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 work 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