

*Poem*

## **We Have Trust Issues**

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## **We Have Trust Issues**

Trust you?  
Like I'm just supposed to lay in the hollow of your hand,  
I don't think you understand,  
Trust you?  
You? Who are you? What are you?  
Bully, betrayer, bureaucrat,  
Trust you?  
In God we trust, you just pretend to be Christ-like.  
Trust you?  
Trust your narcissism, your gaslighting, your manipulation.  
Trust you?  
I'd rather eat crust or even rust. In fact, I'd rather turn to dust.  
Trust YOU?  
To lead me into the depths of hell.  
TRUST YOU?  
No, I don't think we can.  
We have trust issues.  
We are hurt by the silence.

We, the advocates for social justice  
We, in our quest for decolonisation  
We, with our trauma from Apartheid



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We, who were dehumanised and tossed aside  
We, with the legacy of Mandela

What are we doing?

We, for whom #FeesMustFall  
We, whose #BlackLivesMatter  
We, who were colonised and segregated  
We, who were stepped on and made to fall  
We, who were dumbed down and uneducated

What are we doing?

We, whose land was taken, ripped from our hands but not our hearts  
We, whose youth was taken, who gave our Hector's to the cause  
We, whose lives were taken, locked up and shipped out  
We, whose voices were taken, whose languages were taken  
whose cultures were taken, whose people were taken  
whose knowledge was taken, whose names were taken  
whose ... Everything was taken.

What will we do?

We, the collective, have trust issues  
Navigating the hollow hands of higher education  
We don't think they understand  
The depths of our pain, our struggle, our fight  
To reclaim what was taken, to rise up and unite  
We have trust issues, but together we stand  
Determined to heal, to grow, to demand  
The justice and change that is long overdue  
In the halls of academia, where trust was askew  
We, the resilient, press on as one  
Until the battle for equity is won

What will we do?

Trust our damn selves.

**Author Biographies**

**Curwyn Mapaling** is an associate professor of psychology, registered clinical psychologist, and researcher in the Optentia Research Unit at the North-West University. His work advances resilience and wellbeing in education through Optentia's Strengths-based Studies and Interventions programme, translating psychological science into practice across teaching, learning, and student support.

**Nadia Mukadam** works in the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio at Nelson Mandela University and coordinates the Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies. Her scholarship focuses on transformation, social justice, and humanising pedagogy, with active public engagement through writing and social media.

**Nghililewanga Hashali Hamukuaya** is an international lawyer and researcher specialising in ocean governance, the law of the sea, environmental regulation, and administrative law. He holds an LLD (2022), LLM (2018), and LLB (2016) from Nelson Mandela University, plus an Advanced Programme in Risk Management (2018, UNISA).