep passion for both these endeavors. Beyond my poetic pursuits, I am professionally engaged as a public speaker, author, and activist, specifically advocating for issues related to climate change and human rights.

WE WANT TO BE CHILDREN, NOT BRIDES!

I pay the price for not being a son,
I am risen before the rise of the sun.
To my father, my gender is a mockery.
My existence a sin spitted upon,
A sin for which I daily atorn.

I work and toil in the fields,
With a rusted shovel glued on me like a sixth finger
On my right hand.
My back is bent while I break the dry dark brown soil.
From dawn till the late hours of night
All you can hear is the laughter of my shovel as it hits the concrete soil.
Even the birds on the Musasa trees can see that
Something about my life just isn't right.
At fifteen I can neither properly read nor write.

As the sweat continues to roll off my back,
I whisper my chant.
That I know I have a right,
A right to speak up with all my might.
Father! Mother! save me for I am yours.
Raised to be an obeying wife,
This culture is all there is to my life.
My grandmother told me girls should not go to school,
If they do, they will treat their husbands like fools.
My textbook pages became a substitute for firewood.

As I watch my books turn to ash,
I remember the story of a phoenix bird.
As the bird rises from smoke and ashes, so will I
Because I know I have a right,
A right to an education
To allow my spirit to have an aspiration.
Father! Mother! save me for I am yours.

Forced to be married off at 15
And deprived of the education they gave my brother.
It seems my life is less valuable than father's favorite donkey.
I can only be valuable at one point in my life,
When the groom pays bride price for me.
Before and after that, I am as good as an unpurchased
product on a shelf.
But I know I have a right,
To choose to be a child and not a bride.
Father! Mother! have mercy for I am yours.