



TAKE MICHELLE'S WORD FOR IT



BY Amy Fallon

CAN you read this?

Around the world there are millions of children who can't.

Some struggle because they don't go to school or their schools aren't good ones. Some may not be able to afford books.

But Michelle Nkamankeng, who's seven, is making headlines around the globe for her reading and writing. She recently published her first book, *Waiting for the Waves*, and is said to be Africa's youngest published author – and one of the world's 10 youngest.

"If you can't read, you can't write," says Michelle. "Writing makes reading fun."

Michelle lives in Johannesburg, South Africa, with her parents, two sisters and brother. She started reading when she was four.

She wrote *Waiting for the Waves*, inspired by a visit to the beach, when she was six.

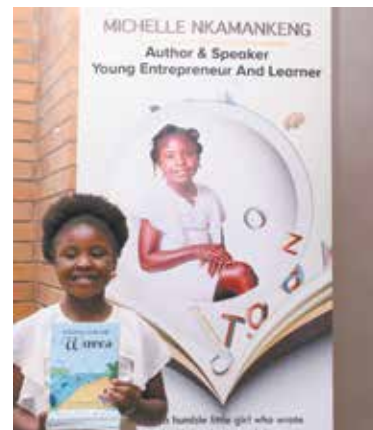
It was hard to find the money to publish it, but it's now on the online bookstore Amazon.

ILLITERACY IS EVERYWHERE

About 175 million young people in poor countries are illiterate – meaning they cannot read or write – says the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

One in four cannot read a sentence.

In Australia, about 46 per cent of people aged 15 to 74 struggle reading documents, the Australian Bureau of Statistics says. Indigenous Australians are affected the most.



BOOKS ARE EXPENSIVE

Michelle writes in her spare time "when a thing comes out of her head".

She has nearly finished her fourth book and hopes to find people to help pay to publish them so they can be given to schools free.

In South Africa, where some people are well off and others very poor, many families cannot afford books.

A 2013 survey by Pondering Panda researchers found that most young South Africans wanted to read more. But more than one-third had to borrow books because they couldn't afford or access them.

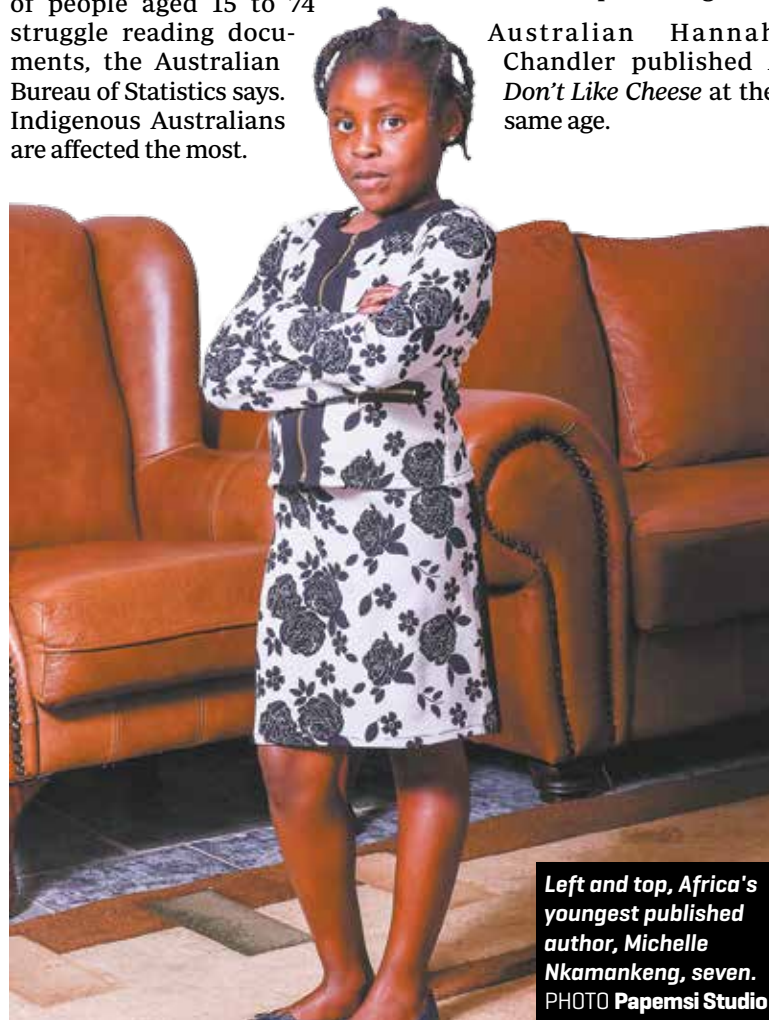
INSPIRING OTHERS

Michelle said she was "happy, excited and proud" of herself.

"Don't let anybody get in your way," she says. "Always follow your dreams."

Some of the world's other young authors include Flavia Bujor from Romania, who wrote *The Prophecy of the Stones*, and American Jake Marcionette, author of *Just Jake*. Both wrote their books when they were 12 before publishing them.

Australian Hannah Chandler published *I Don't Like Cheese* at the same age.



Left and top, Africa's youngest published author, Michelle Nkamankeng, seven. PHOTO Papemsi Studio

Young reporters in the thick of US election

BY Elizabeth Everett Cage



THERE are thousands of journalists from all over the world reporting the US presidential election. But they're not all adults.

Among them is Gabe Ferris, who's 15 and lives in Winslow, in the state of Maine.

He and 34 other student reporters, mostly aged 10 to 14, have gone to rallies and debates to interview candidates, reporters and voters.

Gabe is a member of the Scholastic News student press corps, which for 15 years has written "news for kids by kids".

"I really liked the idea of reporting and journalism," he told *Crinkling News* by telephone after school.

"This program gave me, at such a young age, the chance to do exactly what I wanted to do – tell stories and write."

HILLARY CLINTON VS DONALD TRUMP

Americans will vote for their next president on November 8 and whoever wins starts the job in January.

There are four candidates but only two from the major parties: Hillary Clinton from the Democrats and Donald Trump from the Republicans.

Gabe recently filed a story about a rally in Maine for Mr Trump. He asked voters: "Is Trump your choice?"

He says he was surprised that many still hadn't decided: "Well, it's not 100 per cent – he hasn't closed the deal," said one.

Gabe thinks the debates on television – there have been three between Mrs Clinton and Mr Trump – are very important.

Not everyone lives in a town the candidates will visit so they're important for voters to see and listen to each candidate.

UNUSUAL FOR ADULTS, NORMAL FOR KIDS

This is the first presidential election Gabe has been old enough to follow.

"I know adults are saying this election is unusual, but this is the only election I've known so to me and my friends this is normal," he says.

What many adults have found unusual is that very personal

topics have been raised, and ideas and views have been expressed using strong, sometimes ugly, language.

"A lot of the things going on are certainly adult issues," says Gabe.

"When I'm writing a story it's very hard sometimes to make an adult issue kid-friendly. So what I like to do is to write something that will perhaps make readers ask an adult about the issue," he says.

"That takes the responsibility off of me to explain a really tough subject and lets kids hear the answer from an adult they know."

Suzanne McCabe, the Scholastic Kids news corps editor, says that because of some of the rude language used at rallies, this was the first time she's ever worried about sending her reporters.

"We're not so much trying to shield them as just make sure they'll be safe," she says.

"The nature of this election is something kids, as American citizens, must grapple with themselves. Seeing the process up close is a great education."

ELECTIONS AFFECT EVERYONE

Gabe was happy to learn that Australian kids were interested in the US election.

He thinks it's important for kids to understand what's happening in politics, not just where they live, but overseas too.

"All the countries have to find a way to work together," he says. "Our election impacts the rest of the world, and Australia's elections, the elections of other countries, impact America."

Left and top, Gabe Ferris, 15, has been covering the US presidential election for kids. PHOTOS supplied

