

PEN South Africa newsletter / Issue 12, 2018 / Kate Highman looks back on PEN Johannesburg's racial segregation; Announcing the launch of The Prison Letters of Nelson Mandela; events, calls for submissions, and more.

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the publication of the fifth volume of New South African Writing.
While we should have liked to extend an invitation to you, as
Dear Mr. Mtshali, this volume, the laws of the land unfortunately
make this impossible and since P.E.N. is a non-political body,
such matters fall outside its orbit.

We are holding a party at a public venue to mark
the publication of the fifth volume of New South African Writing.
While we should have liked to extend an invitation to you, as
a contributor to this volume, the laws of the land unfortunately
make this impossible and since P.E.N. is a non-political body,
such matters fall outside its orbit.

We should like you to feel that we had you in mind
when we were issuing invitations to this function.

Yours sincerely,

Edgar Bernstein
Chairman

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Chairman

‘Europeans Only’: Coming to Terms with Racial Segregation in PEN SA’s Past

Do advocates of “free expression” always end up defending free expression?

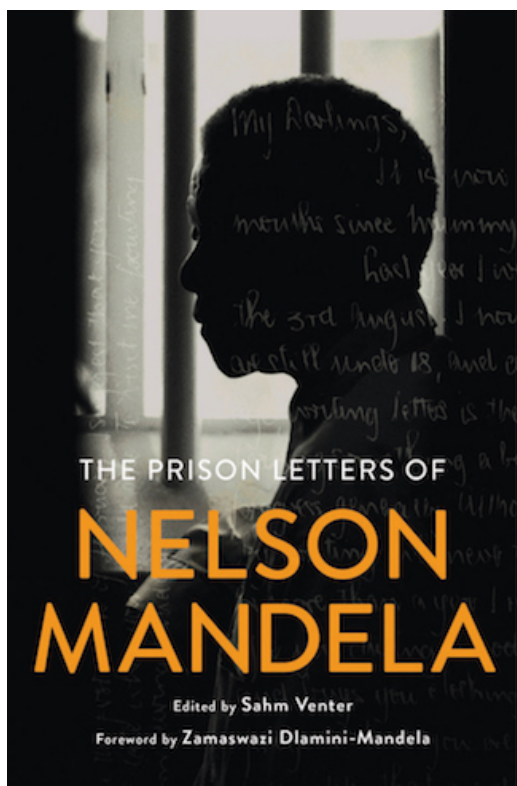
It’s a difficult question to answer, not least because many people think of free expression in different ways. Some people equate free expression (or FX) with the absolute right to say or do what one likes; some people believe it to be a state of social equality, where everyone has the same opportunity to express. Some advocates of writers in prison or exile may have also been racist or sexist, in line with the prevailing attitudes of their times. What do we do with such histories?

PEN South Africa is currently collaborating with researchers from the **Writers and Free Expression** (WFE) Project, to help them answer some difficult questions about the roles that PEN Centres and their members have historically played in society. In particular, we've been opening our archives to find out what role our members and our organisation have played in ensuring, or obstructing, equal rights to expression for South African writers historically. (You note that we say "PEN Centres". In case you didn't know, that's right – the current PEN South Africa is not the only PEN Centre that has existed in SA. There have been many iterations of PEN Centres in SA over the past 90 years.)

The WFE, to quote its mission statement, "looks to the role of non-governmental international writers' organisations, primarily but not exclusively PEN International and its Centres, in order to understand what kind of collective agency writers have in shaping or influencing the right to free expression. The project brings together scholars, writers and activists with particular expertise in three geo-political areas, the UK, South Africa and India, in order to investigate how international instances of censorship and the forms of resistance it has provoked have played out in different parts of the world. While organisations like PEN have mobilised writers to campaign on behalf of writers in exile, of imprisoned writers or censored works, they have also been forums for passionate disagreements about the boundaries to free expression, the universality of rights, the function of literature, and the public role of literary intellectuals."

Of course, such research brings about some unpleasant truths about the history of PEN Centres in South Africa, for governmental racism and segregation often found their concomitants in non-governmental organisations. For example, as the following post relates, PEN SA Johannesburg, despite insisting on non-racialism as it was entrenched in the **PEN Charter**, was generally not open to Black writers during its almost half-century-long existence.

The research about South African PEN Centres, along with other research from PEN Centres and other FX bodies around the world, will be presented in 2020. Until then, here's a thought-provoking tidbit, written by WFE's SA Research Associate, **Kate Highman**, on our site.



Penguin
Random House
South Africa

THE
FUGARD
THEATRE · CAPE TOWN



THE MANDELA RHODES
FOUNDATION

PEN SA to Co-Launch The Prison Letters of Nelson Mandela on 25 July

In celebration of the centenary of the birth of former South African president Nelson Mandela, PEN South Africa is partnering with Penguin Random House South Africa, The Mandela Rhodes Foundation and The Fugard Theatre for **an evening of discussion about and readings** from the correspondence of the world's most famous imprisoned writer, to be held on 25 July at the Fugard Theatre, Cape Town.

The South African launch of *The Prison Letters of Nelson Mandela*, edited by Sahn Venter, will be centred around a discussion panel that includes Professor Njabulo Ndebele and Justice Albie Sachs, along with readings from Mandela's letters – most of which have been unpublished until now – by Buhle Ngaba and Koleka Putuma.

Other events to celebrate Mandela and the book are being held by our colleagues at PEN Centres in **England** and the **United States**.

This is a free, ticketed event with a total of 200 tickets. Paid-up PEN SA Professional Members and Supporters may apply for a ticket to the event. Remaining tickets will be made available to the public through the Fugard Theatre's ticketing system on a first-come, first-served basis.

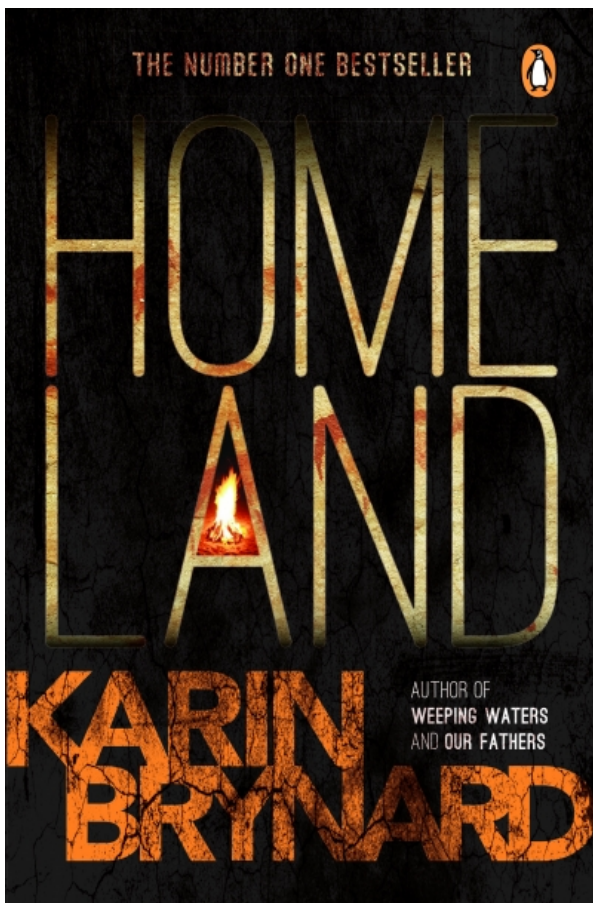
*Full ticketing information will be released soon, and will be announced in the newsletter, as well as **this post on our site**.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check our calendar of literary events – including dozens of events throughout SA for Exclusive Books' Homebru campaign – throughout June by clicking [here](#).

Please submit your literary events for conclusion on our events calendar by e-mailing newslettereditor@pensouthafrica.co.za.

UPCOMING EVENTS



New and upcoming releases from PEN SA members include [Homeland](#) by [Karin Brynard](#).

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS

NEW: [Apply for NAC Funding for Arts Projects And International Bursaries](#) (Deadline 22 June)

NEW: [City Press Tafelberg Nonfiction Award Now Open for Entries](#) (Deadline 31 July)

NEW: [PEN America Grants for 2018/2019 Now Open for Applications](#) (Various deadlines)

[The 2018 Dinaane Debut Fiction Award is Open for Submissions](#) (Open to all SADC Citizens; Deadline 30 June)

[Enter the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize](#) (Deadline 30 June)

[Austrian Haiku Association Seeks Haiku from Africa](#) (Deadline 15 July)

[The Oxford Brookes Poetry Centre's 2018 International Poetry Competition is Open to Entries](#) (Deadline 6 August)

[The Yale Drama Series Award for Emerging Playwrights Seeks Entries](#) (Deadline 15 August)

[Click here to view all calls for submissions](#)

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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 let us know if your email changes so we can update our mailing list.

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