

**JENNI WILLIAMS' VOICE**

“I was born in Gwanda in Matabeleland, a province in Zimbabwe on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1962; one of seven children, all of varying shades. My mother, Violet, was one of three children born to Irish man and a Matabele woman of Rozvi extraction. My grandfather, Raymond, had fled the Troubles in Ireland and had become a wealthy miner in southern Matabeleland. He met my grandmother, who renamed Janet, when she was asked to nurse him after he had become ill from a breathing condition caused by the mining environment. It was only upon his death that his family back in Ireland found out that he had a black wife and a family in Africa.

As my grandfather had died long before I was born, my grandmother ruled as the matriarch of the family and our lives revolved around school holidays in the rural areas. Some of my earliest memories are of sitting in the shade, chatting with Gogo (grandmother) in Sindebele, her tribal language. Gogo could hardly speak English and so it fell to us to learn our

As I was lighter and a cherished daughter, my mother found



I have also found myself the butt of derision because I am of mixed race, not purely black and not purely white, so despised by both. Or as a friend likes to call me, a hybrid.

As I have found my place as a women human rights defender, this has helped me arrive