

Time of the Writer Festival focuses on mental health and suicide

TW: Suicide, self-harm



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The 25th edition of the Time of the Writer Festival will focus on mental health and suicide. Moderated by the skilled and empathetic listener and radio journalist Michelle Constant, the discussion will look to unravel a deeper understanding of suicide and mental health by those who have lost loved ones or been affected by its consequences.

Durban-based journalist Glynis Horning and her husband Chris woke one Sunday morning to the devastating discovery of their 25-year-old son Spencer dead in his bed. In her book, *Waterboy: Making Sense of My Son's Suicide*, Horning pieces together the puzzle of his death, writing with a visceral intensity of loss and grief but also of the joys of celebrating her son's life.

Orphaned by Suicide is Alicia Sewdas Ramdharee's moving account of being orphaned at age 12. In her heart-wrenching memoir, she recounts the horrific event that would see her life thrown into complete chaos and confusion. While the story of her family's murder-suicide made national news headlines, she was shuttled from home to home, with no place to belong. Often being blamed for her family's demise, Ramdharee struggled to find solace-as feelings of abandonment and disgrace threatened her physical and mental wellbeing.



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In her singular lyrical prose, *Broken Porcelain*, Relebone Rirhandzu eAfrika covers topics such as social media's role in how we view depression, generational trauma, what self-care really is, taking anti-depressant medication and finding love when you are mentally ill. The author writes with poignant honesty about the darkness of her mental illness and breaks down what mental illness is (and is not).

Festival details

The panel includes filmmaker Gillian Schutte whose son, Kai Singiswam, committed suicide. After an altercation with a friend, Kai, who displayed hallmarks of empathy and sensitivity, spiralled into a dark hole of self-loathing and despair throughout the night, leading to him ending his life. Popular and loved by his friends, 20-year-old Kai's death sent torrents of sadness through a community that admired him. Schutte is piecing together memoirs to celebrate and honour her son's life.

Flora Veit-Wild, an Emerita Professor of African literatures at Humboldt University, Berlin, will also join the panel. She lived in Harare from 1983 to 1993 and became known for her work on Zimbabwean literature and as literary executor and biographer of Dambudzo Marechera. She is also a founder member of the Zimbabwe Women Writers. Her publications include studies of body, madness, sexuality and gender in Anglophone and Francophone African writing and code-switching and linguistic innovation in Shona literature. Her first book-length literary work is her memoir *They Called You Dambudzo*.



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The festival takes place from 14 to 21 March and will stream live for the 3rd consecutive year, where it can be viewed on [Facebook](#) or [YouTube](#). The Festival sets the stage to engage in critical discussions on Luthuli's vision and current South Africa and socio-political issues of global interest.

The 25th edition of the Time of the Writer festival will honour Chief Albert Luthuli whose debut book *Let My People Go* marks the publication's 60th anniversary. Notable writers from South Africa and around the globe have been assembled for the Festival by the Centre for Creative Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in partnership with the African Book Festival and with the support of the KZN Department of Arts and Culture, National Arts Council, Department of Sport, Arts & Culture, Embassy of Brazil, Embassy of Ukraine and the High Commission Canada.

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