

## CONDITIONS CRITICAL

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Lillian Allen/Frontline/SOCAN

### 1. ONE POEM TOWN 0:47

Hey! Hey! Hey!  
this is a one poem town  
this is a one poem town  
ride in on your macramed verses  
through barber green mind  
keep it kool! kool! kool!  
on the page  
cause, if you bring one in  
any other way  
we'll shoot you with metaphors  
tie you cordless  
hang you high in ironies  
drop a pun pon yu toe  
and run you down, down, down  
and out of town  
cause, this is a one poem town  
and hey! What you doing here anyway?  
So don't come with no pling, ying, jing  
ding something  
calling it poetry  
cause this is a one poem town  
and you're not here to stay?!  
Are you?

### 2. WHY DO WE HAVE TO FIGHT? 3:23

Why do we have to fight  
for what is our natural rights?  
Why do we have to fight  
for what is our natural rights?  
No change without struggle

No one in power ain't giving up nothing  
You born, you live and then you die  
in between you dodge the dubious lies  
oh where is the promised pie?  
where is the carrot for the taking?  
A woman's work is not recognized  
if she be black make it double-dized  
without a man, she's in nothing's land  
Why do we have to fight for a place to live?  
This is the society that our toil has built  
What would it take to make  
a home a right  
What would it take to legalize  
Why do we have to fight  
for what is our natural rights?

### 3. SISTER HOLD ON 4:35

Hold on sister  
Sister hold on  
I know times are rough rough rough  
You work yusef to the bones to lose this rut  
But babylon system conspire to down you  
Babylon system conspire to down you  
Remember your strength sister  
and remember your joys  
Remember you're whole sister  
and you're not alone  
You just gotta hold on sister Sister hold on  
I know times are tough tough tough  
and it seems like things just'a get worst  
some moments feel like a nuclear holocaust  
Hold on sister Sister hold on  
I know you got struggles, sister  
right up to your eyes  
Just wishing the pressures could ease  
Signal a little relief in your life

But every time you turn around  
it's another barrier to break down  
Just hold on sister  
Remember you're whole  
and you're not alone  
Hold on sister, sister hold on  
See this music, this poetry  
this heart  
is reaching out  
Reach out  
Hold on sister Sister hold on  
(Anta) Hold on sister sister hold on

#### 4. UNNATURAL CAUSES 4:54

The wind howled and cursed  
it knew no rest  
when it ran free  
it was a hurricane  
to be watched and silenced  
silence makes you sit and rot  
even cactus fades  
against persistent drought  
they hope the poor will become acclimatized  
see how they look at skyscrapers  
and call them mountain peaks  
see how the sun greets them first  
in the city  
makes a rolling shadow  
Somewhere in this silvered city  
hunger rails beneath the flesh  
...and one by one, they're closing shops in  
the city  
...the Epicure, the Rivoli on the porch...No  
Small Affair  
...No Small Affair-the Sequel...La Petit  
Cafe...The Bamboo

The city, a curtained metropolitan glare  
grins a diamond sparkle sunset  
it cuts a dashing pose  
"The picture you sent on the postcard was  
wonderful!"  
It reminded me of a fairy land,  
a place where everything is so clean  
a place where everyone is happy  
and well taken care of  
...and the sky...the sky...it seems so  
sound, so huge and so indifferent."  
Indifference passes through the wind  
the wind, it rains a new breed  
breeds a new passion  
the passion of inaction  
the inaction of politicians  
the art of avoiding issues  
the issues of culture  
the culture of exclusion  
the exclusion of the "political" and the  
powerless  
Somewhere in this our city  
in our governing chambers  
a watershed of indelight  
of neutered niceties, unctuous  
Click/////click/////click  
postcard perfect  
Dry rivers in the valley  
the thirst at the banks of plenty  
the room at the street-car shelter  
a bus stop bed  
a bus stop bed  
a bus stop bed  
You can make it through the winter if you're ice  
gone frozen  
on many things

bare back. no shelter  
iced hearts in the elements  
impassioned is the wind  
All people are created equal except in winter  
All people are created equal except in winter  
Right here  
on the front steps of abundance  
Caroline Bungle tugs her load  
stalks a place, invites a little company of  
sleep  
unclick/////

this my dear is very unpostcardlike  
Not inclined to poses  
posturing only her plight  
a dangle of terror  
of lost hope  
abandonment  
an explorer in the arctic of our culture  
a straggler adrift  
cross our terrain of indifference  
a life unravelled  
seeks a connection  
a soul outstretched to the cosmos  
Can you spare a little social change, please?  
a cup of tea a cup of tea  
a place to sleep  
a job a job a job...?????

"The last postcard you send was kinda weird...  
poor people, sleeping at the bus stop!??  
Surely you don't have that there..."  
"...anyways, I'm dying to come to Canada I'm a pioneer!"

## 5. FREEDOM IS AZANIA (South Africa Must Be Free) 5:56

Discord....discord....discord  
Nerves twang. Fears sharpen.  
Discord grows  
In South Africa  
where they don't need a reason  
to oppress you  
'Cept the colour of your skin  
Bronze Black  
'Cept that you're African and Bantued  
Xhousa spirited  
'Cept it's your country  
And that's where you're gonna die any-  
way,  
And they feel it in your daring  
As they psychopathically rewrite your his-  
tory  
You feel your back crack. Cracking  
Your arms and legs and your spirits grow-  
ing strong  
Four hundred years of resistance crystallize  
You will not lie down You will not lie  
down In South Africa  
Where hope pound endlessly  
in a drumbeat rage  
Grandmothers carry in their breathing  
The fire, the hope  
The only way for a just society  
Hooking the network of resistance  
Threading  
Every leaf that moves in the night  
Building a tapestry of voices  
Soft. Determined. Unshakeable.  
In South African they don't need a reason to  
shoot

Freedom cried are answered with gunshot blast  
Defiant youths dragged through the streets  
Trailing in what's left of the blood  
They've been sucking form them for centuries  
In South Africa

Where decency, basic human rights  
And the people's will for a just society  
Are swept into the garbage bin of oppression  
Even then, the fighting spirits will rise....rise  
Refuse to lie down

An amputated arm will offer itself  
To an old lady in the night  
Smuggling food to frontline fightersr  
A dead leg will run off to the bush  
To conspire for ancestral revenge  
In South Africa

They don't need a reason to oppress you  
'Cept diamond, gold, greed.  
Superexploitation  
Apartheidism, Racism. Capitalism.  
Imperialism.

...And an unnerving fear  
of the spirit of the people  
Standing on 60 million feet

ALIVE

DEFIANT

AND SWELLING IN RESISTANCE

Freedom is Azania  
Freedom is Azania  
Freedom is Azania

Amandla!

They can't kill the spirit  
South Africa must be free  
South Africa will be free  
THEY CAN'T KILL THE SPIRIT

## 6. CONDITIONS CRITICAL 5:00

Dem a mash it up down inna Jamaica  
Dem a add it up down inna Jamaica  
Gas prices bounce in hoops for the sky  
a little spark and the embers of oppres-  
sion rise  
People tek to the streets.

It's no negotiating stance  
When do you want freedom. Yesterday.  
And how do you propose you'll get it. By  
the people's way  
So, that's why, dem a mas it up down  
inna Jamaica  
Dem a add it up inna Jamaica  
Dem say dem tired of trying to buy the  
country back  
from the Americans and the IMF pack  
A little friendly debt with an open end  
and it feels like the ball and chain game  
again

Conditions critical

Freedom has been mythical  
Every few years a new deliverer come  
Say: Better must come, let me lead the  
way my people  
Seems better get delayed and some-  
where hiding  
It's quarter to twelve and it's getting late  
Better change to waiting and we wait-  
ing here a while  
and the weight is piling on our backs  
And we sweating and dying under dis-  
parity's attacks....attacks  
And our children still bawling. And our  
ancestors still calling  
And we right ya so demanding

## 7. HIS DAY CAME 5:35

They came for him that day  
And sure as hell they found him  
He wasn't even watching TV  
His principal said  
He was a disgrace....disgrace  
a discredit to his race  
His mother, she worked hard  
worked hard and prayed  
She got him everything he wanted  
She bought him a colour TV, a computer  
a 5-speed bicycle and a three piece suit  
But he wanted her to stop working  
slaving in some white man's factory  
His principal, Mr. Frazer, said  
His mother was a hard working woman  
quite happy, and well suited to her job.  
That's when he smashed his fist into Mr.  
Frazer's face  
He sent the principal's dentures flying...flying  
He said it was the biggest  
most dirty lie he'd ever heard. biggest  
most trucking dirty lie he'd ever heard  
So they came for him that day  
and sure as hell they found him  
and leaving like that in the  
back of a police cruiser wasn't easy  
the tears cracked, cracked, like a rock  
inside of him  
and the policeman asked him  
if he was feeling any pain  
"Are you feeling pain, boy?"  
But he only replied  
looking thin, through thin air  
thinness a picture in front of him  
Good. Please help Mamma  
God. Please help Mamma.

## 8. JAZZ YOU 1:35

molten shimmer red charcoal roasting  
like hot. burn. burn black. burn sax.  
burn blue. burn into my flesh  
burning sax. on the wind at sea  
brewing a potpourri of a storm  
a blowing waves of hue  
hot wax, rise and sink, twist and sizzle  
in the frying pan  
mood simmer agasp  
gasping...gasp Oh yeah  
A breath in the life of a sound breezes  
through sax breeds Jazz breathes sax  
a step to beat uup pa pa pa  
Your heart was my whipping stick. oh  
heart  
and your soul my tambourine  
shake on. shake life into them silent  
sound  
solo in duet. Solo on the breeze  
Voo Solaring. Be you. Be bird. Be song.  
Sing. Sing the blues....sing  
blue skies, sing me, sing you skies  
sing. oh..oh Oh sway  
Oh stay oh...oh sing me you  
sing the go away frustration blues  
Sing: "I ain't stop singing till I truck-  
ing through blues"  
(The notes and the melody keep slip  
slip sa/lip  
Oh real So real surreal, slip  
Oh I'm so tired, no music in dem here  
toes  
music, no music, music, no music  
Oh the music/the music always the  
music)

## 9. DIS YA MUMMA EARTH (Peace

Poem)7:41

Oh oh oh O mother earth

All lovers of the earth

Nuclear arms protestors, anti-war activists

Liberation fighters! We are the poets

Restless like the summer's sun

spreading the warmth spreading the word

in a dis ya dis ya mumma earth

cause everything 'pon it

and wi' blood and sweat in it

is every body's homeland all a fi we own

Get up! Stand up! Shout en masse

Wail in the wilderness Our will....will be

Peace, justice, equality

Join hands in liberation dance

Freedom chants

We are our only weapon for peace

People/demonstration/banners/chants

Linking arms Fight if we must

Fight/fight fight if we must

Listen to the poets chant

listen to the people's wants

peace....peace....peace

When the bomb drops

it nah drop pon one person's house top

Ain't be no sunshine when we're gone

Ain't be no...

Dis ya dis ya mumma earth

is for every one

Dis ya dis ya mumma earth is our home land

Dis ya dis here mother earth is we only one

## CONDITIONS CRITICAL

**Executive Producer:** Lillian Allen - Verse to Vinyl Records

**Produced by:** Billy Bryans with Lillian Allen, Dave Gray and Jeff McCulloch, except Unnatural Causes, produced by Lillian Allen, Elaine Stef and Jeff McCulloch

**Musicians:** Billy Bryans/drums; Lauri Conger/keyboards; Dave Gray/guitar; Terry Lewis/bass; Nydia Liberty Mata/bimbales, congas & percussion

**Special performances:** Sister Hold

On...Freedom is Azania. Chorus/Four the Moment....Additional percussion/Lillian Allen Additional vocals/Anta

**Why Do We Have to Fight** - versions

Chorus/Rachel Melas, Connie Nowe

**Dis Ya Mumma Earth**...Additional vocals/

Lorraine Segato Chorus/Lorraine Segato,

Rebecca Jenkins, Micah Barnes, Lucie Blue

Tremblay, Djanet Sears, Keir Brownstone,

Sarah McElcheran...Trumpet/Sarah McElcheran

Percussion jam/Richardo Rodriquez,

Lorraine Segato, Connie Nowe, Billy Bryans

**Unnatural Causes**...Guitar/Elaine Stef

**Conditions Critical**...Synth Horns/Dave Gray

Recorded and mixed at Wellesley Sound

Studios, 1987, Toronto, Ontario Canada

Engineered by Jeff McCulloch; Additional

engineering by Roger Slemm; Assistant

engineers: Dina Brands, Scott Keenan.

Mastered by Peter Norman at McClear

Place, Toronto, 1988

Cover Illustration by Barbara Klunder, 1989

Redesign/layout for CD by Carol Auld, 1998

# CONDITIONS CRITICAL

*Juno Award Winner*

*dis word breeds my rhythm  
dis word carries my freedom  
dis word is my hand  
: my weapon*



Photo by Phyllis Gordon, 1998

Distributed by:



Dedicated to Anta  
and to all wonderful supporters and  
friends!

Also available by Lillian  
Allen...Revolutionary Tea  
Party 1986 Juno Award  
Winner; Nothing But A Hero  
(children and young people);  
Freedom & Dance, 1998.

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