



## Letshatshi, the sunshine girl

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*Artwork: Hanri Human*

*Theme: A girl child discovers her voice*

*Appropriate age group: All ages*



Letshatshi was a little girl with lots of blessings in her life. She had a mother and father who loved her and taught her many things. She had big brothers and sisters who looked

after her. Her family never went to bed hungry – there was always food in their house.

Letshatshi loved bright colours. She had her very own sky-blue blanket to keep her warm at night. She had a sunshine yellow dress and shiny red shoes for special occasions. She loved wearing her yellow dress – it made her want to dance all day. She danced barefoot with her friends in the dusty streets of the township. The bright yellow dress swirled and twirled and whirled as she danced in the sun.

Letshatshi's name comes from sePedi, one of South Africa's languages, and it means one with the sun. She was a happy little sunshine girl. But one night her parents and her big brothers and sisters started talking about painful things. They said: "Look how people are suffering" ... "It's as if we're not even human beings" ... "They treat us so unjustly". Letshatshi listened and listened and listened but she never said a word. You see, her grandmother had always told her: "Children should not speak about grownup things."

The next day Letshatshi was playing in the street when she saw the neighbour, MaMashishi. She greeted her politely but MaMashishi didn't even smile, she just looked down at the ground. Letshatshi saw the big blue bruises on her face and she said loud and clear: "If someone loves you he will never ever hurt you like that." The neighbour was surprised to hear these words from a little girl. Letshatshi was even more surprised: "Did I really say that to a grownup? Won't MaMashishi say I'm cheeky? Will I get into trouble?"

But Letshatshi kept on saying things to grownups. When she went past a township meeting where the elders were talking, she said in a strong voice: "Power should be used for the good of all the people." The elders stared at this little girl who was giving them advice. She was so frightened she ran home and sat in the corner. "I know I mustn't speak to grownups like that! How can I say these things? What is my voice doing?"

Some people in the township complained about Letshatshi: "That child has no respect. She tells grownups what to do! Her family should be ashamed." They did not want to listen to Letshatshi because she was telling the truth.

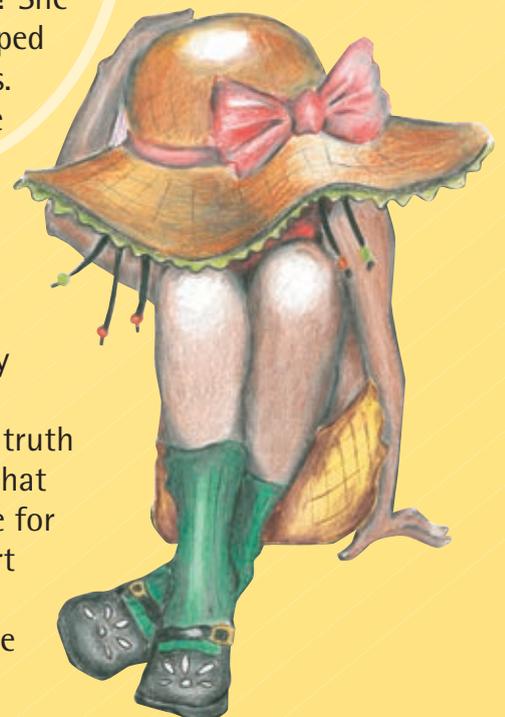
Letshatshi tried very hard to control her voice, but when she knew the truth she said it out loud. So she kept on saying things to grownups. When she saw little children who were hurt and hungry she shouted: "CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS – WE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE LOVED AND CARED FOR – WE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE LISTENED TO!"

Letshatshi could not keep quiet. What was happening to her? She was so worried that she stopped dancing in the street. She stopped playing with her friends. She forgot to put on her yellow dress.

Letshatshi's family saw what was happening to their sunshine girl. Her father said, "My child, your voice is like the sunshine – the people around you need the light." Her mother said, "My precious child, speak the truth and do not be afraid. Let your light shine!" Her brothers and sisters said "Little sister, we need to hear you – there's so much hurt and wrongdoing around us." Next door, MaMashishi smiled at her and said, "My girl, you helped me change my life."

There will always be people who don't want to listen to the truth but there were many who listened to Letshatshi – they knew that her voice was a wonderful gift. She made the elders care more for the community. She gave hope to little children who were hurt and hungry.

When Letshatshi tried to keep silent, she struggled to breathe



and her heart felt weak. But when she spoke out, she breathed deeply and her heart felt strong. In the end she learned to trust her voice.

So if you see a little girl, dancing in the sun in a yellow dress that swirls and twirls and whirls above her dusty feet, it's Letshatshi, the sunshine girl. She will tell you, "We can make the world a better place – every little voice can make a difference."

? Possible discussion points:

What messages would you like to give to your parents/guardians and your family?  
What messages would you like to give to your community/country/world?



**Basetsana Khumalo**

*Basetsana, affectionately known as "Bassie", became Miss South Africa in 1994 and was crowned First Princess in the Miss World Competition in the same year. Bassie was a presenter on the television programme, 'Top Billing', and later acquired a 50% share in Tswelopele Productions which produced 'Top Billing'. When Tswelopele merged with Union Alliance Media and was listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, Bassie became one of the youngest black women directors in South Africa. Over the years she has been involved in a variety of successful business ventures and she and her husband, Romeo Khumalo, have been involved in a number of charities. In 2009, Bassie won the Inyathelo Philanthropy Award and was nominated for the South African Iconic Woman Entrepreneur Award. She is currently President of the Businesswomen's Association of South Africa.*

