

The Walk of Life Through Books: Reading as a Nonviolent Weapon

By Life Sithole

10 July 2025

On June 13, 2025, Funda Mzantsi hosted a dynamic workshop that brought together members from various book clubs across Gauteng. Held at the Gauteng Archives Repository, the event welcomed ten participants from each club and ran from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Its primary goal was to promote a culture of reading among Black youth, many of whom struggle with literacy and spelling.

Junior Dhlamini, 23, from Vlakfontein, south of Johannesburg, and a member of the MoAfrica book club, described the workshop as deeply insightful.

Dhlamini encouraged youth to reflect during Youth Month:

"Before others speak for you, learn to speak to yourself."

Noxolo Tshayinca, 21, from Pretoria North Book Club, also shared positive feedback.

"The workshop covered everything, from guest speakers to logistics. It reminded me of the foundational principles needed for a successful book club," she said. "We learned that the success of our clubs depends on us. Passion and purpose are essential."

Tshayinca said that she's learnt a lot about how book clubs are run.

Sithembiso Mnkandla, 22, from Heidelberg and a member of Lesedi Municipality Book Club, said the workshop helped participants better understand the competition landscape.

"I realised that reading sharpens understanding and improves memory. Without reading, you can't gain knowledge," he said.

Overall, the workshop addressed important topics related to Funda Mzantsi, youth challenges, and competition readiness. It also left attendees motivated and eager to improve.

On June 14, 2025, Lesedi La Batsha hosted a Youth Day commemoration ceremony at Tshwaranang Disability Centre to honour the bravery and sacrifices of the 1976 student protestors against apartheid. Originally scheduled for 10:00 AM, the event began at noon and concluded at 4:30 PM due to unforeseen delays.

The ceremony aimed to preserve the legacy of 1976 by empowering today's youth to build a better future. It featured a variety of activities, including spelling bees, general knowledge quizzes, and performance-based competitions centered on the Soweto Uprising.

Winners were awarded medals and trophies, encouraging further participation and academic engagement. Highlights included poetry from Young Minds Art Project and dance performances by local children. Several community groups—including Swaneville Book Club, Youth Labour Desk, and Crime Concerned Syndicates—contributed to the program.

Pholoso Diutlwileng, 29, an aspiring teacher, entrepreneur, and one of the event judges, expressed her appreciation for the opportunity.

"I felt empowered and welcomed. This event taught me the value of connection and exposure," she said. "I encourage others, especially people living with disabilities, to participate. There's no such thing as 'impossible'."

She also called on parents to attend future events.

"Parental involvement in education is essential. These events help us all learn how to better support our children."

Selia Ndeve, 18, from Swaneville and a proud competition winner, shared her excitement.

"I didn't expect to win. I just took a chance—and it paid off," she said. "You never know when your moment will come. Always believe in the possibility."

Gcobani Jangasele, 28, also from Swaneville, served as the event coordinator. He described the experience as energizing and fulfilling.

"The event went just as planned. I want this kind of thing to happen every day. It keeps the spirit of youth alive," he said.

Both the Funda Mzantsi workshop and the Youth Day ceremony were hailed as successes by organisers and attendees alike. Community members are eager for similar events in the future, recognising their power to uplift, educate, and inspire young people.

Such programs not only keep youth off the streets but also build self-esteem and academic confidence through reading, competition, and cultural celebration, ensuring that the legacy of the 1976 youth is both honoured and carried forward.

This article is an opinion piece submitted on 4 July 2025. The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of Karibu! Online or Khanya College. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.