



A photograph taken by Charial Reynders on April 13, 2025, depicts a homeless woman sleeping on the ground at the corner of High Street in Makhanda, a town where homelessness is a significant issue affecting people of all ages.

Poem:

Democracy is the freedom of a bird unchained,
Where every voice can sing beneath the daily sun.
More than one word, more than just one song -
Just like a flying migration, we need every and each one.
It is the sun and stars that point towards change,
towards Summer and away from Winter.
Equality is a bird about to take flight,
First heaving with effort in an attempt to defy gravity -
Then soaring effortlessly once in motion,
Like the sky is no longer the limit.
Democracy is the freedom of a bird unchained.

Concluding paragraph:

Initially, in my prior attempt, I used Canva and Adobe Express to edit text onto the photograph, but after receiving feedback, I removed the text from the photograph itself. Aside from that, I used my iPhone 8 to take the photograph and crop the image to the preferred dimensions. The poem was written by me as part of an assignment for my JMS class, in which we were tasked with writing a poem about a specific period in the press - I chose the Daily Sun, which is referenced in the poem and was inspired by the bird metaphor used in one of Maya Angelou's poems *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. It must be stated that AI was used, but only for the development of synonyms and antonyms with which I could use to convey my point. I chose to use the photograph to express my belief and stance on the idea of "Freedom of Expression" in South Africa, as I believe it centres around one of my key realisations from this year. Freedom of Expression is important, but we must not forget to uplift those who do not have the liberty to express their freedom in such a way. We preach freedom of expression, but do not fully critique how it is not afforded to certain individuals in our society. The homeless and all those who find themselves in less fortunate positions do not have the luxury of freedom of expression when they are bent on survival. Not many care what the homeless have to say, what their stories are and how a society wrecked with homelessness and unemployment is a broken one, despite what its constitution might say. I know a young boy who sits every day in the same spot, holding a sign that pleads for consideration for himself and his sisters at home. Not many give him the time of day, but why is it so normalised to see a child out on the street in need of desperate aid in this country?

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ngytfT4-wFHxQYg44aj6J4kenWMQX8SsG2EtVeoKh-pQ/edit?usp=sharing>