

MINE MINE MINE

Uhuru Portia Phalafala

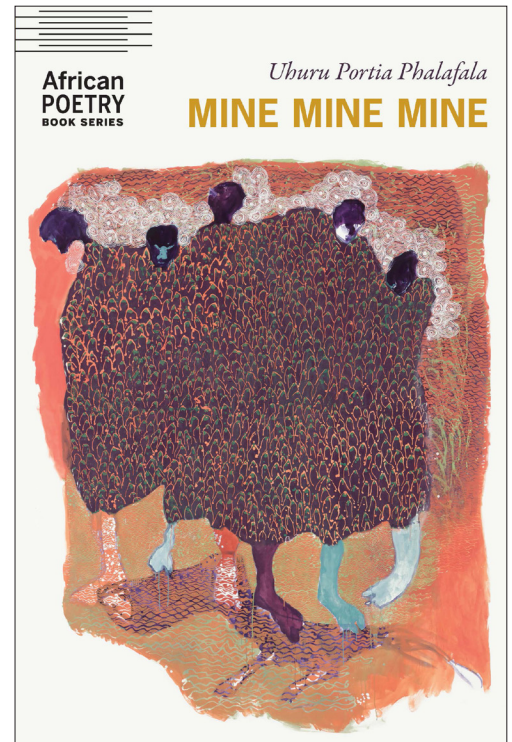
"History lies in our bodies, Uhuru Phalafala shows in *Mine Mine Mine*. Her words are insistent, alive, as necessary as breathing. . . . Phalafala writes a new history, tenderly filling in what was lost, the births and generations missed during the long absences, bearing witness to the links from the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades to the dust of the mines, tracing centuries of history in one body breathing."—Gabeba Baderoon, author of *The History of Intimacy* and *A Hundred Silences*

"In *Mine Mine Mine* Uhuru Portia Phalafala pulls off a small miracle of craft: an intimate poem and yet also an epic. In the tradition of composers like Zim Ngqawana and poets like Okot p'Bitek, this work is personal narrative, a musical composition, an operatic libretto, simultaneously original and yet drawing from the lineage of griots, inyosis, and imbongis, with perfect play between soloist and chorus. An incredible book that spans self, history, and unknown dimensions, part spirit and part human."—Chris Abani, author of *Smoking the Bible* and *The Secret History of Las Vegas*

Mine Mine Mine is a personal narration of Uhuru Portia Phalafala's family's experience of the migrant labor system brought on by the gold mining industry in Johannesburg, South Africa. Using geopoetics to map geopolitics, Phalafala follows the death of her grandfather during a historic juncture in 2018, when a silicosis class action lawsuit against the mining industry in South Africa was settled in favor of the miners.

Phalafala ties the catastrophic effects of gold mining on the miners and the environment in Johannesburg to the destruction of Black lives, the institution of the Black family, and Black sociality. Her epic poem addresses racial capitalism, bringing together histories of the transatlantic and trans-Indian slave trades, of plantation economies, and of mining and prison-industrial complexes. As inheritor of the migrant labor lineage, she uses her experience to explore how Black women carry intergenerational trauma of racial capitalism in their bodies and intersects the personal and national, continental and diasporic narration of this history within a critical race framework.

Uhuru Portia Phalafala is a senior lecturer of English literature at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. She is the author of *Keorapetse Kgotsitsile and the Black Arts Movement: Poetics of Possibility* and coeditor of *Keorapetse Kgotsitsile: Collected Poems, 1969–2018* (Nebraska, 2023).



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