

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 14 2016

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SOUTH AFRICA

Write!
Africa,
Write!

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Dear friends

Many of you will have followed the intense debate that has swirled around the rescinding of an invitation to the Danish journalist and writer, Flemming Rose, to give the TB Davie lecture on Academic Freedom at the University of Cape Town this month. The **letter by the Vice Chancellor**, Max Price, disinviting him stirred both confusion and controversy and heated debate as is evident in the **response from the Academic Freedom Committee**. There have been a number of damning responses in the press including pieces from **Index on Censorship**, **Kenan Malik**, **David Benatar**, **Justin**

McCarthy, Mohammed Jameel Abdullah and Pierre de Vos.

The 'disinvitation' of a speaker – Flemming Rose is a **controversial one**, to be sure – by the University of Cape Town throws into question the nature of academic freedom and free speech.

PEN South Africa has to make a response – issues like this one are at the heart of our work – and this issue has occupied the board and served as a lightning rod for a robust, thoughtful and invigorating debate between colleagues I respect and admire. We have discussed at length the nature of free speech, academic freedom, asymmetries of power and access in the context of South Africa's history and its complex and fractious present moment of radical re-imagining.

Freedom of speech carries with it the reciprocal obligation to listen. Many hold the view that free speech is a political and conceptual frame without which it is difficult, if not impossible, to defend the rights of individuals to say things that are disruptive, critical and unsettling with safety. There are others who feel a more nuanced view is needed, that content – i.e. the nature of the speech that is defended – is important, as is context and history.

These discussions have been challenging and complex. Complexity takes time. South Africa and its universities are at a critical juncture in terms of defining themselves and how their freedoms are exercised. I have given this a great deal of thought – ably assisted by the members of the board.

It is for that reason that we are making use of the discursive space that PEN holds, an interrogative space in which members of the board and PEN members and members of the wider community can contribute to this discussion that goes to the heart of our identity as writers and as citizens.

The next newsletter will be in three weeks time. At that point we will publish a range of opinions on this matter. All of us are fully committed to the principle of free speech and to academic freedoms but this seismic event has made all of us – me especially – consider how one takes this debate forward. How one ensures reciprocity and generosity of thought in a world increasingly riven by polarized views and a refusal of the views of others.

I look forward to your responses and to the conversation that will – I am sure – be very

heated at times.

With best wishes in this cold winter

Margie Orford
President
PEN South Africa



PEN SA Concerned at Wider Implications of SABC's Actions Against Journalists

PEN South Africa is concerned at the wider implications of the actions against the journalists which show that SABC senior officials have no qualms about interfering in editorial independence and the consequences arising from the SABC being unable to deliver on its



82nd PEN International Congress

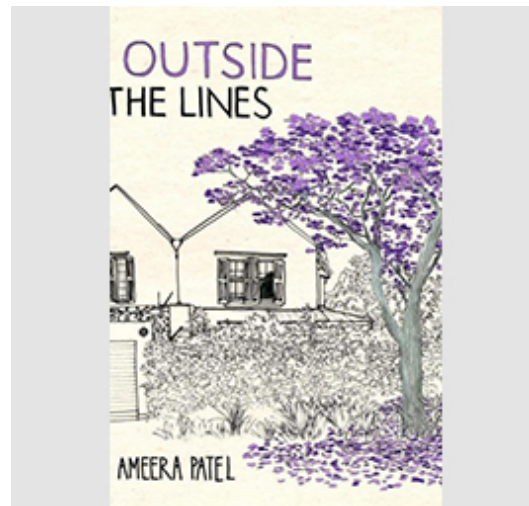
The 82nd PEN International Congress will be held in Ourense (Galicia, Spain) from September 26 to October 2, 2016. The Congress website can be found [here](#). PEN SA members are welcome to attend as participants at their own cost. Please do let us know if you are planning on going.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Take a look at what's happening in August...[read more](#)

NEW MEMBERS' TITLES



Recent titles from PEN SA members include [Outside the Lines](#) by Ameera Patel, [Good Cop. Bad Cop](#) by Andrew Brown, [Some Schools](#) by CJ (Jonty) Driver, [Cocooned Love](#) and [Sparked 2](#) by Hsien W Lou and [White Horse II](#) which is co-written by Nick van

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Artist in Residency Programme (AIR) at the Bellagio Centre...[read more](#)

Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Award and Anthology...[read more](#)

Morland Writing Scholarships for African Writers...[read more](#)

ANFASA Grant Scheme for Authors...[read more](#)

CONGRATULATIONS!

J.M. Coetzee has been longlisted for the 2016 Man Booker Prize...[read more](#)

Evadeen Brickwood held three successful readings on her recent trip to Germany...[read more](#)

AGM REPORT

The electronic AGM document was emailed to all members on the 31st May 2016. Members were asked to respond approving (or not) the contents of the

der Leek. The anthology [To Kingdom Come: Voices Against Political Violence](#) edited by Rethabile Masilo features works by Abigail George, Ingrid de Kok, Rustum Kozain and Athol Williams. [300 Things I Hope](#) by Iain S. Thomas is out in October but available for pre-ordering now...[read more](#)

NADIA DAVIDS CO-OPTED TO THE PEN SA BOARD

We are very pleased to announce that Nadia Davids, scholar and award-winning playwright and author, has been co-opted to the PEN SA Board and will be nominated at the next electronic AGM. Read more about her work [here](#).

WELCOME!

Welcome to new Professional members Jacques Rousseau and Steve Connolly.

HAVE YOUR SAY

We are putting together a report on the state of freedom of expression in South

AGM document, the financials, and proposed changes to our constitution by 5.00 p.m. on the 30th June 2016. Comments were also invited.

As per our current constitution 25% of members in good standing were required to form a quorum. 134 members out of 263 were in good standing and 34 votes were received thus 25.5% and so a quorum was formed. Six comments were received.

In order to change the constitution 66.6% of members in good standing were required to approve the changes. As only 25.5% of members voted the required percentage was not achieved and thus the changes cannot be implemented at this time. The proposed changes concerned officially changing the name of SA PEN to PEN SA, officially providing for different types of membership (Professional, Supporter, Honorary and Publisher), and providing for how electronic AGMs should operate.

Mr Mark Heywood had been co-opted on to the committee with effect from the 12th April 2016. He was proposed as a member of the committee at the 2016 AGM, his CV was detailed in the AGM

Africa and we'd love your input. Please send one or two lines on what freedom of expression means to you and /or why you think it is important to protect to communications@pensouthafrica.co.za.

document, and no objections being received he was duly elected on to the committee.

Please respond to the email sent on Wednesday 27 July calling for votes on the constitutional changes.

Send us your news

Had a book published recently? Attended or participated in a festival? Won an award? Achieved a personal milestone of note? We welcome any news of your activities for future issues of the PEN SA newsletter.

Please email your contributions
to communications@pensouthafrica.co.za



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