You know those days when it’s so hard to get out of bed? For many teenagers around the world, that’s the biggest obstacle to their everyday movement. But in Johannesburg, things are more complex.

A group of South African teenagers at the Afrika Cultural Centre were asked to consider the obstacles they face as they move around Johannesburg. They were asked to write about the subject and to make an image, positioning the place or goal they were trying to get to in the background and an obstacle as an object in the foreground.

These young people are aged 12 to 24. They live in the central business district of the city and in surrounding townships. Some of the descriptions might seem simple, but on further reflection are astonishing. The young people are actors in the city, and they recognise that they are being held back. To propose something as an obstacle requires a consciousness that things could be different. The landscape, distances, infrastructure and crowds of people are pointed to specifically. However, the subject of obstructed movement in the city is expanded to symbolic movement and is even inverted to movements out of the city. These revisions of the question reveal that what weigh most heavily on the minds of these young people are the challenges they confront to move forward in their lives.
Background
*My background represents the end result of what I’m working towards and the city with the light represents success, the beach represents the peace, happiness and fulfillment that comes with it.

Obstacles
*The first one of the woman represents who I am as an African young woman, my culture and I would like to believe the crazy hair represents the insane side of me which I like to call my creative Insanity. The houses represent my current environment as its not the best one. The building is a school, I have to excel academically in order to achieve my dreams. All of these I think I can work through with the utmost diligence.

Camilla Tshelane
I am trying to get into a soccer field but there is an obstacle that is preventing me from getting there which is a fence but we can go around it in order to get inside the field all of this is situated in Orange Farm which is what I experience most of the time when my and my friend try to go and play in the soccer field.

Sifiso

I want to go Cape Town and the obstacles that I face up to, that make difficult for me to get there are mountains, transport and my brain, coz I get this negative thoughts that I can’t make because where I’m from I live the different lifestyle that they are living.

Nsimande Sanelisiwe
Well basically I experienced traffic coming to Newtown. People were busy with construction, coming here we had to turn back around just to get the other route to come here, which I ended coming late.

Tshepiso Promise Ramosela

In order for me to get home I have to jump this big rock’s, for me to get where I live, because they is know way fro me to pass, so it is a must for me to Jump.

Rocky Ndlovu
My obstacle is that I want to go somewhere but I can’t get to town without getting disturbed. So, the day when there was a carnival, I had to get my way. I moved on the other side; go move over the people. Like over on the side.

Karabo Mabena

My destination train station. The obstacle is the gate between the city and the station. Now I’m saying that cause it delays Sowetians you have to pay to get trough.

Luzuko Sondzaba
Im poor and I want a bright future and what stops me to bright future is that Im not working due to my Previous and existing education. Im not qualified to better living, so I need to work firs in order for me to be success.

Thabo Moshdeu

The city is my obstacle to nature.

Angela Sithole
My background clearly states a group of people of the city, some of them hang around all day and while most of them make their way to work to make a living. My obstacle as you see is exactly what some of us that sit around all do, make us weak & weaker.

Waterlilly T Rosa Siyengo

I wanna be in a quite place where I can do other thing quite but the place must be glowing shiny and Golden also but the obstacle that I am sooming is that I just dont understand myself sometime I become some one am not am sometime I just feel like not letting the past go this happens usually when I am alone.

Banele Motha
Many years ago I was not being treated good on the street. When I was learning at Park Town boy High school. They were boys that they were group, when I am passing by the road they usually take my money and lunch box. Every day they take my things, but I discovered that they are always taking my things and I tried to go right around, but it is fear away to get there.

Mthokozisi Dube

There’s a place where I wanna go at a beach in DURBAN; But there are somethings that block my way through MONEY MATTER’S is one of the reasons that blocks my way because I am earning a less salary and I can’t afford to visit the beach our economy is poor and as a results I can’t afford to take a Trip Vacations. WILDLIFE - Nature - These are the thing’s that stands in my way because if they weren’t there maybe there would be a way for me to visit the beach. Mountains and wild animals I can’t cross them anyway.

Phineas Mopogo