

FEBRUARY 2026 ISSUE

# PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

LITERARY MAGAZINE

**OVERALLS  
TO APRONS**

Nomvelo's  
Courageous Step  
into the Unknown

**UNFILTERED**

The Vatiswa Ndara  
Story

**CALLS FOR  
SUBMISSIONS**

“Finally, We  
Are Published Authors”

**28 ASPIRING  
AUTHORS GET A  
CHANCE TO  
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**PUBLISH IN YOUR  
OWN LANGUAGE**

Assisted Self-publishing  
Programme

**JUSTICE DINGAKE TIPPED FOR  
SEAT AT THE HAGUE**

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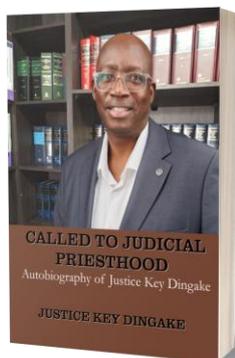
PUBLISH'D Afrika

## Justice Dingake Tipped For Bench At The Hague

In November 2026, the United Nations will cast a significant vote—they will decide on who gets a seat in the Hague as Judge of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

And Southern Africa will be holding its collective breath, as the Office of Botswana's Ambassador to the United Nations announced that the country has nominated renowned jurist and scholar, Justice Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake, to run for the international bench.

But who is Justice Bethuel Key Dingake, and why does his nomination stand out in an era where the pillars of the international order are often tested amidst the shifting sands of power and politics?



The answer lies in his autobiography, “Called To Judiciary Priesthood”, which he published in South Africa through PUBLISH'D AFRIKA in November last year.

“I was moulded from the stony village of Bobonong, by the hands of a community that understood both the harshness of

the sun and the sustenance of the rain,” said Justice Dingake. “Our wealth was not material; it was communal. The concept of Botho—the essence of shared humanity—was not a philosophy to be studied; it was the air we breathed. It was in the way the village cared for an orphan, in the collective responsibility for a neighbour’s harvest, in the intricate, often frustrating, but always human-centric, dispute resolutions under the old tree where the elderly sat.”

But even there, Dingake saw the cracks. He saw the silent resignation of women who worked the land but could not own it. He saw the subtle hierarchies that predetermined futures. A fire of inquiry was lit within him. It was a fire stoked by his parents, simple people of profound wisdom, who sacrificed endlessly so that their children could grasp the power of the written word. They understood that education was not a path out of the village, but a tool to better it.

“The University of Botswana was not merely an institution of learning; it was the forge where my character was tempered,” he said. “The 80s were a time of intellectual ferment and political awakening across Southern Africa. Apartheid was a festering wound on our doorstep, and we, the youth, felt its poison every day. We were not silent. We could not be. Student activism was our training ground for the battles of principle we would later fight in courtrooms. We debated Marxism, African socialism, and liberalism, not as academic abstractions, but as tools for liberation. We organised, we protested, we spoke truth to power. We learned

that law without justice is a weapon of oppression, and that justice without courage is a phantom.”

It was here that Dingake truly understood the law not as a static set of rules, but as a dynamic instrument for social engineering. He learned that to be a lawyer was to choose a side of the marginalised, the voiceless, the oppressed. This was not a radical notion; it was, to him, the only ethical foundation for a legal profession in a continent breaking its chains.

“My time at the Bar was my apprenticeship in the mechanics of justice. I learned the weight of a case file, the anxiety of a client, the theatre of the courtroom, and the profound responsibility of holding someone’s liberty in your hands. I argued before grizzled judges and sharp-witted opponents, learning that victory was not just about rhetoric, but about meticulous preparation and an unshakeable fidelity to facts.”

The University of Botswana has a special place in his life journey. Academia was the laboratory where he could dissect the law, question its assumptions, and imagine its better versions.

“Teaching the next generation of lawyers was an act of faith,” said Dingake. “I endeavoured to impart not just the ‘what’ of the law, but the ‘why’. I urged them to be critical, to see the gaps in our statutes, the biases in our precedents, and to dream of a more equitable legal order. It was a symbiotic relationship: my practice informed my teaching with practicality, and my

teaching informed my practice with principle.”

The move to the Bench was a natural progression, a transition from advocacy to adjudication, from arguing for justice to being its instrument. His tenure at the Industrial Court was a masterclass in the economics of human dignity. Here, the abstract concepts of fairness and equity met the stark realities of bread and butter. He saw the power imbalance between a single employee and a corporate giant, and he understood the court's role as the necessary equaliser.

“My appointment to the High Court of Botswana was where the full canvas of the law unfolded before me,” he said. “The cases were not just judgments; they were conversations with the soul of the nation. They were moments where we had to ask: is this who we are? Is this who we want to be?”

His appointment to the Supreme and National Courts of Papua New Guinea was, for many, a paradox. How could one leave Africa to find Africa? But he went not as a stranger, but as a brother. PNG, with its vibrant tapestry of over 800 languages and cultures, its post-colonial struggles, and its courageous constitutional experiment, felt intensely familiar. It was Africa in the Pacific.

“Sitting in judgment in Port Moresby, I was applying the same universal principles of justice, fairness, and dignity, but through the unique prism of Melanesian culture and the PNG Constitution,” he said. “It was the ultimate test of the portability of legal principle and the universality of human rights. It reinforced my belief that while justice must be contextual, its

foundational pillars—respect for human dignity, equality, and fairness—are non-negotiable anywhere on earth.”

Dingake's service on the Court of Appeal of Seychelles and the Residual Court for Sierra Leone further broadened this canvas. In Seychelles, a small developing island state, the challenges of environmental law, maritime boundaries, and economic rights took centre stage.

“In the Residual Court for Sierra Leone, we were dealing with the grim aftermath of unimaginable brutality, working to ensure that the long arm of justice could still reach those who sought to evade it for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It was a solemn duty to the victims, a contribution to the fragile architecture of international criminal law, and a message that impunity, anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere.”

The presidency of the Africa Regional Judges Forum was the harvest of a lifetime of sowing. It was a platform to nurture the next generation of judicial leaders across the continent.

“We moved beyond mere networking to a profound fellowship of purpose. We shared judgments, debated common challenges—from judicial independence and corruption to the integration of international human rights law into domestic jurisdictions. We understood that an independent, robust, and courageous judiciary is the single most important bulwark against the slide into authoritarianism and chaos. The forum became a sanctuary where judges could strengthen their resolve, share their burdens, and remind each other that

they are not alone in their fight to be the guardians of their nations' constitutional covenants.”

“The jurisprudence I have helped shape, both in Botswana and beyond, is a jurisprudence of transformation. It is not enough for the law to be a mirror reflecting society; it must also be a beacon, guiding society towards a more just horizon. This is the living tree doctrine—the idea that a Constitution must grow and adapt to meet the aspirations of each new generation.”

Publisher, Thokozani Magagula, said: “Some lives embody the power of education, perseverance, and moral courage more profoundly than others. Justice Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake's story is one such example.

“His journey reflects the aspirations, challenges, and triumphs of a continent striving for justice, democracy, and human dignity,” said Magagula. “From humble beginnings in Bobonong, Botswana, to esteemed benches of the High Courts of Botswana, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, and beyond, Justice Dingake's path has been marked by an unrelenting pursuit of excellence and unwavering commitment to principle. His life has been shaped by adversity and driven by a deep-seated belief in the transformative power of law.”

Justice Dingake's upbringing, characterised by simplicity and hardship, instilled in him a strong sense of empathy and social justice. These early

experiences sensitised him to inequality and fueled his passion for advocating for the marginalised. This foundation propelled him to become a respected jurist and thought leader, known for his courage and integrity in the face of challenges.

Honourable Justice John Carey, Justice of the National and Supreme Courts of Papua New Guinea and Adjunct Professor of Law, Griffith University, Australia, said Justice Dingake's reflections on his judicial philosophy, his tenure across multiple jurisdictions, and his contributions to academic discourse, illuminate the rare fusion of intellectual depth and human compassion that defines his legacy.

“What stands out most is his courage—courage to dissent when truth demanded it; courage to reimagine justice beyond the confines of black-letter law; and courage to remain steadfast in integrity amidst the shifting sands of power and politics,” said Justice Carey. “His story reaffirms a timeless truth: that the law, when wielded with conscience and conviction, can be a force for societal renewal.”

Justice Carey said Dingake embodies the story of Africa's evolving jurisprudence and of one son's steadfast service to humanity. His life story challenges us to believe that character still matters; that justice must always wear a human face; and that leadership, at its best, is an act of service.

## From Overalls To Aprons

### Nomvelo's Courageous Step Into The Unknown



appreciate until much later.

“The village was my playground, my teacher, my foundation,” she said. “It taught me resilience, discipline, and the power of community. We fetched water from rivers, carried firewood on our heads, and walked barefoot on dirt roads without complaint. It was a life that demanded strength but also gave

She had reached the pinnacle of her career, in a world of overalls, steel, and industry, a male-dominated field where she was thriving. She had proven that a girl from the village could hold her own in the world of circuits and machinery.

But then, she surprised everyone when she gave it all up. She swapped the overalls for the apron, meaning she gave up a successful career in Engineering and moved to Saudi Arabia, where she embraced the monotonous life of being a housewife.

Nomvelo MaMngoma-Shezi was born in Durban but raised in Highflats, KwaGqwathaza, esgodini saKwaThathane. A city girl with a village upbringing—a combination that shaped her in ways she didn't fully

freedom—the kind of freedom that modern life often takes away.”

Nomvelo would later pursue studies in Engineering, ultimately landing a job at a prestigious engineering firm in Durban. This was where she met the man who would later become her husband and father of their two daughters.

“When my husband was offered an irresistible opportunity in Saudi Arabia, I had to make a choice—tag along with him or continue pursuing my already thriving career,” said Nomvelo. “Moving to Saudi Arabia meant I would be swapping the overalls for aprons. Needless to say, I chose the former.”

Nomvelo’s story is told in her newly released book, “From Overalls To Aprons”, which was published by PUBLISH'D AFRIKA in November last year.



“I still remember my first day stepping out into the streets of Dammam, in Saudi Arabia,” she said. “My head covered in a modest scarf, my heart pounding with both excitement and anxiety. The city pulsed with energy so different from home. The towering buildings, the desert sun, the people moving with a sense of purpose—it was overwhelming. I had read about culture shock, but reading and experiencing are

two different things. I felt like a child learning to walk again.”



Nomvelo said this book is a reflection of an incredible journey that began with the unwavering belief of a husband who saw something in her that she hadn’t yet recognised within myself. He saw the potential, the spark that could ignite something beautiful.

“It was his encouragement that pushed me to embrace storytelling, a passion I hadn’t known I possessed,” she said. “What started as a small nudge turned into a series of life-changing opportunities, and here we are today, at the brink of sharing my story with the world. One pivotal moment in this journey came through an unexpected opportunity on Facebook, where I was introduced to the platforms known as *Zulu Berries are Awesome* and *Zulu Cherries are Fabulous*. The platform offered a space to share my life in Saudi Arabia, and it was here that I truly understood the power of storytelling. Through these platforms, I began to open up about my experiences, my personal triumphs and

challenges, and what it was like to live in the Middle East. I found that by speaking openly about my experiences, I was not only educating others but also growing alongside my audience. Little did I know, these small posts would eventually give birth to something much bigger.”

This exposure not only gave Nomvelo the courage to continue sharing, but also inspired her to branch out into new avenues. With a new sense of purpose and a platform to express herself, she started a YouTube channel called *ZuluFullTimeMama*, now called *ZuluMama*. On this channel, she initially shared her daily life as a mother and a Zulu woman living abroad. It later became a space for learning, connecting, and teaching her children while also embracing the beauty of her cultural heritage.

“As I navigated the world of digital content creation, I realised there was even more to share—specifically about career paths,” she said. “This led to the creation of a second YouTube channel and a Blog called *Futuristic Career Path* (Ikusasa Career Guidance), where I began to offer advice to young people about their career choices after high school. I recognised how much clarity I had gained over the years in terms of my own career journey and wanted to share that insight with others. Whether someone was contemplating their future or considering a career change, I aimed to provide guidance, advice, and inspiration to help them make informed decisions.”

“What I hope to achieve with this book is to offer a glimpse into my life and to

serve as a reminder that stepping out of your comfort zone is often the first step toward discovering new strengths. I am living proof that embracing change and taking risks can lead to unexpected rewards. It was never easy, and at times, it felt daunting, but each hurdle taught me invaluable lessons. These lessons aren't just mine to hold on to; I want to share them with you, my reader, so you can embark on your own journey of transformation.”

When she moved to the Middle East, Nomvelo was faced with a new way of life—one that was vastly different from the familiar world she had left behind. But rather than shy away from the challenges, she embraced them. She learned the importance of adaptation, of understanding different traditions, and most importantly, she learned to appreciate the rich culture and history that the Middle East has to offer.

“My experiences living in Saudi Arabia have given me a unique lens through which I view the world,” she said. “And through this book, I hope to share that lens with you, to invite you into a world that may seem foreign at first but is filled with lessons that can resonate universally. By sharing my story, I aim to inspire someone who may be hesitant to step outside their comfort zone. It is easy to stay within the boundaries of the familiar, to avoid the unknown, but growth happens in the moments where we dare to venture into uncharted territory. If there's one thing I have learned along the way, it is that the only way to truly discover what we are capable of is by taking that first step into the unknown.”

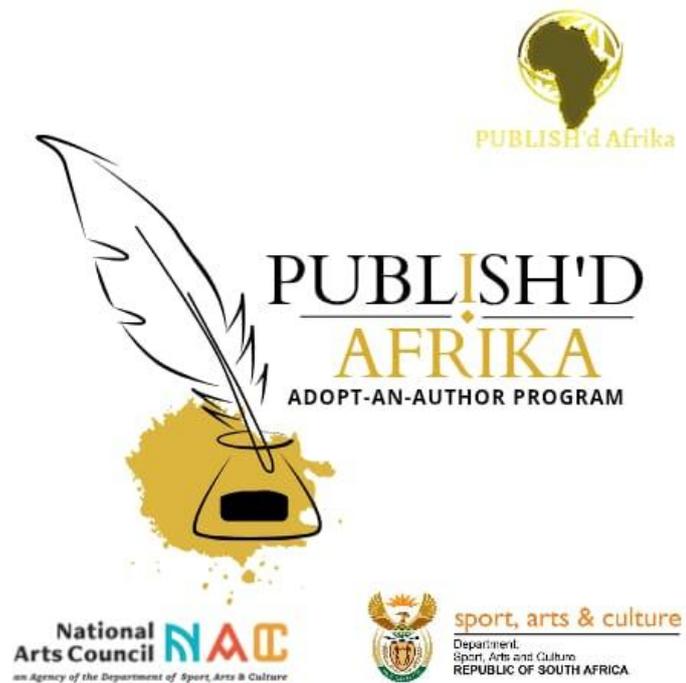
## “Finally, We Are Published Authors!” 28 Aspiring Authors Get Chance To Publish

As the 2025/26 PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Magazine's Spoiling The Broth and Adopt-An-Author Programmes draw to a close in March, a total of 28 writers have been given an opportunity to publish.

These include six writers who published independent bodies of work through the Adopt-An-Author Programme, and 22 who are part of the Spoiling The Broth Volume 4 and Volume 5. Both programmes were generously funded by the National Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture.

Each year, PUBLISH'D AFRIKA's flagship, the PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine, calls for submissions for unpublished full-length manuscripts. Writers are asked to initially submit a synopsis, the first chapter and a marketing plan they have for their book. From the submissions, PUBLISH'D AFRIKA selects writers who would then be published, AT NO COST, as part of the Adopt-An-Author Programme.

This call for submission closed in September 2025 and after meticulously moling through every submission, six writers were selected for the program.



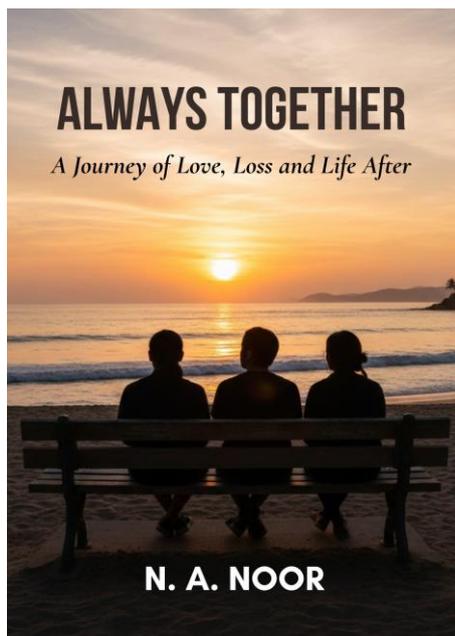
The six authors are: Thandiwe Baloyi, for her book *Jah Love*, Cleopatra Ndlovu for her masterpiece, *Fragments of Me*, Mosimanegape Leeuw for his YA offering, *The Price of Freedom*, Mduduzi Sikhosana for his non-fiction, *Beyond the Matrix*, Mbako Letlhomu for his intriguing novel, *Loving Mary*, and N.A Noir, who penned *Always Together*.

An additional 22 writers will form part of Volume 4 and Volume 5 of the *Spoiling The Broth* Anthology. These are the winners of our monthly PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine Short Story Competition for 2025.

The program was established in 2021, and the first batch of authors we published were sponsored by private companies, amongst them Moripa Logistics, a mining company based in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, and 2C-MAJ. In 2022, only two authors were published, and the program was jointly funded by PUBLISH'D AFRIKA and the University of Fort Hare, as well as by a municipality in the Northern Cape.

Nailah Alexander, who writes under the penname N.A Noor, said the publication of her book has been a dream in the making.

“I submitted my manuscript in September 2025 and received the exciting news of my selection on 31 October 2025, as one of the six gifted scribes in the PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Adopt-An-Author Programme,” said Nailah. “After months of careful work, it has now been polished into a finished book and will be officially released in March.”

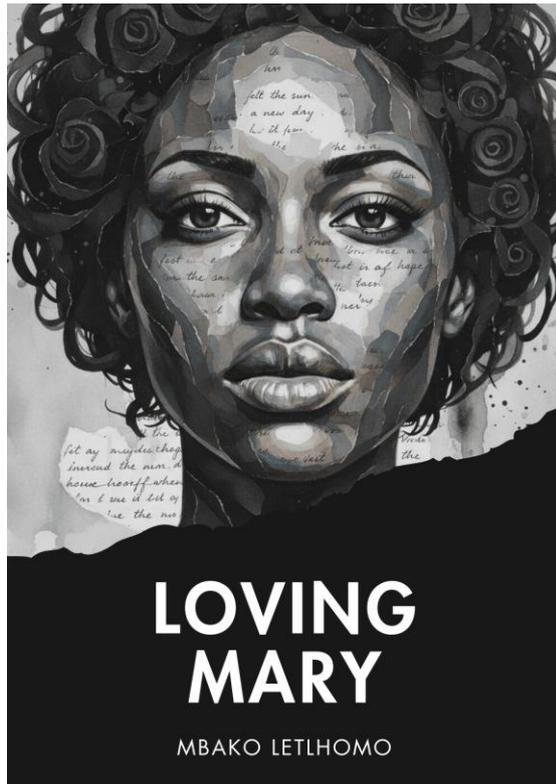


Cleopatra Ndlovu said for a long time, her work lived on the streets of Facebook – raw, hopeful and sometimes unsure,” she said. “There were moments when my dream of being published felt like it was quietly dissolving. Then PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine opened a door and finally, I get to share my storytelling with the rest of the world.”



*Cleo Ndlovu, author of Fragments of Me*

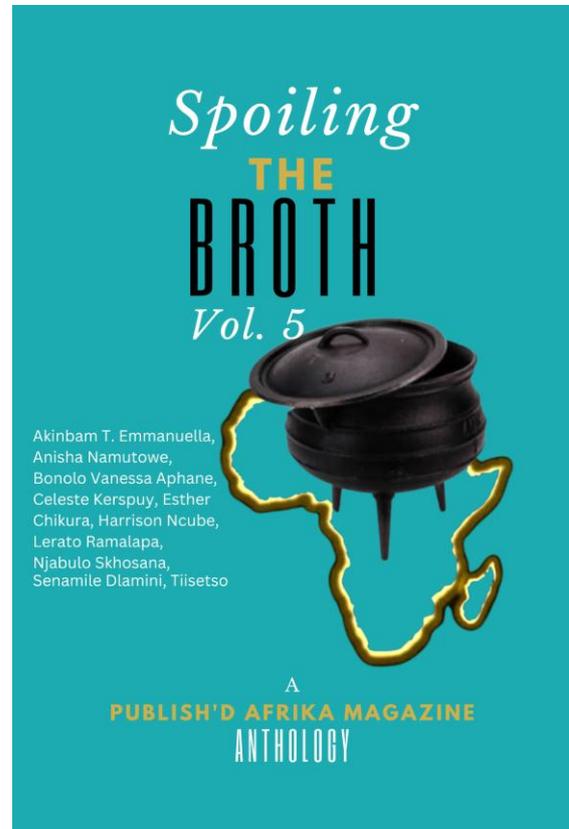
Mbako Letlthomo said, “I owe sincere thanks to PUBLISH'D AFRIKA's Adopt-An-Author Programme for believing in this story before it fully knew itself. PUBLISH'D AFRIKA provided guidance without control, and belief without illusion. To the combined effort of PUBLISH'D AFRIKA, National Arts Council, and Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, thank you for creating a field where African voices are heard.”



Senamile Dlamini, who is part of *Spoiling The Broth* Volume 5, said a delayed dream is still a dream worth chasing.

“This could be a small thing in someone else’s eyes, but to me this is big,” she said. “This is the start of a new journey. This happened so suddenly that even now, I still can’t believe it. When I started writing, I long had a dream of getting published one day like those

authors I read their stories in high school. Now, thanks to PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Magazine, I can call myself a published author, and a proud one.”



The 2025/26 programme was once again funded by the National Arts Council. Pre-orders for the books are already out. You can get in touch with the authors for your copy or contact PUBLISH'D AFRIKA to be linked to an author near you.



# Unfiltered

## The Vatiswa Ndara Story



She starred as Mamfundisi in *Generations*, Maka Buli in *Home Affairs* through to the notorious NoMaRussia in *Igazi*.

But then the thespian, Vatiswa Ndara, receded into oblivion, after she unfairly blacklisted from the entertainment industry. Now she has released her book, “Unfiltered – My Unglamorous Odyssey in the World of South African Entertainment”.

*Unfiltered* takes readers on Vatiswa's captivating journey through South Africa's entertainment industry, offering an intimate look into the complexities behind her public success. This memoir begins with Vatiswa's early years, her close-knit family that ventured abroad and stayed in the United Kingdom for just over three years before returning to South Africa. She and her siblings attended top private schools against the backdrop of apartheid in the 80's.

As she recounts her transition from a bright-eyed aspirant to a prominent media personality, *Unfiltered* reveals Vatiswa's personal and professional challenges she faced along the way. Her accounts of triumph, including iconic roles on prominent productions, are juxtaposed with harrowing experiences of abuse and exploitation.

Vatiswa pulls no punches in exposing the darker side of the entertainment industry, shedding light on a culture of gender-based violence and systemic abuse of power. She critiques the industry's failures and the lack of

regulatory oversight, that has allowed such exploitation to flourish. She also scrutinises some political figures for their roles in the decline of the arts sector and their perceived indifference to the plight of the artistic community.

Despite the gravity of her experiences Vatiswa's storytelling is punctuated with humour and resilience, making it a compelling read.

Through her unflinching honesty, Vatiswa offers a rare glimpse into the realities of the South African entertainment industry, that should

spark important conversations about accountability, support and change.

The book delves into working conditions in the entertainment industry in South Africa, the legacy of exploitation, the role of a woman in a patriarchal society, gender based violence, and politics of arts and culture in South Africa.

The reader is taken through Vatiswa's evolution to becoming an iconic figure in the entertainment industry in a vivid, grim yet humorous way that leaves the reader yearning for more. The narrative moves from radio and television stations encounters, production set conflicts, through to the higher echelons of national and political leadership.

Vatiswa also shares her own journey as a mother who at times struggles to make ends meet. Her story unearths the

unglamorous side of the entertainment industry that we know very little about.

Vatiswa Ndara's memoir is now available on Takealot and Amazon globally.

<https://hosturl.link/ZLIcox>



# PAY-IT-FORWARD PLAY-IT-FORWARD

## Helping Bridge Literacy Gap In KZN



PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine has donated a total of 30 books of various genres to the Newcastle-based Incushe Yolwazi Book Club.

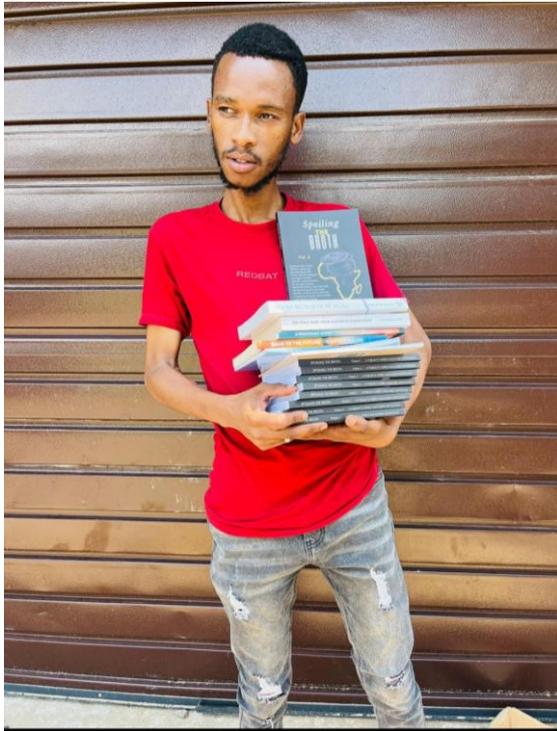
Along with the donation, PUBLISH'D AFRIKA will offer quarterly writing and publishing workshops to the growing number of aspiring writers who flock to the book club on a daily basis.

This is part of our National Arts Council-funded Pay-It-Forward Play-It-Forward programme, which is coupled with the publication of six Adopt-An-Author books and Volume 4 and 5 of the Spoiling The Broth Anthology. The two volumes will see a total of 28 aspiring writers getting an opportunity to publish their works.

Incushe Yolwazi Book Club was established on the 24th of September 2022 by award-winning author Sandile Ngwenya. The book club aims to promote a love for reading among adults and children in the community. With a team of passionate facilitators, they provide reading sessions over weekends for +/- 40 children and +/- 15 adults in grades (R-12) + (18 – Adults) in both isiZulu and English.

The book club primarily serves the Newcastle area, in Kwazulu-Natal, as well as a number of remote corners of our country, specifically children living in the rural areas. The book club also plans to make their services available to pensioners so that they can earn their own livelihoods.

“These books are not just pages and covers. They are hope. They are opportunities. They are voices waiting to be heard and minds waiting to be awakened,” said Incushe Yolwazi founder, Sandile Ngwenya.



By sharing these books within the community, we are promoting a culture of reading because knowledge is one of the few things that grows when it is shared. A single book can inspire thought, restore confidence, and open doors to a future someone never imagined.

“This is something I deeply admire doing, not for recognition, but because access to knowledge can change lives,” said Sandile. “If we want a better world, we must invest in minds one book, one reader, one community at a time.”

The aim of Incushe Yolwazi Book Club is to bring the community of Newcastle

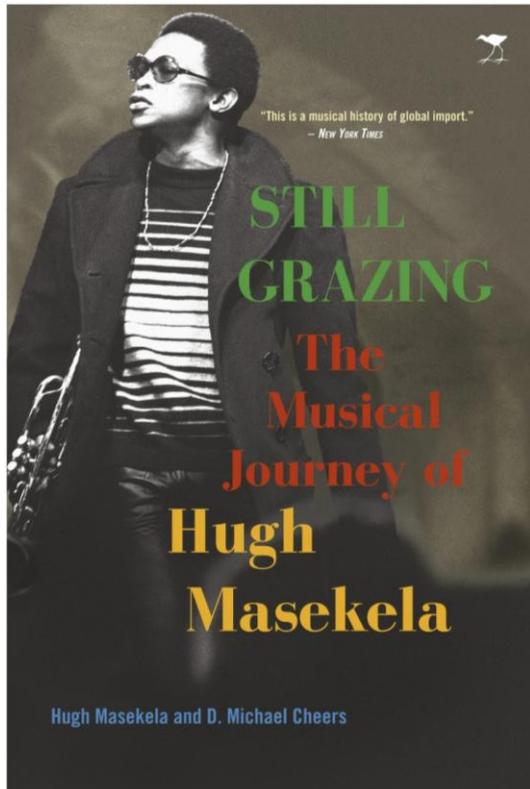
and surroundings together to learn about and discuss matters that are important to them. Their programme is to invite young people to read, formulate opinions and discuss stories from a wide array of genres. The book club seeks to promote a reading culture and is dedicated to upholding, enhance the profile and status of young authors in the country through indigenous languages, Afrikaans and English. The book club seeks to recruit poets as well.

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA co-founder Thokozani Magagula said they will also be visiting the book club quarterly to offer writing and publishing workshops to the club's aspiring authors.

“If you are writing your own book or are interested in starting, learning how people dissect plotlines, characters, and settings in books will help you see what writing techniques work and which don't, Incushe Yolwazi Book Club is the place to go,” said Thokozani. “Reading books of different genres will also let you experience different styles, which will help your writing skills in the long run, the Incushe Yolwazi Book Club is a home to be.”

We all have heard that books are mental food for the brain. Yet some of us struggle with sitting down and actually finish them despite our best intentions. And if you are one of many who pick up a book but never reach the last page, Incushe Yolwazi Book Club will be of assistance.

## Remembering Bra Hugh: Eight Years On, His Music and Life Still Speaks



The 23<sup>rd</sup> of January marked eight years since the passing of Hugh Masekela – a towering figure in Jazz music and a global symbol of artistic resistance.

Masekela's unmistakable trumpet sound carried the soul of jazz, Afropop and township rhythms to the world. Beyond the music, he was a fearless voice against apartheid, using his art to expose injustice, rally international solidarity and affirm the dignity of Black South Africans during some of the country's darkest years.

Masekela's memoir, *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*, is the deeply personal account of his musical journey, exile, activism and homecoming.

Unfolding against one of the most inspiring political transformations of the twentieth century, *Still Grazing* is the engrossing chronicle of a remarkable musician, a one-of-a-kind life. Bra Hugh's music and message continue to resonate, reminding us that culture can be both a refuge and a powerful tool for change.

### Read Below an Extract from *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*

One day at the Blue Thumb Records office, Stewart picked up a copy of the New York Times and saw an article about an upcoming heavyweight championship fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. Hyped as the "Rumble in the Jungle" by new boxing promoter Don King, it was to take place in Zaire later in the year.

King, who had served time in a Cleveland prison for having caused a death in a street fight, was a close friend of a man named Lloyd Price, and had roped him into the Zaire event to handle the entertainment aspects of the "Rumble in the Jungle." Lloyd Price had had major hit records in the early 1960s with "Stagger Lee" and "Personality," which had shot him to the pinnacle of rhythm and blues success. King felt he was just the right man for the job after having known him since the beginning of his entertainment career.

When I was hanging out with Johnny Nash and Danny Sims in the mid-1960s, I had met Lloyd Price on many occasions, and over the years we had come to know each other quite well. On our way out of the Blue Thumb office, all Stewart wanted to talk about was the Rumble in the Jungle as he, Krasnow, and I headed for Dan Tana's restaurant next to the Troubador Club on Santa Monica Boulevard, at the edge of Beverly Hills; it was our favourite watering hole.

At our regular booth deep inside the restaurant, Stewart kept talking about the Rumble. "This is a great chance to have a festival of the greatest artists from America, Africa, and the host country, man. The film that could be made of the festival and Ali and Foreman preparing for the fight would be fantastic. The whole thing could be called 'Three Days of Music and Fighting' [a reference to the Woodstock Festival of 1969], and we should see if Lloyd Price would be interested in our helping him to put such an event together. Our advantage is that you lived in Zaire, Hugh, you know the top musicians there, like Franco and Rochereau, who'd put it together, and Lloyd is your friend, man. He'll listen to you. You should track him down and give him a call."

At first I wasn't too keen on the idea. I was still reeling from the breakup of Hedzoleh Soundz. Stanley and I had been talking a lot about getting Asante and Jagger to go with us to Washington, D.C., where the three of them knew some good musicians from Ghana and Nigeria. We were planning to hook up

with some of them and put a group together so that we could go out on the road and promote the new album we had just made. Stanley's drummer brother, Frankie, was also in D.C.

I was rather surprised that Krasnow was impressed with Stewart's idea and actually thought it was worth following through. The next morning I called Lloyd from Krasnow's office and proposed our idea to him. He loved it. He said he was in a meeting then with Don King and Hank Schwartz, the owner of the broadcast rights and King's partner. He put King on the telephone.

"Hugh Masekela, I have followed your career for a long time and I think that you are an essential brother. You have helped to inspire many of us to look in the direction of the Motherland to retrace our origins and to reconnect with our roots. I have no doubt that you would be a strategic participant in our effort to put together a festival to go along with the greatest fight of the century. As Black brothers, armed with our different expertise in our chosen fields, we would capture the attention and the imagination of the entire world with our joint initiative. Billions of people will be watching this historical event. Let us join hands, my brother, and shake up the world. Any good friend of Lloyd's is a friend of mine. You are welcome to join this great initiative in the history of the world. Now tell me, my brother, your idea is going to need financing. What kind of backing do you have available to make our vision become a reality?"

I said, “Don, I’m sitting here with the president of Blue Thumb Records, who is very enthusiastic about this project.”

Don broke into a happy chuckle, “I love talking to presidents. Put him on the phone.”

Krasnow, Stewart, and I took the red-eye flight to New York, where we had

set up a meeting with King, Schwartz, and Price.

“You get the money to put on this festival and do a film of it. You give me ten percent of your budget and the profits, and you got yourself a deal,” Don King.

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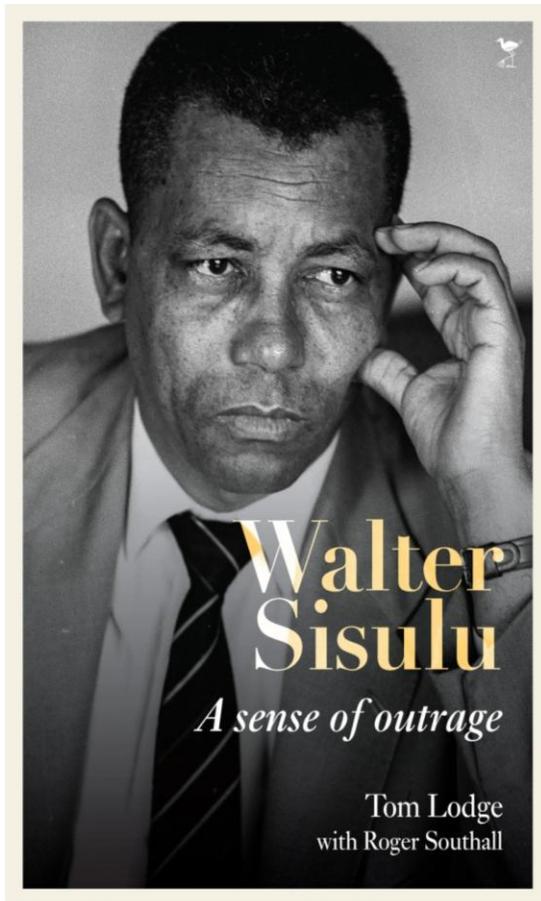
It is said that too many cooks spoil the broth. This broth, comprising of 15 writers unearthed through PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine's Short Story Competition, seeks to shatter this myth. Spoiling The Broth Vol. 4 is a multi-themed collection of new short stories by authors from across the African continent. They were all monthly winners in tightly contested short story writing competitions that were held from January to October 2025.

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ADOPT-AN-AUTHOR PROGRAM

## Walter Sisulu: A Sense Of Outrage



Although hailed, alongside Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, as one of the ANC's holy trinity, Walter Sisulu has remained a relatively neglected figure in the historiography of the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Modest and unassuming, Sisulu was always content to stay in the background in a way that has belied his importance. This nuanced and highly original biography of Walter Sisulu, written by political historian Tom Lodge before his untimely death, provides a powerful corrective.

Walter Sisulu was one of the principal personalities in driving this decade-long resistance to the implementation of apartheid. His contribution was twofold. First, he was probably the most decisive planner in the ANC's campaigning – in Rusty Bernstein's words, 'the senior strategist' or, as Mary Benson noted, 'always unassuming but vital to planning'.

As one of Mandela's biographers note, during the 1950s 'Mandela's first reflex in considering many a problem was to ask, "What does Walter think?"' Secondly, to quote Ruth First, he was at 'the centre of the organisational drive of the ANC' or, according to Joe Matthews, the movement's 'quiet engine'. A more recent assessment has Sisulu as 'the organisational and tactical dynamo who transformed the ANC from a genteel lobby group into a vehicle of mass resistance'.

The specifics of his role as a strategist and organiser need to be teased out. As Mary Benson notes, Walter Sisulu's leadership was 'unassuming'. This was partly a reflection of his own personality, but it was also the case that from the beginning of his tenure as one of the ANC's top officials he adopted a principle of collective leadership. Even his reports as secretary general were signed off by all his fellow executive members.

This kind of self-effacement complicates any assessment of Sisulu's personal imprint on the ANC's history. Philip

Bonner has suggested that the Defiance Campaign was Walter Sisulu's brainchild. This seems reasonable enough.

Nelson Mandela remembered that it was Sisulu who 'first broached the idea' of a national movement of civil disobedience. Their first discussion about this was in June 1951. Sisulu envisaged a broad effort that would mobilise Indians as well as Africans, and his view would prevail over Mandela's, who wanted an exclusively African project.

The following month a Joint Planning Committee was set up after the ANC leaders met Indian Congress principals as well as the executive of the Franchise Action Council, a body set up in the Cape to defend the Coloured common-roll vote. At other meetings, Sisulu had to work hard to dispel communist reservations about the proposal.

Together with J.B. Marks, Yusuf Cachalia and Yusuf Dadoo, Sisulu drafted a plan and then toured the country to win over provincial leaders. Sisulu led the presentations and arguments. The plan was to prepare small groups of volunteers who would court arrest by breaching minor apartheid regulations. The campaign would call for the repeal of six laws

selected to elicit ready responses across the different communities and to draw in rural support: the Group Areas Act (1950), the pass laws, the Bantu Authorities Act (1951), stock limitation regulations, the Suppression of Communism Act (1950) and the Separate Representation of Voters Act (1951).

The campaign would begin in the big cities; rural action would be included in a final phase of mass action after the spread of the campaign to smaller centres. Extending ANC support to rural locations was a key preoccupation for a leadership that was uncomfortably aware of the movement's weakness in the countryside.

In May 1951, Sisulu had visited Nqutu in northern Natal in the wake of stock limitation protests. His speech in Nqutu impressed villagers, and a durable ANC branch would form itself there. For the cities, Sisulu and his fellow planners considered the inclusion of 'lawful industrial action' but decided that the trade union movement was too weak for it to be a practical option in the first stages of the campaign. They hedged their bets, though, with the proviso that they would not 'preclude' its use if local conditions made it possible.

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# Publish In Your Own Language

## Via Afrika's Assisted Self-Publishing Programme Begins



It is that time of the year for writers to publish in their own languages. Why? Because readers deserve stories that sound like home.

During the first two weeks of March, WritePublishRead accepts manuscripts in previously under-published languages for their Assisted Self-Publishing Programme for ebooks. Manuscript submissions are open from 1 to 14 March annually.

*Our Teachers. Our Future.*

### Who Is This For?

For the Assisted Self-Publishing programme, they will be accepting manuscripts from South African writers, living in South Africa, who have not been published before.

They will accept a maximum of 12 manuscripts to participate in the programme, which will give each writer access to a language specialist appointed by ALASA and the NRF Chair in African Languages, who will edit their work and help them prepare the final manuscript for publication.

The number of manuscripts that they will accept per language is structured according to the percentage of home language speakers for each of the under-published South African languages, as follows:

**Under-published South African Languages**

- isiZulu
- isiXhosa
- Sepedi
- Setswana
- Sesotho
- Xitsonga
- SiSwati
- Tshivenda
- isiNdebele
- South African First Nations Languages (For example, †Khomani San, Khwe-, !Xun-, Nama, Koranna, Griqua, Cape Khoekhoe).

### Criteria For Manuscripts

For the Assisted Self-Publishing programme, they are looking for original,

final manuscripts in the languages listed above. Furthermore, they will accept the following fiction genres (note the required word count):

### Classification

- Novel
- Novella
- Novelette
- Short story
- Short story collection (own work)
- Drama (stage play)
- Collection of poetry (own work)

### The Details

Based on the order of submissions received, they will select 12 manuscripts, across all previously under-published languages, and provide special assistance in helping the authors to self-publish their work.

The 12 successful authors will be announced annually on World Book Day, 23 April.

A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between all parties. Note: The author will retain his or her copyright.

The 12 authors will work with Via Afrika, the NRF Chair in African Languages and ALASA through the process of getting their manuscripts digitally print-ready, up to getting it published and promoted.

What will Via Afrika, the NRF Chair in African Languages and ALASA do during this process?

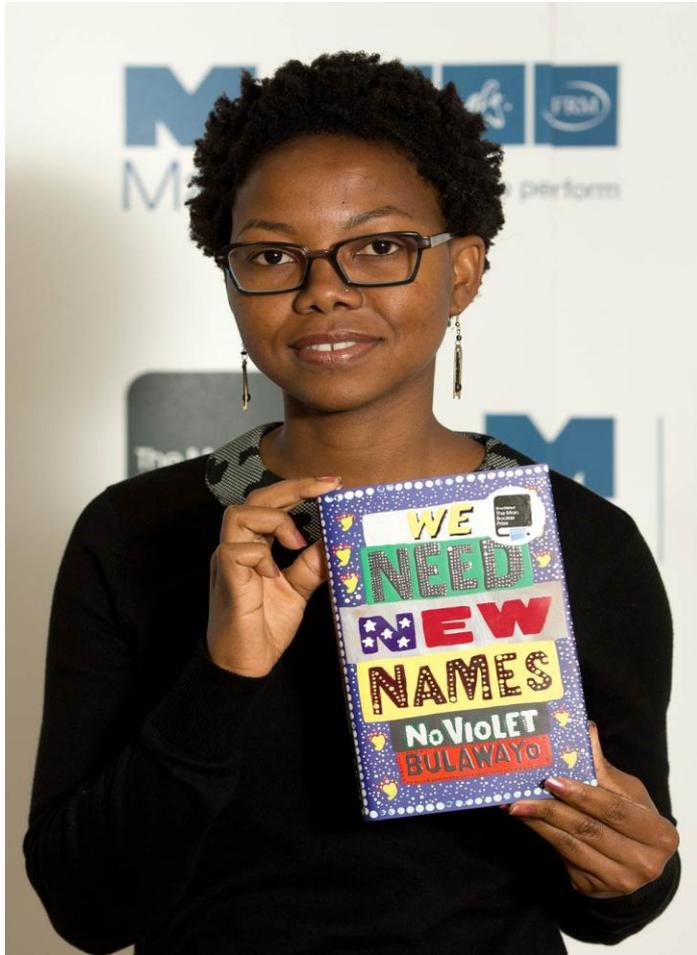
- Assist the authors by performing a thorough language edit on their manuscript
- Assist the authors to get their manuscripts ready for self-publication on the Smashwords website as ebooks
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Note: The Assisted Self-Publishing programme does not include the printing, warehousing, distributing, marketing or selling of printed books. This is a self-publishing initiative that enables writers to create ebooks. WritePublishRead is an assistive tool which will prepare authors to be as successful as possible as independent, self-published authors. It is not a publishing agreement. Authors selected for the Assisted Self-Publishing programme will retain all copyright, and will not enter into a publishing agreement with Via Afrika, the NRF Chair in African Languages, or ALASA, as a consequence of being selected for the Assisted Self-Publishing programme.

The selection of authors who will participate annually rests solely with Via Afrika. Via Afrika's decision is final, and no correspondence relating to the selection will be entered into.

**Learn more:**  
<https://viaafrika.com/writepublishread/assisted-self-publishing-programme>

## Caine Prize celebrates NoViolet Bulawayo Prize marks 25th anniversary in Zimbabwe



*NoViolet Bulawayo*

Caine – the most outstanding winning story from the Prize's 25-year history. The award underscores both the lasting impact of Bulawayo's work and the Caine Prize's role in identifying writing of enduring global significance.

The anniversary programme opened on 15 December 2025 at the Mayor's Parlour in Bulawayo, where NoViolet Bulawayo was joined by Ellah Wakatama whose seasoned leadership has been central to the Prize's international standing. They were received by the Mayor of Bulawayo, Senator David Coltart, before

The Caine Prize for African Writing marked its 25th anniversary with a landmark return to Zimbabwe, celebrating NoViolet Bulawayo's historic Best of Caine Award win and reaffirming the Prize's enduring commitment to African literary excellence.

Held across Harare and Bulawayo, the three-day programme placed Bulawayo's work at the centre of a wider reflection on African storytelling, while highlighting the Prize's legacy and future under the leadership of Chair Ellah Wakatama OBE FRSL.

Widely recognised as one of the most influential African writers of her generation, NoViolet Bulawayo was honoured for her short story "Hitting Budapest", originally awarded the Caine Prize in 2011 and, in 2025, selected as the Best of

proceeding to a public reading and in-conversation event at Mzilikazi Library attended by local writers and readers.

In conversation with Wakatama, Bulawayo reflected on the universal humanity that anchors her work, observing that "death is death in Zimbabwe just as it is in Spain; the same

is true of love and of childhood.” The evening concluded with Bulawayo being presented with a gift of photography by writer, filmmaker, and photographer Elliot Moyo.

A central highlight of the programme took place on 16 December in Harare with an evening reception celebrating Bulawayo's Best of Caine Award. Created specifically to mark the Prize's 25th anniversary, the Best of Caine distinction recognised the most exceptional winning story in the Prize's history. “Hitting Budapest” was selected from all past winners by a judging panel chaired by Nobel Laureate Professor Abdulrazak Gurnah, alongside award-winning author Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and acclaimed film producer Tony Tagoe.

### **Workshop in Harare**

The Harare reception brought together writers, publishers, readers, and literary stakeholders, and featured a live musical performance by Zimbabwean singer-songwriter Raven Duchess. The evening opened with reflections acknowledging the Prize's long-standing partnerships and its sustained investment in and support of African literary communities.

Drawing on her experience as a writer, editor, and cultural leader, Wakatama reflected on the mission of the Caine Prize to platform African writing globally. She emphasised the significance of celebrating this milestone anniversary in Zimbabwe, and spoke to the Prize's responsibility not only to recognise excellence, but to actively

invest in the development and visibility of African writers.

### **Reception in Bulawayo**

In a closing conversation, Bulawayo reflected on her writing journey, the lasting affirmation of her 2011 Caine Prize win, and the importance of ensuring Zimbabwean stories continue to travel across borders and media. She concluded the evening with a reading from “Hitting Budapest.”

The full programme concluded on 17 December with an intimate writers' workshop at the Friendship Bench Hub in Harare, hosted by Wakatama, Bulawayo, and author Petina Gappah. Responding to ongoing concerns around access to publication pathways for Zimbabwean writers, the session focused on craft, discipline, and persistence, offering practical guidance grounded in the facilitators' combined decades of literary experience.

As the Caine Prize marks 25 years of championing African storytelling, the Zimbabwe programme stood as a powerful convergence of legacy and future – celebrating NoViolet Bulawayo's Best of Caine win while reaffirming the Prize's long-term commitment to nurturing African literary talent.

The Prize acknowledges the generous support of Carnegie Corporation of New York and Meikles Foundation, whose sponsorship of the 25th anniversary programme reflects their commitment to sustaining African literary talent.

# Toni Morrison:

## Undeniably Greatest Novelist Of The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

October 7, 1993. A Thursday morning in New York.



**When Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize 32 years ago today, she became the first Black woman ever to receive literature's highest honor. Her response revealed everything about her mission.**

Toni Morrison was sitting in her office at Princeton University, where she taught creative writing, when the phone rang. It was 6 a.m.—too early for good news, she thought.

The voice on the other end belonged to a representative from the Swedish Academy in Stockholm. They were calling to inform her that she had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature—the most prestigious literary honour in the world.

Morrison was 62 years old. She had been writing for over two decades, publishing novels that excavated the Black American experience with unflinching honesty and lyrical beauty. And now, she

had become the first African American woman—indeed, the first Black woman of any nationality—to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in its 92-year history.

Her first response? "Really?"

After she hung up, Morrison sat quietly for a moment, processing what had just happened. Then she went to teach her 10 a.m. class, as scheduled. Because that's what you do when you're Toni Morrison: you show up for your students, Nobel Prize or not.

But that morning phone call represented far more than one woman's achievement. It was recognition that had been withheld from Black writers—and Black women especially—for nearly a century.

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Ardelia Wofford in 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, a steel town where her father worked as a welder and her mother as a domestic worker. She grew up during the

Depression in a family that valued storytelling, music, and the supernatural tales of Southern Black culture that her parents had brought north during the Great Migration.

She was an exceptional student who loved to read, though she noticed early on that the books she encountered rarely featured people who looked like her or told stories from her community's perspective. That absence would shape her life's work.

After earning degrees from Howard University and Cornell, Morrison worked as an editor at Random House while raising two sons as a single mother. It was during those years—editing during the day, writing after her children went to bed—that she began crafting the stories that would change American literature.

Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970 when she was 39, told the devastating story of Pecola Breedlove, a young Black girl who internalised white beauty standards so completely that she prayed for blue eyes. The novel was a searing examination of racism, colourism, and the violence of being told your very existence is ugly.

It didn't become a bestseller immediately. But it announced the arrival of a major literary voice.

Morrison followed with *Sula* (1973), a complex exploration of female friendship and Black community life. Then *Song of Solomon* (1977), a multigenerational family saga infused with folklore and myth that won the

National Book Critics Circle Award. Then *Tar Baby* (1981), exploring relationships across class and colour lines.

Each novel pushed deeper into the Black American experience—not as sociology or protest literature, but as art. Morrison wrote about Black people in all their complexity, contradiction, love, pain, and humanity. She refused to explain Black culture to white readers or to soften difficult truths for anyone's comfort.

"I write for Black people," she once said, "in the same way that Tolstoy was not writing for me, a 14-year-old coloured girl from Lorain, Ohio."

That clarity of purpose—writing from within Black culture rather than translating it for outsiders—was revolutionary.

Then came *Beloved*.

Published in 1987, *Beloved* tells the story of Sethe, a woman who escaped slavery and now lives in Cincinnati with her daughter Denver. But Sethe is haunted—literally—by the ghost of her dead baby, a child she killed rather than allow to be recaptured into slavery. The novel asks impossible questions: What does freedom mean after slavery? How do you live with trauma that can never be undone? What does love look like when the world has tried to destroy your capacity to be human?

Morrison based the story on Margaret Garner, a real enslaved woman who escaped to Ohio in 1856 and, when captured, killed her two-year-old

daughter rather than see her returned to bondage.

The novel was unlike anything in American literature. It blended realism with the supernatural, historical trauma with lyrical prose, unflinching horror with transcendent beauty. The ghost in the story—eventually manifesting as a young woman named Beloved—represented not just one child but all the unnamed, uncounted, unmemorialised victims of slavery.

Beloved became a bestseller, remaining on the New York Times list for 25 weeks. Critics hailed it as a masterpiece. In 1988, it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

But Morrison wasn't done. She published *Jazz* in 1992, a novel set in Harlem during the 1920s that used the rhythms and structure of jazz music to tell a story of love, betrayal, and urban Black life.

By 1993, Morrison had established herself as arguably the most important American writer of her generation. Her novels weren't just literature—they were excavations of American history, reclamations of stories that had been silenced, and assertions that Black life and Black art deserved to be taken seriously on their own terms.

When the Swedish Academy called that October morning, they cited Morrison's entire body of work, praising her for giving "life to an essential aspect of American reality" through novels "characterised by visionary force and poetic import."

The Nobel Prize announcement sent shockwaves through the literary world. Morrison became the eighth woman to win the prize for literature (out of 90 recipients at that point) and the first Black woman ever.

At the Nobel ceremony in Stockholm that December, Morrison delivered a powerful acceptance speech structured as a meditation on a parable about an old blind woman and a bird. She used the story to explore the power and responsibility of language itself.

"We die. That may be the meaning of life," she said. "But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives."

For Morrison, language wasn't just communication—it was how we make meaning, preserve memory, resist oppression, and assert our humanity. Her life's work had been devoted to using language to tell the stories that dominant culture tried to erase.

The Nobel Prize changed Morrison's life in practical ways—increased book sales, more speaking invitations, greater platform. But it didn't change her mission. She continued writing, publishing *Paradise* (1997), *Love* (2003), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012), and *God Help the Child* (2015).

She continued teaching, mentoring young writers, and speaking about literature and race with the same unflinching clarity she'd always had.

In interviews after winning the Nobel, Morrison was asked repeatedly what the prize meant for Black writers and

women writers. She handled these questions with characteristic directness.

"I'm not writing to write a little thing to fit into a little category," she said. "I want to write literature that is undeniably great."

And she did.

Morrison's novels are taught in universities worldwide. *Beloved* is considered one of the greatest American novels of the 20th century. Her work has influenced generations of writers across all backgrounds who learned from her example that marginalised stories deserve literary excellence, that beauty and brutality can co-exist on the page, and that the most specific stories—deeply rooted in particular communities and experiences—can speak universal truths.

Toni Morrison died on August 5, 2019, at age 88. The tributes poured in from around the world—from presidents and Nobel laureates, from students whose lives her books had changed, from writers who considered her a literary ancestor.

But perhaps the most fitting tribute came from the countless readers who saw themselves in her pages. Who found validation in her refusal to apologise for Black culture or explain it for white comfort. Who recognised the ghosts she named and the histories she excavated.

Morrison once said, "If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

That's exactly what she did. She wrote the books that hadn't existed when she was that 14-year-old girl in Lorain, Ohio, searching for herself in literature. She wrote the books that honoured the complexity and beauty and pain of Black life in America. She wrote books that refused to flinch from history's horrors while insisting on humanity's capacity for love, survival, and transcendence.

Thirty-two years ago today, the world formally recognised what Black readers had known for decades: Toni Morrison was writing literature that was undeniably great.

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## Five Things You Must Avoid In Your Blurb

What is blurb?

A blurb is that short, dramatic summary that appears on your book's back cover. Yes, that one that your readers go through to know if the book is worth reading.

Let's see what it should contain. Here are few irresistible things that should be contained in a powerful blurb.

A good blurb must have five elements:

**1. It should not explain the whole story or introduce all your characters.** The readers are not interested in the whole story on your blurb, or a narrative that would pre-empt the central plot. A blurb is only there to make your readers curious. Your blurb's job is to spark the reader's curiosity and stir enough emotions for them to be convinced to buy the book and take it home to read.

**2. Your Blurb Must Show Your Main Character's Core Problem / Pain:** Start to introduce the reader the wound, fear, secret, or struggle of your lead character. This builds empathy and makes your readers emotionally connected to your story. For Example: She was rejected by her mate on her 18th birthday....

Did you see your feelings are already gripped for your female lead?

**3. Your blurb must contain a central conflict:** This is the biggest pressure or disaster that the character faces which is related to your trope. Example: She is forced to marry the billionaire she hates.

**4. Your blurb should have the Love Interest or Opposing Force:** Introduce the person or situation that triggers the drama that moves your story ahead. This is usually her love interest or the villain in the story that makes her majorly weak.

Examples: Alpha Damon, the man she has been destined for but who refuses to accept her.

**5. Your Blurb must contain a Hook:** The Question or Tension That Makes Them Click. Your blurb must end with a question or a high-stakes cliffhanger. This is what makes the reader curious enough to open Chapter 1.

Example: "Will she survive in a pack that wants her dead? Using a werewolf's concept as an example.

**Hint:** A great blurb emphasises the trope clearly so that your readers will instantly know what they are getting inside the book. You can use tropes like: Rejected Mate, Secret Baby, Mafia Romance, Contract Marriage, Billionaire Romance or even enemies to lovers.

Readers are naturally drawn to books because of tropes they love and your blurb or rather synopsis must advertise that trope.

By **Sophie:**  
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/FcZWpalWECV3ad5EzzBTHZ?mode=wwt>

## AVBOB Poetry Corner

### Living In Full



What creative endeavours are you considering for 2026? As you contemplate new projects and recommit to old ones, do you wish you could tap into the spontaneous energy of children?

As we celebrate International Day of Education on 24 January, the AVBOB Poetry Project celebrates the courageous, life-affirming work of Sue Nyamnjoh, a young Cameroonian-born poet whose work embraces the full range of human experience. In 'bone apple tea', a poem from her debut anthology, (un)ravelling (Langaa, 2023), she writes:

I want an appetite for life  
so voracious  
it puts

the gluttony of capitalism to shame.

"It was only as I was gathering the poems for the anthology that I began to see how varied the thread of emotion was," Nyamnjoh says. "But then, the variation makes sense when I consider that the poems were written over a period of four years. It would be uncommon not to feel the full spectrum of emotions. I believe that accessing human emotions is essential. The experience of feeling in full is necessary for continued survival. Selective numbness is a myth."

While (un)ravelling explores emotions from despair and loneliness to resistance and the stirring of new love and desire, many readers will find Nyamnjoh's

different evocations of childhood most moving. In 'petite fille', for instance, she addresses a younger version of herself as follows:

Little girl  
Promise me  
You'll return to that wide toothy grin  
Swear to me  
You'll leap again  
With that spring in your step  
Give me your word  
Cross your heart  
And hope to die

"I actually can't remember how I wrote that poem," Nyamnjoh says. "I think I might have been looking at a childhood

photograph of me. As I remember, I was making one of those extravagant gestures that come so easily to children who are too young to experience self-consciousness and shame. I wanted to reach back to that sense of playfulness, of not being burdened by the world in any way.”

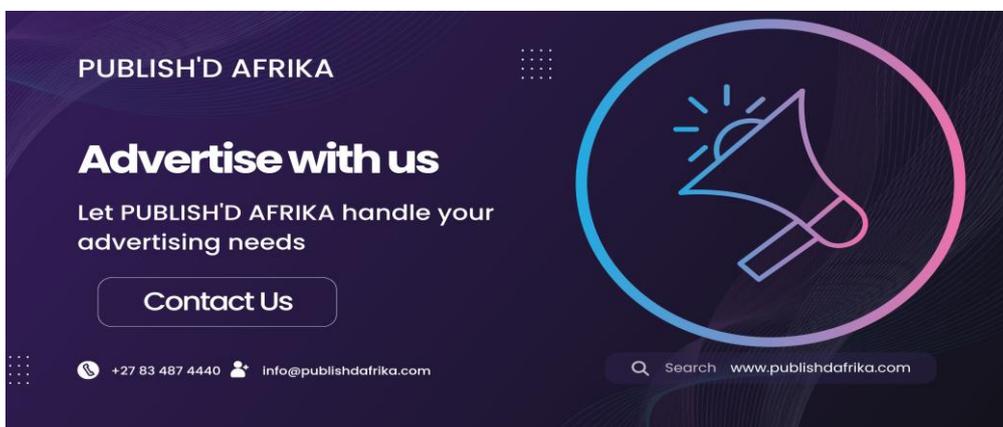
Other poems emphasise the supportive networks that make such free-spiritedness possible. In ‘have you eaten?’, after claiming a proud heritage in which tales of brave deeds are passed on from father to child, she suddenly collapses the reader’s expectations: “All this is untrue.” Instead, she acknowledges the importance of stability and quiet resilience:

Ours was a  
 ‘Have you eaten?’ kind of love.  
 The kind which left my fees paid, my  
 stomach full and my body clothed.  
 Ours was a love that  
 made sure there was a roof above my  
 head  
 and it did not leak.

As for future plans, Nyamnjoh is already writing towards a new anthology and imagining fresh contexts for her work.

“Right now, I’m creating without expectation, rediscovering the joy of writing and falling in love with words all over again. I’m reading. I’m pretty sure there will be another collection in the not-too-distant future. And then, I’m really interested in collaborating with creators in other disciplines. Earlier this year I worked with Zwide Ndwandwe on a show we called Strings and Words, and he played electric bass and designed soundscapes for some of my new poems. I’m interested in exploring poetry in motion through dance collaborations. I want my poems to live fully and to move between realms with nimble footedness. And I would love to make (un)ravelling more accessible and release it as an audiobook at some point.”

In the next few days, write a poem in which you describe the kinds of support you experienced as a young child. Which aspects of love and care were expressed and emphasised, and which were not?



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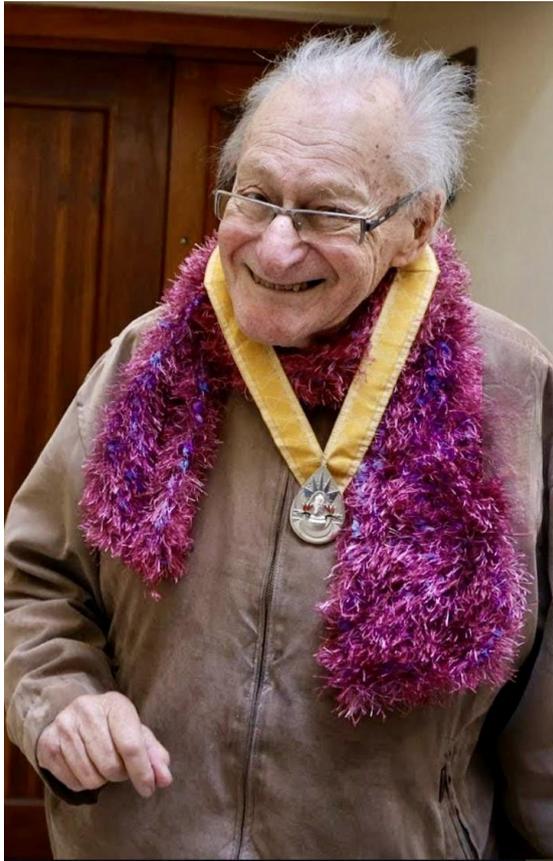
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## The Lightest Touch



We gather enormous quantities of information in the course of a lifetime. When we write poetry, however, we often fail to draw on this specialised information, limiting ourselves to the world of emotions and personal recollections.

Keith Gottschalk is a poet and retired academic with a boundless passion for astronomy. In the 1980s he published a book of mostly political poetry, *Emergency Poems*, often satirising the apartheid government to hilarious effect.

On the strength of this work, he received the Order of Ikhamanga in 2022. Then, in 2023, he published *Cosmonauts Do It in Heaven (Hands On Books)*, in which he turns his love of astronomy and physics into layered, learned but accessible poems in praise of the courage that makes space travel possible.

This month, he shared one of this collection's beautiful, luminous poems with the AVBOB Poetry Project. Read the poem he shared and be inspired to share your own specialised knowledge with a wider audience.

### As The Sun Sets

as the sun sets

the mourners, hoarse,

turn back from the grave.

as the sun sets

the doors close

burglar grilles are rolled down.

as the sun sets,

the commuters, weary,

squeeze out of the minibus.

as the sun sets

the astronomers eat breakfast,

set off, start work.

The poem opens on a sombre note, with mourners leaving a graveside and resuming their lives. We do not know for whom they have been mourning, but their tired, hoarse voices testify to deep feeling.

In the second stanza, the closing of doors and the rolling down of burglar grilles remind us that night-time can be dangerous. Clearly, the people who own these shops or houses are hunkering down, concerned about the safety of their belongings.

The third stanza focuses on people returning home after a long, exhausting day's work. We cannot be certain, but the minibus tells us that the poem is probably set in Southern Africa. The work of Gottschalk, a long-time lecturer in political science, has always been keenly aware of the difficulties Southern African citizens encounter on a daily basis.

Then, in the final stanza, the tone changes completely. The astronomers' activity and excitement are immediately apparent. Of course, it makes sense that they should start working at this time of day: we know that they gather data by looking at the night sky. And if they work during the night, it is also not surprising that they should have breakfast when the sun is going down.

Though Gottschalk's touch is very light here, there is clearly more at stake in this poem than meets the eye. By leaving us with an image of excited astronomers gazing at the stars after having evoked loss, fear and poverty, he reminds us that there is always cause for hope. Simply by looking up, we can enlarge our sense of the world around us. The image of the astronomers does not cancel out the mourners, commuters and other citizens in difficult circumstances, but it does remind us that fear and despair are never our only option. What is more, we have been drawn into a world of passion and discovery that may otherwise have remained inaccessible to us.

In the next few days, write a poem in which you draw on specialised knowledge you have gathered. Perhaps your specialised skill is to draw up learned, complicated documents. Or perhaps you have a rare skill, like an ability to tie complicated knots. Remember, the point is to have a light touch and make your poem fun and accessible.

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## Calls For Submissions

### Call for Writers: Bilingual African Cultural Narratives

**Project Overview:** A paid opportunity is available for a writer to develop content for a focus group study and subsequent script development. The work focuses on authentic African cultural motifs and township narratives.

**Scope of Work:**

**Phase One:** Writing five short stories (500 to 750 words each) based on African cultural themes. These must be written in English and a mother tongue (IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, or Sepedi).

**Phase Two:** Writing five episodes of a micro-drama script (2 to 3 pages per episode) based on the story selected by the focus group.

**Application Requirements:** Interested candidates must submit:

- One basic short story (approximately 500 words) demonstrating an African cultural narrative.
- One micro-drama episode script (2 to 3 pages) in professional script format.
- Submissions must be provided in both English and one of the following: IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, or Sepedi.
- Closing date: 17th February 2026

Please submit applications to Philip Townsend at [philip@riceboy.co.za](mailto:philip@riceboy.co.za)

Kindly direct all enquiries to: [philip@riceboy.co.za](mailto:philip@riceboy.co.za)

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## The African Griot Review – Call For Submissions

**Theme:** Intimacy & The Arts

**Deadline:** 10 February 2026

The African Griot Review is an avant-garde digital magazine that takes an in-depth look at the arts-and-culture scene in Africa and its Diaspora. They are currently accepting submissions for their February (aka Valentine's) Issue, which is themed on 'INTIMACY & THE ARTS'.

Let's talk about intimacy and everything around it – love, sex, sexuality, romance etc – and how it relates to the arts. Are music videos too sexualised? Do music lyrics encourage immorality? Should African films and TV series be allowed to have as much sex and nudity as seen in Western media? Which romantic novels would you recommend? Do African novelists even write about love and romance? Should sex in literature be graphic or assumed? What's the difference between erotica and pornography? Why do many visual artists seem obsessed with nude figures? Do you prefer instant fireworks or a slow burn between characters in a romance? What are your feelings about nudity/intimacy on a theatre stage? When it comes to matters of morality, does art imitate life, or vice versa? Let us know your thoughts and opinions on such topics. We don't judge; we just analyse.

### Submission Guidelines:

#### 1. Articles / Non-Fiction

- Must be written in English. Between 800 and 1,500 words long.
- Times New Roman font, 12-points, double-spaced.
- Must be previously unpublished.
- Type 'Article Submission' and the title of your piece in the subject line of your email. Attach article as Microsoft Word document.
- Include short author bio: 300 words or less.
- Send to [submissions@theafricangriot.com](mailto:submissions@theafricangriot.com)

#### 2. Reviews

- These may be reviews of books, films, TV series, stage plays, songs, albums, concerts etc. Must be written in English. Between 800 and 1,500 words long.
- Times New Roman font, 12-points, double-spaced.

- Must be previously unpublished.
- Include short author bio: 300 words or less.
- Include 1 – 3 photos of the theatrical production on stage or the front cover (in case of a book.)
- Type 'Review Submission' and the title of your piece in the subject line of your email. Attach work as Microsoft Word document.
- Send to [submissions\(at\)theafricangriot.com](mailto:submissions@theafricangriot.com)

### 3. Poetry

- 1 – 3 poems only.
- Must be written in English. 40 lines maximum per poem.
- Times New Roman font, 12-points, double-spaced.
- Preferably unpublished but may be considered if you hold the publishing rights.
- Type 'Poetry Submission' in the subject line of your email. Attach work as a Microsoft Word document.
- Include short author bio: 300 words or less.
- Include 1 – 3 photos of the theatrical production on stage or the front cover (in case of a book.)
- Send to [submissions\(at\)theafricangriot.com](mailto:submissions@theafricangriot.com)

### 4. Fiction

- Must be written in English. Between 1000 and 5000 words long. Must not be written with the assistance of any generative AI tool whatsoever.
- Times New Roman font, 12-points, double-spaced.
- Must be previously unpublished.
- Include short author bio: 300 words or less.
- Type 'Fiction Submission' and the title of your piece in the subject line of your email. Attach story as Microsoft Word document.
- Send to [submissions@theafricangriot.com](mailto:submissions@theafricangriot.com)

### 5. Press Release

- Does not have to adhere to 'Valentine's theme, although that would be a plus.
- Must be written in English and preferably formatted in standard press release fashion.
- Include sender's contact details: 300 words or less.
- You may include 1 – 3 photos.
- Type 'Press Release' and the title of your piece in the subject line of your email. Attach story as Microsoft Word document.
- Send to [editorial@theafricangriot.com](mailto:editorial@theafricangriot.com)

Works featured in The African Griot Review may also appear on the parent website, [TheAfricanGriot.com](http://TheAfricanGriot.com)

We also consider news tips, photographs and artworks.

Email [editorial@theafricangriot.com](mailto:editorial@theafricangriot.com)

Deadline for all submissions is 10th February 2026.

Previous issue of The African Griot Review available here:

<https://theafricangriot.com/theafricangriotreview.html>

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## Calling All Storytellers, Dreamers, And Bold Filmmakers!

The Gauteng Film Screening Experiences is officially open for submissions — and this is your moment to shine on the big screen.

If you've got a completed film and a story that deserves to be seen, heard, and celebrated, we want YOU.

Independent voices. Community stories. Real cinema energy.

Submissions open: 12 January 2026

<https://form.jotform.com/260063502222037>

Close: 6 February 2026

## Poetry Reclaiming Humanity

Poetry is not just art: it is a voice, a mirror, and a weapon against silence.

This year's TJ Motete Vaal Poetry Competition confronts hard truths with courage.

The theme speaks to lives affected by drugs, stolen dreams, and borrowed courage, but it also stands firmly against the pain our communities are facing today.

We are painfully aware of the killing of women in the streets of the Vaal.

We see it.

We feel it.

And as poets, we refuse to be silenced.

Through poetry, we choose to speak where fear wants quiet. We choose dignity where violence tries to rule. We choose purpose over pain.

The streets of the Vaal will know dignity again.

This is more than a competition. It is a stand. It is a call. It is poetry reclaiming humanity.

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## 3rd Harare International Fringe Festival Opens



The organisers of the Harare International Fringe Festival have opened applications for the third edition of the event, scheduled to take place from 17 to 20 September 2026 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The application deadline is 31 March.

Formerly known as the One Hander International Theatre Festival (OHIT), the festival is inviting theatre artists, from various disciplines including music, from Zimbabwe and abroad to submit original productions for consideration. The 2026 edition will be staged under the theme Dream, Dare, Inspire and will coincide

with the start of spring in the capital.

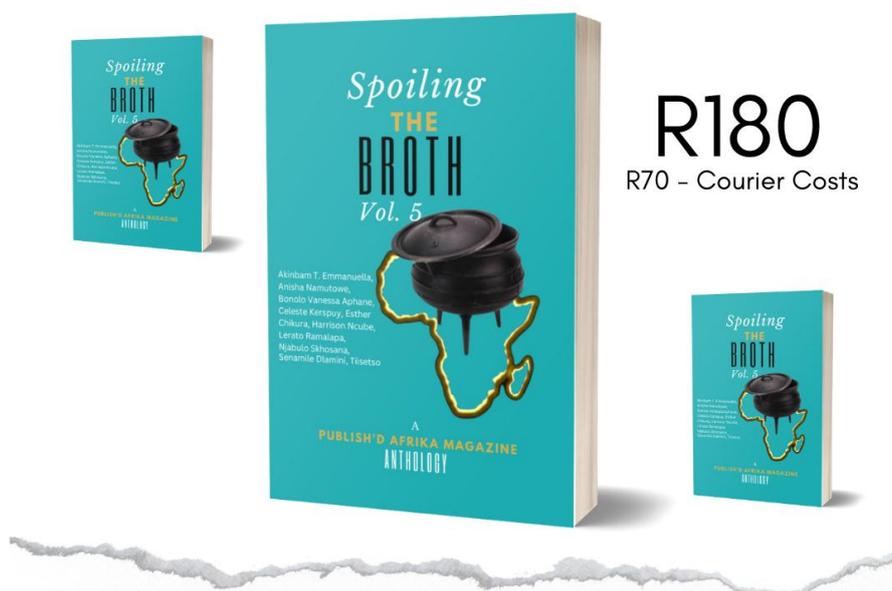
According to the curatorial framework, the festival is seeking diverse and inclusive theatrical works that reflect originality and encourage creative risk-taking. Submissions are open to theatre practitioners worldwide, with a focus on projects that align with the festival's thematic emphasis.

Artists are required to submit a project description of no more than 300 words, along with technical and equipment requirements, a company profile, artist biographies and any supporting material such as images or video recordings.

Selected artists will receive limited support from the festival, including accommodation, breakfast meals during the festival period and airport transfers. Local transport for non-festival activities will not be provided.

Applications will be assessed based on artistic merit, originality, technical feasibility and relevance to the festival theme.

Submissions and enquiries should be directed to [festival@patsime.org.zw](mailto:festival@patsime.org.zw) (link sends e-mail) before 31 March.



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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. 4 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 2025.





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