

## INTRODUCTION

### *Gift Mheta*

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Chinua Achebe, the prolific Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic widely regarded as a luminary of modern African literature, passed away on the 21st of March 2013. Following his death, Chinua Achebe's life and literary achievements were celebrated in different ways across the globe. The Durban University of Technology Writing Centre decided to honour this distinguished scholar of African literature by conducting a creative writing competition in his name.

The competition was conducted to promote both academic and creative writing among students. The broad theme for the competition was *tradition and modernity*, and the sub-themes were *identity and self-representation, rural-urban divide, pan Africanism, colonial encounter and its consequences, post-independent Africa, gender, culture and society, and redefining traditional African culture*. This competition marked the genesis of creative writing competitions at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). Over the years, it has grown significantly, culminating in the publication of winning entries from 2015 to 2020 in a volume titled *Planting the Seed: Emerging Student Voices*.

Publishing winning entries is a way of showcasing past winners of the DUT Writing Centre Annual Creative Writing Competition. It demonstrates the tangible impact of nurturing creativity and critical thinking in our students. Their achievements as thought leaders, entrepreneurs, and community change-makers exemplify the excellence, innovation, and societal impact at the heart of

ENVISION2030. By celebrating these success stories, we provide current students with relatable role models who prove that writing is not merely an academic exercise but a powerful catalyst for leadership and meaningful impact. These narratives reinforce our commitment to producing well-rounded graduates who are articulate on pressing social issues and equipped to shape a better future through creative expression. Above all, these competitions and publications demonstrate to our students that writing can be a viable career path. Like established writers, they too can earn a living through their craft.

Since its inception in 2013 to date, the competition themes have been carefully selected to provide students with an opportunity to engage with issues that matter to African society. It resonates with the call for decolonisation of universities and curricula. The importance of carrying the decolonisation agenda forward is well-summed up by Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, who unequivocally states that:

Education is a means of knowledge about ourselves... After we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover people and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective... All other things are to be considered in their relevance to our situation and their contribution towards understanding ourselves. In suggesting this, we are not rejecting other streams, especially the Western stream.

The competition, therefore, has provided DUT students with the platform to think and write critically about what it means to be an African. It allows them to appreciate and

question African traditions, values, fears, and aspirations. Above all, the competition provided students with a voice on critical topics such as *leadership, literacy, technology, cooperation, harmony, conflict management, non-violence, equality vs inequality*, and so forth.

This volume, titled “*Planting the Seed: Emerging Student Voices (Volume II)*”, curates the winning entries of the DUT Annual Creative Writing Competition, structured chronologically from 2021 to 2025. The winning entries are presented from the first prize winner to the third prize in the essay/opinion piece, poetry, and short story categories, respectively. Thirty-six entries are included in this book.

This book is aimed at anyone who loves reading. It is the outcome of a collective effort by the Annual Creative Writing Competition Task Team at DUT. Through this volume, we hope that budding writers will be inspired to write more. In the words of Eneke the bird in things fall apart, “Since man has learned to shoot without missing, I have learned to fly without perching”. Keep inspiring many readers through creative writing. Do not stop.

We hope you will enjoy reading and using this book, and look forward to your comments on how we can improve for future editions.

## References

Achebe, C. 2006. *Things fall apart*. London, England: Penguin Classics.

Wa Thiong'o, N. 1994. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African Literature*. London, England: James Currey Ltd.

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