

# **‘Let your writing speak for you’: Interview with Tshegofatso Oshyn Gaebuelwe**

**by Martina Van Heerden**

Tshegofatso Gaebuelwe is an industrious first-year student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). She had her first poetry anthology, titled *Oshyn of Blessings*, published in 2015, and in the process, decided to start her own publishing company. Oshyn publications was founded in 2016 and released *Uncensored poets '16* at the start of 2017.

Recently, ten of her poems were selected to be performed as part of a tribute to her first publication; the performance was called ‘10 Oshyn of blessings’. She has also shared her experiences with school students. Writing360 had a chat with her about poetry, publishing, and balancing the pressures of life.

MVH: Tell us a bit more about yourself.

TG: My name is Tshegofatso Oshyn Gaebuelwe and I am 19 years old. I was born and bred in the dusty streets of Ivory Park, Midrand. I have two sisters, Tshiamo and Tshenolo, and I have been nurtured with love and care by two phenomenal women: my mother and my maternal grandmother. I am the founding director and publisher of Oshyn Publications and am currently studying towards a social work degree [at UWC].

MVH: Where does your love for poetry come from?

TG: My story of poetry dates back to my primary school years. I remember, in those days, we had to have three books to use for personal activities, either at home or in class when there was no teacher.



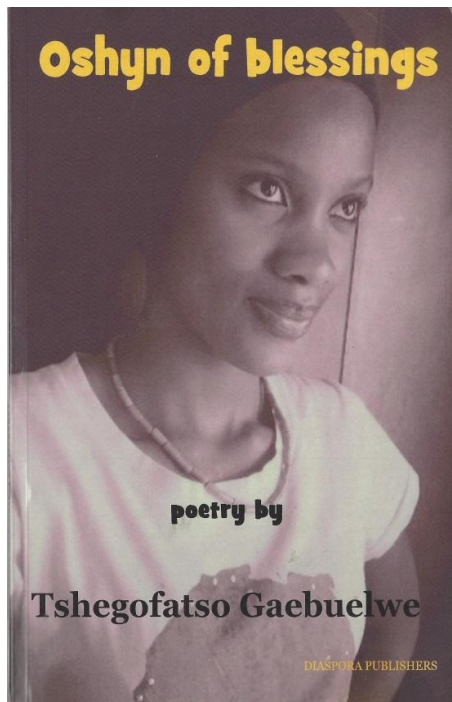
A house book was required in which to always cut and paste pictures of house furniture, people, clothes, food and anything that had everything to do with a household. A house book was in actual fact a wish for our future lifestyle. We would dream of our future families, careers and things that we ought to achieve.

Then there was a music book, all that it entailed was a number of lyrics from international celebrities, pictures of celebrities would also be included in the book as well as the celebrities' latest gossips. It also required cutting and pasting but most of all searching for lyrics on the internet and writing them down in the book so that we could master lyrics of a certain song.

A poetry book, so much of it consisted of poems and motivational/ inspirational quotes. My love for poetry was greatly influenced by the fact that, a poetry book required internal and not external forces to regulate it. I began realising I can write poems when I had an encounter with a friend's poetry book that had a collection of poems from various writers, her sister included. From there, I began challenging myself with the art of writing poems and I think that's where the journey of my poetry writing began.

MVH: What are some of the themes that your poetry touches on?

TG: My poetry touches on a number of themes from love to death and a variety of issues that we get exposed to in our daily



struggles.

MVH: How did your first published anthology, entitled *Oshyn of Blessings* come about?

TG: *Oshyn of Blessings* is a collection of poems I've written since 2011; most of the poems in the book are about appreciating the love and support that my family has given me, accepting [the] deaths of loved ones in the family, describing my poetry journey and also highlighting a number of social ills. It also features

a number of poems about adolescent life. The name was inspired by the fact that I could put meaning to my names even though they both have different meanings. Oshyn means Ocean and Blessings stands in the way of my first name Tshegofatso.

I am an Oshyn to my late father, a Blessing to my mother but an Oshyn of Blessings to both of them and the world.

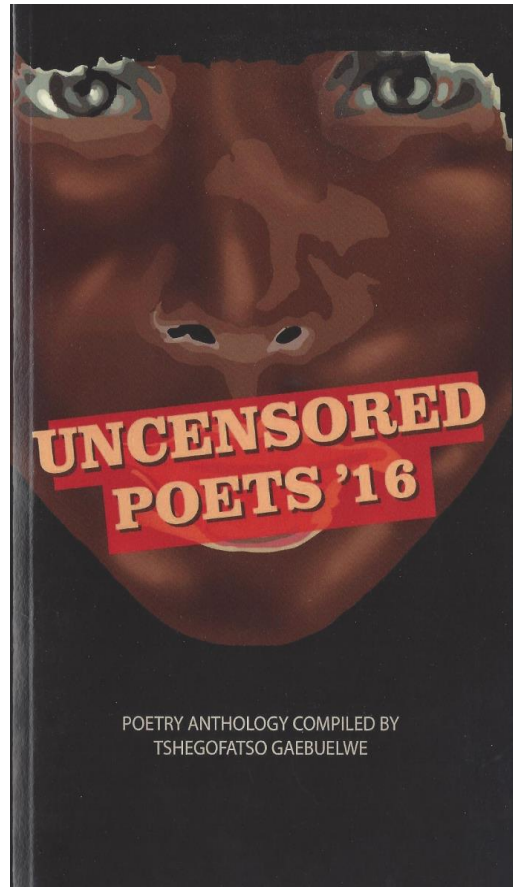
MVH: You recently set up your own publishing company, Oshyn Publications. How did you go about setting that up? What motivated you to do that?

TG: Towards the end of 2016, I started compiling *Uncensored Poets '16*. This is a poetry anthology that was meant to be published under Diaspora Publishers. When I told my publisher, Mr Kennedy H Madhombiro, that there is software I am using to compile the book, he was amazed because I was using the same software that he is using. He therefore advised me to continue with compiling the book as I was using the latest version of the software. As time went on, he advised me to register [as] a publishing company, and publish the anthology under it. I therefore took some of my savings and registered a company with CIPRO and in a few weeks, the registration was complete.

MVH: At the start of this year, you published an anthology entitled *Uncensored Poets '16*. What is it about?

TG: The Uncensored Poets Project is here to tell the story of every passing year with poetry, highlighting the social, political and economic issues surrounding us. The project aims to paint each and every year that comes to pass with poetry. I came to realise that it is the little things that we think don't matter, that matter the most in the history of our lives. *Uncensored Poets '16* touches on a variety of social, political and economic issues of 2016.

I started the project on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 where I made a Facebook post and also sent a tweet looking for people who were interested in the project. The anthology consists of poems from 16



poets (including myself). Four poets are based in Limpopo, eight in Gauteng, one in North West, two in KwaZulu-Natal, and one poet is based in Mpumalanga.

MVH: How do you balance being a first year student, a poet and a publisher?

TG: There is time for everything; academic work can be quite challenging and I always strive to be up to date with my work. I invest most of my free time in my craft, which is enhancing my writing and publishing skills.

MVH: What other similar projects are you busy with in the pipeline?

TG: I am currently working on *Uncensored Poets '17* and *999 Poets, Provinces and Problems*

MVH: If people are interested in obtaining your books, how can they go about getting them?

TG: They can email me at [Oshynpublications@gmail.com](mailto:Oshynpublications@gmail.com)

MVH: Do you have any advice for other aspiring poets?

TG: Be humble, show gratitude and write less on social media. Your craft gradually loses its essence when you don't put meaning to it. Write for yourself; write for the world and most of all let your writing speak for you.

*Oshyn of Blessings*

ISBN: 9781942576385

Diaspora Publishers

*Uncensored Poets '16*

ISBN: 9780620749299

Oshyn Publications

Please contact Tshegofatso directly to buy a copy of the anthologies.

