



MY CLASS

Newsletter of the Jozi Book Fair

Issue Nr. 5 – August 2010

**Jozi Book Fair
7,8,9 August 2010**

Editorial

Poverty remains one of the biggest challenges facing the majority of people in South Africa. This has had, and continues to have, a very direct effect on the quality of education, and subsequently, the level of literacy among the poor. This edition of My Class headlines The Poverty Trap Roundtable, one of the six roundtable discussions taking place during Jozi Book Fair 2010. Roundtable discussions are an expression of Jozi Book Fair's commitment to creating platforms for open debate and discussion.

The Poverty Trap Roundtable poses the question: Can the South African economy as presently structured break out of the poverty trap in which millions find themselves after 16 years of democracy? We also profile the panellists who will debate this question on Saturday 7 August.

In the Exhibitor Section, we profile the Afrikan Wright-us Forum, Tsume Publishing and Workers World Media Productions. From the world of books reports on the Equal Education led 24-hour fast for school libraries and the opinion piece focuses on the Jozi Book Fair's approach to libraries and organised groups of readers. In the programme update we focus on some of the speakers at the fair.

Finally, the book review section looks at George Lamming's *Native of my Person*, a novel that tackles with disturbing incisiveness, the minds of both the coloniser and the colonised.

Enjoy the reading and see you at the fair.

Nerisha Baldevu

Announcements

New exhibitors to the Jozi Book Fair 2010 are:

- **POWA Women's Writing Project:** This is an initiative that was set up in 2006 to create a collective space through which women could share their stories of surviving gender based violence. The writing programme annually invites women through out the country to submit their short stories, poems and personal essays. To date, five Breaking the Silence anthologies have been published: *Dreaming of living* (2005); *Positive Living Gender* (2006) *Murmurs of the girl in me* (2007) *Journeys to recovery* (2008) and *Stories from the Other(ed) Woman* (2009)
- **SA Labour Bulletin:** SALB aims to provide cutting edge information and critical analysis and debate on a wide range of social issues that confront South Africans on a daily basis and that are not covered by mainstream media. The Bulletin publishes articles on labour matters, politics, economics, health, education, sport, youth, women, HIV/AIDS, the environment, culture, and includes book reviews.
- **Xarra Books:** offers a wide selection of international reads, bestsellers, lifestyle, biographies, sport, esoteric, philosophy, motivational and other genres. So, if you are looking for inspiration, entertainment, deeper understanding of the ways of the world, gift ideas or simply how to prepare a fine African dish, visit Xarra. Through their association with local and international authors, publishers and other literature enthusiasts hold regular book events, book launches and poetry sessions.

Programme Updates

The Poverty Trap Roundtable

By Nomsa Hlatshwayo

South African society is rated among the most unequal in the world, boasting ever-increasing unemployment and poverty levels. This condition continues to plague the poor amidst a growing political elite and an already wealthy white minority. The perpetual exclusion of the poor and working class is a clear indication of the inherent structural disparities of the current

economic order. The Jozi Book Fair will explore this post 1994 socio-economic condition in a dedicated roundtable discussion. "The Poverty Trap roundtable will host a number of panellists who have extensive knowledge on the current configuration of the South African economy and state.

Ann Bernstein is the founding director of the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) in Johannesburg. She is acknowledged as one of South Africa's leading development experts and is a strong proponent of the importance of economic growth in promoting democracy and sustainable development. Bernstein's knowledge of corporate social responsibility will serve as an interesting dynamic to the roundtable theme as South African capital continues to be criticised for its ongoing exploitation and lack of accountability for an increasingly unequal economic mandate.

The poverty trap roundtable will also be host to Moeletsi Mbeki and Dale McKinley. Both Mbeki and McKinley are well known for their open criticism of the current dispensation and the increasing poverty that plagues the majority of the South African population. The Jozi Book Fair's aim is to create an environment where post apartheid struggles are identified and discussed on various levels that serve to encourage healthy and sustainable engagement. The roundtable's ultimate purpose is to propose alternative measures to the current order: the panelists together with the participants of the fair will aim to achieve this by encouraging debate. The Jozi Book Fair has committed itself to entrenching public platforms that encourage political empowerment in the face of growing political apathy and economic exclusion.

Headliner Profile

Focus on speakers

Women in SA Publishing:

Angela Makholwa is from Johannesburg and holds a BA Degree in Journalism and Industrial Psychology from Rhodes University. Makholwa worked as a magazine journalist and a public relations consultant for several agencies after acquiring her degree and, in 2002, established her own public relations company, Britespark Communications.

Her first novel Red Ink was published in 2007 by Pan MacMillan. Red Ink is a psychological crime thriller that focuses on a young female ex-journalist

who decides to write the biography of a convicted serial killer and rapist. It explores the relationship that develops between the two characters and some of the chilling spill over effects of this encounter. It has suspense, violence, murder. Her second book is called the Thirtieth Candle, and, true to her suspense writing style, it is a fascinating web of mystery and intrigue.

Makholwa is a panellist on the Women in SA Publishing Roundtable, taking place on the 9th of August from 12 to 1pm.

The Poverty Trap:



Dale T. McKinley is an independent writer, researcher and lecturer as well as political activist. Originally from Zimbabwe, McKinley has lived and worked in Johannesburg since 1990. He ran and managed a socialist bookshop from 1991-1994 and was a full

time activist/ educationalist with the South African Communist Party from 1995-2000 (before being expelled for trying to be a communist).

McKinley is a co-founder of the Anti-Privatisation Forum and remains active in social movement/ community struggles. He holds a PhD. in Political Economy/African Studies. McKinley occasionally lectures at university level and gives regular talks/ inputs to a wide variety of organisations. He is the author two books and has written extensively on South African and international political economy, socio-economic rights/struggles and liberation movement and community politics.

Moeletsi Mbeki is a political economist and the deputy chairman of the South African Institute of International Affairs, an independent think tank based at the University of Witwatersrand. Mbeki has



a strong background in journalism, with a resume that includes a Harvard University Nieman Fellowship and time at the BBC. He often acts as a political commentator in South Africa, and is the author of a paper titled Perpetuating Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, published by International Policy Network. Mbeki has written extensively on the socio-political conditions of post apartheid South Africa. Mbeki was a media consultant for the ANC in the '90s, and is currently the chairman of Endemol South Africa, a TV production house.

Both McKinley and Mbeki are panellists on The Poverty Trap roundtable, scheduled to take place on the 7th of August from 12 to 1pm.

World of Books

Thousands fast for school libraries

by Thobile Disemelo

Over 5000 people across the country fasted with Equal Education for school libraries in South Africa. On 30 July thousands of people comprising mainly of learners from schools in both private and township schools in the Cape came together in solidarity for a 24 hr fast in protest against the lack of school libraries and qualified librarians in township schools in South Africa.

Equal Education has been campaigning for a policy on School Libraries for the past year under the banner of '1 School, 1 Library, 1 Librarian'. Government has now drafted, but not finalised, National Guidelines on School Libraries, but these guidelines are unlikely to be binding. The guidelines do not come with a budget allocation for posts and training for librarians, and are not tied to an implementation plan to roll out school libraries. Equal Education asserts that "the guidelines must set as their long-term goal a functional library in every school".

The fast ended with a demonstration outside the Cape Town Book Fair at the Convention Centre. Yoliswa Dwane, an Equal Education leader said that the point of the demonstration was to highlight that "library books and textbooks are not affordable for our learners. How can we expect our children to succeed when they and their schools cannot afford books?"

A memorandum was presented to representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry, National Treasury and the Publishers Association of South Africa. "The book fair brings people together to celebrate books, which is a wonderful thing. But we need to make these events, and their books, realities for the 92% of South African school children who go to schools without libraries and the 50% who don't have all their own textbooks", Dwane said.

Exhibitor Profiles

Afrikan Wrights us Forum

Afrikan Wright us Forum is literacy based group that focuses on the art of writing as a tool for resistance, and as a way of develop-

ing the greater African Community. They are made up of different writers from all over Africa yet based in Johannesburg. It started at the House of Movements Resource Centre. They are a non profit making organization looking to unite the scattered voices of African Literature.

Tsumele Publishing

Tsumele Publishing is a young and progressive publishing company that specializes in producing innovative and insightful arts and culture publications as well as books on non fiction covering culture, politics and socio-economic issues. Tsumele Publishing produces the new leading arts and entertainment monthly publication Citylife covering fine art, theatre books and motivational books.

Workers' World Media Productions (WWMP)

Workers' World Media Productions (WWMP) is an independent labour media production house and a registered Non-Profit Organization. Their vision is to be the recognized and desired production house for quality media serving the working class. The mission is to provide high-quality, relevant and informative media productions and access to the media for the labour movement and the working class. WWMP also produce publications that promote mass education and political conscientisation on a commission basis.

Jozi Book Fair & Study Groups

by Molefe Pilane

Jozi Book Fair has identified organised groups of readers as one of the central pillars to building a culture of reading in South Africa. Study groups are one form of organised groups of readers that Khanya College has been working with for the last several years in the College's study group programme. These groups have largely been attached to the social justice organisations that Khanya College works with.

Organised groups of readers exist in other forms as well, and are usually linked to public libraries. These are reading circles, book clubs, and friends of libraries. Jozi Book Fair is in the process of linking up these groups with the aim of having these groups participate in the fair, and in particular, in events such

book launches, roundtable discussions, conversations with the authors, workshops, and seminars. The purpose of this is to build the ongoing flow of information between readers, writers and publishers, thereby reinforcing what each of them does.

Additionally, Jozi Book Fair is building working relations with libraries which would allow the project to use the spaces in libraries for book launches, conversations with authors, writing workshops and reading group meetings. This would in turn attract more readers to libraries. If requested, Jozi Book Fair will also assist these libraries to set up reading circles.

In keeping with this, Jozi Book Fair has is hosting a conversation between the Letsele la Thuto Book Club from Orlando West, Soweto, comprising unemployed youth and students and the Spruitview Library Book club with well known author, Zukiswa Wanner. The conversation looks at the reading habits of book clubs in townships, and the challenges they face in accessing and enjoying literature today.

Book Review

Natives of My Person by George Lamming

Reviewed by Thobile Disemelo

George Lamming, born in Barbados on 8 June 1927, is an author of West Indian literature. Lamming comes not only to writing of the West Indian psyche, but of humans in general. Despite critics' accusations of him using his novels as soapboxes from which he preaches his Marxist ideology, Lamming's efforts to tie together collective history through the shared humanity of his characters ensure that his novels remain skillfully crafted and multifaceted.

Lammings Natives of my Person is a disturbing allegorical account of the journey of a slave ship toward San Christobal during the early colonial period. Through his direct confrontation of old colonial rule, and his inventive writing style, Natives of My Person depicts the natives' endeavours to overcome the horror imposed by settlers. More disturbing is his exploration of the psychological and emotional motivations of the colonisers.

Lamming forces the reader to explore the human weaknesses of the men aboard "The Reconnaissance", as they are forced to confront their insecurities and subsequent physical and emotional abuse of the women in their lives, power relations and class struggles in their native land of Lime Stone (symbolic of Europe and England?)

While expressing, among other concerns, his anti-colonial commitment, George Lamming highlights outstanding issues which address the inherent tragedy that accompanies colonial domination. This tragedy, most often, stems from the author's dramatic use of the inevitable antagonism between characters, in their quest for better opportunities on the one hand, and their attempt to resist colonial assaults on the other hand.



Natives of my Person is definitely a must read for anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of Caribbean colonial history.

IMPRINT

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