



# Revolutionary Feminist Poetry

Poetry of Resistance by Third  
World Revolutionary Women

## Editor's Note

This pamphlet is a collection of poetry written by women involved in revolutionary struggle in the Global South. They were actively engaged in radical political movements and armed struggles. Many of these poems were written in prison or exile, in the context of armed struggle, or during periods of political repression.

This is not just a collection of poetry by women who participated in revolutionary movements. It is a feminist collection in that it centers women's voices, experiences, and contradictions within those movements. Many of the women in these pages fought not only against empire and capitalism, but also against patriarchy, both in society and within their own movements. Their poetry reflects that double struggle.

At the same time, these poems remind us that women were not simply victims of patriarchy or footnotes to revolution. They were organizers, fighters, and thinkers. They were central to the survival, leadership, and vision of revolutionary movements.

This pamphlet does not aim to be a complete anthology. It is a small archive of voices often left out of both literary and political spaces.

We share this work to honor these women's words, to study them, and to carry their commitments forward.

# Josina Machel



(1945-1971)

*Mozambique*

*FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique)*

Josina Machel was one of the first women to join FRELIMO's armed wing in Mozambique's struggle for independence from Portuguese colonial rule. She trained as a guerrilla fighter, organized women's brigades, and advocated for women's full participation in revolutionary life. Despite her young age, she quickly became a national symbol of anti-colonial resistance.

She died of illness at 25, but her legacy lived on. Mozambique declared April 7th, the day of her death, as National Women's Day in her honor. She stands as a symbol of the revolutionary woman: militant, organizer, and visionary.

# This is the Time

This is the time  
we were all waiting for.  
Our guns are light in our hands  
the reasons and aims  
of the struggle  
clear in our minds.  
The blood shed by our heroes  
makes us sad but resolute.  
It is the price of our freedom.  
We keep them close in our hearts  
from their example new generations  
-- revolutionary generations --  
are already being born.  
Ahead of us we see bitter hardships.  
But we see also  
our children running free  
our country plundered no more.  
This is the time to be ready  
and firm.  
The time to give ourselves  
to the Revolution.

# Saïda Menebhi



(1952-1977)

*Morocco*

*Ila al-Amam Marxist-Leninist Group*

Saïda Menebhi was a Moroccan student, teacher, poet, and communist activist. She joined the underground Marxist-Leninist group Ila al-Amam while also organizing as part of a teachers' union. She was arrested alongside many of her comrades in 1976 during a wave of state repression and imprisoned in Casablanca, where she was subjected to torture. There, she organized and participated in several hunger strikes to protest political imprisonment.

She died during a 34-day hunger strike in 1977 at 25 years old. Her writings from prison testify to her unwavering commitment to justice, freedom, and liberation.

# Daydream

You know my child  
I wrote a poem for you  
but don't chastise me  
for writing it is this language  
that you don't yet understand  
it's nothing my child  
when you are older  
you will seize this dream  
that I dreamt in the middle of the day  
when it's your turn, you will tell the story of this  
woman  
Arab prisoner  
in her own country  
Arab up to her white hair  
her greenish eyes  
the dream my child  
begins  
when I see a pigeon  
the birds that build their nests  
on the roofs of prisons  
I dream of sending a message to the revolutionaries  
of Palestine  
in order to assure them support for victory

## Daydream (cont.)

I dream of having wings  
just like sparrows  
to traverse the skies  
as far as Erythrea  
as far as Dhofar  
arms heavy with guns  
the head with poems  
I want to be a passenger  
on board clouds  
with my war attire  
combating Pinochet  
in the back country of Chile  
so that my blood runs  
on Chilean soil  
that Neruda praised  
o my dream  
red Africa  
without hungry children  
I dream  
that the moon  
up there is going to fall  
to take out the enemy  
and that the moon will leave me  
in Palestine or in the Sahara  
anywhere  
I struggle for victory  
For all people who are combatants.

**“Despite all the barriers  
imposed, I am here, mother,  
for the sake of a decent life for  
my people. My morale is  
always high. The future  
belongs to the victims of class  
oppression and political  
tyranny. I am not afraid of  
oppression. I believe in my  
cause, the cause of all the  
masses.”**

**~ Saïda Menebhi to her  
mother during a prison visit**

# Edith Lagos



(1962-1982)

*Peru*

*PCP (Communist Party of Peru)*

Edith Lagos was a young revolutionary who dropped out of law school to join the urban detachments of the PCP in her late teens. She lead one of the first guerrilla attacks and was later arrested, tortured, and imprisoned by the Peruvian state, but later escaped and rejoined the armed struggle in the Andes.

She was killed in an ambush by state forces in 1982, at just 19 years old. More than 30,000 people attended her funeral. Her boldness and youth captured the imagination of many Peruvians, especially in rural communities where she became a symbol of defiance.

My ears have heard so many things.  
So many things my eyes have seen.  
My eyes have watered from so much pain  
and the pain,  
on the lip became a scream.

~

Why are you heading south?  
What do you want to raze?;  
the injustice of the past  
dwelling there.

~

They did not want you to climb the mountain  
to see the pampas, the road, the river,  
and the whirlpool.  
But the inertia was left behind  
your feelings are ablaze.

# Meena Keshwar Kamal



(1956-1987)

*Afghanistan*

*RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan)*

Meena Keshwar Kamal was a revolutionary feminist, writer, and the founder of RAWA, an organization committed to women's liberation and secular democracy in Afghanistan. She began organizing as a student and continued her work in exile, building schools, publishing a journal, and leading protests.

She was assassinated in 1987 at the age of 30. Meena's poetry reflects both her fierce commitment to justice and her deep sorrow for the suffering of her people. Her words live on as political weapon and emotional record.

# I'll never return

I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've arisen and become a tempest through the ashes of my burnt children  
I've arisen from the rivulets of my brother's blood  
My nation's wrath has empowered me  
My ruined and burnt villages fill me with hatred against the enemy,  
I'm the woman who has awoken,  
I've found my path and will never return.  
I've opened closed doors of ignorance  
I've said farewell to all golden bracelets  
Oh compatriot, I'm not what I was  
I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've found my path and will never return.  
I've seen barefoot, wandering and homeless children  
I've seen henna-handed brides with mourning clothes  
I've seen giant walls of the prisons swallow freedom in their ravenous stomach  
I've been reborn amidst epics of resistance and courage  
I've learned the song of freedom in the last breaths, in the waves of blood and in victory  
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, no longer regard me as weak and incapable  
With all my strength I'm with you on the path of my land's liberation.  
My voice has mingled with thousands of arisen women  
My fists are clenched with the fists of thousands compatriots  
Along with you I've stepped up to the path of my nation,  
To break all these sufferings all these fetters of slavery,  
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, I'm not what I was  
I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've found my path and will never return.

# Gioconda Belli



(b. 1948)

*Nicaragua*

*FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front)*

Gioconda Belli is a Nicaraguan poet, novelist, and former revolutionary. In the 1970s, she joined the FSLN, using both her pen and her clandestine work to oppose the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship. Her poetry, known for its sensual and political edge, became a symbol of feminist resistance within the broader revolutionary movement.

Belli challenged the machismo of the left with poems that celebrated eroticism, motherhood, and rebellion as intertwined forces. Her poetry remains a vital feminist intervention in Latin American revolutionary literature.

# The Mother

She changed her clothes,  
traded her skirt for pants  
her shoes for work boots  
her pocketbook for a backpack.  
She abandons lullabies,  
to sing protest songs.  
She lets her hair grow wild, overcome with emotion  
for the love that surrounds her.  
She no longer lives solely for her children,  
caring only for her own children.  
Her breasts feed  
thousands of hungry mouths.  
She is mother to neglected children  
kids playing trompo on dusty sidewalks.  
She gives birth to herself  
feeling—at times—  
unable to shoulder so much love  
thinking of her own flesh and blood  
—faraway and alone—  
crying for her at night in vain  
while she answers other cries,  
many cries,  
but always thinking of the cry from her own flesh  
which is one more cry in this great crying of the pueblo that  
calls out to her  
and that tears even her own children  
from her arms.

# Nibha Shah



(b. 1971)

*Nepal*

*CPN(M) (Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist))*

Nibha Shah is a Nepali poet and former Maoist revolutionary who joined the underground communist movement in her youth. She was involved in armed struggle and lived in hiding for years, rejecting her privileged background to fight for class and gender liberation. Shah was arrested, imprisoned, and interrogated by the Nepali state, but continued to write poetry throughout her political work.

Her writing confronts caste, patriarchy, and the contradictions of revolutionary life. Today, she remains a respected figure in Nepal's feminist and leftist literary scenes.

# Cage

We want  
eyes to open:  
eyes will open  
We want to live free:  
Who can cage us?

We look at the faces of  
light and darkness—  
light pierces darkness.

Your walls couldn't cage us  
Even inside the prison, we continued to fly  
carrying feathers of ideas,  
Even inside the prison, we continued to burn  
with the light of faith  
Now say, where will you cage us?

Your handcuffs and nails couldn't cage us  
Your beatings couldn't shrink us  
We tore into shreds your  
forms for surrender  
We signed off on your  
standard procedures for death  
Now say, where will you cage us?



# Captain Vaanati

(1970s-1991)

*Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka)*

*LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)*

Captain Vaanati, born Patmasothi Sanmukanathapillai, was a Tamil poet and member of the LTTE's women's unit. She became a respected leader in combat and headed the Women Tiger unit of the LTTE. Her poetry called on Tamil women to resist their oppression.

She was killed during the Elephant Pass battle in 1991. Her poems, published posthumously by the LTTE, remain a powerful reflection of the Tamil liberation struggle and the role of women within it.

# Get Ready for Battle

You, who have become  
a refugee in your kitchen,  
because of the storm of patriarchy  
You, waging a silent war with fire!  
Get ready, and come!

Let your self-confidence grow  
and your courage too.  
Do you have any freedom  
to act on your thoughts  
and your desires?

Family life does not exist  
for the have-nots now.  
This is what has continued  
into the twentieth century.

Like the dreams of someone mute,  
your emotions now run silent.  
You sob in the kitchen  
as you are being rapped.  
Get ready, and come away.  
Let us create a new era,  
in the shadow of the guns  
we now carry.

When we get national freedom  
that we desire so deeply,  
we will build the tomb  
for women's exploitation.  
We will dig the graves  
for society's backward ideas.

For this revolution tomorrow,  
you must come today.

Look! There, in a flood of blood,  
your sister holding her gun out to you.  
Take her weapon.  
Walk in her footsteps.

# Lil Milagro Ramírez



(1946-1979)

*El Salvador*

*ERP (People's Revolutionary Army)*

Lil Milagro Ramírez was a Salvadoran poet, revolutionary, and co-founder of the ERP, one of the major Marxist guerrilla groups in El Salvador. An activist from a young age, she helped build the political and cultural foundations of armed struggle in the country. Her poetry, written in clandestinity and prison, speaks to comrades, love, and the inevitability of sacrifice.

She was captured by the military in 1976, tortured, and disappeared. In 1979, she was murdered in secret custody. After her death, her poems were published as part of El Salvador's radical literary tradition.

# Awakening

I was meek and peaceful  
I was a flower,  
But meekness is not a wall  
That covers misery.

And I saw the injustices  
And before astonished eyes,  
Strikes and rebellions broke out  
Of the proletarian man.

And instead of absurd pity,  
Of compassionate hypocrisies,  
My indignation sprung forth  
And I felt fraternally united  
with my brothers.

And every strike hurt me,  
And every cry struck me  
Not only in the head or the ears  
But in the heart.

## Awakening (cont.)

My white meekness fell,  
Dead at the feet of hunger,  
I stripped myself, weeping, of its veils  
And a new garment girded my flesh.

Springtime of struggle are now  
my arms,  
My red blood is of protest,  
My body is olive green  
And an incendiary fire consumes me

And yet,  
I am still the same as before,  
lover of peace,  
I want to fight for it  
desperately,  
because from the beginning  
I dreamed of peace.

**“Many consider it impossible to balance being a revolutionary fighter with being a writer and poet. I went through that phase too, feeling considerable guilt when I was only writing. At such times, yes, I think you should give up the pen and take up the gun in defence of freedom. But once you’re on the right track, sure of your role and fulfilling what you believe to be your duty, then it is possible and valid to spend your free time writing poetry.”**

**~ Lil Milagro Ramírez on struggling with the idea of continuing to write**

## Afterword

The women in this pamphlet were part of revolutionary movements that have been attacked, suppressed, or forgotten. Their poetry remains as evidence of the worlds they fought for, and the roles they played within them.

Many of these women are rarely mentioned in political histories. Their names are not always taught, their words often untranslated or unpublished. This collection exists to challenge that erasure.

But this pamphlet's purpose will not be realized without your help. To keep these women's legacies alive, we must actively engage with their lives and words. We encourage comrades to read this pamphlet collectively and to study the history, meaning, and political significance of these poems and their authors.

This pamphlet is only a beginning. We hope it inspires others to seek out the writings of revolutionary women across movements and geographies, to continue translating and sharing their work, and to carry their memory into ongoing political education and organizing.



**We Women Have  
the Right to  
Fight**