

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 05.

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The literary community in South Africa might find a lot to gripe about. However we are spoilt for choice when it comes to subject matter. We live in possibly one of the most exciting countries on the globe where the weekly news output – news, in this instance being incidences of corruption, murder, power outages, rapes of women and children, avoidable accidents and general mayhem – exceeds the yearly aggregate of a few middle income countries. And that's in just one province.

In this scenario, we seem overly subscribed in villains, which include self-styled messiahs who force bizarre diets on their congregations. Twenty-one years into the new democracy, children are still burning to death in shacks and, increasingly, parliament

descends into a national embarrassment. The heroes and heroines are few and far between, many of them forced to shout themselves hoarse in issuing warnings of impending disasters.

The concerns of writers have been aired, quietly or dramatically, in various book fairs. The debates, enriched by contributions from academics and professionals that have commented on socio-economic exigencies, have alerted us to the need to do things differently. Here and there are skirmishes and small victories; the statue of Rhodes is removed from the pride of place on the campus square. In truth, however, it is the calcified tissue of intolerance and fear that needs to be excised from the body politic if we are to survive as a nation.

While writing is a solitary undertaking, it would serve us well to remember that we are part of a bigger community operating in a complex country. While we haven't traditionally been the first to man the barricades, it's high time we remembered our role to bear witness. Here and there we have to act, especially when it comes to protecting the one freedom that unites us all – freedom of speech.

In future, the generations will ask us questions about where we were when miners were shot down in Marikana. Or what we said about the wholesale squandering of resources that could have mitigated the fires that killed children in shacks. Or what the private sector did when it could have done more to alleviate the poverty and unemployment that stalk our communities like a marauding beast.

James Baldwin, whose ninety-first birthday we would be celebrating this month, had the prescience to comment eloquently on what we should be bearing in mind.

"Society must accept some things as real; but the artist (or writer) must always know that visible reality hides a deeper one, and that all our action and achievement rest on things unseen. A society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and he must let us know, that there is nothing stable under heaven. In the same way that to become a social human being one modifies and suppresses and, ultimately, without great courage, lies to oneself about all one's interior, uncharted chaos, so have we, as a nation, modified or suppressed and lied about all the darker forces in our history."

Enough said.

Mandla Langa
PEN SA Executive Vice-President

PEN SA Condemns the Draft Online Regulation Policy

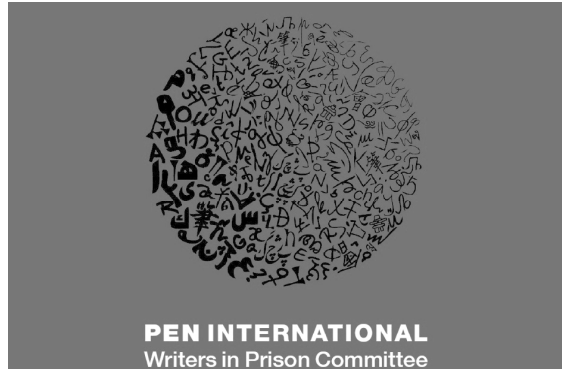
PEN South Africa condemns the draconian regulations which the Film and Publication Board plans to introduce to control the content of messages and other expressions of opinion which civil society and other users of the internet write online. It calls for their withdrawal because they are unconstitutional, in conflict with other law, poorly drafted and vague, too far reaching in scope, difficult to interpret and unworkable...[**read more**](#)



PEN International New Voices

Award Shortlist

The shortlist for the 2015 PEN International New Voices Award has been announced. There was one South African on the longlist, Carien Smith nominated by PEN Afrikaans, but she unfortunately wasn't shortlisted...[read more](#)



Writers in Prison Case List

The Writers in Prison Committee of PEN International was set up in 1960 as a result of mounting concern about attempts to silence critical voices around the world through the detention of writers.

It works on behalf of all those who are detained or otherwise persecuted for their opinions expressed in writing and for writers who are under attack for their



PEN International's Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee Meeting

The AGM of PEN International's Translation & Linguistics Rights Committee was held in Barcelona from 21st-23rd April 2015. The theme of this year's meeting was "Literary Translation as a Political Factor". The minutes from the meeting and several of the articles presented are now available on our website, including Adré Marshall's piece on translation and minority rights in SA.

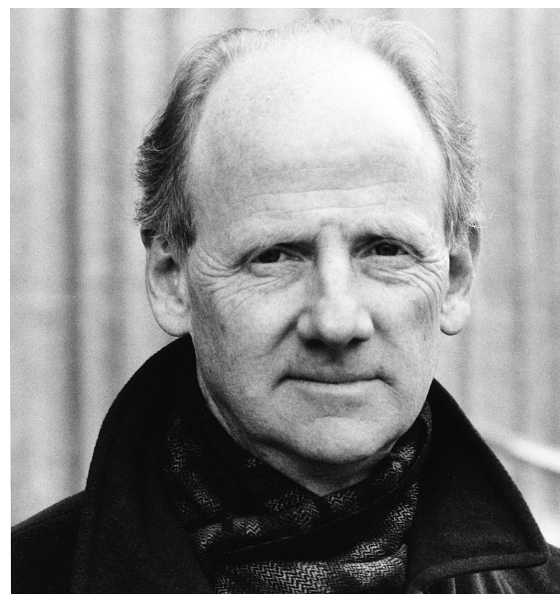
Adré, PEN SA's representative on the Committee, has written about the meeting...[read more](#)

peaceful political activities or for the practice of their profession, provided that they did not use violence or advocate violence or racial hatred. The Writers in Prison Committee recently published the January to December 2014 Case List which details the cases of imprisoned and persecuted writers around the world...[download the case list](#)

NEW MEMBERS' TITLES



PEN SA members have published several new titles in the last few months. Click through to see them all...[read more](#)



Letters from PEN International President John Ralston Saul

We last shared one of PEN International President John Ralston Saul's letters to the PEN membership in January. He has since written two more letters, which you can find on our website...[read more](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

CONGRATULATIONS!

Angela Lloyd won the short-form category of the 2015 Franschhoek Literary Festival SA Wine Writers' award...[read more](#)

Zakes Mda won the 2014/2015 University of Johannesburg Main Prize for his novel *Rachel's Blue*...[read more](#)

Andrew Salomon was named the Judges' Choice Winner for Best Story in the Short.Sharp.Stories Awards 2015...[read more](#)

Bridget Pitt was named the Judges' Choice Runner-Up in the Short.Sharp.Stories Awards 2015...[read more](#)

Raymond Louw received an honorary Doctorate of Literature from the University of the Witwatersrand...[read more](#)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

In March PEN SA Vice-President

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Etisalat Prize for Literature...[read more](#)

Triggerfish Animation Studios' call for storytellers...[read more](#)

Africa Centre's Artists in Residency Programme...[read more](#)

Charles Causley International Poetry Competition...[read more](#)

South African Arts Journalist of the Year Awards...[read more](#)

The Jeli Story Project...[read more](#)

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Dominique Botha, Z.P. Dala, Richard de Nooy, Karin Brynard, Jenny Crwys-Williams, Jim Pascual Agustin and Raymond Suttner.

Raymond Louw wrote about the
Constitutional protection of media...[read
more](#)

CORRECTION

In our last newsletter we announced
that PEN SA members Patricia
Schonstein and Douglas Reid Skinner are
launching a new poetry publication
entitled *Stanzas*. Please note that the
website we shared is not yet live but you
can contact them
on douglas@stanzas.co.za

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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