



CONVERSATIONS
WITH THE HORN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**2012 KWANI? LITFEST: CONVERSATIONS WITH THE HORN – WRITERS,
ARTISTS IN EXCHANGE**

9th-16th December 2012

Readings, performances, writers in conversation, public lectures, panel discussions,
film screenings, art exhibitions, workshops, music and food.

Free Entry

**Venues : Kifaru Gardens, Goethe-Institut Nairobi, University of Nairobi,
Habesha Restaurant, Kuona Trust, Nairobi National Museum , Eastleigh
&KICC**

The fourth edition of Kwani? Litfest, our biennial gathering of writers, artists and thinkers from across Africa, takes place between the 9th and 16th December 2012. This year's literary festival *Conversations With The Horn: Writers, Artists in Exchange* hosts readings, performances and discussions that explore and celebrate literature and its role in our lives. The week-long packed programme brings together important voices from the Horn and award-winning writers from across the continent, including:

- Somali poet Hadraawi
- Sudanese-British novelist Jamal Mahjoub
- Eritrean writer and historian Alemseged Tefesai
- Egyptian writer and activist Nawal El Saadawi
- Nigerian novelist Helon Habila
- Ghanaian novelist Kojo Laing

Hadraawi is widely recognised as the greatest living Somali poet; he was imprisoned in the 1970s for his writing and awarded with a 2012 Prince Claus Award for his contribution to peace through poetry. The novels of **Jamal Mahjoub** have been praised for their insights into the human condition and identities in flux, as well as their explorations of Sudanese history and its links to Africa and Europe. **Alemseged Tesfai** is a lawyer turned freedom fighter and Eritrea's most prominent historian; he writes mainly in his native language Tigrinya and his Tigrinya translation of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *I Will Marry When I Want* premiered in 2000. Bringing these important voices to Nairobi as part of Kwani? Litfest, we wish to foreground the Horn - its rich cultural past and a space of emerging, overlapping and urgent new narratives - in a series of intra-continental literary, artistic and intellectual conversations.

Also present at the festival are Egyptian writer and activist, Nawal El Saadawi and leading West African novelists, Helon Habila and Kojo Laing. The work of **Nawal El Saadawi** engages with significant historical moments in her home country, Egypt, while **Habila** and **Laing's** writing provides literary mirrors to Nigerian and Ghanaian spaces. At a time when East African contemporary writing is struggling to engage with political developments, these writers and those from the Horn will create a discursive space that reveals how contemporary writing can engage and impact the society it emerges from.

Conceptually, the festival also recognizes the Horn as important to East Africa following recent political developments in the region including Kenya's military involvement in Somalia, the independence of South Sudan and the return of Ethiopia as a continental force in politics and economics. Alongside the international emergence of contemporary writing from the region that contests dominant political and media narratives of conflict and displacement, this presents an exciting opportunity for exchange and sharing between writers from the Horn and the rest of the continent.

The festival will kick off on Sunday 9th December with an event at Kifaru Gardens where Hadraawi will hold a public conversation alongside performances of his poetry, followed by readings from Helon Habila and Kojo Laing, live music and DJs. During the week, writers and artists will share and discuss their work and practice, culminating in a lecture by Jamal Mahjoub and the launch of Kwani? 07 on Saturday 15th December. A parallel programme of panel discussions with poetry performances by Warsan Shire and music by Waayaha Cusub runs across the week in Eastleigh. A further eight writers from Mozambique, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa, Rwanda & South Sudan will be visiting the festival as part of a Pan African exchange programme initiated by Goethe-Institut.

The 2012 Kwani? Litfest is presented in programming partnership with and financial support from Ford Foundation, Lambent Foundation, Stichting Doen, IGAD, CEWARN, Oxfam, Goethe-Institut, The Dutch Literary Fund, The Swedish Embassy in Nairobi, Kuona Trust, National Museums of Kenya, The Theatre Company, Hotel InterContinental and University of Nairobi. Kwani Trust hopes this unique showcase of panel discussions, lectures and performances will offer inspiration and entertainment, as well as a space for reflection on the differences, commonalities, and imaginaries between different societies across Africa. Via social media, these conversations and reflections will reverberate across the continent: we welcome you to the 2012 Kwani? Litfest, and to be part of the exchange.

For programme details visit: <http://litfest.kwani.org/>

Twitter: @kwanitrust #kwanilitfest |Facebook: www.facebook.com/kwanitrust

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Notes for Editors:

1. Established in 2003, Kwani Trust is a Kenyan based literary network dedicated to developing quality creative writing and committed to the growth of the creative industry through the publishing and distribution of contemporary African writing, offering training opportunities, producing literary events and establishing and maintaining global literary networks. Our vision is to create a society that uses its stories to see itself more coherently <http://www.kwani.org>
2. Kwani? Litfest was established in 2006. The literary festival brings together leading writers from across Africa for one week in a high-energy social and creative encounter around one salient subject, explored through the lenses of the continent's past, present and emerging literatures. The 2008 edition was themed 'Telling Truths: Writers in Conflict: Our Role, Our Imperative, Our Impact' following the December 2007 post-election violence in Kenya, and using this as a spring board for the generation of ideas around the place of the writer in reinventing post-conflict spaces. The 2010 edition brought three generations of African writers together under the banner 'Tell Us What Happened' and featured conversations comparing challenges, socio-political contexts and techniques across 50 years of African writing.
3. Biographies of participating writers are available at: http://litfest.kwani.org/litfest_writers.php