

## **Khanya College's Study Groups**

By Viwe Mazwana

For years, Khanya College has recognised the importance of study groups as spaces for learning together, empowering women, and gaining a deeper understanding of the world. Khanya hosts these study groups both in person and on WhatsApp, allowing participants from across South Africa to join the discussions. These groups have had a significant impact on individuals and communities, particularly women who joined FEMNET, a Khanya network where women read and discuss issues they face at home and in their communities.

"Reading together encourages and helps women develop reading and writing skills, respond to challenges in a non-violent way, and speak out about issues affecting them," said Zanele Nomdikinya, a member of the study group. The study groups have also helped participants sharpen their analytical skills, enabling them to better understand and report on community issues with clarity and purpose. They provide a safe space for reading and collective learning, where participants struggle and grow together in their reading and writing journey. Through critical discussions, members share perspectives and insights that help them understand why things are the way they are.

As part of the lead-up to the 26th Khanya College Winter School, Khanya hosted weekly WhatsApp study groups from April to June, reading *Dreaming of Light* by Jayne Bauling, *The Long Shadow of De Klerk* by Comrade Oupa Lehulere, and *Open Mic Session: Social Grants and Black Women in South Africa* by Dr. Maria van Driel.

The group read *Dreaming of Light* shortly after the Stilfontein massacre, where 87 miners died after the government blocked food from entering the mine. The study group aimed to understand this crisis as part of apartheid's lasting legacy, which continues to push working-class people deeper into poverty. *The Long Shadow of De Klerk* helped participants explore how former president De Klerk shaped the constitution to ensure economic benefits for the white minority. *Open Mic Session: Social Grants and Black Women in South Africa* examined the struggles of working-class women under neoliberalism and the heavy burdens they carry in society.

These study groups were successfully facilitated weekly on WhatsApp, with participants from Gauteng and other provinces, including the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, and Western Cape. "The study groups showed that the system oppressing the working class remains unchanged. Through the discussions, I realised that as a country, we need a new way of thinking, a new culture, and a new set of values," said Zamuxolo Matha, a study group participant.

Through these study groups, Khanya College has empowered activists and community journalists. As the Winter School begins, reading together remains a vital part of critical thinking, collective learning, and meaningful engagement.

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