

KEORAPETSE KGOSITSILE

Collected Poems, 1969–2018

KEORAPETSE KGOSITSILE

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

PHILLIPPA YAA DE VILLIERS AND

UHURU PORTIA PHALAFALA

"If I could sing, after a sudden rain, I would certainly praise in my song Keorapetse Kgositse's poetry because it was shaped by his body and his soul, both of them existing all along a marvelous and historical lifetime—Willie's property—forever beginning, forever laughing, like he did himself, inspired, nourished by Afrika, the deep and wise homeland of our own. His transparent voice was given to the service of freedom, all over the planet. Kgositse is like his fellow poet David Diop, a strong 'spirit, ever since unchained.' And I will always say to him: Thanks, brother, 'You are what Man should be.'" —Nancy Morejón, author of *Before A Mirror, The City and Homing Instincts/Querencias*

"The young want to move and they want everything else to move—including poetry. Willie Kgositse's poetry lunges, strains its muscles—and barks or howls or richly murmurs or screams." —Gwendolyn Brooks, introduction to *My Name Is Afrika*

Keorapetse Kgositse, South Africa's second poet laureate, was a political activist, teacher, and poet. He lived, wrote, and taught in the United States for a significant part of his life and collaborated with many influential and highly regarded writers, including Gwendolyn Brooks, Sterling Plump, Dudley Randall, and George Kent. This comprehensive collection of Kgositse's new and collected works spans almost fifty years.

During his lifetime, Kgositse dedicated the majority of his poems to people or movements, documenting the struggle against racism, Western imperialism, and racial capitalism, and celebrating human creativity, particularly music, as an inherent and essential aspect of the global liberation struggle. This collection demonstrates the commitment to equality, justice, and egalitarianism fostered by cultural workers within the mass liberation movement. As the introduction notes, Kgositse had an "undisputed ability to honor the truth in all its complexity, with a musicality that draws on the repository of memory and history, rebuilt through the rhythms and cadences of jazz." Addressing themes of Black solidarity, displacement, and anticolonialism, Kgositse's prose is fiery, witty, and filled with conviction. This collection showcases a voice that wanted to change the world—and did.

Keorapetse Kgositse (1938–2018) was chosen as South Africa's national poet laureate in 2006. He taught at the University of Dar es Salaam, Nairobi University, and Sarah Lawrence College. His publications include *The Present Is a Dangerous Place to Live*, *If I Could Sing: Selected Poems*, and *This Way I Salute You*. **Phillippa Yaa de Villiers** is an award-winning South African writer, performance artist, and lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. **Uhuru Portia Phalafala** is a lecturer at Stellenbosch University.



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