

## **17th Jozi Book Fair continues despite City delays**

By JBF Team

10 October 2025

Khanya College hosts the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Jozi Book Fair Festival this year, a milestone for everyone who has assisted over the years – exhibitors, readers, writers, artists, city officials and the public.

Due to the dispute with the City and the latter's planned eviction of Khanya from the WMCottages, and Khanya's campaign to defend public spaces, the City has delayed giving the college permission to host the Festival at Newtown Park. This is disappointing as Khanya has hosted 13 of its 17 book fairs in Newtown; bringing much needed footfall from the townships to a generally lifeless cultural precinct.

According to Khanya College's director, Maria van Driel, "The JBF is built on love, love for our people, and that keeps this book fair going through difficult times. We will not disappoint anyone, the JBF Festival will continue in communities." Khanya decided to decentralise the book fair to different communities. The JBF is the only free, city-based fair in the country, run by a NGO, and which has had an uninterrupted run for seventeen long years.

### **JBF Programme**

On 22 September, the JBF Poetry Buddies programme was held at PUSH, an orphan and vulnerable centre in Eldorado Park. This was a huge success, with over 100 children participating from Eldorado Park and Soweto.

The JBF's Tsohang Batjha School's and the Oupa Lehulere Sports programmes will be held at Yeoville Boys on 18October; and the JBF Public programme will be held on 1November at the WMC.

The first edition of the JBF in 2009, was hosted jointly between Khanya College and Museum Africa, a partnership with the City's Art, Culture and Heritage department. At the time, many city officials were activists from the anti-apartheid struggle and supported transformation to SA's democracy.

The year's application to DACH/JDA was sent on 30 May; and a reminder was made during the negotiations with the City's Vuyisile Mshudulu in July, who assured the Khanya Board of his support. All parties are aware that any public event in Joburg requires permission from the Joburg's Joint Operations Committee, amongst others. The JOC takes time, about 3 weeks, and is understandably more vigilant after the Usindiso fire that claimed 76 in August 2023; and the fire in the Civic Centre a month later.

This year's 2025 JBF theme: *Community Solidarity and Public Spaces*, speaks directly to the daily struggles of Johannesburg's working-class communities. According to JBF's Nosipho Mdletshe, "The painful reality we face is inadequate public spaces for children and youth, including streets, sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, libraries and community halls."

“Public spaces are where communities meet, share knowledge, create, and build their power,” she continued.

The JBF welcomes members of the public to the various events of book launches, panel discussions, skills workshops and performances. The JBF is shaped by the stories, struggles, and dreams of ordinary working people and citizens. For more information, [www.jozibookfair.org.za](http://www.jozibookfair.org.za)

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