

Singing the Truth

The story of Miriam Makeba



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Singing the Truth

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Singing the Truth: the story of Miriam Makeba

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Singing the Truth

The story of Miriam Makeba



A long time ago, in the vast city of Johannesburg, a baby girl was born. That baby was me. My mom called me Miriam. Miriam Makeba.



Mom was a sangoma, but she also worked to make other people's homes neat and clean. It was hard for my mom to earn enough for both of us. She started selling homemade beer to bring in more money.



The laws of the land said that selling homemade beer was wrong. The police sent my mom to jail for six long months. I was only 18 days old, and needed my mom. So even though I was just a baby, I went to jail too.



As a little girl I loved to sing. When I was older, I helped my mom clean houses. Singing songs as I worked made the chores go faster and the days seem brighter. Singing made me happier than I can explain.



I sang in my church, and this made others happy too. Music has the power to bring people together. When we were singing we felt brave and strong.



People said my voice was a gift
and my songs were special. I sang
with other musicians and our music
was heard all over the world.

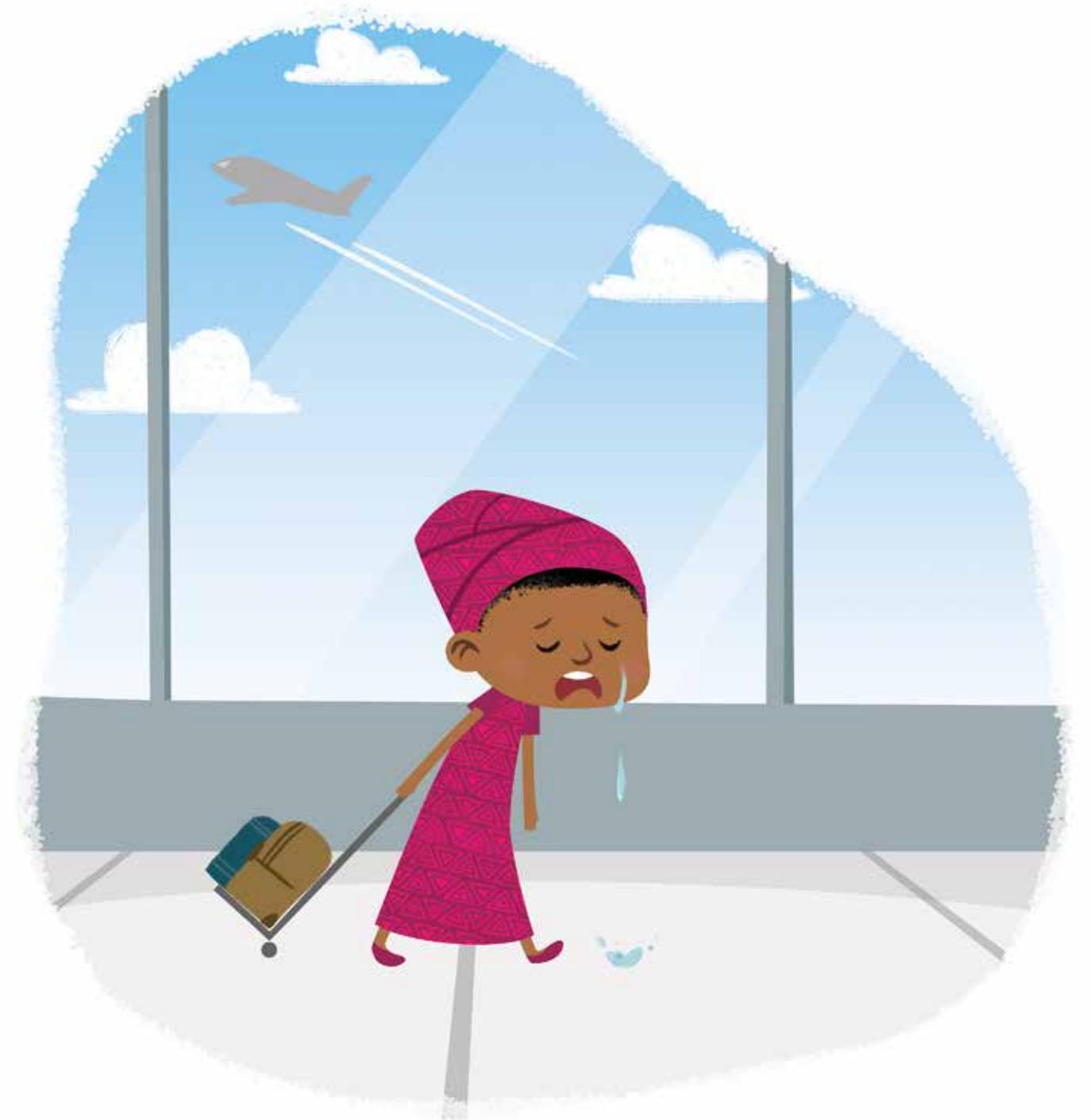


My home was Sophiatown, a place of culture and music. Sophiatown, a place where South Africans could make music in harmony and dance together. But the people who ruled the land at the time did not like this togetherness. Those rulers didn't want black and white people to be friends.



I knew it was wrong to treat people differently because of their skin colour. I did not hide my beliefs, and so those people in charge wanted me out of the country.

When I was singing in America, I was told I could never return home.



People all over the world heard my story.
My songs and my story helped many
to see how there was no fairness in
South Africa for those with black skin. I
decided to go on singing and telling the
truth about my country, no matter what.



The world loved my music and I was welcomed in many countries. I won awards and sang for important people all over the globe. My life was good, but something was missing. I could not sing in my home country, and people there were not free.



Then a wonderful day dawned when Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa. New people were in charge and the unfair laws belonged to the past. I finally went home with new hope in my heart.



After that I could sing in a free, fair country. People of different skin colours could enjoy music together. I helped make this happen because I was brave and strong. I sang the truth in all of my songs.

