

## GAIA Update

### March, 2007 - Elizabeth's Song



Friends,

From time to time a dear U.S. friend sends us something we want to share with others.

Michelle Bitting is a frequently published poet and a strong supporter of our work through St. Matthew's Church in Pacific Palisades. In this poem, a pantoum, ARV means anti-retroviral (medication.) We have the poet's permission to distribute this as our March 2007 monthly update and we do so with sincerest thanks to Michelle and to all of you who help the women of Malawi through us.

William Rankin

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### Malawian Woman (Elizabeth's Song)

-for William Rankin

In 2005, AIDS killed 86,592 Malawians, 21,118 of them children.  
A small country, the average per capita income is \$170.  
Not enough to feed a mother,  
even if she could get ARV's to keep herself well.

A small country, the average per capita income is \$170.  
When the money runs out, you sell the only thing left.  
Even if she could get ARV's to keep herself well,  
there are three little ones at home already infected.

When the money runs out, you sell the only thing left:  
the body that was never yours to begin with.  
Three little ones at home are already infected,  
an HIV bequest from the father who ran away.

The body that was never yours, Elizabeth,  
is singing its broken song all over Africa.  
An HIV bequest from the fathers that run away,  
leaving grandmothers to till the fields.

The broken song of Africa  
rises from the bodies of the dead.  
Finds the grandmothers left tilling the fields  
who stop what they're doing and listen.

The bodies of the dead rise and sing  
when there isn't enough to feed a mother.  
Who will stop what they're doing and listen?  
In 2005, AIDS killed 86,592 Malawians, 21,119 of them children.

Michelle Bitting