**FLUP X GWL THE SLAMMERS**

**Julio Ludemir:** But here we are in the biggest Black country outside Africa. And this means thatmore than 50% of the population are Black.

\* \* \*

**Jessica:** FLUP is an originally favela’s festival of books and of writers and of poetries. I love FLUP I expect them to bring the walls down, here in Brazil and around the world. I think it’s very important bringing other writers and other poets from here in Brazil. Brazilian people need this and people around the world need to know Brazilian poets too. In this moment, our politics are very bad. We don’t like our president, our president is a fascist, he wants Black people die, he wants poor people to die, and it’s very exhausting for our people. I think the festival FLUP, brings the comfort, brings us love, but especially love. I think it’s a festival about love.

**Babs:** I think Roberta even said in the beginning, in her opening speech about the Festival becoming more radical, more radical even now this year. I think, of course, these are political statements and I think that’s what brazil also needs now. There’s this guy, on top, that doesn’t really like females, doesn’t really like Black people, he doesn’t like gay people. So, I think celebrating all that he doesn’t like is a very great and political statement and we should keep defining it because otherwise that gets lost. Then we continue having that narrative that excludes so many people, so if not festivals like this happening to open up the narrative to give voice to all those excluded, that would be an awful world.

**BC Woman:** The British council in Brazil has been working with FLUP, this festival, since its very first beginning. Back in 2012, we have co-created a lot of work and a lot of curatorial issues around their topics so we have managed to bring a range of different artists from the United Kingdom, and the opportunity now to bring a touch from Scotland, through this slam is very much a delight.

\* \* \*

**Jessica:** Specially here in Brazil, they don’t really listen, they don’t listen to poor people, they don’t listen to Black people. They don’t feel empathy about our problems, about our questions, about the racism. When FLUP stays here at the museum, they can’t ignore it, they can’t ignore this and I feel FLUP has an obligation to make people listen about Black feminism, about women, about the violence. They can’t ignore this.

**BC Woman:** The festival brings a platform of discussion around invisible voices, the peripheries, from the big peripheries of urban cities.

**Jessica:** Just here now at museum, I think there are more white people, more rich people, more tourist came here and see FLUP. We talk for these people too, we talk about our problems, about racism, about fatphobia, about everything. These people need to listen to this too, not only people who live in favelas, but rich people need to hear this, and I think at museum people listen to this. I think it’s the perfect world, FLUP being at museum and at favelas.

\* \* \*

**Julio:** At the first edition we realised how powerful is the spoken word. Here we call spoken word of *sarau.* We have a powerful scene of spoken word, of *saraus,* in peripheries. City of God, a lot of favelas with one specific *sarau,* and in the first edition we put all those spoken world scenes with each other.

\* \* \*

**Jessica:** The slam is my favourite part ever, I love slam, I think the slam is the most important movement we have today in the world.

**Babs:** I think slam is just an excuse to get a bunch of good poets together.

**Lahya:** Hi, my name is Lahya.

**Listette:** Hello, my name is Lisette Ma Neza

**Precious:** My name is Precious Nnebedum

**Babs:** My name is Babs Gons

**Mahogany:** My name is Mahogany L. Browne

**Lahya:** I am from Germany, I’m staying in Germany, I’m located in Germany but I am originally from Namibia.

**Precious:** I’m from Nigeria, and I live in Austria at the moment.

**Babs:** I grew up in the Netherlands, where I still live, in Amsterdam.

**Mahogany:** I’m from Brooklyn, New York, by way of Oakland California.

**Lahya:** So I’m writing since I was 11, and writing poems since I was 11. I’ve been performing since I was 20 years old, performing, and singing and doing art on stages. I’m a performance artist and I’m doing visual arts and poetry!

**Precious:** I’ve been performing for over two and a half years now.

**Babs:** I have been performing for a long time actually, but I’ve been really caught up in organising, spoken word events, so my own performing got to the background for a long time. Since 2014, I’m full time performing as an independent artist.

**Precious:** I started performing because I had a collection of stuff and I didn’t know what to do with them. So I had a chat with one of my English teachers from high school and she was like I think I know what you could do with them and she kind of introduced me to slam. Then, after the first performance I was like okay, I like this, and since then I’ve been on stages pretty much.

**Babs:** End of the 90s I started with organising stages in Holland and I started doing that because I had a need to find stages where I would be comfortable, and they weren’t there. That’s why I started organising, but it all came out of a love for writing and performing. I think I’ve always been writing, I started off with reading, I was always reading, reading, reading. I started writing something as a child, and I don’t think I ever stopped writing. I just didn’t do anything with it.

**Precious:** I wanted to be on stage.

\* \* \*

**Lahya:** It was my first time ever for slam, because I understand myself more than a spoken world poet, I’m not used to this competition thing, so it’s not what I’ve done before. It was a real tough and interesting experience.

**Precious:** The whole having to judge someone’s art, because in the end it’s all subjective.

**Babs:** The reason I don’t like slam so much is because it’s a competition. It’s such an intimate form of art where you share your own story, where you bear your soul, you open up, show something of what’s going inside of you or how you see the world. I never went into the slam scene, but more in the performance scene. But I think this is just a display of different people and their stories and if it’s in the form of slam, let’s do it like that.

**Precious:** In Austria it’s more like a competition, everyone goes to win, you don’t go to enjoy the performance, you just want the praise that comes with it. You’\re not supporting anyone else that’s there, you can come with your best friend and you end up being rivals just for those five minutes you’re on stage.

**Mahogany:** This audience who has no idea, how do you score a poem? You don’t, it’s impossible for you to put a number to it. What we’re asking you to do is put a number to your feeling about it, that’s it.

**Babs:** To tell you the truth, I can say I’m not slamming and then they call you from Rio and say, ‘you wanna come to Rio and slam?’ Who am I to say no?

**Mahogany:** I love the community, the people that they brought were really lovely and everyone really applauded each other and supported each other, and I think that’s really what it’s about.

**Babs:** Slam here in Brazil, is different than the slam I know. There’s a little bit more urgency, more relevancy.

**Mahogany:** This is my first time in Brazil, it was a bit of an eye-opening experience, I wasn’t aware that poetry slams affected other communities in this way. I think on our last evening we had over 1000 people just for the poetry. It was really inspiring to see that, especially coming from the States.

**Precious:** You do your thing, and you enjoy and everyone kind of already understands, it’s so relatable here. It’s all super open, everyone’s pushing you to go on stage, everyone’s pushing you to be the best version of yourself.

**Lahya:** To have seen some on point energy. So I saw people who when the time was over they were BOOM BOOM BUM! And they left the stage, it was very fast, I liked this energy of being very concentrated and being on point.

**Precious:** I’m gonna have to work on my performance I think, these people have so much energy and I feel like it’s accepted. Everyone wants to get that energy out of you. Whilst in Austria, people are just sitting there and clapping as if they were in an opera house or something. You feel as if I’m not allowed to be loud, I’m not allowed to say this, I’m not allowed to do this with my body. Now, I feel like why not?! No one’s going to come up to me and say ‘I liked your poem, but you were kind of loud and this that..’ Like, if you don’t like it, leave! Literally, I’m telling you, I’ve got this, I don’t know if it’s self-confidence but it’s like a different way of perceiving how I stand on a stage or how I present myself to people, it’s a lot different now. I’ve learnt a lot, to not care about what people think, because in the end it’s just you and yourself.

**Mahogany:** I’m aware of the possibilities, I’d just never been out of the country or in Rio specifically and seen it happen outside, for free, it was really invigorating.

\* \* \*

**Babs:** Last year, I think, was the first time FLUP had an all-Black line-up or Brown and Black line-up, no white people. It was really about *negritude* (blackness), they called it. This year it’s Black and female.

**Mahogany:** I’m totally into just hosting women’s voices and marginalised voices but I’ve never been to an all-Black women poetry reading slam before, that was a first time for me.

**Babs:** There’s this beautiful thing called sisterhood, which really makes it a little easier to connect with everyone. You also see it on the topics, on the stage, femininity, being female or identifying as female and also, sexism. I think it’s more addressed than last year, there’s something a little bit more organic, natural to connect. There are some things out of the way and that is some reluctancy you experience sometimes between male and females, in the sense that it’s a little bit more diffused, I think this sisterhood it a little bit easier to connect with people.

**Mahogany:** We have a lot of focus on those communities specifically in slam, because you know the patriarchy works, you could have a man talk about being a parent and they’re applauded for being brave and then you have a woman talk about it, and it’s like ‘hmm, your mother poem’ and you’re like but he’s brave, right? It’s a good moment to even the playing field. But for me, I’m less interested in the slam portion and the competition and more interested in the comradery and the community. They are not a lot of women slammers and there’s definitely not a network where you take care of each other and you support each other, and you lift each other up. That is why I was really intrigued with the one in the states while it had existed and now, being here now. I was really interested in what community can look like and how we applaud each other and how we list each other up. The competition is a way to get us here together.

**Precious:** The whole sense of community, everyone just belongs to something greater.

**Lahya:** The best thing was to listen to all these beautiful people, to really feel what they are doing, to learn, to have this together thing. We were so close to each other, although we are from different parts of the world. As Black people, Black female people we can change the world doing poetry and that was the best, what I could learn from these few days here, and I love it!

**Babs:** To show, to really write down the different style and different urgency of slam here in Brazil. Not only in Brazil, because I saw people from Nigeria, I saw people from Haiti, I saw people from Trinidad, and a lot of people form the diaspora. It’s just wonderful to see that there’s so many similarities, but also a lot of differences. It’s rich display of storytelling.

**Jessica:** I saw many poets from every part of the world, I was thinking about it, I think our problems are the same in all countries. I think the slam is staying in front of this, the slam fights for this, the slam is hope about everything. I feel love when I saw the slam and I feel we can achieve everything we want to.

This is my second time at FLUP, I came here last year. When I went back home after that week, I came back with a feeling of, that I had finally spoke for a crowd that had really understood me. It wasn’t just like hey, I’m here to give you my life and my stories and you can have a look in it. It was like, they were having a look in it and they felt like it was their lives too, something like that. People coming to me saying you made me realise that people all over the world are struggling with the same pain, same traumas, same reality as we do right here. That’s just so special, I really feel like this is my audience and I don’t experience that often.

**Babs:** It’s like the connection over borders, it’s so much more intense. You can feel totally estranged in your own country, your own environment. Then you can travel all over the world or halfway over the world and then you meet many more like minded people than back home. That’s to go travelling, to open up. The book doesn’t have one page, there’s a million.

**Lahya:** I’m totally in love with all these beautiful, female, Black, unapologetic poets, that I will never forget.

**Julio:** The audience realise, in the same moment, that poem was written for them. Because there is a kind of poem, there is a kind of expression, that tried to create this road, my heart to your heart.

**Mahogany:** The feeling of just being seen and seeing your reflection, that’s what keeps me coming back to the stage, that’s what keeps me writing. It’s bigger than getting a 30, it’s bigger than winning a slam, it’s really about assuring our legacy, our lineage and our stories, they live beyond us and while we are here to share those stories, that we are connecting with others so that we don’t feel as isolated or as alone as the world makes us out to be.

\* \* \*

**A poem fit for a page?**

by Courtney Stoddart

When is a poem fit for a page?

Do I grab you reader?

Will you play student and I’ll play teacher

Just for a moment

Do my words carry your eyes across the page?

Like mother carries foetus

The words should not deplete us,

These words can repeated

Deep seated, thoughts completed

Sinking deep into subconscious and

made conscious when repeated

Can you feel my rage emanating from the black printed ink?

Do these words sink into your soul?

Can you tell that I am woman and severed black and white not quite whole?

Will this sound like another lustful ballad of oppression?

No signs of navigation and only dim misdirection

Can you question your position in this system?

Can tears transcend paper and page to purge the earth for what it’s worth from whence it came

Can paper and ink create concave in the black white divide?

To the precipice where heart and soul intertwine?

Steeped in deception

Insurrection soaked in insurgency

Take the tonic and sip it till redemption

Rebirth resurrection

Take me to the place where hair becomes curled and nose becomes wide

Take me to the Sphinx whose nose was cut off in spite    s

Taught not to bite the hands that feeds you

And greed is a deadly sin don’t forget what the masters teach you

They point but the finger cannot reach you

Skin, they seek to bleach the melanin from the very heart of you as if they want to make themselves part of you

Like they started you

Like they imparted to you the knowledge

Like they didn’t break all promises that were made

Like they didn’t bait, rape, take and enslave

Like they didn’t put pen to page and engage word to paper

And fake our histories and write themselves as the maker

And the maker always has a minstrel, a monkey on his left hand to stand and bang the symbol

Faced with misplaced projection but impelled is the rebellious spirit still placed within me

Cannot be erased from the generational cells dispelled within these feet

within the soul

Propelled like a well with no water

Are you lamb fit for the slaughter?

Is a poem fit for the page?

Is a poet fit for the stage?

Will you play student and I’ll play teacher? just for a moment

Do my words carry your eyes across the page?

Like mother carries foetus

The words should not deplete us,

These words can be repeated

Remain undefeated and if the sacrifice is life we’ll swipe the lamb from underneath