



Wednesday 21st May 2025

## **NAIROBI LITFEST'S 2025 PROGRAMME LAUNCHES WITH A CALL TO RADICAL IMAGINATION**

Book Bunk and Hay Festival Global are proud to announce the launch of the Nairobi Literature Festival (Nairobi Litfest) 2025 programme. The festival will take place from **26th to 29th June** across three historic public libraries; McMillan Memorial Library, Kaloleni Library and Eastlands Library. Now in its fourth edition, the festival returns with a robust programme of **43 sessions** featuring over 60 thinkers, writers, poets, artists and educators from across Africa and the globe.

### **Book Bunk, Hay Festival partnership**

In 2024, Book Bunk and Hay Festival joined forces for a new chapter in the festival's journey, presenting a collaborative edition that brought together over 60 writers across 32 events. It reached an audience of 1,400+ in person and online. This partnership with Hay Festival Global seeks to increase the festival's international presence and expand its audience reach.

#### **Hay Festival Global CEO Julie Finch said:**

*"As an international charity, we reach millions of people every year through our one-of-a-kind Festivals, Forums, programmes, and digital platforms. We are delighted to partner with Book Bunk as co-hosts of Nairobi Litfest for the second year running, expanding our work in new and engaging ways for audiences in Nairobi and online."*

### **2025 Theme: Exploring Alternative Knowledge Systems**

Inspired by Octavia E. Butler's quote, "There is no end to what a living world will demand of you," this year's festival theme, **Alternative Knowledge Systems**, is an urgent invitation to explore radical thought. At a time when the world is contending with crises of inequality, apathy and disinformation, Nairobi Litfest seeks to gather voices that imagine different futures through literature, music, art, governance, and archives.

#### **Book Bunk Co-Founder and Nairobi Litfest Co-Director Angela Wachuka said:**

*"We are excited to once again partner with Hay Festival Global and gather people from all over the world in Nairobi, anchoring critical conversations in the city's public libraries. This annual festival showcases public libraries as part of Nairobi's crucial public infrastructure - safe spaces where people can access alternative thinking at a time especially fraught with polarisation. We welcome everyone to these precious Palaces for The People."*



The 2025 programme features **masterclasses, workshops, panel discussions, book talks, performances and a dedicated children's festival**. Highlights include;

- **Masterclasses on poetry, podcasting, photography, and writing** with luminaries like **Ayanna Lloyd Banwo** (OCM Bocas Prize winner), **Luis Tato** (World Press Photo winner), **Momtaza Mehri** (Forward Prize winner) and **Chinny Ukata and Astrid Madimba** (Independent Podcast of the Year winners).
- **Radical media and archival practices** explored through sessions led by **Africa is a Country, Ukombozi Library, and Panashe Chigumadzi**.
- A vibrant **children's corner** with storytelling, book giveaways, and interactive workshops featuring authors **Venna Odhiambo, Velia Vidal**, and storyteller **Orpah Agunda**.
- Panel discussions like 'The Woman as Free', featuring award-winning **Leila Slimani, Goretti Kyomuhendo, and Ayanna Lloyd Banwo**, and 'Everything is Political' with **Ntone Edjabe, Agustín Laó-Montes, and Rosie Olang'**, will examine art and activism as tools for change. Award-winning authors, artists and academics including **In Koli Jean Bofane, Prof. Kithaka wa Mberia, Pankaj Mishra and Joe Sacco** will also share their insights throughout the festival.

**Hay Festival Global International Director Cristina Fuentes La Roche said:**

*"Nairobi Litfest is a space where great minds meet, celebrating the best of local and global literature with artists, writers and thinkers championing new perspectives. Against a backdrop of global challenges, here is an event that champions the spirit of collective inspiration. Join us in person and online!"*

### **Nairobi Litfest partners**

This year's collaboration between Hay Festival Global and Book Bunk is supported by The British Council as part of the UK/Kenya Season 2025. Additional main support is provided by Open Society Foundations, Hawthornden Foundation and Ford Foundation – Malunga: Network for Global Justice. Library venues are provided as part of Book Bunk's partnership with Nairobi City County.

Festival programming is supported through partnerships with Book Aid International, Text Book Centre, the UK High Commission, Africa Is a Country, Ukombozi Library, The Embassy of France & Alliance Française de Nairobi, The Embassy of Belgium in Kenya and other friends of Litfest.

The full programme is available on the festival website: <https://nairobilitfest.com>

For media inquiries, interviews or festival press materials, contact: [comms@bookbunk.org](mailto:comms@bookbunk.org)



## Notes to Editors

**About [Book Bunk](#):** Through a partnership with Nairobi City County, Book Bunk transforms dilapidated libraries into creative hubs for underserved communities through architectural restoration, provision of collections and resources, preservation of cultural heritage, and delivery of programmes focused on arts education, skills development and lifelong learning. The organisation's restoration approach addresses architectural, social, experiential and digital needs through community participation. Book Bunk has restored two historic libraries, increasing patronage by 250% and in 2024, served 45,326 library users. To date, they have digitised 396,849 archives for public access, served over 39,000 programme participants, added 19,000 new titles to libraries and created braille translations of key works by African authors. *How to Build a Library*, a documentary film about the organisation's work premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2025. *A Palace for The People*, their podcast series, explores archival materials that connect library restoration work to Kenya's history. *Nairobi Litfest*, an annual literary festival, is co-presented with Hay Festival Global.

**About [Hay Festival](#):** Hay Festival Global is a charity providing global festivals of stories, ideas, and new possibilities. The antidote to polarisation, Hay Festival brings together diverse voices to listen, talk, debate, and create, tackling some of the biggest political, social and environmental challenges of our time. Through one-of-a-kind festivals, in unique locations around the world – plus forums, digital platforms and learning programmes – Hay Festival celebrates and inspires different views, perspectives and points of view. In 1987, Hay Festival was dreamt up in the booktown of Hay-on-Wye, Wales. Thirty-eight years later, the charity runs events and projects all over the world, from the historic town of Cartagena in Colombia to the heart of cities in Peru, Mexico, Spain and the USA.

## **About [British Council: UK/Kenya Season 2025](#)**

The British Council is collaborating with partners in the UK and Kenya to present a programme of activities in 2025 that celebrate creativity and innovation through the arts, culture, and education. With a thematic focus on innovation, the UK/Kenya Season 2025 will create opportunities in arts, culture, heritage, and education. Activities will take place in both countries between May and November 2025, with public events showcasing work ranging from architecture, design, and fashion to literature, music, visual arts, performing arts, and film.