SEPTEMBER 2026 ISSUE

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

LITERARY MAGAZINE

BUILDING AFRIKA'S DIGITAL WORK INFRASTRUCTURE

CREATOR'S GUIDE TO FACEBOOK COPYRIGHT & LEGAL RECOURSE

BOOK-ED IN MIDDELBURG
One Book. Countless Perspectives

DOLLY PARTON, THE BOOK LADY:
How The Girl from Sevier County Taught the World To Read

SKETCHES OF A LIFETIME
Try Phoku's Art of Becoming

THE MAN WHO LEARNED TO POUR BACK TO HIMSELF

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PUBLISHED BY PUBLISH'D AFRIKA
Designed & Compiled by Sukoluhle Nontokozo Mdlongwa
Edited by Thokozani Magagula

CONTACT DETAILS
Call/WhatsApp:
+27 83 487 4440
+27 74 643 0618

Email:
info@publishdafrika.com
thokozanimagagula@publishdafrika.com

Facebook: Publish'd Afrika Magazine

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

LITERARY MAGAZINE

Redefining Africa's Narrative

The Man Who Learned To Pour Back Into Himself

Bongani Ngubeni on Identity, Intentional Living, and Why Self-Investment Isn't Selfish

On paper, Bongani Ngubeni wears many titles. He is a motivational speaker, a life coach, an NLP practitioner, a wellness coach, an acoustic guitarist, a singer, a songwriter, and an author.

The many titles, however, all orbit one obsession: helping people stop outsourcing their worth. He is not selling you a quick fix. He is handing you a mirror through his new book, *Pour Into It*, which he says is not another hustle-manual. It is a disruption.

"Many of us spend our lives pouring into everything and everyone around us, yet we often forget to pour into ourselves," he says. "We pour into family. Into relationships. Into careers, businesses, deadlines, and the endless expectations of society. And somewhere between the performance and the proving, we disappear. Identity thins. Dreams go quiet. Confidence fractures. Purpose blurs."

Bongani knows that terrain intimately. That is why he wrote the book.

"I wanted to write a book that would cause people to pause and ask themselves: 'What am I pouring into my own life?' It's a simple question. It's also confrontational as hell."

Pour Into It was published through **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA** in February 2026. It was born from a radical idea: your life has value before you produce anything. You have something inside you worth developing. And you do not have to stay defined by your past, your circumstances, or the opinions of people who never had to live your life.

This is not self-care as bubble baths and affirmations. This is self-leadership. This is about what you allow into your mind, who you allow into your inner circle, and what future you are quietly building with daily, intentional choices.

If you have ever felt stuck, lost, empty, or disconnected from yourself, this book is for

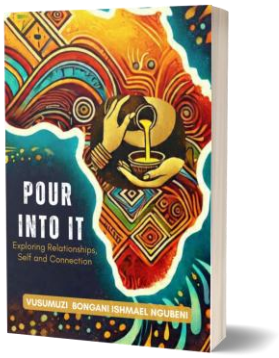
you. Bongani is especially speaking to the givers. The ones who have spent years taking care of everyone else that investing in themselves feels like guilt.

"It is for young people forging identity, for adults drowning in responsibility, and for professionals chasing purpose over pay cheque," he says. "It is also for parents and entrepreneurs. Anyone standing in the messy middle of a life transition and thinking, 'There has to be more than just existing'."

"In many ways, the target audience is anyone who is ready to stop simply existing and start intentionally investing in the person they are becoming."

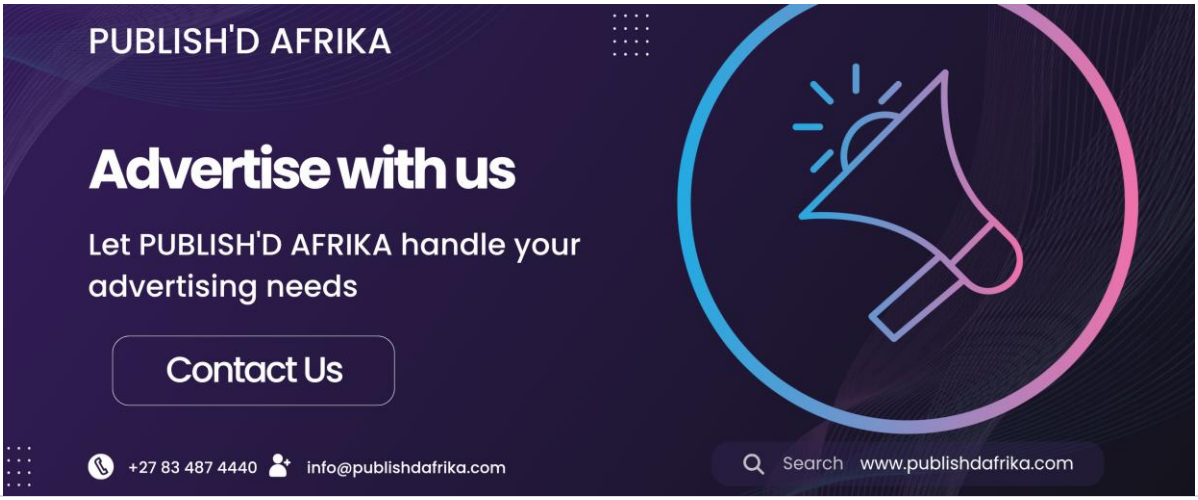
Ngubeni doesn't want you to just read *Pour Into It*. He wants you to be altered by it. His hope is that you close the final page with a renewed understanding of self, identity, and personal responsibility.

"You may not control everything that happens around you, but you can control what you allow inside you," he says. "You can challenge the limiting beliefs, confront what has been holding you back, and recognise your worth without waiting for permission. Ultimately, to sit with one question that will shape the next decade of your life: 'what am I pouring into my life, and what kind of person is it creating?' Because what we continually pour into ourselves eventually becomes who we are."



Pour Into It is not simply a book to read. It is an invitation to take responsibility for your own becoming—to pour into yourself so deeply, so intentionally, that what overflows into others is finally meaningful.

- Bongani Ngubeni is currently advancing his studies in coaching and wellness, using speaking, coaching, and music as tools for restoration.



Dolly Parton, The Book Lady:

How a Girl from Sevier County Taught the World to Read

When asked whether she preferred to be remembered as the Queen of Country or the Book Lady, Dolly Parton told Jenna Bush Hager in 2019 that she preferred the latter.

It is the most Dolly answer imaginable—humble, shrewd, and true to the thread that runs through 60 years of rhinestones and songwriting: reading is freedom.

In 1995, Parton did something with no business model at all. She wanted to help the children of Sevier County, Tennessee, where she was born, learn to love books. She started Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a program that would mail one free, age-appropriate book every month to every child from birth to age five, no conditions attached.

The idea came from her father. Robert Lee Parton worked hard, never went to school, and could neither read nor write. "If you can read, even if you can't afford education, you can go on and learn about anything you want to know. There's a book on everything," Parton told NPR. She wanted to honour him by making sure no child felt the shame he felt.

What began in one county became the programme that could. Tennessee became the first state to cover all 96 of its counties, and then the model spread across the United States, Canada, the UK, Ireland and Australia. As of August 2026, the Imagination Library has gifted more than 330 million books, with other counts putting it at over 332 million free books to more than 3 million children around the world.

The scale is staggering, but the editorial philosophy is intimate. Each title is chosen by a committee looking for developmental

appropriateness and for what author Matt de la Peña calls windows and mirrors—books that reflect a child's own life and give a view into someone else's.

In the last decade, that has meant a deliberate push for diversity of race, family structure, geography, and class—from rural Appalachian hollers like the one Dolly grew up in, to urban apartments.

It is also why Gen Z knows her differently. While older generations eulogise *Jolene, Coat of Many Colors* and *9 to 5*, younger kids know her simply as the woman on the video who tells them their book is on its way.

Parton's literary imagination was never confined to America. Her songs have travelled further than any bookmobile could, and Africa has long sung them back.

The most joyful example is South Africa's Ndlovu Youth Choir. The 30-member ensemble from Moutse Valley in Limpopo, formed in 2009 to give talented, underprivileged teenagers a professional stage, first fell in love with Dolly during their travels in the U.S. after America's Got Talent. In 2019, they put their own spin on her 1973 classic *Jolene* on their album *Africa*, and in February 2020 shot a sunlit video in their hometown to go with it.

Their version is not a cover so much as a conversation: Parton's Appalachian ache meets isiZulu harmonies, Limpopo line-dancing, hand-claps and a bright pink township palette. It went viral again in late August 2026 when the choir shared it as a tribute, with a drone shot of the singers forming a heart in the dust courtyard, writing simply, "Rest in peace Mama Dolly."

Parton's African connections predate that viral moment. In the mid-90s she collaborated with South Africa's Ladysmith Black Mambazo on her *Treasures* album, a partnership its leader recalled as easy and warm. It was two traditions of storytelling harmony finding each other.

That is Parton's true contribution to literature. She did not write a novel, but she built a delivery system for imagination. She understood that a book arriving addressed to a child, in the mail, with that child's name on it, is not just literacy. It is a message: you count, you belong to the world of readers.

Parton died in Nashville at 80. She is survived by six of her siblings.

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA
Redefining Afrika's Narrative
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Celebrating Judge Dingake's Nomination to The Hague

When Judge Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake came to PUBLISH'D AFRIKA to publish three books in two years, we had no idea of the stature behind the manuscripts.

He is not only a Botswana legal eagle. He is a jurist who has presided over the High Courts of Botswana, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, and more. He has also been elected chairperson of the Africa Judges and Jurists Forum (AJJF) in June 2026.

Judge Dingake has also been Justice of the High Court and Industrial Court of Botswana, where he also acted as a Justice of the Court of Appeal. An accomplished academic and jurist, Justice Dingake holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Law from the University of Cape Town, a Master of Laws (LLM) from the University of London, and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from the University of Botswana.

Photo: *(Left) Judge Dingake receiving copies of his book, Without Fear or Favour, from PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Director, Thokozani Magagula, at The Maslow Hotel in Sandton.*

He holds professorial appointments at the University of Cape Town, James Cook University, and San Beda University in the Philippines, where he teaches Constitutional Theory at doctoral and postgraduate level.

Justice Dingake is internationally recognised for his contributions to constitutionalism, human rights, HIV and health law, gender justice, and social justice.

Today, Africa waits with pride. Justice Dingake has been nominated to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the highest honour for any judge in the world. The nomination, a first for Botswana, represents a milestone for the country in

contributing to top-tier international judicial governance.

An African son, born and raised in Bobonong, Botswana. All the best, Justice Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake. PUBLISH'D AFRIKA and all its subsidiaries stand with you, together with the rest of Africa.

The outcomes of nominations and the subsequent elections for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are scheduled to be announced in November 2026 during the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Read more on Judge Dingake by clicking on the link below:

https://publishdafrika.com/2026/01/28/publishd-afrika-online-literary-magazine-february-2026/

Your Wrote It, Posted It, And They Stole It

A Creator's Guide To Facebook Copyright and Legal Recourse

A lot has been said about the works creatives share on Facebook, and if it is "free for all" once it is posted on your timeline or page. Ninety percent of the time, the information flooding the public domain is wrong and misleading.

The answer has always been the same: if you wrote it, photographed it, designed it, or filmed it, and you posted it on Facebook, you own it. That is the starting point of copyright law worldwide, including here in South Africa.

Copyright is automatic. Despite what you may have been told, your timeline is not a public domain. You own copyright for everything you create, even if you post it on Facebook. As Toronto internet lawyers Shaya Silber and Gil Zvulony explain: "Once an idea is expressed in a fixed form, copyright ownership is immediately vested in that work. The copyright protection is granted under the Copyright Act, by default. No registration is required."

In South Africa, this is governed by the Copyright Act 98 of 1978, as amended. You do not need to add a © symbol, register anywhere, or post a legal disclaimer on your timeline for it to apply. South Africa is also a signatory to the Berne Convention, which means your work is protected in 181 other countries the moment you create it.

So why does it feel like you lose control when you post?

You Own It, But You Licence Facebook. Facebook's own Terms of Service are very clear on this point, and the company has had to repeat it for years because of viral hoaxes. In a formal fact check, Facebook stated: "Anyone who uses Facebook owns and controls the content and information they post, as stated in our terms. They control how that content and information is shared. That is our policy, and it always has been."

The How-To Geek summary of the terms puts it simply: "No, Facebook doesn't own your photos. That's not how copyright or real life works. They're still your photos, not Facebook's. In fact, it's right in Facebook's terms of service: 'You own all of the content and information you post on Facebook.'"

What you do give Facebook is a licence. When you accept the terms, you grant Facebook "a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide licence to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook." Legal

information site http://Zvulony.ca notes the implication: "Facebook is stating here that you retain the copyright ownership... That is not the case [that you retain all rights]. All this clause really says is that Facebook cannot stop you from using the content that you provide."

That licence is only between you and Facebook. It allows Facebook to display your work, photographs, and reels in news feeds, store it on servers, and make thumbnails. It does NOT give other Facebook users permission to steal it, regardless of the fact that it has been posted on social media.

As attorney Jenni Bohning, quoted during one of the Facebook copyright hoaxes, explained: "Facebook doesn't own your work. You do. When you created your account with Facebook, you agreed to let Facebook use and distribute your posts according to the privacy settings you choose."

That means no, people are not justified in taking your work, removing your name, and making it their own. Another user taking your original post without permission is infringement, not sharing.

What Legal Recourse Do You Have?

You have more options than most people think, and you should act quickly and methodically.

1. Document Everything

Take dated screenshots of the infringing post, the URL, the profile name, and your original post with its earlier timestamp. Save the original files with metadata. This evidence helps if the infringer deletes the post later.

2. Use Facebook's Intellectual Property Reporting Tools

Facebook has a dedicated DMCA agent. Legal guide Mandour Law confirms: "Facebook employs its own DMCA agent to directly receive takedown notices using the service provider's own forms."

Go to Facebook Help Center > Intellectual Property > Copyright. You will need to:

- Identify your original work and where it appears

- Identify the infringing URL

- State under penalty of perjury that you are the owner

- Provide contact details

Facebook is required under the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to act expeditiously once notified. The same process also works for Instagram.

3. Send a Formal Cease-and-Desist or DMCA Notice Outside Facebook

Intellectual property attorney Conrad Fahrenkrug, Senior Lawyer at iGERENT, advises creators to report violations to each platform where it appears. The DMCA process requires you to "include ownership proof, exact URLs, and the required statements."

A proper notice must identify the copyrighted work, identify where the infringement occurs, give your contact information, state that you have a good faith belief the use is not authorised, and be

signed. You do not need a lawyer to file it, though a lawyer's letter often gets faster action. You can also file with Google to have the stolen copy de-indexed from search results.

4. Pursue Remedies Under South African Law.

In South Africa, copyright infringement is both a civil and, in serious cases, a criminal matter under Section 27 of the Copyright Act. **Remedies include:**

*Interdict to stop further use

*Damages or a reasonable royalty for the unlawful use

*Delivery up of infringing copies

*In severe commercial infringement, criminal complaint via SAPS

For smaller creators, a letter of demand from an attorney citing the Copyright Act and the Berne Convention often resolves the matter without court. For larger or repeated commercial theft, you can approach the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) or brief an IP attorney to issue summons in the High Court. Keep in mind that moral rights are also protected: even if economic rights are disputed, you retain the right to be credited as the author.

As author and law professor Lawrence Lessig famously wrote, "The law as it is, is a mess. But the principle is clear: creativity requires control." That control stays with you.

Final Advice: Do not post those "I hereby declare my copyright is attached" statuses. As Facebook and legal experts have repeatedly said, they do nothing. As legal blog Malwarebytes notes: "You don't need to make any declarations about copyright issues since the law already protects you."

What protects you is creating original work, keeping originals and timestamps, setting your Facebook privacy settings carefully, and using the formal reporting channels when someone crosses the line.

BOOK-ED In Middelburg

One Book. Countless Perspectives.

There are places where people gather because they have somewhere to be. And then there are places where people gather because they have something to discover.

Book-ed in Middelburg, a book club founded by Faith Maruziva, was born from the belief that a book can be more than something we read. It can be a doorway, a question, a mirror, a conversation waiting to happen.

In a world that often asks us to move faster, Book-ed invites us to slow down. To turn a page. To sit with an idea. To listen to another person's interpretation and realise that perhaps, within the same story, we have each been reading something different.

That is the heart of Book-ed.

"I have always been drawn to questions," says Faith. "My fascination with Plato's work, particularly the way his writing opens a question and leaves the mind wrestling with it, made me long for conversation. I would find myself reading a thought, sitting with it, turning it over in my mind and wishing there was someone beside me with whom I could share the words, the questions and the uncertainty."

That longing, she says, stayed with her. She then began to understand that perhaps reading was never meant to end when the book closes. Perhaps it begins there.

Faith's own journey as a runner also shaped the idea behind Book-ed. As she trained towards becoming a marathon runner, she watched her physical strength develop through discipline, consistency and distance. Yet somewhere between the kilometres, she began to notice a different kind of weight.

"The body could be getting stronger while the mind could still be carrying things that were difficult to name," she says. "I noticed this not only in myself, but in other runners too."

Through experiences of grief, including the loss of runners to suicide, she began to understand more deeply that mental health is not a side conversation. It is a need. For women and for men of all ages. For people who appear strong and for those quietly struggling. She then began thinking about what it means to build mental resilience.

"I thought perhaps resilience is not simply about becoming harder," she says. "Perhaps it is also about becoming more open. About allowing the imagination to stretch. About encountering ideas outside our own experience. About learning to hold more than one perspective at once."

And what better place to begin than through books? Literature allows us to enter lives we have never lived, places we have never seen and questions we may never have thought to ask. It can challenge certainty without demanding that we abandon ourselves.

That became one of the foundations of Book-ed. **One book. Countless perspectives.**

On 30 August 2026, Book-ed gathered for its first Meet & Greet in Middelburg. For their first read, Book-ed selected *A Woman's Essence* by Thokozani Magagula, beginning a journey that will take the club through its first month together.

"But the inaugural gathering was never only about introducing a book," says Faith. "It was about introducing a possibility. A possibility that a town like Middelburg can have spaces where literature, culture, conversation and wellbeing meet. A possibility that people can come together without needing to have all the answers. A possibility that sometimes the most meaningful thing we can give another person is simply the space to speak, listen and be heard."

The day unfolded with warmth. There was food, laughter, conversation, photographs, an opportunity to meet the author and the simple joy of gathering around something they all shared: the love, or perhaps the curiosity, to read.

And then came the moment that perhaps captured the spirit of Book-ed most completely. At the close of the gathering, members were invited to write down something they wished to let go of. A thought. A weight. A fear. A chapter. Something that no longer needed to travel with them into the next season. The words were placed onto plates, and together, the plates were broken. Not as an act of destruction, but as a declaration.

"The breaking became a symbolic clearing of the page. A reminder that endings can be beginnings, that what has been carried does not always have to be carried forward, and that sometimes we need to make a little noise before we can hear the quiet that comes after."

The broken pieces remained behind. The people did not.

They walked away with something new: a book, new conversations, new questions and perhaps a little more space within themselves.

And that is precisely where Book-ed finds its purpose. One Book. Countless Perspectives.

"Our slogan is not simply a beautiful sentence," says Faith. "It is the philosophy of the club.

We do not expect everyone to arrive at the same conclusion. In fact, we welcome the opposite. A book enters a room as one story and leaves as many. Your childhood, your experiences, your questions, your culture, your disappointments, your hopes and even the things you have never said aloud may influence the way you read a single paragraph.

And that is what makes reading together so interesting."

Book-ed's twelve-month journey is designed to take the members beyond reading the same kind of book repeatedly. Throughout the year, members will determine the categories to be explored and nominate books within those categories. Members will then vote on the books that will become future reads. This gives everyone a voice in the journey. It also means that the year's reading list is not decided by one person.

"The intention is to discover African voices, South African stories, international perspectives, fiction, non-fiction, unfamiliar genres and books that perhaps we would never have picked up on our own," she says. "We want to contribute to a reading culture here that feels alive, social and accessible. Not reading because we are told we should. Reading because there is something beautiful about finding a sentence that makes you stop."

Building Africa's Digital Work Infrastructure

Building WorkKE:

What Kenya Is Teaching Us About the Future of Digital Work in Africa

Across Africa, conversations about digital employment often begin with skills. We ask whether young people have the right digital skills, whether they have internet access, and whether they are prepared for the future of work.

For Kennedy Asiago, building WorkKE in Kenya has taught him that there is another side of the equation that deserves just as much attention: after people acquire digital skills, where does the work come from?

Kennedy is the founder and CEO of WorkkKE, a marketplace where businesses could find freelancers and skilled professionals, while giving African talent access to more income opportunities. Currently, WorkKE boosts of over 8000 users, and more than 181 cybercafés are represented within the WorkKE ecosystem.

"We launched WorkKE in 2025 with what appeared to be a straightforward idea — create a marketplace where businesses could find freelancers and skilled professionals, while giving African talent access to more income opportunities," he says. "The assumption was that attracting skilled people would be difficult. We were wrong."

WorkKE has since grown to more than 8000 registered users. That growth has been encouraging, but it has also revealed one of the most important lessons of the startup journey: building the supply side of a digital marketplace can be easier than building sustained demand.

"Thousands of people may be ready to work, but a marketplace only works when businesses are consistently willing to hire them," says Kennedy. "That realisation changed how we think about WorkKE."

According to Kennedy, a digital-work marketplace is not simply a directory of people and projects. Trust sits at the centre of every transaction. An employer hiring someone online wants to know: is this person genuine? Can they deliver? What happens to my money if the work is not completed?

The professional has equally important questions: is this employer genuine? Will I be paid after completing the work? What happens if there is a disagreement?

"These questions are particularly important when digital transactions involve people who have never met each other," says Kennedy. "That pushed us to think beyond matching supply and demand and focus on the infrastructure around the transaction, including verification, trusted hiring, local payment options and mechanisms designed to make digital transactions safer for both sides."

"We have also expanded our thinking around skills development, digital products, employer tools and AI-enabled productivity. The result is that WorkKE is gradually evolving from what started as a freelance marketplace into what we see as a broader digital-work ecosystem."

Building for African Realities

Another lesson has been that African startups should be careful about assuming that successful global models can simply be replicated locally. The fundamental marketplace concept may be similar, but the environment is different.

Payments are different. Trust behaviours are different. Business purchasing patterns are different. Internet access and digital literacy vary significantly. Many small businesses are still learning how to hire and manage people remotely.

This means building for Africa sometimes requires solving problems that sit outside the original product idea.

"One example we are exploring is Kenya's cybercafé network," says Kennedy. "More than 181 cybercafés are currently represented within the WorkKE ecosystem. Traditionally, these businesses have provided services such as internet access, printing, government e-services and document support."

WorkKE also sees a possibility worth exploring: could some of these businesses gradually become community access points for digital work, online commerce and skills?

"The model is still developing, and we do not yet claim that it has been proven at scale," says Kennedy. "But it represents the kind of local infrastructure that could help digital opportunities reach people beyond the most connected urban professionals."

Perhaps the most important founder lesson has been learning not to confuse user growth with marketplace success. Registration numbers matter, but they do not tell the entire story. A sustainable marketplace needs employers who return, professionals who find meaningful opportunities, transactions that work smoothly, and enough trust for both sides to come back.

"That has made us increasingly focused on the demand side of the digital-work economy," says Kennedy. "Africa is investing significantly in digital skills. That is necessary. But skills programmes alone cannot create a digital economy. We also need businesses that know how to use digital talent, trusted platforms through which transactions can happen, payment infrastructure that works locally, and pathways connecting skills to actual income."

What Comes Next

"We are still early in the WorkKE journey, and many of the difficult questions remain unanswered. We are learning how to create stronger employer demand, how to improve trust, how to make the marketplace more useful outside major cities, and how emerging technologies such as AI will change the type of work businesses need."

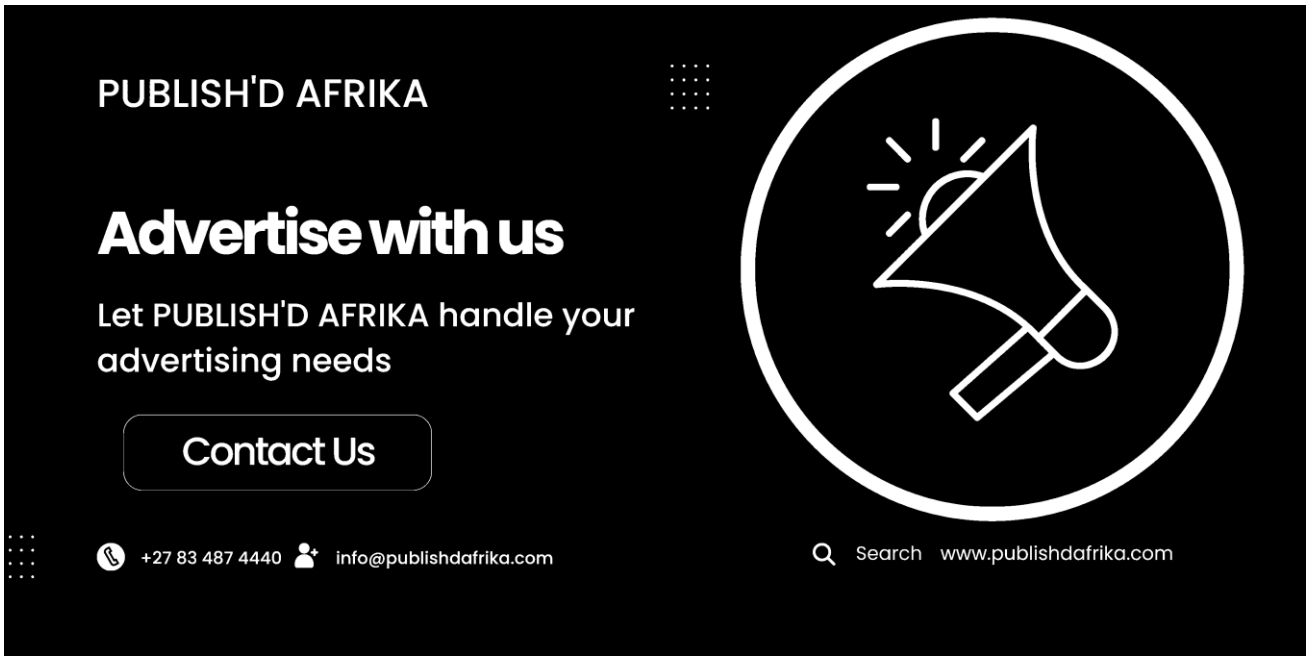
Kennedy is however increasingly convinced that Africa does not have to be only a supplier of talent to digital platforms built elsewhere. There is an opportunity to build our own digital-work infrastructure around African businesses, African professionals and the realities of our markets.

"WorkKE is one attempt to explore what that infrastructure might look like," he says. "The biggest lesson so far is simple: building a startup is not about proving your original idea was right. It is about listening carefully enough to the market to discover what actually needs to be built."

Get in touch with WorkKE at +254 719 672 714

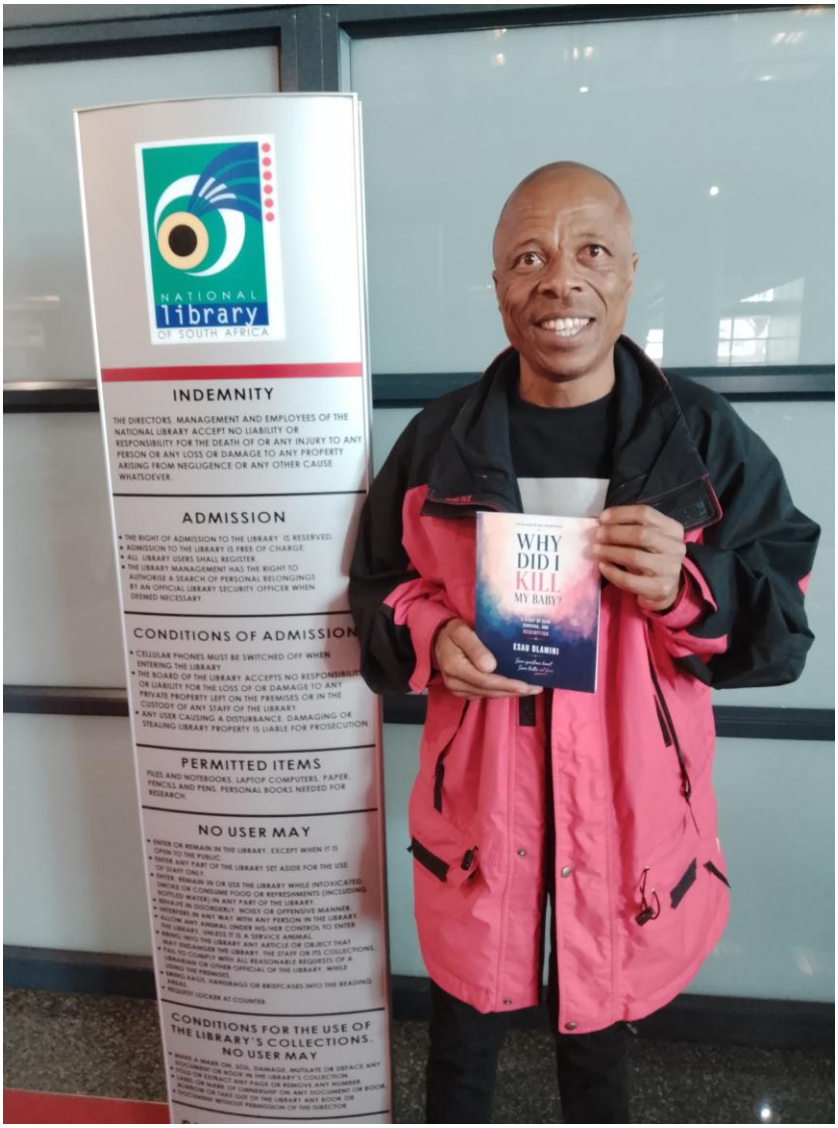
workke.co.ke

kennedy@workke.co.ke



From Journalist to Novelist

Essau Finds Advocacy In Storytelling



For many years, Esau Dlamini used journalism to give communities a voice, documenting the struggles, achievements and personal journeys of ordinary people. Now, the Duduza-born journalist has entered a new chapter in his storytelling journey; becoming a novelist with a powerful message about trauma, healing and hope.

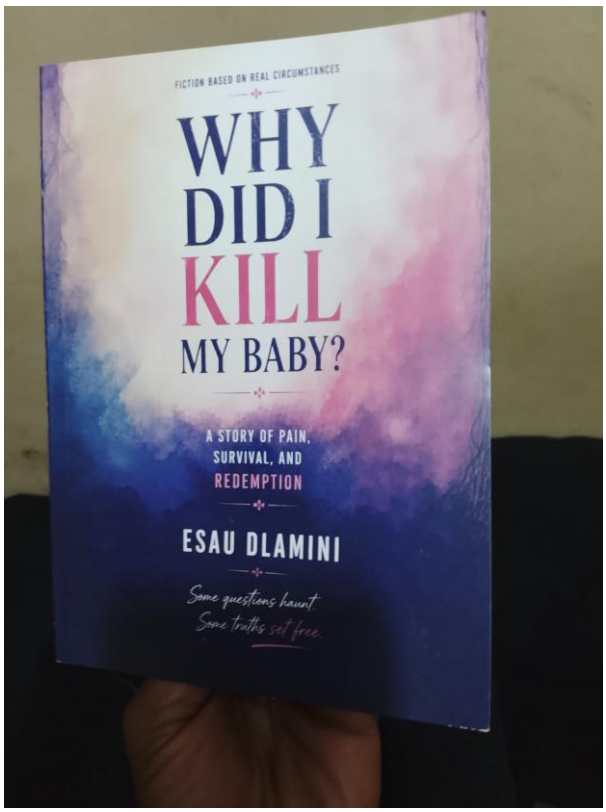
Dlamini has released his debut novel, *Why Did I Kill My Baby?*, a fictional story inspired by real-life circumstances that explores some of society's most difficult conversations, including gender-based violence, spiritual abuse, trauma, grief, forgiveness and the journey towards healing. The novel is not only a literary work; it is a call for empathy, awareness and reflection. Through the experiences of its main character, Nyeleti Mthombeni, readers are taken on an emotional journey that explores the impact of abuse and the strength required to overcome pain and rebuild one's life.

For Dlamini, writing has always been a lifelong passion.

"I have loved reading and writing since I was a child," he says. "I was also actively involved in debating and public speaking during my high school years, which helped me develop confidence in expressing ideas and telling stories,"

His years as a journalist strengthened his ability to tell human-interest stories, but the dream of writing a novel remained close to his heart. Although *Why Did I Kill My Baby?* is a work of fiction, Dlamini says the story reflects realities experienced by many people in communities across South Africa.

"This is a fictional story, but it is rooted in situations that happen far too often. Through the novel, I wanted to give a voice to people who suffer in silence and create a story that encourages compassion, understanding and healing," he says.



The book addresses sensitive social issues while reminding a reader that behind every statistic is a human story. It encourages conversations around supporting survivors, breaking cycles of abuse and creating spaces where people feel safe to speak out. Beyond addressing social challenges, Dlamini hopes his novel will contribute towards building a stronger culture of reading, especially among young people. He believes books have the power to educate, inspire and transform lives.

"One of my biggest goals is to promote a culture of reading. Books have the power to educate, inspire and transform lives, and I believe we need to encourage more people, particularly young people, to read for knowledge, personal growth and enjoyment."

As part of his literacy advocacy, Dlamini plans to visit schools and libraries across Ekurhuleni to engage with learners, encourage reading and share his journey from journalist to author. He hopes young people will understand that their own experiences and ideas matter.

"I want young people to see books as tools that can shape their futures," he says. "Reading and writing can open doors."

Dlamini's journey reflects the growing importance of African voices telling African stories. Through his novel, he highlights the role of literature in preserving experiences, challenging social issues and encouraging healing. For him, becoming an author is not only a personal achievement but also a responsibility.

"I want my books to spark conversations that matter. If someone finishes reading this novel feeling inspired to seek help, speak out, support a survivor, or simply view these issues with greater empathy, then I will know the book has fulfilled its purpose," he says.

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The Misinformation Conundrum:

Why Peddlers View Being Corrected As An Attack

Not every peddler of misinformation does it with evil intent. Some are misinformed as well but mean well.

At the same time, peddling misinformation while trying to inform and educate is particularly dangerous because it erodes the credibility of factual information. It causes bad decisions with real costs. People make health, financial, and safety choices based on what they think is true. If the information is wrong, the decisions people take are wrong too, even if the intent was good. Remember, every choice you make starts with an idea someone has put in year head. It is easier to take advice, a recommendation or a suggestion from someone you believe to be an expert or someone you believe to be well-informed. You do it without hesitation, without questioning it, until it is proven incorrect.

Misinformation also erodes trust in all information. When people discover they were misled by someone who claimed to be educating them, they don't just lose trust in that person; they start to distrust teachers, experts, media, and even facts in general. Remember, wrong information spreads faster than facts. A simple, emotional, "you need to know this" post is easy to share. The correction is usually longer, more nuanced, and boring. The algorithm and human psychology both favour the first version.

It also creates echo chambers. One piece of misinformation becomes the foundation for the next. Once a false belief is accepted, people seek out more information that confirms it and reject anything that doesn't. Hence it makes real education harder. Teachers and experts then have to spend their time debunking instead of building knowledge.

Often, people who spread misinformation get offended when corrected. It is rarely about the fact itself. It is about what the fact means to them. For them, it is about identity, not information. If someone has built their identity as "the one who informs others" or "the one who sees the truth," a correction feels like you are saying "you are not smart / you are not a good person / you are a liar." They hear an attack on character, not a correction of data.

It is often a case of cognitive dissonance. Holding two conflicting ideas: "I am a well-meaning educator" and "I spread something false" is uncomfortable. The easiest way to resolve that discomfort is to reject the correction, not to accept that you were wrong. Next, the misinformation peddler accuses the one correcting the misinformation of having an agenda and attacks the person instead of engaging on the matter at hand.

They also fear public embarrassment and the social cost that comes with it. If they corrected themselves, they would have to admit to everyone that they can be wrong, or that they are less-informed on some issues. That feels humiliating and can cost them status in their community or potential online following. They think: "My intent was good, so my impact must be good."

When you point out the bad impact, they feel you are questioning their motives, even if you are only questioning their accuracy.

Most people who spread misinformation don't think they are spreading misinformation. They think they are informing. So their reaction to correction follows a pretty predictable pattern:

1. Immediate Defensiveness

Denial: "That's not false, I saw it somewhere"

Counter-attack: "Who are you to correct me?" or "You're the one misinformed"

Shifting the burden: "Prove that I'm wrong"

This is self-protection. If you believe you are helping, being told you are harming feels like an accusation of bad character.

2. Justifying the Source

"I got it from a credible person/page/video"

"Many people are saying it"

"Even if this detail is wrong, the bigger point is still true"

They defend where it came from because admitting the source is unreliable means they have to question other things they learned from that source too.

3. Playing the Motive Card

"Why are you attacking me? I'm just trying to educate people"

"You are trying to silence the truth"

"You have an agenda"

This reframes a factual correction into a moral conflict: good person trying to help vs. bad person trying to attack.

4. Silence, Deletion, or Doubling Down

Most people don't publicly say "thank you, I was wrong." Common exits are:

Quietly delete the post and say nothing

Stop replying and claim the engagement is pointless

Block or mute the corrector

Or the opposite: post even more to prove they were right all along

Open acceptance is rare, especially in public, because the social cost of admitting an error in front of potential audience is high.

5. Delayed Private Acceptance

A lot of research shows people may reject a correction publicly but update their belief privately later. They won't tell you that you were right, but they will stop spreading that specific claim.

The reaction gets more intense when three things are present:

- A potential large audience is watching
- Their identity or community is built around a belief that they are experts

- The correction is phrased as "you're wrong / you're lying" instead of "that information is inaccurate"

When they can't defend the information, they attack the person correcting them.

It moves like this: Fact -> Motive -> Character

1. First, it is about the fact: "That's not true"

2. Then about your motive: "You're just trying to make me look stupid / you're paid to say that/ you have an agenda"

3. Then about you: "You're arrogant, jealous, ignorant, brainwashed"

Here is why it always gets personal:

- It gets personal because it is easier taking that route. Defending a claim takes evidence, sources, logic. Attacking you takes one sentence.
- It changes the audience. If they can make you look bad, the crowd stops looking at whether the original information was true or false. Now it is a drama about who is the nicer or more credible person.
- It protects status. In front of potential followers, admitting "I shared false info" lowers their status. Saying "this person is a hater/troll who attacks people trying to help" keeps their status intact and even gains sympathy.
- It feels justified to them. Because they believe their intent was good, which was to inform, they feel morally superior. So any correction feels like bullying, and bullying justifies a personal response in return.

Common personal moves that you will see:

- Name-calling, mocking and challenging your skills on an entirely different matter, like a soccer player challenging a cricketer to a penalty shoot-out.
- Bringing up your past mistakes: "You also once shared..."
- "If you're so smart, why don't you..."
- Telling their audience: "Don't listen to this person, I won't argue with him any further"

The trick is not to get pulled into that second fight. The moment you start defending your character, you have left the original topic. The best response is boring but effective: don't defend yourself, stick to the claim. When you correct the information and not the person, you get a lot less retaliation. Most people don't double-down on the facts—they double-down because they feel shamed in front of others. They completely forget that the whole point wasn't to shame them but to help them spread accurate information.

Here is what tends to work, especially on WhatsApp groups, family chats, on social media and work chats:

1. **How to correct without it feeling like an attack**

Separate public and private: If it's in a group, correct the claim in the group briefly, then take the person to DMs. "Hey, saw the post

about X in the group—I checked and found Y, thought you would want to know."

Use the truth sandwich: True context -> flag the false part -> true context again. Don't lead with "This is false."

Ask, don't accuse: "Where did you see that? I saw a different number from—have you seen this one?" It invites them to correct themselves.

Steelman their concern: "I get why that would be worrying if it were true" before you share the correction. It shows you heard motive, not just error.

Bring receipts, not lectures: One primary source, screenshot, or link is stronger than five paragraphs. Let the source do the arguing.

Don't make it about intelligence or morals: Avoid "you're spreading misinformation / you are lying." Say "that claim / that post is inaccurate."

How to handle fallout when they get personal

Don't match escalation: If they insult you, don't defend your character. Go back to the claim. "Happy to compare sources on the claim itself."

Set a boundary once, clearly: "I'm not going to argue about me—I shared the source so people can decide. If you want to discuss the data, I'm in."

Use the 1-and-done rule: Correct once, with evidence. If they keep going, you don't need to reply every time. Audiences notice who stays calm.

Document if it gets to harassment: If it is work or community related, save screenshots with timestamps. If it is just a social group, mute or step away for a few hours. Retaliation loses fuel fast when there is no audience response.

Protect the relationship after: Give them an off-ramp. "No hard feelings, I know there is a lot of fake stuff going around." People who feel they can back down without losing face often do.

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Sketches Of A Lifetime

Try Phoku's Art of Becoming

He has received an honourable mention from Amapiano artist, Tyler ICU, and his work has been featured on national TV shows like Daily Thetha and Kwantu, plus Mpuma Kapa TV on DSTV.

His name is Try Phoku, a self-taught visual Artist.

Try, 25, was born in Bronkhorstspruit Gauteng, South Africa. His journey with art started at age 12 when he picked up a pencil and paper. What began as curiosity quickly became an "everlasting relationship" with drawing.

Entirely self-taught, he spent his teenage years practising every day—turning pen, pencil, charcoal, and pastels into the tools he still uses to master portraiture. His focus has always been people. Human nature plays a huge role in his approach, and he creates art meant to connect with the soul and leave a lasting emotional impact.

Now a recognised visual artist and portrait master, Try's detail and emotional depth have taken his work beyond Bronkhorstspruit. A major milestone was his exhibition at the State Theatre, which introduced his art to new audiences firsthand. He has also received an honourable mention from Amapiano artist Tyler ICU, and his work has been featured on national TV shows like Daily Thetha and Kwantu, plus Mpuma Kapa TV on DSTV.

"That exposure helped grow my brand into communities across South Africa," he says.

Alongside his studio practice, Try also serves as an Art teacher at Mpumelelo Secondary School, mentoring the next generation of young artists.

From a 12-year-old with a pencil to a 25-year-old artist and educator, Try's story is

built on discipline, curiosity, and consistency. He draws daily, keeps learning new techniques, and lets the work speak for itself. His goal remains the same: to create portraits that people will admire for years to come.

Connect with Try Phoku
Facebook: Try Phoku
Instagram: @try_phoku
Website/Gallery:
http://tryphokuarts.pixieset.com
Contact: 076 790 5267

Chinua Achebe Prize For Literature Opens 2026 Entries

The Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) has unveiled a new logo and opened entries for the Chinua Achebe Prize for Literature 2026, following the dissolution of the committee previously responsible for the prize.

The announcement was contained in a press statement jointly issued by the ANA President, Dr. Usman Oladipo Akanbi, and the Acting General Secretary, Wole Adedoyin, inviting Nigerian writers at home and **abroad** to participate in the 2026 edition of the annual prize.

The Chinua Achebe Prize for Literature recognises excellence and outstanding achievement in Nigerian fiction. Established in 2021, the prize has over the years recognised notable works of Nigerian fiction. **Past winners are: 2021 – Obinna Ndenwe, Colours of Hatred; 2022 – Sylva Nze Ifedigbo, Believers and Hustlers; 2023 – Nikę Campbell, Saro; 2024 – Ifeoma Chinwuba, Sons of the East; and 2025 – Ndidi Chiazor Enenmor, See Morocco, See Spain.

For the 2026–2030 period, ANA expressed appreciation to United Nigeria Airlines (UNA) for its sponsorship commitment of ₦10 million towards prize money and administrative costs.

The 2026 competition is open to published novels written by Nigerian authors and published in 2025 or 2026. Manuscripts are not eligible, there is no entry fee, and an author may submit only one title. Works previously entered for the prize are also ineligible.

According to ANA, authors or publishers are required to submit 10 copies of the published novel, proof of Nigerian citizenship, a covering letter stating the prize being entered for, the author's email address, telephone number and postal address, as well as the publisher's details, publication year and ISBN.

"The Chinua Achebe Prize for Literature remains an important platform for recognising excellence in Nigerian fiction and encouraging writers to contribute

meaningfully to the nation's literary heritage," ANA stated.

Entries will be judged on literary quality, originality, creativity, language, narrative craft, characterisation and thematic depth. Submissions must be original and comply with Nigerian copyright laws, with authors and publishers responsible for any copyright infringement.

The prize is not open to members of ANA's Board of Trustees (BOT), National Executive Council (NEC), the judging panel, United Nigeria Airlines staff, or their immediate family members. Judges are required to disclose and recuse themselves from entries involving a conflict of interest, including works they have edited, published or for which they have written supporting material.

The winner will receive ₦1,000,000 (One Million Naira) and a plaque/certificate. The prize may be deferred where there is no deserving entry or no entry at all. Where there is only one entry, it may be awarded if the judges consider it deserving, while the decision of the judges remains final. ANA also reserves the right to verify submitted information and disqualify entries that fail to meet the stated requirements. Submitted copies will not be returned.

The submission deadline is 15 September 2026, with the shortlist scheduled for 15 October 2026. The winner will be announced at the Awards Dinner during the ANA International Annual Convention, scheduled for 29 October–1 November 2026.

Entries should be addressed to: The General Secretary, Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), KM 2, Mamman Vatsa Writers' Village, Mpape, Abuja, Nigeria. ANA stated that it would not be responsible for delays, loss or charges arising from postal or courier services.

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AVBOB POETRY CORNER

WONDER-EYED

One of the things we love most about children is their ability to experience profound astonishment at everything that surrounds them. But how can we nourish and sustain this ability as we grow older?

No one has pondered this question more deeply than Sarah Frost, who won the English category of the AVBOB Poetry Competition in 2025. As we prepare to celebrate International Youth Day, The AVBOB Poetry Project celebrates her voice and work. Her second collection, River Fugue (Karavan Press, 2025) includes hauntingly beautiful poems about the ways in which wonder can be discovered, lost and found again. In one poem, she remembers discovering the beauty of John Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' on a lonely evening, while she was hungry for love as well as experience. Another finds her, eight years old and at a loss for words, wandering alone through a winter landscape just after she has received her first hardcover book.

"As a child I didn't have words for the big feelings," she confirms. "So it is a gift to be able to go back to that time as an adult, through memory and poetry, and reckon with what happened to me. I was so lonely and cold the night I read the Keats poem, love-hungry, and realising that poetry could 'warm and feed' me was an important insight. Through these experiences, I was slowly realising how I could make my mark, plot a path through grief, with words."

Another exquisite poem, 'St Barts', laments the loss of her own childlike ability for wonder. She describes how she used to walk through the door of a church and feel herself in the presence of something larger than herself: "These days the wooden door is barred shut. / And, I have lost those eyes ablaze with wonder."

Although this poem expresses profound loss, the entire collection shows how this blaze of wonder can be rekindled throughout one's adult life. 'Child in the Scarp Forest', for instance, shows her beginning to learn how to see through a child's eyes again:

I see with her cerulean gaze

the new scarp growing from the old,

the wild fig as it breaks and frays,

the flowering understory, crimson gold.

Like a blue duiker, wonder-eyed,

from the rot of what has died,

she finds the fruit and its seeded core.

Great trees mute the urban roar.

What does celebrating International Youth Day mean to her as a poet?

"Young people need to trust their voices and use them. I wish I'd had more faith in my skills and insights sooner. International Youth Day says to young people that they are part of the conversation, something really important in these alienated times where tech pulls us away from our experience, and master narratives (war, capitalism, ecocide) terrify us into silence."

What other activities help her to stay creative and grounded on a daily basis?

"I am a dedicated Iyengar yoga practitioner – practising at least twice a week, sometimes more. Coming back to the wisdom of the body is very important, especially because I lead a cerebral (and too often online) life. I am a fervent believer in the importance of self-compassion. As an artist, it helps me find the 'still voice within', and summon meaning from an expansive and generous centre, rather than one that is shut down and self-doubting."

In the next few days, write a poem in which you draw wonder and strength from something ordinary but precious in your immediate environment.

The AVBOB Poetry Competition is open for submissions until 30 November 2026. Visit www.avbobpoetry.co.za today and learn how to enter your best words.

POINT OF VIEW

It would be easy to assume that every poem is written from a single point of view, aiming to deliver a single message as simply and directly as possible.

But sometimes poets find it more rewarding to shift their perspective, slowly or suddenly, halfway into a poem, showing up our expectations and forcing us to examine our cherished assumptions and beliefs.

Simon van Schalkwyk is a poet and academic whose second collection, Zero Summer (Dryad Press, 2026), challenges and delights in equal measure. This month, he shared with The AVBOB Poetry Project 'Nature Is Healing', a poem from the collection that consciously subverts the reader's expectations.

Read the poem he has shared and discover how exciting it can be when a poem's point of view shifts to reveal a startling new angle.

It happened anyway – ruin.

No matter how hard they worked,

despite their entrepreneurial spirit,

there was never enough money.

Shops were boarded up monthly,

then twice monthly, then weekly.

Then the virus happened. Game over.

Now the shops are just boards

hammered and nailed over windows

(or what used to be windows)

the streets overrun by hyrax

(nature is healing).

Colonies of hyrax

loitering on empty corners

yelling Stella, singing Maria,

getting into knife-fights and trouble.

The poem's title is deliciously ambiguous. Many readers will assume that this will be a poem in which nature heals and consoles the human heart. But as we will see, the poem has other intentions.

It begins with an account of human beings challenged by financial hardship, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The "entrepreneurial spirit" of these people cannot protect them against the scarcity of money and other resources. We might expect to learn more about them, but this does not happen. Instead, the point of view shifts, zooming in on the shopfronts and boarded-up windows in spaces where human beings used to trade and compete.

Then, within a few short lines, we are presented with an image of hyrax taking over these formerly human spaces. The poem's biggest surprise comes in a line in brackets, as if it was included at the last moment: "(nature is healing)." With a shock, we realise that the nature being described here does not heal or console human beings at all. On the contrary, it is healing itself, for its own sake. And it can only do this because of the absence of the humans who would normally threaten it. From this point onwards, the poem's focus is entirely on the hyrax who now roam freely in spaces human beings have abandoned.

Does this mean that the world presented here is a happy, idyllic place now that humans no longer threaten the natural world? Well, not exactly. The poem ends in ambiguity, with a final glimpse of hyrax, "loitering on empty corners", behaving raucously, "getting into knife-fights and trouble." In other words, creatures other than humans also fight over the same territory. Resources are still limited. Even so, the natural world is healing, simply because human beings are suddenly absent from the scene. Van Schalkwyk has forced us to examine our assumption that human beings and their concerns are at the centre of any action.

In the next few days, write a poem in which you unexpectedly change perspective. You could either write it in different sections, each from a different angle, or change your point of view gradually. Aim at creating

something that will be surprising in some way.

The annual AVBOB Poetry Competition is open for submissions until 30 November 2026. Visit www.avbobpoetry.co.za today and familiarise yourself with the competition rules.