

APRIL 2025 ISSUE

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

LITERARY MAGAZINE

U.S CAPITAL
CELEBRATES
JOHN KANI

WRITERS NOT
SPARED OF
TRUMP'S WRATH

CELEBRATING
THE LEGACY
OF CAN THEMBA

FROM PROSTITUTE
TO SHAREHOLDER
AT JSE
The Vera
Qwesha's Story

R30 MILLION
INVESTED
IN POETRY PRIZE

FROM HOUSE HELPER
TO HISTORY MAKER

ZWELIHLE'S JOURNEY
OF FAITH AND PURPOSE

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PUBLISHED BY PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

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From House Helper to History Maker: Zwelihle's Journey of Faith & Purpose

Born in Zimbabwe, in a small village called Cuseculu, where her homestead stood in the heart of a polygamous family, author and publisher Zwelihle Banks Nsiwa's formative years were simple yet filled with lessons of survival.

Her mother was the third wife, and her father—a well-respected counsellor and farmer—was a man of great influence in the community. But life had other plans. She failed her O-Level exams, a moment that could have defined her end, but instead, it became the beginning of an incredible journey.

“I attended Bhalule Primary School, then went to Samahuru SDA Mission School, where my leadership journey took root,” she said. “In the year 2000, I became Head Girl—a position that ignited a fire within me. With a dream too big for my circumstances, I left Zimbabwe for Botswana to live with my sister—the family's breadwinner. I told her, ‘I don't just want to survive; I want to go back to school.’ She believed in me. She supported me. But fate would test me in unimaginable ways.”

A few years later, her sister passed on, leaving behind two young children—a five-year-old boy and a nine-year-old girl. At just 22 years old, Zwelihle became their guardian.

She had no qualifications, no stable job, and no clear way forward. The only option was to become a house helper, scrubbing floors and washing dishes just to put food on the table. But deep down, she knew this wasn't the end of her story.



“I saved every cent I could. When I had enough, I enrolled for a Certificate in Public Relations at Gaborone University College of Law—and passed with distinction. That was exactly 15 years after failing my O’Level. That gave me the confidence to pursue an Advanced Diploma in Public Relations, Marketing and Advertising.”

Then came her biggest testimony: she secured a scholarship from the Limkokwing University of Creative Technology from the late founder of Limkokwing University, Tan Sri Dato Sri Paduka Dr Limkokwing, where she earned her Honours Degree in broadcasting and journalism. But she wasn’t done yet. she applied for another scholarship, this time from UNICAF, and today, she is pursuing her MSc in International Business Management from the University of East London (UK).

Journey To Becoming An Author

“Three months into my marriage, tragedy struck,” she said. “I lost my mother-in-law. Four months later, I lost my own mother. In the same year, both my brothers were murdered. Pain became my daily companion. The weight of grief was unbearable. Nights felt endless. I found comfort in God. I would fall asleep with cartoons playing in the background—anything to distract me from the pain.”

Zwelihle says it was her husband who continuously reminded her, “There is something inside you. Look deep within—you will see what God has deposited in you.”

That was the moment everything changed. The couple started doing affirmations together, speaking life into their broken hearts. And out of that healing process, something beautiful was born – books. What

began as a personal journey turned into a mission to empower children and teenagers. Smart Thinking Publishers—the publishing company she and her husband founded—became the home of their books. Today, she is the author of 14 children’s educational books and a teen affirmations book, available in seven languages: English, Shona, Ndebele, Ikalanga, Setswana, Afrikaans and French.

“My books are not just words on paper; they are seeds of hope, reminding every child that they can rewrite their story no matter where they come from,” she says. “What Sustained Me? The Word of God, prayer, family, and a strong Christian community.”

“Too often, we thank friends, family, and mentors—but I will never forget the power of the Christian community that stood with me in my darkest days. Strangers, neighbours, destiny helpers and believers carried me when I had no strength left.”

Zwelihle says God has shown her mercy, grace, and favour. In every storm, He sustained her.

“I don’t want to lie, there were days that looked dark. But I kept moving forward. In the year 2024, just less than a year after starting the journey of authorship, we got a number of nominations and awards.”

These include Humanitarian Impact (Zimbabwe) – LIST, SHE Awards – Most Promising Founder of the Year (Over 30), FOYA Global – Most Promising Founder of the Year (Over 30). The awards included being recognised among the 100 Distinguished African Fashion and Art Personalities, finalist in the 2025 Women Changing The World Global Award under

Emerging Woman of the Year, and The African Writers Tribe Awards.

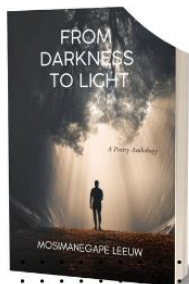
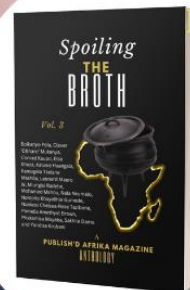
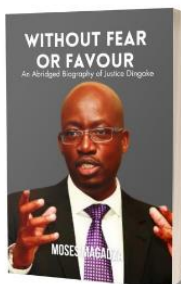
“To every person reading this... you are not defined by where you start,” she says. “You are not limited by your failures. You are not

trapped by your circumstances. What stops you if a former house helper can become a published author in seven languages? Dream BIG. Work HARD. Trust God. Your story is still being written. Make it legendary.”

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U.S Capital Celebrates Kani

Thespian Honoured For Global Contribution To Art



The United States of America capital, Washington DC, has celebrated South Africa's legendary actor, Dr Bonisile John Kani, for his more than 60 years' contribution to arts and culture around the globe.

Washington DC Mayor, Muriel Bowser, gave the thespian his flowers on behalf of the more than 700 000 residents of the capital, celebrating him as a trailblazing actor, director, and award-winning playwright.

"From your contributions to *The Island* and *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*, to your portrayal of Tshaka in the *Captain American: Civil War* and *Black Panther*, your transformative artistry sparks dialogue that has truly been world-changing," said Bowser. "Your exemplary service to art and culture has earned you multiple awards, including a Tony, Special OBE Award, the Pragnell Shakespear Award, and the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE)."

Bowser said the city is tremendously grateful that the Shakespear Theatre Company is showcasing Kani's work in the nation's capital.

"On behalf of the more than 700 000 residents of Washington DC, thank you for your outstanding contribution to art and culture and best wishes for your continued success," she said.

Dr John Kani was born in 1943 in New Brighton Township, Port Elizabeth, one of many of the country's legends born and bred under apartheid government. At one point in his life, he was detained for 23 days without a reason, while his brother was shot dead by police in 1985 – while reciting!

Dr Kani is a prominent and an accomplished actor, director and playwright. He co-founded the Market Theatre Laboratory. He co-Wrote *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and *The Island* in 1940. Alongside Barney Simon, Dr Kani also created *The Lion and The Lamb*, a hugely successful musical play where he reprised a leading role in a performance that saw the retelling of the biblical-based story of Christ's life brought vibrantly to life on stage.

He received a Tony Award in America in 1975, as well as a Hiroshima Foundation for Peace and Culture Award for his extraordinary contribution to theatre in America. He also received an Avanti Hall of Fame Award from S.A Film, Television and Advertising Industries.

In 2005, then President Thabo Mbeki bestowed him the Order of Ikhamanga, Silver, for his contribution in the struggle for

liberation through artwork. He used the play *Nothing but the truth* as a vehicle to explore the complex issues that arose after 1994 democratic elections. These issues involve freedom, tension between those from exile and those who remained in the country, thus healing the wounds from the past and moving on with life. The play also tackled issues of sibling/youth rivalry and cultural traditions (Ubuntu).

Celebrating Dr Kani's achievement, South African filmmaker, producer and playwright Duma Ndlovu said the whole world keeps bestowing accolade upon accolade on our beloved icon, Dr. Bonisile John Kani.

"*Ndiza Ntaka ndini ndiza*, fly our flag high, right there in the US Capital where they keep talking about us," said Ndlovu. "You are hoisting us and our names even higher!"



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And to Rusby,
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These are The Chords Of The Hymn I sang
after healing.

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A STORY OF AFRICA'S PAST AND PRESENT

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Writers Not Spared Of Trump's Wrath

Funding Halted for 58-year-old Writing Program

United States President Donald Trump has been signing executive orders that have affected, amongst others, USAID, the U.S principal agency to extend assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reform.

Now, the stroke of his mighty pen has caught up with writers as well, dealing a devastating blow to the University of Iowa's 58-year-old International Writing Program.



The U.S. Department of State notified the University of Iowa International Writing Program on February 26, that its grants through the department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs were being terminated, stating that the awards "no longer effectuate agency priorities," nor align "with agency priorities and national interest."

The literary contributions of the International Writing Program significantly impact the University of Iowa and Iowa City communities. Further, writers and their cohorts have generated economic investment in the state of Iowa that would ordinarily be sent elsewhere. More than 90% of funds

associated with the IWP's federal grants are spent domestically, which would have resulted in slightly less than \$1 million going back into the U.S. economy over the next year.

Due to this loss of federal funding, totalling nearly \$1 million, the program's leaders will cancel its summer youth program, dissolve distance learning courses, and discontinue the Emerging Voices Mentorship Program. Because the program's Fall Residency also receives funding through a combination of gifts, grants, support from foreign ministries of culture and nongovernmental organisations, the 2025 cohort will be

reduced by about half. The fall program usually hosts about 30 writers.

IWP Director Christopher Merrill says the university remains dedicated to the program's mission, which is to promote mutual understanding through creative writing and literature.

"We are devastated by the abrupt end of this 58-year partnership and are working closely with the Office of General Counsel and the university's grant accounting office to review the terminations, understand their full impact, and respond in the best interest of the organisation," Merrill says. "Despite this disappointing turn of events, the IWP's mission remains the same and, with the help of a small number of other partners, we will still hold a 2025 fall residency as we also pursue new sources of funding."

The Fall Residency Is an 11-week program that brings established international writers

to the UI campus, providing them with time to produce literary work, while also introducing the social and cultural fabrics of the United States. The experience enables them to take part in American university life and creates opportunities for them to contribute to literature courses both at the UI and across the country.

More than 1,600 established writers from more than 160 countries have participated since the program was founded in 1967. For their efforts to promote cultural diplomacy by convening writers from around the world, IWP co-founders Paul and Hualing Engle were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976.

Three IWP participants have won the Nobel Prize in Literature: Han Kang of South Korea (2024), Istanbul-born novelist Orhan Pamuk (2006), and Chinese novelist Mo Yan (2012). Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka won the 2022 Booker Prize.



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"Conversations With My Thoughts" is an invitation on a journey to the corners of your mind that you have long abandoned, where the cobwebs have formed and taken permanent residence. As you take a walk through those avenues you may have considered taboo to explore, please fear not, as only you control how deep the mind delves. Steadily stroll through familiar cognitive streets that you have often neglected to explore. Understand and admire their beauty in their unique forms.

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It is said that too many cooks spoil the broth. This broth, comprising of 15 writers unearthed through PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine's Short Story Competition, seeks to shatter this myth. *Spoiling The Broth* Vol. 3 is a multi-themed collection of new short stories by authors from across the African continent. They were all monthly winners in tightly contested short story writing competitions that were held from January to October 2023.

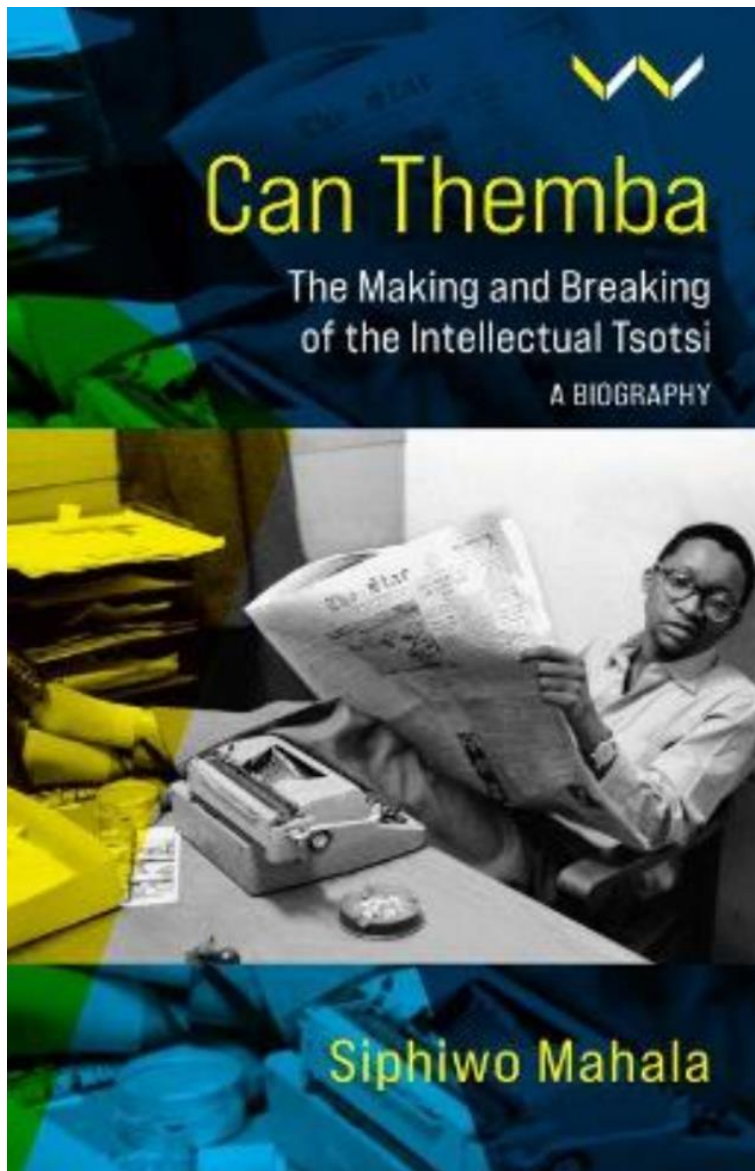
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Celebrating The Legacy of Can Themba



The DALRO Can Themba Merit Award is a prestigious short story competition that celebrates the literary legacy of Can Themba, offering a unique opportunity for emerging authors to gain mentorship, publishing, and a chance to see their work adapted into a play.

Themba was born in Marabastad, near Pretoria, in 1924, but spent most of his time in Sophiatown, Johannesburg, South Africa. He was a student at Fort Hare University College, where he received an English degree (first-class) and a teacher's diploma.

After moving to Sophiatown, he tried his hand at short-story writing. Temba entered the first short story contest of *Drum* (a magazine for urban Black people concentrating mainly on investigative journalism), which he won.

He subsequently worked for *Drum*, where he became one of the “Drum Boys” together with Henry Nxumalo, Bloke Modisane, Todd Matshikiza,

Stan Motjuwadi and Casey Motsisi. They were later joined by Lewis Nkosi and Nat Nakasa. This group lived by the dictum: “Live fast, die young and have a good-looking corpse.”

Part of *Drum*'s ethos was investigative journalism. One of the aims was to show the realities and inequities of apartheid. Themba decided to see how white churches would react to his attending services.

He wrote: “The Presbyterian Church in Noord Street allowed me in, yet the one in Orange Grove refused me admittance. They explained that the hall was rented from some boys' club whose policy did not allow Non-whites into the hall. They also said something about the laws of the country.

At the Kensington DRC (Dutch Reform Church), an aged church official was just about to close the doors when he saw me. He bellowed in Afrikaans: '*Wat soek jy?*' (What do you want?).

'I've come to church,' I said. He shoved me violently, shouting for me to get away. I walked off dejected.

Themba's journalistic viewpoint conditioned all his writing. His short stories are anecdotes and vignettes depicting the harsh and depressing conditions of African life in the Johannesburg townships. They have a lively and perceptive wit, but their jaunty tone cannot conceal the self-lacerating cynicism that was required in order to survive under the existing social conditions.

Some critics saw his apparent flippancy as evidence of a lack of commitment. Mphahlele even accused him of writing "poor Hollywood imitations." Nevertheless, Themba's work has a lively force that illuminates the milieu in which he lived.

Growing frustrations with the restrictions of apartheid caused him to move to Swaziland, where he worked as a teacher. In 1966, he was declared a 'statutory communist', as a result of which his works were banned in South Africa.

He died of Coronary thrombosis in his flat in Manzini in the late sixties. For more on Can Themba, read Siphiwo Mahala's book, *Can Themba: The Making and Breaking of The Intellectual Tsotsi*.

The Top 10 finalists of the DALRO Can Themba Merit Award will receive:

- R10 000 cash prize
- fully funded participation in the 2026 Time of the Writer festival
- fully funded attendance at the Bergen International Literary Festival (Norway)
- story published in an anthology by Wits University Press
- invitation and participation in the book launch in Johannesburg in hosted by Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation (DALRO)
- opportunity to work with a dramaturge to adapt the short story to a playscript
- playscript produced by the The Market Theatre
- mentorship in five publishing related workshops

The winning story will be transformed into a stage play to be premiered at The Market Theatre @markettheatre in 2026.

Submissions close: 23h59 on Thursday, 10 April

Submit your entry via email: ndlovuT2@ukzn.ac.za

More info and guidelines: <https://dalro.co.za/CTMA/>

The Vera Qwesha Story: From Prostitute To Shareholder At JSE

Once upon a time in her life, she was a drug addict and the queen of the Red-light District, most sought-after by men with urges for eccentric sexual pleasure.

Today, by the grace of God and hard work, she has overcome what she terms “demons of drugs and prostitution” that were terrorising and tormenting her life. She is now an author, a philanthropist, a motivational speaker, and a shareholder of a JSE-listed company.

“My story is no different from most girls in South Africa who are experiencing common struggles such as peer pressure, poverty, drugs, alcohol abuse, crime and unemployment,” she says. “I also experienced partner abuse at the hands of the father of my teenage daughter

as I was in a relationship with him for thirteen years, hoping that he would change. But he didn't, and I decided to end our relationship by calling off our engagement. He then refused to support our daughter.”

It was after this incident that her friends, who were working and staying in Johannesburg, introduced her to the escort business. They painted a glossy picture of how the escort business was far better than street prostitution and that it was very discreet. The clients were met at exclusive hotels; all she had to do was to advertise her nude pictures online.



“It took me a period of three months to make a decision of being a sex-worker because I was very scared and sceptical,” she says. “My first thought was my family, but the pressure of being a single parent without any kind of income was too much for me to bear. At the time, I had just graduated from the university of Port Elizabeth with a degree in Political Science. I had chosen to study Political Science because I wanted to serve my country and to also change my family’s situation, as I come from a very poor family background. My mother worked as a domestic worker and we lived in a shack with no proper sanitation, no electricity, and no running water.”

After months of pounding the concrete jungle for a job, Vera eventually turned towards the whispers and open arms of the sex industry. She began a new life with the name “Flame” and started to post nudes online. She described herself as a Brazilian Coloured and became one the most sought-after high-class sex workers in the country, fielding calls from men with endless supplies of cash.

“Having grown up in a racially segregated country like South Africa, it was somewhat challenging to offer sex services to people I was not familiar with,” she said. “I used my body to be defiled by different men from all over the world for money. Those clients came in different shades, shapes and sizes – Asians, Indians, Whites and Blacks. They had different tastes and preferences. Some wanted very strange and odd services. It was even more strange to find women who would book a sex-worker for her man just to keep him happy, or to protect her marriage, and as a sex-worker, you have to offer that man a session because his wife has begged

you to do so, just so that her children can have the financial support from their father.”

The worst part, she says, was having the wife in the same room, watching the whole session. Asked why she was putting herself through all that, the wife’s response was that she was doing it to protect her status in the community, for her children and for her marriage to survive.

“As I reflect on my experiences, I came to the realisation that the sex industry is not as glamorous as it is projected by those who lure people into it,” says Vera. “Some clients treat sex-workers like objects and consequently ill-treat them badly. As a result of this, most prostituted women always say that they would leave prostitution if given other options. They always express the desire for skills development programs, formal jobs and assistance in business start-ups, as they have no resources to help them exit the sex-trade.”

Vera says when her friends introduced her to the prostitution business, they never told her about the rampant use of drugs and that high-paying clients are the ones that are the biggest users. When she finally met those clients, she fell into the trap as she was desperate to make a quick buck. It was easier servicing clients when she was also high, promising herself that she would leave the business as soon as she had accumulated enough money to start her own business.

“But my dreams perished because of the very drugs that were supposed to numb my conscience and forget what kind of work I was doing,” she says. “I had also been lying to my mother, telling her that I had a stable job as a make-up artist in Johannesburg. I could no longer have a session with a client

without first sniffing a line of cocaine. A day would not pass without me taking cocaine. Without the drug, my body would start shaking uncontrollably. I spent thousands on drugs such as cocaine, heroin, crystal meth and dagga. I tried so many times to commit suicide because of the guilt that was slowly killing me every day. I kept thinking of all the efforts and sacrifices my mother made raising me.”

Vera also witnessed many other girls losing themselves to drugs. Some overdosed, some were brutally killed, while many were raped. Her story, she says, and those of many other women, depict moral decadence that has afflicted our society. The challenges that she went through are a consequence of the social ills that most youth in South Africa experience. With the pervasive patriarchal system and marginalisation of women, young women are left with limited economic opportunities and are forced into destructive means such as drugs and prostitution, and

this has contributed to the social decay and moral degeneration.

“Unlike so many, I was fortunate by the grace of God to turn my fate around and now I am a very successful businesswoman in construction, brickmaking, and mining,” she says. “I am also a public speaker and an author as well. I am also the director of Vera Qwesha Foundation, an organisation that strives to bring back moral values to society by helping those who have behavioural problems and victims of social ills, such as substance abuse, gangsterism, prostitution and human trafficking.”

The Vera Qwesha Foundation has established a skills training program so that the survivors of social ills can learn how to survive and generate income for themselves. They also provide motivational talks in schools and communities around the country, warning the youth about dangers of substance abuse, gangsterism prostitution and crime.





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Trapped in a web of deceit and abuse, a young woman's desperate fight for survival and to preserve her marriage becomes a powerful testament to her unbreakable spirit. 'Covered in Scars' is a heart-wrenching tale of love, betrayal, broken promises and painful discoveries that will leave you breathless.

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Cry and Laugh with Lastborn is a melting pot of melancholy, love, ecstasy, grief, loss, betrayal, tragedy and elation with an infusion of somewhat hilarious innuendos that are perfectly timed to lighten the load. The poems speak of life just as they speak into life, mirroring what we go through in this grueling journey called life. While some spoken words lament the status quo, Cry and Laugh with Lastborn is a breath of fresh air as it also conjures possible solutions with a dash of humour to help the reader gobble down the bitter truth.

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Six Months of Sleepless Nights Finally Pay Off

21 Writers Get Opportunity To Publish

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It is said that too many cooks spoil the broth. This broth, comprising of 15 writers unearthed through PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine's Short Story Competition, seeks to shatter this myth. Spoiling The Broth Vol. 3 is a multi-themed collection of new short stories by authors from across the African continent. They were all monthly winners in tightly contested short story writing competitions that were held from January to October 2023.

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After six months of sleepless nights, PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine's Adopt-An-Author Program has drawn to a close with 21 writers getting an opportunity to get published.

Funded by the National Arts Council, Department of Sport, Arts and Culture and the Presidential Employment Stimulus 5, the project saw a total of 21 writers getting an opportunity to publish – 15 who are part of the 'Spoiling The Broth Anthology' Volume 3 and six are authors publishing stand-alone bodies of work.

The Spoiling The Broth anthology consists of short stories penned by the 2023/4 winners of the monthly **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine Short Story Competition**, while the six stand-alone books are by authors discovered through the Adopt-An-Author

Call For Submissions that was announced early in 2023.

Sanelisiwe Ndlovu, author of *Covered In Scars*, began publishing her work on Facebook in February 2023 and amassed over 10 000 followers. She has always yearned to see her work in print, but didn't have the means to get her original works published. Until **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA's Adopt-An-Author** stepped in.

Covered In Scars is a fictional story about betrayal, deceit and abuse. It touches on the struggles faced by women in toxic marriages and relationships. It touches on that mentality of 'I can't leave my husband for other women', that mentality of 'he apologised, he will change'.



Lazarus Kgageng is the author of *The Chords Of A Hymn*, is the founder of Thola Lesedi Foundation and Lazarus Kreations, founded in 2016 and 2021 respectively. He is also a screenwriter, filmmaker, poet and motivational speaker.

“My book explores the far-reaching effects of decisions parents take for their children,” he said. “It shows the powerplay that often follows, self-discovery, betrayal and unconventional love.



Themba Skhosana’s *Conversations With My Thoughts* is about recapturing Ubuntu and encouraging readers not to ignore our own innate indigenous knowledge or where we come from as a people.

“The book seeks to remind us that our existence is indicative of people who have lived before us,” he said. “It is an invitation on a journey to the corners of your mind that you have long abandoned, where the cobwebs have formed and taken permanent residence. It is a body of work intended to impact a positive change in your life,

sparking an intimate journey of self-introspection with the eventual goal being that of a transformed, principled human being.”



Also published through the Adopt-An-Author Project are books by Patrick Moabui, Njabulo I. Makhaye, V.W Mayo and the Spoiling The Broth Anthology. **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine** co-founder, Thokozani Magagula, said the publication of the books would not have been possibility without the continuous support by the National Arts Council, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture and the Presidential Employment Stimulus.

“These government agencies have continually seen value in what we do, and we are grateful for their support,” he said. “The search for new writers who will form part of the Spoiling The Broth Volume 4 has begun and we have also identified a few writers for the next Adopt-An-Author Programme.”

R30 Million To Date Invested In Poetry Prize

A little over R30 million has so far been invested into various initiatives of the AVBOB Poetry Prize, which has now opened for its fifth run since its inception.

AVBOB's total investment into the many important initiatives under The AVBOB Poetry Project exceeds R30 million to date. In addition to The AVBOB Poetry Competition and its administration, these include the annual AVBOB Poetry Anthology, annual AVBOB Poetry Gala, multiple TV series profiling our winning poets ('I wish I'd said...' on SABC 2 and 'Ek wou ons ê...' on VIA), and sponsorships of key poetry-related events (with a special focus on educating new poets).

This is the true value of The AVBOB Poetry Competition: it is so much more than an annual competition. The AVBOB Poetry Library alone is the largest freely accessible poetry library of its kind worldwide, offering words of comfort for the bereaved and catharsis for its tens of thousands of poets.

The prize said over the four previous years of the competition, they have been honoured to see entries grow year-on-year from 20 774 poems in the competition's first year, to 41 149 poems in last year's competition. To encourage poets to focus on submitting only their best poems – while simultaneously ensuring that no poets have an unfair advantage in terms of sheer volume of poems submitted into the competition – they first applied a limit of 30 poems per poet and then decreased that to 20 and now 10 poems per poet.

"From the launch of the competition, our commitment to quality was underlined by our selection of expert judges for each of the 11 official language categories," reads the statement. "Our judges (whose profiles are available on our website) have strong academic and literary backgrounds, with many well-recognised as experts within their respective languages and published as authors and poets themselves."

As with any competition, entry into The AVBOB Poetry Competition does not automatically guarantee that those entries will be accepted for publication or go on to win one of the highly-acclaimed AVBOB Poetry Prizes – awarded to the first-place poems in every language category (comprising a R10 000 cash prize, a R2 500 book voucher and the prestigious AVBOB Poetry Trophy every year). Simply put: if the competition was easy to win, it wouldn't be prestigious for poets.

The above notwithstanding, presently The AVBOB Poetry Library features over 15 000 carefully-curated poems, in all 11 official languages, which have been accepted for publication by our editors since the competition's launch (with each earning a R300 usage fee for their respective poets – a direct investment by AVBOB of over R4.5 million into supporting South African poetry).

"Every year, we are moved by the personal stories our poets share with us over how The AVBOB Poetry Competition changed their lives (whether as winners or not), and we

remain committed to the best interests of every single one of the members of our community.

It is in this spirit that we wish our poets all the best with their entries into the fifth competition (which closes on 30 November).

Getting accepted into the library will not be easy (but this year 1 600 new poems have already been accepted). Winning WILL be a highly prestigious achievement. And, most importantly, through your words you can change someone's else's life ... and your own."

BOOKS BY SUKOLUHLE NONTOKOZO MDLONGWA

Sukoluhle isn't just an author, but is also the co-founder of PUBLISH'D AFRIKA, a self-publishing agency based in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, in South Africa. She is also the co-founder of PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine, which she runs with her life partner, Thokozani Magagula, who is also an author, journalist and editor.



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Advice To My Younger Self

Tackling The Future Folly Of Youth Today



If you were given an opportunity to go back in time and give advice to your younger self, what advice would you give? Which decisions would you reverse and which associations would you do away with?

Zola Mongwe, author of the book *Advice To My Younger Self*, says the time to correct future mishaps and regrets starts now – today, this very hour.

“I often reminisce about those precise moments when I had to make life-changing decisions or choices decades ago, and wonder what I would have done differently, having the life experiences I’ve had and lessons I have learned,” she says. “How would the knowledge I have today, have impacted the pathways I’ve travelled?”

Zola is a teacher, an emotional healer, an inspirational speaker and motivational coach. Her book, *Advice To*

My Younger Self, is a body of work aimed at using her own life experiences to caution and advice those coming after her that they need not make the same mistakes she did.

“Thinking about the idealised situation of going back in time to speak to my younger self frequently makes me feel melancholic as well as insightful, in the same way that I would if I were guiding and holding the hand of a younger version of myself,” she says. “Reflecting on the lessons I would give those past incarnations of myself, I shudder at how much wisdom and life experiences I have gathered along the way.”

“Would I have said YES to that marriage proposal? Would I have said NO? Would I have seen the red flags, walked away and never looked back? Or would the folly of youth have wrapped blinders around my eyes despite the red flags towering as high as billboards in front of me?”

Advice To My Younger Self is Zola’s debut book, which has been developed in collaboration with bestselling author of

Prison Love, Tshidi Monkoe's *Author Masterclass* and PUBLISH'D AFRIKA.

"I believe from my simple life, I have found my purpose and the zeal to empower lives," says Zola. "I have gathered the wisdom and life experiences worthy of being shared with

'my younger self' to pave the way for a successful and fulfilling life. I have learned that you become yourself when you stop confirming to societal pressures and systems, then you start finding and knowing yourself, as well as what works for you."

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine Facebook Short Story Competition - April 2025



THEME: NONE

'Let your pen bleed...'

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

WORD COUNT

Write a short story of 1 800 to 2 500 words.
The story can be of any genre except erotica.

PRIZES

PUBLISHER'S CHOICE AWARD - R 1000
PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD - R 500

SUBMISSIONS OPEN

7 - 14 April 2025

PUBLIC VOTING

21 - 27 April 2025

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Sukoluhle Nontokoza
Mdlongwa on

 **+27 74 643 0618**

 info@publishdafrika.com



1. Like and follow PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine Online Facebook Page
2. Short stories should be STRICTLY written in English. You can add a touch of any language to your story.
3. Your work should be original
4. Short stories to be submitted in WORD DOCUMENT FORMAT. Clearly state your full/pen name, contact details and number of words. PDFs and stories typed directly on WhatsApp or email body WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFIED. Make use of Google or go through the page or Sukoluhle Nontokoza Mdlongwa's timeline if you don't know what a Word Document is.
5. Anyone from any country can enter the competition. There's no age or nationality restrictions.
6. Submit via email to info@publishdafrika.com or WhatsApp +27 74 643 0618

PLEASE NOTE: All previous PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine Facebook Short Story Competition winners are not eligible to enter.

All qualifying stories will be posted on our PUBLISH'D Afrika Magazine page. Number of reactions per story determine the People's Choice Award winner. We also have a Publisher's Choice Award for a story that will be picked by the publisher.

Mabel Segun Passes On At 95

Mabel Dorothy Okanima Segun (née Aig-Imoukhuede) passed away in the early hours of Thursday, 6 March 2025. She was 95 years old.

Born Mabel Dorothy Okanima Aig-Imoukhuede on 13 February 1930, in Ondo City, Nigeria, to Isaiah and Eunice Aig-Imoukhuede, Segun was a pioneering Nigerian writer, editor, and advocate for children's literature, whose influence spanned decades.

She received her early education in Edunabon and Akure before attending CMS Girls' School, Lagos, from 1942 to 1947. Her academic brilliance led her to the University of Ibadan, where she graduated in 1953 with a BA in English, Latin, and History. At university, Segun served as deputy editor and advertisement manager of the University Herald. Her literary gift was quickly recognised when a short story she wrote in her final year won the inaugural Nigerian Festival of the Arts Literature Prize in 1954.

Mabel Segun's first husband burnt her first yet-to-be-published novel because he did not want her to become famous. Her literary contributions were vast and impactful. She authored, co-authored, and edited 11 children's books, among them are the beloved autobiographical works: *My Father's Daughter* and *My Mother's Daughter*, which have been widely studied in Nigerian and international universities.

Her works have been featured in over 30 anthologies, both in Nigeria and abroad, and translated into multiple languages, including



German, Danish, Norwegian, Greek, and Serbo-Croat. Two of her children's books have also been translated into Swahili and Arabic.

Segun's influence on Nigerian literature remains profound. Her pioneering efforts in children's literature, poetry, prose, and essays cemented her status as one of Nigeria's most celebrated female writers. Her legacy endures through her works, the institutions she founded, and the countless writers she inspired.

Partly sourced from: **Black History Studies**

A Parallel Life



Do you sometimes worry that you have to choose a single career, discarding the bits of you that do not serve it?

Chantal Stewart is a medical doctor, author and poet who has found ways to sustain her creative gifts while navigating a successful career. She works full-time in a government hospital and spends her free time facilitating creative writing workshops. Her poems have been widely anthologised, while her debut novel, *The Veil of Maya* (Minimal Press, 2022) won the NIHSS Best Fiction Novel Award and the UCT Book Award and was republished by Karavan Press in 2024.

“I started enjoying creative writing from a very young age,” she remembers. “When I was eight or nine years old, I decided that I wanted to write my first

novel by the time I was eighteen, which seemed a very advanced age at the time. Needless to say, this did not happen.

“My father was a GP, and his practice was adjacent to our home, so I was steeped in the practicalities of medicine for as long as I can remember. When I was growing up, if one did well at school one either did medicine, law, teaching or engineering. So I decided that I would do medicine and study literature later. There was never any chance that writing and literature would not be part of my life.”

“My medical and writing life have always been separate. I have seen them as left brain vs right brain. I very seldom write creatively about my work life, though this is starting to happen now, maybe as I make peace with the two disparate parts of myself.”

Read the useful tips Stewart has shared for sustaining creativity in the midst of a busy working life and let them feed your own creative fires:

6. The first thing to say is that very few people can make a living from writing, so don't necessarily think of this as your career.
2. Find time (both physically and in your mindset) to nurture creativity in the midst of a demanding job. And even when time is limited, reading is always essential. The more widely one reads, the better it is for writing and creativity.
3. Create deadlines for yourself. What sustains me now is that I have to write. I suppose it is a compulsion. These days, I cannot imagine not writing creatively in some way for any length of time.
4. Writing communities are very important. If you can, regularly attend workshops. Apart from getting you to write, they can also put you in contact with like-minded people. There are various groups who meet once a week or once a month to write and discuss writing. Look them up and join them.
5. Many writing coaches talk about keeping "morning pages" or journalling. I find it very useful to spend 5-10 minutes jotting down memories at the end of a long day. This does not have to be detailed, but it is good both as an archive and to rid oneself of the "stuff" of the day.
6. Finally, there are many writing competitions dedicated to all genres of literature. It is useful to submit to some of these, as they provide a goal or a purpose to one's writing. In the next few days, write a poem that describes a second life that you would like to have. It could be a secret ambition or a dream of luxury that feels impossible even to pursue. Explore how it might feel if you could fulfil this dream. Make it as far-fetched or as ordinary as you like.

The annual AVBOB Poetry Competition is opening for submissions on 1 August 2025. Visit www.avbobpoetry.co.za today and familiarise yourself with the competition rules.

Tshepang Mkhwanazi: Author, Philanthropist Wrapped Into One

When Tshepang Mkhwanazi entered the African Teen Authors Book Initiative (ATABI) Short Story Competition, he was acutely aware that he would be contesting for a spot against scribes from 28 African countries and the diaspora.

When the initial Top 25 was announced, he was elated to discover that he was amongst those in the longlist. Crossing fingers, he awaited the final Top 10 list, of which he emerged in the fourth position, sealing his spot amongst the scribes who would be heading to Morocco as part of the competition's prizes.

Born in Bophelong, Vanderbijlpark, the 19-year-old hasn't looked back since. He published his debut book, *The Heart Whispers*, a collection of poems, in 2024.

He went on to dust off a number of manuscripts that he had written from when he was 14 years old, and moled into them with renewed vigour to get them ready for publication.

Tshepang also writes Sesotho novels, drama scripts, poems, and short stories. He has been featured in a short story anthology titled *Tales From The Riverbank* and profiled in five magazines and four newspapers. He is currently working on multiple projects,

amongst them a poetry anthology titled *Passion And Profit vol 1*, two novels titled *Life After Matric* and *Puseletso*, as well as a drama book titled *Motlalepula*.

Tshepang is also a motivational speaker, a mentor, a poet, a radio person, a digital



marketer, and an author. He has also started a project called MOTHO KA BATHO LITERARY PROJECT, whereby he mentors authors from his townships. He also helps learners with homework and teaches others to read and write. He has been

nominated at the Young Leaders Awards under the sub-category “Young Inspirational Person”. He was also nominated at the Mzansi Arts and Media Awards under the category “Best Writer” at the age of 19 years old.

BOOKS BY SUKOLUHLE NONTOKOZO MDLONGWA

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My Turn: Your Opportunity To Share Your Views With Africa



Do you have a subject you feel strongly about? Would you like to share your thoughts on the matter with the continent? PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine brings you **My Turn**, a column dedicated to you, the reader, to share your views on any topic or subject matter with our readers across Africa and the diaspora. You choose the topic you would like to share your views on, provided it is free of bias, prejudice, religious prejudice, sexism, homophobia, racism, transphobia and xenophobia.

While the writer has autonomy to pick their own topic, the submission should however venture to align to PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine's motto: '**Re-defining Africa's Narrative.**'

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine reserves the right to edit, shorten or refuse a submission. The submission should be no more than 1000 words and should be accompanied by a head-and-shoulders picture of the writer. There is no remuneration for an article that has been accepted for publication. We will publish only one **My Turn** Column per issue.

Submissions can be submitted to:

info@publishdafrika.com

WhatsApp: +2783 487 4440

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Pitch To Publication An Exclusive Books Homebru Edition

The Jacana Literary Foundation (JLF) is delighted to collaborate with Exclusive Books in 2025 to launch a special EB Homebru edition of From Pitch to Publication, which will identify, nurture and profile new talent.

Pitching sessions will be held in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, at the end of May. Submissions to participate close 31 March 2025.

From Pitch to Publication provides an exciting opportunity for writers from southern Africa to showcase their work to a panel of industry professionals in a Dragon's Den type environment.

Participants are selected from a bursting-at-the-seams submissions box and are afforded a priceless behind-the-scenes glimpse into the literary world.

They'll get invaluable feedback, insights and tips from the panel of publishers, booksellers, literary festival organisers, academics and media.

Most importantly, they will get a shot at a writing mentorship and a publishing deal with the JLF's partner publisher, Jacana Media. Furthermore, those writers who scoop a coveted publishing deal will be featured on Exclusive Books' iconic annual Homebru campaign, which celebrates South African literature and homegrown authors, showcasing a collection of diverse titles and giving a platform to local voices.

Do you have what it takes to pitch your book? This is your chance to impress and persuade us – and the knowledgeable team from Exclusive Books – to consider your work for publication.

Send your submission to From Pitch to Publication – Jacana or email info@jacanaliteraryfoundation.co.za for further information.

Submissions must include:

Your full manuscript

A synopsis

Your biography

The Spring Writing Fellowship

The Spring Writing Fellowship, a free and intensive 6-week online mentorship program for emerging writers, is accepting applications until April 15, 2025.

The fellowship is only open to writers between the ages 18 and 25 residing in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, and South Africa who have not published a book before (eBook/hardcopy).

This online fellowship focuses on 4 genres of literature: Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, and Book Review. During the 6 weeks, mentees will be in contact with their mentors, sending them their works and getting reviews and commentaries. The medium of communication between the mentors and mentees throughout this program will be via email, phone calls, WhatsApp, and text messages. In addition, all mentees will be provided weekly airtime and free access to 1-year MasterClass membership as part of the program.

See the fellowship information page to learn more and click here to submit an application. You can watch this video and read this interview for tips on submitting a successful application and to hear more about fellows' experiences.

Finalists will be notified of their acceptance to the Spring Writing Fellowship on May 18. For any inquiries regarding the fellowship, please email contact@spring.org.

CANEX Book Factory Prize for Publishing in Africa

African Export Import Bank - Afreximbank's CANEX is excited to announce the 2nd edition of the CANEX Book Factory Prize for Publishing in Africa, in collaboration with Narrative Landscape Press. This initiative celebrates the literary talent within Africa and its diaspora.

The winner will receive \$20,000, and each of the four finalists will be awarded \$2,000. Submissions are open from 19 March to 30 April 2025.

How to Apply:

1. Register for the CANEX Book Factory by visiting: <https://canex.africa/canex-book-factory>
2. Click on the "Prize for Publishing in Africa" button to access the submissions platform.
3. Check your email for a confirmation after signing up.

Exciting opportunity for illustrators!

Lounloun is inviting passionate illustrators to join their team.

They are seeking artists who can visually capture the essence of our stories, bringing characters and settings to life.

Lounloun is a Pan-African literary journal, currently focused on fictional stories rooted in historical events that have shaped the continent.

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