seeds of antiracist education (by tawona ganyamtopè sitholè)

vakuru vakati chinokanganwa idemo
asi muti wakatemwa haukanganwi
the proverb is a reflection that
what forgets is the axe
but the tree that was cut does not forget

the mouth of this river is dreaming of words
in dreamtime but in the meantime
it is not going swimmingly
bursting on the inside but on the outside
all we get to see is the brave face
so to ask where is the safe space
brave enough for difficult conversations
safe enough for nuanced observations
elsewhere it is just life
“racism isn’t a problem in Scotland”
“oh God she’s talking about racism again”
at the same time
“no matter how much i’m perceived to be loud
my voice is still not heard”
“I feel like I cannot bring my whole self
just parts that are acceptable”
and in the meantime
instead of raising instead erasing
the young talking of problem behaviour
unfair burden placed on people of colour
racial trauma leading to mental unwellness

in all this embarrassing richness
we cannot afford to ignore race
to ignore race is to ignore ourselves
we cannot afford to neglect healing
to neglect healing is to neglect learning
fundo cunoastere seekna al tâleem ionnsaich
so much ground covered
so much left uncovered
in the spirit of this dear rugged land
the mouth of this cave is yawning in song
yawn time but in the dawn time
it is not going harmoniously
brimming on the inside but on the outside
all we get to see is the brave face
so to ask where is the safe space
brave enough for collaboration
safe enough for cocreation
elsewhere it is just life
“I don’t see colour i’m colourblind”
“I concentrate on what unites us”
but in the dawn time
“they gave me a place but don’t want me
to fully occupy that space”
“I’m expected to accommodate others
so that my difference does not offend them”
and in the dawn time
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the mouth of a ventriloquist is dummying the run
in dummy time but in running time
it is not going tickety-boo
bubbling on the inside but on the outside
all we get to see is the brave face
so to ask where is the safe space
brave enough for the insatiable search for justice
safe enough for amplifying voices trapped in brackets
elsewhere it is just life
“what does it have to do with me”
“it is all in the past let’s just move on”
and in running time
“am i good enough im not good enough”
“why am i different i don’t want to be different”
and in the dawn time
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all we get to see is the brave face
but there is a brave safe space
a teaching and learning programme
called building racial literacy
what everybody should be doing
promoting race equality and antiracist education
inclusive and supportive
where its ok not to always stand tall
where its ok not to always stand at all
sometimes we have to stumble a little
real is ok but i kinda like the surreal
where we take those stumbling blocks
and we turn them into building blocks

in the spirit of this dear rugged land

my habibti and i are raising two girls
and if they came one day saying
“mama baba i hate my hair i want to be blond”
i would say “you need to add an e after d
dictionary says that is th correct female form”

i wouldn’t say that
i would probably tell them what they tell me
“you're sparkling on the inside”
“you have a rich culture where you come from”
“we all have varying amounts of melanin”
but they don't want to hear that
they don't want to hear that from me
they want to hear it from friends and peers
teachers neighbours and mates
they need to hear it from out there
and they may settle for now
for now is not the time to get into it
to get into what they say
“teach them to be proud of who they are”
but how can they reach for pride
when they are still figuring out
how to tie shoelaces
do and undo buttons
and they are not alone
they are just among
all who just want to belong
all children
all children of this rugged dear place
i don’t want to see another brave face
i want to imbibe the vibe of ancients
the proverb is a reflection that
tend them all for all have seeds inside
chenga ose manhanga hapana risina mhodzi