

Editorial

The debate around the Franschoek Literary Festival raises important questions about the nature of literary festivals in South Africa in general, and the lack of transformation. Broad sections of the population do not have access to books and literature. This is the heart of JBF's work, to create readers and writers in all South Africa's languages, and we will return to the debate later.

2015 has been exciting for JBF's work. Amongst others, we visited Jaipur and Kolkata Book Fairs in India to broaden our understanding of book fairs. The Guest of the fair, Gcina Mhlophe, had two launches, one with the schools in Yeoville and another with Wits and the public in Braamfontein. The JBF team is also busy with the school youth project, Tshohang Batjha, the Poetry Buddies, the book clubs and preparations for the annual fair.

With only three months to the 7th Jozi Book Fair @ Wits, 11-13 September 2015, publishers, NGOs and the public are encouraged to 'Take a stand at JBF' and EXHIBIT or HOST an EVENT. Deadline for applications is 31 July 2015.

The venue for the Fair, the Science Stadium on Wits West Campus, is ideal for JBF's programmes, exhibitor stalls, a music stage, a theatre stage, a children's tent and a flea market and food market. A more detailed map of the venue with the designated areas will be made available online.

Build the movement of readers and writers, build the JBF.

With best wishes
Maria

Literary festivals in South Africa: what do they represent?

The debate about whiteness and exclusion at Franschoek Literary Festival is about literary festivals in South Africa generally. Some writers supported Thando Mqolozana and Malaika wa Azania who called for government and private sector intervention and Zakes Mda said he no longer attends literary festivals in Europe as he felt like a 'performing monkey'. (Mda was the JBF Guest of the Fair in 2014.)

So far there's been mixed responses. At a related debate at Wits on 'Decolonising the literary landscape', Ben Williams from Books Live, apologised to Mqolozana, while Corina van der Spoel (Wits Press) called him 'a pernicious racist' and went on to say that black parents do not buy books.

While this is an important debate, it is not only about writers but readers too. The debate must go beyond issues of colour to address the fundamental issue of social class: working people of colour do not have access to reading, to books, to literature. This raises issues of the publishing industry and its orientation, and the role of the ANC government. Interestingly writers were silent on the role of government, and only Mda raised the issue of 'black leaders who allow this to take place and JBF will return to this later. JBF will focus on the role of literary festivals in South Africa at JBF in September

Khanya College & Wits Launch Jozi Book Fair

Khanya College and Wits University launched the Jozi Book Fair, at the Orbit in Braamfontein on the 21st May 2015. The Guest of the Fair, Gcina Mhlophe, internationally acclaimed storyteller, was also introduced. The event was attended by the Vice Chancellor of Wits, Mr Habib, authors like Zakes Mda (the Guest of the Fair in 2014), publishers, journalists, publicists, exhibitors and people who love books.

The Wits Vice Chancellor, Adam Habib said that the partnership with Khanya College, which goes back to the 1980s, and "... is about deepening access to education, something Wits is increasingly committed to, further to address inequality in our societies. Our relationship with Khanya allows us to do this." "So many of our book fairs, like Franshoek, are spaces that allow the upper middle class to hang out, we need book fairs that break the class division, that enable conversations across classes, and reach people who are not so rich."

Oupa Lehulere, Director of Khanya College, recalled the Fosatu rallies at Wits, and said that it is important to make literature available to larger audiences in communities, particularly working class communities. "Literature does not have to be elitist. The elitism of literature shows a transition that has failed to broaden power and to broaden access to literature. This book fair as we see is a space to enjoy books, talk about books and importantly a space to generate the forces for social change." He further stated

Announcements

- * Jozi Book Fair: 11-13 September 2015, Wits University
- * Take a stand! EXHIBIT/HOST EVENT at JBF: DEADLINE 31 July 2015! Exhibitor Stands allocated on a 'first come first serve' basis.
- * Tshohang Batjha: writing skills workshop for school youth on 29-30 June – By Invitation only



that "without debate and the exchange of ideas we cannot talk about transformation. It is a bizarre society that has all the facilities of modern life but does not read, debate and discuss."

The Guest of the Fair, Gcina Mhlophe thrilled the audience with a stunning performance and her commanding voice. Earlier in the year, the Guest

was launched at Yeoville Community school, for the inner city schools that the JBF works with.

By Nosipho Mdletshe

Why Take A stand at JBF?



Zakes Mda

I send my agent to London or Frankfurt but i attend the Jozi Book Fair myself because this fair creates readers and writers!



Oxford University Press

We will be at JBF because we want to promote our author, Michael Williams' books to broader layers of people.



Dr Pheko, Tokolo Publishers

We choose Jozi Book Fair because we want to contribute to the culture of reading and writing. The JBF is the platform for the people we want to reach.

Bhala Africa

We chose JBF because the fair organises children and promotes children's literature. This speaks directly to the focus of our work.

Creating storytellers

Storytelling is one of the oldest art forms, it encourages the use of imagination and enhances our listening skills. The Jozi Book Fair (JBF) hosted a two-day storytelling workshop with Gcina Mhlophe on 22-23 May at the House of Movements. The aim of the workshop was to create storytellers, writers and/or performers and included 10 participants.



Gcina Mhlophe's provided practical exercise for participants to vividly paint the picture to the audience using words. Storytellers

must take their audiences to the places they want them to go. Good storytellers must read widely to be able to tell a story with meaning. "Storytellers are language lovers," said Mhlophe. All participants are encouraged to tell their stories in their own languages.

Mhlophe raised the need to preserve history and stories in different art forms such as embroidery, opera and dance. She gave an example of the late artist Dumile Feni, who translated stories into visual art.

The JBF will continue to provide support to storytellers, including writing skills and building confidence. The participants will perform their stories at the JBF Storytelling Festival in September, and the 10 best stories will be published.

By Makhosazane Mngadi

Poetry Buddies: Training Coordinators

The JBF organises children between the ages of 6 and 12 years of age into Poetry Buddies groups. The Buddies get together regularly to play, to read, to write poems and to perform. The aim of the Buddies is to build children's confidence and self-esteem, and assist them to express themselves.

The JBF began to train its first group of trainee coordinators in mid May. The group consists of sixteen (16) trainee coordinators from eight (8) orphan and vulnerable children (OVC) centres. The JBF decided to work with and support the township-based OVC centres given the important work that they do. The trainees are men and women in their 20s and 30s, who work as 'volunteers' and receive a basic stipend.

The training includes understanding the different aspects of children's development, caring for children, how to work with and respect children, set up and coordinate the poetry buddies groups, and prepare educational activities for the children.

Last year the JBF published the first book of poems by the JBF Rhodes Park Poetry Buddies. A second book of poems will be published in time for the JBF in September.

By JBF Team

Tsohang Batjha – Authors @ JBF



The Jozi Book Fair (JBF) organises youth at school into book clubs and assists them to read and to write and to produce their own newsletter, reflecting their issues and interests. The school book clubs are called Tsohang Batjha, which means arise youth, and every year a specially programme for schools is hosted at the annual book fair.

This year the JBF's School youth programme will include meeting four local authors. The school book clubs are busy reading as part of their preparation for the fair, and to meet these authors. The authors and the books that will be discussed at the JBF in September are: *The Mark* by Edyth Bulbring, *Diamond Boy* by Michael Williams, *Melville 67* by Zakes Mda and *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis.

To participate in the Schools Programme at the JBF please contact us as space is limited.

Kolkata: world's largest book fair

In February 2015, Dr. Maria Van Driel, director of the Jozi Book Fair (JBF), visited the Kolkata International Book Fair (KIBF) in India, as part of building links between the JBF and book fairs around the world. The aim of these visits is to learn how other book fairs, which are much older than the young JBF, have built up a strong readership in their countries. In South Africa we face an uphill battle in building book fairs because of a weak culture of reading, according to Van Driel.

Another feature of the KIBF that held promise for the JBF was the vast number of books available in Bengali and other local languages. Thousands could be seen standing in line to buy Bengali books, a sign of a living and thriving literature in local languages like Bengali.

The KIBF is said to be the most well attended book fair in the world. Over the 12 days that it is open more than 2 million people, mainly from the city of Kolkata, visit the book fair. This is more than 160 thousand people per day! The most striking thing about this is not just the numbers, but also the fact that those attending are working class people with their families. "The sight of working class people with their families buying books was one of the most inspiring things for me," she said. "It gave me hope that in South Africa it is possible to build a strong reading culture among working class people."

The KIBF, now in its 39th year, and is organised by the Calcutta Publishers and Booksellers Guild, established in 1975, a year before the first edition of the book



fair. Its aims to promote good reading habits among the public and to extend help to publishers and booksellers in the successful pursuance of their trade. The Guild also undertakes various strategies to promote a book-buying culture. In 2004 the public bought books worth more than 5 million Rupees (R1million). By 2014, this amount had changed to 200million Rupees (R50million).

The organisers of the KIBF met with, and agreed to build links and assist the JBF in its development. According to Dr. van Driel, Mr Chatterjee, the General Secretary of the Guild, was generous with his time in the middle of organising a fair of 2 million people, and the meeting showed great promise for the future cooperation between the fairs.

By Oupa Lehulere

African Flavour Bookshop, Vanderbijlpark

African Flavour bookshop was opened early this year in Vanderbijlpark, in the Vaal . This book shop only sells books on Africa, in different languages and promotes reading and writing in indigenous languages. Fortiscue Helepi, the founder of African Flavour argued at an event held at Wits, 'Decolonising the literary landscape' that he wanted to prove that a black person can open a book shop and not a tavern. He purposefully opened the bookshop because of the debate around black people not reading. Helepi wants to make quality books accessible at affordable prices, and demonstrate that this can be done. There are challenges from publishers who do not want to provide him with books because he has a tiny shop and his target market is regarded as non-readers. The bookshop stocks books by writers such as Niq Mhlongo, Zakes Mda, Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Adichie, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Kopano Matlwa.

JBF salutes you!!!

World Book Day Celebrations

The JBF held successful World Book Day celebrations at Rhodes Park with the poetry buddies, and at the House of Movements with the JBF Inner City Book Clubs



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