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# Colour Me Freedom

**Chika Maduakolam**

## **Abstract**

This poem reflects on freedom, as a personal desire and as part of the collective fight against racial and ethnic injustices. While presenting an idealized expectation of freedom, I consider the complex and contradictory elements of freedom. Freedom is reimagined as an inclusive, liberatory experience rooted in individual authenticity and shared humanity. Reflecting on the struggle between self-expression and systemic limitations on freedom, this poem celebrates both the scars of oppression and the resilience born from collective histories. It critiques the use of freedom as a weapon to perpetuate violence and advocates for a freedom that is collaborative, just, and mutual. This poem provides space for solidarity-based individual development and dislocating structures of oppression. This poem invites us into a space wherein freedom is free flowing, interrelatedly acknowledged, and equitable, likening freedom to the boundless flight of a butterfly.

## **Keywords**

self-actualization, social justice, collective liberation, radical self-care

What is freedom to me?

The unfettered wings of a butterfly. Free to fly, free to shine.

Beauty in its spread, height in its flight.

Creatures of light. Custodians of resplendent color.

What is freedom to me?

Space to grow, room to bloom. Shedding the weight of the history I carry.

Embracing the scars of my identity. Yet blossoming in the fullness of who I am.

What is freedom to me?

Knowing the fabric of shared pain and struggle.

Acknowledging the separation of unique oppression. Feeling my pain and feeling it deeply.

Enjoying my joy and revelling even deeper in it. Using my words and respecting my living.

What is freedom to you?

To be loved, as you are, no shame, no constraint. To exist, in the fullness of your story.

To be reached, in the ways you want to be. To live, completely and wholly.

What is freedom to you?

To have your hurts and call it what you please. To hold your fears and own the time to let them go.

To take your happiness and spread it like a gift. To be is all you ask, of me, of you, of the world.

What is freedom to us?

Our struggles being called who we are. Our sources of strength from the lives we have lived.

And the lives we have inherited. Our victories becoming our identities.

Our stories becoming our own.

What is freedom to us?

You versus me being a relic of the past. You and me as the forge of the future.

A blending of lines that build on fairness and justice. A tapestry woven with each sweat and heart.

A bridge of worlds that are different but do not divide.

Freedom is what we call the moments where our hearts are light.

Freedom is what we hope as we live each day.

Freedom is what we seek as our journeys meet.

Challenged, disagreed with, rebelled against, we still ask to be free.

Trampled upon, relegated, ignored, we still desire to be free.

Applauded, extolled, praised, we still ask for no limits.

Freedom is the light of our path and the prism of our peace.

And yet, freedom is ever out of our reach.

Here is an invitation: shall we be free together?

Pursue a freedom that holds space for your thoughts and my dreams.

Build a place where we share who we are without dimming the other.

Craft a garden which carries our histories and stories side by side

Like well watered foliage.

Pour water in places where rocks have been built

Creating fountains of shared beauty, pleasure and tranquility.

Here is an invitation: can we be free together?

Like butterflies who spread their beautiful wings in the vast sky  
With no limits to all the space they can occupy  
Displaying the splendor of their wings  
Here is an invitation: will we be free together?

## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Author Biography**

Chika Maduakolam is a Ph.D. candidate in Socio-Legal Studies at York University. She holds an LLM degree from Osgoode Hall Law School. She has worked as a research assistant on an international research project on gendered violence in war and a domestic project on civil justice in Canada. Her research areas focus on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, militarized masculinities, international law, gender and human rights.