



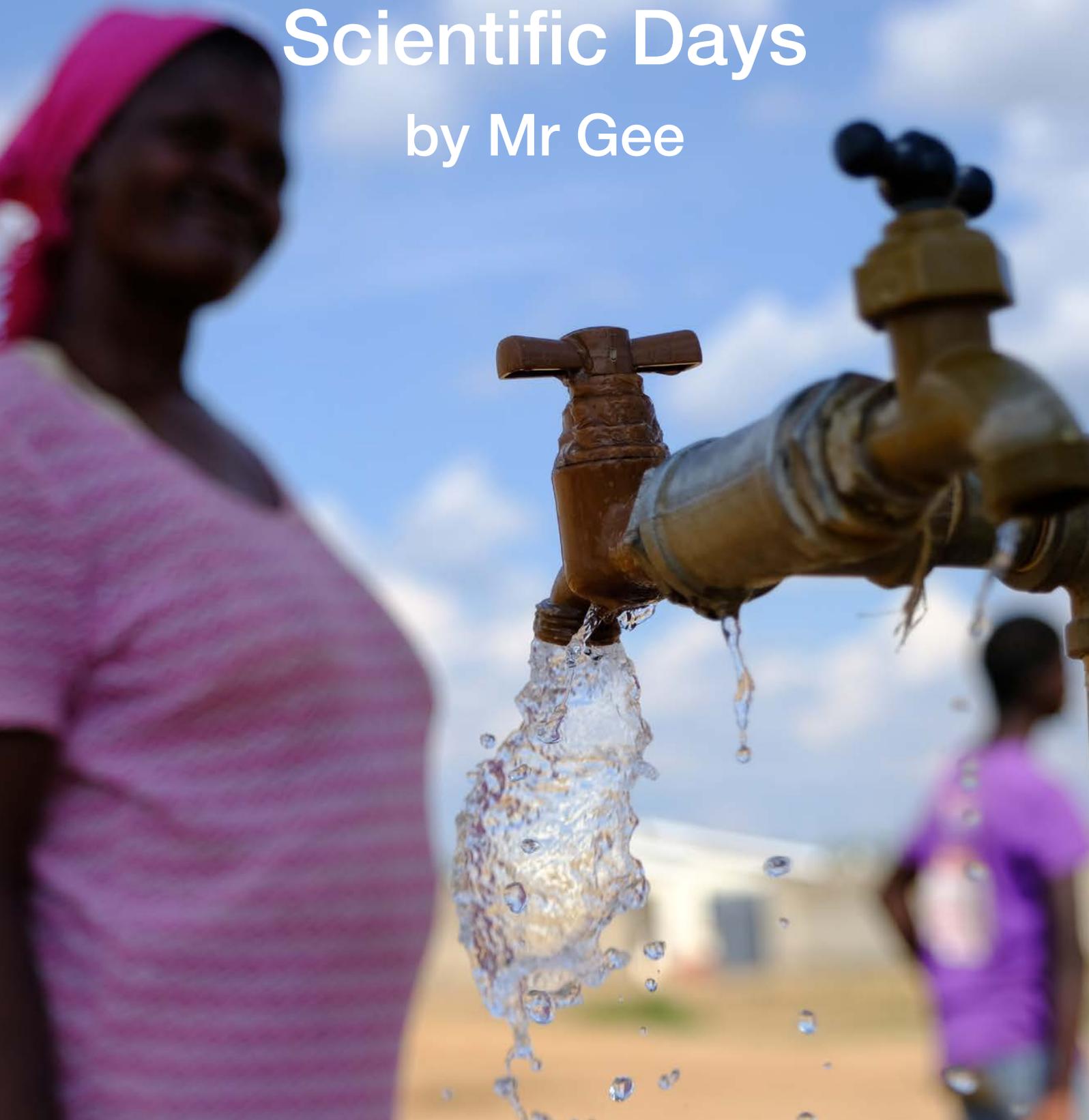
MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES
DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS



MSF Scientific Days
13-14 May 2020

Poems Inspired by MSF Scientific Days

by Mr Gee



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Front cover: MSF's environmental health approach to fighting typhoid and cholera © MSF



Traditional healer in Swaziland is HIV-positive and on treatment.

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A Conference Without Borders

Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) provides life-saving emergency relief and longer-term care to some of the most vulnerable and excluded communities around the world. As an independent medical humanitarian organisation, we deliver care based only on need, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, religion or political affiliation.

MSF Scientific Days is an annual conference presenting the results of medical research and innovation conducted across the entire MSF organisation. The conference takes place over two days; one day focusing on medical research, and one day dedicated to showcasing innovative solutions to problems faced by our teams in the field.

The overarching aim of MSF Scientific Days is to scrutinise our work, review the effectiveness of our activities, and improve the quality of care provided to the patients and populations we serve.

At this year's event on 13 and 14 May 2020, professional poet, Mr Gee, offered a commentary on the discussion he had heard. These poems were amongst the highlights of the conference and Mr Gee has kindly allowed us to reproduce those poems here. We hope that you enjoy them.

More information on MSF Scientific Days, including how to take part in 2021 can be found here: <https://www.msf.org.uk/msf-scientific-days>.



Mobile clinic in Borgulia, Tal Afar district, Iraq

Mr Gee

After two decades of work, Mr Gee is a veteran of the UK's Spoken Word scene. Perhaps best known as the 'Poet Laureate' on Russell Brand's Sony award-winning radio show, he has also toured the world many times with the Comedian. His work has featured in the Times, The Guardian and the New Statesman. Gee has presented three radio series for BBC Radio 4: Bespoken Word, Rhyme & Reason, and Poetic Justice. Poetic Justice focused on the extensive rehabilitation work that he does in prisons. Mr Gee is currently an advisor for the prisoner rehabilitation charity Switchback and co-hosts a podcast called The Magic Number.

Mr Gee has delivered two TedX talks and was a host for the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Forum in London. He starred in the West End show Into The Hoods (as the 'Poet'), which won the What'sOnStage Theatregoers' Choice Award for Best Ensemble Performance. He was also a featured guest on Akala's BAFTA nominated BBC 2 programme, Poetry Between the Lines, and his poetry launched the 2017 Barbour International Spring season. He most recently created a digital data art-piece called 'Bring Me My Firetruck' for the Open Data Institute, which was showcased at the Tate Britain as part of their 2020 Blake Now series.



Mr Gee

An Evolution of Thinking

Some will arrive for the first time,
Others will leave for the last
But we do... what we can do... to help see their time pass,
For the beauty of every seed lies in its potential to grow,
And the beauty of every idea lies in its potential to be shown,

No disease should be neglected,
Each one holds its own throne,
Rules its own Kingdom,
Until it enters our zone,

Where it comes to test our theories,
Test our treatments,
Test our voice,
Test our bodies, Test our rights,
Test our wrongs, Test our choice,

Tomorrow offers no promise,
Yesterday provides no solace,
But new thinking must evolve within the blinking of an eye,

For if the road ahead is blocked with losses,
And we can't pay for river crosses,
The path we forge across the forest,
Will require a change of mind,

Last week, I met a grieving facemask
On a distant street but we couldn't hug,
We briefly drowned in each others sound,
And admired each others gloves,

Isolation makes the heart feel heavy,
It's a bitter pill that's hard to bear,
Our norms and background forms our values,
So our personal needs must be centered in our care,

Thus we spoke about,
War and Conquest,
Wealth and Waste,
Cure and Cause,

Healing subject to Borders,
Heat treatment subject to flaws,

We planted these ideas in each others minds,
Related to a cause,
That would grow to form new solutions,
Or old perspectives to re-explore,

So even though this may be the first time,
or indeed may be the last,
We will do... what we can do,
To help each other through... the time that passes,

Butterfly credentials

It's impossible to stand still on a moving planet,
Try staying static where you are and you'll soon see where you end up,
Dust settles and rust never sleeps,
What's that coming 'round the mountain.... Covid19,

This world is built on ebb and flow,
Motion and emotion,
Everything and nothing fighting each other
Outside of a back-street bar,

Look up...
Even the stars in the night sky will get bored, move on & leave you where you are.
If you insist on standing still,

Nah...You Gotta keep moving,
Twisting, turning.
Adapting, innovating, Evolving

Rattle that colonial cage that holds you,
For a room full of Complacency contains no view
Why do you think that your eyeballs flicker in your deepest moments of sleep?
They wanna see something new!

Y'know?... figure out stuff.
Get over the hump,
We've got too many holes & not enough donuts,
Let's Go ahead and Do!

So Give up this religion of stagnation,
That praises the permanent,
Endlessly holding on to a thing to endlessly behold,
For tradition's sake.

Man,
Once upon a time "Tradition" was just yesterday's new thing!
"Old normal" was once "new normal", but now no normal's working.
Poor people still die...from being impoverished,
So who's signed up to work on this paradigm shift?

Perspective is the litmus test on our ability to see,
If Apps can kill, then apps can heal,
Which one do we choose to believe?

Why not Take well observed notes from butterflies?
Their destination doesn't change,
Grey sky or blue,
But the path that they take is far from predictable,
If they know where they're going,
Why don't you?

Simple Rhymes for Complicated times

Catch me if you can said the gingerbread man,
If you can't take the heat of the kitchen,
You better build a digital fan,
Don't tell me where you are,
Meet me where I am,
Before I play Patty Cake like the baker's man,

Don't leave me single and mingling like a twinkling star,
You say you've got the know how,
but how do I know where you are?

Information is power and knowledge always reigns,
The media may change but the social message remains the same,

Whether it's facebook or whatsapp,
The data is on tap,
I only wanna be ignorant at the beginning of each day,

But once night falls and nature calls,
You can't be preaching to an empty hall,
If you find your audience is hidden,
You've gotta seek them all the way,

It's not like you can play games with ebola,
But you can play games with ebola,
There are so many ways to learn,
To get health promotion over,

You've got:
Visual, Logical,
Verbal, Social,
Solitary, Physical,
Rhythmical, Aural,

Use whatever Interaction it takes to get that message across,
Surf the seven seas, click the mountaintops,
Innovation is finding that new solution & using it how you can,
Or else we'll be forever lost... chasing that Gingerbread man,

The Clothing of Covid (a new virus in town)

The sky at dawn is a daily event of kaleidoscopic complexity,
As Night and Day try to co-ordinate their outfits,
With the rising of a morning sun,

It's a marvelous competition of colour.
That we mirror in our lives,
As we ask "What's the latest style?",
"who is en vogue?"
"I want to be seen...so what shall I wear?"
Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet,
They're all there.

Each school of thought is readily kitted out, hoping to match,
The mood, the fashion, the temperature of the time,
For a new day is dawning,

Yet even the most elaborate of patterning,
Of our tribal costumes, embroidered with corporate desire,
Can become oh so easily unravelled by the familiar pulling,
And tugging Of a single infectious thread,

And thus while our heavenly skies,
Can entertain many different hues of conversation,
Here on earth, we are forced to stitch together our own pseudo-national Well-worn uniforms of protection,

Cut from the same mixed cloths of uncertainty and propaganda.
Information and misinformation,
transparency and mistrust,
All in need of ventilation,

So the rich adorn themselves in the usual regalia,
Of hand-me-down garments of exclusion,
Leaving the poor naked and out of doors,
As we face this new mask with old confusion...

There's a new virus in town,
And Covid be its name,
It knows us better than we know ourselves,
For it seeks no refrain,

There's a new virus in town,
And 19 be it's number,
It knows not nationality or refugee,
A perfect storm with unknown thunder,

There's a new virus in town,
And it wears a sweet perfume,
With a fragrance of isolation,
That has us zooming to our rooms

There's a new virus in town,
And it brings a new fashion to the show,
We're all invited to the party,
Perhaps it's time to change our clothes,

The End of Day 1

The Closing of a chapter can be a beautiful thing,
Lessons learned, evaluations,
Embracing new beginnings,

As we retrace our thoughts back to the vision,
And ask "Why are we not doing better?"
Can't we have less pills for the same ills?
So how is success to now be measured?

How do we monitor all the peaks?
How do we connect all the dots?
If under-reporting forms distortions
Does the key go undetected by the lock?

Yes, We can optimize,
Yes, We can harmonize,
But there are limits to all measurements,
Accuracy forms a dreamed desired,
Adherence makes it more relevant,

Such are the challenges of Prevention:

So we screen,
So we swab,
So we treat,
so we detect,

Be practical,
Be Compliant
Be visible,
Be Respectful,

A chapter closing poses complex questions,
Which none of us can project,
Much like this poem, it forms suggestions,
To urge us forward with new intent.

The Mosquito Prayer

When I was a little boy,
My mother took me on a family trip to Guyana,
It was soooo hot
And I remember I used to pray to God every night:

Dear God...why??

Why!?!?!
Why, oh why, oh whyyyy????
Why did you place so many mosquitoes here.....abundantly?
It seems that whenever I try to do something,
They only want to trouble me,

What purpose do they serve?
Except to get on my nerves?
Surely nobody would miss them if they disappeared from this earth?

When I spray them during the day,
They still come out at night,
If my hand deports them out my way,
They send my leg a postcard full of bites,

I tell them that: "when my retribution hits you",
"You'll feel no pain,"
"No Mosquito, No Cry"
But I still have to clean the sludge out from their stains,

Lord answer my prayers, so I can be free from their ways!

But eventually, I became a man,
I was no longer a little boy,
As the challenges got bigger,
Sometimes what you build can be destroyed,

I realised that: the higher the water levels,
The higher the water devils,
And had I let one mosquito stop me,
How was I to wade in the water with life's perils?

Because we were all made to be tested,
There are always hardships to wrestle,
Sometimes a problem that seems as big as Goliath,
Can be crushed with the right pebble,

So I remain thankful for the lesson,
That all obstacles provide,
I now try to see the troubles of this world
As mosquitoes buzzing throughout the night,

Tools for the kit

My toolkit carries a single ray of sunshine,
It reminds me of why I'm here,
It shines a light,
To provide insight,
And the shadows, they disappear,

In My toolkit, I pack the loneliest teardrop,
To remind me of what I'm about,
Of what we can all bring
Cos when the storms kick in,
It never rains on one man's house,

In My toolkit, I place a quiet pebble,
And weigh it up against all of my doubting,
For alone I am small,
But together we stand tall,
Thus I'm motivated to be part of a mountain,

My toolkit, holds my last breath,
A reminder of the sacrifice we all have to make,
To put our lives on the line,
To help heal mankind
And never let anyone waste away,

Thus We need the right tools for the right tasks,
The right questions to be asked,
The right approach, the right dose
The right co-ordination of staff,

In a world where sweetness kills,
And bitter is the pill,
We have to make most of our ingredients,
And cook up a healthy meal,

Yes My toolkit may look empty to some
People are disappointed in what they may find,
It may seem to hold nothing,
But from nothing can come something
If your toolkit retains an openness of mind

You are all poets!

You are all poets,
Whether you like it or not,
For only a curious mind can decide,
Where to place the full-stop.
For the poet endlessly researches:
Screens for symptoms within their verses,
A cascading overview,
Of a malnourished mood,
Consumed by our new purpose,

For if we are what we eat,
Then I'm trying to eat to live,
And Remove the parasitic,
From the city to the village,

So we trace our world with metaphors,
Track our subjects into stanzas,
Treat ourselves with paragraphs,
Admit failure with our hands up,

But we never stop trying,
Because we know the truth is there,
The remedy for a better me
A better now, a better here,

Yes, you are all poets,
For poets speak to survive,
Trauma competes with a silent charm,
When those closest to us take our pride,

And try to break us up inside,
So real care must be provided,
Someone has to listen to the quiet voice,
behind the pain of sexual violence,

My words are never mindless,
Like you, I tap into the timeless,
Beyond the borders, beyond the barriers,
I want to heal that, which is inside us,

That's why like me...you are all poets,
Whether you like it or not,
Life's diagnosis may have many commas,
But only one full-stop.



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The measles unit run by MSF at Biringi Hospital, Ituri Province, northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo