

# AWPN online educational toolkit

## Background

The majority of African women still face considerable social and political inequality. The facility for change is dependent upon the willingness of society to openly discuss such issues. Written creative works (poetry and plays) and their performance can play a key role in raising awareness and encouraging discussion (both nationally and internationally). However, this work is largely invisible with only a handful of African Women published to date some of which was in the 1970s.



## Project Overview

In 2015 Dr Yvette Hutchison was awarded, as PI, a 2-year AHRC network grant (£35,000) to set up the digital *African Women Playwrights Network*, involving the creation of a pan-African virtual network of writing by disenfranchised women playwrights. The initial aim of the project was to identify and map the work of contemporary African women playwrights with the aim of making the work more accessible to an international audience. This aim was extended to offering a digital platform as a means of connecting writers and establishing a global community including others from the sector to facilitate professional opportunities and mentoring for writers. This platform is accessible to users with poor wifi and feature phones. Community management prompts discussion of relevant issues, encourages and facilitates the development of new creative works and is supported by a parallel stream of associated live performance and workshops in the U.K.

## The Market

The University of Warwick funded the project from June 2017, enabling the network to grow its membership to over 450 women from more than 21 countries. Warwick Ventures has supported the development of AWPN, working alongside Dr Hutchison to help develop the project strategy and implement collaborative partnerships with digital partners, theatres, film makers and creative consultants. Warwick Ventures also funded the creation of the Woza Africa! Education Toolkit through its Ideas Fund. This Toolkit was designed by Dr Hutchison to introduce teachers, theatre groups and students anywhere in the world to a wide range of African approaches to storytelling, historical and cultural frames of reference, and ways of being in the world. For Drama, Theatre, English, History, Geography, Cultural Studies courses, or just for fun.

## Next Steps

The project plans to grow the international online community in parallel with engagement of UK based communities of African women and young people. Working at both a national and regional level these activities will intersect with Coventry City of Culture 2021 and explore themes such as identity, social cohesion and connecting cultures.

The Toolkit is available free of charge to Non-Commercial Organisations (e.g. schools and clubs), and Commercial Organisations who would like to use the Toolkit are asked to contact [ventures@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:ventures@warwick.ac.uk)

For further information and to download the toolkit, go to:

[www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/scapvc/theatre/research/awpn/woza\\_africa](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/scapvc/theatre/research/awpn/woza_africa)