

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Warsan Shire headlines the 2018 Africa Writes festival”

In her first UK public appearance since her poetry reached millions of people in Beyonce's visual album *Lemonade*, poet Warsan Shire will headline Africa Writes festival in London, Friday 29 June to Sunday 1 July 2018. The UK's biggest annual African literature festival brought to you by the Royal African Society will be held at The British Library and Rich Mix London.

Ahead of the publication of a new collection, Shire will close the festival on Sunday 1 July in conversation about her work, process and inspiration, as well as discussing living and working in LA, and her new projects that explore the intersections of art and healing. Shire was awarded the inaugural Brunel International African Poetry Prize in 2013, and in 2014 was selected as Poet in Residence for Queensland, Australia, and appointed as the first Young Poet Laureate for London. She is the first person under 30 to headline Africa Writes festival.

Fellow poets Yomi Sode and Octavia Poetry Collective will perform at the Friday and Saturday headline events of the festival, which brings together over 50 of the most influential voices in contemporary writing from Africa and its diaspora over an exciting literary weekend exploring themes of migration and identity, and celebrating the poetic form.

Following sold-out shows at the Roundhouse and Battersea Arts Centre, Yomi Sode adds a special date to his UK tour of his one-man show exploring themes of identity, migration and displacement, to open the festival on the evening of Friday 29 June at the British Library. *Coat* is an honest and emotional story of Junior, a child born in Nigeria who leaves behind a life he loved to move to London at the age of 9. Whilst cooking up a stew on stage, Sode confronts the difficult realities of growing up in south London as a young man, and the expectations of family, blending poetry and drama in a unique performance style rich with lyricism, humour and hard truths.

The celebrated Octavia Poetry Collective hosts the Africa Writes 2018 Party on Saturday 30 June at Rich Mix, London. Following last year's sold out R.A.P. Party which saw the main British Library space full of 600 young poetry and hip hop fans, the 2018 party will be a celebration of the words, art and song of women in Africa and the diaspora. Taking their name from the American science fiction writer Octavia Butler and inspiration from the \$1 billion-grossing Marvel film *Black Panther*, the womxn of colour poetry group will host a Wakanda-themed event featuring art displays, a live band, DJs and a line-up of guest poets.

The Africa Writes daytime programme of more than 20 events includes book launches of writers from across the continent and the diaspora, panel discussions, workshops and an international book fair with classics, recent publications and rare finds. Tickets are now available to book at africawrites.org/tickets/africa-writes-2018 and the full festival programme will be announced at the end of May.

-- ENDS --

For further information or to arrange interviews with guest writers and contributors, please contact:
Caitlin Pearson, Events Programme Manager ras_events@soas.ac.uk or 0203 073 8337

For Images, Logos & Artist Bios, [Download the Press Pack](#) on Dropbox

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Listing Information

FESTIVAL (Adults and family)

Africa Writes 2018

Friday 29 June, 20:00 – Sunday 1 July, 19:30

The British Library, 96 Euston Rd, London NW1 2DB www.bl.uk

Nearest tube: King's Cross

Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Rd, London E1 6LA www.richmix.org.uk

Nearest tube: Liverpool Street / Old Street

Ticketed headline events & day passes £8 - £18

Festival website: africawrites.org

Ticket booking link: www.bl.uk/events/africa-writes-2018

Confirmed line-up so far: Warsan Shire, Yomi Sode, Octavia Poetry Collective

Notes to Editors:

- Africa Writes** festival is an annual celebration of contemporary literature from Africa and the diaspora brought to you by The Royal African Society. 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
- The **Royal African Society** is a membership organisation that provides opportunities for people to connect, celebrate and engage critically with a wide range of topics and ideas about Africa today. Through our events, publications and digital channels we facilitate mutual understanding between the UK and Africa across academia, business, politics, culture and education. We amplify African voices and interests, reaching a network of more than one million people globally. www.royalafricansociety.org.uk
- 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
- Africa Writes 2018** is organised in partnership with the British Library, with support from the Arts Council England, and the Miles Morland Foundation.