



For Immediate Release

Author Recognized By The Dalai Lama Announces Book Launch To Help The Children of Africa - *Petals and Blood: Stories, Dharma and Poems of Ecstasy, Awakening and Annihilation*

Gavin Harrison, Recipient of the Unsung Heroes of Compassion Award by H.H. the Dalai Lama, is proud to announce the official launch of his recent book as it hits bookstands and online with donations of sales going to orphaned children in Africa

Hawaii, March 6, 2014 – With much anticipation, author Gavin Harrison’s book dedicated to the orphaned children of Africa is officially hitting bookshelves across the globe. This newest book, *Petals and Blood: Stories, Dharma and Poems of Ecstasy, Awakening and Annihilation* shares Harrison’s courageous life stories. Harrison, who originally hails from South Africa, grew up gay in a deeply divided country. He dealt with pervasive sexual abuse and has lived with HIV for over half of his life. Throughout his hardships, Harrison found his passion for poetry and philanthropy and has been recognized by the Dalai Lama for his work. Harrison has lovingly dedicated this book to the orphaned and vulnerable children of Africa. He self-published *Petals and Blood* to optimize the parameters of support for those children. He is donating five dollars from the sale of every book purchased via his [website](#) to [The Woza Moya Project](#) and [Group of Hope](#) in South Africa. Both organizations provide support to those affected by HIV, AIDS and poverty, an initiative that is near and dear to Harrison’s heart. For more details on breaking announcements, book tours across the globe and more, please visit the [Petals and Blood website](#).

Not only was this the second highest funded book to-date on a funding platform called, [Indiegogo](#), Harrison has been an inspiration to many. “There are no words to describe the impact Gavin had on me. I really appreciated that he acknowledged his HIV status, this was a big thing for all of us – meaning that he accepted his situation. He is a phenomenal and inspiring person,” said Luyanda Mboniswa, a member of the Group of Hope, incarcerated within the South African prison system.

Petals and Blood has had a rapturous reception thus far, and has been receiving accolades from the world’s top spiritual leaders. [Sharon Salzberg](#) says “The prose, the poetry and the photographs all bring us to a profound, tender and, most unusually, a direct knowing of the deepest and most beautiful truths.” [Sylvia Boorstein](#) refers to the book as “voluptuous, mouthwatering and breathtaking”, while [Lama Surya Das](#) has noted, “Gavin’s heart, like his eyes and ears, is a wide open organ of perception, finely attuned to the sacred space within each and all of us.” [James Baraz](#) says “*Petals and Blood* dazzles the senses, breaks open the heart and leads us to a place of connection, enchantment and wholeness.” Among

others who have endorsed *Petals and Blood* are [Joseph and Goldstein](#), [Kim Rosen](#), [Joan Halifax](#) and [Anam Thubten](#). These additional endorsements are included on the *Petals and Blood* [website](#).

This impactful author has positioned each chapter in *Petals and Blood* to begin with his personal stories, anecdotes and reflections related to the theme of that chapter's poems. The seven chapters of poetry included in *Petals and Blood* follow an arc that evolved from public gatherings led by Harrison in his current home of Hawai'i and former home, South Africa. This includes poems of **INVOCATION, LONGING, FIRE, TOGETHERNESS, THE INDESCRIBABLE, LOVE** and **GRATITUDE**.

From witnessing his friends succumb to a new disease known as AIDS to sharing his diagnosis with his mother, the healing of his relationship with his father, his celebration of original innocence, that innocence lost and then discovered again — Harrison bravely shares these experiences and his life story with readers. Along with this insight into his life, he has intertwined his poetry, and brief excerpts from the works of Sufi poets, Hafiz and Rumi. The magnificent photographs on each page of *Petals and Blood* express the beauty of the two places that birthed Harrison's poems, South Africa and Hawai'i. Despite his hardships, *Petals and Blood* exudes a joy that is uplifting, contagious and courageous.

Harrison's story starts in his birthplace of Johannesburg, South Africa in 1950. When he was ten years old he was sent to boarding school, 300 miles away from home. This was where he endured bullying and further sexual abuse, which began in his first years. In 1974, he left South Africa to travel the world with his partner and eventually settled in Iran. On a return visit to South Africa at his first meditation retreat, he met his spiritual mentor, Joseph Goldstein. He chose to live at the Buddhist Retreat Center in KwaZulu-Natal for a year. Upon his return to the USA, he was unknowingly infected with the HIV virus before entering a monastery.

A recipient of the Unsung Heroes of Compassion award presented to him by H.H. the Dalai Lama for "kindness and quiet dedication to others," Harrison has an extraordinary gift for offering teachings of awakening rooted in the Buddhist Insight Meditation Tradition. He is also the author of *In the Lap of the Buddha* (Shambhala Publications, Boston, 1994.)

Harrison's prayer is that the interweaving of ecstatic poetry and gritty humanity will provide evidence of what he knows to be true: *No matter how dire and challenging the circumstances of our lives might be, the deepest truth of who we really are remains untouched and unsullied by whatever may befall us. Awakening to our essential nature and the very truth of existence is the birthright of us all.*

Please visit <http://petalsandblood.com/> for additional details about the book, and the projects this book is benefitting. Also, please visit the [Petals and Blood blog](#) to track a behind the scenes look at the book.

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About Petals and Blood

Petals and Blood weaves ecstatic poetry with stories drawn from the poet's stark, vulnerable and adventurous life. Defying apartheid, helping orphaned children in Africa, realizing Oneness with murderers in a maximum-security prison, uniting with The Infinite at the threshold of death, making peace with illness and betrayal, offering prayers to the Goddess Pele in Hawai'i and his devotion to Mother Africa. The stories and poems remind us that our Essential Nature remains unsullied and untouched by whatever may befall us, no matter how unfortunate the circumstances of our lives may be. For more details, visit <http://petalsandblood.com/> and <http://petalsandblood.tumblr.com/>. Also, follow *Petals and*

Blood via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the Woza Moya Project

Woza Moya, a community-based NGO located in the Ofafa Valley of rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, began in 2000. Woza Moya's aim is to provide quality care and support to those infected and affected by HIV/Aids and poverty. Working closely with the community and using a holistic approach, Woza Moya offers services in the areas of home based care, food security, child and youth care, ECD, paralegal, youth and media, and water and sanitation. Additional details can be found at .

About the Group of Hope

This unique prisoner-initiated program began in 2002 in Brandvlei Prison, a maximum-security facility near Worcester in the Western Cape, offering the only alternative to joining the notorious prison gang system in South Africa. The men of The Group of Hope have adopted many orphaned and vulnerable children from the surrounding townships. They raise money to help feed, clothe and keep these children in school by making jewelry out of recycled paper. The Group of Hope inmates also run HIV prevention campaigns within the prison, as well as workshops for troubled youths within the community. For further information about The Group of Hope, please visit www.groupofhope.co.za.

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