

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 04 2017

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## Free Speech Rights are Women's Rights

*PEN SA President Margie Orford made the following speech on 30 January 2017 at the Free Speech Debate at St Antony's College at Oxford University with PEN International President Jennifer Clement. The event was chaired by Timothy Garton Ash. A recording of the event can be listened to [here](#).*

At the Women's March in Washington to protest the inauguration of Donald Trump, an elderly woman held up a sign saying 'I can't believe I am still protesting this shit.'

I had the same feeling. Why am I? Given the current politics the answer is obvious, but why is it so? And why does it matter?

It matters because patriarchal power and the attacks on free speech go hand in hand with the curtailment of women's rights. They are in many ways dependent on each other to sustain the gendered forms of social and political power resurgent in the world today. The same forms of silencing, gendered power that have shaped most of history by denying full citizenship to women and silencing our voices.

Why is this happening and what are we to do about it?

It is not a coincidence that one of the first executive orders that Donald Trump's signed stops international aid to any healthcare provider that might mention abortion. It is a move that impacts directly on the bodily integrity, the freedom of choice, the privacy and the authority of millions of women over their own bodies. It is also no coincidence that this was followed by a continuation of Trump's attacks on the press (and the truth) and the gag orders on many government agencies that stopped staff from speaking to the press and communicating with the public on social media. This was followed by Steve Bannon, Trump's advisor and enthusiastic proponent of the misogynist 'alt-right', calling the press 'the opposition'...[read more](#)

*(Image by Jurgen Schadeberg, courtesy of [South African History Online](#))*

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## Harvey Tyson, Former Editor of the Star, Responds to the Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill

*PEN SA made comments to the Hate Speech and Hate Crimes Bill, which you can [read here](#), and invited PEN SA members to send us their own comments on the bill. Below is a submission by Harvey Tyson, the former editor of *The Star* and author of *On My Watch and Blood on the Path – Saga of the Founding of SA 100 Years Ago*.*

### Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill

While welcoming a Bill that seeks to discourage all forms of hate speech – particularly the unfettered and often ill-considered exchanges on the social media – it is essential that PEN SA's reminder is heeded: freedom of expression and freedom of the media come first.

This draft 'Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill' directly threatens both principles of democratic freedom and so conflicts with the Constitution. The Draft Bill, therefore should be withdrawn and totally redrafted after law advisers have studied the supporting expert opinions available on this subject...[read more](#)



### **RIP Miriam Masoli Tlali**

South African author Miriam Masoli Tlali has passed away at the age of 83. Read Dr Barbara Boswell's obituary: "[Rest in power, Miriam Tlali: author, enemy of apartheid and feminist](#)" and [watch 21 Icons' short documentary on Tlali](#), filmed in 2014.



### **New PEN Report Examines Obstacles to Minority-Language Publishing**

To mark International Mother Language Day on 21 February, PEN International launched a new report which examines the condition for minority language creative writing industries in Kenya, Haiti, Serbia and Nigeria. The report

*(Image courtesy of 21 Icons South Africa)*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Take a look at the literary events happening in March, including talks by visiting authors Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o and Tsitsi Dangarembga and literary festivals Wordfees, the 20th Time of the Writer International Festival, the Knysna Literature Festival, Blown Away by Books and, further afield, the Jalada Mobile Literary & Arts Festival...[read more](#)

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## PEN SA AFRICA PULSE

Egyptian novelist Ahmed Naji talks about how his time in prison made him believe in his literature more, cybersecurity and internet control issues in Africa are highlighted and the trial of three members of Cameroon's English-speaking opposition has been postponed...[read more](#)

The Committee to Protect Journalists reports rising threats, new Gambian

finds that there is still a conviction in the mainstream publishing industry that it is primarily viable to sell books in dominant languages, and that a major obstacle to establishing and sustaining strong minority-language publishing industries is the way that minority languages are valued locally and nationally...[read more](#)

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## CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Wasafiri New Writing Prize 2017...[read more](#)

2017 Prairie Schooner Book Prize Contest...[read more](#)

District Lit calling for submissions for disability, medicine, and illness special issue...[read more](#)

Lethe Press calling for submissions for 2017 Best Gay Stories Anthology...[read more](#)

Call for papers on the Promotion of African Language Literature...[read more](#)

Call for submissions for ITCH Issue 20: Vision...[read more](#)

President Adama Barrow promises to respect freedom of expression as Gambian journalists return from exile and Wendy Isaack writes about the balancing act the Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill needs to perform between freedom and hatred...[read more](#)

## NEW MEMBERS' TITLES



Jim Pascual Agustin's poetry collection [Wings of Smoke](#) was published last month and Abigail George's poems "Every bit of dust and air" and "The struggle for creativity" were featured in the anthology [Experimental Writing: Africa vs Latin America Vol 1](#) edited by Tendai Rinos Mwanaka and Ricardo Felix Rodriguez...[read more](#)

Speculative fiction magazine FIYAH calling for submissions for third issue...[read more](#)

SA Writers College 2017 Annual Short Story Award...[read more](#)

Submissions invited for "Poetry in McGregor" 2017...[read more](#)

## WELCOME!

Welcome to new PEN SA Professional members Efemia Chela, Selwyn Milborrow and Linda Markovina.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Jacaranda Books have acquired the UK and British Commonwealth rights, excluding Southern Africa, to PEN SA member Zakes Mda's novel [Little Suns](#). Jacaranda will publish *Little Suns* in their Global Classics list in 2018...[read more](#)

## GOOD NEWS

PEN has welcomed the news of the release of prominent Uzbek journalist Muhammad Bekjanov on 22 February 2017, who spent 18 years in prison on politically-motivated charges...[read more](#)

## AWARDS NEWS

The 2017 PEN America Literary Award winners have been announced...[read more](#)

Sabata-mpho Mokae was named the inaugural recipient of African Flavour Books' Lesedi La Africa Award...[read more](#)

Rethabile Masilo was awarded the 2016 Glenna Luschei Prize for African Poetry...[read more](#)

## 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](mailto:communications@pensouthafrica.co.za)



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