

## To tell our truth

*By Mpiloe Zondi*

For many years,  
I was forced,  
to sit quietly by,  
and be subjected  
to the hateful  
words and acts  
of self-righteous,  
religious bigots.  
Imagine feeling  
out-numbered,  
overwhelmed,  
alone, outcast,  
and separated from God,  
all because you  
knew that you were different.  
Imagine hiding  
who and what you are,  
your friendships,  
your relationships,  
and who you date,  
all to avoid the same fate  
as Matthew Shephard  
and others whose names  
were forever wiped-off life's slate.  
Imagine being  
physically, emotionally,  
psychologically,  
and even sexually abused  
by the some of the  
same straight religious bigots  
who persecuted you out of hate.  
Imagine having to  
keep all the abuse,  
all the feelings,  
and all their filthy secrets,  
hidden inside your head,

unable to tell anyone  
for fear of your ending up dead.  
Apparently,  
that's the way it goes;  
those unable to protect themselves  
always end up as prey to the predatory  
throes.  
Apparently,  
those of us without voices  
are never heard by the majority;  
we have few choices.  
Apparently,  
real abusers become bold,  
they deny our rights  
to prevent our truths from being told.  
Is it okay  
to abuse someone  
because they are gay?  
Do you know how hard  
it is to hear that  
people who are queer  
are sexual predators?  
When all the while,  
having to smile,  
and act like you  
were not sexually abused  
by the very straight people  
who preach the hate?  
If you are lucky,  
you somehow learn  
to love yourself.  
You learn to fight back.  
You learn to stand up  
for yourself and others like you.  
You learn to speak the truth,  
and, like this poem, write the truth,

even when the religious bigots  
don't want to hear it.  
Speaking and writing the truth is easy;  
you KNOW the truth,  
because you LIVED it.  
But, some of us  
aren't so lucky.  
Some of us  
are hurting so badly  
on the inside  
from all the abuse  
held in our heads, sadly  
that we turn  
to alcohol, drugs or sex  
to numb our pain.  
Many of us  
take that abusive stain  
to our young graves.  
You'd think that,  
after having been injured  
by so many straight,  
religious bigots,  
that I'd be filled with hate.  
Honestly, I was for a while

during my younger years.  
But I had to let that go  
long ago, or else my soul  
would have died a hateful fate.  
No, I don't hate  
religious bigots  
who happen  
to be also straight.  
Nor will I ever  
lift a hand to  
tempt anger's fate.  
That's not who I am.  
But I will stand  
with my LGBT  
brothers and sisters  
hand in hand,  
and fight for rights  
guaranteed to all  
people of this land.  
For I will not practice hate.  
For humanity's sake,  
Society needs to wake,  
Help us stop the homophobic insanity  
our lives are not a mistake...