



SOUTH AFRICA

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN CENTRE OF  
PEN INTERNATIONAL**

**A World Association of Writers**

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**To: SA PEN Members**

**E-Newsletter No. 11/2014 – 03/08/2014**

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**SA PEN PRESS RELEASE – 31/07/2014**

**PEN SA says unwarranted prison sentences on Swazi editor and lawyer a massive blow to freedom of expression and journalism**

PEN South Africa calls on all PEN chapters to join the international outrage and protest that is mounting against the sentencing by the Mbabane High Court in

Swaziland of Bheki Makhubu, editor of the independent news magazine, *The Nation*, and human rights lawyer, Thulani Maseko, to two years' imprisonment without the option of a fine after being found guilty of "scandalising the judiciary". The sentences were handed down by Judge Mpendulo Simelane on Friday, 25 July.

These men have endured summary arrest and imprisonment for months with their applications for bail being refused for no good reason, a closed court hearing in defiance of the country's constitution and two trials allegedly for being in contempt of Swaziland's justice system ending with the harsh jail sentence.

They were arrested in March, this year and their trial was marked by procedural irregularities and violations of their rights, which started with their detention after the closed court hearing on 10 March. Since then they have been unlawfully detained.

In articles in *The Nation*, the two had criticised the arrest and detention of a government vehicle inspector, Bhantshana Gwebu, in January, this year, after he charged the driver of one of the Supreme Court judges with following an unauthorised route. Judge Simelane argued that writing these articles amounted to interfering with the administration of justice, because the criminal matter was still before court.

However, PEN SA, in common with other media and human rights organisations, maintains that Makhubu and Maseko were legitimately practicing their right to free expression by commenting on the conduct of the judiciary. Their comments certainly did not warrant the contempt of court charges brought against them. Also, Judge Simelane who presided over their case should have been recused because of his personal involvement in the Gwebu case mentioned in the articles.

The second ordeal they faced was their conviction on contempt of court charges on 17 July for separate news articles they published in *The Nation* criticizing Swaziland's Chief Justice, Mr Justice Michael Ramodibedi. *The Nation* and its publisher, Independent Publishers, were fined R50 000 (about US \$5 000) each and Makhudu was given a suspended three months' prison sentence.

PEN SA has noted that the two-year sentence handed down by the court has been interpreted by journalists in Swaziland as intended to send a message to those who seek to criticise the country's judiciary. National Director Vuyisile Hlatshwayo of the Swaziland Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa has said the judgment "criminalises freedom of expression in Swaziland", a claim, he said, "aptly demonstrated by the scathing tone and language of Judge Simelane.

"In his judgment, he makes it loud and clear that the objective of the sentence is to silence like-minded journalists thinking of questioning the conduct of judicial officers. According to this judgment, judges are a God's gift to the Swazi Nation who cannot do anything wrong in their administration of justice," Hlatshwayo said.

PEN SA supports the move by the legal representatives of the two men to appeal the conviction and sentence and demands that the men be released on their own recognisances pending the appeal hearing.

PEN SA believes the appeal will succeed if the hearing is conducted in accordance with the Swaziland 2006 Constitution. It believes the conviction and sentences contravene Sections 24 (1) and (2) of the Constitution which provide for freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of the press and other media. They also contravene Section 24 (2) (c) which protects a fundamental right, expressed as “freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons)”.

PEN SA also argues that though Section 24 (3) sets a limitation on those rights “reasonably required for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons,” this does not apply in this instance because court proceedings are held in public and thus editorial criticism of the rulings of a judicial officer in such public circumstances is entirely appropriate. It equates with the overturning of a judgment by a superior court after an appeal hearing which implies criticism of the lower court’s judicial officer and which can, and frequently does, contain actual criticism of the judgment of the lower court.

PEN SA draws the attention of the Swaziland government to the outrage and condemnation expressed by journalists and human rights activists throughout the continent and further afield at the court’s treatment of the two men. There is no doubt that this reaction will influence governments in their attitude to Swaziland, especially the United States which is considering removing the trade preferences it has granted Swaziland, such as AGOA.

PEN SA calls for the immediate release of the two men and for the appeal to be held soon. If that is not successful because of the inability of the judiciary to absorb criticism as is the custom in Western democracies the demand is to free the men on other grounds.

PEN SA notes with shock and alarm that the sentences constitute a massive blow to freedom of expression in Swaziland and will have a chilling impact on the work of journalists in that country, not only local Swaziland journalists but those from South Africa and other foreign countries who enter Swaziland to report on developments there.

**Raymond Louw**  
**Vice-President, South African PEN**

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A warm welcome to new members: Andrew Salomon, Alexander Matthews

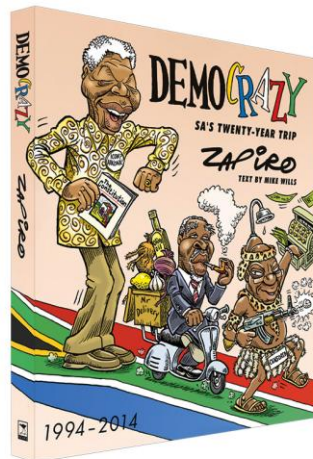


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**Book Launch: *DemoCrazy: SA's Twenty-Year Trip* by Zapiro, 4th August, JHB**

St John's College and Jacana Media invite you to the  
launch of  
*DemoCrazy: SA's Twenty-Year Trip*  
by Zapiro  
Text by Mike Wills

*DemoCrazy* records the extraordinary roller-coaster South African journey over the past two decades since the landmark election of 1994 through the eyes of Zapiro, the nation's most awarded cartoonist. It is his 'greatest hits' collection and provides a brutally funny record of a momentous and historic time.



**DATE:** Monday, 4 August

**TIME:** 17:30 for 18:00

**VENUE:** St John's College  
St David Road  
Houghton

**RSVP:** Zinta van der Linde  
zinta@jacana.co.za  
Tel: 011 628 3200

**Zapiro will be presenting a collection of his cartoons  
from the past twenty years.**



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**Book Launch: *Regarding Muslims* by Gabeba Baderoon, 4th August, Cape Town**

Venue: The Book Lounge, 71 Roeland St, Cape Town  
Time: 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.  
RSVP: (021) 462-2425 / email [booklounge@gmail.com](mailto:booklounge@gmail.com)

How do Muslims fit into South Africa's well-known narrative of colonialism, apartheid and postapartheid?

South Africa is infamous for apartheid, but the country's foundation was laid by 176 years of slavery from 1658 to 1834, which formed a crucible of war, genocide and systemic sexual violence that continues to haunt the country today. Enslaved people from East Africa, India and South East Asia, many of whom were Muslim, would eventually constitute the majority of the population of the Cape Colony, the first of the colonial territories that would eventually form South Africa.

Drawing on an extensive popular and official archive, *Regarding Muslims* analyses the role of Muslims from South Africa's founding moments to the contemporary

period and points to the resonance of these discussions beyond South Africa. It argues that the 350-year archive of images documenting the presence of Muslims in South Africa is central to understanding the formation of concepts of race, sexuality and belonging.

In contrast to the themes of extremism and alienation that dominate Western portrayals of Muslims, *Regarding Muslims* explores an extensive repertoire of picturesque Muslim figures in South African popular culture, which oscillates with more disquieting images that occasionally burst into prominence during moments of crisis. This pattern is illustrated through analyses of etymology, popular culture, visual art, jokes, bodily practices, oral narratives and literature. The book ends with the complex vision of Islam conveyed in the postapartheid period.

Gabeba will be in conversation with Rustum Kozain **and** Desiree Lewis.

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**Book Launch: *Tokoloshe Song* by Andrew Salomon, 5th August, Cape Town**

Venue: The Book Lounge, 71 Roeland St, Cape Town  
Time: 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.  
RSVP: (021) 462-2425 / email [booklounge@gmail.com](mailto:booklounge@gmail.com)

When Richard Nevis quit the rat race, being pursued to the Owl House in Nieu Bethesda by an assassin with a books fetish was not what he had in mind.

The trouble started while Richard was volunteering at a shelter for mistreated tokoloshes. There he befriended Lun, one of these often misunderstood creatures. But Richard and Lun come to the unwelcome attention of both a brutal villain and Cape Town's most dangerous criminal mastermind.

Teaming up with a potent duo of midwives, who are members of a secret order equally adept at delivering infants and performing martial arts, Richard and Lun have to race across the Karoo in a quest to open an ancient metal box to stay alive.

Delightfully entertaining and funny, *Tokoloshe Song* is Andrew Salomon's fantasy debut.

Andrew will be in conversation with the lovely Alex Latimer.

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**Book Launch: *The Trigger: Hunting the Assassin Who Brought the World to War* by Tim Butcher, 7th August, Cape Town**

Venue: The Book Lounge, 71 Roeland St, Cape Town  
Time: 5.30 for 6.00 p.m.  
RSVP: (021) 462-2425 / email [booklounge@gmail.com](mailto:booklounge@gmail.com)

On a summer morning in Sarajevo a hundred years ago, a teenage assassin named Gavrilo Princip fired not just the opening shots of the First World War but the starting gun for modern history, when he killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Yet the events Princip triggered were so monumental that his own story has been largely overlooked, his role garbled and motivations misrepresented.

*The Trigger* puts this right, filling out as never before a figure who changed our world and whose legacy still has an impact on all of us today. Born a penniless backwoodsman, Princip's life changed when he trekked through Bosnia and Serbia to attend school. As he ventured across fault lines of faith, nationalism and empire, so tightly clustered in the Balkans, radicalisation slowly transformed him from a frail farm boy into history's most influential assassin.

By retracing Princip's journey from his highland birthplace, through the mythical valleys of Bosnia to the fortress city of Belgrade and ultimately Sarajevo, Tim Butcher illuminates our understanding both of Princip and the places that shaped him. Tim uncovers details about Princip that have eluded historians for a century and draws on his own experience, as a war reporter in the Balkans in the 1990s, to face down ghosts of conflicts past and present.

*The Trigger* is a rich and timely work that brings to life both the moment the world first went to war and an extraordinary region with a potent hold over history.

*"A fascinating study of one of those rare individuals whose act of violence changed the history of the world. An incisive, shrewd, wholly compelling investigation of an assassin's life and times"* William Boyd

Tim will be in conversation with Josh Hawks of Freshlyground.

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**Worldwide reading for Edward Snowden – Call for SA PEN readers. Deadline = 11th August 2014**

The international literature festival Berlin is calling on all individuals, institutions, schools and media outlets that care about freedom and civil rights to participate in a worldwide reading of texts about surveillance in support of Edward Snowden, on **8th September 2014**. The appeal is available in several languages so it can be supported worldwide: <http://www.worldwide-reading.com/archiv-en/08-09-2014-worldwide-reading-for-edward-snowden/aufzuf>.

**SA PEN will be participating in this worldwide event. If you would like to be one of our readers please contact Deborah at [rudebs@icon.co.za](mailto:rudebs@icon.co.za) by the 11th August 2014.**

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## **Sign Russia/Ukraine Statement – Deadline 7th August**

28/07/14

Dear PEN members, dear friends,

As you already know, on 11th June Swedish PEN hosted a meeting of PEN International in support of the dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian writers, members of PEN. At the end the meeting a statement was written that was circulated and supported by former presidents of our organization, Nobel laureates and members of the Swedish Academy. It was well received in the international Press.

Several writers have approached us asking for the possibility of signing the statement, too. This is why we are circulating the statement again to all centres and friends of PEN international. If your Centre wishes to sign the statement (below), or some of your members want to sign it personally, please send a response to my assistant Eva Okunbor, on [eva.okunbor@pen-international.org](mailto:eva.okunbor@pen-international.org), before **August 7th**.

When the statement was first debated all of us saw the central problem which propaganda represents in dealing with the Russian/Ukrainian conflict. The crisis surrounding the shooting of the airplane has only accentuated the destructive role of propaganda.

With kindest regards,

Carles Torner

**Executive Director | PEN International**

### **PEN International conference on the Russian/Ukrainian situation**

**Stockholm, 11th June 2014, hosted by Swedish PEN**

### **Russian and Ukrainian PEN affirm their unity against the waves of propaganda destroying the language of public discussion.**

At a gathering of writers held in Stockholm by PEN International and Swedish PEN, Ludmila Ulitskaya, vice-president of Russian PEN, spoke of “the lies poisoning minds which have no other sources of information” and Aleksandra Hnatiuk, from Ukrainian PEN, of “propaganda designed to create enemies.”

PEN International has been organizing meetings of writers across Europe bringing together Russians and Ukrainians with their colleagues from around the world. In times of actual and threatened violence PEN believes that channels of public discussion must be kept open. PEN International President, John Ralston Saul, said, “Peace and stability is not about deals done behind closed doors, but the ability of people to talk to each other in public.”

For three months there have been incessant acts of aggression towards Ukraine from the side of the Russian Federation. There has been the illegal annexation of Crimea, which makes us deeply worried about the rights of the Tatar population, and following it armed groups have created violent disorder in the eastern parts of Ukraine with the goal of destabilizing the country. Ukrainian PEN has talked about journalists and citizens being shot, murdered, kidnapped and tortured. Russian PEN points out that such violence is dependent upon the co-opting of language: “Words are the only means we have to construct meaning and express reality. The Russian authorities are



currently using words to destroy meaning. It goes without saying that this is a crime against culture.”

PEN is particularly concerned about the tsunami of anti-free expression laws emerging in Russia, which include treating international NGO’s as foreign agents; anti-gay laws; a law permitting the blocking of websites without a court order; laws against discussing Russian history; a Religious Defamation law. In the name of security, human rights are being dangerously undermined.

People wonder if we are faced by a war of interests or a war of values, or both. In either case, the only real security lies in opening channels of free expression. Those on the front lines of this situation are often the journalists, in whatever country. We admire their courage and appeal to those under pressure to remember, in Lev Rubinstein’s words, that “propaganda is the collapse of language.”

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This statement has been written after a series of meetings of Russian and Ukrainians writers, including Alexei Simonov, Lev Rubinstein, Andrey Kurkov, Myroslav Marynovych, Mykola Riabchuk, Leonid Finberg, and foreign colleagues. The meetings took place in the cities of Kiev, Bled and Warsaw. The participants in the Stockholm meeting were PEN Centres of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Slovenia and Germany. **The statement has been signed by:**

Ludmila Ulitskaya, Vice-president of Russian PEN

Alexandra Hnatiuk, Ukrainian PEN

John Ralston Saul, President of PEN International

Takeaki Hori, International Secretary PEN International

Jarkko Tontti, International Treasurer PEN International

Markéta Hejkalová, Board of PEN International

Tone Peršak, Chair Writers for Peace Committee PEN International

Marian Botsford Fraser, Chair Writers in Prison Committee PEN International

Josep Maria Terricabras, Chair Translation & Linguistic Rights Committee PEN International

Carles Torner, Executive Director PEN International

Tomas Tranströmer, Literature Nobel Laureate 2012

Mario Vargas Llosa, Literature Nobel Laureate 2011 & ex-president of PEN International

Per Wästberg, former president of PEN International & member of the Swedish Academy.

György Konrad, former president of PEN International

Ronald Harwood, former president of PEN International

Homero Aridjis, former president of PEN International

Peter Englund, member of the Swedish Academy

Kjell Espmark, member of the Swedish Academy

***Ed: SA PEN has since signed this statement, as has Margie Orford and Ray Louw. If you too wish to sign in your personal capacity please email [eva.okunbor@pen-international.org](mailto:eva.okunbor@pen-international.org), before 7th August.***

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## **July letter from John Ralston Saul, International President, to the PEN membership**

July 22, 2014

Dear PEN Members, Dear Friends,

Apologies for the break in my letters. I have been on the road since early May visiting PEN Centres in South America, Europe and Asia.

First, as many of you know, Carles Torner has stepped in as Acting Executive Director. All of us on the Board are excited about this. Carles has a long history with PEN. He has served on the Board. And, as Chair of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, he led PEN to create the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in 2004. For 6 years he was head of the Literature and Humanities Department at the Institut Ramon Llull, which could be described as the Arts Council of Catalonia. So he has a great deal of management experience in the world of literature. Carles is from Barcelona, speaks French, Spanish, English and Catalan, all fluently. And, of course, he is a well known poet and essayist.

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A few words about our upcoming 80th Congress in Bishkek. In early June as part of the preparations, Hori Takeaki, International Secretary, Carles Torner, Markéta Hejkalová, International Board member, Jena Patel, Congress Officer and I were in Kyrgyzstan to meet with the Central Asian Pen Centre, led by Dalmira Tilepbergenova.

This is going to be a particularly meaningful Congress. Several hundred writers will be coming to a country and a region where our presence can have an important and positive impact. We will be at the heart of the Central Asian

Republics in a country where there is the greatest experimentation with free expression and democracy. Think of it also as a region with Russia close by on one side and China close by on the other. This gathering will be complicated, delicate and important.

Central Asian PEN works very hard across not only political, but also linguistic and cultural borders. One of the purposes of the Congress will be to bring writers together from all five republics. The other four exist in far more difficult political situations. And there are a variety of difficult ethnic tensions in the region. In some ways what we will be trying to do in Bishkek will resemble what we did in Belgrade, bringing together writers from throughout the Balkans, which led to the creation of the Balkan Network, one of the few, if not the only, structure linking people in the region.

Of course there remain free expression issues in Kyrgyzstan and during our trip we raised these in the appropriate places. The funding of the Congress will meet PEN's rules of independence and will not involve any government financing. Many universities and cultural institutions will be involved.

One of the many things we did during our trip was to sit down with university students who were graduates of our PEN Central Asian Centre's Freedom of Expression Summer School. Each of them talked of how this PEN program had given them the courage to speak up in different ways in each of their lives. Their openness and the clarity of how they saw free expression was deeply moving.

Finally, I should add that Bishkek is a surprising city, surrounded by the Caucasus and filled with a mixture of the peoples of Central Asia. Those of you who are coming will learn a great deal and be fascinated.

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In early May I went to Argentina and Chile with James Tennant, our Literary Manager. This is part of our drive to reinforce PEN's role in Latin America, in part to face up to the violence against writers and the impunity for the perpetrators in a growing number of countries, led unfortunately by Honduras (<http://tinyurl.com/p3gn7qo>), Mexico (<http://tinyurl.com/m2m49ey>) and Brazil. Our Brazil Centre is now strong and active, as are those in Mexico and Nicaragua. We may be able to create a Honduran Centre at the Bishkek Congress.

The Argentinian and Chilean Centres have a long history. The aim today is to encourage the leading writers of both countries to join so that the Centres represent the full influence of these rich literary communities. The current presidents in both countries – Beatriz Curia and Aileen L'Huillier – are eager for this to happen.

In Buenos Aires we did a major event on PEN at the Book Fair, held a meeting at the National Library and met a large percentage of the country's leading writers, publishers, journalists and translators. Luisa Valenzuela, Gabriela Adamo of the Buenos Aires Book Fair and many others made this possible. We are now in the midst of a membership drive and many are now joining.

In Santiago we held a large meeting at the Neruda Foundation, as well as several other gatherings. Thanks to Antonio Skármeta (now on the PEN Chile Board) and Fernando Sáez Garcia, Executive Director of the Neruda

Foundation and many others, a recruitment campaign has now begun. Almost all of the leading writers are eager to become involved.

Incidentally, thanks to Antonio, we were able to call on the great Nicanor Parra, now 100. He was brilliant and funny. A model for us all!

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After Chile I went to the annual meeting of German PEN in Schwäbisch Hall. Here is one of our large and fully engaged Centres, with a strong writers in exile program, a taste for debate on issues, and an active Board. It was a great pleasure to be with them and in the hands of their new President, Josef Haslinger and their new Secretary General, Regula Venske.

After that we held our biannual International PEN Board meeting in Barcelona where we spent two days setting policy. The Committee Chairs were also there. The Board will report to you on the outcomes. It should just be said that PEN is growing, our programs are multiplying. These are all designed to work through our Centres and our Committees. So it is a decentralized and member based approach.

Our work in education in particular with the support of Swedish International Development Agency and the International Law firm, Clifford Chance, much of it with our African Centres, is increasingly important. With UNESCO we now have a program focused on supporting minority language publishing involving four PEN Centres: Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria and Serbia.

Carles, Romana Cacchioli, Director of International Programmes, Émile Martel, President of Québécois PEN and I have just met with La Francophonie and are working on areas in which we can cooperate. The Publishers Circle

training initiative in Myanmar is now developing into a literary translation training program.

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While I have been in these places many other things have been happening elsewhere. The Peace Committee meeting in Bled. The Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee meeting in Girona. They are moving towards a new initiative in support of translation.

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Finally, Jarkko Tontti and I went to Estonia, Finland and Sweden.

In Estonia, with their PEN President, Kätlin Kaldmaa, we began working on how this successful Centre could find more financial support. We sat down with the Board and met with the Minister of Culture, Urve Tiidus.

In Helsinki we talked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about supporting PEN programs, as is the case in Norway and Sweden. We had a public event with members and Pekka Haavisto, Minister for International Development, chaired by the Centre's new President, Sirpa Kähkönen.

And in Stockholm we held the last of four meetings bringing together Russian and Ukrainian writers with other PEN members. This was organized by PEN Sweden, and in particular by Ola Wallin and Ola Larsmo. These four gatherings in Kiev, Warsaw, Bled and Stockholm have been all about the Russian and Ukrainian PEN Centres standing united, refusing to be drawn into the propaganda struggle. In Stockholm, Lyudmila Ulitskaya of Russian PEN and Aleksandra Hnatiuk of Ukrainian PEN were particularly eloquent.

We put out an initial statement on this, signed by those initially involved. It will soon come to all of you and I hope you will add your names as Centres and as individuals.

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Let me close by mentioning the deaths of three devoted PEN leaders. First, Peter Day, who was editor of the PEN International magazine for a decade and a friend to many of us.

And South Africa has lost, as we have, two historic figures. Anthony Fleischer, the President of the Centre, died on June 5th. Anthony was a strong opponent of apartheid and a leader who encouraged new young writers. He was a great servant of PEN.

Nadine Gordimer was International Vice President of PEN and Nobel Prize winner in 1991. She was a great writer and a courageous voice for the principles which have brought us all to PEN. Her story is that of the long struggle against racism and for a fair society.

Nadine, Anthony and Peter are reminders of what PEN has always stood for. We have a Charter which we try to live up to. But we also have members whose very lives are illustrations of our purpose.

All best wishes,  
**John Ralston Saul**  
**International President**



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**SA PEN was sad to hear of the recent passing of Nadine Gordimer.**

**President Margie Orford writes: Nadine Gordimer - A pen guided by a moral compass to the end**

(Published 15/07/14 at <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/15/nadine-gordimer-moralcompass.html>)

Nadine Gordimer was a passionately cerebral writer, and her death confirms the passing of a generation of South African writers who lived by a firm moral compass. There are very few of them left. She was her country's most celebrated writer, winning the Booker Prize in 1974 for *The Conservationist* and in 1991 the Nobel Prize for literature. She died Sunday at age 90, at home in the presence of her children.

Born in Springs, a rough mining town near Johannesburg in 1923, Gordimer published her first short story at age 15. Her first novel, *Lying Days*, was published in 1953 and was followed by 12 more. "I would have been a writer anywhere," she said in an interview in 1990. "But in my country, writing meant confronting racism."

Her birth and death bracket the establishment and eventual demise of apartheid, the most brutal and dehumanizing period of South Africa's history. Her voice — at once lyrical and acerbic — is unique, forged by a lifelong engagement with the corrosive effects of a political and economic system founded on inequality and segregation. She claimed that "to be a writer is to enter public life," a principle to which her career as a writer and an activist bears eloquent testimony. Gordimer observed no boundary between the ethics of living and the aesthetics of writing, which was why the apartheid censorship board banned several of her novels.

"I am interested in human beings in human situations," she told one interviewer. However, under apartheid, there was very little space in which to be human. Not even the most intimate realms of the body and of the heart, of sex and love, of the everyday pleasures of friendship escaped the invasive prurience of racist legislation. In her great novels of the 1970s — *July's People*, *Burger's Daughter* and *The Conservationist* — she explored the intimate spaces within and between South Africans, writing with great eloquence of the damage that was done by the inescapable warping of human relationships by apartheid.

I read these powerful and disturbing books as a student in the 1980s, a time when South Africa's resistance to apartheid generated increasing violence. It was Gordimer who charted apartheid's destruction of individuals, a destruction that was mirrored at that time in destruction in the public realm, where barricades burned and police fired endless volleys of bullets at protesters.

Gordimer was a woman of great personal integrity and political commitment. She joined the anti-apartheid movement in the early 1960s, and she helped edit Nelson Mandela's famous "I am prepared to die" speech in 1962. She used her prominence as a writer to campaign against apartheid, calling for economic sanctions to be enforced against South Africa to end minority rule and joining Mandela's African National Congress.

Even after South African politics became increasingly nasty and brutish during the postapartheid era, her acuity and her commitment to principle remained unwavering and inspirational — perhaps because hers was always primarily a commitment to the grand old notions of freedom, justice and equality. She understood better than most people why postapartheid South Africa was not a utopia, that the end of apartheid

hailed abroad as a miracle did not erase 300 years of formalized racial inequality and poverty. But she had no patience with the smug schadenfreude of interviewers or other writers who questioned her commitment to politics in the light of postliberation disappointments. Her novels in the last two decades continued to address the messy complexity of the poverty that endured despite the end of apartheid.

Even in her twilight years, Gordimer felt compelled to fight one last valiant political campaign, against the Protection of State Information Bill introduced by the government of President Jacob Zuma. Known as the Secrecy Bill, this draconian law, if passed, would limit freedom of speech and threaten writers more than any legislation under apartheid did. It would also serve to mask the rampant corruption that is corroding the great political legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle as embodied by the likes of Mandela.

Her writing and her politics were intimately connected in a manner currently unfashionable. For her, it was impossible — indeed, pointless — to try to separate the two. Having experienced firsthand the effects of censorship, she was a tireless champion for freedom of expression. The banning of her books was taken up by PEN International, and she, as a vice president of the organization, campaigned tirelessly for the right of writers to be free and to be heard. In a world where increasing numbers of writers are being silenced, there is much to be learned from her political commitment and from her great ability to unfold in elegant prose how repression and violence distort the human heart.

Nadine Gordimer's passing leaves a gap in the literary and political landscape, not only in South Africa but throughout the world.

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**16/07/14 : PEN International is deeply saddened by the death of its Vice President, the South African Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer. She was greatly loved by the PEN community and universally admired as a writer and activist.**

John Ralston Saul, PEN International President, said she was, 'a great writer imbued with great courage. Nadine Gordimer was one of the defining voices of PEN in the modern era, combining creativity, ethics and the resolve necessary to stand up to racism and authoritarianism'.

**On Nadine Gordimer**

*by Per Wästberg: close friend of Nadine Gordimer for over half a century; member of the Swedish Academy's Nobel Committee for Literature; former President of PEN International*

Nadine Gordimer's great themes were love and politics. Behind the most intimate relations and the most public there is the same search for an identity, a self-confirmation, a wish to belong and exist. For Gordimer the novel and the short story were instruments to penetrate a society which defends itself against scrutiny, hides in censorship and hypocrisy, refuses to recognize its unknown history and thus produces a grammar of lies where capitalism, liberalism, marxism are seen to mean the same thing: an onslaught on the Volk.

She gave much personal support to individual writers... She was so involved in the struggle that one wonders how she managed to keep her integrity and observe society with such a discerning eye in her stories... She endured bleak decades, refusing to move abroad as so many others did; her husband, Reinhold Cassirer, is a refugee from Nazi Germany who served in the British Army in World War II. Her daughter settled in France, her son in New York; but she kept her lines open inside South Africa, out of commitment to black liberation, both for the sake of her own creativity and that of black South African writers who were silenced, and for whom she had to speak.

The writer's task is to transform experience, enter into the existence of others, whether they be black or white, men or women, and to use the fruitful tension in both belonging and standing at the side. With her restless energy and prodigious discipline, Gordimer was able to put herself not only in the mind but in the body of criminal and saint, male or female, black or white. Asked what to write about when apartheid was over, she would reply, 'Life didn't end with apartheid; new life began.' The Nobel Prize to Nadine Gordimer put the search light on a country in painful transition from an oppressive racism to a turbulent democracy... Her work reflects the psychic vibrations in South Africa, the road from passivity and blindness to resistance and struggle, the forbidden friendships, the censored soul, the underground networks.

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Thanks to Nadine's and Reinhold's hospitality and our friendship of 55 years I have stayed at her house, built around 1910, longer than in anyone's. It has hardly changed; I know every corner of it, where her books are, the paintings and the African handicraft she and Reinhold collected over the years, the smells, the way to move in the kitchen and in the garden. The house is like the childhood place where I spent my summer holidays. A tree planted just before I visited the house for the first time is now huge...

Nadine Gordimer's work grew into a profoundly psychological and social chronicle of half a century in South Africa. She was both its archivist and lighthouse keeper. Above her collected experience the light sweeps, illuminating parts which would otherwise have lain in darkness, helping us navigate towards a South Africa which, far from being geographically and politically cut off, is a universal landscape that could bear quite a different name.

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**Publications received**

SA PEN has received the following publications. Should you wish to read any of them please contact Deborah on rudebs@icon.co.za

- *Japanese Book News*, No. 80, Summer 2014

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## **Forthcoming events**

- ❖ **Bloody Book Week** – 6th to 9th August, Johannesburg.  
[www.thebloodybookweek.co.za/](http://www.thebloodybookweek.co.za/)
- ❖ **International Literacy Day** – 8th September 2014
- ❖ **Open Book Festival** - 17th to 21st September 2014, Cape Town.  
[www.openbookfestival.co.za](http://www.openbookfestival.co.za)
- ❖ **Cape Town Fringe** - 25th September to 5th October 2014.  
[www.capetownfringe.co.za](http://www.capetownfringe.co.za)
- ❖ **PEN International Congress** – 29th September to 2nd October 2014, Bishkek, Krygyzstan. Hosted by Central Asian PEN.
- ❖ **International Translation Day** – 30th September 2014

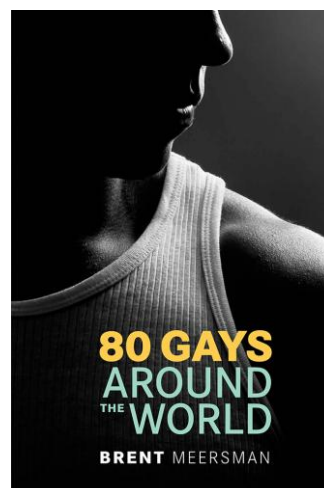
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## **Members' Publications**

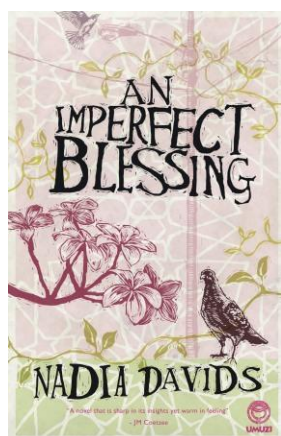
### **80 Gays Around The World by Brent Meersman**

A young gay man bewildered and lost on the highways of Los Angeles; a sadomasochist Neo-Nazi in Berlin; a rent boy in Shanghai; a holiday romance in Mexico; a man from Dakar in a bathhouse in Paris; a love hotel in Tokyo; a darkroom in Rio; a hamam in Syria; the burning ghats on the Ganges; Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Shinto and atheist; legal and illegal.

... blazing through 18 countries on six continents, *80 Gays Around the World* is an explicit, upfront, edgy, often funny, travel adventure come memoir.



### **An Imperfect Blessing by Nadia Davids**

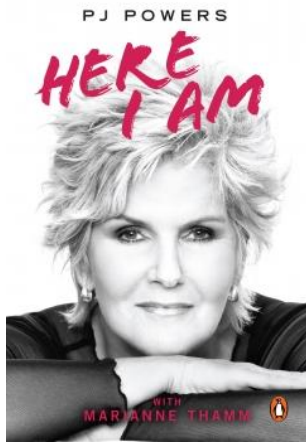


It is 1993. South Africa is on the brink of total transformation and in Walmer Estate, a busy suburb on the slopes of Devil's Peak, fourteen-year-old Alia Dawood is about to undergo a transformation of her own. She watches with fascination and fear as the national drama unfolds, longing to be a part of what she knows to be history in the making. As her revolutionary aspirations strengthen in the months before the elections, her intense, radical Uncle Waleed reappears, forcing her parents and sister Nasreen to confront his subversive and dangerous past.

Nadia David's first novel moves across generations and communities, through the suburbs to the city centre, from the lush gardens of private schools to the dingy bars of Observatory, from landmark mosques and churches to the manic procession of the Cape Carnival, through evictions, rebellions, political assassinations and first loves. The book places one family's story at the heart of a country's rebirth and interrogates issues of faith, race, belonging and freedom.



**PJ Powers: Here I Am by PJ Powers and Marianne Thamm**



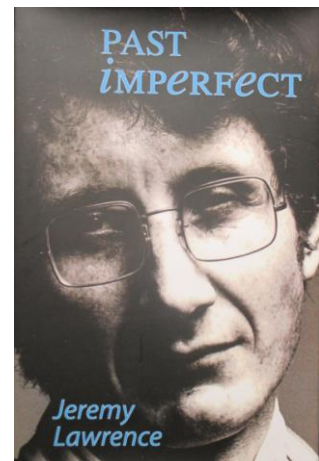
More than just a story about the personal journey of one of South Africa’s most beloved music icons, this extraordinary memoir of PJ Powers – or Thandeka, as she was affectionately renamed by Soweto crowds – is set against the turbulent backdrop of South Africa’s recent political history. It features a gallery of political leaders and international celebrities, including the likes of Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel, Chris Hani, Joaquim Chissano, Queen Elizabeth II, Brenda Fassie, Sharon Stone and Robert De Niro.

On Republic Day 1982, a white rock and roll band called Hotline, wearing stonewashed jeans and sporting big hair, took an accidental sho’t left into Soweto – a detour that forever changed the life of their lead singer, PJ Powers. Hotline was the first all-white rock and roll band to ‘cross over’ into highly segregated apartheid South Africa, making international headlines in the process. The prolific Powers went on to accomplish extraordinary heights as a solo artist with countless gold and platinum discs.

*Here I Am*, written with Marianne Thamm, is an intimate and hilarious account of the life and times of one of this country’s most recognisable and enduring performers. From the dizzying heights of international stardom to the dark depths of her struggle with alcohol, this is a must-read to explore the heady mix of politics and music of the time.

**Past Imperfect by Jeremy Lawrence**

*Past Imperfect* is an autobiography. Alternating between London and South Africa, the author pursued a career in journalism and subsequently publishing. In her Foreword, Helen Robinson likens him to a “traveller” and says: “The baggage of a traveller has many surprises and this book captures his responses to the challenges of a life well lived”.



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Had a book published recently? Attended or participated in a Festival? Won an award? Achieved a personal milestone of note? The compiler would welcome any news of your activities for future issues of the SA PEN e-newsletter. Please e-mail your contributions to [rudebs@icon.co.za](mailto:rudebs@icon.co.za).

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