



Young Scribes



Initiative

Creating future Writers & Readers

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Vision Statement

We, the people of South Africa, have journeyed far since the long lines of our first democratic election on 27 April 1994, when we elected a government for us all.

We began to tell a new story then. We have lived and renewed that story along the way.

Now in 2030 we live in a country which we have remade.

We have created a home where everybody feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone **embraces their full potential**. We are proud to be a community that cares.

Introduction

The time was around three in the afternoon. I was driving down the NY 3A street towards the NY 50 intersection; the street just before the NY 1 intersection traffic lights. As I was approaching this street, I saw, about a hundred meters ahead, diagonally to my left, four young boys of school going age, running after another one about 50 meters ahead of them. He was just about to turn around that corner at the bakery. As they got closer, 3 stopped and only one kept running toward the other boy, careful not to be noticed by him; as if to surprise him.

He finally reached him right at the corner and as he did, from behind in a familiar friendly embrace he placed his left arm on his friend's shoulders around his neck, and walked beside him. No more than 2 or 3 steps later, he pulled out a gun with his right hand and shot him in the face. He then removed his left arm around him as the boy fell, slowly; watching him all the while. Then all 4 boys ran and disappeared between the houses in the area. I have never been more shocked in my life. I still have images of that boy falling slowly; he was wearing a white T-shirt and sky blue jeans. I will never forget that boy."

This is an account told by my brother of an incident that took place in Gugulethu about 3 weeks ago. This is one of many incidents of violence involving young children in township areas yet he said this one struck deeply; seeing how cold and brutal our children are. He'd never seen the boy before yet, in his words, he said, "... **soze ndiphinde ndiyilibale la layti...**" (I will never forget that boy).

The truth is we have created an environment that makes monsters of our kids and as we continue failing them, our children are increasingly becoming numb. The question then is, "What are we going to do to help make a better environment for our kids?" What contributions are we making towards that end? My grandmother taught us that idle hands are the devil's tools and that even if you're sitting in front of a heater, cold, you must be doing something productive with your hands. Her daughters, granddaughters and even great granddaughters, would knit; while I made a habit of fixing unbroken electronic gadgets.

What of today's kids? What are we doing for them? SIMAMELE is creating an initiative that will contribute towards creating a better environment for our youth; by providing a platform to help them keep their hands productive. This will help us not only hear their stories but it will give us an insight into how they feel and their thinking process. In that process, the SIMAMELE Young Scribes Initiative will create future writers.

Background

Writing! Its history goes back tens of thousands of years and, in terms of physical evidence, can be traced back to around seventy five thousand (75,000) years ago. Its maturation taking place here in Africa, its home; where it was conceived, given birth to and also perfected.

By the year 4,000 BC, at its most advanced stage in its history, writing was so integral to the African way of life that it was sacred. In fact, it was referred to as, “The Word of God” (MDW NTR) by the ancient Africans in the Nile Valley. Even to this day, writing remains a very important part of our lives; both as a means of storing and sharing information; a great deal of knowledge is stored in written form. So reading presents the most efficient way to acquire knowledge and equally the most efficient way to share it. Reading and writing therefore must again be an integral part of our lives.

To live the vision of a country we have remade where everyone embraces their full potential requires knowledgeable citizens who not only consume but produce knowledge. Reading and writing form the foundation of knowledge acquisition, production and dissemination.

SIMAMELE Young Scribes initiative aspires to spark in young minds the love of reading and writing and to nurture that love from a young age; something they will carry with them well into adulthood.

Burning Need

There is a big problem of reading and comprehension in terms of the developmental milestones for our children. The problem starts at foundation level (Grades 1 to 3) which the pupils leave without having reached standard milestones. Children then go through the system, reaching Grade 12 (i.e. those who do not drop out) without reaching the required standards. This then becomes manifest in the adult population.

According to research conducted by the South African Book Development Council (2006/2007), South Africans do not read books. More than two-thirds of South Africans regularly read print media. Only 1% of South Africans regularly buy books and only 14% are regular book readers, figures far below the estimated literacy rate.

SIMAMELE is of the belief that interventions are required not just at the foundation level but at all other levels within the education system or within the lives of children of school going age. Interventions aimed at inculcating a habit of reading and writing.

Concept

SIMAMELE invites original short story submissions from young writers aged between 13 and 17. We encourage parents, care givers, guardians, young minds and educators across all South African provinces to encourage and support young creative minds in telling their stories; in any official language of South Africa.

The short stories will be published in the Young Scribes section of the SIMAMELE web publication and the contest will run for a period between May and November 2018.

The SIM Young Scribes Prize recognises the need to honour and nurture excellence from a young age and the role that reading and writing plays in the development of a just and open society where “everybody feels free yet bounded to others; where everyone embraces their full potential.”

Assessment

The stories will be rated and judged based on two inputs; popularity and adjudicators’ assessment. Popularity will be inferred from the volume of hits each story receives during the period of assessment (May to November). The most read story (i.e. one with the highest volume of hits) earning the highest rating.

At least 3 adjudicators will form part of the panel of judges. Among them, at least one will be an education specialist.

The popularity input will account for 33% of the final rating, while the adjudicator’s assessment will account for the remaining 67%. The story with the highest final rating will be announced the winner.

The judging/assessment process decision is final and no correspondence can or will be entered into.

There will only be one winner:

SIMAMELE Young Scribe of the Year

The name of the winner will be published on the SIMAMELE website and any other media publication that will participate.

The SIM Young Scribe Prize

In 2018, the SIM Young Scribes Prize will recognise one Young Scribe with an award valued at R 10,000. The award will include:

- A bookstore voucher valued at R2,500
- Table to the value of R2,500
- Mobile data for a year valued at R3,500
- A cash sum of R1,500

Conclusion

This prize is meant to play a role in attempts to get children in to the habit of regularly reading and writing so they grow up to become well informed and critically thinking adults with the understanding that these adults, are critical for the development of our country.

We hope it will also engage and encourage parents to be intimately involved in the development of their children's ability to read and to write.