



Miss Behave

MALEBO SEPHODI



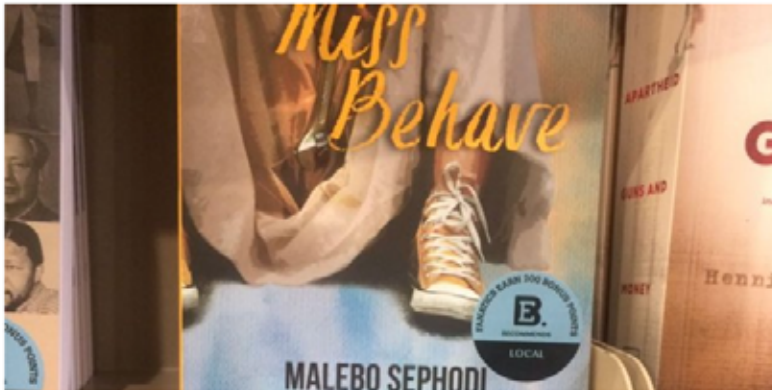
Nkateko Mabasa
Writer

THE BLOG

'Miss Behave' By Malebo Sephodi Is A Bright Light In A Deep And Lonesome Night

The life of a black woman in SA is a world of 'hidden anxiety, maltreatment and nervousness.'

09/06/2017 03:56 SAST | Updated 09/06/2017 09:41 SAST



In the coming revolution, it seems to me, that it will be women who shall lead us. Or rather it shall be a black radical feminist. For it is them, who not only have a true sense of reality but honestly seek to fight oppressions of all kind, having been subjected to it all. And it is in the work of debut writer Malebo Sephodi that one has a glimpse of what that liberated future might look like. In her insightful and deeply personal book "Miss Bahave", Malebo presents a world of the black woman in South Africa.

A world of hidden anxiety, maltreatment and nervousness, not to mention the inner turmoil of being silenced. Bearing society's burden on a body that does not belong to itself. It is the world hidden from view but existing nonetheless. And as a society, we refuse to see this body, let alone hear it. It's absence and silence confirms to us our sense of normal; it hides our moral depravity. But then appears in this deep and lonesome night, a bright light.

Sephodi, much like a skilful director of a play, breaks the fourth wall. The audience is shocked, realising it is actually participants in this play called life. Shocked not out of horror but out of the responsibility they must accept. One is moved from passive observer, to face up to one's role in the continued subjugation of black women. Though Sephodi seeks to write about how 'to navigate life as a woman', she does more. *Miss behave* is about women refusing to 'know their place and stay there', refusing to behave, to be docile and submissive.

Society is put on trial and has been found wanting. But all hope is not lost. To enjoy the democracy and freedom of our ideas, black women cannot be ignored any longer. Here is a brave voice to speak on the issues that matter. O ye mighty, polymath and intelligentsia, look upon her work and be in awe. This is not, as you might expect, musings of an armchair critic; one who speaks from their prejudice and misconceptions, far removed from the practice of the principles they confess. Sephodi has and continues to be a community activist and organiser, a public speaker and counsellor.

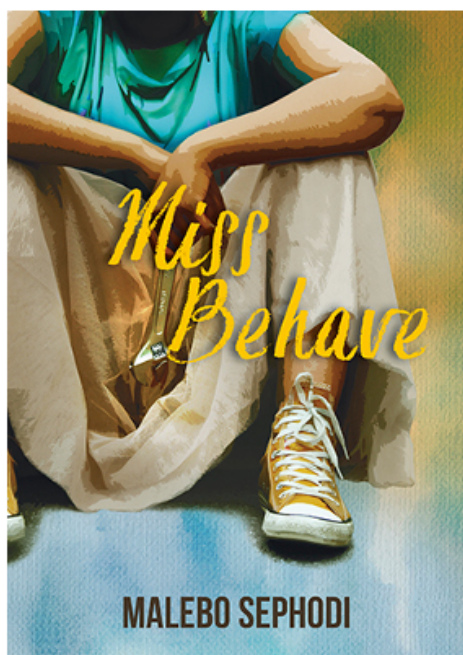
HUFFPOST

2



'I wrote it for black women but men are finding value in it' – Malebo Sephodi chats about her new book *Miss Behave*

[More about the book!](#)



Malebo Sephodi says she is surprised at the response to her new book, *Miss Behave*.

Sephodi was chatting to Polity SA about the book, which details her journey as a black South African feminist.

What was important for me was to show feminist ideals, the theory, but make it practical enough to show how it interacts with our lived experiences,' she explains. 'So I don't even mention the word 'feminism' in the book until the last chapter, just to counter certain arguments about what feminist theory is, whether it is a "white" theory or an "un-African" theory.'

Miss Behave challenges society's deep-seated beliefs about what it means to be an obedient woman. Despite this, Sephodi says she found that a lot of men have been reading it and enjoying it.

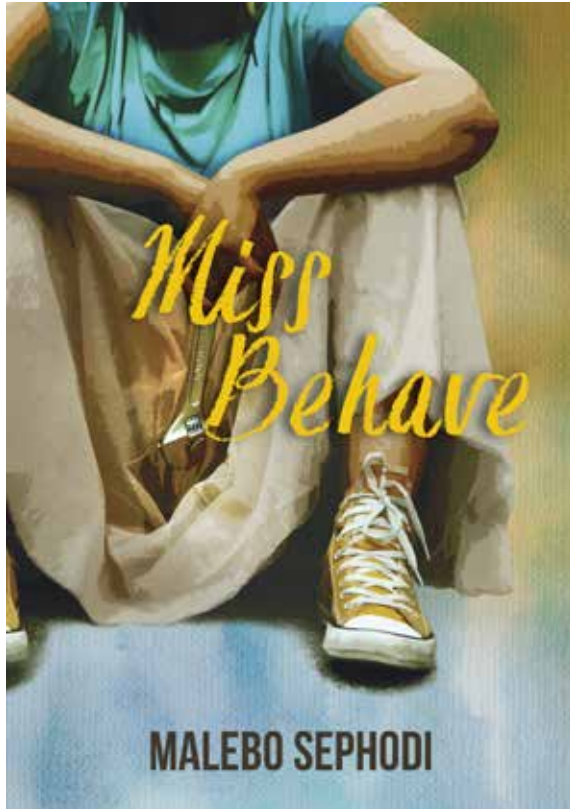
'I wrote the book for black women, especially those who are questioning, who are seeking for liberation. I didn't write it for men. But I find that men read the book, and find value in it too. Some of them have come back to me and said "this is a life-changing book for me, as a man".

'So I wrote it for black women but men also find value in it.'

Sephodi is an activist and writer who takes special interest in gender, development, science and economics in Africa. She is the founder of Lady Leader, a platform that allows black women to just be.

Challenging societal norms for black women

NEWS / 21 JUNE 2017, 5:10PM / KHAYA KOKO



IN PERSPECTIVE: Malebo Sephodi hopes her new book will appeal to men as well because patriarchy is bad for them too, she says.

"I didn't write this book to preach for the choir. I'm not looking for people to snap their fingers, affirm me and say: 'Speak, sister, speak'."

This was the explanation given by Malebo Sephodi, the author of *Miss Behave* (published by Blackbird Books), on why she wrote her book, which seeks to unapologetically challenge societal norms pertaining to black women.

It is a book that is not afraid to rebel against what the author views as antiquated religious and cultural standards, which she feels perpetuate destructive patriarchy.

Sephodi said she was careful not to be viewed as someone who was trying to speak for all black women, saying she drew from her own lived experiences and how her family and society at large expected her to conduct herself as a "good Christian woman".

"A lot of black women are afraid to step out of the confines of societal norms. It's the same story with me, where - especially with the Christian background that I had - there were certain expectations that were placed on me as a woman.

"And that makes us (black women) feel like we have spokespeople, because everybody we encounter feels they have a piece of you and can tell you how to live your life," she contended.



Miss Behave

'lives her best life'

Cape Times 7 Jul 2017 [+1 more](#)

MISS BEHAVE Malebo
Sephodi Loot.co.za (R189)
Blackbird Books

REVIEWER: LINDA CURLING

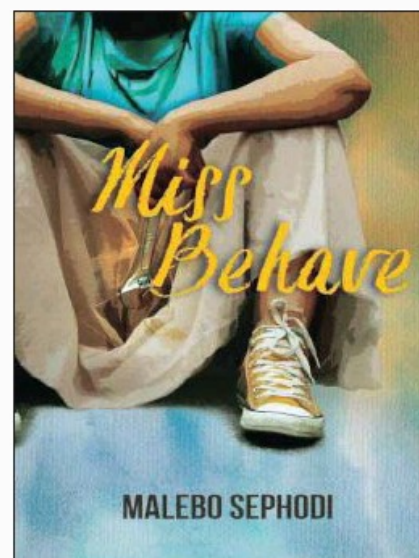
MALEBO Sephodi's cleverly titled story chronicles the experiences that have defined her "complex journey with feminism". It's a journey that seems to have taken her by surprise, leading her to a place where her current ideology is different from where she was 10 years ago.

Despite having immersed herself in numerous self-help books and writings by influential authors, one of the strengths of this book is that Sephodi's narrative is personal, not theoretical or prescriptive. Inspired by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's quote "well-behaved women never make history", Sephodi is striving to live her own life rather than having society dictate how a black South African woman should live. "Misbehaviour... is in the decisions we make that challenge the notions adopted to keep us well-behaved", and this takes guts.

She confronts cultural traditions in her personal life, questioning what many women accept without a second thought,



such as their subservient role in marriage, lobola, or even whether to remain unmarried. "I never knew I could choose whether I wanted to get married or not. It has always been positioned as a destination that a woman needs to achieve." Sephodi also shines a light on corporate culture and discrimination in the workplace. Her chapter titled "Beyond the quotas" should be compulsory reading for all HR and middle managers upwards, to sensitise them to the various -isms, subtle and overt, that manifest themselves through thoughtlessness, ignorance or bigotry. She shares her



struggle to adapt, and the difficulties faced when she leaves to go it alone.

As she so eloquently writes, "I just want to live my best life, free from the constraints of gender and sexual norms, but I find that patriarchy slaps me in the face wherever I go."

Title: Miss Behave

TNA
THE NEW AGE

The New Age (Free State) 12 Jul 2017 +2 more Lilian Selapisa

Author: Malebo Sephodi
Publisher: Blackbird Books
(2017)

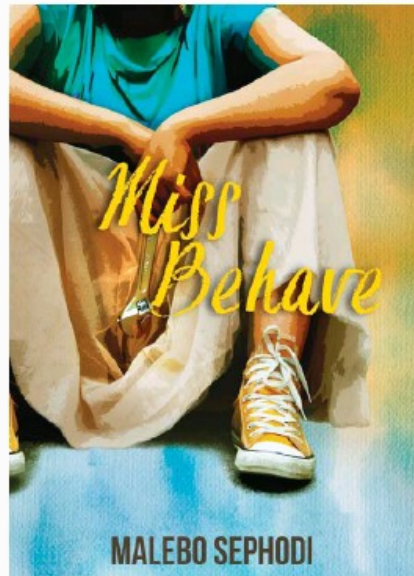
WHAT constitutes a well-behaved woman? Can a woman's identity be defined outside the confines of masculinity? Do societal expectations allow room for women to live their lives without any restrictions?

These are some of the questions that Sephodi tackles in this daring memoir. *Miss Behave* addresses issues such as misogyny, patriarchy and sexism without the normal heaviness. It is a likely uncomfortable self-help book that does not necessarily give the do's and don't of life, but rather leaves you with questions that could help you rethink your life.

Sephodi invites the reader for a conversation about things that have come to be accepted as normal because of how we are socialised. The book works because she opens up a discussion between herself and the reader.

This makes it easy for the reader to question their complicity in allowing patriarchal rules to be normalised when it comes to women's behaviour.

Basic questions about why a woman has to change her surname after marriage or why they say "you (the man) may kiss the bride" as opposed to, say for ex-



ample, "you may kiss your husband", prompt a reader to question everything about how patriarchy is often ingrained in many of the things we have come to accept as normal, perhaps natural.

"If I were to call it, name it, I would say that to misbehave is to denounce the social norms that limit individuals based on who they are. That to make history is to upset patriarchy, a system that is intent on controlling.

"What does it mean for patriarchy when those who are marginalised find their voices and take charge of their own lives? It means that all that it has come to establish as truth gets dismantled. It means that women start challenging what society has come to know as the dominant structure," an extract from

the book reads.

Although nothing in Sephodi's book is necessarily new, in that it is premised on the feminist theory, her conversational style of writing makes it easier to relate to the issues she is addressing.

To add to the significance of the book is the fact that it comes at a time when South Africa has entered into a state of rapture, where discussions of the destruction of patriarchal systems have reached their peak.

This book is a must read for women seeking autonomy outside the confines of masculinity, perhaps even for those (men, too) who may not be aware of the role they play in perpetuating patriarchal norms daily. –



Write a comment...



Share



Comment



Save



More



Bump it



Dump it



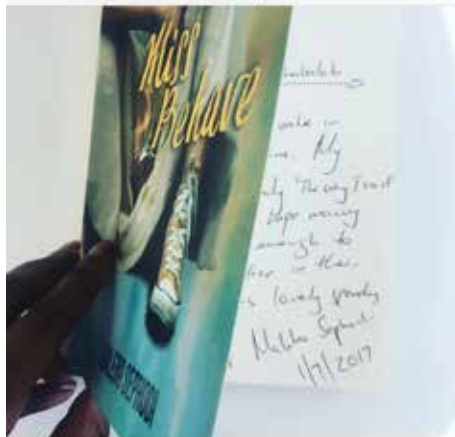
Instagram



11 likes

bafatibebumbenebookclub What a well written book...be on the look out for a review... #bookreviews #bookworms #localreads #bookswritten4us #reading #book #MissBehave #MaleboSephodi #bookclubs #BBBBookclub

16 JULY 2017



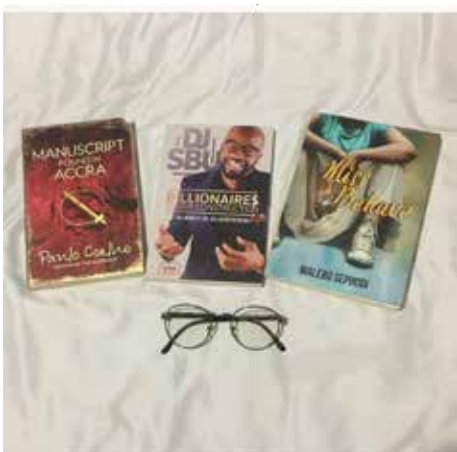
147 likes

leratoti My signed copy of @malebosephodi's new book, Miss Behave. 🙌 This book is not only flying off the shelves but it's got so many women ready to "misbehave" honey! 🍷 I can't wait to start reading it - this woman is so damn funny! Thank you so much for signing my copy, Malebo! 🙌 And yes babhem! I bought the book. Because when one author wins, we all win. But mostly, I'm here for my sistas! Let's make it another bestseller by a black woman! 🙌 #blackexcellence #authors #southafrica #MaleboSephodi #MissBehave #readingissexy



11 likes

jabulilebuthetezi Almost there, can never read a book without a bookmark. 📖 What a capturing read. I cant help but feel that, many young women... as many as possible need to read #MissBehave by #MaleboSephodi at some point, in their lifetime.



45 likes

lindi_emme The joy of my life will always be between the pages. 📖📖📖 What's been keeping me company when i'm not reading school stuff are these three books. Thinking of writing up reviews on them, particularly Miss Behave because i'm so grateful for Malebo's voice; but while i decide on that go visit your book store and get you a copy and thank me later. 📖📖📖📖📖📖📖📖📖📖



6 likes

tumiemasilo The joy i find in experiencing black women writers, breaking boundaries, writing about concepts that i struggle with... #malebosephodi

31 OCTOBER 2017

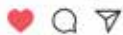


15 likes

agie_l "...it is traumatic to find out that so much of what you have been taught to believe and stand for is actually used to control you...we frequently accept norms in the name of culture and beliefs. All these must be interrogated...some things we need to vomit out of our systems so that the truth may prevail." @malebosephodi thank you so much for this book. One of the best i've read this year. #MaleboSephodi #MissBehave #FemaleAuthors #AfricanAuthors #Feminist #feminism #Patriarchy #Sexism #Religion #Bigotry #Sexuality #Change #WeShouldAllBeFeminists #SouthAfricanAuthors #southafrica #AfricanBooks #Bookworm #CurrentRead #Bookshelf #bookstagram





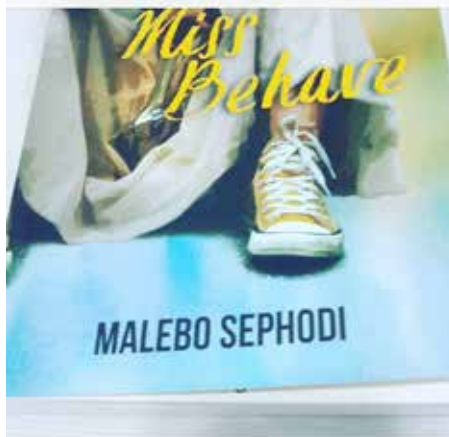


12 likes

tjmgidi17 I am an African feminist!!!! This book is a parallel of my journey. Thank you @malebosephodi for putting pen to paper on so many truths.

If you are my friend, you should get this book. To understand me better and to open your mind to the realities of a black woman #missbehave #africanfeminist #intersectionalfeminist

tokologo_n Getting it soon.



4 likes

refilwe_masemola_makhetha Many people call themselves a lot of things but they hardly embody or even resemble the names they give to themselves. The author of this amazing book calls herself a lioness and she truly is one! Some parts of this book felt like you have been reading my mind and have been living in my thoughts. I resonate with the narrative of this book. I laud you for writing a book that will give many women the courage to free themselves. You are a history maker and I am glad to have met you. ❤️❤️



25 likes

cheekynatives Our WCW is @malebosays, author of #MissBehave - a necessary book of our times. Make sure you get yourself a copy of this gem. It will be in stores this weekend!

Stay tuned for a podcast with this ineffable, beautiful, smart black womxn



Liked by misssetoo

walaza Done. Read it a few months ago. Very well written. Thought provoking and intimate. Addresses issues about patriarchy, black women dominating male spaces etc. Let's just say the narration is well written and plenty of topics to reflect on and discuss.



cheekynatives



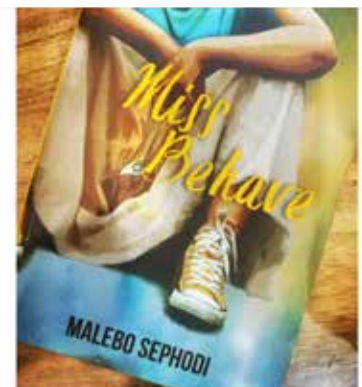
22 likes

malebosays #Repost @cheekynatives (@get_repost) . . .

There are 15 signed copies of #MissBehave available at Exclusive Books Rosebank

unatim Malebo I got your signed copy! I thank you for the words of this book. It is a paradigm shift. You have re-awakened my soul! Ndiyaabulela sisi

malebosays @unatim thank you so much for your feedback! Fills my soul 🥰🥰🥰

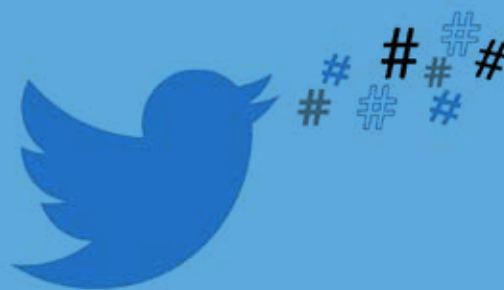


13 likes

i_foundme If I were a teacher in a South African high school, I would prescribe this book to my students. I would invite them to interrogate their lived experiences against Malebo's lenses. I would listen to their stories, and read their essays, about how their identities and positions in society exposes them to oppression, or strengthens them to oppress. From all of the engagement I would hope that transformative rell-action would take place, and society will, slowly but definitely surely, truly become inclusive. Eventually.

There are some books you read and at the last word you know you have been affirmed, that you have become stronger and more capable. This is one of those for me.





ff Franschhoek Lit Fest @FranLitFest · 1d
There are no words to tell how inspiring, moving and entertaining this was. Do yourself a favour and read [#MissBehave](#) It might set you free.

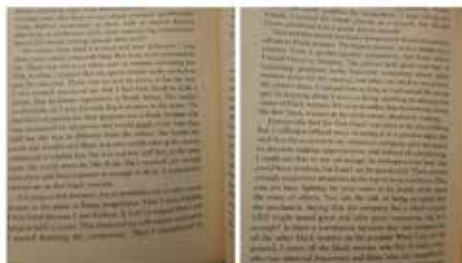
FB: Jacana Media @JacanaMedia
The opening of the launch for [#MissBehave](#)



0:45 1 1

 **Masego**
@Sego1gp

This chapter was written with me in mind....in fact the words resonated so much it read like the book birthed from my soul! 🙌🏾@malebosephodi



2017/07/04, 8:47 PM

 **Seani**
@PhathuMusitha

Replying to @malebosephodi

Stop it, you're getting me excited-er for next weekend. Sorry in advance if ka phapha, I just feel like we're friends after Miss Behave 🥰🥰

2017/07/01, 6:12 AM



facebook

