Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

Oct 20, 2014 00:00 BST

African writer explores global storytelling at Northumbria

An internationally acclaimed writer and film-maker will explore how stories can transcend international borders during a public lecture at Northumbria University, Newcastle this month.

Billy Kahora, a Kenya-based writer, screenwriter and editor is currently visiting the North East to collaborate on research into homelessness with Northumbria academic and Orange Prize-listed author, Dr Laura Fish.

The two writers are working together on a range of public events, research

and student activities as part of a six week programme.

n 29 October, Billy will reflect upon what it is to be an African writer in contemporary society more than 50 years after Kenyan independence. In his public lecture, entitled The Contemporary Writer and Local and Global Voice, he will discuss how contemporary writers from the African continent occupy both a local and international forum. Billy argues that writers can project their voices and local stories into a global space, rendering the national space invisible in literary terms.

Billy Kahora lives and writes in Nairobi. His work has appeared in various publications, including Vanity Fair. He is Managing Editor of Kwani Trust; has edited seven issues of the Kwani journal and other Kwani publications; and is an Associate Editor with the Chimurenga Chronic.

This year he was nominated for the Caine Prize for African Writing – the most prestigious literary award in Africa. It marked the second time that Billy, who entered his short story, The Gorilla's Apprentice, has been listed for the prestigious prize.

During his visit to Northumbria this autumn, Billy has taken part in readings and discussions at the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Durham Book Festival. He will also work with BA and MA Creative Writing students at Northumbria in lectures and seminars as well as delivering workshops and readings with young homeless people in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Billy's tour will conclude with a public screening of 'Soul Boy', his award-winning film on 9 November. It will be shown at Tyneside Cinema – the North East's leading independent cinema – which is working in partnership with Northumbria University to improve education, support enterprise and entrepreneurship, increase research impact and secure investment. 'Soul Boy' will be followed by a discussion session led by Dr Fish and Billy.

Themes of home, homelessness, place, and identity run throughout both writers' creative works and their latest collaboration aims to broaden their research interests and share them with wider audiences.

Dr Fish, Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Northumbria, said: "Billy Kahora is an eloquent and affective writer, deeply political. He deals with

reality and his work is felt in the gut.

“I am delighted that Billy is here, at Northumbria University, as Visiting Writer. During his stay I am certain he will make a positive contribution to the University and a number of partner organisations in Newcastle.”

The findings developed from their homeless workshops in the North East will generate material for short stories, which will be shared with communities in Newcastle, Gateshead and Kenya.

Billy Kahora’s lecture is open to the public and takes place at 6.30pm on Wednesday 29 October in lecture theatre 002 in Northumbria University’s Business and Law Building, City Campus East. Refreshments will be available from 6pm.

For more information and to register your attendance, email nu.events@northumbria.ac.uk

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