This song is for ...
a woman who chooses to withhold her name

Ave Maria
by Charles-François Gounod
performed by Jacobi de Villiers & Eric Dippenaar

"What shall I say, what shall I write? I have deleted my words several times, written and rewritten them, tried again and again, but I know that even if I delete them, they will be an eternal replay. An eternal retracing of feelings and of what I relive day after day. The smear is there, it stares at me every day, it forces me to have to confront it straight on, from the side, from the back…there is no getting away from it.

Today I am able to own it without guilt – I was abused. I felt guilty for years and wanted to prove to the world that everything was alright! But deep inside I was shattered.

My wounds will never ever heal completely, and I grow them (I have grown roses in this garden of mine). I care with much tenderness for this little corner of myself, because I know there is no cure, there are but 'remedies' taken in small doses to alleviate the symptoms of this silent wound.

Women: water your gardens and fertilise this incurable wound with self-love.

I will not write of the depths I have sunk to.

I simply sing, meditate, pray…

Sing, meditate and pray for us!

One day at a time…"

This song is for ...
Nondumiso Msimanga

Bohemian Rhapsody
by The Braids (original by Queen)
performed by Nonku Phiri & Dion Monti

“I tried to kill myself.

I still want to kill myself.

I have to fight to not want to kill myself.

I don’t want to just die.

I’m a fighter and everyday I’m fighting for my life;
fighting for it to matter.

Here’s to the good fight!”

This song is for ...
a woman who chooses
to withhold her name

Uyesu Ulithemba Lam
Xhosa traditional hymn
performed by Msaki, featuring
Lebogang Ledwaba & Thembinkosi Mavimbela

“But I am praying, and I am very strong and God is
going to answer me one day…

You must fight for life.”

This song is for ...
Corey Spengler-Gathercole

Fight Song
by Rachel Platten
performed by Desire Marea, featuring Izimakade

"To my rapist

You were my friend, I trusted you and you stole my innocence.

As a rape survivor, my role in the rape is often questioned, but what about your role? Yes, I was with you willingly and I went into the hotel room willingly, but that was because I trusted you. You knowingly set a trap for me and sadly I fell into it as I trusted you. You weren't brave enough to do it alone, so you brought a friend along. I had just turned twenty-one, so in your books it made me an adult and as you said that night, "This is what adults do so get used to it". I never asked you to betray my trust but that night you taught me that even someone you have known for about seven years could not be trusted. You tried to break me in your attempt to initiate me into adulthood. Then you felt guilty or were scared of the consequences, so you offered me money. Why would I want your money, I was not a prostitute, paying me wouldn't make it all go away? After that night I felt broken, lost and empty. Something special had been stolen from me and I could never get it back. I took you to court but I was let down by the justice system and after almost four years of my life I watched you celebrate as the magistrate gave both you and your accomplice three years house arrest, as he felt somehow that it was the alcohol that raped me, and not you. I was in tears as all I wanted to do was stop you from doing this to someone else and I felt like I had failed. Even after all this I refused to let you steal anything else from me. It took time, but I started to pick up the pieces you left me with and rebuild the puzzle that was my life, even though the puzzle looked very different. I could never be the same person, as what you did to me changed me in so many ways, but today I am stronger. I want you to know that you were not able to break me and that I am still standing and that I will fight for all women who are hurting because of someone like you.

Regards,

A strong rape survivor"

This song is for ...

Sinesipho Lakani

Save the Hero
by Beyoncé
performed by The Wretched

"The 19th of April 2014 was a holy Saturday for others and not so holy for me. What was meant to be an academic transition turned out to be a bitter life transition when I was kidnapped and raped in a taxi in the third month of my first year in university. Later in the same month, I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety.

All I prayed for was to come back to my family alive. I saw my life flash before my eyes when they said, "We need to get rid of the evidence", simply meaning I should be killed. In the same rhythm as his first stroke, I uttered "Dear God..." and my heart spoke the rest.

My self esteem, the love for myself, everything in me died. With every tear I shed. The minute I was thrown out of that car. I no longer look at myself the same.

The fact that I never got to meet my offender face-to-face, that justice was never served, is the main reason for the delay in my healing.

Some days are better than others.

One day I'm happy, positive and ready to fight and conquer, then the next I battle anxiety.

All I ever want to do is end it all. Put a stop to this misery.

For the longest time I've used the desire to be wanted sexually to escape reality. Getting through days is a struggle. I live my life in fear. Making it home safe is a daily prayer. Waking up still breathing is an achievement.

Oh how I want to end it all. But with everything going on in the country, all these women getting kidnapped, raped, then killed, makes me appreciate having survived. But again I am forced to relive the moment every time I hear a story of a raped woman.

What time was it?

Are you sure you were not revealing?

Maybe you were drunk?

You should have cut off his manhood.

Society raped me more.

My life has never been the same, I'm broken, and my sin, my only sin, was being a woman."

This song is for ...
Pat Hutchison

Unstoppable
by Sia
performed by Nonku Phiri & Dion Monti

"For as long as I can remember my life was always happy, I was a brave, confident go-getter. I never really fully understood what trauma was at its core until January 2013, the evening before my birthday. I couldn't have kids and my friend was pregnant with her first child, so naturally I was over-the-moon to meet this little man.

On the 26th of January 2013 my friend went into labour, and out of excitement I got into my car and headed towards the hospital. Truth be told I never knew where it was, however I thought I could stop and ask for directions on the way. This turned out to be a grave mistake. When I stopped and asked for directions I was held up by four guys, each with a gun pointed at me. An evening that was supposed to be full of joy and happiness turned out to be a horrifying nightmare. For four hours and what felt like a lifetime I was brutally gang raped by these men.

I think the most disturbing part of the entire evening was the fact that they would phone my Dad and make him listen to what they were doing to me. The police informed my Mum that I had a 2% chance of surviving this and they were told to say their prayers as this was no longer a rescue mission, but it was a body retrieval mission.

Because my car was second-hand I didn't think it had a vehicle-tracking device in it, but to my surprise it did. My brother got hold of someone on Facebook who then phoned the CEO of 'Tracker' who without hesitation switched on the tracking unit. This is how they eventually found me.

After they were done raping me, the rapists drugged me, tied me up with my own tow rope and locked me in the boot of the car and told me to sleep while they went to fetch petrol. They then proceeded to set the grass around the vehicle on fire. After a few minutes I started to try and loosen my restraints, when I heard someone calling my name.

By the grace of God, I was found and pulled out of the vehicle five minutes before my birthday. After that night, I became a shell of the person I used to be, I was too petrified to even leave my house, or climb into a vehicle. I was terrified of life itself. I fell into a deep-seated depression which took me many years to get out of. Without the amazing support of my family and friends I would never be where I am today. I have risen above and today I am unstoppable. I have a new vehicle, I have my own business and I'm growing from strength to strength everyday. I drive by myself to go to the shops and I'm loving life again.

People don't understand the trauma of rape. I have people say to me it's been five years, get over it! To me it feels like yesterday. I can remember every single minute of the ordeal as if it happened yesterday. Time doesn't make you forget, it only makes it easier to deal with. If I can say one thing that I've learnt over the past four years, it is that there is always hope and there is always somebody who has your back and that things do get better.

I didn't know how strong I was, until being strong was my only choice."