

Poetry Series

**Moses Shimo Seletisha**  
**- poems -**

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# Moses Shimo Seletisha(1986)

## MOSES SHIMO SELETISHA

The late Professor Es'kia Mphahlele believed the silver lining apartheid provided was it allowing indigenous languages to flourish through investment in their development. This was not the case in other parts of colonial Africa.

In a post-apartheid South Africa there are complaints from language practitioners that the democratic government has little regard for Black languages. "I have seen groups growing and dying of hunger. It is the Department of Arts and Torture that is not doing us right at times. They will always tell you there is no sufficient budget". Sepedi performance poet, playwright, actor, translator, writer and intellectual with a keen interest in African languages Moses Seletisha (27) protests.

He is one of a growing number of young artists who choose to express themselves in their mother tongue because as he says, "why do you want me to speak your language when I have mine? "

Seletisha was born at Mooihoek Village in Tsimanyane. He grew up in Leeufontein next to Marble Hall in Limpopo Province. By his confession his father passed on when he was five-years-old, leaving his mother to raise him, a brother and sister with her R500 a month wages. He remembers that his father worked in the mines and alleges his pension was squandered by his uncle. As a result he was raised by his grandparents Martha and Stephen Seletisha with whom he still lives.

His first literary awakening came when he was recruited by a theatre company. From here his formative stage mirrors that of most Limpopo artists. "During Heritage month I saw myself reciting my first poem 'The University of The North' which was a dedication to the late Prof. John Ruganda organised by University of Limpopo. The reception was too overwhelming and made me escalate my pen. At the same time I was serving as an actor performing at The Market Theatre Lab and National Arts Festival (Grahamstown) "

Seletisha prides himself on being 'an old lion'. "My pen started making sense at the age of fifteen " he says. However, for a 27-years old man who models himself after the doyens of Sepedi literature O.K. Matsepe and N.S Puleng it seems Seletisha is comfortable with not getting much attention. He has shared the stage as a poet with notable voices such as Vonani Bila, Lois Reeds, Lesego Rampolokeng, David Wa Maahlamela, Matete Motsoaledi, Mmatshilo Motsei,

Antonio Lyons and many others. "If it was not of poetry I would have become a murderer, I use it for verbal masturbation", he confesses.

It however is not poetry that pays the bills in the Seletisha household. Stage is what he is known and famed for; often wowing crowds across provinces with his animated presence. He has been an artist for the better part of his adult life where he acquired experience working in different stage productions such as Kgorong (The Royal Court) , Le kae letsoalo, Khupamarama (The Secret) , Swana ya Mosate and The Way.

The big project of this prolific English to Sepedi translator is Tšhutšhumakgala (Coal-train) . Tšhutšhumakgala is the biography of Frans Tlokwe Maserumule, a former Umkhonto we Sizwe combatant who is now a member of parliament. "A first black prisoner on Robben Island to get married in Pollsmoor Prison during the apartheid system. He was granted a 10-second honeymoon. Tlokwe is an unacknowledged hero of the liberation struggle in this country." he says. Seletisha believes through this book Tlokwe, who still has bullets lodged in his body will finally be honoured.

The biography is edited by Motsoaledi and wa Maahlamela, both of whom Seletisha calls "my gods of poetry". Foreword is by former APLA commander Letlapa Mphahlele.

He swears by Bila. "He is one honest writer, his work contains the truth."

Himself, wa Maahlamela and Motsoaledi are the trio responsible for the renaissance of a language that is endangered by the emerging middle class which prefers foreign to native. Seletisha is optimistic, "The upcoming generation will also donate the tongues to add on the spice. Instead of investing in sex, alcohol and human trafficking, crime and all unprofitable activities."

SOWETAN 28/06/2013 & KASIEKULTURE blog - Goodenough Mashego

mošate!

# I Forgot To Write A Poem

tonite a poem pays a visit!  
Protest my sleep  
June or not  
with Jane or not  
none of the above matters

I was in the study room  
to offload my dreams  
(wonderful! you go poet)  
i ran back to join Jane  
Jane is long gone  
On bed is a note  
That reads:  
it's over.

Moses Shimo Seletisha

# I Write To You, Not For You

Dear Child  
Yet unborn  
Is that you I look forward to?  
Nameless as you are  
We saw you fumbling  
Deep in your cave  
your kicks & punches  
Tells how militant you are  
Be not like your dad  
Because his poetry is bad  
His poetry is a nag  
Smells pungent  
Is a rot that carries big & green flies  
It undresses the elders  
Shows no respect  
His poetry tells more of human erect  
That's a shame not fame  
Remember  
that when you land on land  
That the universe is horrible  
You will be circumcised on arrival  
Hence your umbilical cord will be cut  
With a blade that is shiny and sharp  
Your constant cry  
Won't make any difference  
As many time you can try  
For life is cruel  
In this cruelty  
We live in  
Daddy only writes poems  
Hoping to fix the nation  
He does that full-time  
Even when it rains & hails in bullets  
No time to put bread on table  
A writer, writes to survive  
So annoying  
Like a typewriter  
-dear child  
I will be glad

If you take a different direction  
Forget about terminologists & critics  
Nothing beats education  
I say so  
simply because I love you.

Moses Shimo Seletisha

# Moetapele

o re o moetapele  
ora ge o beile moeta pele  
hlogo še ke lerotse  
mmpa e rurušwa ke menyonyo,  
o re kea bolela ono šutša  
matswele eke o mosadi  
ditšhiuana re anya lefe?  
twatše le yona še!  
e reja botala  
ge ele wena  
o e fofotša  
ka šawara!  
sebapu  
tena!

Moses Shimo Seletisha

# Sentence

Inside me is a dead organ  
From the crest of my mind  
Flows the blood of a stillborn  
Muted and disconnected from womb to tomb  
Uprooted shamelessly  
His soul cancelled  
From the book of life  
Indeed life is a knife  
Aborted soul I know of  
Tears so eternal  
Memories flushed overnight  
Folk tales are better told  
I am burning from inside  
It haunts me  
To know that, I do not know you  
I feel blank  
More like a word puppet  
Where my lips dance for every tune  
I call it a verbal prostitution

Moses Shimo Seletisha