

Editorial The New Writer

Jozi Book Fair is committed to developing emerging writers who are socially and culturally relevant to the issues affecting the majority of South Africans. Following on the challenge posed by Oupa Lehulere in My Class, Issue 10 of “finding ways of connecting emerging literary talent with the great social and political questions in our time”, the Jozi Book Fair Writers' Project was created. The project aims to develop emerging writers by establishing writing circles, providing reading and writing skills workshops, and encouraging indigenous language reading, writing and publishing.

As part of the process of developing emerging writers, the Jozi Book Fair Writers' Project hosted a 2-day discussion on the formation of a Forum for Movement Journalists. This edition details the outcomes of that meeting, and looks at the differences between reading clubs and study groups.

This edition of My Class also reports on the Roundtable with Exhibitors and the Sol Plaatje Literary Festival, publishes Part 2 of the paper on Literacy Movements and Language, and includes an extract of the paper delivered by Guest of Jozi Book Fair 2010, Lindsey Collen, at the Roundtable on Violence against Women in Literature.

Enjoy the reading.

Molefe Pilane
Co-ordinator: JBF Readers and Writers Projects

The Sol Plaatje Festival

By Molefe Pilane

The Sol Plaatje Educational Trust hosted a 2-day literary festival on the 5th and 6th November at the Mmabana Cultural Center in Mahikeng. Approximately 200 students, government employees, cultural activists and members of the public attended the festival. The programme of the festival included exhibitors, seminars and lectures.

Seminars and Lectures:

Workshop Publishing and Self – Publishing by Vonani Bila of Timbila

The workshop was targeted at emerging writers and self-publishers. Vonani advised participants on what emerging writers and self-publishers must do in order to

Announcements

Premier Screening of “ The Matriculant ”

Date: 7 December 2010

Time: 18h30

Venue: Labia Theatre , Cape Town

Gauteng Right 2 Know Summit

Date: 8 December 2010

Time: 09h00

Venue: Civicus House, Johannesburg

Khanya College Anti-Xenophobia Cultural Event

Date: 16 December 2010 (Reconciliation Day)

Time: 10h00 – 15h00

Venue: Thokoza Township, East Rand

survive a hostile publishing environment in South Africa. Talk on “ Mhudi as setwork in education” by Prof. Steven Gray. As a Sol Plaatje scholar and editor, Prof Gray gave an account of the last 40 years of his academic life that was spent on recovering most of the original writings of Sol Plaatje, and editing them in a way that did not misrepresent what the author intended. Anecdotally, Professor Gray told his audience about missionaries deliberately changing Sol Plaatje's novel Mhudi during the editing process in the early 1900s, and finding those changes when the original manuscripts were discovered at the University of Fort Hare after students burnt down the library and archive during the student riots in the 1980s.

Talk on “Plaatje in the public space” by Dr Mcebisi Ndletyana

Much of this talk focused on the Sol Plaatje's contribution to literature and anti-colonial struggles. Dr Ndletyana also referred to attempts by the Post-apartheid ruling elite to want to re-interpret Sol Plaatje's life history and use it for their own narrow political interest. The Kimberley local municipality had attempted to unveil Sol Plaatje's statue as part of their political campaigns without any attempts at consulting Plaatje's family or the Sol Plaatje Educational Trust.



The Launch of "The Story of Sol Plaatje, a biography on Sol Plaatje" by Sabata Mokae

Sabata Mokae launched his biography on the life of Sol Plaatje. Mokae started this work by through archival research as part of his studies. The book covers Plaatje's early life in the Free State, his family background, his schooling at the Mission school, his life in Kimberley where he worked at the post office, his writings and talents, his contribution to the anti-colonial struggles and his death.

The festival was a success and the Sol Plaatje Educational Trust needs to ensure that this event becomes an annual event in the literary calendar.



JBF Roundtable with Exhibitors

by Nerisha Baldevu

The Jozi Book Fair team hosted a roundtable discussion with eight publishers on the 30th of October 2010. The purpose of the discussion was to assess Jozi Book Fair 2010, and chart a way forward for the fair in the current context.

Director of Jozi Book Fair, Oupa Lehulere clarified the aims and objectives of the fair, and the role of small publishers within this. He said that readers, writers and small publishers were the focus of Jozi Book Fair, with trading rights being periphery. He also pointed out that reading as a public activity is not the main aim of big publishers, that their interest is commercial, especially in a recession. Small publishers, on the other hand, while needing to be financially viable, are actually driven by particular interests regarding content and areas of publishing such as publishing and promoting indigenous language writers and literature, and therefore create audiences, writers and readers. The challenge was to create a book fair that is a space for debate and discussion, but which also makes books accessible to the public.

Allan Horwitz of Botsotso Publishing suggested that the Jozi Book Fair should be an annual sale of books. He pointed out that in order to grow the book market, it was necessary to reach the working class. However, the

working class does not have much disposable income, and we live in a society that is not particularly literate, nor has it been introduced to the world of books. The issue then was how to bring organised groups of readers to Jozi Book Fair which did not have the funds for a massive marketing drive in the city. He said that it was necessary to find an affordable product for a bigger market, and suggested that it was necessary to target unions, civics, schools and reading groups.

While all the publishers present at the meeting agreed that the focus of Jozi Book Fair was correct, and stated that the Jozi Book Fair team needed to be clear about the objectives of the fair in order for it to be successful. They also pointed out that there was a need for them as small publishers to survive financially and that this issue needed to be explored further through a series of seminars that interrogated the structure of the book trade, the cost of paper, and within that, the pricing of books.

With regards to the assessment of Jozi Book Fair 2010, the small publishers offered several suggestions. These included:

- That the Jozi Book Fair team explore the possibility of using just one floor – preferably the ground floor of Museum Africa – for all exhibitors;
- That all discussions and events of the book fair take place on the other floors of Museum Africa, which would then address the issue of noise in events;
- That the team look at the proximity of ATMs or make provision for card payments;
- That the team revisit the use of the hessian to create the stalls, as well as the size and set up of the stalls;
- That the team explore the possibility of a catalogue that is also a diary of events of the fair;
- Advertise the events of the fair on a daily basis at the entrance to the fair;
- Engage students to be stall minders which would then allow exhibitors the space to network. These stall minders would be paid by the exhibitors themselves;
- Improve the overall marketing of Jozi Book Fair dramatically – through the use of billboards, technology and all media;
- Improve signage within the venue;
- Explore the provision of food and drinks within the Museum Africa space; and
- Increase foot traffic at the fair.

The Jozi Book Fair team would like to thank all of the small publishers who participated in the discussion. All the suggestions and criticisms will be considered in the organising of Jozi Book Fair 2011.

Literacy Movements and language

Compiled by Molefe Pilane

My Class runs Part 2 in the series on Literary Movements and Language, extracts of the paper published in Dorad No.4, the newsletter of Ledikasyon pu Travayer (LPT). Part 2 covers the "Challenges and Achievements of LPT".

PART 2

Printing Press and Literary contests and prizes: Challenges and Achievements As LPT's language expanded, production of teaching materials by hand became difficult, and they needed to go to professional printers. LPT came up against the problem that some printers did not want to print their books and newspapers because they were in Kreol. Printers invented a range of reasons to delay the printing. In 1980, at one of the LPT's General Assemblies, a decision was taken to set up their own printing press. It took a period of 4 years to set it up, from typesetting to layout, films, plates, printing and binding, and including marketing. LPT gradually became a fully-fledged publisher.

LPT's printing press has a unique character in that it specializes in work for democratic organisations like trade unions, cooperatives, women's groups, youth organisations, civics, credit unions and parent-teachers' associations. The press prints leaflets, newspapers, pamphlets and posters for all kinds of associations in Kreol and in other languages, including English, French, Swahili, Arabic and Bhojpuri.

Literacy contests and prizes

In realizing that there was not enough literary production in Kreol, the LPT took a decision in 1987 to organise a literary prize for work in Kreol. Contests and prizes created a source of literary creation to draw from for publishing and printing, and they have also given birth to a whole new generation of writers.

Other achievements:

Through its work, LPT was able to develop a whole network of contacts with all the trade union federations and with the broad masses of workers. In 1996 LPT was able to call for the formation of another mass movement called All Workers Conference. LPT also produces its own newspaper, written in Kreol and Bhojpuri which represents the voice of organised working class.

Text was presented in Kreol by Alain Ah-Vee of LPT at the October 1999 Seychelles Festival

The Forum for Movement Journalists

The Jozi Book Fair Writers' Project hosted a Media for Movements workshop on the 15th & 16th November 2010 at the House of Movements in Johannesburg. Sixty three journalists from the social justice movements, trade unions, and their media committees in and around Gauteng participated in the workshop over the two days.

The aims and objectives of the workshop to:

- Introduce Jozi Book Fair and the Jozi Book Fair's Writers' project to movement journalists;
- Make an assessment of individual movement journalists and of the existing movement press;
- Investigate and profile the existing movement press and make an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses;
- Develop a theoretical framework for understanding the state of movement journalism and movement press;
- Explore ways and strategies that movements' press can develop to enhance their co-operation and working relations amongst themselves,



including writing for each others' publications and for non-movement publications; and

- Lay the basis for the formation and ongoing functioning of a Forum of Movement Journalists.

Setting up a Forum of Movement Journalists:

Participants largely agreed that a forum was necessary to bring movement journalists together to address some of the problems experienced in the movement press. These problems included the limited supply of stories and articles, poor distribution and irregular production of publications. The forum would provide the space for the political and technical development of the participants as movement journalist.

Participants identified the following criteria for membership to the forum:

- A passion for writing
- Ability to read & write
- Commitment to writing
- Open to criticism
- Willing to learn
- Commitment to a vision of social justice writing
- Honesty and integrity
- Respect and tolerance to other people and other members
- Principled
- Commitment to gender equality and the forum as a safe space for women
- Opposition to the promotion of xenophobic

- attitudes, racism and tribalism
- Objectivity, impartiality and rationality

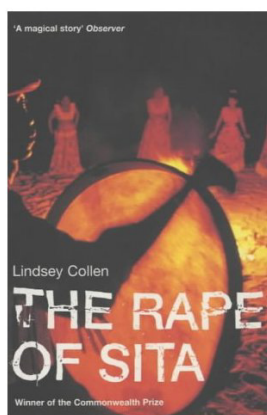
Khanya College agreed to provide the following support to the Forum:

- Political training & education (including skills training);
- Infrastructure support in the form of the Resource Centre and website, and assistance in facilitating communication between members;
- Creation of a web based storage and archiving facility of submitted articles;
- Editing of submitted articles;
- Exposure of articles to other publications and progressive press, and ensuring that the movement journalists get some financial rewards if their articles are published;
- Assistance in co-ordinating and organising members into Book Clubs, Study groups and Writing Circles; and
- Facilitation of the creation of writers' circles and platforms for them to meet.

For further information, contact Molefe Pilane at jozibookfair@khanyacollege.org.za or on 011 3369190 / 084 377 3010

Violence Against Women & The Rape of Sita

This is an excerpt of the paper presented by Guest of Jozi Book Fair, Lindsey Collen, at the JBF Roundtable on Violence against Women in Literature



When I wrote the novel 'THE RAPE OF SITA' in 1993, rape was prevalent in Mauritius but it was not a subject discussed openly at the time.

In my talk I'd like to focus on my exposing the subject in public in fictional form, and also about the resulting violence inflicted on me, as a woman, as a direct consequence of writing the book and exposing the subject.

First, rape is, everyone agrees, a heinous crime. I spend a lot of time trying to understand exactly why. I think it's specifically to do with patriarchy and fear of worse exactions and retaliation, rather than anything easier to understand. I think its heinousness is to do with the negative balance of forces between the sexes. It is patriarchy showing who is boss around here, in no uncertain terms. And should you squeeze a man's testicles hard, say, or stab him, this will challenge the whole of society. It is thus "unthinkable". Because you are forced by the State (in its Marxist meaning) to submit

to patriarchy, as soon as women's equality gets any lip service paid to it, rape becomes "a heinous crime". And it becomes this precisely because patriarchy has not yet been challenged, because patriarchy is still woven into the sacred structure of the status quo in modern capitalist society.

All this to say that exposing rape, if you can do it accurately enough, will cause you to suffer some form of violence from the upholders of the status quo. You are somehow exposing the ultimate proof of the rule of patriarchy. In Mauritius, at the time of publication of *The Rape of Sita*, the question of rape was not discussed in public much. The women's movement had tried to put it on the agenda, but society preferred denial. When *The Rape of Sita* came out, within three days of the launch, a small group of Hindu fundamentalists threatened to kill me, throw acid at me, rape me in public, etc. Then the Prime Minister stood up in Parliament, called me a blasphemer, and set the police on me under the Criminal Code for being an "Outrage against public and religious morality".

Then, my life was precarious. I have lived dangerously all my life. But that was really dangerous. So, to avoid arrest by the police and violence from fundamentalists, I went into hiding.

The Rape of Sita brought many changes. Rape was discussed openly. Literature spread into the broad masses, longing at first only to find out what I had said about the Prime Minister or one of his Ministers to cause the book had been banned. The novel as a form came out of its class closet. But more importantly, the cycle of violence was interrupted.

In the struggle against rape, the important thing is to change the balance of forces against patriarchy and against hierarchies and against patriarchal hierarchies. In all major hospitals there is now a "Rape Crisis Unit" which comes into operation the minute a victim arrives at the Hospital. There is even a "protocol", whereby if a woman, ignorant of this right, turns up at a Police Station, she is informed of her right to go straight to the hospital, or to be taken straight to the hospital. But it is one of those gains that is easily rolled back, so we have to keep mobilizing to maintain the gain.

So, that gives a brief insight into the way in which one bit of fiction on violence against women provoked further violence against women and then became part of the ongoing struggle against violence against women.

Lindsey Collen, August, 2010

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