

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Nawal El Saadawi to headline 5th Africa Writes - the UK’s largest festival of African literature”

Africa Writes, the UK’s biggest annual African literature and book festival organised by the Royal African Society, returns to The British Library from Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd July 2016.

Celebrating its fifth anniversary, Africa Writes 2016 brings together over 50 authors, poets, publishers, performers, and academics, including some of the most influential voices in contemporary African writing.

Nawal El Saadawi – the internationally renowned Egyptian feminist writer whose work has been translated into over forty languages and includes titles such as *Woman at Point Zero* and *Women and Sex* (banned in Egypt for almost two decades) – will headline the festival. On Saturday 2nd July, El Sadaawi will reflect on being a woman writer and on the challenges faced by women living in traditional societies. She says:

“I am delighted to participate in the 5th Africa Writes festival organised by the Royal African Society in London this July. Africa is rich with creative women and men, of fine material wealth and unique historical treasures. Egypt is in Africa, not the so-called ‘Middle East’ (Middle to who?). I am proud of my African roots.” - Nawal El Saadawi

New writing and women’s writing will feature prominently in this year’s Africa Writes programme. The festival will also shine a light on narratives of displacement and migration, and the theme of ‘disruptive stories’. Writers Kayo Chingonyi, Inua Ellams and Zodwa Nyoni will engage MPs, peers and the general public with their stories of asylum and migration at a pre-festival event taking place in Parliament on Monday 27th June, as part of Refugee Week.

On Friday 1st July, Africa Writes presents *Sex, Love & Poetry*, an evening of readings and uncensored conversation hosted by world-renowned Nigerian LGBT rights activist Bisi Alimi; and on Sunday 3rd July, the festival closes with a staged reading of Joy Gharoro-Akjobotor’s *The Immigrant*, a provocative new play set in the year 2116 about a desperate British migrant claiming asylum in the African Union.

In the last five years, Africa Writes has become a key London-based event and has hosted some of the biggest names in African literature, including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2012), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2013), Ama Ata Aidoo (2014), Wole Soyinka (2014) and Ben Okri (2015), as well as featuring and supporting up-and-coming talent, like poet Warsan Shire (2013, 2014), who recently featured in Beyoncé’s visual album *Lemonade*.

From book launches and panel discussions to performances and workshops, Africa Writes 2016 will once again offer a wide-ranging programme, connecting African, British and diaspora writers to diverse UK audiences, and bringing contemporary African writing to the fore.

Our panel discussions will explore the role of non-fiction writing in developing Africa’s development narratives, diversity in children’s publishing, and new strands in contemporary genre fiction. Our expanded outreach programme will include interactive sessions for children and young adults, as well as masterclasses from award-winning writers Bernadine Evaristo and Jacob Sam-La Rose.

Other programme highlights include: *Meet the Publishers*, a Dragon's Den-style pitching event for aspiring writers; the annual *Africa in Translation* symposium curated by Wangui wa Goro; events featuring the 2016 Caine Prize for African Writing shortlisted writers – Abdul Adan (Somalia/Kenya), Lesley Nneka Arimah (Nigeria), Tope Folarin (Nigeria), Bongani Kona (Zimbabwe), and Lidudumalingani (South Africa); and audience favourite *African Books To Inspire*.

Africa Writes 2016 book launches include: *Taty Went West* by South Africa's new sci-fi talent Nikhil Singh; *The Woman Next Door* by Baijan-Nigerian-South African Yewande Omotoso; *How to Spell Naija in 100 Short Stories (Vol 2)* by Nigerian Chuma Nwokolo; and several titles by Congo's writer in exile Kama Sywor Kamanda.

-- ENDS --

For further information or to arrange interviews with guest writers and contributors, please contact Caitlin Pearson, Events Programme Coordinator at the Royal African Society, on:

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Download the full festival programme [here](#).

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Notes to Editors:

1. **Africa Writes** is the Royal African Society's annual literature and book festival in association with the British Library. Launched in 2012, every year Africa Writes showcases established and emerging talent from the African continent and its diaspora in what is now the UK's biggest celebration of contemporary African writing. www.africawrites.org
2. **The Royal African Society** is a membership organisation that fosters a better understanding of Africa in the UK and throughout the world. Our goal is to promote Africa globally in the spheres of business, politics, academia, arts and culture. We disseminate knowledge and insight to make a positive difference to Africa's development and celebrate the diversity and depth of African cultures. www.royalafricansociety.org.uk
3. **The British Library** is the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world's greatest research libraries. It provides world class information services to the academic, business, research and scientific communities and offers unparalleled access to the world's largest and most comprehensive research collection. www.bl.uk
4. **Africa Writes 2016 is supported by:** Arts Council England, the British Library, the Miles Morland Foundation, the Centre of African Studies, University of London, and Morton Hotel.
5. **Africa Writes 2016 programming partners** include: The Caine Prize, The Royal Society of Literature, Barbican Young Poets, the Africa All-Party Parliamentary Group, Commonwealth Writers, Counterpoint Arts, English PEN, SIDENSI, Afrikult., African Reading Group (ARG!), Black Reading Group, Bahati Books, Cassava Republic Press, *Kwani?* Trust, The Literary Consultancy, and Writivism.
6. **Africa Writes 2016 media partners** include: Africa in Words, Black Applause, BookShy Blogger, Hello I Am Mariam, Indelibl, NAM Magazine, and The Nzinga Effect.