

OCTOBER 2026 ISSUE

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA

LITERARY MAGAZINE

**WHAT TYPE OF
EDITOR SHOULD
I HIRE FOR
MY BOOK**

LOOKING FOR A
BLACK-CENTRED
PUBLISHER?

Here Are 16
To Pick From

**WHAT
BESTSELLING
AUTHORS KNOW
THAT MOST
WRITERS DON'T**

BASADI

When Women Built
A Country And Men
Took It Back

**EM DASH ON
TRIAL**

Why We Are
Blaming The
Wrong Punctuation

**“I FAILED, AND THAT
SAVED ME”**

PHINDILE NGIBA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PHINDILE NGIBA: <i>"I FAILED, And That Saved Me"</i>	1
What Bestselling Authors Know That Most Writers Don't	3
BASADI: <i>When Women Built A Country And Men Took It Back</i>	7
What Happens When A Woman Stops Enduring?: <i>New Novel Puts Marriage on Trial</i>	10
What Type of Editor Should I Hire For My Book?	12
The Words They Stole: <i>Burkina Faso is not revising its schoolbooks. It is taking them back</i>	15
So You Wrote The Book. Now What?: <i>Charmaine On How To Launch Into Sales</i>	17
The Story After The Story: <i>Kutullo On The Human Cost Of Chasing News</i>	19
Em Dash On Trial: <i>Why We Are Blaming The Wrong Punctuation</i>	21
Poetry Africa 30 th Edition Comes To Durban	24
AVBOB POETRY CORNER	26
CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS	28

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PUBLISH'D AFRIKA
LITERARY MAGAZINE
Redefining Africa's Narrative

PHINDILE NGIBA: “I FAILED, And That Saved Me”

What if failure was never a stain, but a signal?

That is the question at the centre of Phindile Ngiba's book, *I FAILED: Breaking Patterns & Finding Healing*—and it is the question that has defined her last sixteen years shapeshifting through drama, media and entrepreneurship.

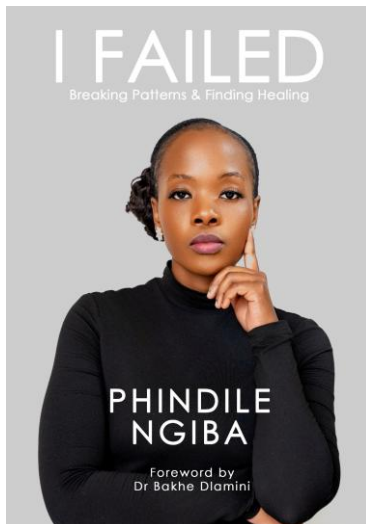
She calls it a life autopsy. The book is not a memoir that asks you to feel sorry for her, but a surgical, courageous unpacking of a toxic upbringing, a failed marriage, financial instability; basically every wrong turn she took so you do not have to take the same one.



In Phindile's language, failure is not a final destination. It is a missed target, a reality check, a moment to stop, recalibrate and pivot. And pivot is what she knows best.

Based in Johannesburg and raising two children alongside her adopted niece, Phindile has built a life that is as rooted in the sacred duties of motherhood and community service as it is in business. Today she uses that same resilience and grace to teach others how to turn setbacks into blueprints.

I FAILED is candid, semi-autobiographical and unapologetically redemptive. It refuses to separate healing from practicality. In one chapter, you are confronting generational trauma and unexamined family dynamics and cultural expectations. In the next, you are talking financial literacy. Then faith. Then self-discovery.



The book also refuses to let you just read and nod. The book works as an interactive workbook—reflective sessions, journaling prompts and reaffirming statements that

make you do the inner work long after you close the cover.

“The women who will feel it most are those in the middle of the messy middle; women navigating identity, faith, marriage and the hard work of personal restoration,” she says.

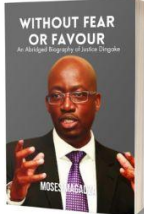
The takeaway Phindile wants you to leave with is disarmingly simple: awareness is the first step to transformation.

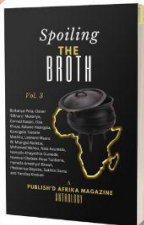
“Adversity does not define your destiny. It refines your character. You can move from brokenness to power, but only if you are willing to break the patterns that broke you,” she says.

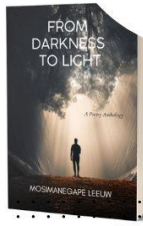
To order the book or to connect with Phindile, go to www.phindilengiba.com

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What Bestselling Authors Know That Most Writers Don't

Every debut writer thinks the secret is talent. Bestselling authors know better: talent will get you a beautiful manuscript, but it will not get you a career.

That is the hard lesson every bestselling author learns, and the one most budding authors avoid. We grow up believing if we write well enough, someone will find us. The publishing world works the opposite way. It finds people who already have people.

Publishers do not buy books. They buy markets. When a publisher in Johannesburg or London looks at your proposal, they ask two questions: how good is this, and who will buy it tomorrow morning? The first is talent. The second is your numbers.

Talk to any writer who has actually moved numbers; from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to Colleen Hoover, from Trevor Noah to James Clear, and you will hear the same uncomfortable truth: talent is the entry fee. What keeps you on the shelf is something else entirely.

So what do they have in common? And what should an African budding writer sitting in Soweto, in Durban, in Nairobi, steal from them right now?

They started with 20 true fans, not 20,000 followers:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie did not start with a million followers. She started with a workshop. Her Farafina Workshop in Lagos created a generation of writers who read her,



cited her, invited her. Wole Soyinka built his following through theatre audiences and university debates long before Nobel.

Rupi Kaur, who outsold most poets on the planet, posted one poem on Instagram to 30 followers. Then 300. She replied to every comment for two years.

Trevor Noah did not build a following as an author. He built it as a comedian on stage every night, then on *The Daily Show*, then the book *Born a Crime* sold 2 million copies on day one because the audience was already warm.

Budding authors in Africa think they need to go viral in America. You need 20 people in Soweto, Durban, Accra who will show up every time you read. That is a market.

Colleen Hoover, the biggest selling novelist in the US, built her army on TikTok by crying with readers on camera. She did not market books. She built friendships around books.

They Write Like Employees, Not Geniuses:

Stephen King writes 2,000 words a day, even on Christmas. Maya Angelou rented a hotel room in every city she lived in just to go to work. Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote *Devil on the Cross* on toilet paper in a Kenyan prison. African bestsellers are ruthless about routine because their lives rarely allow romantic writing retreats.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has spoken openly about writing in tiny stolen hours between teaching, activism and motherhood. Koleka Putuma did not wait for inspiration to write *Collective Amnesia*, which made her the best-selling poet in South African history. She performed, revised, toured, launched 17 times in three months.

The lesson: Bestsellers treat writing as labour before it becomes art. Set a target that scares you a little, such as 500 words before your day job. One chapter every Saturday. No negotiating with mood.

They Mine One Obsession, Not Ten Ideas:

Budding writers want to write about everything. Bestsellers write about one wound until it stops bleeding.

Chinua Achebe spent his entire career answering one question: what did colonialism do to our stories? Wole Soyinka returns again and again to power and its absurdity. Chimamanda keeps circling

gender, migration and what it means to be at home and not at home at the same time.

Look at Trevor Noah. His book, *Born a Crime*, is not a book about everything that happened in South Africa. It is a book about one mixed-race boy raised by a ferocious mother who refused to be defined by apartheid. One obsession, told with intimacy and humour. It sold over two million copies.

Thando Fuze, whose *Fluent in the Language of Burial*, launches at Poetry Africa this year, says she writes to forget, to remember and these days to find God. One thread.

The lesson: Stop asking, "What should I write?" Ask, "What keeps keeping me up? What story will not leave me alone?" Bestsellers are not broad. They are deep. Readers do not buy topics. They buy obsessions rendered honestly.

They Turn Specificity Into Universality:

This is the biggest trick African writers are now teaching the world. The old advice was: "Write universal to sell global." The new bestsellers do the opposite. They go hyperlocal and the world comes to them. No one told Chimamanda to remove Igbo words to make *Half of a Yellow Sun* more accessible. No one told Ngugi to write in English to sell more. He switched to Gikuyu and became more influential.

When Putuma wrote *Water*, a poem about hair, history and who gets to be clean in South Africa, she won the PEN South Africa Prize and ended up on school syllabi because every girl in every country understood the politics of water.

James Clear sold 15 million copies of *Atomic Habits* not by saying "be better", but by saying "place your gym clothes next to your bed tonight."

The lesson: Your township, your grandmother's proverbs, your shebeen, your taxi rank, your church—that is not a limitation. That is your competitive advantage. Write the specific so well that a reader in Ukraine or Algeria, like the poets joining this year's Poetry Africa, feels it as their own.

They Build Community Before They Need It:

No bestseller is a lone genius. They are network nodes.

Adichie was lifted by Chinua Achebe and in turn lifted dozens of younger writers through her workshop in Lagos. Gcina Mhlophe mentored Phindile Ngiba and Thando Fuze. D'bi Young Anitafrika built Watah Theatre in Toronto so other Black women's stories had a stage.

Colleen Hoover did not become the best-selling novelist in America through a big marketing budget. She built a TikTok community that felt like they owned her characters.

The lesson: Publish before your book is perfect. Read at open mics. Join Chalkboard Slams. Comment on other writers' work. Bestsellers start giving long before they ask.

They Understand The Business, Not Just The Book:

This is where many African writers self-sabotage. We love the art and outsource the business, then complain we are broke.

Bestsellers know the book is 50 percent writing, 50 percent publishing.

Adichie understands branding, speeches, essays, Instagram Lives—not vanity, but visibility. Trevor Noah understood television.

The lesson: Learn contracts and rights. Ask what Poetry Africa's industry sessions are teaching—artist mobility, professional branding, technology in poetry. Your manuscript is not finished when you type THE END. It is finished when a reader can pay for it on Webtickets, in a bookstore in Rosebank, or from your hand after a reading.

Bestselling authors are not mystical. They are consistent where others are occasional, specific where others are vague, communal where others are isolated, and entrepreneurial where others are only artistic.

The good news for African budding writers is this: you already have the hardest part. You have stories no one else can tell, born against a backdrop the world is finally ready to hear—fifty years after Soweto, thirty years after the Constitution, and right now, while every word can still become a street.

Your job is not to wait to be discovered. Your job is to write like someone who has already been chosen, and then do the work to prove it.

Why Talent Alone Will Starve You:

Three reasons budding African authors must build now:

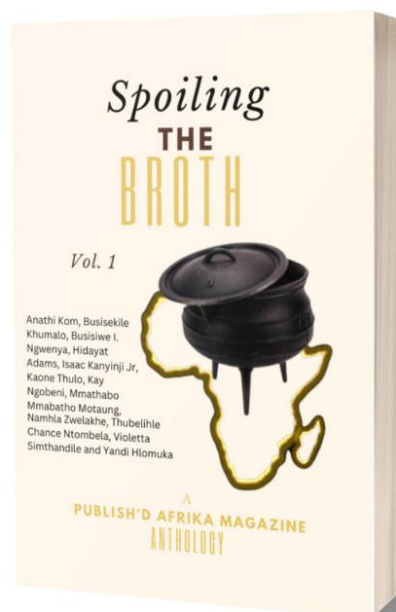
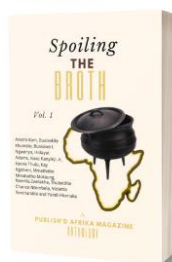
First, distribution is broken. Bookstores cannot stock every talented writer. They stock writers who bring foot traffic.

Second, traditional deals are shrinking. Publishers have less money for marketing. If you come with 5,000 engaged followers on WhatsApp groups, Facebook, TikTok, you are a safer bet than a genius with no one to email.

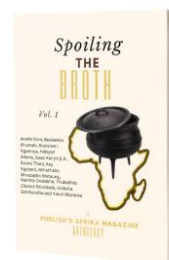
Third, independence is now power. You can self-publish, sell independently and at launches, on your Facebook page, Tik Tok,

X and through WhatsApp broadcasts. But you can only sell direct if people know where to find you.

Talent writes the book. Numbers make sure the book is read. So stop hiding behind humility. Post the poem. Record the reading. Start the newsletter. Teach the workshop. Host the small room. The writer who waits to be discovered waits forever. The writer who builds 20 true fans, then 200, then 2,000 — that writer becomes inevitable. And inevitable is what bestsellers have in common.



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It is said that too many cooks spoil the broth. This broth, comprising of 18 writers unearthed through PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine's Short Story Competition, seeks to shatter this myth. *Spoiling The Broth Vol.1* is a multi-themed collection of new short stories by authors from across the African continent.

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PRESIDENTIAL
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BASADI:

When Women Built A Country And Men Took It Back

What happens when women have had enough?

That is the question at the heart of BASADI, the powerful new 1050-State stage play written by Given Boleu and directed by Monica Bila.

The production, funded by the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP), will be staged at the Emalahleni Civic Theatre on 7 November.

It begins not with a protest, but with an exodus. In the land of Basadi, a place founded by strong and determined foremothers, a powerful narrative unfolds. These foremothers hail from diverse backgrounds across South Africa. What unites them is disappointment and disillusionment with the men in their lives. They have been cheated on, abused and marginalised. So they do what no one expects; they decide to take matters into their own hands and leave.

Under the leadership of their first queen, Kgoshigadi Serurubele, they do not just survive. They build. They build a thriving society that is independent, self-sufficient and prosperous. They raise their children. They run successful businesses. They create systems that work for the betterment of all.

1050-STATE
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“In Basadi, men are present, but they do not rule,” says Given. “They live under the guidance and leadership of the foremothers.”

And before they go, those foremothers leave a legacy that no law can erase—wisdom, strength and resilience, passed down in poems and messages to guide future generations. It should have been forever. But Basadi, like South Africa, forgets at its own peril.

The new generation of women begins to drift away from their matriarchal roots. Influenced by external ideologies, and by certain interpretations of the Bible that insist men are meant to lead, they start to believe the lie that they are meant to follow. That shift in perspective is small at first, then seismic. It allows men to gradually gain power and influence in Basadi.

“As more men enter, they eventually take control,” says Given. “And the problems that the foremothers had fled from come rushing back.”

Bila directs this collapse without sentimentality. The women of Basadi find themselves facing the very same challenges their ancestors escaped—abuse, marginalisation and exploitation. Many are forced to live on the streets, and become victims of abuse and exploitation. Some are compelled to engage in prostitution, their bodies commodified and exploited, just to eke out a living. The utopia becomes painfully familiar.

It is here that Given's pen turns from history to reckoning. As the women of Basadi navigate their harsh reality, they begin to realise a brutal truth: their struggles are a

direct result of the power they have given away. But in that realisation is also their salvation. Despite the challenges, they find strength in their shared experiences and collective resilience. They come together to form a powerful protest against Gender-Based Violence, seeking justice and accountability for those who have abused their power.

It is a moment that deliberately echoes the spirit of the 1956 Women's March, where over 20 000 women from diverse backgrounds came together to demand equality and justice. Led by courageous women like Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, and Sophia Williams, that historic march marked a pivotal moment in the fight against apartheid and the struggle for women's rights.

Given and Monica make the link clear: Basadi is a celebration of the women of 1956, of their courage and resilience, and of women as a whole. It is a tribute to the power of women's voices, their struggles, and their triumphs. Through its characters, Basadi tells the story of women who refuse to be silenced, who demand to be heard, and who fight for their rights and the rights of their communities.

The play resonates deeply with that spirit, highlighting the importance of women's empowerment, leadership, and collective wellbeing.

Now, a new generation of women in Basadi is on a quest to reclaim their heritage and rebuild their society. They are determined to rediscover the strength and resilience of their foremothers and to create a brighter future for themselves and their daughters.

It is theatre as memory. Theatre as warning.
Theatre as homecoming.

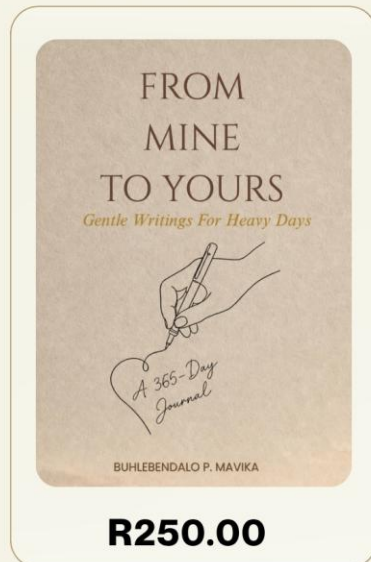
Tickets sell for R50 for an individual and
R80 for two people. For more information,
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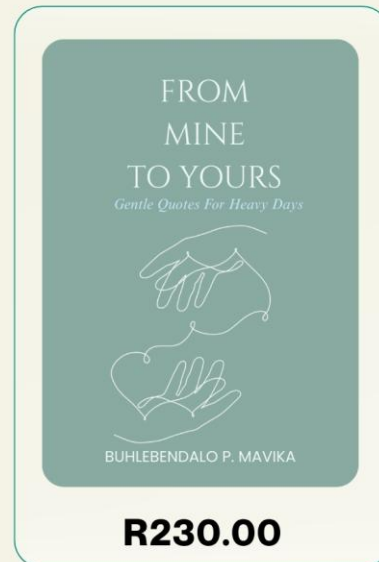
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What Happens When A Woman Stops Enduring?

New Novel Puts Marriage on Trial

Award-winning author Mubanga Kalimamukwento is back with a new and magnificent novel, *The Shipikisha Club*, where she explores the meaning of innocence and guilt within Zambia's cultural landscape.

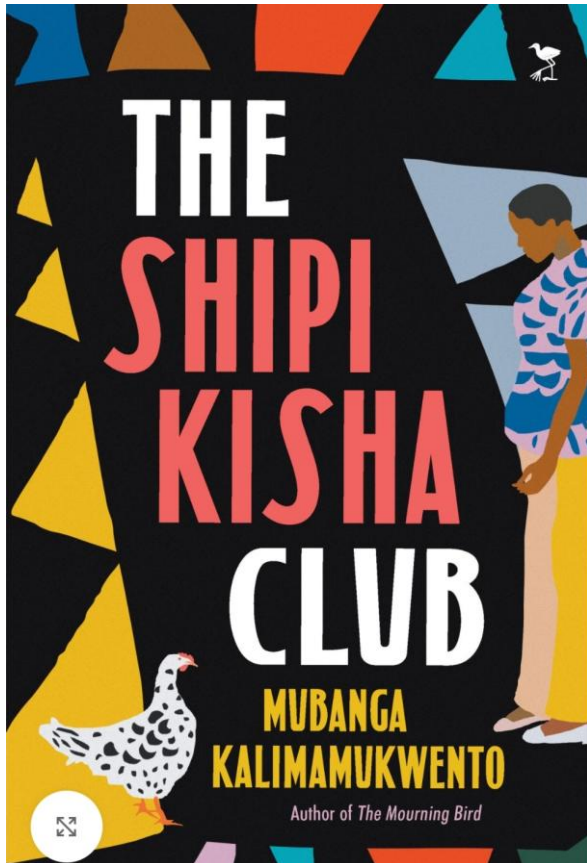
Mubanga Kalimamukwento is the author of four books and one chapbook. She was the first Zambian winner of the Jacana Literary Foundation's Dinaane Debut Fiction Prize for *The Mourning Bird*. She additionally was the first African winner of the Drue Heinz Literature Prize. She has also received support from the Fulbright Program, the Africa Institute, the Hawkinson Scholarship for Peace and Justice and the Miles Morland Scholarship for African writers.

In the book, she tells the story of Sali, a working mother of three, who is on trial for the murder of her husband, Kasunga. The prosecutor says she shot him after a heated fight in their bedroom, but there are no witnesses and Sali pleads not guilty.

To understand how Sali ended up in the dock, we have to go back fourteen years, to a young woman determined to resist the pressure to find a husband, an affair with a wealthy married man called Doc and a life-changing discovery that forces her to make a difficult choice. Sali finds herself married to Kasunga and suddenly thrust into the Shipikisha club: her society's expectation that it is a wife's duty to endure. As the years pass, she learns to live with the cracks in her marriage and the pressures of motherhood.

Until one day, when everything changes.





Sali's trial becomes a national scandal and draws a cast of witnesses, including the maid, Kasunga's mother and Sali's 15 year old daughter, Ntashé. Each have their own version of the woman, the marriage and

what happened behind closed doors. But whose story will the court believe? And most importantly, whose side will you be on?

As Sali awaits her fate, held in appalling conditions in Mukobeko Prison where inmate rape and the threat of HIV infection are rife, she hopes against hope. Before the verdict is announced, memories and words, regrets and accusations fill the courtroom, time crashes into itself, slowing to a near halt while racing ahead. Sali calls no witnesses because no one else was there when it happened. Even her diary doesn't contain the whole story. So why must she alone carry the blame?

Told through the rotating perspectives of Sali, Ntashé and Sali's mother Peggy, *The Shipikisha Club* is a riveting story of gender politics in Zambia and the world at large.

This novel is the perfect bookclub pick that is already well-received by international audiences. It comes with a group discussion questionnaire that will facilitate discussion in your bookclub.

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What Type of Editor Should I Hire For My Book?

You have finished a draft. That is no small thing. You have lived with these characters, this argument, this world for months or years, and now you are staring at a manuscript that feels both entirely finished and not at all ready to be seen.

The next question is inevitable, and more complicated than it first sounds: what kind of editor do you actually need? The short answer is that "editor" is not one job. It is at least five different jobs, and hiring the wrong one at the wrong time is how writers waste thousands and months of momentum.

Before you hire anyone, you need to diagnose your manuscript.

1. The Developmental Editor: The Architect

If your beta readers say, "I liked it, but..." or "I got lost around page 80," you don't need someone to fix your commas. You need a developmental editor.

This is big-picture work. A developmental editor asks: does this book work at all? Does the plot hold? Does the memoir earn its ending? Does the nonfiction argument build logically? Is your protagonist's decision in Chapter 22 motivated, or convenient?

This is the most expensive and most invasive edit, and it is indispensable for first-time novelists and memoirists. A good developmental editor will tell you to cut a beloved chapter, merge two characters, or re-order your entire Part II. It will sting.

Genres have architecture. A romance editor knows the promise of the happily-ever-after and where the beats must fall. A mystery/thriller editor is obsessed with fair play and information management; when the reader should know what the detective knows. A fantasy and sci-fi editor is tracking your magic system for internal consistency and checking for the dreaded lore-dump.

For nonfiction, specialisation matters even more. A prescriptive business book, a narrative science book, and a spiritual memoir require three completely different editorial brains. If you are writing a proposal-driven book for traditional publishing, hire a developmental editor who has worked in that category. Ask them: what was the last book in my genre you edited? Where is it now?

2. The Line Editor / Stylistic Editor: The Voice Tuner

Once the structure is sound, you hire for language.

Line editing is often confused with copyediting, but it is an art form of its own. A line editor works sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph. Not "is this grammatically correct?" but "is this alive?" They smooth transitions, sharpen dialogue, kill cliché, vary rhythm, and make sure your prose sounds like you on your best day.

This is where literary fiction, upmarket fiction, and creative nonfiction live or die. If you write poetically but your tenses drift, or your voice is strong but your sentences are baggy, this is your person.

For genre writers: A literary line editor who hates your genre will quietly try to make your commercial thriller sound like Marilynne Robinson. Don't let them. You want a line editor who loves your genre and respects its conventions. A horror line editor knows how to stretch dread in a sentence. A romance line editor knows how to make intimacy read emotionally, not clinically.

3. The Copyeditor: The Last Defence

Copyediting is not glamorous and it is non-negotiable. This is the edit that makes you publishable.

A copyeditor corrects grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax, and continuity. She will catch that your character's eyes were blue in chapter one and hazel in chapter nine. That your protagonist drove three hours from Johannesburg to Pretoria. That you used the same unusual metaphor twice in four pages.

Technical fields: If you are writing historical fiction, medical memoir, legal thriller, military sci-fi, or anything with specialised knowledge, you need a copyeditor who knows that world, or who is willing to fact-check it ruthlessly. A great historical fiction copyeditor will know you can't have a character check a wristwatch in 1823.

Never skip this stage because you are "good at grammar." You are too close to your own book to see it.

4. The Proofreader: The Final Sweep

Proofreading is not editing. It is quality control after your book is typeset. The proofreader is looking for the dropped word, the double space, the widow/orphan, the chapter header that says Chapter 11 twice.

Do not hire a developmental editor to proofread, and do not ask your proofreader for developmental notes. By this point, you should be done changing the book. If you hire a proofreader too early, you will pay them twice.

5. The Other Specialists You Didn't Know You Needed

Modern publishing has created necessary new roles:

The Sensitivity Reader / Authenticity Reader: Not a censor, but a cultural consultant. If you are writing outside your lived experience (such as a protagonist of a different race, religion, disability, gender identity, or profession), a sensitivity reader helps you avoid stereotype, harm, and lazy error. This is especially critical for children's literature, historical fiction, and contemporary realism.

The Nonfiction Fact-Checker: If your memoir or narrative nonfiction will make verifiable claims about people, companies, or events, hire one. Lawsuits are more expensive than fact-checkers.

The Series / Continuity Editor: Writing a series? Especially in romance, fantasy, or mystery, you need someone whose entire job is to remember that in Book 2, the village had a well on the north side.

So, In What Order?

For most authors, the path looks like this:

Self-revision -> Developmental Edit (if needed) -> Author rewrite -> Line Edit -> Copyedit -> Proofread (after layout).

You do not need all of them every time. For some books, you might jump straight to line editing. If you have a brilliant idea for a business book and a messy 90 000-word brain dump, you need developmental first.

The question to ask any editor before you pay a deposit is this: "What kind of editing do you think my manuscript needs right now, and why are you not the right person for the other kinds?" A good editor will tell you the truth, even if it costs them the job. The bad one will tell you she/he can do it all.

And that is how you know who to hire.



The Words They Stole

Burkina Faso is not revising its schoolbooks. It is taking them back

On September 7, the Burkinabe Ministry of Secondary Education made an announcement that sounded like a lesson in itself.

From this school year, from CP1 to Terminale, Burkinabè children will get 54 new lessons in history, geography and citizenship. This means new books, new words, a new story, and the minister did not whisper about why.

"Those who came to conquer Africa, we call them explorers, conquerors. Were they conquerors? They were spies. They were invaders," said Minister Moumouni Zoungrana.

For decades, the blackboard taught children to describe their own invasion politely. It portrayed Europeans not as invaders, but explorers. They did not pillage; they discovered. Zoungrana said the old curricula used words that "infantilise" and "animalise" Africans in the teaching of their own history. So the new textbooks will stop being polite. Explorers become what they were: invaders. This is more than a curriculum tweak. It is a decolonisation of the classroom.

For generations, a child in Ouagadougou could recite the causes of the French Revolution before she could name the Moose kingdoms that built the very ground she stood on. She learned that Africa was discovered, as if it had been hiding from itself. She learned that her past began when someone else arrived. That past is now being put back where it belongs.

At the centre of the new lessons is the Charter of Kurukan Fuga. If you have not heard of it, that is exactly the problem. Adopted in 1236 after the Battle of Kirina, in the heart of the Mali Empire, it is a constitution, not a myth. A written text that laid down rules for justice, for governance, for the protection of slaves, for women's rights, for how to treat a stranger at your



door. It is one of the oldest known declarations of human rights in West Africa, older than many of the documents Europe claims as its first.

A child who learns that her ancestors were called "discovered" grows up thinking she needed civilising. A child who learns about Kurukan Fuga grows up knowing her ancestors were writing constitutions while Europe was still figuring out parliaments.

The new history will also teach what was always skipped: African contributions to science, the real economy of slavery, African resistance to colonisation, and the history of major revolutions told from the side of the people who resisted, not just the people who arrived with guns.

In geography, the lens shifts too. Less Bordeaux and the Seine, more Burkina and the AES—the Alliance of Sahel States.

What does Burkina Faso have? What can it build? What connects it to its neighbours, not to its former coloniser?

Specialists are now preparing the content. Teachers will receive guidebooks to carry it. Zoungrana put it plainly: the goal is to "extirpate the words that infantilise us, that animalise us."

Language is never neutral. Call a man an explorer long enough and you start to think the land he walked on was empty. Call him an invader and suddenly the people who were already there come back into focus. They had names. They had kingdoms. They had charters.

Burkina Faso has decided its children will learn those names first.

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So You Wrote The Book. Now What?

Charmaine On How To Launch Into Sales

Every author remembers the “high” of typing THE END. Few remember what came after—the awkward silence, the boxes of books in the garage, the frantic WhatsApp messages: “So, when is the launch?”

Charmaine Mrwebi has watched that moment play out too many times, which is why her new guide, *How to Host Your Book Launch*, might be the most important book South Africa’s breed of new and budding breed authors will read this year.

For almost two decades, through her publishing house Charmza Literary Club which she founded in 2008, through the Thaba Nchu Book Festival, through countless workshops in community halls and libraries across the Free State, she has seen brilliant manuscripts die a quiet death. They died not because the writing was weak, but because the launch was.

That is what pushed her to write *How to Host Your Book Launch*, a practical, no-fluff guide to the part no one teaches you in creative writing class.

The Book Most Authors Don't Know They Need

We love to talk about writing and publishing, but we rarely talk about launching, and yet a launch is not a party. It is a business decision. It is the first time your community meets your book in public. It is where a potential reader decides if they will buy, where a journalist decides if they will quote you, and where a librarian or festival director decides if they will book you.

“Most budding authors do everything right until that point and then improvise,” she

says. “No budget. No guest list strategy. No book stock plan. No photographer. No



follow-up. The result is a beautiful event that sells twelve copies and is forgotten by Monday.”

Her book fixes that. Written for aspiring and published authors, independent publishers, writers' organisations and anyone tasked with organising literary events, it walks you through the entire process—planning, budgeting, choosing a venue that actually serves your audience, promoting beyond your own timeline, inviting the right guests, managing stock so you do not run out or get left with debt, and the crucial follow-up that turns a one-night event into long-term sales.

It comes with what authors have been begging for: checklists, action pages and step-by-step advice you can apply to your own event that weekend.

Why This Book Matters Now

In South Africa, we have more authors than ever and fewer traditional launch platforms. Bookstores are closing their event spaces, marketing budgets are shrinking, and self-published authors are carrying the full weight of promotion themselves.

In that gap, knowledge is power. Charmaine Mrwebi brings the knowledge of four roles at once: author, publisher, librarian and literary event organiser. She has organised festivals, workshops and launches in under-resourced communities where every rand counts and every chair filled matters. The

guide reflects that reality. It is not written for a New York launch with a publicist. It is written for you in Thaba Nchu, in QwaQwa, in Bloemfontein, trying to launch with heart and with discipline.

This is also why the writing process behind it matters. She did not write theory. She distilled years of lived logistics—what works when the sound fails, when the author is late, when the audience is shy, when the books arrive late. Drafting, editing, proofreading, interior design and cover creation were done with the same patience and attention to detail she now teaches authors to bring to their own events.

More Than A Manual

Charmaine Mrwebi is not new to this work. As a storyteller and the founder of a literary movement that has been nurturing children, young people and established authors since 2008, she has always understood that literature grows when we create platforms, not just books. *How to Host Your Book Launch* continues that mission. It tells authors: your book deserves a proper introduction to the world. Give it one.

The book is available directly from Charmaine Mrwebi and Charmza Literary Club. Copies will be at selected book launches, literary events, workshops and festivals. Follow Charmza Literary Club on social media for ordering, delivery and upcoming launch masterclasses.

The Story After The Story

Kutullo On The Human Cost Of Chasing News

You read the headline. He carried it home.

For years, Kutullo Madisha did what good journalists do. He arrived at the crime scene, the accident, the court case, the political clash. He spoke to grieving families, gathered the facts, filed the story and moved on to the next assignment.

From The New Age and ANN7 to freelance reporting for Newzroom Afrika, that was the job—tell other people's stories, often on their worst days.

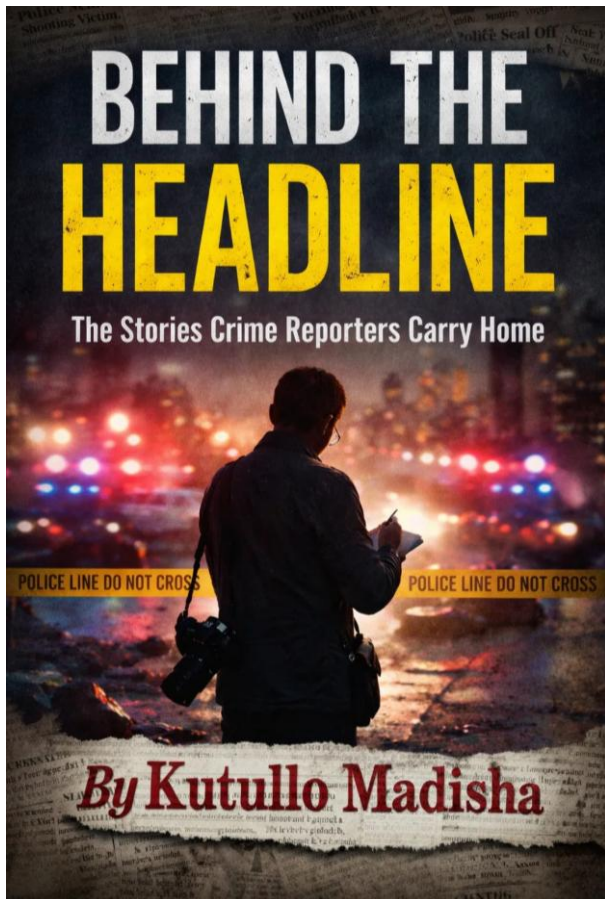


Behind the Headlines: The Stories Journalists Carry Home is what happens when the camera stops rolling and the reporter has to go home and live a normal life. This book is not about how to write a headline. It is about what a headline does to the human being who had to write it.

In a newsroom culture that teaches objectivity and professionalism but rarely talks about trauma, Kutullo is opening a conversation that is long overdue. We expect journalists to be strong because they are the ones telling the story. But being able

to report on something does not mean you are unaffected by it.

The writing of it forced him to revisit memories he had convinced himself he had moved beyond; the images, the conversations and the questions that were not comfortable to sit with. Then came the second education: self-publishing. Cover, editing, printing, finances, positioning, marketing, distribution, learning to trust his own instincts when something did not represent the story he wanted to tell.



“The biggest challenge was financing the book myself and quieting the doubt that every first-time author hears: Is it good enough?” he says. “Will anyone read it?”

He survived it the way he advises others to survive hard stories; by not trying to see the whole staircase. Just the next step. First the

manuscript, then the cover, then printing, and finally the launch. The result is deeply timely.

“We are in an era obsessed with press freedom, misinformation, ethics and digital journalism,” he says. “All are important, but we rarely ask about the person behind the byline.”

As Kutullo writes, a journalist is not a camera or a recorder. They are a human being. That is the line he wants you to remember: behind every headline is a human story, and behind every journalist telling that story is another human being.

The book, says Kutullo, is not an accusation against journalism. It is a love letter to the people who do it. And if it encourages one journalist to finally speak about what they have been carrying silently, or makes one reader look at a byline with a little more empathy, then it has done its job.

The book is currently available from the author. You can call or reach him on WhatsApp on 0786593189.



Em Dash On Trial:

Why We Are Blaming The Wrong Punctuation

Every few months the internet decides it has found an infallible tell for artificial intelligence. For a while it was the word "delve". Then it was "in today's rapidly evolving landscape". Now, it is my beloved em dash.

Scroll through any writing forum and you will see the accusation: "Too many em dashes; Definitely AI." A personal essay gets flagged because it contains three interruptions. A poet gets told to make her work sound more human. The irony is sharp. We are taking one of the oldest, most human tools in English prose and calling it a machine fingerprint.

This is not just inaccurate; it is literary amnesia.

Em Dash on Trial

The Charge Sheet:

The case against the em dash is built on vibes, not evidence. A screenshot, a red circle around the punctuation, a comment that says, "dead giveaway." No reading of the argument, no attention to rhythm or risk. The mark itself has become the trial.

But any court that respects precedent would throw this out.

The Defence Witnesses:

Laurence Sterne in 1759 builds *Tristram Shandy* out of dashes because his narrator cannot hold a straight line of thought. The dash is the novel's nervous system.

Emily Dickinson uses the dash as theology. Her manuscripts are constellations of them. She writes "Because I could not stop for Death—He kindly stopped for me" not because she does not know how to use a comma, but because she wants meaning to hang, suspended, in the air between two worlds.

Herman Melville cannot describe a whale without one. Jane Austen uses them to capture gossip turning into judgment mid-sentence. Virginia Woolf in *To the Lighthouse*, James Joyce in *Ulysses*, and William Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!* use the dash to show consciousness folding in on itself, correcting itself, contradicting itself.

Toni Morrison, Cormac McCarthy, Don DeLillo, Claudia Rankine, Maggie Nelson, Ocean Vuong, Zadie Smith. Open any page of *Blues* or *On Beauty* and you will find dashes doing human work. An interruption, a swerve, a second thought catching the first one before the

period can close the door. None of these writers were predicting a language model. They were trying to make written language sound like thinking.

The Verdict:

The dash is not guilty. What is guilty is our desire for a shortcut. When we are anxious about authenticity, we look for one visible clue. The em dash is easy to spot. It feels like proof. If we convict it, we do not catch AI. We just teach young writers to flatten their sentences, to remove the exact hesitation and self-correction that makes prose feel alive. And then, ironically, they will sound more like the models we fear.

Why the Machine Loves It Too

The reason AI uses em dashes so often is not that it invented them. It is that it learned them from us. Large language models do not write from nowhere. They are trained on vast libraries of human books, essays, letters, and poems. They have read more Dickinson and Woolf and Baldwin than any of us ever will. When they need to pivot, to qualify, to smuggle a second voice into a single sentence, they reach for the same tool those writers reached for because, statistically, it is what good writers do.

The dash is useful. It is not a comma, which politely pauses. It is not a period, which firmly stops. It is a swerve. It lets you write, "I came to write about AI, or rather, about our anxiety over it." That gesture of self-correction is deeply human, which is precisely why a machine trained on human sentences learned to copy it.

To say "AI uses em dashes, therefore em dashes are AI" is to confuse inheritance with identity.

Other False Fingerprints

The dash panic is part of a larger pattern of folk forensics. We keep inventing rules that do not hold.

1. Perfect grammar means AI

The claim is that humans make typos, so flawless text must be machine-made. Tell that to any copy editor, or to Nabokov, who rewrote paragraphs twenty times. Clean prose is often the result of many drafts, not no human at all.

2. Balanced perspectives mean AI

People say AI always writes, "On the one hand, on the other hand." Much of human academic and journalistic writing is trained to do exactly that. Nuance is not robotic.

3. Fancy vocabulary means AI

AI is accused of loving words like "tapestry," "multifaceted," or "testament". That is not a machine tell. That is just purple writing, and humans have been writing purple prose since the Victorians.

4. The tidy conclusion means AI.

The neat summary at the end, the "In conclusion", is called a bot move. It is also what every high school taught students to do for thirty years.

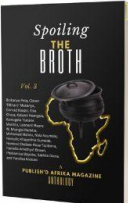
What these tells share is a misunderstanding. AI does not have a style. It has our styles—plural. It is a mirror of centuries of choices. If you want to know if something was written by a person, there is no punctuation shortcut. You have to read for thought. Does the essay contain a memory that could only belong to one life? Does it take a real risk that might fail? Does it hold two contradictory ideas without rushing to resolve them into a tidy moral? That is still hard for a model to fake.

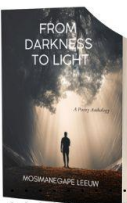
The em dash was never a sign of the artificial. It was always a sign of a mind catching itself in the act of thinking, and deciding to keep going anyway. We should let it keep doing that work.

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Poetry Africa 30th Edition Comes To Durban

Poetry Africa returns this October for its 30th edition, presenting five days of performances, poetry slams, workshops, industry dialogues and literary events.

Set to be held in Durban from 5 to 9 October 2026 and presented by the Centre for Creative Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the festival will build up to the 5th World Poetry Slam Championship. The Durban Playhouse Theatre will serve as its principal venue alongside locations across the city. The World Poetry Slam Championship will bring 40 slam poets from 40 countries and five continents to Durban for a week of competition.

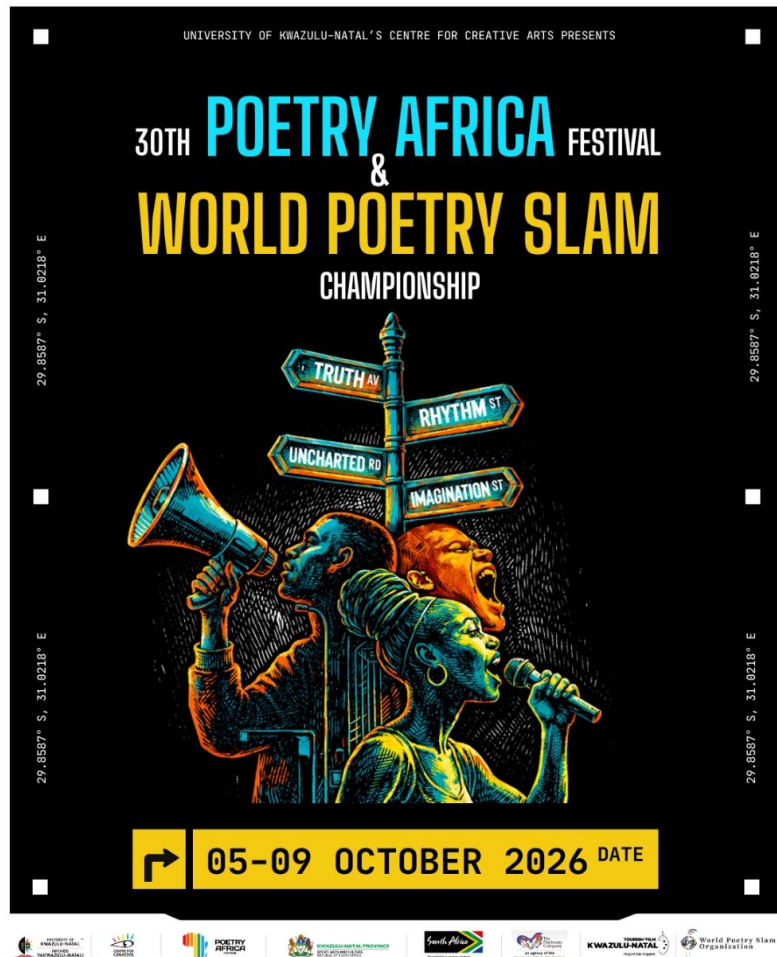
The anniversary edition unfolds against several defining moments in South Africa's history. Fifty years after the 1976 Soweto Youth Uprising, and three decades after the first public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the adoption of the 1996 Constitution, Poetry Africa's 2026 programme turns its attention to questions of voice, memory, freedom, and who gets to speak.

Centre for Creative Arts Director Ismail Mahomed describes the festival as part of an ongoing national conversation about expression and visibility.

“1976, 1996, the TRC represent an unfinished conversation about who gets to speak and be heard in this country,” he says. “Poetry Africa exists to keep that

conversation alive, because freedom of expression is a responsibility we renew every time a poet takes the stage.”

For curator Siphindile Hlongwa, those historical moments also provide the foundation for this year's theme, “Every Word a Street, Every Voice a City.”



“Every one of these anniversaries is really about a voice: a generation's, a nation's, a poet's,” she says. “This year's theme asks what we build when those voices are finally given room.”

The festival opens at the Playhouse Drama Theatre with South African poet Lebo Mashile as host and Koleka Putuma, the 2026 Featured Poet, delivering the keynote address. The opening programme also features performances by Ana More of Ukraine, Haroun Amri of Algeria, Nanda of Gabon, and South African poet Steel the Poet.

The evening will also honour Dr. Gcina Mhlophe with a Lifetime Achievement award and feature a performance by Jamaican-Canadian dub poet and playwright D'bi Young Anitafrika, a three-time Dora Award winner known for the Sankofa Trilogy and for founding Toronto's Watah Theatre. For younger poets, opening night will also host the Chalkboard Slam Competition, Poetry Africa's spoken-word competition for high school learners.

The festival's competitive programme continues throughout the week. The Poetry Africa National Slam Jam will hold its semi-finals and final on October 6, before the World Poetry Slam Championship takes over the programme from October 7 to 9, progressing through quarter-finals and semi-finals to the final.

Beyond the stage, the festival's industry programme brings together conversations on both the practical and political dimensions of a life in poetry. Sessions will

explore sustainability and longevity in poetic practice, artist mobility, contracts and rights, queer poetics, professional branding, and the role of technology in contemporary poetry. The programme also includes a book launch for Thando Fuze's *Fluent in the Language of Burial*.

The festival closes with *Water*, a staged production developed from Koleka Putuma's celebrated 2016 poem of the same name. The poem, which won the PEN South Africa Student Writing Prize, examines access to water as a political and racialized inheritance. The Poetry Africa production extends those questions into a broader meditation on ownership, belonging, ecological and climate justice, and the ports, trade routes, and nightlife economies that shape who is permitted to belong and where.

Founded in 1997, Poetry Africa has grown into one of the continent's longest-running international poetry festivals. Presented by UKZN's Centre for Creative Arts, the festival brings together published and spoken-word poets from South Africa and around the world for performances, poetry exchanges, school and campus programmes, open mics, book launches, panel discussions, and slam competitions.

Over three decades, the festival has also positioned poetry as a space for thinking through social change, while contributing to the study and scholarship of contemporary poetry at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The full 2026 programme is available at the Poetry Africa website, with tickets available through Webtickets.

AVBOB POETRY CORNER

KOMVANDAAN



We South Africans are fond of talking about our rich, diverse cultural heritage. But it is important to remember the hard work done every day by poets, translators and activists to keep indigenous languages and traditions alive.

No one knows this better than Lynthia Julius, a poet born in Namaqualand, Northern Cape, who won the Afrikaans category of the AVBOB Poetry Competition in 2017 with her poem 'Vir Aljarreau'. Her debut collection, *Uit die Kroes* (Kwela, 2020) pays tribute to her own Nama roots, while sometimes lamenting her distance from

them. As we celebrate Heritage Day, her extraordinary poems, some of which have been translated by Douglas Reid Skinner, remind us why it is important to celebrate indigenous memory and storytelling.

In one particularly evocative poem, called 'Ontheeming (Displacement)', she describes the way her relationship to her Nama heritage changed after she and her mother moved to Kimberley, away from her place of birth, when she was a child:

My mother is sourdough bread and Nama line dancing

belly laughter and meat

Okiep and Bergsig people

she can count to ten in Nama

when I tried the other day

I only got to three...

when I'm in Springbok, I'm much too city

in Kimberley, too Nama...

But even though her relationship to Nama culture might be more distant than she would like, she credits it with helping her find her own voice as a poet.

“I am the poet I am today because of where I come from. Because of my heritage. And I don’t sit, while writing, and make the conscious decision that I need readers to see and experience my heritage. It is a part of me that has shaped me in every facet of my life and writing.”

Another poem, ‘Intellectualisme van Goed (Intellectualising Stuff)’, describes her longing to run back to her mother’s house and hear the honest, down-to-earth speech of the people she knows and recognises in that environment:

I wanted to hear Auntie Lysie’s stories of Ashley, who used to lie
on the roof with a blanket when the sun was shining
I wanted to hear Uncle Piet playing his out-of-tune guitar
with his wine next to his left tackie
and the butt of a spliff beside the right...

“I was sitting in Philosophy class while studying at the University of the Free State,” Julius remembers. “I sat there, and I was sick of academia. I sat there, and I was homesick. I felt estranged while sitting in that class, and I desperately needed to be human again. Shaped by the Northern Cape, the people, and their Gariep Afrikaans.”

Asked what celebrating Heritage Day means to her, she uses an Afrikaans word, “komvandaan”, meaning the place you come from or origins:

“I cannot make sense of the world without my heritage. Without acknowledging my ‘komvandaan’. I make sense of the world, as a poet, through my ‘komvandaan’.”

Wider access to poems such as these always depends on the work of translators, and Julius is full of praise for Reid Skinner’s translations.

“I never thought I’d see my poems translated. Douglas, however, handles one’s work with so much respect. He always takes my heritage, my use of language and dialect, into consideration. So yes, I do see my work being translated into English of course. But I don’t see that happening without Douglas.”

In the next few days, write a poem that highlights an aspect of your own linguistic and cultural “komvandaan”.

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

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Looking For A Black-centred Publisher?

Here Are 16 To Pick From

Cassava Republic Press was founded in Abuja, Nigeria, 2006 with the aim of bringing high-quality fiction and non-fiction for adults and children to a global audience. They have offices in Abuja and London.

Their mission is to change the way we all think about writing from Africa and her diaspora, whether set in filthy-yet-sexy megacities such as Lagos or Kinshasa, in little-known communities outside of Bahia, in the recent past or indeed the near future.

And because literature is not merely a mirror, but a window to many worlds, Cassava Republic believes in its radical power to confront injustice, and help re-imagine more just, capacious futures. They do not only want stories that reflect the world as we know it, but interrogate it in the process of creating new possibilities.

They also think the time has come to build a new body of writing that links writers and readers from Benin to Bahia. It's therefore the right time to ask challenging questions of Black writing—where have we come from, where are we now, where are we going and who owns the means of production? Their role is to facilitate and participate in addressing these questions, as their list grows. They are still just beginning.

<https://cassavarepublic.biz/about-us/>

Jacaranda Books is an award-winning, diverse-owned independent publisher and bookseller. They are dedicated to promoting and celebrating brilliant diverse literature. Since launching their first title in 2014, they have published 70+ titles by a raft of talented authors, including multiple award-winners Irenosen Okojie, Fiston Mwanza Mujila, Bernice L. McFadden, and Shola von Reinhold.

In 2020, Jacaranda were named Small Press of the Year at the British Book Awards. In that landmark year, they launched #TwentyIn2020: an unprecedented initiative to publish 20 titles by 20 Black British writers in a single year. That same year, they also co-launched the #InclusiveIndies campaign as a response to the impact of Covid-19 on publishers—raising over £100,000 that they were able to share with 12 other independent small presses.

In 2021, Jacaranda formed a historic partnership with Hachette UK, expanding their sales and distribution to support the flourishing global market for readers of books by diverse voices.

Their ethos is simple—they are committed to publishing ground-breaking writing with a dedication to creating space on the bookshelf for diverse ideas and writers.

<https://jacarandabooks.co.uk/pages/about-us>

Blackbird Books was founded in August 2015 by publisher Thabiso Mahlape.

Its launch was a ground-breaking move for the South African literary landscape and since its inception, they have been pioneering and establishing a home for new African narratives, especially for Black authors.

Blackbird Books is concerned with publishing stories that cut to the core and reflect the African experience. They provide this platform to brilliant authors, concentrated on young Black authors, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to tell the stories that shape and showcase the wealth of their African experiences. They pride themselves in being a launchpad for Black narratives that would otherwise not get the attention they deserve.

The scope of the stories they publish have allowed Blackbird Books to entertain a variety of readers across demographics. This decision has enabled them to excavate aboriginal narratives without compromising the authenticity of the stories. The presence of Blackbird Books over the last five years and the visibility of its owner-publisher, Thabiso Mahlape, have encouraged a wave of literary interest in South Africa. It can be seen in the burgeoning book-club environment and the wave of self-published authors who draw inspiration from Blackbird Books and its ground-breaking journey.

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA is based in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, South Africa, and has so far worked with writers from South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Morocco, Lesotho, Kenya, Swaziland, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

The imprint is the brainchild of Thokozani Magagula, former Regional Editor and Bureau Chief at South Africa's biggest daily, Media24-owned Daily Sun, and Sukoluhle Mdlongwa-Magagula, author of six bestselling books.

While PUBLISH'D AFRIKA is an independent publishing agency, they always venture to give writers across the continent information on traditional publishing opportunities, writing contests for poetry, short stories and novels as well as writing workshops that assist creatives to hone their talents.

Through their Facebook page and blog, as well as through their monthly online literary magazine, **PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine**, they regularly publish success stories in the arts and creative sector, as well as calls for submissions from all over the continent and abroad, giving gifted scribes options that are available to them as creatives. The

opportunities also include, amongst others, calls for submissions from literary magazines across the globe, online publishing and traditional publishers interested in unearthing new talent.

PUBLISH'D AFRIKA Online Literary Magazine holds monthly short story competitions, through which they unearth gifted writers from across the SADC, the continent and the diaspora, for their annual *Spoiling The Broth* Anthology. They also host the annual Adopt-An-Author Program, where 10 gifted, budding authors are given an opportunity to publish. Both programmes were established in 2021, and have so far given a total of writers opportunities to be published authors.

Email PUBLISH'D AFRIKA at info@publishdafrika.com or visit their website www.publishdafrika.com

Amistad Books is the most respected and storied imprint dedicated to publishing Black voices. For forty years, they have been devoted to honouring the legacy of Black literature, amplifying the bold and unapologetic voices of today's storytellers, and paving the way for inspiring Black-centered stories of the diaspora. their authors celebrate and illuminate Black history, shape the culture, and enrich our bodies, spirits, and imagination through fiction and nonfiction that expand our narratives in new and surprising ways.

Their catalog reflects the breadth of Blackness. From the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Known World* by Edward P. Jones to the seminal classic *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston to *Just As I Am* by Cicely Tyson to *Hustle Harder, Hustle Smarter* by Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, Amistad books illuminate, inspire, and imagine the past, present, and future of Blackness.

<https://www.harpercollins.com/pages/amistadbooks>

Third World Press Foundation is the oldest African-centered book publisher in the world. Originally founded in Chicago in 1967, TWP has been publishing Black and African-centered literature under the direction of founder Professor Haki Madhubuti for over a half-century.

In addition to publishing, TWPF runs a network of three charter schools. Now in its 54th year, TWPF is one of the last-remaining Black Arts Movement (1965-1975) institutions. TWPF continues to publish and contribute to a rich, sentient tradition of Black literature, Black educational excellence, and Black institutional development. TWP has published hundreds of authors and continues to impact our current age of emerging and established writers, poets, educators, artists, scholars, and activists.

A full-service publishing house, TWP is located in a spacious, half-block facility on Chicago's south side.

<https://thirdworldpressfoundation.org/pages/about>

Ankara Press is looking for full-length commercial fiction and nonfiction by Black writers from across the globe. They are looking for joyful, strange, tender, sexy, hilarious, haunting, hopeful books that reflect the complexity of Black life and keep readers glued to the page. If your story makes people laugh out loud, cry in public, or text their group chat right after reading, they want to hear from you.

They are looking for smart, swoony romances; bold, character-driven women's fiction; unforgettable horror and twisty thrillers; vision-rich sci-fi and fantasy; fresh, voicey nonfiction; and middle grade stories filled with humour, heart and Black kids being fully themselves. They want self-reinvention, morally grey anti-heroes, intergenerational hauntings, sexy mage rivals, cults and corruption, summer camp sagas, folk horror, monster boyfriends, and much more.

If your book is driven by voice, emotion, tension, and a love for storytelling, you are speaking their language. They read every submission. If they don't feel your work is right for them, they will send a standard rejection letter. They are unable to provide personalised feedback. If they are excited, they will be in touch to talk next steps. Please know that they only publish authors they believe they can build something meaningful with—a long-term relationship grounded in shared values, mutual respect and commitment to the process. Publishing a book is a journey. If you're ready to show up for it, they are ready to read.

They publish commercial fiction and nonfiction, including romance, women's fiction, thrillers, fantasy, horror, mystery, memoirs, crime, self-help and more. Basically, all the good stuff.

They are a Black-centered, Black-led imprint, and believe in amplifying stories that reflect the diversity and nuance of Black experiences from Lagos to Los Angeles, Kingston to Kigali, to Cape Town to Caracas, for everyone to enjoy.

<https://ankara-press.com/>

Bula Buka was founded in 2014 by Tiisetso Maloma, and has become a prominent South African book publisher celebrated for its pioneering work in the “diary chronicle” genre. This cutting-edge narrative style has garnered a wide-ranging audience, captivating readers not just within South Africa but also across Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Europe, and North America. Bula Buka's distinctive contribution lies in its groundbreaking role within the “diary chronicle” genre. The publisher has notably released titles like *Diary of a Side Chick*, *Chronicles of a Slay Queen*, *Diary of a Zulu Girl*, and *Diary of a Cheating Wife*.

Visit their website: www.bulabuka.co.za

Bhiyoza Publishers, founded by Menzi Thango, is a small but impactful Black-owned enterprise focused on publishing literary works in the diverse African languages of South Africa. The company's core mission is two-fold: nurturing African languages' growth while preserving their historical and intellectual wealth.

Visit their website: www.bhiyozapublishers.co.za

Poetree Publications was founded by Flow Wellington. Poetree Publications stands out as a prominent independent self-publishing company in South Africa. Owned by a Black woman, the company is recognised for providing writers with customised, cost-effective packages to craft literary products of exceptional quality. Poetree Publications takes a specific interest in promoting writers, particularly women and queer individuals of African descent. While the focus is on these groups, the company's publishing scope encompasses diverse genres such as poetry, short fiction, children's books, anthologies, and more.

Visit their website: www.poetreepublications.co.za

Book Lingo was founded by Clare-Rose Julius. Book Lingo is a publishing house based in South Africa, proudly committed to fostering local literacy. The company values the uniqueness of every story and believes in tailoring the presentation to reflect that individuality. Their services are highly adaptable, designed to cater to specific needs. With a wealth of publishing experience spanning decades, Book Lingo comprehends and anticipates the requirements of authors and book distribution partners, consistently pushing the boundaries to deliver top-notch products and services.

Visit their website: <https://www.facebook.com/BookLingoBooks>

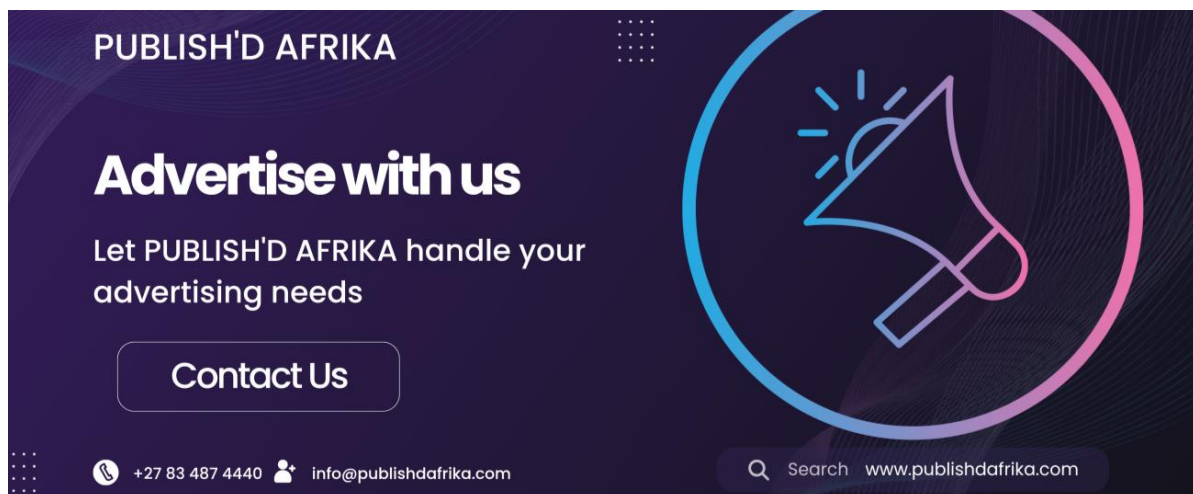
New Beacon Books is UK's first Black publisher and bookshop. It was founded in 1966 by John La Rose and his partner, Sarah White. Having staved off closure in 2017, New Beacon Books has remained an established part of the Black community selling a range of African and Caribbean literature as well as publishing a wide range of their own books in genres as diverse as literary and cultural theory to poetry and fiction.

Bahati Books is a digital publishing house that publishes and promotes literature written by writers of African origin. The founders, Barbara Njau and Kudakwashe Kamupira, are committed 'to take African literature from being a 'niche' in the publishing world, to the mainstream'. With an array of authors already on their roster, their website also has some free short stories written by their authors to give you a simple taste of what they have to offer.

Tamrind Books was established in 1987. Tamarind has been a champion of diversity in children's publishing, helping to ensure children of all cultures and ethnicities get the chance to see themselves in stories and books. Now part of the Puffin and Ladybird family under Penguin books, their legacy in diverse children's books continues.

African Books Collective is based in Oxford. They are an African owned publisher of books from Africa. From scholarly non-fiction, fiction to children's books, ABC has a vast range of books by authors from all parts of the continent.

Ayebia Clarke Literary Agency & Publishing are more of a publisher than a bookstore, though they do sell books on their website. Ayebia is a bespoke publisher specialising in quality African and Caribbean writing. Ayebia aims to publish the kind of books that provide new and fresh insights into African and Caribbean culture, life and literature. If you are a budding author, it's worth getting in touch with them as they do nurture new writers through their literary agency arm.



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Calling All African Writers

WSA
Writers Space Africa
Empowering African Writers

Call for Submissions

Theme
What if?

Writers Space Africa (WSA) magazine is accepting submissions for its 120th edition (December 2026 Edition). We accept submissions in the following categories:

- Creative Non-Fiction (1,200 Words maximum)
- Children's Literature (700 words maximum)
- Flash Fiction (300 words maximum)
- Poetry (24 lines maximum)
- Short Stories (1,500 words maximum)

To submit visit: <https://www.writersspace.net/>

Deadline October 19, 2026

WhatsApp +254 702 447 049

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Visit Us www.writersspace.net

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First published in January 2017, Writers Space Africa has grown to become one of Africa's most widely read magazine. Behind the scenes are talented writers of African descent who work hard to ensure that the magazine is published monthly and only the best entries are published.

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They accept submissions in the following categories:

Creative Non-Fiction – 1,200 Words maximum

Children's Literature – 700 words maximum (illustrations may be attached and poems not longer than 24 lines)

Flash Fiction – 300 words maximum

Poetry – 1 poem, a maximum of 24 lines

Short Stories – 1,500 words maximum

Please note:

Please edit your work and submit it to one category only.

Do include the title and category in your submission.

The submission window is open from 20th September until 19th October 2026.

The editors will reply to selected writers and those whose works have not been selected.

The editors will reach out to all authors by November 2026.

All selected and published entries will be uploaded to the WSA website after the magazine is released.

The author retains the copyright.

Please note that this edition will be released on the 1st of December, 2026, on their website.

To submit, upload your work through their submission portal below.

<https://www.writersspace.net/submissions/>

In case of technical issues, please send a mail to wsa@writersspace.net or WhatsApp: +254 702 447045 explaining the nature of the issue.

Please do not send your submissions to this email address. Submissions sent to this email will not be accepted.

Sillerman First Book Prize Opens for Submissions



Submissions are now open for the Sillerman First Book Prize for African Poetry, the annual award given to an African poet who has not yet published a full-length poetry collection.

The winner receives \$1,000 and publication through the University of Nebraska Press as part of the African Poetry Book Fund. The prize will be judged by the Sillerman Editorial Team: Kwame Dawes, Chris Abani, Matthew Shenoda, John Keene, Gabeba Baderoon, Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, Aracelis Girmay, and Mahtem Shiferraw. A winner will be announced in June.

Eligibility: The prize is open only to “first book” submissions, meaning writers who have not yet published a book-length poetry collection. This includes self-published books that have been sold

online, in stores, or at readings. Writers who have edited and published an anthology or similar collection of other writers' work remain eligible.

An "African writer," for the purposes of this prize, is someone who was born in Africa, is a national or resident of an African country, or has African parents. Only poetry submissions in English will be considered. Translated work is accepted, with a percentage of the prize awarded to the translator. Past or present paid employees of the University of Nebraska Press, Akashic Books, or Amalion Press, and current faculty, students, or employees at Brown University, are not eligible.

Manuscript Guidelines: There is no entry fee. Manuscripts should be at least 50 pages long, submitted anonymously with no author name, address, phone number, or email on the manuscript itself, only a cover page listing the title. An acknowledgements page listing individual poems' publication history may be included if desired, and no application form is required. Writers may submit more than one manuscript. While there are no strict formatting rules, the prize organisers suggest Times New Roman or Arial, 12-point font, single-spaced, with one poem per page.

Manuscripts are accepted annually between September 15 and December 1, and submissions are electronic only, via Submittable at:

<https://africanpoetrybookfund.submittable.com/submit>

The Women's Prize Trust Opens for Submissions

The Women's Prize Trust has opened submissions for the seventh edition of Discoveries, its flagship writer development programme supporting unagented, unpublished women novelists.

The panel is chaired by Kate Mosse CBE FRSL, Founder Director of the Women's Prize for Fiction and Non-Fiction, with bestselling Nigerian-British author Oyinkan Braithwaite joining this year's judging panel alongside author and former litigation lawyer Ela Lee, Curtis Brown literary agent Ciara Finan, and Curtis Brown Creative founder Anna Davis.

Run in partnership with Audible, the Curtis Brown Group, and the Curtis Brown Creative writing school, Discoveries is free to enter and open to unagented, unpublished women writers aged 18 and above in the UK, Ireland, or the Channel Islands, who submit the first 10,000 words of a novel-in-progress for adult readers.

The judging process runs across several stages. From the full pool of entries, the panel selects a longlist of sixteen, who each receive a two-week Discoveries Writing Development Course and an Audible subscription. A shortlist of six then advances to Curtis Brown agent mentoring, a free Curtis Brown Creative course, and an Audible studio day.

One shortlisted writer is named the Discoveries Scholar and awarded a fully funded three-month novel-writing course, and the overall winner receives an offer of literary representation from the Curtis Brown Group alongside a £5,000 bursary.

Submissions close January 11, 2027, with the longlist announced May 6, the shortlist May 20, and the winner and scholar named June 3.

Now in its seventh year, the programme has built a track record hard to argue with. Since launching in 2020, Discoveries has drawn more than 16,000 entries, and of the 96 writers selected across its first six years, over a third have signed with literary agents and 19% have secured publishing deals, with eleven alumni already published and seven more debuts confirmed through 2028 from houses including Little, Brown, Michael Joseph, Gollancz, and HarperCollins imprints.

Niamh Connolly, the 2024 winner whose novel *We Go Way Back* publishes with Hodder & Stoughton next April, credited the programme with something less tangible than a book deal: confidence.

“The voice of self-doubt can be very loud, and I will forever be thankful to the Women’s Prize Trust and Discoveries for quietening that doubting voice,” she said, describing the programme’s community as an “army of champions” for what is otherwise a solitary occupation.

Alongside the submissions window, the Trust and its partners are running a program of events for prospective entrants, including an ESEA Lit Fest workshop with Ela Lee on September 19, an online alumni panel chaired by Nussaibah Younis on September 22, a Cheltenham Literature Festival panel on October 17, and a Curtis Brown Creative “Your Novel: How to Get Started” webinar on November 12.

Submissions for Discoveries 2027 close January 11, 2027, at 11:59pm GMT. Full details and entry information are available at discoveries.curtisbrowncreative.co.uk.

