

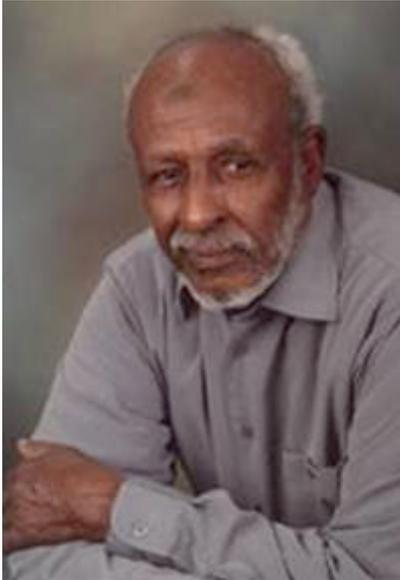
Kwani? LitFest 2012 Writer and Artist Bios



Nawal El Saadawi graduated from the University of Cairo Medical College in 1955, specialising in psychiatry, and practiced as a medical doctor until taking the position of Director General for Public Health Education in the Ministry of Health. In 1972 she lost her job in the Egyptian government because of her banned book: *Woman and Sex*. In 1982, she established the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), the Egyptian Branch of which was outlawed in Egypt in 1991. In 1981 Saadawi was arrested and imprisoned for publicly criticising President Anwar Sadat's policies. She was released one month after his assassination. Her name appeared on a fundamentalist death list after publishing her novel *The Fall of the Imam* in Cairo in 1988 and she was obliged to leave her country, to teach in the USA. Other court cases have been raised against both her and her daughter and defeated. In 2008 she defeated a case that demanded the withdrawal of her Egyptian Nationality in response to her play *God Resigns at the Summit Meeting*.

Her most famous novel, *Woman at Point Zero* was published in Beirut in 1973. It was followed in 1976 by *God Dies by the Nile* and in 1977 by *The Hidden Face of Eve*. *The Hidden Face of Eve* was her first book to be translated to English and was published by Zed Books in 1980. Her most recent novel is *Zina: The Stolen Novel* (2008). Nawal El Saadawi has published over 45 books, which have been translated into over 30 languages. She holds more than ten honorary doctorates from different universities in Europe and the USA. Her many prizes and awards include the Great Minds of the Twentieth Century Prize (2003), the North-South Prize from the Council of Europe, the Premi Internacional Catalunya (2004), and most recently she was the 2007 recipient of The African Literature Association's Fonlon-Nichols Award. From 2007-2009 she held the Cosby Chair at Spelman College in Atlanta. Her books are taught in universities across the world.

Nawal El Saadawi has received many awards and accolades during her life. In October she received the *Good Housekeeping* Women of the Year Outstanding Achievement Award (UK); La Federación de Mujeres Progresistas (FMP)[Progressive Women's Federation (FMP)] in Madrid and The University of Oslo's Human Rights Award in November 2012.



Maxamed Ibraahim Warsame (Hadraawi) is a prominent Somali poet and songwriter, considered by many to be the greatest living Somali poet, having written many notable protest works. Hadraawi was born in Burco, situated in present-day Somaliland. In 1953, at the age of nine, he went to live with an uncle in the Yemeni port city of Aden, where he began attending a local school where he received his nickname, "Hadraawi" (*Abu Hadra*), a pseudonym by which he is now popularly known. In 1963, he became a primary school teacher.

After Somalia gained its independence, Hadraawi relocated from Aden to Mogadishu and began working for Radio Mogadiscio. In Mogadishu, he

both attended and later taught at Lafoole (Afgooye) University. He also worked for the government's Department of Information. Aside from love lyrics, he was a powerful commentator on the political situation and critic of the then military regime in Somalia. In 1973, Hadraawi wrote the poem *Siinley* and the play *Tawaawac* ("Lament"), both of which were critical of the military government that was then in power. For this dissent, he was subsequently arrested and imprisoned in Qansax Dheere until April 1978.

Following his release from prison in 1978, Hadraawi became the Director of the Arts Division of the Academy of Science, Arts, and Literature in Somalia and later joined the opposition Somali National Movement based in Ethiopia. He was a very prominent voice in the ensuing years of civil war. Hadraawi relocated to Great Britain in 1991, returning to Somaliland in 1999, this time settling in Hargeisa. The following year, the mayor of Chicago invited him to participate in the latter city's Millennium Festival.

Hadraawi now lives in Burco and will be awarded with a 2012 Prince Claus Award for his contributions to peace through poetry in January 2013.



Jamal Mahjoub was born in London and raised in Khartoum. His stories and essays have appeared in The Guardian, Le Monde, Die Zeit and other publications around the world. His novels have been widely translated and won a number of awards including, the Guardian/Heinemann African Short Story Prize, the NH Vargas Llosa prize and the Etonnants Voyageurs Prize. He is a contributing editor at Guernica Magazine (www.guernicamag.com) and has recently begun a new life in crime fiction as Parker Bilal – The Golden Scales was published by Bloomsbury in 2012.

Website: www.jamalmahjoub.com



Jama Musse Jama is a mathematician whose research interests include ethno-mathematics and the role of traditional indigenous culture in Mathematics Education as well as language technology. He is the author (and co-author) of several books, two of them on Somali traditional games and their use for educational resources. Jama's work in the development and promotion of the Somali language, literature, and reading culture includes the founding and organising of the annual Hargeysa International Book Fair, to which he recently added a Moving Library Tour. He is the founding president of Redsea Cultural Foundation and Publisher of Ponte Invisibile, its publishing arm, which develops works in standardised, formal Somali.



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Awes Ahmed Osman was born and brought up in Somalia, and educated in India & Somalia. Prior to arriving in Sweden, he worked extensively in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Somalia. His novel, *Skinless Goat in Somalia* is translated into Swedish (*denskinnlösageten I Somalia*) and he is now working on a new book. Awes currently works as a teacher/trainer at Folkhögskola Nyköping and is highly interested in helping newly arrived refugees integrate into Swedish society and for this reason, coaches immigrants in Stockholm. He speaks four languages fluently and can be reached on awesosman@hotmail.com



Helon Habila was born in Nigeria. He worked in Lagos as a journalist before moving to England in 2002 for a writing fellowship at the University of East Anglia. In 2001 his short story, *Love Poems* won the Caine Prize and in 2002 his first novel, *Waiting for an Angel* was published. The novel went on to win the Commonwealth Prize for Best First Novel (Africa Section) in 2003. In 2006, he co-edited the British Council's anthology, *New Writing 14*.

In 2005-2006 Habila was the first Chinua Achebe Fellow at Bard College, New York. He stayed on in America as a professor of Creative Writing at George Mason University in Virginia. In 2007 his second novel, *Measuring Time*, was published. The novel won the Virginia Library Foundation's fiction award in 2008. In the same year Habila's short story, *The Hotel Malogo* won the Emily Balch Prize and was also selected by the Best American Non-Required Anthology, edited by Dave Eggers.

Habila's third novel, *Oil on Water*, which deals with environmental pollution in the oil rich Niger Delta, was published in 2010 and was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (2011) and the Orion Book Award (2012). It was also a runner up for the PEN Open Book Award (2012).

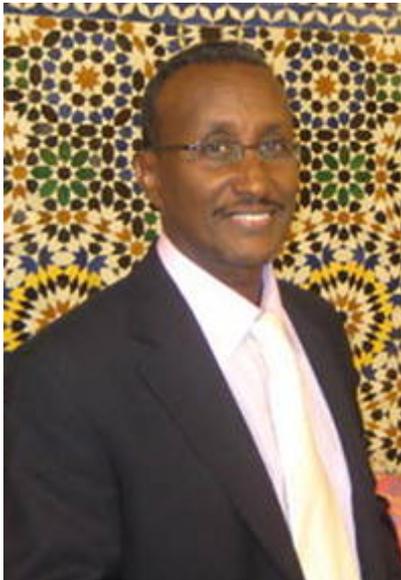
In 2011 Habila edited *The Granta Book of the African Short Story*. Habila has been a contributing editor for the *Virginia Quarterly Review* since 2004. He also teaches every summer in an annual creative writing workshop series in his native Nigeria, the Fidelity Bank International Creative Writing Workshop. Helon Habila lives in Virginia with his wife and three children.

Website: <http://www.helonhabila.com/>



Meaza Worku, playwright, essayist, and a comic writer, is one of a very few Ethiopian women writers. She studied Theatre Arts at the University of Addis Ababa and went on to launch a career in acting and directing. *Aquarachu/The short cut/* (2002) was her first drama directing on television, and *Yekirbruk/short-sighted/* (2003) was her first television play. She then joined Fana Broadcasting Agency to work as a radio journalist and entertainment program producer, and produced more than 20 short radio plays, soap operas, short stories, articles & comic books.

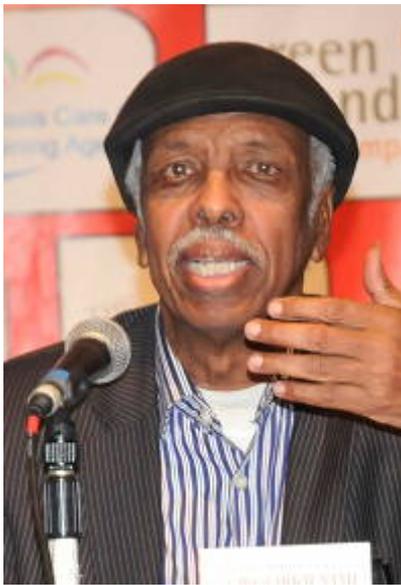
Zinegnochu /Celebrities (2011), her first stage play, has been on show at the Addis Ababa Culture & Theatre Hall since April 2012. In 2011 she wrote her second play (first play in English) *Desperate to Fight*, which was selected for development by the Sundance Institute East African Theatre program. The play was read at the Theatre lab venue on Manda Island, Kenya and New York's Barishnikov Theater in 2012. *Desperate to Fight* was also selected for the WPIC (Women Playwrights' International Conference), held in Stockholm in August 2012. With the help of artiste grants received from Sundance Institute, the play is now in production and will be staged in Ethiopia in Amharic & English. Selections from this play will also feature at the 2012 Kwani? Litfest in Nairobi.



Chehem Watta was born in the Djibouti Republic and teaches at the Faculty of Medicine and Djibouti University. He is the HIV/AIDS advisor to the president of the Djibouti Republic, as well as an awarded poet. He is the author of six poetry collections, *Rimbaud l'Africain. Diseur de silence* [Rimbaud, the African] (2012), *Djibouti, le silence embrasé du désert* (2012), *O pays, perle sur la langue-routes pour le monde* (2005), *Cahier de brouillon des poèmes du désert* (1999), *Pèlerin d'errance* (1997), and *Sur les soleils de Houroud* (1997), of the novel *Amours nomades* [Loves of Nomads] (2008) and the novella *L'éloge des voyous* [In praise of louts] (2008). Watta is working on a new book: *l'Union des crabes de la mer Rouge ou les courtes histoires des baisés jetés à l'océan Indien et à la mer Rouge* [the sacred Union of crabs of the Red Sea]



Warsan Shire is a Kenyan-born Somali poet and writer who is based in London. Born in 1988, she has read her work internationally, more recently in South Africa, Italy and Germany. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Creative Writing. Her poetry has been translated into Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. The artist and activist uses her work to document stories of journey and trauma. She curates and teaches workshops around the art of healing through narrative. Her first book *Teaching My Mother How To Give Birth* is published by Flipped Eye.



Said Jama Hussein is a founding member of Somali P.E.N Centre (an affiliate member of International P.E.N, World Association of Writers), and its vice-president until 2010. A well-known Somali Scholar who is actively engaged in the promotion of the Somali language and literature, he is also an essayist and short-story writer. His first collection of short stories, *Shufbeel* was published in book form by Ponte Invisibile, Pisa, Italy in 2010. Many of his stories have appeared in various Somali journals published in London; some have been adapted and broadcast on the Somali section of BBC World Service Radio. He has also translated some of Anton Chekhov's short stories into Somali, published in book form by Ponte Invisibile in

2011 .

Said Jama is a regular contributor to the two highly popular cultural events related to Somali Literature, London's Somali Week Festival, and the Hargeysa International Book Fair respectively. He is fluent in English, Arabic and Somali and currently heads the translation section of the Redsea-online Cultural Foundation. Said Jama is married and lives with his family in London.



Alemseged Tesfai, lawyer turned freedom fighter, is a prominent historian, essayist, novelist and dramatist. Born in the town of Adi Quala, Eritrea, in 1944, he graduated from Haile Selassie I University (now Addis Ababa University) with an LLB degree in 1969, and attained a Masters degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1972. In 1974, Tesfai abandoned his PhD studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to join the fledgling Eritrean People's Liberation Front. He has written several books and plays and his novel, *Wedi Hadera*, is based on the experiences of a bandit turned freedom fighter. *Two Weeks in the Trenches (Kilte Qne ab Difa'at)* is a collection of childhood memories, war diaries and plays which won Eritrea's highest literary award, the Raimock Prize, in 1997. He has also published two children's novels. His three-volume work on the history of Eritrea covering the period 1941-1962, is a treatise on the events that led to Eritrea's 30 year war of independence. Tesfai writes mainly in his native language of Tigrinya, with some works translated into English. His English version of *Two Weeks in the Trenches* has been published by Red Sea Press (USA) and Hidri Publishers (Eritrea), respectively. He also collaborated in translating his play, *The Other War*, with a British playwright. The play was staged at the Yorkshire Playhouse Theatre in Leeds in 1997, and was also broadcast as a BBC Play of the Week in 2001. His Tigrinya translation of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *I Will Marry When I Want* premiered in Asmara as part of the 'Against All Odds' Conference in 2000. At present, Tesfai is finalizing his last volume on Eritrean history and making plans to condense his history books into an English version. He is also working on a collection of short stories in English that he hopes to publish over the next few years. His screen adaptation of *Wedi Hadera* will feature in Eritrean theatres in two parts.



Sayadiin Hersi was born in the autumn of 1972 on the current border area between Ethiopia and Somalia. He attended primary school in Warder, Ethiopia and secondary in Mogadishu, Somalia. He studied medicine, graduating in 2006 from the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, where he lives since seeking asylum there in 1992. He is currently employed by the municipality of Amsterdam as a public health officer. His novel, *Verloren Vader (Lost Father)* was published in Dutch in November 2010

Moving Africa 2012 Writer Bios



Chuma Nwokolo (b. 1963) is a writer and attorney, called to the bar in 1984. He worked briefly for the Legal Aid Council and was managing partner of the C&G Chambers and has convened legal and literary conferences. He was writer-in-residence of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and chair of Leys Newspapers, Oxford. He has led creative writing seminars for Oxford Brookes University and Benue State University and delivered workshops at literary festivals.

The publisher of African Writing Magazine, his seven books include two novels for young adults, (The Extortionist & Dangerous Inheritance - [Macmillan Pacesetters]) a poetry collection, (Memories of Stone), the novel, Diaries of a Dead

African, the novelised anthologies, African Tales at Jailpoint, One More Tale for the Road, and most recently, a collection of short stories, The Ghost of Sani Abacha. His story, Diary of a Dead African, was chosen by La Internazionale as one of the 3 best stories worldwide in 2003. His work has been translated into Italian, Slovene and Slovak.

For more information on Chuma, please visit : www.nwokolo.com



Born in 1985, Dzekashu MacViban is the author of a poetry collection titled Scions of the Malcontent. His work has been featured in Wasafiri, The Sonora Review, The New Black Magazine, Jungle Jim, PalaPala, Saraba, and Aaduna, as well as other anthologies. He is a post graduate student at the University of Yaoundé, and the Founding Editor of Bakwa Magazine. He lives in Yaoundé and is working on a novel.



Sylvia Schlettwein was born on 16 November 1975 in Omaruru/ Namibia. She grew up in Stellenbosch/ South Africa, Katima Mulilo/ Namibia and Windhoek/ Namibia. Sylvia holds a BA-Degree in German and French of the University of Cape Town. In 2000 she went to Stuttgart/ Germany where she continued to study German and French Language and Literature at the University of Stuttgart and the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lettres et Sciences Humaines in Lyon/ France. After completing her Master's degree in June 2002, she returned to Windhoek in 2003 where she now teaches German, English, Afrikaans and French to adults and children in her own language centre, the Language Studio.

Sylvia writes short fiction and poetry in English, German and Afrikaans. She received a Highly Commended Award in the 2010 Commonwealth Short Story competition for her story "Framing the Nation". She was selected for and attended the 2011 FEMRITE Residency for African Women Writers in Kampala/ Uganda. In July 2012 her short stories were published in the collection "Bullies, Beasts and Beauties". Sylvia lives, loves and works in Windhoek where she is involved in various literary projects. She is currently working on her first novel and her current work features on her publisher's (Wordweaver Publishing House) on www.wordweaverpublishing.com. Find her on facebook under Sylvia Schlettwein.

Short Stories:

Bullies, Beasts and Beauties (Anthology of short stories with Isabella Morris, Wordweaver 2012)
Mother of the Beast In: Summoning the Rains (Femrite 2012)
Blutsbrüder (Felsgraffiti 2011)
Blood Brothers (Bleeding Words 2, 2011)
To own a bed In: The Bed Book of Short Stories (Modjaji 2010)
Framing the Nation In: Commonwealth Short Stories 2010 (CBA 2010) Highly Commended Award
Vision 2010 in Suburbia (Felsgraffiti 2010) Felsgraffiti Literary Award
Windhoeker Wahrheit (Felsgraffiti 2008)

Poetry:

Warten In: Ich häufe weiter Sehnsucht an (Jokers 2011) Highly Commended Award
Lied vom Roten Geröll (Felsgraffiti 2009) Felsgraffiti Special Poetry Prize
Wüstenspaziergang (Felsgraffiti 2008)

Essays:

Ja, well, no fein (Perspektiven 2011)
Wasserkochen à la Ingo Schultze (Felsgraffiti, Windhoek 2010)



Ntone Edjabe was born in Douala (Cameroon) in 1970 and moved to Lagos (Nigeria) to complete his studies. In 1993 he moved to South Africa, where he has worked since as a journalist, editor, publisher and DJ. He worked as a basketball coach from 1995-1998 and was Coaching Director of Basketball South Africa during this period. He co-founded the Pan African Market in 1999, a trade and cultural centre in Cape Town. He published a weekly music column in CapeTimes newspaper and worked as freelance editor from 1998 to 2002.

In 2001 he founded Chimurenga, a publication of culture and politics. He is also co-editor of African Cities Reader, a biennial publication in collaboration with the University of Cape Town. He is the founder and co-curator of the Pan African

Space Station (PASS), an internet based music project. He has collaborated with numerous radio stations and publications, including Bush Radio 89.5, Politique Africaine, L'Autre Afrique, BBC Focus on Africa. As DJ, he is a founder of the Fong Kong Bantu Sound System, a collective based in Cape Town. As speaker on contemporary African art and culture, he has participated in events around the world, including Documenta 12, Africa Remix, Dak'art biennale and many more. In 2009 he was Massachusetts Institute of Technology Abramowitz Artist-in-Residence. He sits on the board of Keleketla Library, an arts organisation based in Johannesburg.

Selected publications

- Re-state the focus to shape local polemic in "Artthrob", n. 71, 07/2003.
- The dour rhetoric of nation building, Rhodes University Journalism Review 24, 2004
- Why blackman dey carry shit in Politique africaine, Issue 100 Cosmopolis: de la ville, de l'Afrique et du monde, Karthala Editions, 2006
- African Comics, BBC Focus on Africa, 2007
- Felasophy and the Quest for Lightness in the New South Africa, Zones of Emergency Lectures, MIT, 2008
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Féling Capela

Born Juma Salvador in Mozambique, 1981, Féling Capela graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Portuguese literature from the Eduardo Mondlane University. The young up-coming writer also has a keen interest in photography and has trained in the same in Germany and Austria. Féling is currently a photojournalist at Noticias Newspaper. His activist mind led him to become a founder member of Associação Cultural Pl'Arte d'Alma (Literature International Group).



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Kivu Ruhorahoza is a writer and film director from Rwanda. His first short film, Confession won the City of Venice Award at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival and was screened at the Venice Film Festival. Lost in the South won Best African Short Film at the Vues D'Afrique Festival in Montreal and was screened at the Rotterdam International Film Festival. Ruhorahoza's first feature length narrative, Grey Matter, won the Best Actor Award and the Jury Special Mention for Best Emerging Filmmaker at the 2011 TriBeCa Film Festival in New York. The film went on to play at international prestigious film festivals including Melbourne, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Dubai, Durban, Göteborg and Rio. Ruhorahoza just completed his first novel,

Desintegrations, written in French.

Artists



Kenyan-born Somali artist Deqa Abshir has training in both art and women's studies. An artist in Kenya, her artwork expresses the complexities of identity.

"There are various influences that make up who I am, but my identity as a Somali Kenyan is fundamental to my life considering that I identify equally with my "Somali-ness" and my "Kenyan-ness". Additionally having spent 6 years in New York for my art education and having my family scattered around the world have all led me to question: What is identity? How rooted is it in citizenship or where we live? Through my paintings, I try to get these thoughts in order. I feel like this discourse of identity affects so many in my generation of young Africans who everyday are confronted with issues of globalization, while having to engage with national, tribal and cultural pressures. Contrary to what is expected, I believe this has made my generation stronger, more diverse and more accepting. This acceptance and growth is something I strive to express in my work."

Her work attempts to highlight some of the paradoxes of modern culture; the way in which our traditional or semi-traditional upbringings and the culture that surrounds our everyday lives contradicts with the modern fixtures tattooed across Africa. Her artwork endeavors to highlight the juxtapositions between the realistic and the poetic, the traditional and the modern, the global south and the global north.

Her current work focuses on identity on a community and individual level seen from the perspective of women. The images are set on a back drop of architectural imagery and symbolism, the changing architecture of our society as it develops represents a change in a community's identity. One of the main symbols in this series of work is that of a gate. The gates represent the diacotomy between the restrictions of identity and culture as well as the representation of new beginnings and possibility in relation to the current climate in world. The women in each of the paintings serve as a narrator as well as a symbol of the importance of women as storytellers within society.



El Tayeb Daw Elbeit creates richly coloured paintings focusing on the human figure, although he also shows an interest in the Arab influence on local architecture. He arrived in Kenya from Sudan in 1997 on invitation by the local Paa ya Paa gallery and soon found a job as a textile designer for the Kenyan fashion house Kiko Romeo. He has exhibited his work widely in Kenya and abroad, including in London, Paris and Rome.



Ermias Ekube is a painter, engraver, sculptor & poet who arrived in Addis Ababa in 1970.

He was educated at the now Addis Ababa College of Fine Arts and Design where he studied painting, drawing, sculpture and graphics art, majoring in painting (DFA in 1990). Since 1991 he has participated in several group and solo exhibitions in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Tanzania, Swaziland, Denmark, England and Norway; and published poems and writings in exhibition brochures.

Besides giving short art workshops and art courses, Ermias has exhibited regularly with 2D and 3D mediums in different techniques in Asmara. He currently lives and works in Nairobi.

To learn more about Ermias' work, please visit <http://www.warscapes.com/content/three-eritrean-painters>



Fawaz El Said was born in Sudan and graduated from the college of Fine Art at Sudan University. He has participated in art workshops at the French Cultural Centre in Khartoum and exhibits his work throughout East Africa. Fawaz is currently based at Kuona Trust in Nairobi.



Yassir Ali is a Sudanese artist born in Kasala, East Sudan. He currently lives and works in Nairobi, Kenya and has his studio at the Kuona Trust Art Center. Yassir's art and style is inspired by the Nubian culture of North Sudan. He graduated from Sudan University for Science and Technology (B.A), where he studied fine Art. Yassir has participated in various projects including the Nafage Art Workshop held at the Abd elKarim Mirghani Children's Cultural Center (AKMCC) in Sudan in 1998. Yassir has exhibited locally and internationally since 1994.