

### **Third Space Prompts**

#### **In Solidarity: Motif, Metaphor & Movement, with Rhiya Pau**

##### ***How should we think about the bounds of solidarity?***

Remember: *“There’s no such thing as the voiceless. Only the deliberately silenced and the preferably unheard.” [Arundhati Roy].* Solidarity is not about speaking for people, it’s about supporting them, making space and platforming them.

*“What is this greed of wanting more,  
of baking four and twenty blackbirds in a pie  
and expecting them to sing, when you know  
that a twelve-year-old girl, who makes her living  
picking chilies, has just died of exhaustion  
walking home? And as you learn her name,  
Jamalo, and are figuring out how to mourn  
her, someone else will say, Look,  
the flamingos have returned to Bombay.  
Look how this carpet of pink brightens  
the day. It’s the difficulty of reconciliation.  
This with that. Jack and his box.  
The continual threat of being startled.” [Tishani Doshi]*

Writing in solidarity in a way that ties the specificity of our experiences to the universality of the movement, is an incredibly powerful approach. It’s a way of adding momentum. In a world where power is highly concentrated, sometimes all we have is momentum, volume, bodies, mass, to change our political trajectory, to be a force to be reckoned with ( $f = ma$ ).

Solidarity often comes from a place of intense emotion and empathy, these emotions can be overwhelming and to the point of inaction and nihilism. Hannah Arendt draws the distinction between ‘there are no words’, and ‘I have no words’ - if I have no words, I am still there to regain them in the future, but where there are no more words, the violence of non-verbalisation is absolute. Where there are no more words there are no more things, there are no more worlds. Writing in solidarity is also a poetry of witness.

### **PART 1**

1. What symbols and motifs do you associate with solidarity?
2. List sensory adjectives you associate with each symbol? Get creative, perhaps these are associations only you might make
3. What symbols and motifs do you associate with South Asian culture?
4. List values you associate with each symbol? Get creative, perhaps these are associations only you might make
5. Make a map of words you associate with the symbols, adjectives and values. Put each word in proximity to others based on the strength of association. Can you find any parallels and connections between them? Does anything there surprise you?

## PART 2

Poetry is all about emotion “a poem is a unit of feeling, that in its singular form makes you quiver” [Ankita Saxena]. The emotions that drive us to activism are very strong, they can be overwhelming, when we feel them entirely cerebrally. This next practice is one I’ve adapted from a friend Sunny Pfalzer. I find it helpful in processing my emotions somatically, and overriding my usual neural pathways when it comes to writing and language. It involves three ten minute sections, but feel free to adjust as you need to. I encourage you to read the full instructions before you begin.

### Instructions

Think about a cause you care about - something that worries you about the state of the world. Think about the last time you experienced emotions related to that cause, maybe an incident you experienced, a conversation about the cause, an article you read etc. Now think about how you would feel if that cause was entirely resolved, and all your worry and anxiety about it disappeared.

1. **Move for 10 minutes:** stretch, dance, wriggle, massage your head or your arms, get up and dance - the idea is to move continuously but it can be in a small or large way. 10 mins may feel uncomfortable but just keep going, focus on different parts of your body, use your space, make noise if you feel called to do so. Notice any discomfort, notice the pace of your emotions. A good poem is about unlocking the reader’s emotion at the right pace so when we reflect on this exercise we will think about translating the pace of emotion to the page
2. **Read for 10 minutes:** I want you to try and read without judgment, without emotion. Just focus on the words, notice the language, the power of sentence structure, vocabulary, rhyme. In this exercise, we’re tricking our brain to move away from meaning and towards craft. The meaning will be there in your subconscious and we’ll see what it unlocks in the free write. You can read anything you have to hand, but I’m also sharing the following links to some of my favourite works by SA writers - you can read the beginning of these through the Amazon sample feature. [[Azadi by Arundhati Roy](#), [A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry](#), [A God at the Door by Tishani Doshi](#)]
3. **Write for 10 minutes:** The only rule here is keep your pen on the page. It doesn’t have to make sense!

How did you find the exercise? What did you find easy/difficult? Did you feel/think different things during different parts of the exercise? Did you feel like you were writing from a different place than usual? Did anything come up related to symbols of solidarity and SA culture?