



AMWASA

Mandela Day Challenge 2026

The Untold Story Challenge

67 minutes. One elder. One story that must not be lost.

Author name:

Person being interviewed:

Why I chose this person:

A free resource for everyone - from AMWASA

Empowering Muslim Women Writers • Curating Clean Literature

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The Untold Story Challenge

On 18 July each year, South Africa pauses to honour Nelson Mandela's legacy by giving 67 minutes — one for every year of his public service — to something greater than ourselves. This Mandela Day, AMWASA invites you to give those 67 minutes to a different kind of struggle: the quiet, urgent work of making sure a story doesn't disappear.

Every family has an elder holding a story that no one has written down. A grandmother's migration. A mother's first business born out of necessity. A father's struggle. A sister's quiet defiance. A brother's battle with demons. These stories are a trust — and once they're gone, they're gone. Writers are uniquely placed to receive that trust and carry it forward. This is authorship as a service.

What's inside

- A simple explanation of why 67 minutes, and how to hold that time with intention
- A short dua/prayer to open your sitting with your elder
- Twelve interview prompts, arranged to move from easy memory into deeper reflection
- Guidance on writing it up afterwards — turning a conversation into a page
- A note on where this can lead

Who this is for

Anyone with an elder in their life willing to sit and talk for just over an hour. No membership required. No writing experience is necessary to start; you only need to listen well first.

How to use it

Set aside 67 uninterrupted minutes with your chosen elder — a parent, grandparent, aunt, or elder neighbour. Use the prompts as a loose guide, not a script; let the conversation breathe. Record with permission if you can, or take notes as you go. Afterwards, use the writing-up guidance to shape what you heard into a short piece — even 300 words is enough to preserve something true.

The impact

A story saved this Mandela Day is a story your children's children will still have. That is service that outlasts the 67 minutes it took.

Before You Begin

A short dua/prayer to open your sitting:

My Lord, inspire me to be thankful for Your favour upon me, and to work righteously as I attempt to preserve what may soon be lost.

Ask your elder's permission before recording or writing. This is their story — you are simply its keeper for now.

The Twelve Prompts

Opening (easy memory, low pressure)

1. Where were you born, and what do you remember most about that place?
2. Who in your family were you closest to growing up, and why?
3. What is a smell, sound, or taste that instantly takes you back to your childhood?

Middle (life shape, choices, turning points)

4. Tell me about a time you had to be braver than you felt.
5. Was there a moment your life took a direction you didn't expect?
6. What did your parents teach you that you still carry today?
7. What was expected of women in your community when you were young — and how did you navigate that?
8. Tell me about someone who believed in you when it mattered.

Deeper (reflection, legacy, faith)

9. What has your faith carried you through?
10. What do you know now that you wish you'd known at my age?
11. What is something about you that most people never ask about?
12. If there is one thing you want your grandchildren to remember about you, what is it?

Close by thanking your elder, and let them know their story matters enough to be written down.

Share your challenge

Once you've sat with your elder — even before you've written a single word — we'd love for you to share it. Post a photo of the two of you, a line from what they told you, or simply the moment itself, and tag AMWASA. Not to perform the story, but to let others see that this kind of listening is happening quietly, all over, on the same day.

Every story you share might be the nudge another writer needs to go and ask their own grandmother the same questions.

AMWASA social handles:

- Instagram, Threads, Tiktok: @amwasa_network
- Facebook page: @amwasanetwork
- LinkedIn: AMWASA (company page)

Turning the Conversation into a Page

You do not need to write a polished piece today. You only need to capture the truth of it.

- **Start with a single image or line** your elder said that stayed with you — let that be your opening sentence.
- **Write in first person as them, or in your own voice as narrator** — either is valid; choose whichever feels honest.
- **Keep their exact phrases where you can.** The way someone says something is often as telling as what they said.
- **Aim for 300–800 words.** This is a beginning, not a biography.
- **Sit with it for a day before editing.** Let the emotion settle before you shape the language.

What Comes Next

- **Submit an anecdote to an anthology**

If the story you've captured moves you — or moved your elder to tears, or laughter, or silence — it may belong in a suitable anthology. Contact Wilman Fikker Publishing to submit or enquire about their Barfi Books anthology series:

barfi@wilmanfikker.com.

- **Keep following the story**

Sometimes 67 minutes is only the beginning. If your elder's story keeps unfolding and refuses to fit onto a single page, that may be the start of something longer — a memoir or biography in its own right. AMWASA's [Start Your Book: From Idea to Outline course](#) exists for exactly this kind of journey, whenever you're ready to take it further.

- **No deadline, no pressure**

This challenge doesn't expire. There's no deadline to meet and no clock running out — take the 67 minutes whenever your elder is ready to talk, and whenever you are ready to listen. Some stories need a week to arrange, others need a season. Either is fine.

A Note from AMWASA

Thank you for participating in this challenge. Keep in touch to access next year's challenge.

Join as an Inkling

If this challenge stirred something in you, Inklings is where AMWASA begins for every writer — free, always open, and fully remote membership level. As an Inkling, you'll get access to a growing set of resources to support you at the very start of your author journey. No pressure, no cost — just come as you are.

Want access to all resources?

For writers ready to go further, The Collective is AMWASA's paid membership — always open, fully remote, and giving you access to the full resource library across every stage of the author journey, from first draft to published book. It's an investment in your own writing, and in a community of women authors walking the same path. Join whenever you're ready.

Learn [more about AMWASA Membership here](#).