



eWIKO
NOVIOLET BULAWAYO

NoViolet Bulawayo is the author of *Glory*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and longlisted for the Women’s Prize, the Aspen Words Literary Prize, and the Rathbones Folio Prize. Her first novel, *We Need New Names*, was recognized with the PEN/Hemingway Award and the LA Times Book Prize Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, the International Literature Award, and others. NoViolet earned her MFA at Cornell University, where she was a recipient of the Truman Capote Fellowship and where she currently teaches. NoViolet grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Wiko, September 2022. Another year, and the minds gather again. Like they’ve gathered for about four decades now, like they’ll gather for decades more. One feels the sheer weight of this place at the first meeting, listening to Fellows from all sorts of disciplines talk about their work. And, for the weeks and months to follow, witnessing the work come alive – in colloquiums, workshops, conversations, lunches, dinners. Minds dancing, the world opening, widening. The delight for me is being surrounded by people I wouldn’t otherwise meet, listening to conversations that don’t always form a part of my daily experience. Outside of the obvious work, well, life is lived, community is forged in the near-unreal place that is Grunewald. Grace prevails here, perhaps too much even, so that I’m a bit surprised by the absence of scandal, drama: for surely, how can it be that this kind of large group spends all this time in peace and beautiful friendships, getting along? But then again, perhaps it is no surprise and may have to do with the example that is modelled by the institution. Literally every single member of the Wiko staff is generous,

kind, positive, and present, everyone doing their best, and extra, to make Wiko the nurturing, peaceful place that it is. They are the gift, and if this place be magical, they make the magic.

My own work progresses as expected of the early stages of hewing fiction from the messy matter of life, and this could be because my subject matter is emotionally difficult. In the end, working on the project is a challenging and humbling exercise, but the writing feels necessary. I do have things to distract me as needed – a screenplay that eventually gets finished before I leave Wiko, occasional escapades with friends into the cultural hub that is Berlin, readings for the German edition of my second novel, *Glory*, that take me on tour, though, regrettably, my stops are often super-short, so that I don't have the time to properly experience the places I visit. Still, it's wonderful meeting and sharing with my readers – an opportunity I wouldn't have otherwise had – so many of them engaged, so many of them passionate about books. And in this way, between facing the main work and juggling other things on the side, I am able to coax myself into advancing my writing up until the fellowship comes to an end and I pack up my beautiful Villa Jaffé apartment. Now, months later, as I write this long overdue yearbook post – I am pleased that what began then still continues, the project has found its shape, the writing is much easier, and of course, somewhere at Wiko, the minds gather...