

## Editorial

This year the 7th annual Jozi Book Fair takes place at Wits University on the 11th, 12th and 13th of September 2015, with the theme: *Children's Literature and Childhood*. The Guest of the Fair is the author, poet and storyteller, Gcina Mhlophe. Gcina's work keeps alive the spirit of Africa, for today and future generations.

Every month the My Class will run articles on different aspects of the theme of the fair, and the work of Gcina Mhlophe.

The JBF promises to be even more exciting this year, reaching out to 'new' constituencies and new challenges, and consolidating relationships with the 'old'. We look forward to the participation of the public, book club members, authors, artists, youth and children. The JBF is a platform for everyone: This is the fair that creates readers and writers in all South Africa's languages.

Best wishes,  
Maria van Driel

## Theme: Children's Literature & Childhood

This year the theme of the JBF is 'Children's Literature & Childhood'. Children are the most important people in our society, and how we care and develop our children reflects the society we have today and the society we will have in the future.

The literature that we provide for children is a key indicator of this. The majority of children in South Africa have access to very few libraries and books, at school and in the community. This is a major problem for growing and developing our children, especially for working class children, for children of colour.

This year's theme enables us to collectively unpack a number of important issues: who are the children in South Africa and what does childhood mean for them; what is children's literature, and what is its role and importance for children; what literature is available for children, and in what languages? These are some of the issues that JBF will discuss in the My Class, in our activities held during the year and at the Fair. We support the words of Amilcar Cabral, of Guinea Bissau, '...the children are the flowers of the future and the reason for our struggle.'

The JBF calls on everyone, especially the public, to participate and engage widely and deeply in this discussion. Children are the concern of everyone.

## Guest of Fair: Gcina Mhlophe

The JBF is delighted to announce that the Guest of the Fair for 2015 is Nokugcina (Gcina) Elsie Mhlophe. The Guest is someone who promotes the aims of the Fair through their work, and inspires others to read, to write, to think and to act. Gcina is celebrated internationally for her work as amongst others, author, poet, performer and storyteller.



Gcina was born on the 24th of October 1958 in Hammarsdale, KwaZulu-Natal. After she matriculated at Mfundisweni High School she went on holiday to Johannesburg in 1979 and stayed for 21 years. She completed her journalism studies at Rhodes University and worked in various positions, from domestic to BBC newsreader and cultural activist. Gcina won numerous awards for her work, including seven honorary doctorates from amongst others, Pretoria, Fort Hare and the Open University in Britain.

## Announcements

- **Launch of Guest of Fair, Gcina Mhlophe, will be held at Yeoville Boys Primary on the 13th of March 2015 @ 11.30am. Space limited, booking for schools essential.**
- **JBF 2015 will take place on the 11th, 12th and 13th of September 2015 at Wits University, Braamfontein with the theme: Children's Literature and Childhood.**
- **PUBLIC CALL! HOST AN EVENT or EXHIBIT @ JBF & build a readers' movement.**
- **Contact details for JBF: 011-3369190/ Facebook us on Jozi-Book-Fair**
- **email: jozibookfair@khanyacollege.org.za**  
**website: www.jozibookfair.org.za**

Gcina has had an illustrious and productive life. She has published 26 books including a breath-taking collection of stories for children, poetry and plays. One of her plays, *Have you seen Zandile?* is about her life and relationship with her grandmother. Another important collection of poems and stories, *Love Child*, deals with personal and political issues. Through her work, especially her storytelling for children, Mhlophe keeps alive the history and spirit of South Africa and Africa. Gcina writes and performs in English, isiZulu, isiXhosa and Sesotho and her work has been translated into German, French, Italian, Swahili and Japanese. While she lives in Kwazulu Natal, she works all over South Africa and the world.

Gcina @ JBF 2015

Gcina will participate in various JBF activities throughout the year and at the Fair in September. This will include running workshops on storytelling and writing, and performing to schools and children.

## Lessons from JBF 2014

While last year's fair was successful, there are many lessons that we wish to address to ensure an even better annual event in 2015. The JBF was formed in 2009 with the explicit aim to build and deepen a culture of reading and writing in all South Africa's languages. Last year the fair was held at the Central Johannesburg College, in Doornfontein, and was attended by about 1800 people. The annual event consisted of 101 activities, including a comprehensive School and Children's Programme, book launches, seminars, conversations with authors, exhibitions by publishers and artists, and performance events linked to 'the word'.

Building a reading culture needs the focused support and the resources of the nation. Historically, where this has occurred we have seen the transformation of society. For example, trade unions study groups in Sweden in the 20th century; and the Cuban Literacy Campaign in 1959. In both Sweden and Cuba civil society has developed high levels of education. While we are mindful of Khanya College's limitations as a tiny organisation, we are convinced that together with fraternal organisations, schools, youth, parents and the public, we will build a discerning indigenous-based readers and writers movement in all our languages.

## 2015 JBF Attractions...

This year the JBF looks forward to deepening our work with our key constituencies:

- **Tsohang Batjha** focuses on building reading and writing groups with school youth. We encourage teachers and librarians to contact us to run reading groups where you live and work.
- **JBF Poetry Buddies** focuses on developing reading with children between the ages of 5 and 11 through fun games and poetry. Please contact us if you are interested to run a group in your community or church.
- **Book clubs and study groups** organise reading amongst adults from the broad public, the social movements and community-based constituencies.
- **Monthly and quarterly events:** conversations with authors, book launches and seminars on topical issues.





- **Participate in JBF:** launch a book or host a seminar, write book reviews and literary articles for My Class, Deadline 15th of each month.

#### Forthcoming Events

- Storytelling Workshop & Festival for adults: Learn the art of storytelling with Gcina Mhlophe on 22-23 May 2015. Festival will take place at the Fair. Win prizes at the JBF. The best 10 stories will be printed.
- Winter School holiday camp for school youth on 29 July-1 August
- Activities with youth to commemorate: including Africa Day (28 May), Youth Day (June 16), Women's Day (Aug 9)
- Spelling Bee at Wits University, date to be confirmed.
- Short Story Competition for school youth.
- Read the most books! Competition for schools, all age groups!

To participate in Poetry Buddies or coordinate a group, contact JBF.

For details of all events see our Facebook page, website and My Class.

## Children's literacy



Many South African children who completed their foundation phase or the first three years at school have a low level of literacy, but this problem goes back a long way and hence the poor literacy amongst many people between the ages of 15 and 24.

This year the JBF's theme is on Children's literature and childhood. One aspect of the theme is the importance of stories for children, reading to children and children learning to read.

Yet, in South Africa we do not pay enough attention to developing children through providing literature for children. There are few libraries at schools and in communities and this explains why there is a major problem in combating illiteracy in the country. Children's literature prepares children to understand the world they live in, to read the word and the world. This also increases their creativity generally. The JBF therefore encourages storytelling and writing for children, in all their languages. This is what South Africa needs.

By Sthembele Ngobeni



## Don Mattera Honoured

World renowned poet, journalist and author, Don Mattera was honored in Newtown on 24th January 2015. Earlier, on the 17th January Jozi Book Fair joined activists and artists to celebrate Mattera's birthday. Born in 1935 in Westbury in Johannesburg, Mattera left a life of gangs, violence and jail to become an anti-apartheid activist, and underscoring that 'the pen is mightier than the sword'.

Mattera won several awards in recognition of his work as a journalist, poet and social justice activist including: the PEN Award (1983) for Azanian Love Song, the Noma Children's Book Award (1993) for The Five Magic Pebble, the Steve Biko Prize for his autobiography: Memory is the Weapon, an Honorary PhD in Literature from the University of Kwazulu Natal, and the South African Order of Ikhamanga.

The 79 year old Mattera motivates people of all ages with his poetry, linguistic skills and his wisdom; and is an avid supporter of JBF and its aims to deepen a reading culture in all South Africa's languages.

By Sthembele Ngobeni

## Birchleigh wins School Debate

The Ekurhuleni 'Public Speaking Competition on Reproductive Health' held its 2nd round of debates on the 6th of February 2015, in Kempton Park. The 1st round of the debate took place in Tembisa on the 4th of February. Khanya College and Jozi Book Fair supported the initiative. The debate formed part of the search to fight the spread

of HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis (TB).

The eleven participating schools included: Phomolong Secondar, Sizwe Secondary school, Kempton Park High, Jiyane High, Armour Foundation, Norkem Park High, Birchleigh High, Thembisa West High, Sir Pierre Van Rynfield, St Athanasius Christian School and Sunrise Combined School.

The school learners impressed their educators and adjudicators with their well-researched and constructed speeches. Clearly, Ekurhuleni high school learners are keen to help the Municipality to fight the spread of these diseases. While the competition was not an easy one, all learners seemed to have enjoyed themselves. While all schools did well, we congratulate Birchleigh for winning the competition.

By Nondumiso Mntuyedwa



## Self-educate!

The argument that education is a sustainable solution against poverty is not very successful in South Africa, where poor black children are still marginalised by exorbitant fees. Higher Education continues to be the monopoly of the wealthy and hence education is not a form of 'redistribution'.

Many students who qualify to attend university remain at home or dropout because they lack the finances to further their education and make something of themselves. The system that we live in has already decided that black children, the majority from working class, will remain at the periphery of economic development.

We claim to have achieved freedom but our socio-economic rights are fundamentally ignored. In effect, the working class masses are excluded from these rights. After 20 years of democracy, higher education is still largely inaccessible for the poor and this compromises the 1994 freedom that many celebrate without understanding that black people remain largely marginalised.

Can this be a 'developmental state' if something as key to development as higher education is not prioritized? How is the youth meant to sustain itself and get jobs if they cannot get an education? Privatisation of education has assured that working class people remain at the periphery. It is time for people to self-educate, to bridge this gap, and not depend on government.

By Nosipho Mdletshe

### THE TREE

A Tree looks beautiful with it's fresh green leaves...  
they are pretty and better than brown dry leaves

### WHAT AM I SAYING?

I'm saying people, surround yourselves with useful  
and valuable things...  
people that can value you, people that can expose  
your beauty..  
and help you to open doors for your future  
Books are made by a tree to manufacture the mind-  
set..

BY: Thabo Letoaba

### IMPRINT

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