

A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with her hair styled in many small, tight braids. She is looking down and to the right with a gentle, contemplative expression. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the texture of her hair and the contours of her face. She is wearing an orange garment.

EW BLOG

A Joyous Memory Of
A SPIRITUAL WARRIOR
ELSIE MATLHAKO

"Issue 1. 2020: Book Reviews and Opinion Pieces

EW BLOG: Book Reviews and Opinion Pieces

COLLECTION OF BLOG POSTS

Issue 1. 2020

AUTHOR AND EDITOR IN CHIEF: Ezekiel Kekana

CHIEF SUB-EDITOR: Khotso Sello

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS EDITION



Boitumelo Thage



Candice Chirwa



Haafizah Bhamjee



Makhosazana
Mavundla



Ntando Sindane



Regomoditswe
Mputle



Thembi Mazibuko

SPECIAL THANKS TO:



Jacana Media



Jonathan Ball Publishers



Pan MacMillan



DESIGN: Thabang Malatji

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Cell no: +27 84 693-1824 | Email: admin@ewblog.co.za | Website: ewblog.co.za

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Editor's Note

The year 2020 has started well for the EW Blog family. EW Blog has managed to secure a spot at YOU FM. All EW Blog contributors will have an opportunity to review the books they have read live on the radio on selected Thursdays. It is yet another achievement for this baby, which will be turning three years later this year.

It is also an honour to announce that EW Blog has 10 contributors. I am so glad and happy the team continues to grow at a very rapid pace. I owe my sincere gratitude to Haafizah Bhamjee, Thembi Mazibuko, Rego Mputle, Boitumelo Thage, Makhosizana Mavundla, Ntando Sindane, Refilwe and Lucy Sekhota. A big thank also goes to our in-house photographers, Thabang Malatji and Maria Maake.

It is my pleasure to announce our first EW Blog eBook edition of the year. The edition is dedicated to the late Elsie Kekana. This year marks exactly two years since God decided to call Elsie to heaven. It is on this edition that her friends remember her for the spiritual warrior she was. I would like to thank Thapelo Mercy, Dr Zwivhuya Tshivenga, Dr Nthabiseng Rapeta, Linda Tjale and Kutullo Mapheto for honouring their friend.

As per usual, there are exciting reviews from the latest books in the market, including Adriaan Basson's *Blessed by Bosasa*, *Born Freeloaders* by Phumlani Pikoli and *Siren* by Kuli Roberts among others. The primary objective this year is to increase our readership base and also sign more writers. We would also be printing T-shirts, caps in order to grow the brand. EW Blog continues to be amongst the best book reviewing websites and it is all thanks to our loyal subscribers. I still urge each and everyone to continue subscribing to the blog, so as to not miss any latest posts. As the year is still in its infancy, I encourage everyone to keep oiling their brains by reading books, especially African literature. I special thank you to our friends at Jacana Media, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Pan MacMillan and foxwrite publicity. I hope this year will continue to be a great one for our working relationship. Enjoy our first instalment of the year and let love reign supreme this month of love.

Kind regards
Ezekiel Kekana
EW Blog Chief Editor



ELSIE KEKANA

LETTER TO A SPIRITUAL WARRIOR: ELSIE MATLHAKO KEKANA

It is often said that God loves those who sit beside Him at all times and obey His word forever and ever. This year marks exactly two years since God called you to sit beside Him in heaven Elsie Mathlako Kekana. While I am slowly starting to accept that the WILL of God has prevailed, and I must learn to accept and not question it. However, I still have moments where I will just sit and wonder how your life could have been. I know very well that God called you in order to heal you from the monster that was renting in your body. Indeed God is love and His ways are forever meant to serve us good. Had He allowed you to leave longer, you will forever be in pains and that will have eventually broke your spirit to see Mama crying because your love for her was immeasurable.

I am writing this just to wish you a happy birthday ses, I know you are still much alive and I feel your spirit each and every day in my life. While last year I decided to tell the world about the void you left in my life, this year, I decided to allow the people who love you deeply to share how they remember and miss your physical presence. Nthabiseng Rapeta, the one you shared so many bed stories with in Rooihuiskraal. Mercy Rakgadi, the one you told me took care of you when you guys were in University together and never felt sorry for you when you told her about your cancer. Kutullo Mapheto, the one who made you laugh like there's no tomorrow whenever you guys met at church. Zwivhuya Tshivenga, the one whom you shared such deep love with. I would have done injustice had Linda Tjale not said a word in this letter. Linda was one person who loved you since you were born in 1994. She has also been there for you throughout everything. Happy Birthday ses and here is what your friends are saying to you:

Zwivhuya Tshivenga

You are dearly missed sesi, your absence is felt but what's fulfilling is that you are at a better place, home. I remember how beautiful you were smiling gracefully when you wanted, your calmness over everything, slow soft sweet steps. I remember your love for God Ses, your faith, you held tight to him regardless at all times, I think you take after mama "Mma k". You are literally your mother's daughter. I'm a better sing now hahaha, well I think you'd always help me keep in tune.





Linda Tjale

You left us with so many questions. I miss your angelic smile and your beauty. I remember a week before you passed away. You sent me WhatsApp asking me when I will come and see you. It truly broke my heart seeing you laying in a hospital bed, however, you remained very strong despite everything. After Sesi Tumi informed me that you have passed away, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It felt like I was dreaming. I miss you so much my little sister. On this day, I am reminded about how you will always remind me not to forget to bring you carrot cake and a present. Happy birthday my dear.



Thapelo Mercy

O6 Jan 2017...

"Don't worry sesi, I will be fine at least they won't operate me this time" ... I still remember just those words like it was yesterday and because of the warrior Queen I knew, I had faith that you will still pull through like you always did, little did I know that God had other plans. She was my all and she knew it, she did not want me to treat her like she was ill hence every sad memory I have of her is when I am alone and reality starts kicking in, only when I'm alone..

She knew what she was up against and like our prayer sessions she was always armed, God never failed you my angel. To me you still remain my "Warrior Queen", your strength gave me hope upon the unknown.. I loved you when I first met you not because re bo "Mahlako" or, the respect you gave me, but I loved you for you. You know our say, FOREVER AND ALWAYS. I love and miss you baby.



Kutullo Mapheto

Honestly, I don't know how I am feeling right now, because every time I miss you it's a different feeling. At first, I was angry, angry at God and also at myself and everyone else. I blamed Him for taking you away from me so soon. Every time somebody makes me sad, I felt like I could just call your phone and talk to you. However, at the same time, I felt like I was burdening you with my problems.

Lately, when I'm happy, you are the first person I want to tell because I feel you are the friend I can talk to at any time about anything and not feel judged. I don't wanna lie, you left an empty space in my heart and no one can fill it. I'm learning to live with the kind of heart that can never be satisfied even though it's too painful.

At times I have mixed emotions then I remember God took you because he saw that you needed to rest and though I'm happy that you are resting. I wish heaven had visiting days so I would come maybe once or twice a week just to remind my heart of your beautiful smile. Not only are you my spiritual sister, but you part of me. I carry you and until we get to sing the same song next to each other...I will always love you.



Nthabiseng (left); Elsie (right)

Nthabiseng Rapeta

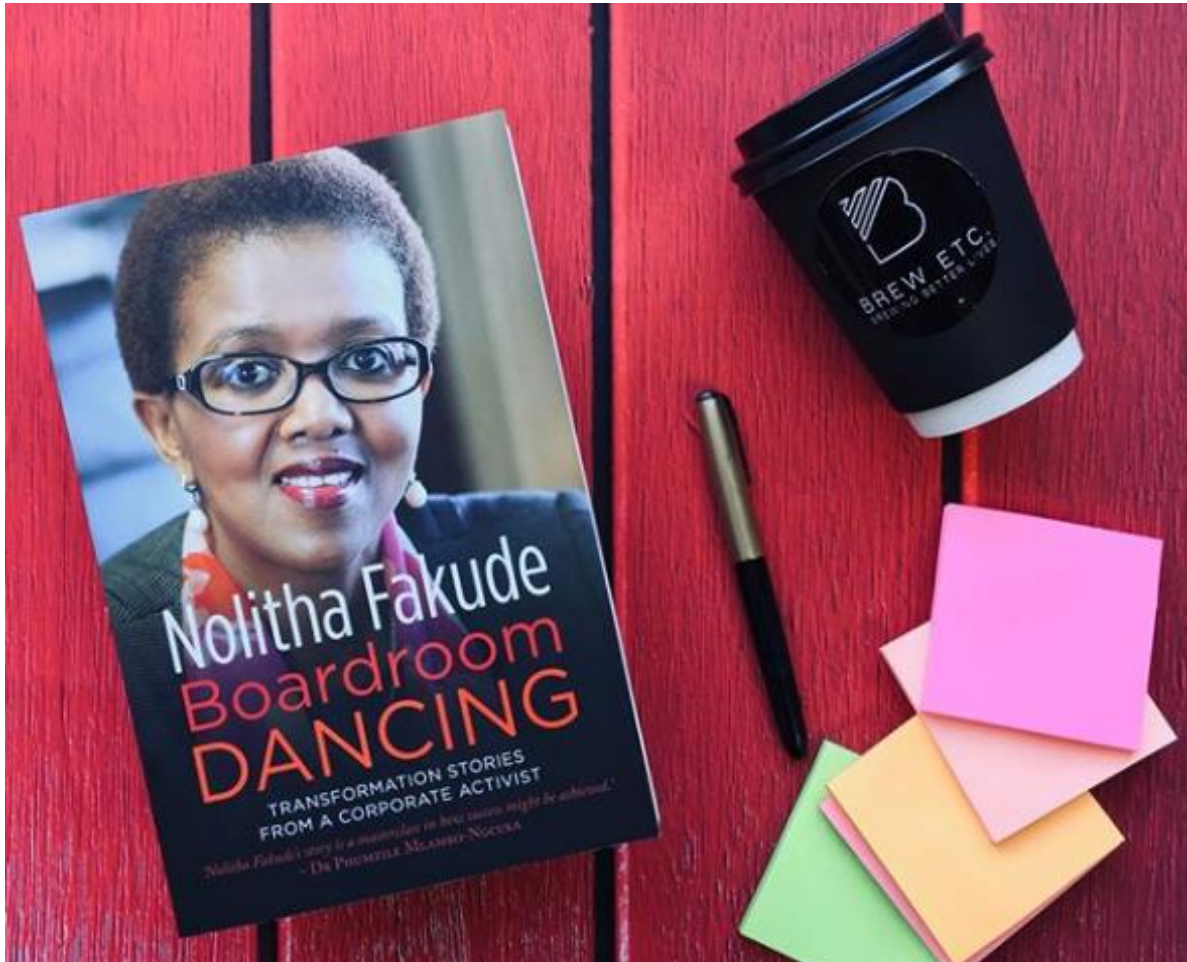
Makes me sick to write this letter knowing you'll never be able to see it and you don't even care about the things of this world anymore. But if you are able to see this, I want to assure you that there's nothing you are missing out on from this world, the Lord surely was more graceful to you than any of us left behind. How I envy the peace you are at right now! Mama misses you a lot and the two of us are incomplete without you. I hope you are having the best of time in the house of our Creator and that you are healed of the pain you were in. You left us too soon, I don't know how life was gonna turn out for us but I do remember that we had agreed to marry each other when life shows us flames. Let me tell you what I miss about you: you knew me very well from my strongpoints to my weaknesses and you never took advantage of it. You always supported me in and stood by me even when I was messing up, never judged me and corrected me with decency and respect. You were yourself, uncompetitive and very understanding of your background. You lived within your limits and that was absolutely inspirational. I

still admire it to this day. Remember the guy I had a crush on for years?? I'm finally dating him and I'm very happy. Sometimes I feel like you forced God to make him mine because I know how persuasive you can be with the people you love. But I wish you were here so that I could just tell you more about him. But all in all, life is okay, I've made new friends and they are treating me good too. I know we'll never see each other again but the time we spent together is worth celebrating. Thank you for spiritual warfares we conquered together and all the times we prayed for each other. Prayer kept us united and protected most times. I love you and you are unforgettable.

In Book Reviews

Boardroom Dancing: A much-needed reminder that there's always something to stand up for

Written by [Makhosazana Mavundla](#)



Boardroom Dancing Book image. Picture credit: bargainbookssa via Instagram

“Self-made Billionaire”?

Remember when *Forbes* magazine tried it with us making it seem as though one could wake up one day as anything they had ever imagined themselves being without any input from others. Well, *Dancing Boardroom*, a novel way ahead of its time details how two prominent African proverbs – “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” and “it takes a village to raise a child” – have always played their part in people’s success.

In this 230 page novel, corporate Activist and businesswoman Nolitha Fakude, takes us on her journey and experiences of failure, palpable racism, self-doubt, assimilation and realizing her worthwhile navigating her way up the corporate ladder. First introduced to the idea of assimilation in her early childhood years due to her “special childhood” life afforded to her by educated parents.

Fakude went above and beyond to not feel out of place due to her well-off life. However, It didn't take long for Fakude to realize that no matter how hard you try to fit it in, if its not made for you, it'll never happen – a lesson taught to her by her cheeky mother who would always snap her back to reality.

As we all know it, our childhood experiences play their part in our present and future and for Fakude, it was no different. Her matriarchal growth set up, which saw her hands-on at home, bore her indomitable, resilient, tenacious, passionate and persistent (traits inherited from her mother) spirit rise to the occasion in her 29-year career.

Fakude was awarded her first taste of corporate life when she applied for the Woolworths' Graduate Training Programme. An application prompted both by her yearning for liberation and all the knowledge garnered during her childhood days of helping at her family general dealer store. Selling herself short thinking she'd just end up in human resources, little did she know that her 12 years there, would awaken her undying vision of a changed South Africa in which previously disadvantaged persons would be granted a space in the working sector, a voice in a country that would rather have them shut and dignity which was once stripped off from them.

“Show me your friends and I'll show you your future” (in Fakude's case mentors) is a quote that resonates deeply in me with every page turn.

Fakude's passion for alignment in life, saw her meet like-minded people who stopped at nothing to make sure that their efforts for change yielded results.

Her yearning for cohesion – for businesses to not stop at talking but go as far as implementing their words and maintaining an image they've created saw Fakude leave an indelible mark in every position she has held. Poise, grace, and her “teach me” attitude awarded her opportunities she never fought for. Her name was mentioned in rooms her feet had never set foot in, proof that once you know what it is that you'd stand for even if it means standing for it alone, your work will always speak for itself.

There's no such thing as “self-made”. *Boardroom Dancing* is a harsh reminder to the youth to that in order for your work to speak for itself, grab every opportunity awarded to you, associate yourself with like-minded people and take time to discover your niche and keep at it until it yields your desired results.

Fakude's story also reminds us that some years are for growing and some are for blooming. A reminder to go bravely and deeply by taking the first step even without seeing the whole staircase.

Black Child, your dreams are valid.

In Book Reviews

One Day in Bethlehem will Shake You to the Core

Written by [Haafizah Bhamjee](#)

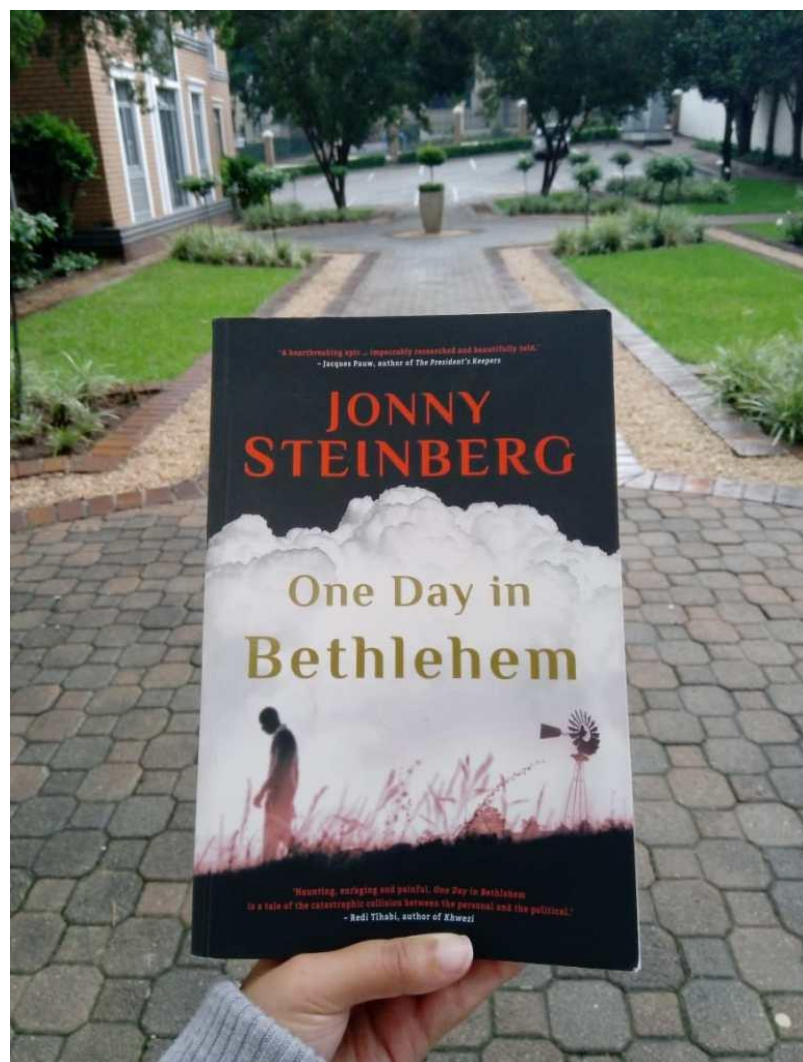
What does an imprisoned man think about in his spare time?

Amongst other things the ocean, its vastness, its deadliness, “because a sea is the opposite of a prison cell.

1992. Slap bang between the year Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and the end of apartheid. A time of impending justice, chaos, fear and illation. While the men and women of the country’s townships raced towards democracy armed with AK47 rifles, white police officers scurried backward towards their fading glory wielding whatever power they had on whomever they could. A time of confusion for many South Africans. But nobody could have been as confused as Fusi Mofokeng, a retail worker at the local *Shoprite* in the sleepy town of Bethlehem, whom on the morning of 2 April 1992 was taken from his bed and charged for a murder he did not commit.

The central theme of the narrative is justice. In a macabre sense, justice is best understood where it cannot be found. Fusi Mofokeng and his friend Tshokolo Mokoena never saw justice. Both men served a nineteen-year jail sentence having been accused, trialled and sentenced for the murder of a young, white police officer named Lourens Oosthuizen. Mentioning the officer’s name is an important sentiment as Oosthuizen too never received justice. The men who admitted to an MK conspiracy which led to his murder; Clement Ndabeni, Mandla Fokazi, Sikhalo Ncala and Donald Makhura, walked free after testifying before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1997 on the grounds that they had murdered Oosthuizen in the interests of their country.

Contrarily, Mofokeng and Mokoena, who testified their innocence before the same panel, were sympathised with and then returned to their cells. Neither would confess to a crime they did not commit and as such neither could be granted Amnesty. The narrative seems to be chipping away at the all-encompassing question: “If the

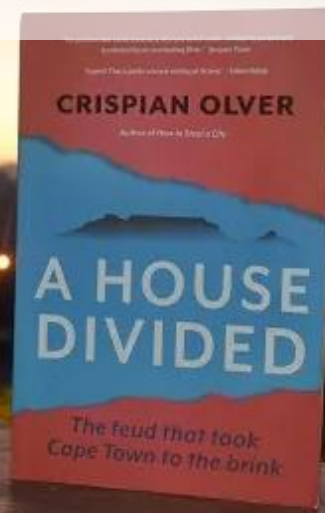


injustice of the past is obvious and tangible, what do we have to say for the injustice of the present?”

Another theme explored is hope and its power against adversity. There is no doubt that Mofokeng was failed by the apartheid justice system, to the extent that he was framed in court; but the real betrayal came after he was failed once more by post-apartheid institutions including the Human Rights Commission and the TRC. By the end of the book, we can see that everyone involved with the case was convinced that Mofokeng and Tshokolo were innocent, however tied up in a web of bureaucracy, 19 years passed before they were released. It could only have been Fusi Mofokeng’s optimism and belief in himself that saw him get through those years and come out alive.

One Day in Bethlehem, Jonny Steinberg’s latest offering, haunted me. I could not get myself to put it down, but I also struggled to read it and often found myself arrested by a single sentence or a single paragraph that would captivate my mind for days. Steinberg’s clean and poetic retelling of the story of Fusi Mofokeng kept me under a spell, while the content angered me to the point where I would have to bend the cover shut and busy my mind with other thoughts lest I too found myself engulfed by the depth of that ocean of grief.

One Day in Bethlehem is the kind of book that evokes riots in the minds of its readers and leaves them changed forever.



A House Divided reads like a carefully orchestrated assault on Patricia De Lille's legacy

Cape Town's water crisis will undoubtedly go down as one big stain on Patricia De Lille's tenure as mayor of the city. The so-called 'day zero', that is, the day that many Capetonian's taps were supposed to go dry, will forever remain a big mystery to South Africans, mostly the Cape Town residents.

Was there truth in the 'day zero' announced by the Democratic Alliance (DA)?

What led the DA-led government to make such an alarming pronouncement, and was there a political will from different spheres of government to resolve the water crises in the mother city?

In *A House Divided*, local government expert Crispian Olver tries to find all these answers for his readers. Through rigorous interviews with different roles players, politicians, civil servants, and ordinary citizens, Olver thoroughly digs deeper into different layers that led to the water crisis, a scandal that truly exposed the battered relations between Patricia De Lille and the pettiness of politicians in the face of crisis.

Perusing through the pages of this book, readers will appreciate Olver's thorough investigation in how, despite being denied access to the City's documents, he still managed to expose lots of mistakes which were at the heart of the scandal and also different ills that continue to dominate municipalities in South Africa such as the relationship between politicians and business leaders.

However, I believe the manner in which the scribe delivers his story it will easily be interpreted as him directly attacking Patricia De Lille's tenure as mayor in the City of Cape Town. While I sincerely thought the author would provide a deeper breakdown of what led Cape Town to face the water crisis and also expose the DA's claims of 'day zero', the author largely channelled all his energy in describing De Lille's leadership style during her tenure as mayor of Cape Town, her 'bullying tendencies', her relationship with business leaders, and her political feud with some DA leaders and civil servants in the Cape Town's city hall.

I couldn't help but think this is just a book that aims to rubbish De Lille's legacy more than exposing the failures of the DA in dealing with the water crisis. This is also compounded by the fact that the scribe decided to interview all the people who were against De Lille's mayorship and failed to give De Lille an opportunity to state her side of the story before publishing the book.

If the argument is that De Lille was busy with her 'election campaign', why then not wait for her and publish the book once she has stated her side of the story. The book read like a carefully orchestrated assault on De Lille's mayoral legacy and one which readers should take with a grain of salt. Without the voice of the supposed 'main actor' on the water crisis scandal, this makes the book one-sided.

In Book Reviews

Dr T ignites a fire to good sexual health and pleasure

Written by **Ntando Sindane**

I almost did not read this book because of how it is often referenced on social media. The marketing approach shows itself through Twitter with terms such as “Tlof Tlof revolution” and “Sexual pleasure revolution” often thrown around cheaply when making reference to the book. One immediately assumes that these trendy taglines are probably telling of how shallow or trivial the book actually is. On the contrary, the text proved these preliminary assumptions wrong. After having perused through Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng first offering titled *Dr T- A Guide to Sexual Health & Pleasure*, I was left thoroughly educated.

Roughly, there are a few take outs that are worth mentioning: Dr Tlaleng speaks from the proverbial and almost academically elusive position of a lived experience. Her accounts both on health and pleasure questions are related to various personal experiences, these include her first interaction with menstruation, to her experiences as a junior medical doctor at a community clinic, and right through into her personal space as a young wife, trying out for a pregnancy shortly after undergoing surgery. The lived experience style of writing draws the reader into appreciating the text not merely as academic but equally as an expression of the personal account; thus making this book a truly liberating engagement.

As you read through the book, you discover crucial insights about the human body, specifically its reproductive system. The first feeling that comes to one’s mind is that most of these things are so important, that they should actually be made compulsory knowledge to all adults. This lends credence to the on-going proposals by the Department of Basic Education to introduce sex education as a compulsory subject in our schools. It would be recommended that the Department should consider prescribing this book to both primary and high school learners.

The book is divided into three sections, the first is about sexual health; the scribe discusses sexual health beginning with physiology wherein the vagina is placed on the table, dissected and interrogated for the truths about its character, the myths about its attitudes, and the superstitions that surround it. The penis is also put under microscope, explaining its physical make-up, including post-circumcision.

What makes this book special and unique from other health books is its glossary of terms. Shortly after concluding section 3, the “glossary with a difference” does not merely explain terms used in the book, but it rather engages in the onerous task of educating the reader, providing them with a language to articulate their sex health and pleasure experiences properly.

Dr T uses non-verbose language to unwrite dominant narratives about sex, pleasure and everything related to it. The author deliberately focuses on the vagina, women’s health and sexual fulfilment, having noted that this is a subject that remains under-researched, even in the MBChB curriculum.



Picture Credit: Nolo Moima Via Instagram

In Book Reviews

Yusuf Daniels' Living Coloured is a Rare Gem

Written by [Haafizah Bhamjee](#)

With its beginnings in a series of viral Facebook posts by Yusuf Daniels, who describes himself as an “accidental author”, this little book is a quick read that will have you laughing long after you’ve put it down.

In just 96 pages, Daniels gives his readers a captivating collection of memoir short essays that depict his youth in clear imagery and authentic language. It is the authenticity of Daniel’s writing style that first had me drawn towards his book.

Diverging from the style of traditional literary publications, particularly non-fiction, Daniels is comfortable using colloquial language and slang. This adds to the essence of the type of story he is telling and makes it feel homely.

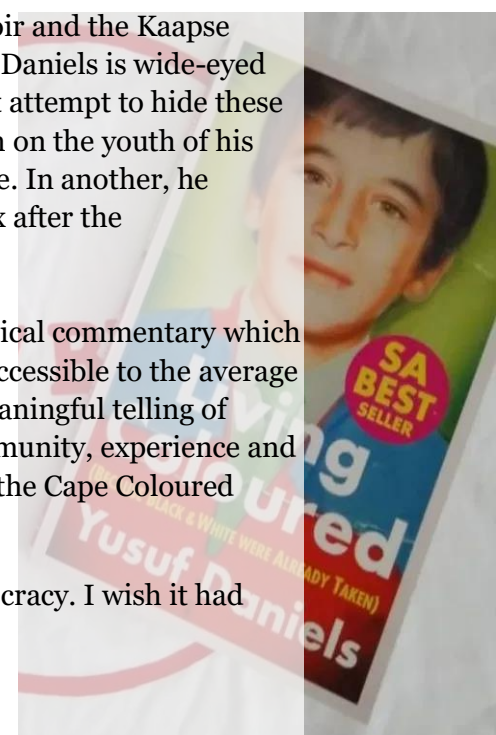
The narrative follows young Yusuf or “Yussie” as he navigates everything from street games to apartheid segregation. While reading you can’t help but salivate over his vivid descriptions or Ramadan and Eid feasts, or ‘Heyday Treats’, or laugh at young Yusuf’s childhood blunders including one incident where he made the mistake of teasing Ruthie, the neighbourhood terror, without the safety of a locked gate between them.

Without unnecessary nostalgia that makes one cringe, a feature which sometimes taints these sorts of narratives, Living Coloured transports the reader to a time when children played together in the streets unsupervised and were as safe in their neighbour’s homes as in their own. A time when two children could wander down to the nearby dam for an afternoon of fun. When neighbours invited each other to their dinner tables with open arms, and young romantics frequented the ice-rink to skate together (and make out). A picturesque time that most people of my generation find hard to imagine.

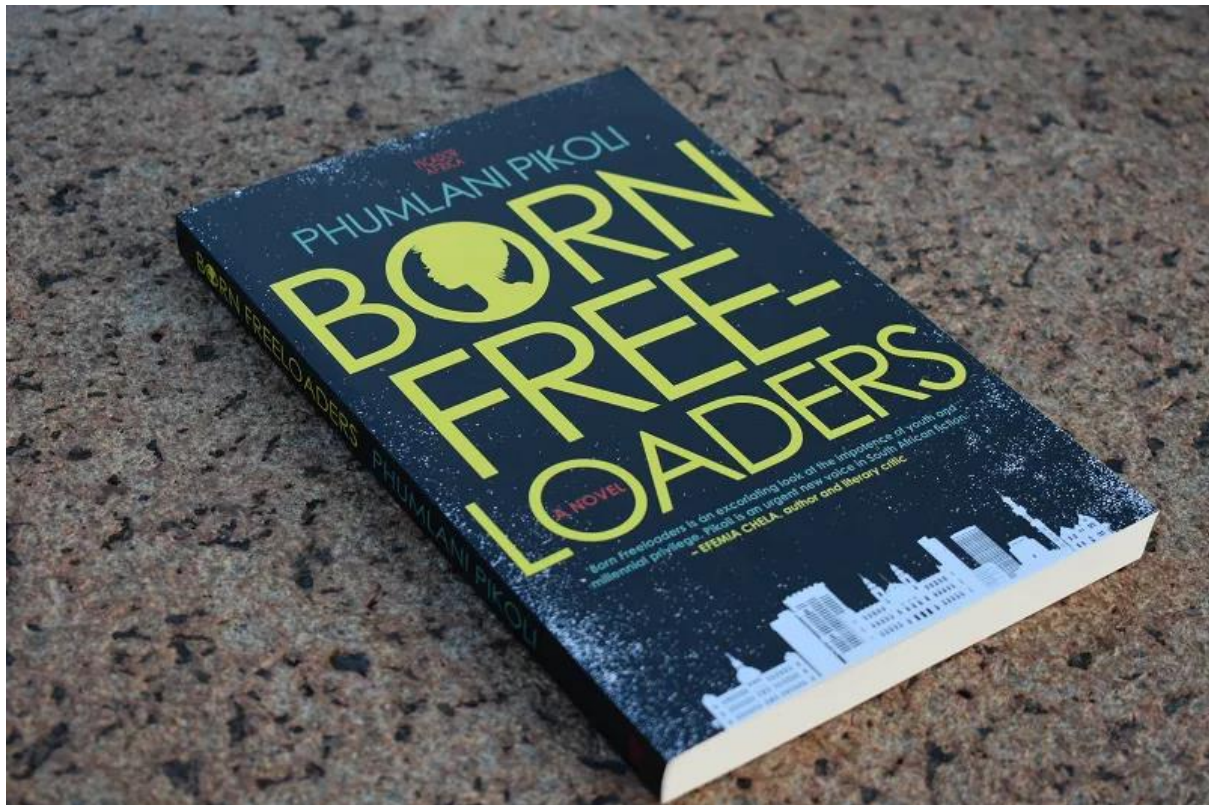
I thoroughly enjoyed reading about his participation in the Malay Choir and the Kaapse Klopse, and the street games that even the adults joined in. However, Daniels is wide-eyed and aware of all the undesirable aspects of his childhood and does not attempt to hide these from his reader. In one section he describes the impact of gangsterism on the youth of his community and how baseball helped keep him away from that lifestyle. In another, he mentions when his family, and others, were removed from District Six after the implementation of the Group Areas act of 1950.

In a time of high political writing and wide-spread political and historical commentary which is usually so strung up on relevance and populism that it becomes inaccessible to the average person. Daniels offers his readers a clean, refreshing, emotive and meaningful telling of shared lived experience. Living Coloured is a rush of culture and community, experience and identity, politics and the home; a narrative set in apartheid depicting the Cape Coloured community without cheaply sensationalising the politics of identity.

An important, and often untold, narrative sorely needed for our democracy. I wish it had come sooner. An absolute treasure!



In Book Reviews



Born Freeloaders fails to live up to its title

Written by [Boitumelo Thage](#)

The generation in which I am born into is referred to as the 'born frees'. We are called this because prior to 1994 South Africa was under a white Afrikaner apartheid rule, wherein black people didn't enjoy certain privileges and access as compared to whites. Everyone born post-1994 is unfairly labelled a 'born free' by those who lived during that dark era.

I refuse to believe that we are 'born frees', and as I paged through Phumlani Pikoli's latest offering titled *Born Freeloaders*, I was hoping he will explain in detail what kind of freedom do the post-1994 young adults enjoy today. Is it political freedom, the right to be able to vote in every election year, social freedom, the right to live anywhere and socialise with whomever or is it economic freedom?

However, I was disappointed with the scribe's failure to really explain in detail the misnomers attached to this term. The book narrates a story of a modern black South African family living in Pretoria, where the children Nthabiseng and Xolani navigate their way through life.

The front cover of the book paints an image that you'd be reading about 'born frees', and I had a different expectation of the book.

In all honesty, in as much as the book tells the story of modern black life in a democratic South Africa, the lifestyles of young people, drinking and partying which consume the lives of the youth in our generation, I couldn't resonate with the book.

I read it with hopes that as I peruse through the pages, I will find something about a detailed and deeper analysis about the freedom the so-called 'born free' generation are enjoying in the democratic dispensation. I feel as though this book was a perfect opportunity to write about the socio-economic challenges that the so-called 'born free' generation go through in today's society.

I agree with Efemia Chela when she said that Pikoli is a new voice in South Africa's fiction writing because indeed he is a talented writer. However, in this book he dropped the ball on tackling a term that continues to be attached to a generation that is yet to taste the fruits of 'freedom' in the 26 years of the country's negotiated democracy. The youth, mainly those who are born post-1994, are still fighting to have free fee decolonized higher education even under the new dispensation as we have seen in social movements such as the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall.

If reading fiction is your cup of tea then you would certainly enjoy reading this book. If not, then this book will definitely not resonate with you.

The opportunity to read such a book written by a young author like Pikoli provides one with an opportunity to understand how other young people born in privileged black households view challenges faced by many poor young people across the country.

This is a good story to read if you would like to be entertained and have a well-painted picture of the lives of young modern people living in Pretoria.



In Book Reviews

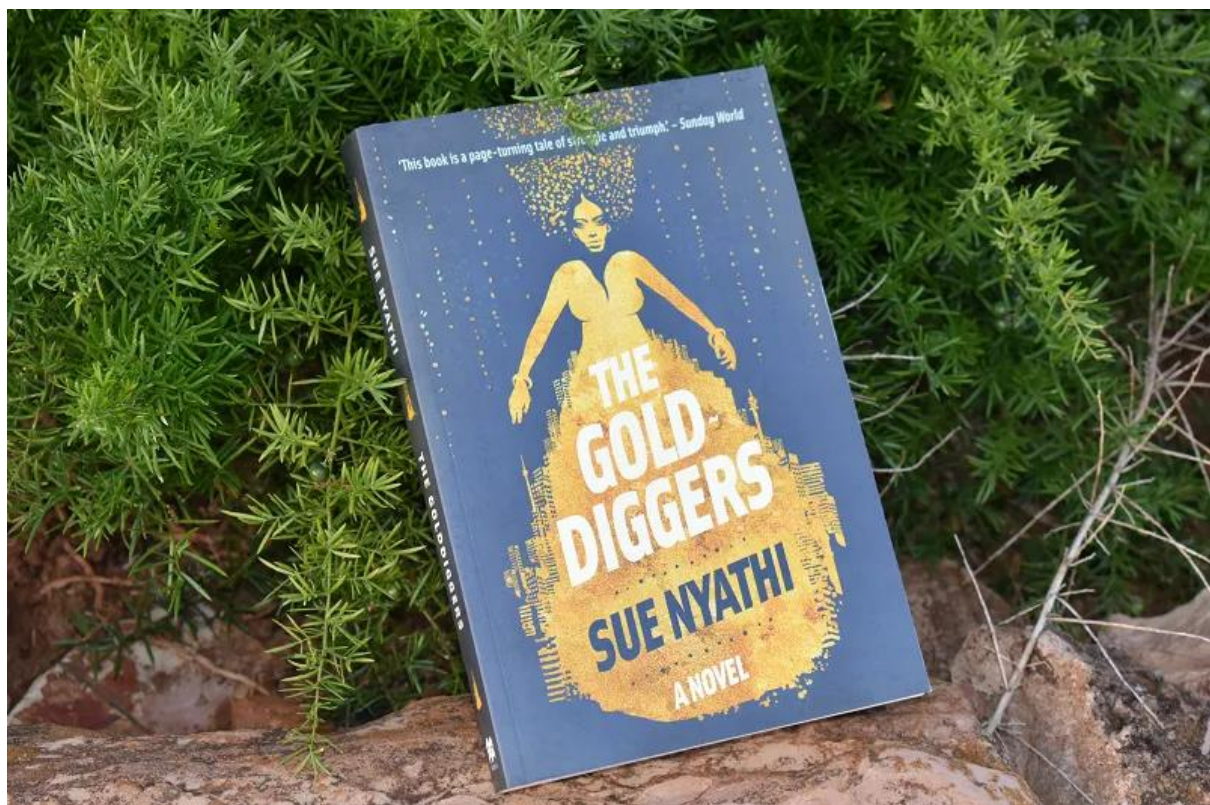
Sue Nyathi digs the horrific and success stories of Zim immigrants in *The Gold Diggers*

The great author Frederick Buechner once said, "... the only books worth reading are books written in blood." One such book is Sue Nyathi's much acclaimed second novel titled *The Gold Diggers*.

In this novel, Nyathi narrates the painful and sometimes torturous journey which many Zimbabwean immigrants go through in their bid to attain economic wealth in South Africa's richest city, Johannesburg.

The story is a familiar one. It is a story of hardships and suffering faced by many immigrants from across the African continent as they fight for their piece of gold in the City of Gold. However, what resonates with Buechner's sentiment in *The Gold Diggers* storyline is the manner in which Nyathi, a Zimbabwean native, narrates how lives are ruined and lost in the process of fleeing Zimbabwe.

Nyathi captures the reader's imagination from the first chapter, as she takes you to the streets of Bulawayo, where the story starts with multiple characters fleeing their land of birth to take refuge in the shiny streets of Johannesburg. Not giving away much, Nyathi with the right authority and authenticity, touches on numerous themes that emerge as different characters battle it out to attain economic freedom in Joburg.



Drug trafficking, identity theft, xenophobia, child trafficking, adultery are but some of the themes that emerge from the journey of each character. Readers will go through an emotional rollercoaster perusing through the pages. I found myself shedding a tear after a horrendous act meted on baby Zipho by drug lord Kayin.

This book is very informative in understanding the struggles which many illegal immigrants suffer through in South Africa while trying to make a better life for themselves. The Gold Diggers does leave the reader with a sense of compassion for every foreigner in the country.

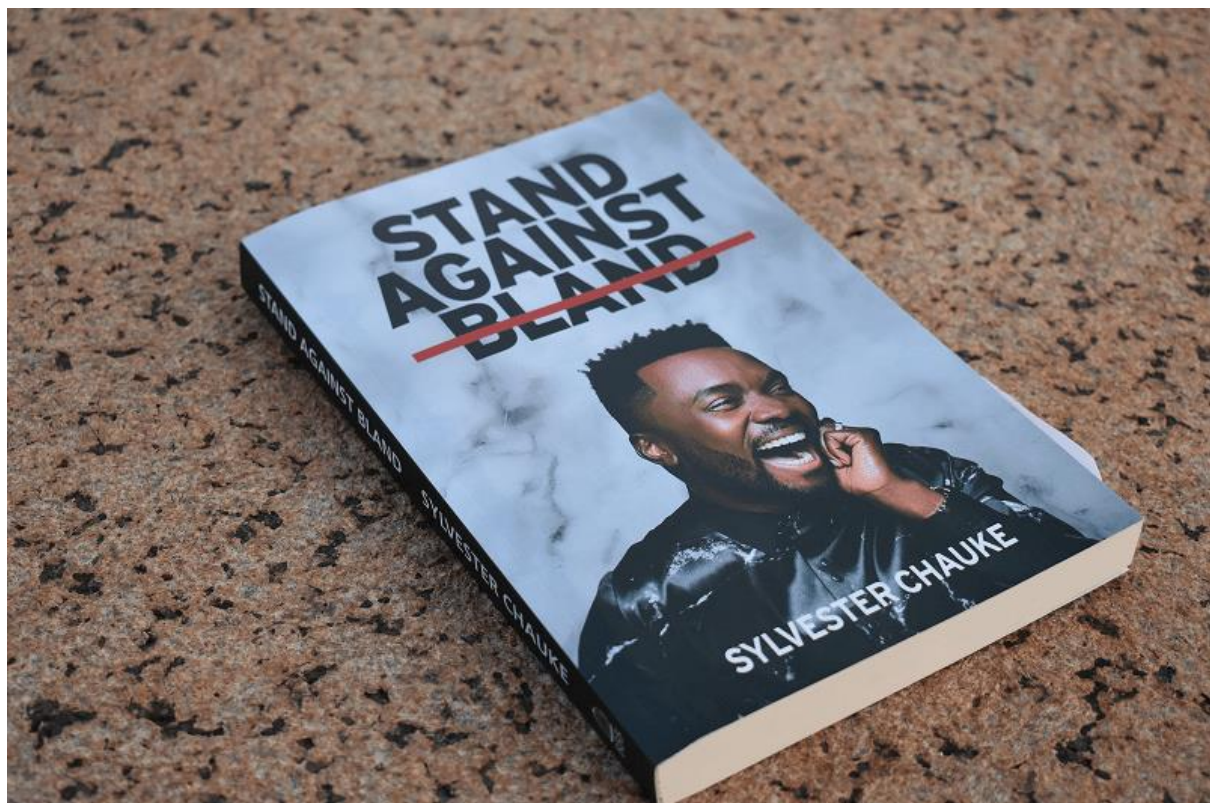
The chapters are also nice and short keeping the reader's attention intact throughout. Readers might, however, find themselves remember the storyline more than they remember the whole characters. Nyathi has assembled a lot of characters and I found myself struggling to remember all of them upon finishing.

The cover and the title does a serious injustice to the book. It gives the impression that it is another book ridiculing women's economic quests. However, despite all that, I believe the novel will go down as one of the best classic novels, which depict the lives of illegal Zimbabwean immigrants in South Africa.

In Book Reviews

Stand Against Bland is a voice for good in alleviating consciousness in Corporate SA

Even before I started perusing through the pages of this book, the cover signalled a story of success. Sylvester Chauke's hairstyle on the front cover, which has recently been dubbed 'the hairstyle of success' by many South Africans, thanks to Siya Kolisi and Zozibini Tunzi, who both donned the hairstyle in their recent respective successes in the Rugby World Cup and Miss Universe pageant.



Chauke's first offering simply titled *Stand Against Bland* is a clarion call to all South Africans of all races to always do good to the next person. In this memoir-type-style book Chauke, who like many South Africans I still find myself calling him the Nando's guy thanks to his stint with the Chicken franchise, narrates his own journey into the professional and business world.

The scribe touches on so many socio-economic issues, which continue to be part of many black peoples' lives across the townships and villages of South Africa. For all the themes, which he proposes in the book, I found myself nodding in agreement with his proposed solutions in dealing with the effects of apartheid spatial planning on black workers.

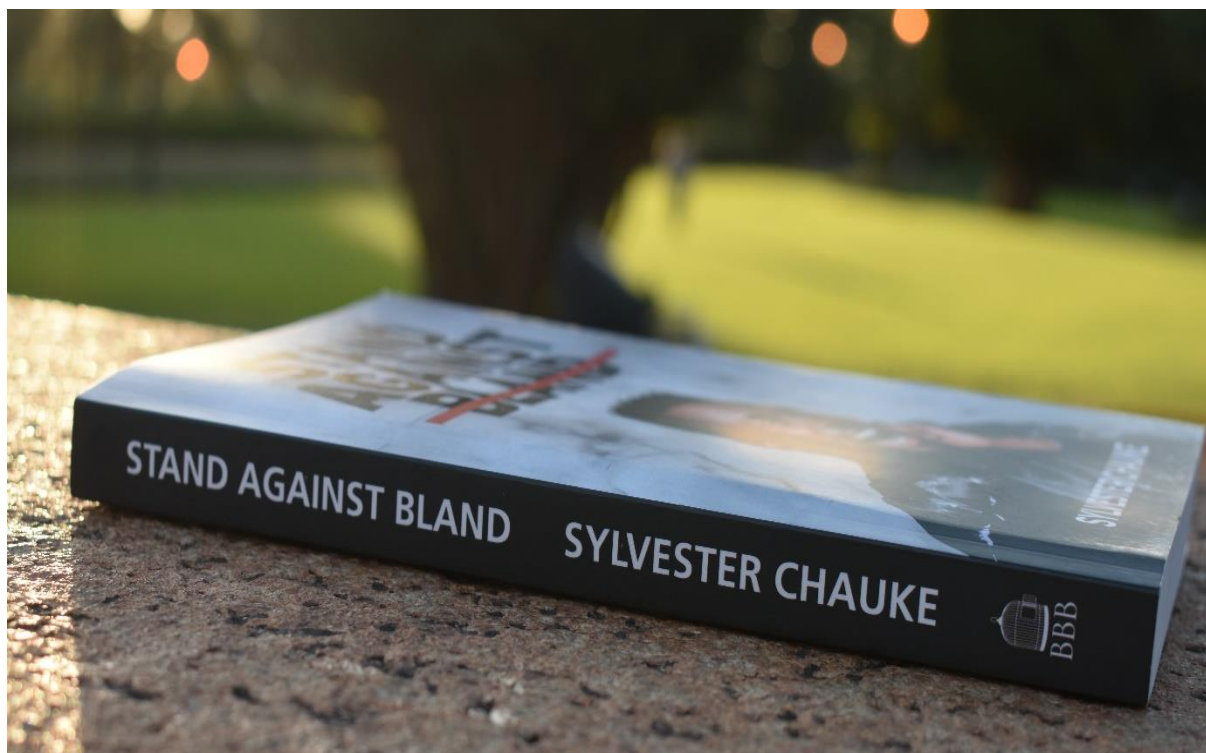
Many South Africans continue to live far from their places of employment. Many continue to lose jobs for being late thanks to long commute hours to and from work. In this info-educative book, Chauke projects practical ways in which both the employers and employees can adopt practical measures to tackle Hendrik Verwoerd's plan of isolating the bulk South Africa's working class from their workspaces.

The pages also serve as motivation, inspiration and education for the oppressed masses. Readers will appreciate how Sylvester had to navigate through poor conditions in Soweto to eventually craft a way to achieve his dreams.

The chapters are also very short, keeping the reader's attention intact throughout. The language is simple and easy to grasp. The only drawback I picked throughout was how chapters are disorganised. Plenty of repetition throughout the chapters.

Overall, this is a book that I will encourage young professionals to read. I would also recommend it to employers, who might be oblivious to the socio-spatial challenges that many black professionals face on a daily basis.

Stand Against Bland is not only reflecting on Sylvester's good humanitarian heart, but it is a clarion call to everyone to be an agent of change. A must-read for entrepreneurs to carry on their journey in transforming Corporate South Africa.



In Book Reviews

Alex Van Tonder's 'A walk at Midnight' is Immersive and Captivating

Written by **Haafizah Bhamjee**

The story follows the life of Jane Ronson, a devoted mother and wife who is caught up in a police investigation. Her husband, the Governor of New York state, was found dead after either falling or being pushed off the roof of their home.

Jane's story is intricately woven in and out of the investigation, which seems to be centred on her as a murder suspect due to her having authored a book in which the protagonist murders her husband by pushing him off a roof.

The quiet domesticity of the Ronson's family life is shattered chapter by chapter as we learn about Jane's troubling past.

The novel elegantly depicts Jane's life from birth detailing a strained relationship with her mother, a tragic rape that pummels her into a drawn-out depression, and a controversial writing career.

The beauty of this story is how well Van Tonder is able to depict the psychological state of her protagonist. Jane's decisions and actions as an adult can be echoed downward throughout her life and childhood.

As a child, she was a bystander to her parent's abusive marriage. As an adult, Jane endures a physically and emotionally abusive relationship which mimics that of her parents.

The story explores relevant social issues such as rape, domestic violence and patterns of societal violence, as well as crime. It also offers a critical view of US politics, political hypocrisy, and the impact this has on individual lives.

The novel, which is written from a heavily feminist perspective speaks to all of the ways in which misogynistic violence creates a culture of self-hate, and how it normalises violence towards women.

It also explores how domestic violence impacts the psychological wellbeing of children and how it influences the break down of family values.

Van Tonder's excellent writing is deliciously irresistible, poetic and descriptive. She expertly manoeuvres between revealing too much or too little which keeps the mystery of the novel vibrantly alive.

This is a definite read for the new year!



In Book Reviews

An Image in a Mirror: A literary plea for society to self-reflect

Written by **Thembi Mazibuko**

An Image in a Mirror, which was shortlisted for the UJ Debut Prize for South African Writing in English for 2019, is a classic story of the twins separated at birth with the hope that one would lead a better life in a different place.

We're introduced to Nyakale, who is taken by her aunt and raised in South Africa while her twin sister Achen remains in one of the villages in Uganda. It is an eventful journey of how their mother's decision impacts how they grow up, their experiences inform the decisions they make. What is clear throughout the book is the yearning that a mother and daughters have for each other as well as the strength of the twins' bond traversing distance.



Ijangolet Ogwang is quite metaphoric in her writing which initially serves to paint clear imagery but loses its powerful effect as the story progresses due to overuse. She also uses symbolism minimally but effectively with rain being a recurring symbol of transition in the book. Her scene-setting is vivid but concise.

I was transported from the leafy suburbs of Johannesburg to the bustling city of Kampala seamlessly and I could feel the atmosphere, aromas and the character of the cities. There are elements of poeticism to how she writes which is more prevalent in Achen's point of view. Based on the melting pot of different themes she touched on in the book, it leads me to believe that Ijangolet is an activist at heart.

The book deals with many societal issues such as xenophobia, colourism, women's rights, single parenting, mental health, gender-based violence, Rhodes must fall movement, mobility and migration in search for safety or greener pastures, impact of war-torn countries on families, child soldiers, society expectations, marriage and what it represents, loss and identity.

There are numerous juxtapositions such as the wealth gap between the emerging middle class and the poor in South Africa despite the democracy and 'freedom' that has been attained. She highlights the residual impact of apartheid on our daily lives and the way it mirrors our reality in different ways. She also cements this by highlighting the irony of Uganda gaining

independence from British rule, but still being dependent on them for aid through NGO's that don't see the people but focus on the poverty in their efforts.

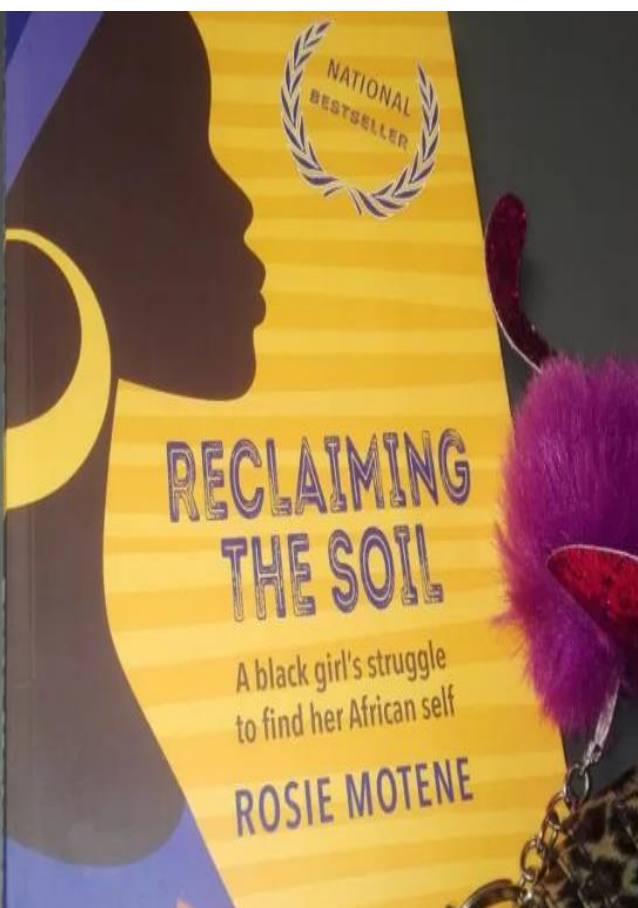
She touches on the presumptuous nature of first world country representatives coming to Uganda and deciding which socioeconomic concerns are more important without consulting the locals about what they need. Her environmental awareness shines through as she describes the reliance that rural villages have on subsistence farming and the impact of global warming on traditional methods of sustenance. How drought can and continues to have far-reaching consequences in communities resulting in hunger and exacerbating poverty even further.

What shines through is the spirit of Ubuntu within the village through these times of adversity. I loved the fact that African words were not italicised, which depicts that these languages are indigenous to our continent and not something foreign that needs to be written differently.

As a result, italics were used skillfully to set apart what was necessary through the letter that Nyakale reads from her mom and the last chapter which serves as the climax of the story. I think character development could've been more well-rounded. There are some decisions that both Nyakale and Achen make that are inconsistent with how the characters have been presented to the reader. The number of themes in the book might have contributed to there not being enough scope to build the characters more.

It made me do some self-introspection in terms of my impact within the community I operate in.

In Book Reviews



Reclaiming The Soil demands for the searching of one's cultural roots

Written by **Regomoditswe Mputle**

The moment I picked up the book, I simply rolled my eyes and said this is just another coconut trying to justify her privileges, little did I know that I would simply go on an emotional roller coaster ride that has been Rosie Motene's life.

Reclaiming the Soil by Rosie Motene gives the reader an in-depth look into the life of a black child who is simply struggled with identity but who refused to acknowledge her melanin skin and culture.

As much as her adoptive family loved and cared for her as they did with their own children, there were times that the Rosie would simply see that she is not one of them hence she spent most of her adult life trying to conform or fit into what "they" especially the "mother figure" thought was right for her.

“ALL MY LIFE I have lived under a one way glass bell that you designed for me. You could see me but I was only allowed to see out when it suited you. When you needed some entertainment you shook the bell, shone a bright light through a small-orchestrated hole, which had the ability to be closed at any point.” Read an extract from The Glass Bell chapter.

The book somehow makes one belief in the power of family and how true a mother's unconditional love is. One of the best thing about this book is that it teaches the reader that regardless of where your path/destiny may lead you to, your roots and culture will always haunt in the back of your mind.

As much as this is a great story, there is a lot of redundancy and some chapters look as if the scribe had lost her train of thought. While I understand that this is a self-published book and it is a debut book for Rosie.

However, a few of the grammatical errors in this book does carry the potential to set a reader off from further reading this interesting storyline.

Reclaiming the soil is certainly an interesting book and would make a good present for Christmas reading list.

In Book Reviews

Letters Home is a bridge into a time of elegant language, forbidden love, and haunting politics.

Written by **Haafizah Bhamjee**

Issuing us his memories, first through a series of letters and later by essay; Jolyon Nuttall reintroduces his readers to the art of patient reading.

Not quite postmodern in nature, Nuttall's disjointed narrative forces the reader to dig for meaning beneath the covers.

To find, within the turmoil, a sense of belonging. His story is cosy and familiar, dangerously beautiful and eloquently writ.

The form of the book is disjointed and careless. There is something charming about the personal touches.

The letters are very carefully selected. In this way, Nuttall is able to provide us with a distinct vintage love and classic style.

His writing also takes on a uniquely South African perspective as he battles casual racism from his parent's disapproval of his relationship to the fear that bringing an Asian girl home to Durban could land him in jail.

Nuttall also describes times where he witnessed racism or was a victim of not conforming to the racist standards set by the



apartheid regime. For example, he details a scene when giving a lift home to Chief Luthuli, he finds himself handed a court summons for being in a “non-white” area without approval.

His experiences as a white journalist making his way through these restrictions is illuminating and heartbreaking. In the first part, young Nuttall, re-explores his own memories as a hopeful and bright journalist in New York, juxtaposed with his dismal view of South Africa as a “young, white liberal,” and the complex desire to return home despite it all.

He does all of this through a collection of brilliant letters.

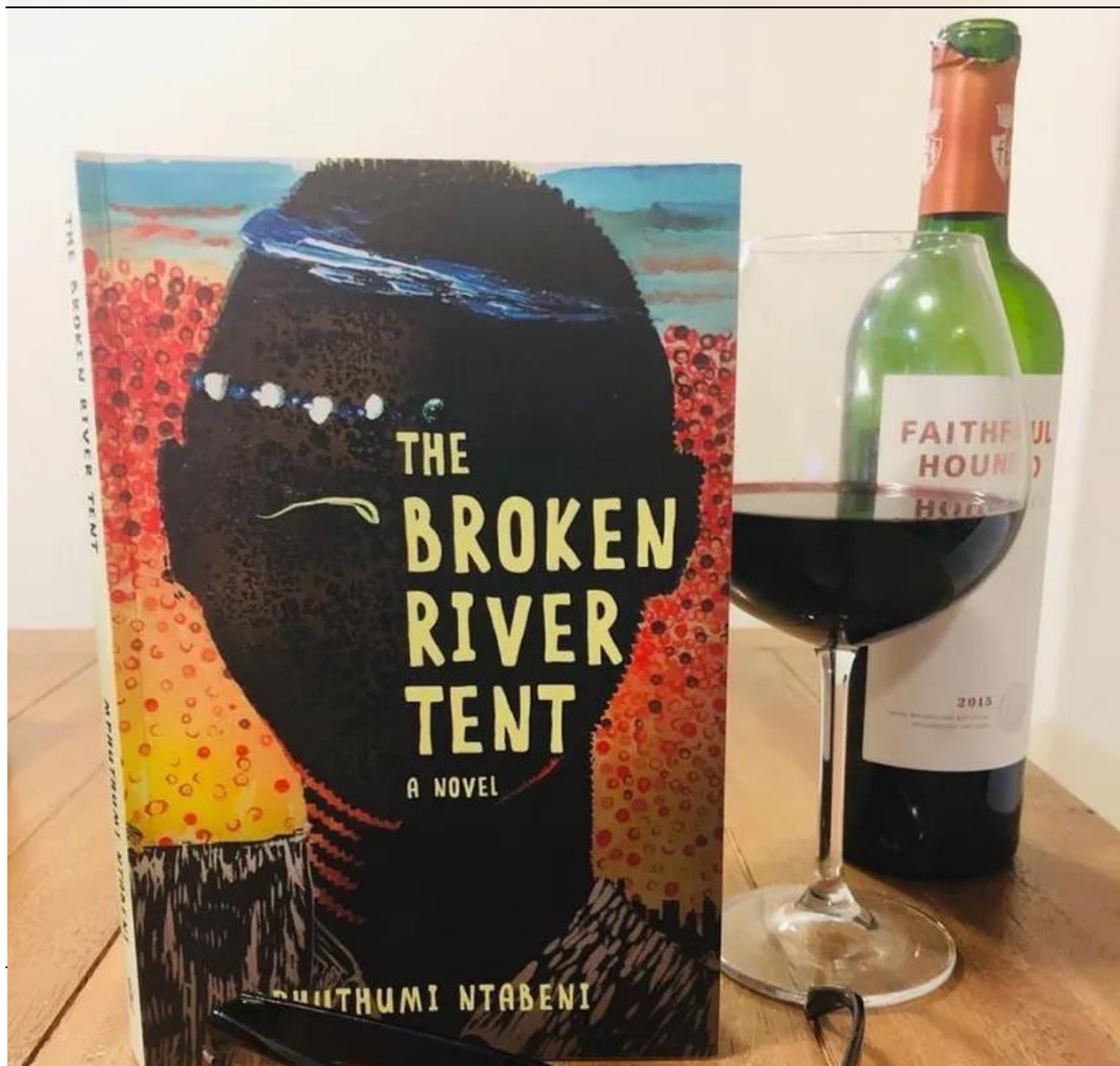
The essay focuses on his return from New York, the heart-wrenching break he has with his Japanese lover Misa and the finding of new love in Pietermaritzburg. He also details his shift from a young, aspiring journalist into the world of newspaper management.

Nuttall is a playful and colourful writer who, at one stage, ends off a letter to his parents with “For my birthday, please send me a canister of air from the Drakensburg.”

In another letter, he describes his encounter with the pet cat of his boss, claiming that, “It is a matter of class consciousness, of course,” that they could not trust each other.

His story is cosy yet vibrant, perfect for any reader who is willing to get lost in a mesmerising world of forbidden politics and hasty friendships.

In Book Reviews



The Broken River Tent ignites a fire to discover African roots

Written by **Thembi Mazibuko**

Mphuthumi Ntabeni's *The Broken River Tent*, which has won the University of Johannesburg Debut Novel Prize 2019, is a metaphoric and graphic representation of how colonisation has eroded the magic and spiritualism of the Xhosa nation.

The River is a strong symbol throughout the book which was considered a very powerful natural element. This translates to the Xhosa nation being referred to as the 'River People'. Ntabeni highlights how the river tent was broken through various descriptions.

The story introduces us to Phila, the protagonist, who is a qualified architect from Port Elizabeth. Phila's aspirations of being a successful architect are dashed by the corruption that exists in the government and he thus decides to do research and write on the history of his people, the Xhosa nation. When he receives news from his sister that their father has passed on, it serves as a catalyst for a journey to self-discovery.

Readers are then introduced to Maqoma (1798- 1873), who was a Xhosa warrior and chief. He is considered to be one of the greatest Xhosa military commanders and played a major part in the Xhosa Frontier Wars. When he appears to Phila he initially thinks Maqoma is an apparition that only he can see, hear and talk to which he attributes to an analeptic memory.

However, as the story progresses one can detect supernatural elements to Phila's ability to see and interact with the warrior. This begins a series of stories regarding the history of the Xhosa nation and how the nation is impacted by the arrival of the British.

The story is a challenging read and should not be rushed as the volume of information contained therein needs to be digested and assimilated slowly because of the significance of the story that is being told. There are also numerous European and philosophical references which readers might find difficult to understand at face-value without researching how they fit into the story.

Ntabeni's writing has the potential to break the continuity in reading and pacing the story. The text is verbose in some instances which requires consultation of the dictionary. What Ntabeni manages to do beautifully is to tell a vivid and graphic tale of how the Xhosa nation fought and resisted against white domination.

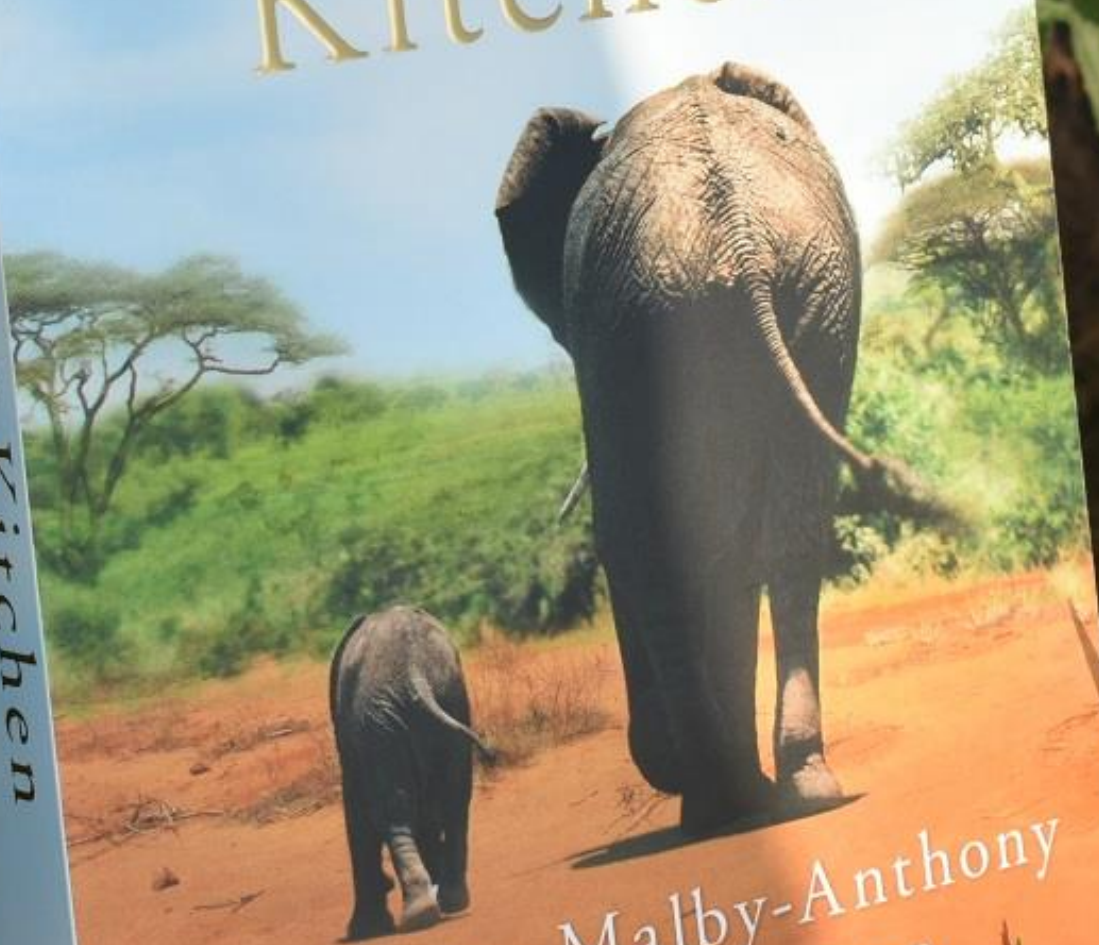
He also highlighted the under-handed tactics that the British employed to gain the upper hand. The scribe details graphically the Waterkloof battle, Hintsa's death, the great Xhosa famine and Maqoma's incarceration at Robben Island. His clever use of different characters i.e. Maqoma, Phila and Zwelinzima to narrate the story breaks the monotony of a single narrator and also adds depth to the storytelling.

This novel is complex, multi-dimensional and touches on prevalent South Africa's issues such as land and religion. Ntabeni also highlighted how Christianity began to divide the nation. His writing is poetic and philosophical with infusions of humour. The book causes one to reflect on the cyclical nature of life and how history seems to repeat itself over centuries.

A worthwhile and necessary read for all generations.

'The most magical book about
the African bush since *Born Free*'
DAILY MAIL

An Elephant in my Kitchen



An Elephant in my Kitchen
Françoise Malby-Anthony with Katja Willemsen

Françoise Malby-Anthony
with Katja Willemsen



In Book Reviews

An Elephant in my Kitchen is Captivatingly Adventurous

Written by **Haafizah Bhamjee**

Francoise Malby-Anthony's memoir *An Elephant in my Kitchen* is bewitchingly captivating.

Her writing style is entrancing and whimsical, humorous and heart-wrenching.

With this, Malby-Anthony takes on the issue of poaching in a deeply personal way.

She narrates her story, beginning in the 1980s when she met her late husband Lawrence and later moved from her native Paris to KwaZulu Natal to be with him.

In a touching scene, readers are given a glimpse into her first encounter with wildlife, you can't help but gasp and chuckle as she describes how the sight of giraffe and rhino both scared and amused her.

The couple went on to purchase a game-farm and transform it into a conservation sanctuary called *Thula Thula*.

Located in rural KZN, bordering tribal land, *Thula Thula* now forms a part of the community; stimulating the rural economy by creating jobs, and housing orphaned wildlife.

The story focuses on Thula Thula's rescued elephants, amongst other rescues including rhino.

Through the mesmerising rise and fall of her story and challenges with poaching, Malby-Anthony is able to foreground the need to protect South Africa's wildlife.

This is done through her exhilarating encounters with elephants such as Nanna, the matriarch of *Thula Thula*'s herd, and Thabo the rhino brought to them as a naughty toddler,

but also through her restless need to protect the sanctuary she created with her husband after he passes on.

The story describes the intense and emotionally rewarding experience of being a conservationist.

It details the trials and tribulations of these selfless individuals who go out of their way to protect our wildlife, with little to no help and often without recognition for their service.

In the context of rising ecological concerns internationally this narrative is important.

Detaching from the high language sometimes used in discussions of environmental justice, *An Elephant In My Kitchen* fantastically fills the void for the average person, unpacking these often dense issues at a very basic level and in language that is understandable and clear. *An Elephant in my Kitchen* is universal in as much as it sets an unfamiliar scene for its audience.

The experiences of the animals and people who call *Thula Thula* home are emotionally captivating, and the impact of environmental degradation is persistently palpable.

Malby-Anthony introduces us to a world in which danger is a constant present and the majestic will of the natural world forms the scene of a battle for life and for love.



In Book Reviews

HomeGoing depicts the triumph of a human spirit in the face of adversities

Written by **Thembi Mazibuko**

“Fante and Asante, fellow Akans. Two peoples, two branches split from the same tree.”

Yaa Gyasi weaves an emotive tale originating from the matriarch Maame where the family splits into two: Effia and Esi. The rest of the book uncovers how the slave trade in Ghana impacts seven generations from these half-sisters spanning over several hundred years through marriages and unions.

The overarching theme and unifying thread throughout the fourteen chapters is the slave trade and slavery but even more powerful is its impact on the Fante and Asante people.

“He had always said that the joining of a man and a woman was also the joining of two families. Ancestors, whole histories, came with the act, but so did sins and curses. The children were the embodiment of that unity, and they bore the brunt of it all.”

Each chapter puts a magnifying glass on the lineage of Effia and Esi and how the generations fare throughout the centuries. The importance of roots, culture, names and identity is echoed throughout with an infusion of the supernatural, African beliefs vs Christianity and the missionaries.

Yaa Gyasi uses many contrasts throughout the book to highlight important aspects of society’s social challenges that black Africans continue to face today: Africans turning on each other, Black Lives Matter, importance of marriage and the security it signifies, religion and its connotations, but most importantly, the degradation of our African culture as a result of colonisation.

Her use of symbolism is powerful and consistent throughout the book with the most notable being the elements of Fire and Water. “He knew then that the memory of the fire that burned, then fled, would haunt him, his children, and his children’s children for as long as the line continued.” The fire is symbolic of the pain that the lineage went through due to their participation in the slave trade and it is a recurring theme throughout.

“I came to these waters and I could feel the spirit of my ancestors calling out to me



from the sand, but some others were trapped deep, deep, deep in the water so that I had to wade out to hear their voices.”

Marcus, who is the last person in Esi’s lineage also grows up afraid of the water as his ancestors were shipped from Cape Castle to America on the slave trade.

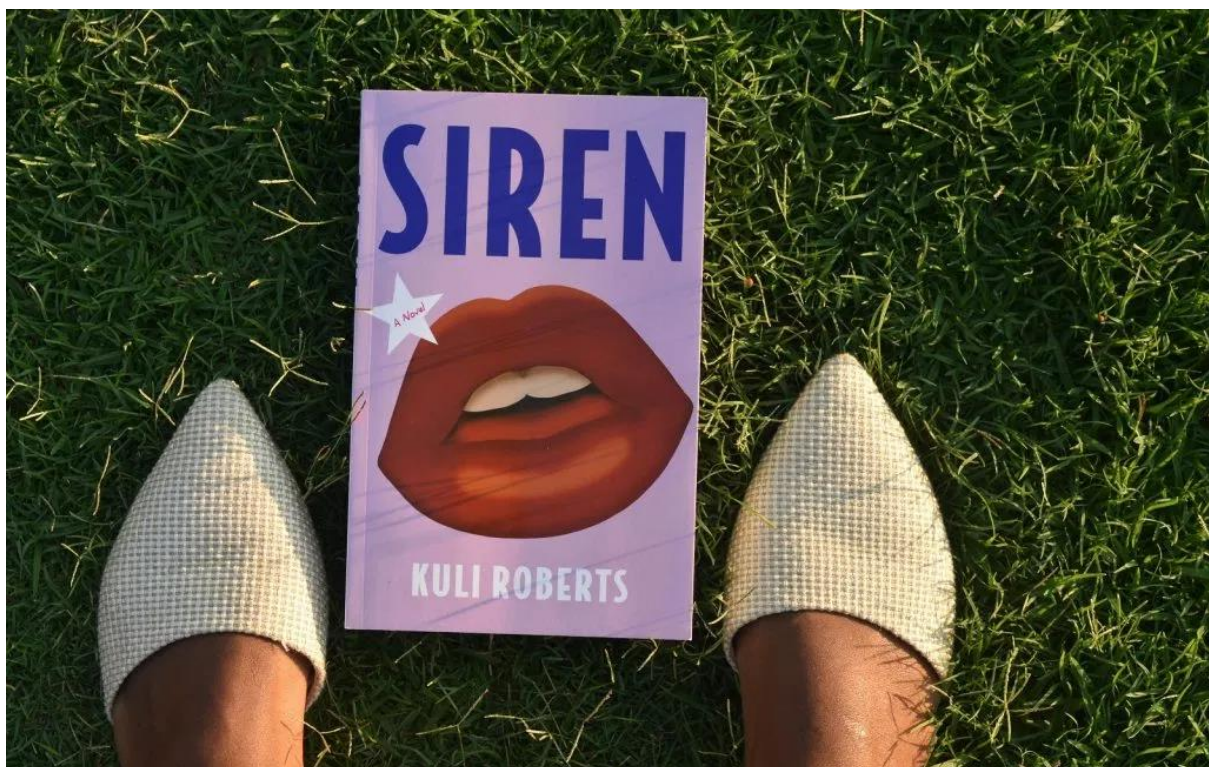
The healing comes in the very last chapter where Fire and Water meet with a powerful “Welcome home.”

This is a powerful book depicting the triumph of the human spirit despite the adversities of life. The story is one of resilience, love, family and the far-reaching consequence of decisions and choices made today on those that come after us.

The book left a lingering question in my mind: 400 years of slavery later, are Africans truly free?

In Book Reviews

Siren mirrors the evil and good of South Africa’s entertainment industry



After reading this book, I found myself with so many superlatives to describe what I had just read.

Scandalous, saucy and page-turner were the best three to describe Kuli Robert’s debut novel simply titled *Siren*.

In *Siren*, Kuli, a veteran entertainment journalist with a career spanning over two decades, brings to light the good and evil of South Africa's entertainment industry.

Through a powerful leading character Zinhle 'Siren' Sedibe, Kuli narrates a story of a young black lady, who goes through all the ups and downs that many young aspirant actresses normally go through in the industry.

Sexual favours from big television producers/directors, exploitation from casting agents, and manipulation are all part of the game. However, while fully aware of all that, Siren is determined to make a better life for herself and that means doing whatever it takes.

While not wanting to give away too much, this is the kind of novel that will inspire, motivate and educate readers, as Siren goes from zero to hero. Kuli's storyline is one that will resonate well with many who are in the entertainment industry and will serve as a lesson for those looking to venture into the industry.

Unfortunately, Siren had to learn throughout her journey.

Perusing through the pages, one cannot help but appreciate Kuli's descriptive style of writing, especially when she details every sexual scene Siren shares with the legions of men she beds.

This is the kind of writing that will easily grab the reader's attention from chapter one, as I was a victim.

Kuli cleverly divided the chapters in an autobiographical style of writing.

The chapters also build onto each other and are short, which helps in capturing the reader's attention throughout.

This is the type of novel which forever keeps the reader's suspense in check because in every chapter there's an explosive revelation in Siren's colourful life journey.

The only disappoint I picked up was Kuli's failure to go in-depth about Siren's relationship with her albino daughter.

After she found out that her daughter had oculocutaneous albinism, Siren did not know how to react or even accept Thando.

As an activist against the killing of albinos, Kuli should've at least dedicated a chapter to educate young mothers who go through the same predicament.

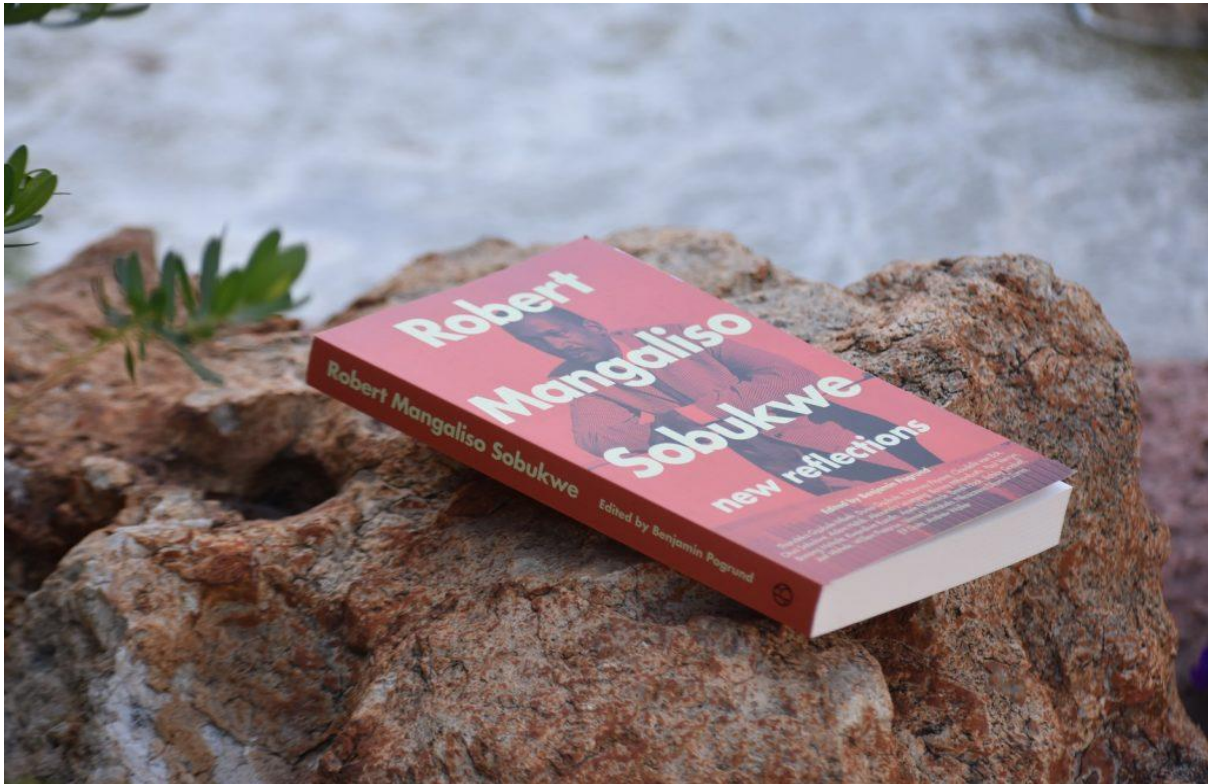
Overall this is a must-read and I hope one day this book can be turned into a movie or even drama series.

Given Kuli's many years in the entertainment industry, your guess is good as mine about who Siren might be in real life, but sure sound like someone the author might have met in her long career in the industry.

In Book Reviews

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe: New Reflections is a Political Firecracker

Written by **Haafizah Bhamjee**



Benjamin Pogrund's *Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe: New Reflections* is a medley of refreshing contemplations. This must-read book features chapters by Kwandiwe Knodlo, Bobby Godsell and Ishmael Mkhabela, among others. The opening chapter by Pogrund himself is perhaps the most profound in reflecting on the life and work of Robert Sobukwe.

Pogrund incorporates a deep respect for Sobukwe's humility, an appreciation for his enthusiasm with African centred politics and the sobriety of his leadership.

The various authors touch on a number of pertinent issues amongst which you will find Paul Verryn's thoughts on xenophobia's destructive anti-African message, Claudelle von Eck's experiences with internalised racism & gender, and Willem Pretorius' careful contemplation of land reform.

Andrew Walker paints a touching image of his journey towards appreciating the political endurance of Sobukwe. Thandeka Gqubule-Mbeki and Duma Gqubule reinvent borrowed memories of Sobukwe's childhood and his life outside of politics. Through these and other chapters we find out more about this man that has become the struggle's best-kept secret.

Sobukwe was a diligent student who showed leadership qualities even during his early years in a township adjacent Graaf-Reinet. A brilliant scholar of literature and history who was not

afraid to make personal sacrifices for the greater good, his peers affectionately termed him 'Prof'.

Sobukwe has been described as a deeply religious man, a fantastic friend, a devout husband and father. What led to his arrest in 1960 was perhaps also a tenant of his selflessness and people-oriented leadership. During the Sharpeville demonstrations, Sobukwe vowed to stand on the frontlines together with the people he cared so deeply for.

Rather than using the masses as his political shield and spear, he wanted only to protect them from the fascist regime. It was his optimism and disciplined character that carried him through years spent in solitary confinement on Robben Island.

Perhaps the book could have done without Adam Habib and Alexandra Leisegang's rant on inert civility. I gravitated much more towards the excellent chapter by Ishmael Mkhabela, who enjoyed an acute understanding of Sobukwe's politics, and who demonstrates the necessity for People's Power in the face of oppression, touching on Sobukwe's ungovernability and lust for justice at any cost.

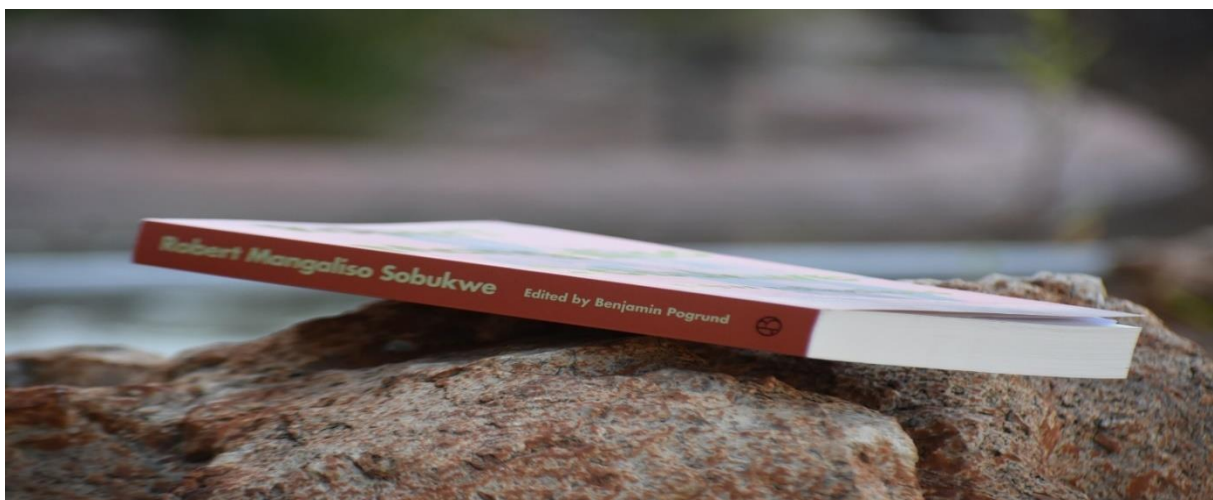
After all, Sobukwe was a fierce leader with a powerful presence. It was Sobukwe's PAC that led people into the streets while the ANC begged at the feet of the Crown. Sobukwe was a powerful voice for radical, Africanist politics.

Why else would the apartheid regime lock him away in solitary confinement for years, then release him into house arrest to live out the rest of his time completely disarmed by military watch?

Why else would the leadership of the ANC be so afraid to utter his name, lest their voice shakes at the recognition of his unapologetic criticism of them?

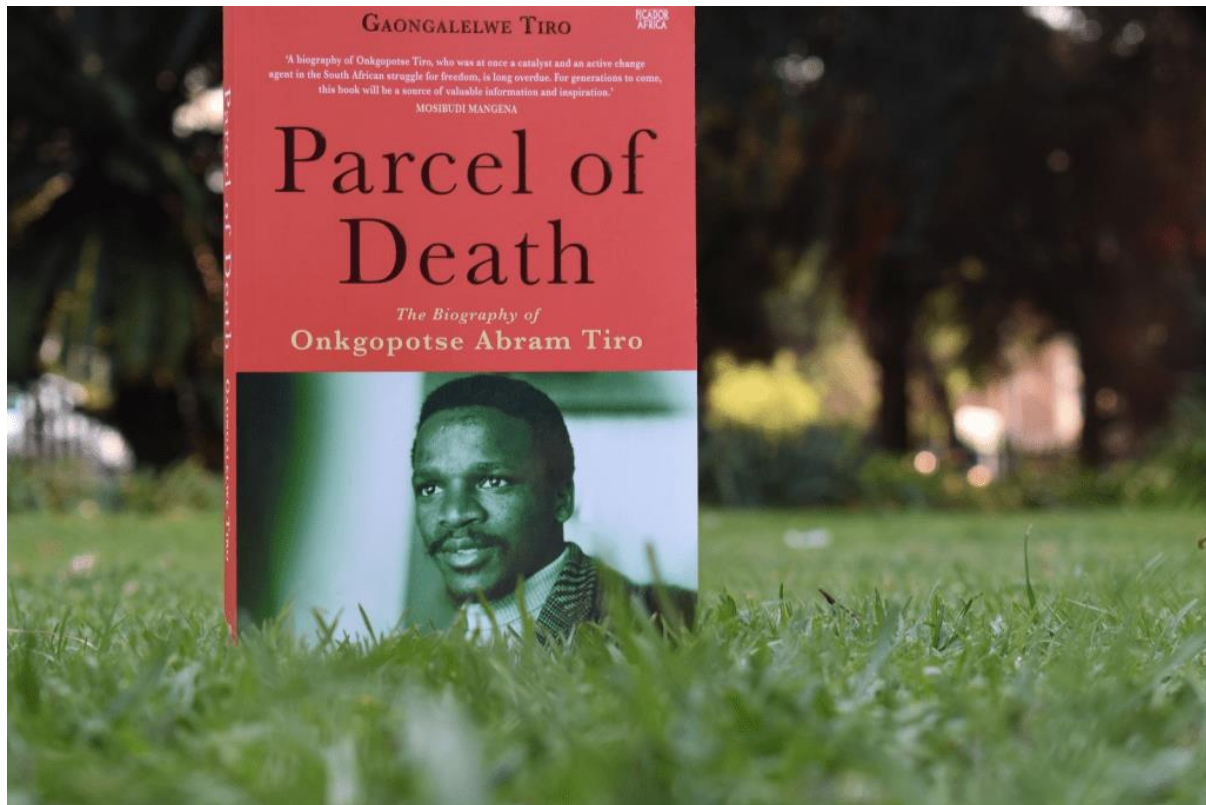
Today, our nation is littered with issues that Sobukwe both predicted and addressed nearly fifty years ago. The failures of the ANC and the rise of popular politics, such as that of the EFF, are amongst these issues.

Sobukwe's wisdom and courage are what is sorely needed in the building of our nation. Despite the assault by the African National Congress on the life and legacy of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, a new generation of leaders have both recognised and begun to honour this phenomenal individual. Despite there being not a single recording of what has been described as Sobukwe's charismatic speeches; his voice grows louder every day in our collective minds.



In Book Reviews

Parcel of Death honours a man who truly died for the black cause



In a month which South Africans not only celebrate their diverse cultural heritage but their identity as Africans, less has been done to celebrate those who championed and ingrained a black identity.

Proponents of the Black Consciousness movement such as Bantu Biko, Strini Moodley and Onkgopotse Tiro are only celebrated on their death dates by the democratic government.

The government is guilty of celebrating and honouring a selected few liberation fighters.

25 years into democracy, the school curriculum at basic education level in as far as history teaching is concerned is still eurocentric, with a few mentions of a post-democratic history era which tends to favour ANC leaders.

A quick google search about Qunu village in the Eastern Cape will tell you that it is the birthplace of the former President Nelson Mandela.

However, a similar exercise about Dinokana in Zeerust will result in a little mention about the place being the birthplace of the great Onkgopotse Abram Tiro.

It is no secret that Mandela has rightly been celebrated more by the new dispensation than any other liberation fighter.

However, in this well-researched biography titled *Parcel of Death*, Gaongalelwe Tiro has managed to package the life and legacy of Onkgopotse Abram Tiro in less than 250 pages. Perusing through the pages, readers will get to know Tiro's personal background.

His rich family history, his upbringing and the history of his birthplace Dinokana village.

More importantly, readers will get to appreciate the legacy of Tiro, his relentless fight against the old apartheid regime, his call for a free decolonised higher education and his work in the fight to promote black identity amongst the Black Africans.

This book reminds readers that Tiro was a man who was indeed ahead of his time, as some of the issues he addressed in that 'Turfloop Testimony' he delivered in 1972 are still very much prevalent in the higher institutions of learning across the country.

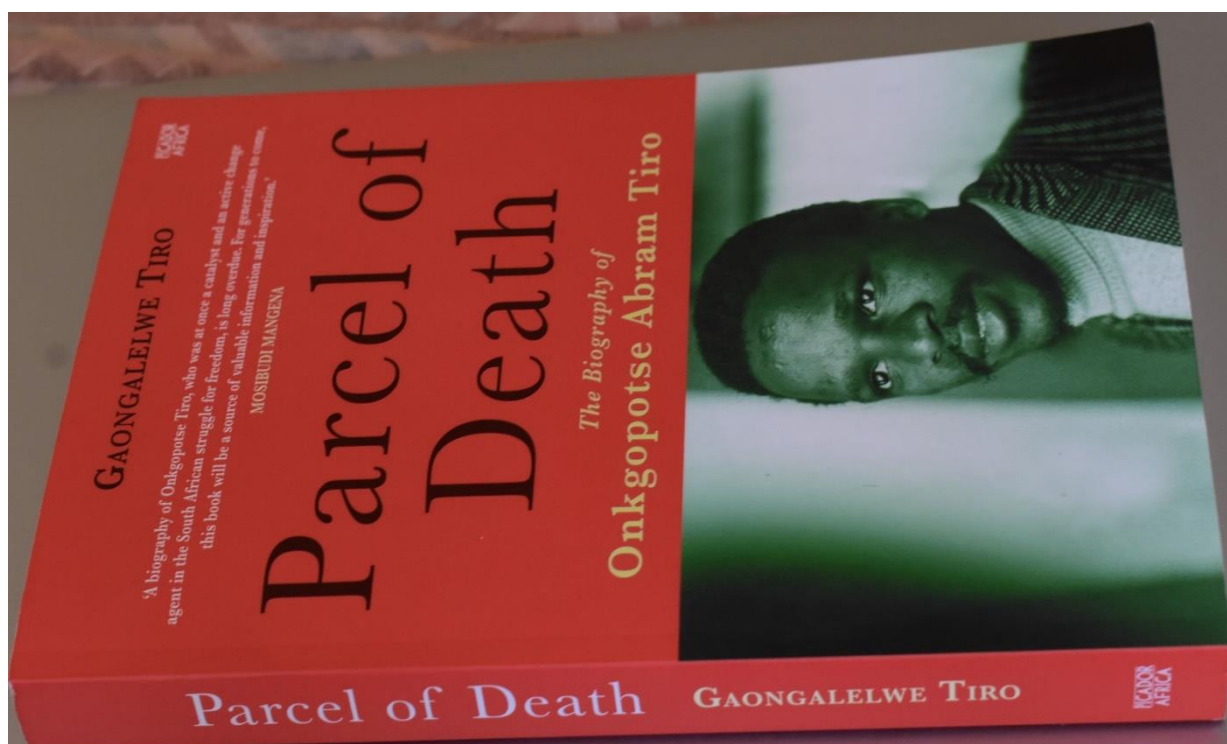
This is a book that will encourage and fuel energy to all young people who are refusing to co-exist with poverty, unequal education, landlessness and unemployment in the democratic dispensation.

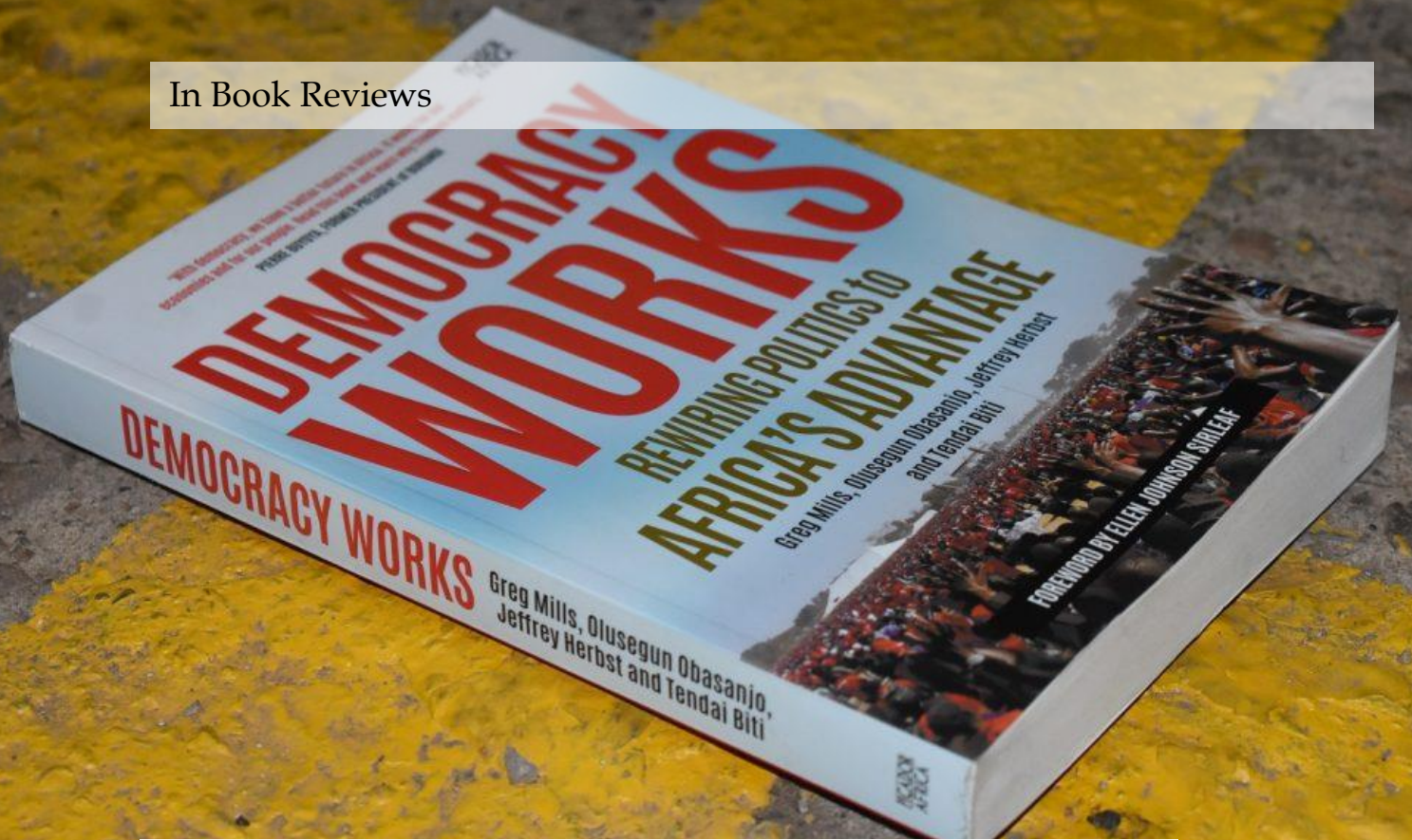
While the story is about Tiro's legacy, readers will also appreciate how the scribe not only celebrate Tiro, but also the role played by other unforgotten liberation and Black Consciousness luminaries such as Bokwe Mafuna, Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu and others.

The authenticity of the story been told in this book derives from the fact that the scribe interviewed those who worked closely with the man.

This is a must-read book and especially for the younger generation who continue to be denied the opportunity to learn more about other liberation heroes.

The Basic Education ministry should include this book as part of their prescribed books for history subject in all the public schools.





Democracy Works Delivers Only Hype and No Essence

Written by [Haafizah Bhamjee](#)

While reading *Democracy Works- Rewiring Politics to Africa's Advantage*, an academic research book co-authored by Greg Mills, Olusegun Obasanjo, Jeffrey Herbst and Tendai Biti; I had sensed that it hadn't been written for an ordinary person.

Despite what I'm sure were fantastic efforts by some of the authors, the book seems to shoot above the head of the average African.

It does very little to address crucial issues inside of struggling democracies, gives no glimpse into the democratic protests taking place in many African countries (as I had hoped it would) and gives no true insight into the historical imbalances of power that have helped to ferment authoritarianism.

Most of the research is concerned with economic growth rather than economic equality.

Arguing in favour of the Mauritius model, the book claims that the success of the country can be attributed to none other than, simply put; free markets and a lack of consequences for imperialist abuse and historical injustice.

The preservation of colonial icons through statues, the lack of government interference in cases of foreign theft of resources, the inability to redress historical inequality of wealth, and the favouritism of a one-industry monopoly; are all, according to *Democracy Works*, the reasons for the success of democracy in Mauritius.

At no point are readers told what is meant by democratic success. Especially given that despite Mauritius' stable GDP and booming tourism industry, the country harbours impoverished populations.

Despite the disappointing capitalist rant issued by the authors in the formative part of the book, I believed that it would be more progressive on social issues further on.

My hopes were dashed when I came to find that this was not the case, the writers only go on to bash Rwanda and Singapore for their autocratic ways, without stopping to ask themselves why the only options they see fit for Africans is a choice between weak democracies that lack a backbone and violent autocracies both of which pander to imperialists and the bourgeoisie.

When they finally get around to the topic of human rights, we are given a mere few pages that speak only about press freedom and functioning judiciaries. Nothing on women's rights. Nothing on the rights of the disabled, LGBTI, children, and elders. Nothing about accessibility to health care or education. Nothing about dealing with environmental damage or destruction of food sources, or exploitation of natural resources, or the prevalence of environmental catastrophe.

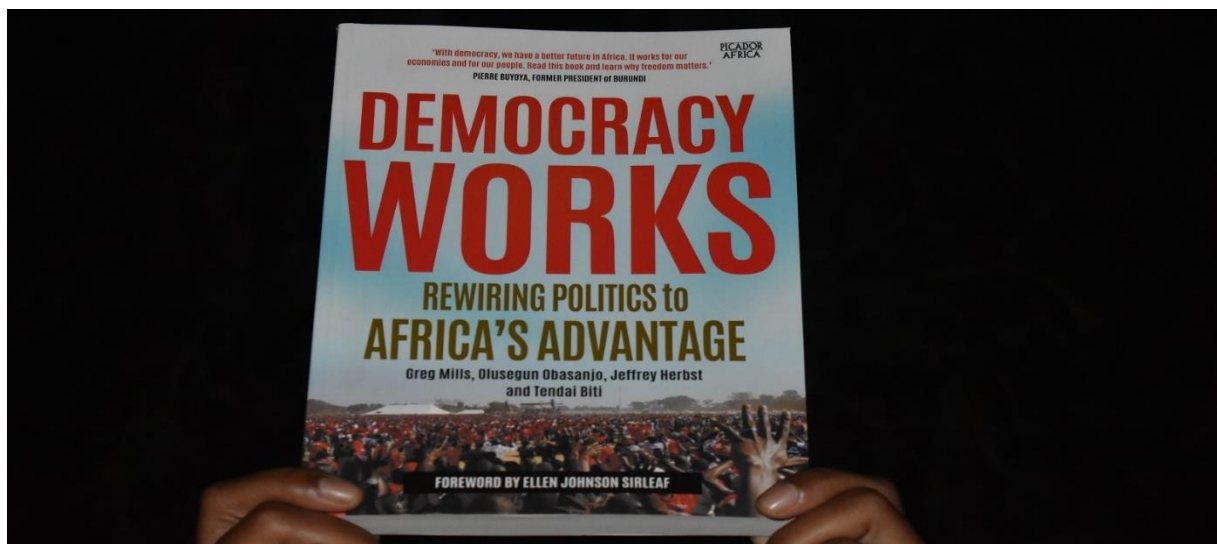
The lack of diversity in outlook could be blamed on the book's large arc. Did they really attempt to analyse every African country's state of political well-being in a single book? Did they know, going in, that Africa is in fact not one big country, but many different countries? That it has a myriad of histories, varying cultures & beliefs and so many social issues it could fill twenty thousand similar books?

How can a single book hold all these identities, crisis and conflicts?

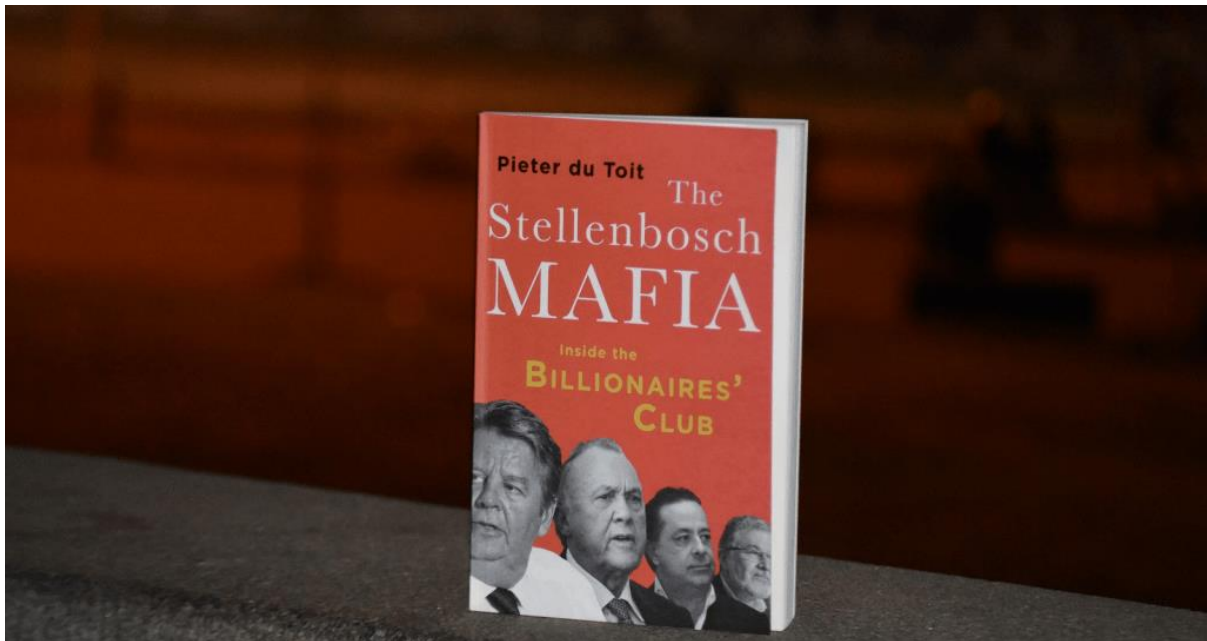
Democracy Works was not written for Africans to read, understand, relate to and use to build from. It does not give us an understanding of the benefits of democracy or the ways in which democracy can and should be used to build better and brighter futures. Instead, it was written for Europeans so that they might have another reason to blame Africans for our own poverty and suffering. It was written to evade the very real and scary conversations about colonialism.

Consider that there is not a single page that addresses the dilemma of the everyday African voter, but an entire chapter entitled "A Role for Outsiders?", within which it is discussed how pitiful it is that European leaders often struggle to "reward" African leaders, with money, for their democratic ways because this might be seen as bad.

Democracy Works is an illuminating and insightful book to read if you are wondering how not to write about Africa.



In Book Reviews



The Stellenbosch Mafia opens up a dialogue about white privilege

Post-apartheid South Africa continues to remain a tale of the two nations. The gap between rich and poor is further extended by the ever-increasing levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The most privileged and the economically marginalized find themselves in different geographical spaces in the country.

Those who are at the receiving end of poverty dwell in rural areas and townships, while those who play key roles at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange lay comfortably in exclusive suburban towns.

One such town, which is a physical address to many wealthiest men, is Stellenbosch town. Stellenbosch is home to multi-billion companies and the wealthiest businessmen in the country. The town is home to Remgro's boss Johann Rupert, Capitec bank founder Michiel Le Roux, and founder of Pepkor Christo Wiese among others.

The 'dorp' has historically dominated the political scene and played a formidable role in the apartheid era. But it is in the new democratic South Africa that its influence in society has come under a microscope.

The long-held questions about the power of its inhabitants' influence in the running of the state and in controlling the country's currency dominate public discourse whenever there is a political storm.

In *The Stellenbosch Mafia-Inside the Billionaires'club*, author Pieter Du Toit 'attempts' to investigate the veracity and the kind of influence this group of billionaires wields in the running of the state and the controlling of the rand.

Through various interviews with key figures of the so-called Stellenbosch Mafia, the author illustrates how powerful these Afrikaner men are.

Rupert, Le Roux, and PSG honcho Piet Mouton are the men holding all the cards.

However, perusing through the pages, a reader will be disappointed in how the author only focused on what these billionaires thought about the fall of Steinhoff and not their supposed influence on the running of the state.

The scribe has not investigated how these men continue to enjoy their white privilege.

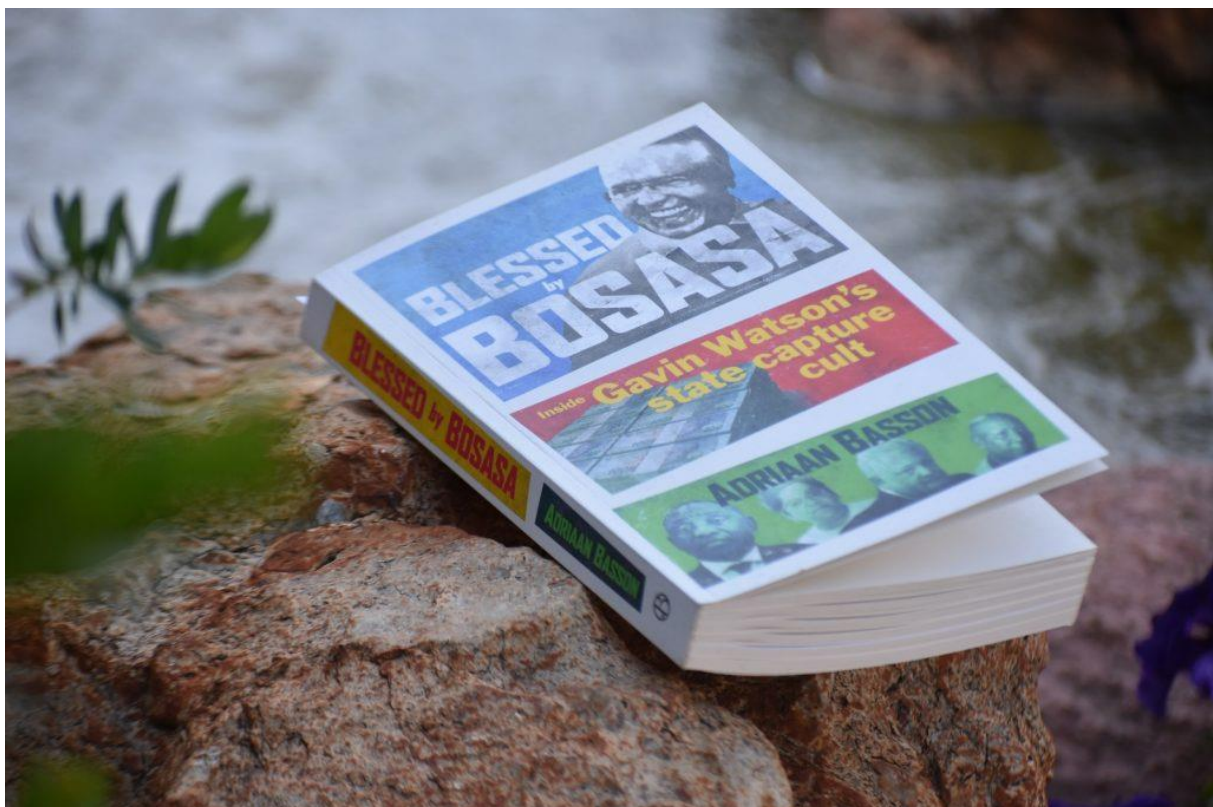
The back cover of the book misleads by detailing how the author investigates the 'excessive influence' of this town and its inhabitants. Readers will be disappointed, as a large part of the book focuses on the collapse of the graced retail holding company Steinhoff and how its former chief executive officer Markus Jooste tried to destroy the business culture in Stellenbosch.

Du Toit failed to delve deeper into the extent of white privilege among these elite Stellenbosch inhabitants post-apartheid.

By his own admission that some of the subjects in this book he knows 'personally' and some are his friends, those friendships lines are easily exposed.

Nonetheless, this book is important for a dialogue about how white privilege continues to create two countries in one.

In Book Reviews



Blessed by Bosasa is brave, insightful and well-researched

It can be said without a doubt that the Gupta and Watson families have brought to prominence the concept of state capture in the last 25 years of the country's negotiated democracy.

These two families have redefined the relationship between the state and business.

A relationship that is largely characterised by corruption, disrespect for the rule of law and patronage system.

The Watsons, particularly Gavin Watson, through his company Bosasa, managed to play a vital role in the capturing of state departments and also controlling and owning high profile ANC leaders in government.

President Cyril Ramaphosa is the latest victim to find himself entangled in the Watson/Bosasa link.

Ramaphosa has taken Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane's report on a review over the R50 000 cash from Bosasa which was donated to his 2017 ANC's presidential elections.

A lot of questions have since been asked about the Bosasa company, thanks also largely to Angelo Agrizzi's testimony at the Zondo Commission.

These questions include, who founded and owns Bosasa, how did the company become so heavily linked with ANC politicians, why it continued to do business with the state for years despite the mounting allegations of corruption and who are the directors of it?

In *Blessed by Bosasa- Inside Gavin Watson's state capture cult*, author Adriaan Basson vigorously provides all the answers to the above questions.

Basson takes the reader from how the company was originally founded, to how it was stolen by Gavin Watson, and most importantly how it captured the Department of Correctional Services to win tenders amounting to R12.2 billion over the years through different state Presidents.

At the centre of all this looting of state funds was a freedom fighter turned businessman Gavin Watson.

Basson in this book provides well-researched evidence of how Watson created a corruption web, where he used his proximity to ANC leaders to loot state coffers, capture state entities, used religion to cover his dirty tracks and avoided prosecution throughout his life.

This is a book that will make readers question the ANC's stance on corruption in the last decade or so.

Most importantly, a reader will question how on earth politicians and civil servants such as Linda Mti, Patrick Gillingham and former President Jacob Zuma are not yet in jail, despite evidence corruption against them.

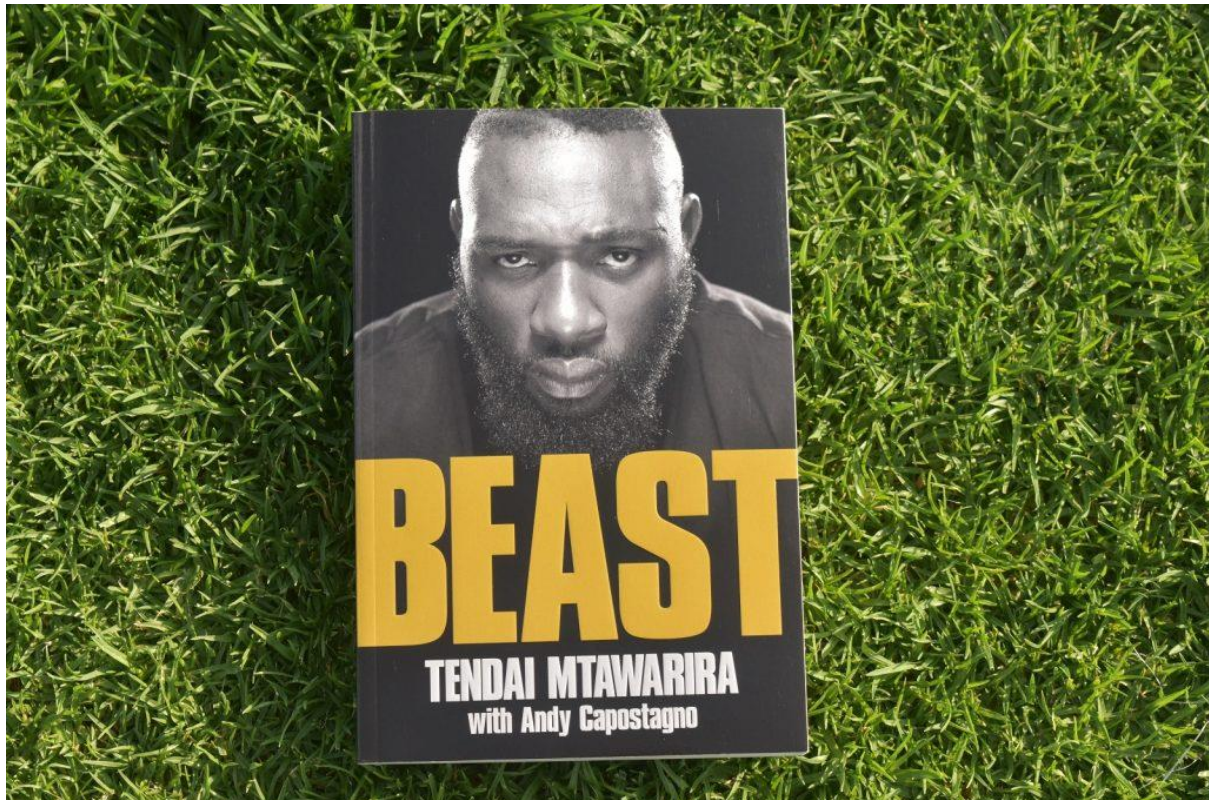
Nongcobo Jiba, Lawrence Mrwebi, former Minister Nomvula Mokonyane and the Watson family might decide to sue Basson in future, as he has spared no one in this book.

Some might question Basson's timing to release the book, after Watson's untimely passing in August, which means he will not be out to defend himself.

Blessed by Bosasa is brave, insightful, well-researched and very risky.

However, it is a must-read book, especially for patriotic South Africans who want to live their lives in under a corrupt-free society.

In Book Reviews



The absence of the Springboks' success in the book makes Beast's story incomplete

Tendai Mtawarira's autobiography simply titled *Beast* was originally scheduled to be released prior to the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

However, due to a leak about Mtawarira's take on former Springboks coach Peter De Villiers, the publisher, through the possible pressure applied by SA Rugby decided to withhold releasing the book to shift the attention away from Mtawarira in the World Cup.

The book was finally released days after *Beast*, as Mtawarira is affectionally known, returned back with the Ellis Webb trophy from Japan, after the Springboks' success in the world showpiece.

However, while the book was withheld, I thought the author Andy Capostagno was waiting for the outcome of the Boks performance in Japan so that he can add the Beast's biggest achievement in his professional career, that is winning the World Cup.

However, I was so disappointed and I am pretty sure legions of Beast's supporters will also share the same emotion about the absence of Beast's biggest moment in his career in this book.

The book was, without doubt, rushed into being released in order to cash in on the Springboks success euphoria.

I believe Capostagno should have taken time after the Springboks success and fully recapture Beast's success with the Springboks in the World Cup.

This book feels half-baked without Beast's success in the World Cup.

Winning a World Cup is a huge milestone and it redefines the success of any professional rugby player and without this part in this book, I feel this autobiography failed to capture the full story of a man who defied the odds to become the most successful rugby player from Zimbabwe.

However, perusing through the pages of this book, readers will get to know more about Tendai, the go-getter, son, brother and husband than Beast who is known to lift the big players on the field.

In a typical modern-era autobiography writing style, Capostagno allowed Beast to tell his story in his own words, while his task was to get comments from the people who shaped and were part of Beast's career.

Not giving away much, there are few controversial points Beast is raising in the book.

For example, his take on Jake White's tenure at the Sharks and also Peter De Villiers' management style during his time with the Springboks.

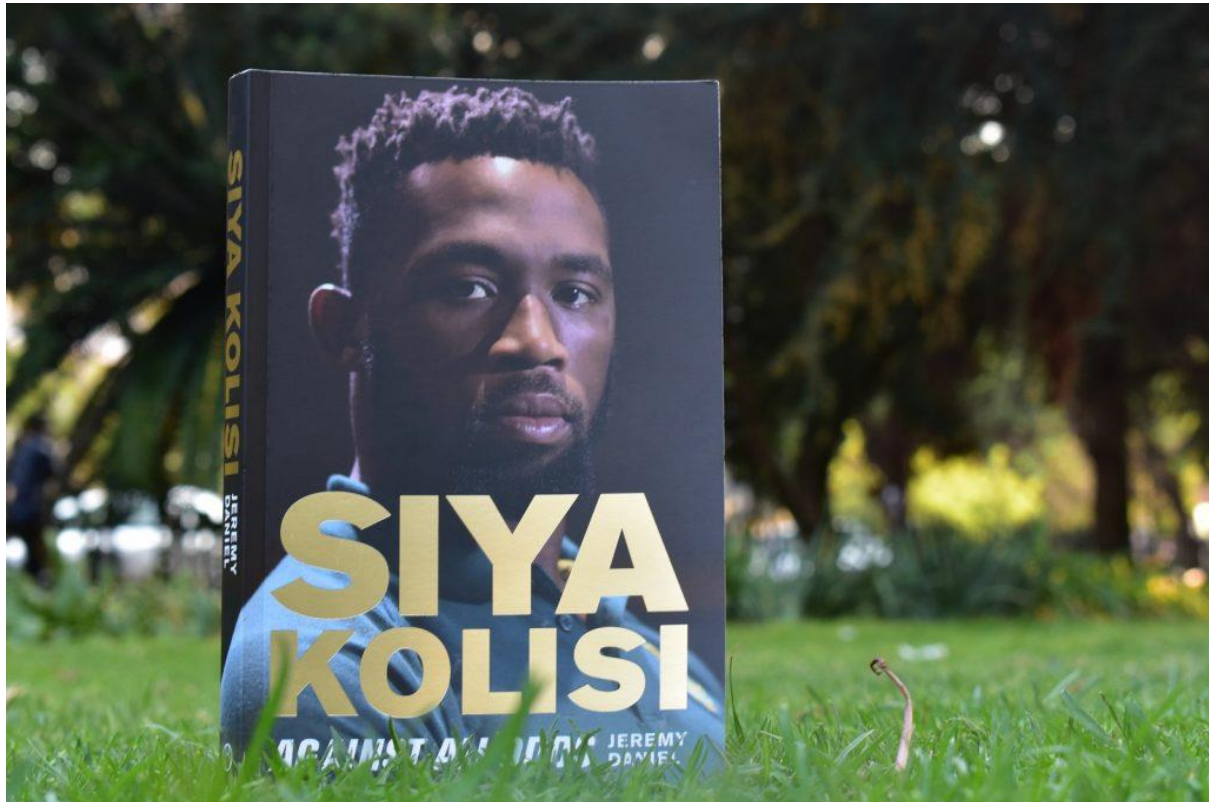
I believe this book will draw a different reception from many people.

For ordinary readers, Beast's story will provide some inspiration, motivation and encouragement, given his tough journey from Zimbabwe to becoming one of the most revered sports personality in the world.

However, to his former colleagues in the Springboks and at the Sharks, some might be angry with him, given that his 'dream team' only include one player from the team that recently won the World Cup.

Since Beast has retired from international rugby, I hope that he will one day fully write his successful professional story, especially his World Cup success with the Springboks.

In Book Reviews



Siya Kolisi's story is indeed an embodiment of the nation's potential

South Africans will be hoping that Siya Kolisi becomes the first black Springboks captain to lift the 2019 Rugby World Cup title.

Kolisi once again made history by becoming the first black player to lead the Springboks at a world showpiece in the opening match of the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan, when the Springboks battled it out with the world champions New Zealand.

With the Springboks hunting their third Ellis Webb trophy, Kolisi and his troops will be looking to end the dominance of the All Blacks and register their names in the rugby history books.

Kolisi's story is one that continues to unfold at each and every turn. By the time he calls it a day on the rugby field, he will have made his indelible mark on South African rugby. He has broken every record in as far as South African rugby history is concerned. A lot of stories will be written about this native of Zwile township by the time he ends his rugby career.

However, that project has already started with the latest autobiography written by Jeremy Daniel. In this short biography simply titled *Siya Kolisi- Against All Odds*, Daniel treks the story of Kolisi from where it all started and to where it is now.

Kolisi's story is well documented.

He grew up in a poor family in Zwile township with his grandmother and went to the prestigious Grey High. He eventually signed for Western Province Rugby, captaining the Stormers in the Super Rugby. The loose forward finally made history by becoming the first black Springbok captain in 2018 in the England series.

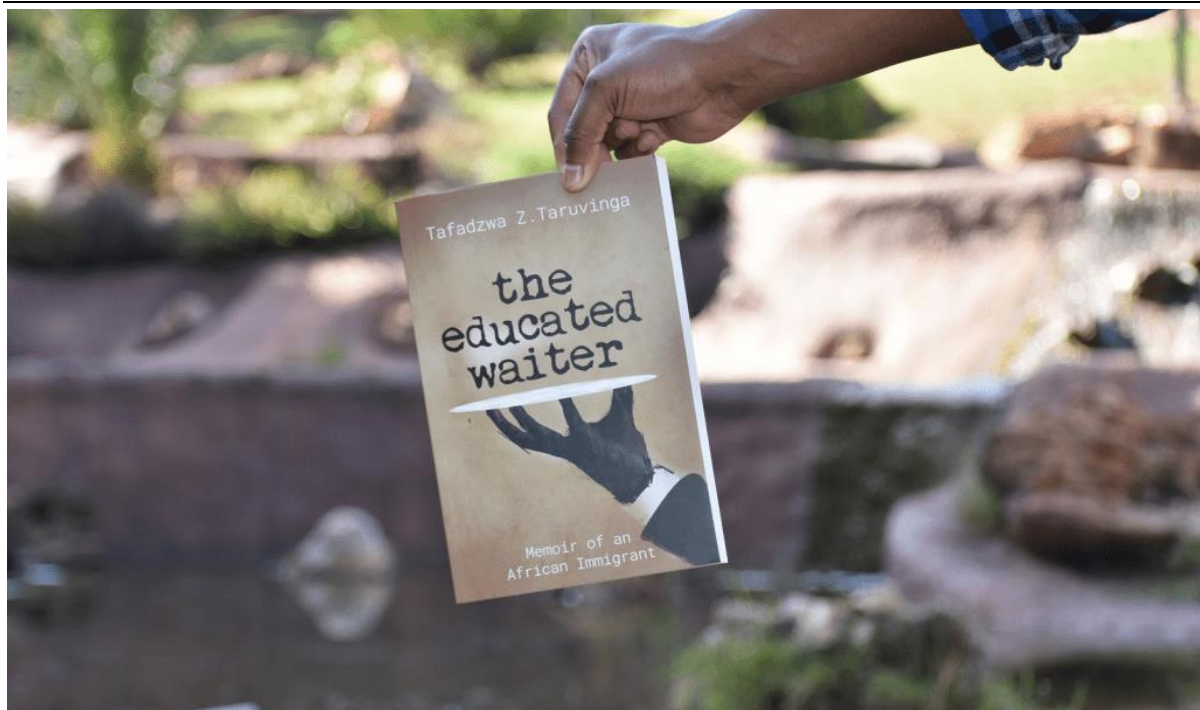
While Daniel provides more in-depth detail about that journey in this book, he, however, tells the story in a way that will make a reader see the odds which were heavily stacked against Kolisi in his career path.

Perusing through the pages of this book, the reader will be heavily inspired, motivated, encouraged, but most importantly appreciate how a God-given talent saved Kolisi. It took him out of obscure poverty to rubbing shoulders with the world's most celebrated athletes.

While Kolisi played no part in the writing of this book, the authenticity of the story being told derives from the fact that the scribe spoke to the people who were involved in the early days of Kolisi's life and career. This book celebrates Kolisi's career achievements thus far and Daniel will one day have to fight it off with other scribes to finally record Kolisi's full biographical history once he hangs his boots.

While the focus is on Kolisi's career trajectory, a more detailed chapter about Kolisi and his relationship with his father could have given the reader a clearer picture of what kind of a man is Siya Kolisi outside the playing field.

In Book Reviews



The Educated Waiter narrates a familiar story but told from a different perspective

South Africa is blessed with degree-holding waitresses, childminders, security guards and cleaners both from local and other African countries.

The lack of unemployment and a few economic opportunities has forced many university and college graduates to take whatever job that is on offer.

If you are an immigrant from other parts of the continent, it is even worse as one has to go through the government's red tape before one gets their desired job.

In *The Educated Waiter*, Zimbabwean author Tafadzwa Taruvinga tells his painful story of trying to make a better living for himself in South Africa, the land of 'milk and honey' for many African immigrants.

Despite holding an economics degree from a prestigious university, Taruvinga joins many of his African brothers and sisters who have to do odd jobs in order to survive poverty in what he calls 'SataAfrika'.

While this is just a familiar South African story, where graduates continue to do odd jobs not aligned to the qualifications and get to be exploited in the process, I found Taruvinga's story very unique and painful.

For example, despite him having international work experience from Germany and Dubai and lucky enough to get job opportunities aligned to his qualification, the South African government, through its snail pace of issuing work permits to foreign nationals, especially African immigrant, effectively crush his dream of getting a well-paying job.

This is a book that many black African immigrants will easily relate with, especially those from poor African countries.

The derogatory name-calling, the xenophobic attacks and the continued exploitation due to economic vulnerability, Taruvinga had to endure all of that.

However, reading through this book, one cannot help but see how Taruvinga, despite all the challenges he faced, cannot claim in this book to be speaking for many Zimbabweans or other migrants from other parts of the continent.

For example, throughout his struggles in finding a job, he stayed in the suburbs, has connected friends and families, who at times help him financially and even offer him jobs.

Many Zimbabweans and other African migrants are forced to settle in impoverished townships across the country and have fewer connections to even get an odd job.

So Taruvinga's experience is definitely different from an ordinary African migrant.

There are also some things which will leave readers asking for an explanation, like how the scribe forever keeps referring to the town that is currently known as Makhanda as 'little Grahamstown' and his friend Dawie, 'the Afrikaner', while others are just named without using their ethnic group.

However, this is a book that will inspire and motivate readers, who are facing the odds and looking to make it in life.

As in the traditional memoir writing style, the chapters in this book build onto each other and are short enough to keep the reader's attention in check.

Indeed, a must-read book for everyone, especially South African government officials especially those working at the Department of Home Affairs.

As this department is responsible for making many African immigrants end up being educated waiters, nannies and cleaners in South Africa.

In Book Reviews

Coconut reflects on how the dawn of democracy disrupted 'normality'

Written by **Regomoditswe Mputle**

The moment I started reading this book I was instantly transported back to my high school and primary school days, simply because Ofilwe and Tshepo story is one that has become quite popular with those who went to the so-called 'Model C' schools.

Especially the struggle that Ofilwe has to go through with regards to fitting into her new environment.

For example, white girls are amazed by her braids and ask her to plait their hair:

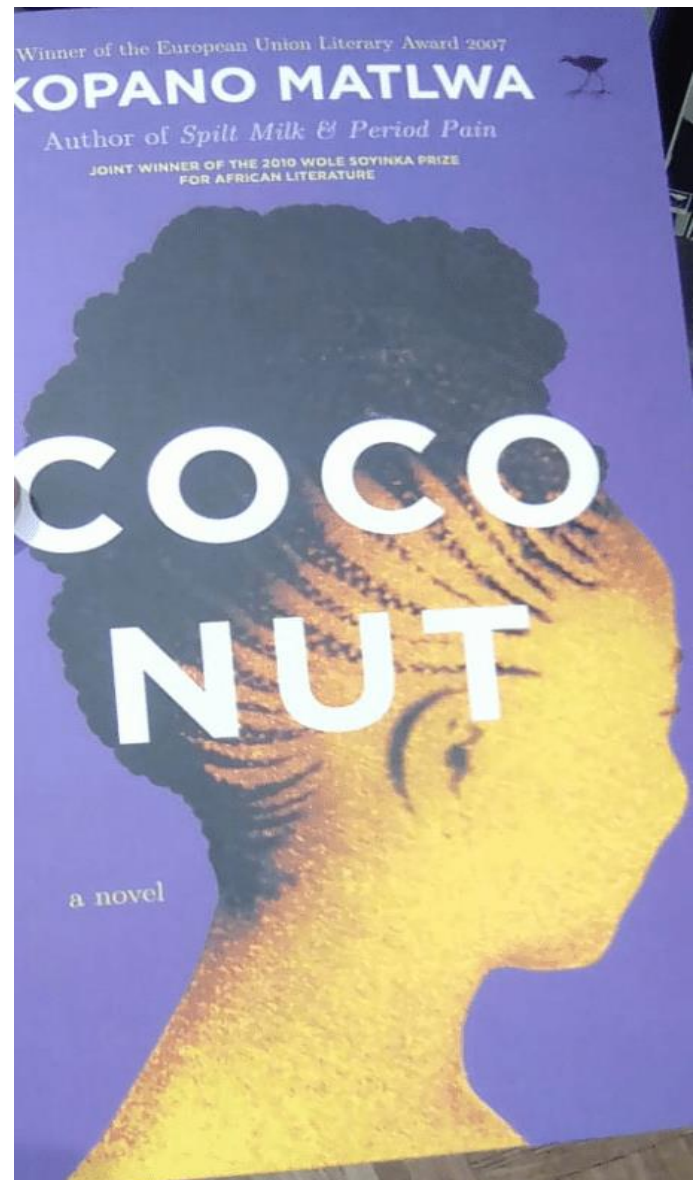
"Kate asked me one day during music, if I could plait her hair into thin plaits like the braids that adorned my head. She said my braids were pretty and that she wished she could have hair like mine so she could be as beautiful as I was."

The book also focuses on some of the challenges that these 'Model C' kids face, such as being insecure when in unfamiliar places or even trying to hide the fact that they are privileged.

"I reek of KTV, IEB, MTV and ICC, although I have tried to mask it behind All-Stars sneakers and a free Youth League election T-Shirt. I am certain that they will catch me out as soon as I open my mouth. They do not, or rather, if they do, it is of no significance, for they treat me like any other. I too stand above the deep buckets of fierce oil: plucking, washing, stuffing, basting, and turning one naked chicken after the other but not managing to sing 'Ndihamba nawe' simultaneously, like the rest of the staff promise."

What is also interesting about the book is how it addresses issues of unemployment and the lengths that some go through just to place a meal on the table.

The book is quirky but educational.



Author Kopano Matlwa has a way of tabling stereotypes and mannerisms that we are likely to see at family gatherings, for example, there is a part where Ofilwe promises to teach her cousins English and how she is perceived to be smart by her relatives just because of her good command of the Queen's language.

Even though the book looks at what 'coconuts' go through, Matlwa also highlights problems that married couples face and how patriarchy is still a problem in many societies.

This book is for everyone to enjoy and to reflect on how the dawn of democracy distorted what was previously believed to be the norm.

In Book Reviews



Khaya Dlanga reminds us that we all have our unique stories to share

For many black South Africans born before technology, in the villages, townships and pre-democracy, childhood experiences were unique though similar.

Herding cattles, sheeps, and goats, if your parents were fortunate enough to have owned any livestock or playing with a brick as an imaginary car was what many children did to keep themselves busy.

Every person has their own childhood experiences which always sound interesting to the next person.

In *These Things Really Do Happen To Me*, celebrated author and marketing guru Khaya Dlanga shares his intimate childhood experiences growing up in the Eastern Cape province. From his relationship with his grandfather, who worked him hard to make sure he was not 'soft', to his schooling days in the post-apartheid era where he had to personally deal with racial slurs from a fellow pupil.

He tells his story in a candid manner, which will make many readers appreciate his honesty and relate to his childhood experiences.

This is a book that reminds everyone that we all have stories to share, and about the people who play a role in shaping our stories or ‘co-stars’ as Dlanga calls them.

Dlanga admits that *‘one of the primary reasons I wrote this book is because I feel that we have been through a lot of serious years. My book is meant to be light-hearted, talking about everyday life.’*

With that, readers will laugh at some of the funny moments that he had to endure, like wrongfully introducing Paul Kagame as Nigeria’s President.

While he focuses largely on the lighter side of his upbringing and also his tough career trajectory, the scribe does not shy away from tackling South Africa’s tough socio-economic issues such as inequality at work, interracial relationships, and lobola practices.

Dlanga, who is a well-respected global marketing guru, delivered a book that will inspire a lot of young people, especially those still trying to make it to the top in rural and townships across the country.

A must-read book that will remind everyone about their childhood experiences and how to stay motivated throughout life’s tough challenges.

The chapters are very short and build onto each other nicely.

These Things Really Do Happen To Me is a hilarious, informative and inspiring book.



BREAKING A RAINBOW, BUILDING A NATION

The Politics behind #MustFall Movements

Rakgotsafetse Chikane



PICADOR
AFRICA

In Book Reviews

Breaking a Rainbow fiercely interrogates inequality in SA

Written by [Haafizah Bhamjee](#)

Rekgotsfetse Chikane's fiery account of the #MustFall student movements that rocked our nation between 2013 and 2016, is a must-read.

In his book, *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation*, Chikane expertly navigates the events as they occurred on the ground, something few journalists or writers were able to do at the time or since.

He foregrounds these movements as a necessary process and outcome of South African democracy, which he frames as littered with challenges.

The scribe goes on to address everything from racial inequality, class disparity and even patriarchy.

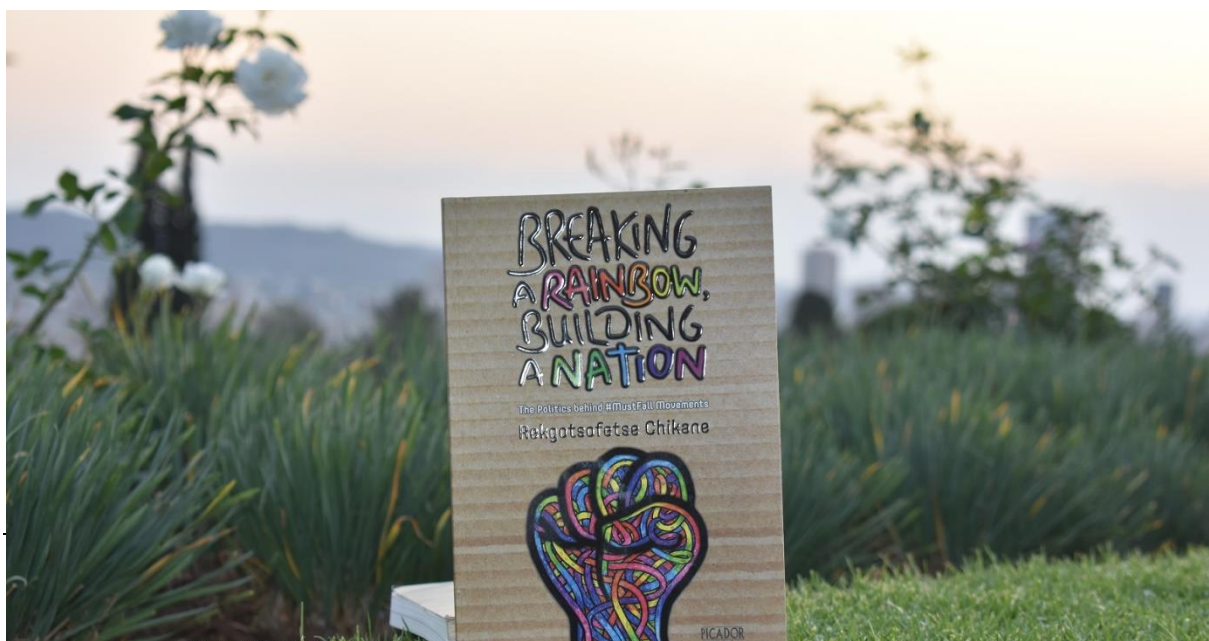
Chikane does not shy away from addressing the most important issues young, black South Africans are facing in what he calls "a post -1994 South Africa."

His descriptions of inequality between white and black South Africans, wealthy and impoverished South Africans and the rising black elite serves, to him, as a backdrop to the conversations around land, free education and the lingering legacy of colonial fetishism.

Here he considers the rainbow nation imagery that many young South Africans were forced to grow up with and allows his readers the opportunity to see the cracks in the narrative.

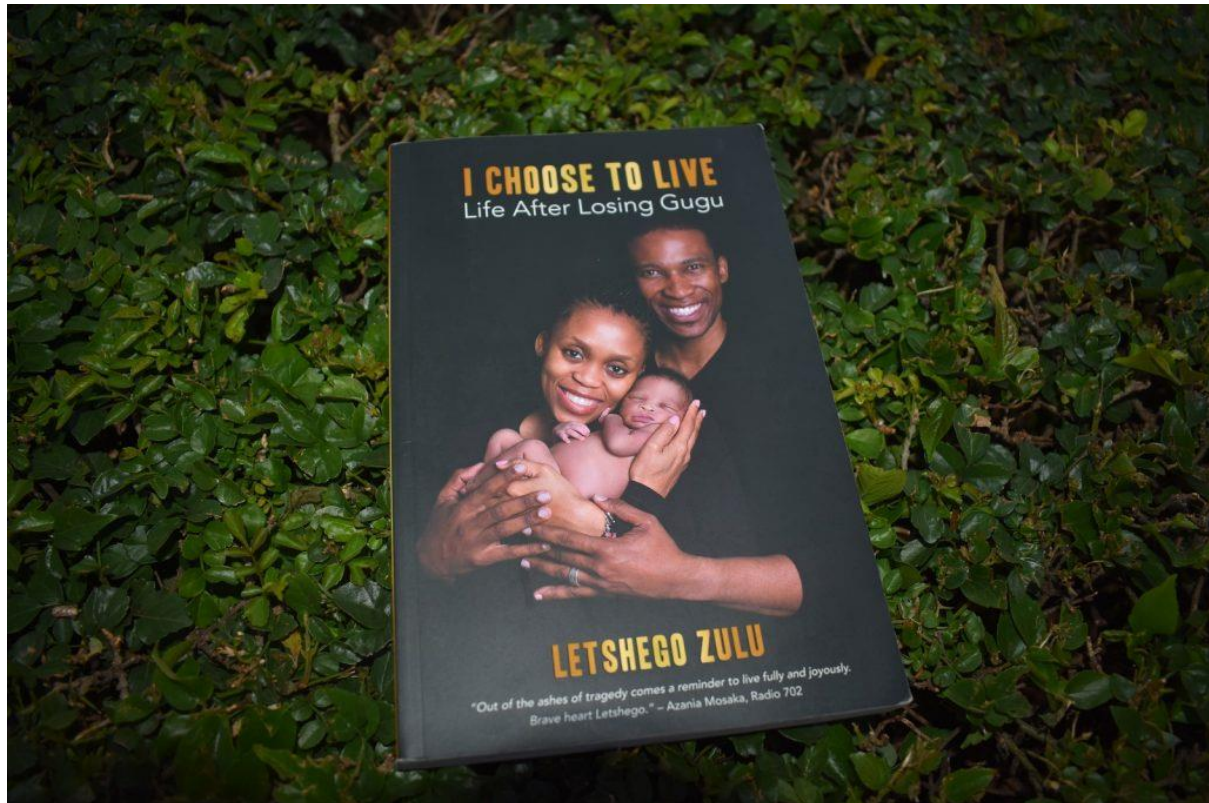
Speaking to the importance of youth activism and change led by young people, he takes into account the desperate desire for reform and a need to renegotiate the terms upon which our democracy stands.

Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation will no doubt go on to be a staple for anyone hoping to understand the complex socio-economic plateau of a country still choosing to ride on the political railway tracks laid by apartheid, and the untold stories of the young people fighting to change the course of our collective history.



In Book Reviews

I Choose To Live is a motivational source to enjoying life to the fullest



The Mandela Day of 2016 was a sombre day for many South Africans and the entire continent of Africa. South Africans woke up to the news that one of their favourite motor racing champion Gugu Zulu had passed away while trying to summit Mount Kilimanjaro. It was a sad day for many South Africans for having lost their favourite son while still trying to remember their favourite father Nelson Mandela.

South Africans, the continent at large and the rest of the world mourned together with Letshego Zulu and her daughter Lelethu. Letshego and her young daughter Lelethu had lost a husband and a father respectively. After three years following the untimely death of her husband, Letshego has decided to pen down what really happened in that fateful adventure in Tanzania in her debut book simply titled *I Choose To Live- Life After Losing Gugu*.

In this inspiring and motivational book, Letshego recounts step by step all events that led to the ultimate passing of her husband in Tanzania.

Letshego has cleverly divided the book into three different parts.

While the first part focuses on the events of that fateful week, readers will find inspiration, motivation and guidance in the second part. It is this part which does justice to the title of the book.

Letshego provides readers with much-needed guidelines and lessons which one can follow after losing a loved one. People often find it difficult in many cases to pick up pieces, fail to accept the situation after losing a loved one.

Perusing through the pages of this book, readers will be given lesson by lesson on how to deal with losing a loved one, but most importantly how to develop a positive view and enjoy life once more after that period.

Letshego admits that;

“In this book, I’ve shared my personal road map with you. You can allow it to guide and motivate you, but ultimately you will need to personalise your approach”.

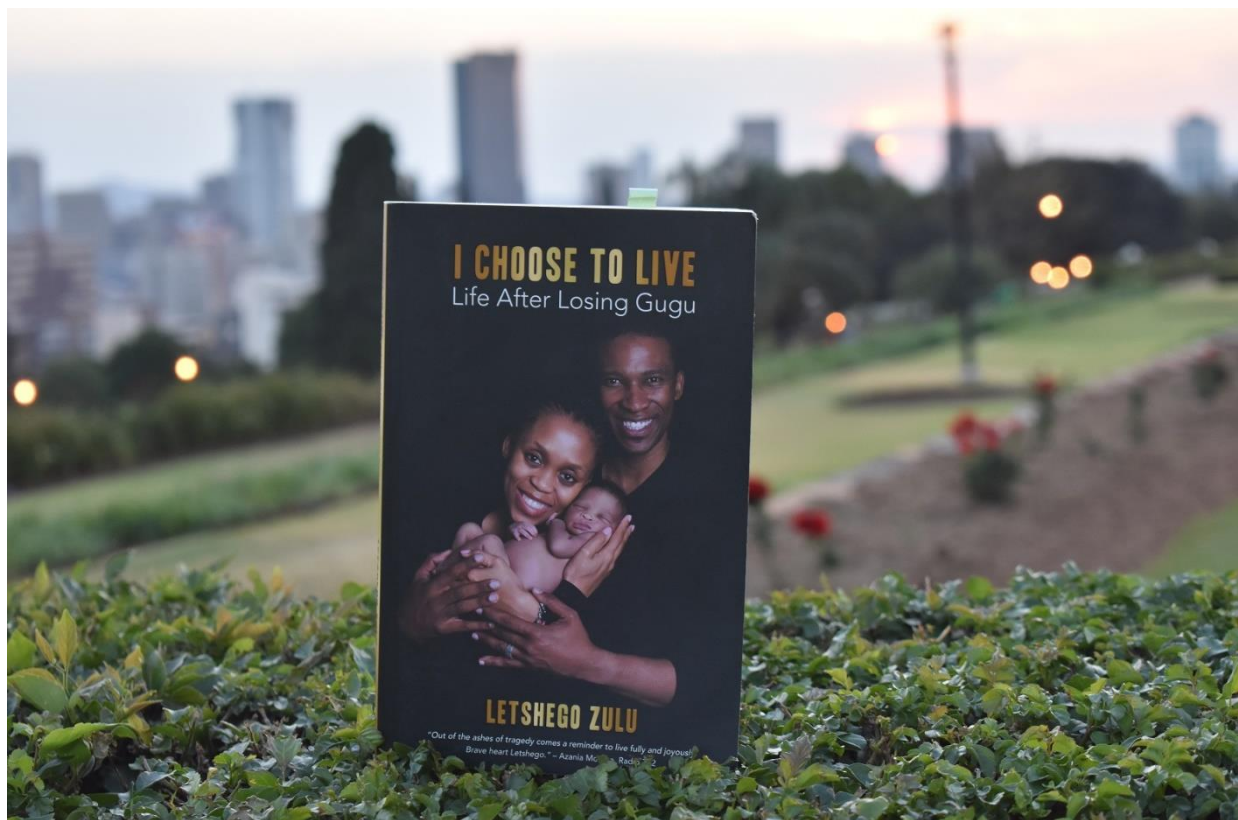
Letshego has successfully provided many people with a manual book on how to chart a way forward after a devastating period of life.

This is a book that every household should have as their second bible, as it provides comfort, inspiration, motivation, courage and tips on how to live a better life.

Well done to Letshego for not only keeping the memory of the great Gugu Zulu alive in many people’s minds, but also for being a shining example that positive mindset trumps every bad circumstance.

This is a must-read book and I encourage everyone who has lost hope in enjoying life once more, feeling despair and depressed to read the book.

It will most definitely leave you motivated, encouraged and inspired to face life head-on.



In Editor's Pick | Opinion Piece | Political Commentary

President Cyril Ramaphosa delivering SONA in 2019. Picture Credit: GCIS



Eskom should just be Ramaphosa's SONA address not empty job creation promises

The period which the country finds itself in really compels each and every one of us to be honest about the situation. The economy is trapped in a stagnation zone, unemployment is threatening to further rise, Eskom is failing small businesses and ordinary South Africans, and men continue with their war against black women.

The situation demands a proper self-introspection from all citizens, but most importantly it is a time when leaders need to be honest with the people they are leading. It is time to really act and take the bull by the horns. President Cyril Ramaphosa will be delivering his fourth state of the nation address in few weeks' time, opening the 2020 Parliament.

He will address a nation that is grappling with many socio-economic issues, unemployment, inequality, dysfunctional state-owned entities and rising femicide. Ramaphosa has long been a man with a silver tongue but takes little to action regarding whatever he promises. Since taking over the highest office in the land two years ago the President has been promising to create more jobs and grow the economy.

In his January 8 ANC statement, Ramaphosa made similar promises to the legions of ANC supporters who came to listen to his party's promises for the new year. It is almost expected that Ramaphosa will once again make similar promises to the nation next month.

However, many South Africans are tired of lies and empty promises. There will be no jobs that Ramaphosa's administration will create this year. Instead, South Africans should expect the 29.1 unemployment rate to reach a new height in the first quarter. Ramaphosa should do all South Africans a huge favour and never mention any job creation in his SONA address.

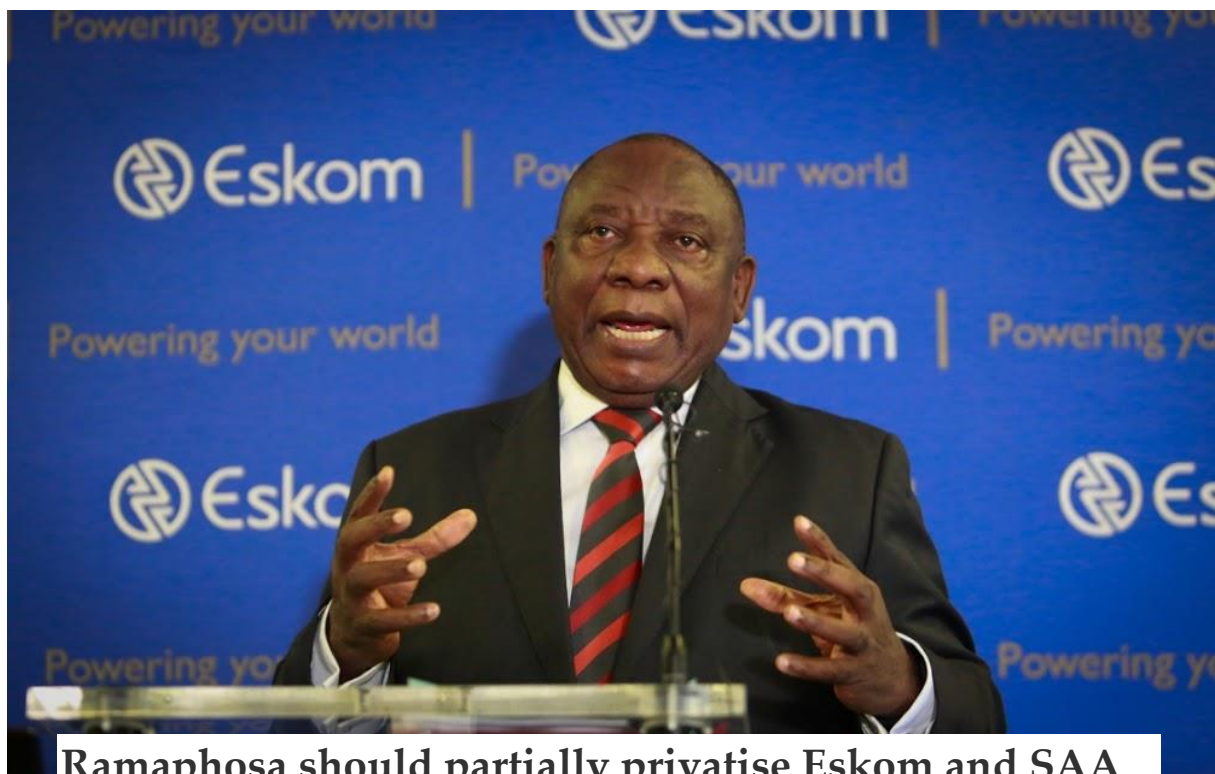
Instead, he should focus on how he will save Eskom and make sure it provides South Africans with electricity. Eskom has turned into an enemy of progress to many small businesses, as it continues with its regular rotational blackouts on a daily basis. Small businesses have been a major victim of the power utility's failure to provide lights on a daily basis.

Ramaphosa, who has promised that he will appoint a 're-configured Eskom board with the appropriate mix of the electricity industry, engineering and corporate governance experience', should address the nation on how he will end load shedding. He has the power to make sure that Eskom provides electricity to all South Africans.

That ability comes with him appointing skilled, experts and experienced individuals to the Eskom board. He should also make sure that his comrades in the ANC stay far away from operations at Eskom. The nation is hungry to hear that in his SONA address. Eskom should just be Ramaphosa's SONA statement, not empty jobs that will never materialise.

In Editor's Pick | Opinion Piece | Political Commentary

President Cyril Ramaphosa addressing the media at Megawatt Park: Picture Credit: DispatchLive



Ramaphosa should partially privatise Eskom and SAA to limit political interference in their operations

In his closing remarks at the ANC's Lekgotla, President Cyril Ramaphosa promised that there will be less political interference in the State-Owned Entities (SOE) such as Eskom. Eskom and South African Airways (SAA) are in serious financial mess purely due to the fact that politicians decided to force their dirty hands in the operations of the two entities over the years, with the Jacob Zuma era the worst ever.

The state's majority shares in the two ailing SOEs has allowed politicians, especially Ministers to meddle into the operations of the companies without being called to order. Boards and the

executives continue to be proxies for politicians and play a huge role in helping these greedy politicians to loot state resources.

Appointments in major strategic positions are made without looking at experience or expertise, but how close one is to a certain politician. Ramaphosa has come to accept that the political hand in the operations of these ailing SOEs need to be cut off and by saying that he earned himself more enemies in his own party.

Ramaphosa's call is legit and one that will require him to play his part in making sure that the only time that politicians (Ministers) have their say in the SOEs is when they attend shareholder's meeting. It is time to partially privatise Eskom and SAA. The state needs to sell a certain percentage of its shares in these two SOEs to private entities or individuals.

This will be a good way to limit political interference in these SOEs and allow them to function without unnecessary pressure from politicians. No minister will unilaterally make a decision about who gets to be a CEO without consulting with the rest of the shareholders, as this is the case now. Private shares will allow for proper monitoring of political interference, as all the shareholders will be able to check on each other in every decision taken.

South Africans cannot afford to pour money into these entities, while it is politicians who continue to financially ruin them. Telkom and Airports Company South Africa are perfect examples of a good partnership between state and private shareholding. The state can still remain the majority shareholder in order to prevent private shareholder's profit-driven obsession overpowering these SOE's developmental agenda.

It is time to reduce the powers of the Minister of Public Enterprise. Vuyani Jirana and Phakamani Hadebe resigned as CEOs respectively of SAA and Eskom due to continuous interference and lack of support from Minister of Public Enterprises Pravin Gordhan.

In Editor's Pick | Opinion Piece | Political Commentary



Only apolitical board will save Eskom more than just firing Pravin Gordhan

It is only two weeks into the new year, however, Eskom's operational faults have once again taken centre stage and threaten to put President Cyril Ramaphosa's presidency on the line once more. It came as no surprise when Eskom dominated the bulk of Ramaphosa's speech during the ANC's birthday celebration in Kimberly over the weekend.

The problems at the power utility have finally got the better of one Jabu Mabuza who has since left the troubled State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) with a tail between his legs. Calls continue to mount for Public Enterprise minister Pravin Gordhan to follow Mabuza out after he reportedly 'misled' Ramaphosa about load-shedding. As expected the EFF and COSATU are calling for the head of Gordhan and it seems like his days in heading the Public Enterprise ministry are numbered.

However, the problems at Eskom will take more than the firing or redeployment of Gordhan. Gordhan walked into an already raging fire when he took over a portfolio that includes overseeing Eskom and its troubled twin, the South African Airways (SAA).

Following the resignation of Mabuza as Eskom's board chairperson, Ramaphosa announced that he will appoint a 're-configured Eskom board with the appropriate mix of electricity industry, engineering and corporate governance experience'.

For over 26 years of the ANC's rule, Eskom has been dominated and led by associates of the political leaders in its different boards.

Associates who are just there to protect the interest of their political handlers.

When Ramaphosa took over with his "new dawn" selling point, expectations were that he will take a different position in the appointments of the personnel who sit on the boards of different SOEs. The appointment of Mabuza and other members such as Sifiso Dabengwa into the Eskom board raised eyebrows because of their close proximity to the President, a worrying factor for many people, especially the Red Berets.

Now with the country grappling with rotational blackouts on daily basis and this adding more pressure on the already stagnated economy, Ramaphosa is once again faced with yet another opportunity to make a right choice this time with the appointment of a new board. It is time he appoints people who understand the challenges which Eskom finds itself in.

The people who have no political ties to him or any of his comrades in the ANC. It is time for Ramaphosa to make tough decisions which will upset his business friends and comrades, but that which will benefit all South Africans. Ramaphosa needs to appoint a chairperson, who will not toe the political line and be brave enough to tell politicians to back off in the operations of Eskom.

A person like Busisiwe Mavuso, who has been on the board of Eskom and have a vast experience as an executive, has the right expertise, knowledge and the required zeal to help Eskom turnaround. Ramaphosa should consider Mavuso for the chairpersonship position.

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Disgraced Tshwane Mayor Stevens Mokgalapa Picture Credit: Loveable Daniels



The political quagmire at Tshwane House proves to be the last straw of how coalition governments failed dismally

With just a few months before the next local and municipal elections, electorates in the Nelson Mandela Bay, Johannesburg, and Tshwane can collectively breathe a sigh of relief. It has been long years of political instability, political power plays, budget delays and legal wars between politicians in the three major metropolis.

Coalition governments have given electorates a clearer picture that politicians and political parties in South Africa are yet to reach a political maturity level. Most importantly, coalition governments have exposed that politicians represent themselves more than the people.

The current level of political immaturity that the Tshwane citizens have been exposed to in the recent City Council sitting just proved that politicians will shamefully do anything to gain power.

The DA, EFF and the ANC have all given the middle figure to Tshwane citizens with their continuous infighting. While the three parties wrangle for power, service delivery in the Capital City continues to be severely impacted with the administrators not knowing what to do.

Instead of showing a great deal of leadership in this political quagmire, MEC Lebogang Maile is also playing politics. As a result, adding fuel to the already raging fire.

The DA seems to be hellbent on holding onto power in the City, despite signs that its days of leading the metro are numbered.

The ANC and EFF, who are instigators of this shameful display in the City Council, continue to be legally outplayed by the DA in their quest to remove Speaker Katlego Mathebe and the disgraced mayor Stevens Mokgalapa.

As if the Tshwane council debacles are not enough to prove that the coalition government are unstable, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan municipality will soon have a new mayor or could have a familiar face returning back to the hot seat.

It has since emerged that the DA is once again in discussions with the United Democratic Movement (UDM) to take control over the troubled municipality. However, it is clear that UDM leader Bantu Holomisa still wants his ally Mongameli Bobani to retain to the mayor's office.

Bobani, who was removed as the mayor last year in a motion of no confidence, has been accused of being a corrupt leader by the DA's John Steenhuisen.

Steenhuisen campaigned relentlessly for the removal of Bobani and will undoubtedly refuse to hand back the mayoral chain to the UDM leader in the council. It remains to be seen what kind of arrangement the two parties will reach in taking over power the metro.

South African politics is not ready for coalition governments because ordinary citizens are at the receiving end of their instability.

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Picture: Zandile Gumedede

We should be wary not to produce another Jacob Zuma in Zandile Gumede

It might sound like a joke to think that Zandile Gumede might one day emerge as the President of South Africa, given her age and the current negative political climate around her. However, history has proven that old age and criminal charges levelled against a high profile politician cannot stop them from assuming the highest office in the land, one Jacob Zuma has proven that fact to be flawed.

Following her appearance in court over her corruption, fraud and racketeering case at the Durban magistrate court, many of Gumede's supporters stated that the former eThekweni mayor will one-day 'lead' the country.

Gumede is facing corruption charges amounting to R389 million over the Durban Solid Waste tender. The former eThekweni mayor maintains that this case against her is just political ploy to destroy her 'good image'. Her supporters are ardent that Gumede's detractors are trying to persecute their 'leader' for her purported stance on 'radical economic transformation.'

The state is yet to issue a formal charge sheet against Gumede, which ultimately forced the case to once again be postponed to April. The state is without a doubt proving to be not ready to start trialling Gumede for her alleged involvement in the looting of the eThekweni municipality.

The state's failures have thus fueled Gumede to play the victim role to perfection. A certain section of the public is starting to sympathise with her. Gumede, who is also enjoying massive support from the ANC's top leaders, among them include ANC Secretary-General Ace Magashule and the Women's League leaders, is slowly showing that the charges against her might be a political witch-hunt.

The state's un-readiness to come with concrete evidence to start the trial, massive support within and outside the ANC, and also the perfecting of the victim role; these were all features that saw Zuma corruption charges dropped in 2009. While Zuma's position in the ANC at the time allowed him to simply move up to the top, Gumede's rise might take a few turns before she can become the President of her party, never mind of the Republic.

The similarities with Zuma's 2009 case are striking and requires the state not to repeat the same mistake. The state should act fast on this case and stop delaying it in favour of Gumede. The country cannot afford to have yet another Zuma-like case. The state must not allow public sympathy and unethical, corrupt ANC leaders forced it to drop charges against Gumede.



In Editor's Pick | Health | Opinion Piece

Back to School: this is the time for the government to end 'period poverty'

Written by **Candice Chirwa**

It is *Back to School* season, which means many schoolgoers are excited about the new school term. Many schoolgoers are excited to meet their new teachers, catching up with their friends and getting on with the curriculum.

The human right to education includes the right to free and mandatory primary and secondary education for all to be “generally available and accessible.” In addition to the right of girls to education, educating girls undoubtedly has greater benefits for the economic development of a country, civil society’s formation and the overall health of the population.

Not only is education a human right. Education is more than writing, reading, and arithmetic. It is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future. It is also one of the main ways of empowering girls.

However, for many schoolgirls, this new school year marks a period of uncertainty when it comes to managing their menstruation. Menstruation is a natural biological function of all females and menstruators worldwide.

All around the world, girls, transgender and intersex people suffer from the stigma of menstruation through cultural taboos, discrimination and the inability to afford sanitary products. This is also known as period poverty.

When that ‘time of the month’ arrives, there comes a range of economic and social burdens on young girls during their time of transition into adulthood. The long distances that girls have to walk to school, fear of bullying by boys and other classmates along with the lack of effective menstrual materials and adequate facilities all have a significant impact on girls’ education.

In addition, poor MHM prevents girls from being able to reach their potential when they attend school during menstruation. This is due to the fact that girls cannot concentrate in school because their bloodstains could appear on their uniforms as teachers expect that children have to stand up to answer a question or write the answer on the board.

Furthermore, globally including in the East and Southern African region, misconceptions, negative cultural and social norms surrounding menstruation affect girls’ perceptions of their bodies. Some communities believe that once a girl has started her menses, she is ready for sexual activity, thus many girls fear disclosing their menstruation due to the association of menstruation being equated to sexual behavior which is considered improper.

The education of girls can end in communities where menstruation is linked to sexuality, and so there is social stress due to the early marriage of girls, leading to the termination of school attendance.

These are just a few of the menstrual obstacles that girls in LMICs have to face on a monthly basis. It is important to understand that these obstacles that girls face during their period can

have harmful effects on schooling which further contributes to the gender gap in primary and secondary education and thus violates their rights to education.

Although there is no universal estimate, smaller studies on school girls indicate that interventions such as providing sanitary materials illustrate a higher school retention rate for the girl child.

Menstrual management can be essential in ensuring that children's everyday life is not interrupted by menstruation. It ensures that the girl child can continue with her daily routine such as going to school, going to work or doing household chores.

It can also prevent potential situations of embarrassment and in turn, make them feel confident about themselves and their bodies. In this sense, maintaining proper menstrual health is important for the girl child's wellbeing and development.

I believe that every girl should have access to safe, affordable menstrual products.

Every girl should also learn that her period is a natural even phenomenal bodily process.

Every girl should learn that their period is not a monthly curse and certainly nothing to be ashamed of. PERIOD.



Ezekiel Writing Blog (EW BLOG)
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