

Kitabu

The bi-monthly newsletter of the African School Mobile Library
"African Studies by bicycle"

Issue 6: December 2020

Dear Reader, welcome to Kitabu. In the month that South Africans gather at the Kurudi Festival to celebrate the continent and the work towards unity, let's sing the praises of two of its gatherers, past and present.

Steve Biko Is Smiling

Steve Biko is smiling Neo Mathetsa, because of you. Smiling, grinning and clapping his hands. The iconic one, mentor to thousands, who founded the Zanempilo – "bringing health" – Community Centre, is feeling good, because your vision is a continuation of his; commencing with the setting up of a library in your one-room home. Let them read of Mamphela Ramphele and also of Thebe Medupe

Smiling at the shining new recruit to the Royal Grassroots Regiment; who focuses on literacy, as his centre had a remit of health. When the only library in the area burns down, what do you do? You implement the dream of another one. Books on the coffee table, stacked in boxes between the sofa and the armchair and wherever there is space: people sitting on the bed. Let them read of John Kani and also of Terry Pheto

I imagine him in the days of door to door, with one or two fellow dreamers, asking for donations of books: bringing deference to the elders and laughter for the children. And did you ever see green wheelie-bins used for a greater purpose, than for the transportation of literature? Email me and tell me, if you know of a sweeter use for them. Let them read of George Pemba and Mbongeni Buthelezi.

A dedicated actor and a lover of books, he had already shared the former passion, by organising drama workshops and performances in the township of his birth. During the theatre interaction, he was once again reminded of low literacy levels and the lack of books. Under the umbrella of the Mohlakeng Youth Movement, which Neo co-founded with other young people, the "Underground Library" began. Let them read of Abdullah Ibrahim and also of Lucky Dube.

If we're going to stand and salute anyone, let it be Neo Mathetsa; the young man who inspired a collection of two thousand books. The library then moved to a container: I wonder where it is now. Children come to do their homework and adults come to borrow books. I hope that in March, when South Africa celebrates Library Week, that the Underground one is mentioned; and when in July, Librarian's Day is celebrated, that he is given a commendation. Let them read of Alex la Guma and also of Bessie Head.

Isn't it good to know, that in his place of well-deserved rest, laying sideways on a hammock in the shade, looking on: that the valiant one Steve Biko is smiling.

Sources - DGMT - SABC News - Wikipedia

What influenced us to start the library is the lack of reading in our community, not just in Mohlakeng but in the rest of the country especially among young people.

Neo Mathetse – SABC News

They collected close to 2000 books and began stocking a library in a small building behind Neo's house. Dubbed "The Underground Library" by community members, today children come after school to do homework, play games and rehearse performances. The library also lends books to adults, and volunteers follow up door-to-door to see whether people are reading and enjoying the books they've borrowed.

DGMT

He tries to combine his love for theatre and reading into the Underground Library which will officially launch this weekend. The 'movement' as he calls it, wants to encourage people within his community to read and have fun while they do it. The launch hopes to encourage people to donate books and build up confidence in people who are shy to read aloud.... He also liaises with the children's teachers to monitor their reading levels. Neo plans on taking this initiative further and hopes it will gain enough momentum to spread to other townships.

Anazi Zote

He said the library plays a meaningful role in helping kids with homework as well as offering acting lessons. It especially benefits those in townships, informal settlements as well as RDP houses.

Neo is also part of a troop of actors, and arts and culture vultures called Mohlakeng Youth Movement aimed at promoting arts and culture among the youth in the township.

"As the demand grew, more and more books arrived in large numbers. A book container from Bright Kids Foundation was donated to us and we put it in a space next to Ramosa Hall. The only challenge we are faced with at the new facility is the lack of electricity for WiFi and IT-related services, as well as water and sanitation."

Neo Mathetse

excerpts from Randfontein Herald

As well as ethnographic/historical writings on the San, Xhosa, Zulu, Venda, Swazi, Sotho and the Tswana, the ASML has **SEROWE: VILLAGE OF THE RAIN WIND** - Bessie Head

FOOLS AND OTHER STORIES - Njabulo S. Ndebele

A WALK IN THE NIGHT and **IN THE FOG OF THE SEASON'S END** - Alex la Guma

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