

BOOKNEWS

Jozi's antidote to all-white fests

CHARL BLIGNAUT

charl.blignaut@citypress.co.za

In the debate around the whiteness of book festivals, here is the antidote: a book fair geared at children's literature, literacy and storytelling with an accent on black communities, educationalists and pupils. It also incorporates theatre and film festivals, jazz concerts and broad-ranging sociopolitical debates. There's a whole lot on offer next weekend at Wits.

Here are just a few of the highlights that you shouldn't miss out on:

- A round table discussion on the crisis in our schools. Friday at 3pm. Panellists who are trying to find a way forward for South African education include Salim Vally, Bulelwa Ndodana and Mugwena Maluleke.

- There's a delicious must-see storytelling festival on Saturday and Sunday mornings at 9.30am in the Children's Tent. Take the kids along to fall in love with South African storytelling, courtesy of Gcina Mhlope, one of the headliners of the fair, along with Faith Busika, Beverly Benton, Joan Rankin, Zukiswa Wanner, Hamilton Wende and Reviva Schumacher.

- Meet Penny & Puffy. Saturday at 10am. Years ago, Zakes Mda and Mpapa Mokhoane wrote a children's book called Penny & Puffy. Now they've handed the book rights to the fair, which has even created Penny and Puffy mascots. The kids will be enthralled by a reading of the book, which is being republished.

- Other children's events and reading debates and discussions not to miss include:

- Reading and the State of Libraries in SA, with Busi Dlamini and Sally Currin, is on Saturday at 11.50am.

- Cuba: Literacy and Children's Literature, Lessons for SA is presented by a headline guest at this year's festival, Enrique Pérez Diaz, on Saturday at 1pm. The Cuban author, publisher and children's bookstore founder is a genius when it comes to kids and reading.

- Iconic poet Don Mattera will be commemorating the life of Stephen Bantu Biko on Saturday at noon.

- South Africa's poet laureate, Keorapetse Kgotsitsile, will join playwright, novelist and painter Zakes Mda for a discussion called Growing an Indigenous South African Culture on Sunday at 3pm.

- Mda will also be discussing his jolting rape novel, Rachel's Blue, on Sunday at noon. Don't miss the irrepressible novelist Zukiswa Wanner discussing her African adaptation of a classic fairy tale for kids, Refilwe, also on Sunday at noon, in a different session to Mda, and Struan Douglas on The Story of Jazz on Sunday at 2pm.

- Political debate abounds at the fair this year. Look out for:

- Media in SA: Who Owns and Controls it? Join Jane Duncan, Lumko Mtimde and Tawana Kupe for a chat on Saturday at 12pm.

- The Colour of Our Future: Does Colour or "Race" Matter? One of South Africa's eternal conversations will be steered by Xolela Mangcu, Joel Netshitenze and Adam Habib on Saturday at 4pm.

- Young Female Writers and their Challenges is the topic being debated by authors Futhi Ntshingila and Zukiswa Wanner on Sunday at 1pm.

- Philosophy for Teens is a great way to engage young intellectuals, presented by Theresa Giorgza from the education department at Wits University. It's on Sunday at 10am.

The Jozi Book Fair is on from Friday, September 11, to Sunday, September 13, at the Science Stadium, West Campus, Wits University, Braamfontein.

The schedule is subject to change. Visit jozibookfair.org.za for updated info



HEADY STUFF Gcina Mhlope is a headliner at the Jozi Book Fair

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