

Umlando nomcebo wethu: Our history, our treasure

By Gcina Mhlophe

Listen to the song of tiny birds
Greeting a brand-new day
They have been paying their
Respects to the rising Sun
Each morning for millennia
Their tiny eyes have seen the
Spiral of Time, the Spiral of Life
If we listen to their sweet melodies
Even in the seagulls' songs
We can hear the message that says

Each shell is different
Unique and special, custom made
For the one who will live in it
Tailor made to be protector
And communicator,
It is One of a kind
Ancient wisdoms teach us
That our very first ancestors who
Walked the shores of this land
They could read waves,
Could dance to the rhythm of the Ocean
Could spot a precious gem
From the generous sea coffers
As they gushed out, glistening,
wet, playful and tantalising

Our ancestors could tell by the look
Of the sun-kissed pearly treasures and cowry shells
Lying there on the sand, greeting the
Eyes of the beholder
Invisible magical threads wove their way
Straight to the very souls of our forebears

Their heartbeats connected with a future
They could not even perceive at the time
But they knew by the radiant works of wonder
Gifted to them by the deep blue sea
That these were indeed timeless treasures
They traded with them, adorned themselves and
One another.
Royalties were decked out
In the very best of these precious body ornaments

But you and I know, that everything must change
Mother Earth and Father Time
Taught us these lessons, from the very beginning
Time and seasons change, they always will
Like the spiral of Life carries humanity from
One epoch to another. Kingdoms rose and kingdoms fell
Cowry money soon turned to silver and gold
Like the spiral drill that broke the rocks
Deep in the bowels of the Earth
When the gold came out and greeted the Sun
It was clear that a massive change
Would take this land of beginnings. Our Rich Mother Continent Alkebulan. Mama
Africa, through many unique and
New ways of trading, innovative ways of wealth perception
A seismic tremor was felt the world over
From small beginnings to great revolutions
The hands of time redirected our way of thinking
They witnessed our human relations as the gap widened
Between the Haves and the Have-nots
We warmly embraced greed,
When we knew only too well that
Mother Earth has more than enough resources
For all her children and their children's children
Centuries unborn

People of my land
Hear the call of the cowhide drum
Calling to great sons and daughters of Africa
Sounding a word of caution
Queen Mother Elephant trumpeting urgently from the African bushlands
DO NOT GAIN WEALTH AND LOSE YOUR SOULS !!
In this long and perilous journey, she commands ...
Lalelani ! Tsheletshang ! Listen to the unique voices of ancient tellers of tales
Reminding us that, it is the song of Joy and Hope
That gave birth to the Spirit of Creativity
That propels business innovators, movers and shakers
Like your heart meets my heart with every handshake
Like Purpose meets opportunity
Like the power of love overcoming the love of power

People of Africa are calling on the power of stories
That will reignite the fire of Globalisation
By honouring the most diverse cultures
With eyes of visionaries who are ready to
Touch the Past and Feel the Future !
Zazi imvelaphi yakho, uhlomele ikusasa
Again and again, at the most unexpected times

Today we are gathered here, talking history on the move
With all that is in me, I raise my voice with pride,
To the Ancestral world, calling forth the great spirits of
Heritage icons whose first coins led us to produce heated iron
The polishing of ostrich egg shells that made trade possible
The elephant tusk jewellery that crossed oceans and
Brought back gifts that lifted our wealth and took us to a global stage
We celebrate the genius minds and hands
That skilfully forged the golden rhino
In Mapungubwe
Writing history that would inspire future generations

Today, the Reserve Bank Museum
Is opening at the right place, at the right time.
For all to see beyond any shadow of a doubt
It is here for the right purpose
My heart and yours and your, know it too that
This historic moment is speaking to us to
Get up and take that big brave broom
And sweep away misinformation and hateful propaganda
Together we reawaken the spirit of Democracy
By being the very force of social change
Putting economic empowerment back on the agenda
In every story we tell
In every song we sing
In every engineer, doctor, scientist, banker, educator, author, train driver, pilot,
bricklayer, electrician and nation builder ...
Let us all feel the history of our economy in our bones
That unmistakable stamp
Of pure excellence that has brought you here today
To put them into context, with unyielding integrity

So, with all of that in your DNA
I hereby declare – you and you and you
Are phenomenal storytellers, Born to win !
These are the Golden Years we've been striving for
Ningo Manqoba ! MaQhawe namaQhawekazi !
Heroes and Sheroes of my land !
Re motlotlo ka lona !
Go on – Celebrate our diversity and nationhood
Go on – Reset the world

You are the true Reserve Bank of Freedom-loving Spirits
Our people depend on you
Keep arming us with enlightenment and hope
One story at a time ! Halala !!!!
Allow me to Celebrate each and every one of you !
This Reserve Bank Museum is one of a kind
That's the excellence we are gathered here for
Ka pilo yaka yothle, keri-Binang maAfrika, Binang !
Nako ifitlile

The fire of a billion stars is commanding each and every one of us
To stomp our feet, clap our hands, chant in one voice:
QAQAMBANI, BAPHATHISWA BENDYEBO YESIZWE !
QAQAMBANI. SINEQHAYIYA NGANI !!!