

Obakeng Tong

Grandpa raised me

I was raised
Raised by words...
Raised by tears.
Raised by the traumas of hurt seen
through perfect eyes.
I was raised.

I was raised by a man whoms hurt bled into my heart.
The stories he told have all touched home.
It was an echo to me.
An echo of a past I never knew,
But the past I understood the pain it brought.

He said to me...

My son, they have brought me pain.
They have stripped me from touch and from feel.
I recall one night.
The voice of my mother screaming in pain.
They were here.
They searched the house.
Looking for the eyes of a blind man
Forgetting that they themselves were blind.
Blind to the harm they had caused .
Blind to the hearts they had burned.
They had stripped me of all my belongings, my home.
Told me I had not mattered to the world.
They had taken my mother from me.
They had brought me pain.

Was this humanity he spoke about?
The man that raised me?
His words taught me that the white had hearts of swollen dragons.
Hearts of a dragon that breathed his heart out.
But I ...

I was raised
Raised to know that the white man had only caused harm
to the black.
But is it truly my fault?
Even in a time of born free, I was born
To hate those who were blind even though
I myself could not see.

But I was raised

Raised by words...
Raised by tears...
Raised by the hate of mankind to one another

I was raised.

Poem explanation

The impact of apartheid on a born free generation

We live in a society where Parents tend to forcefully pass on their ideologies and hate towards certain things on to their children. In which the children also inherit the Ideologies and keep the cycle going for generations and generations.

The poem 'Grandpa raised me' is inspired by a Grandfather born during the times of Apartheid who is raising his Grandchild during the 'born free' times of today. During Apartheid, The Grandfather was stripped of everything he had and his mother was taken away from him and through this, his hate towards the white grew and had stuck dear to his heart.

Grandfather always tells his grandchild stories of what would happen during times of 'aand klok' (which was a certain time of curfew when policemen would search people's houses to make sure their housekeepers had left) and times of 'state of emergency raids' (where police would search houses and take any person suspicious of being an activist against apartheid). These stories told by the Grandfather had always made the White man the villain. The repetition of these stories then resulted in the Grandchild beginning to carry His grandfather's burden and grow his hate towards the white in his heart.

The Grandchild speaks of how it is not 'truly his fault' that he had grown to hate the White but rather it was of the hurt he saw his grandfather in and his understanding of the amount of torture the white brought to him.