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INTERVIEW REQUESTS, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Neilwe Mashigo
011 628 3200
neilwe@jacana.co.za

FOR SALES ENQUIRIES CONTACT:

Jacana Media
011 628 3200

The Recovered, Lost or Forgotten Voices of South Africa

Alfred Qabula was a central figure in the cultural movement that emerged among working people in and around Durban in the 1980s. The movement was an innovative attempt to draw on the oral poetry developed among the Nguni people over many centuries. Qabula was a forklift driver in the Dunlop tyre factory in Durban at the time this book was developed. He used the art of telling stories to critique the exploitation of black workers and their oppression under apartheid.

"Let Qabula and his poverty remain a symbol of their resilience of South Africa's working class, and inspire up-and-coming artists!"

– Blade Nzimande, SACP General Secretary and Minister of Higher Education and Training

A Working Life, Cruel Beyond Belief is the first book in the *Hidden Voices* series and is Qabula's testament, telling the powerful story of his life and work. It also contains a generous selection of his poetry. The Hidden Voices Project emerged out of an interest in intellectual left contributions towards discussions on race, class, ethnicity and nationalism in South Africa. Specifically, the project seeks to examine and make available writings on left thought under apartheid. The aim is to look at hidden voices – voices outside of the university system or academic voices suppressed by apartheid pressures. Before and during the apartheid years, many universities were closed to existing local ideas and debates, and critical intellectual debates, ideas, texts, poetry and songs often originated outside academia during the period of the struggle for liberation.

"As Qabula has passed on for the 'lands of the high winds', we must not forget that he died in poverty and that his last words on paper, one finished poem and four unfinished ones, were words marked with bitterness. He was deeply disappointed that 'his' revolution was taken over by a world of cell phones and briefcases. As he also discovered that his talents as an oral person were lost in the winds of change, these disturbing poems preceded his self-imposed exile."

– Ari Sitas, NIHSS Board Chairperson

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Karin Pampallis is the Hidden Voices Programme Manager. She is currently a researcher at the Society Work and Development Institute at Wits.

Edward Webster is the Hidden Voices Programme Director. He is also Professor Emeritus at the Society, Work and Development Institute (SWOP) at Wits and director of the Chris Hani Institute at COSATU. He is an internationally recognised sociologist, and is the author of six books and over one hundred academic articles as well as numerous research reports.



HIDDEN VOICES



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