

Issue 001 - April 2020

MWAMKO

Historicize, Problematize, Politicize

7.02 pm

Somewhere in Nairobi



March 2020
Mdogo

Editorial:

At this point in time when major media and information outlets are under the capture of a minority ruling class and its fabricated elite, information is increasingly twisted to suit particular discourses, narratives and worldviews through these same outlets that have the power and ability to shape societal thought, practices and worldviews.

But amidst the din that engulfs us through a constant information assault from these outlets, sparks of truth resist the winds of conformity and join one another, steadily growing into flames of freedom, justice and dignity. These sparks are the re-awakening.

Mwamko is a re-awakening of popular interest in decolonial, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-patriarchal discourse situated in a Kenyan (and African) context. It is an attempt to educate and raise consciousness, sparking conversations around our lived experiences and material conditions as young Kenyans - thus enabling us to articulate our positions, ask questions and challenge hegemonies.

It is our hope that Mwamko will decisively contribute to discourse around the shared aspirations of Kenyan youth, and sow the seeds for the democratization of that discourse – and of society, by extension.

May this issue enable us to historicise, problematise and politicise our immediate issues. Enjoy the read.

Editorial team.

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**Illustrations: Bwana Mdogo*

***Design & layout : John Musila*

LET THEM EAT DATA



"The struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting"
 – Gacheke Gachihi

Covid-19, the infectious disease caused by the coronavirus, currently confronts Kenya at its doorstep. A statement from the Ministry of Health dated 31st March put the number of confirmed infections at 59. Kenyans are now under curfew between 7pm and 5am, while many Kenyans who recently arrived from abroad are under quarantine in public institutions or hotels -depending on their ability to pay.

When the coronavirus first broke out in Wuhan last year, many of us perceived and thought of it as a distant thing. Within a few months, the outbreak had spread across borders – and as the number of infections and deaths kept rising, the World Health Organisation declared it a pandemic. But even before the virus reached our borders, Kenyans had reason to be worried, and rightly so. Was our health system prepared to handle a pandemic of such proportions?

In as much as 'access to healthcare' has improved over the decades, the health system on which this access is anchored has been weakened by a myriad of reasons, particularly from the 1980's. In the 80's, the World Bank imposed its Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP's) on many countries in the Global South. The structural adjustments were a set of economic reforms that these countries had to adhere to as conditionality to aid. SAP's forced these countries, Kenya included, to cut their

budgets for social and economic services including education, healthcare, public housing, agricultural development and even water so as to secure funding from the World Bank.

The SAP's and the subsequent underinvestment by the state in public health systems, massive privatization of healthcare and endemic corruption have over the years pushed healthcare costs beyond reach for many Kenyans. Their intersection has turned healthcare into a commodity whose accessibility and quality are pegged on one's ability to pay, effectively re-creating and entrenching classist patterns around healthcare access that exist to this day. Healthcare, like the lives it is meant to safeguard, is a right.

When our doctors went on strike for over 100 days in 2016, they made the following key demands: better remuneration, better equipment and availability of drugs in health facilities, availability of more doctors in public hospitals and increased allocation of funds to health research. We know how that went. How narratives were woven to paint the doctors as greedy and heartless by narrowly focusing on their demands for better pay, and how segments of society vilified the doctors for 'politicising healthcare'. It therefore is not surprising that 56 years after 'independence', all Kenyan hospitals have less than 600 ICU beds between them – with public hospitals accounting for only 40% of

these.

Anyway, this was an article about Covid-19. Let's get back to that

The Ministry of Health has issued guidelines aimed at stemming the spread of the coronavirus. These include social distancing, avoiding handshakes or close contact like hugs and frequent washing of hands with soap and water. Its website further advises everyone to avoid touching their eyes, noses and mouths – and to practice respiratory hygiene when coughing or sneezing. Additional social measures taken by the government include closure of schools, churches, markets, and entertainment joints.

While these guidelines might have been crafted to protect us, their design neither takes into account the lived socio-economic conditions of the masses, nor recognizes the peculiar nature of the Kenyan economy - effectively rendering many of them kaput. Indeed, as Kenyans from various quarters have been asking, how will the traders stay away from crowded markets if they do not know where tomorrow's meal will come from? How do you practice social distancing in crowded slum environments where whole families live in single rooms? Is it possible to wash your hands frequently without running water in your tap? And how do those who purchase water on a day to day basis continue doing so while the cost per jerry can has risen from ten to twenty shillings in some of our settlements? If at some point it becomes necessary to have a total lockdown, how would the millions of casual laborers stay at home not knowing how or when their families will eat?

More significantly, the government announced a curfew between 7pm and 5am effective 27 th March and tasked the police with its enforcement. Characteristic of its history and nature, the police force has treated Kenyans to gruesome violence during this period - starting with ferry users in Mombasa on the first day of the curfew. In many other places, Kenyans were beaten or tear gassed out of markets, kiosks, vibandaskis and other social places in incidents that left many small scale traders and roadside vendors, the workers and peasants, counting losses or nursing injuries. At least two people - a boda-boda rider in Kwale and a 13 year old boy in Nairobi's Kiamaiko area – have lost their lives to police excesses during this period. Covid-19 on the other hand has so far claimed one life. This imposition of violence on the masses to protect them from the coronavirus brings to fore a salient contradiction that must be placed at the center of our public discourse and analysis.

Let them eat data.

On the 23 rd of March, Kenyans eagerly awaited President Uhuru Kenyatta's live address to the nation. Many hoped that this speech, coming in the middle of a crisis, would address their concerns and anxieties by rolling out progressive measures capable of cushioning them from the tough economic times that loomed ahead. After dithering and prevaricating, Uhuru arrived at the thrust of his speech.

His government, in a bid to widen Kenya's 4G internet connectivity and enhance remote access for those currently

working or learning from home, had approved roll-out of the Loon project – a collaboration between Telkom Kenya and Google's Loon Project. The timing of this speech was a reminder of how much the ruling class is out of touch with the reality on the streets. History reminds us of Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France who on learning the peasants had no bread and were starving, is alleged to have said that the peasants 'could have cake' instead.

No one thought of a #ProPoorCoronaResponse like the one proposed by Ujamaa Centre that advocates for a price freeze on essential commodities, suspends utility payments and household bills until this is over, ensures both public and private hospitals are accessible to all irrespective of ability to pay, protects small and medium enterprises through tax exemptions and rent moratoriums, and enlists then trains emergency response teams in conjunction with churches, transport Sacco's, unions and communities. In the Kenyan situation, an effective starting point would have been the suspension of water bills and immediate restoration (or connection) of water supply to all households to allow people to wash their hands as frequently as necessary. That was not to be. Kenyans were instead treated to a 'let them eat data' moment.

The people meanwhile, maintain brave faces in the midst of their ongoing confrontation with the virus. They continue lighting paths, illuminating the lives of others, and providing a glimpse into the sense of togetherness and affection that humanity is capable of. The outpouring of love and solidarity towards the less fortunate, food drives for those likely to be affected by a lock-down in various areas, communities learning how to make liquid soap for distribution and villages coming together to collectively figure out their survival are some of the ways people are building and maintaining their sense of community and solidarity.

As Gacheke Gachihi reminds us, "The struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting". When the virus is finally subdued, we will have to pause and re-think our public health system. Let us not forget to remember.

***Sungu Oyoo is a Kenyan writer and activist.**

Note: This article was written on the last day of March. As at the time of publishing, the following changes have occurred:

**The number of infected Kenyans had risen to 191 on 11th April. 8 people have lost their lives to Covid-19 so far.

**More Kenyans have lost their lives to the police since this article was written - bringing the total number of deaths attributable to the police force to at least 15 people.

***The Nairobi metropolitan area is under lockdown. Residents are allowed to move within, but not in and out of the metropolis. A similar arrangement is also in place in the Coastal region (Mombasa, Kilifi and Kwale Counties).

Lived Realities



By Asha Jaffar

The coronavirus and the national/international crisis it has precipitated show us that systems currently in place do not work for the majority. It is now clearer, day by day, that society will have to re-imagine the architecture and design of political, economic and social spheres of its existence.

Covid-19 is with us, and as humanity has always done over the course of history, we will overcome it by coming together to fight using all weapons at our disposal. Over the past two weeks, I have been part of efforts to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus on my community in Kibera - where I was born. Below is a short write-up of our experience with the Kibera food drive this far.

Social distancing, isolation and staying at home is a privilege - especially when you live in an overpopulated area where overcrowding, congestion and poor hygiene are tied to your daily existence – and especially where you have to depend on casual work that pays on a daily or weekly basis to put food on the table. Such casual work comes with no medical insurance or benefits

With this Global Pandemic (Covid-19), governments everywhere have put in place tough restrictions on movement and social engagements. In Africa, especially Kenya, these strict measures come with a pinch of privilege. With social distancing for instance... you need to at least have adequate space and a population whose movement you can regulate. In Kibera (the largest slum in Kenya), a lot of people are now trying to keep distance, and every new day provides a glimpse into their daily struggle to maintain this safe distance despite the congestion. To stay at home and do nothing on the other hand is the greatest privilege most residents of Kibera can think of, for most here depend on casual work as construction workers, househelps etc.

As young community leaders, we started a Kibra food drive with the aim of keeping most families in our community, especially those that cannot stay at home without having to worry about food, nourished during this period of economic uncertainty. Each time we knocked on someone’s door, every time we said hello, the smiles and gratitude that met us gave us hope and determination to do more. With no support from either the government or the many non-governmental organizations with a presence in Kibera, the community team has so far been able to feed around 200 families over the past two weeks.

Action as conversation.

In an effort to learn what other young people are doing to combat the virus and its effects in their communities, I also spoke to Grace and Christine. Grace is a founding member of Women for Peace, a Kisumu-based CBO, while Christine is a resident of Maringo in Nairobi. Below are snippets of our conversations:

Asha: How are you fighting the virus in your communities?

Grace: My team and I are voluntarily making and distributing masks to groups that come into contact with a high number of people on a daily basis and who may not be able to afford buying masks. These include mamas in the market, boda-boda operators, and other vulnerable groups who – given the tough economic situation - are more likely to prioritise feeding their families over purchasing masks.

When we started, we were making the masks out of cotton and canvas materials. After doing some research, we upgraded to the most recommended fabric as advised, and started making masks with two coatings and 3 layers. Demand for the masks is very high, but the high costs of producing them mean we can only make and distribute a limited number of masks.

Christine: When we came together, it was a few like-minded people asking ourselves what we could do to minimize cases of the corona virus in Maringo. We decided to make soap and sensitize our community on the importance of proper hand washing during this period. I volunteered to train a few community health workers on how to make the hand washing soap.

We launched our hand washing campaign with a clean-up of our neighborhood and demonstrations of how to properly wash hands with soap and water. The team has been making liquid soap, packaging it in half-litre bottles and distributing it to the most vulnerable in our community – mainly the old, the needy and vendors who interact with very many people.

Other people: Wash your hands! Focus! Viva!

***Asha Jaffar is an award-winning writer and journalist from Kenya.**

“With no support from either the government or the many non-governmental organizations with a presence in Kibera, the community team has so far been able to feed around 200 families over the past two weeks.”

Asha

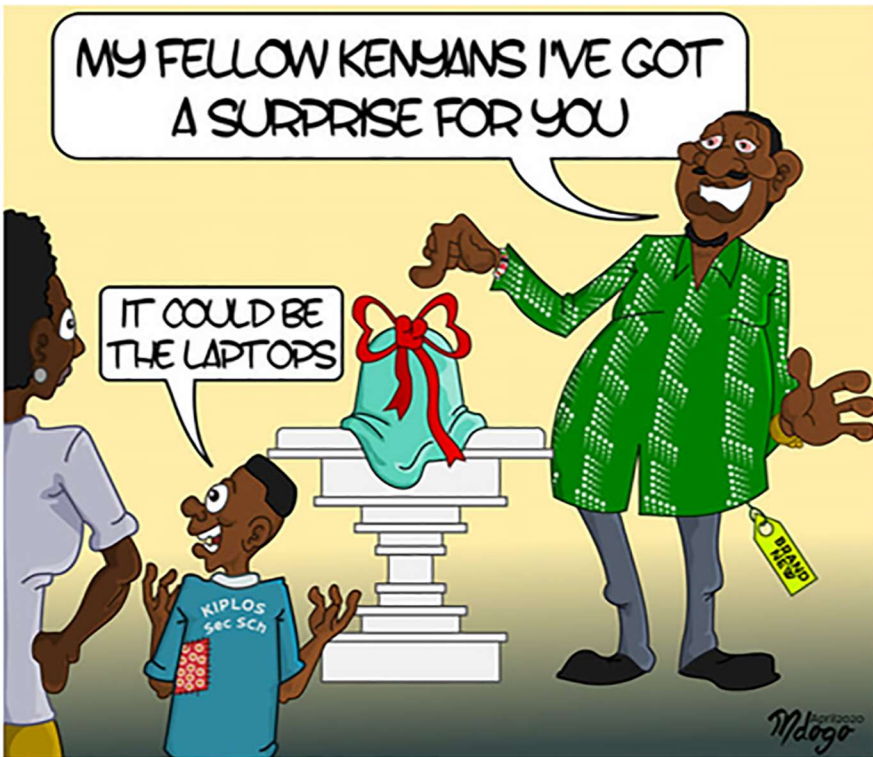
“Demand for the masks is very high, but the high costs of producing them mean we can only make and distribute a limited number of masks.”

Grace

“The team has been making liquid soap, packaging it in half-litre bottles and distributing it to the most vulnerable in our community – mainly the old, the needy and vendors who interact with very many people.”

- Christine

Graveyard of our Memories



**FOOLING KENYANS
-Since 2013-**

By Abubakar Junior

*The graveyard of our memories
Is a huge space and it takes months of long lonely nights to visit each grave.
I can never forget any of the engravings on the tombstones though,
Neither can I forget the date it all went dead.
There are so many pretty flowers of all colours everywhere,
I know it isn't you and it definitely isn't me so who else even cared?*

*For the longest time I wondered who else held these graves dear,
Until I realized it was from every promise we made, every 'I love you' we giggled and every
unspoken thought we very clearly heard.
The flowers were from the love that was true and the beauty of truth.*

*For a long time I wondered then, who is it that killed them all?
Who is it that killed us?
I blamed time so very wrongly,
I had no one else in mind.
Until I realized it was our priorities, aspirations and pride.
It was the adults who didn't care about friendship bracelets and handmade cards*

*I see it as something dead to mourn about,
Do you see it at all?
Or did you use all that was dead as stepping up in the race that has got to your head?*

*But maybe it is me being mistaken again,
Maybe you followed your religious rites.
Maybe we sit in a beautiful urn somewhere in your mind.*

***Abubakar Junior is a Kenyan writer, poet and activist.**

SCRATCH TO REVEAL: BENEATH NYAYO'S BLINDSIDING POPULISM



The announcement of Daniel Moi's death via Presidential proclamation a month ago was greeted with mixed reactions from the public. On one hand you had a narrative peddled by tools of the state, local media outlets and politicians alike who depicted Daniel Moi as a well-intentioned statesman. This narrative was echoed on social media by individuals who not only took a typically 'African' respectability stance – "in Africa we do not speak ill of the dead, kindly let the family mourn in peace" – but also promoted the same government-endorsed narrative of Daniel Moi's well-intentioned nature by mentioning some of his populist proclamations and acts. Then, farther toward the other end of the spectrum of opinion, you had those who – as we young people say – had no chills. Social media was awash with such opinion - and so while many gloated over his death or wrote him off with casual indifference, others mourned him.

The divergence of these responses would have a spectator believe that Kenya's longest serving President had an irreconcilable duality to his character. But when such a spectator scrutinizes history with a fine tooth comb., they discover that Moi's populism, interpreted or perceived as kindness, magnanimity or selflessness, was a ruse he employed to sanitize his regime – a regime responsible for deaths, detentions, torture and grand corruption. Scratching below the surface of this front would reveal a calculating operator intent on the consolidation

and protection of the power he wielded. This is demonstrable by demystifying the man's public persona and popular narratives about him.

Moi the Democrat – The idea that Moi was "good" until the 1982 coup and the idea that the exigencies of his time demanded that Moi be the man he was.

Lacking the charisma and freedom fighter credentials that his predecessor had, Moi strove to endear himself to Kenyans to legitimize his presidency. This was probably why he announced the release of all political prisoners on Jamhuri Day in 1978, only a few months after taking over from Kenyatta – a move that was celebrated by University of Nairobi Students, hitherto a nuisance to the Kenyatta regime. To make it look like a clean break from the Kenyatta regime, his regime also refrained from interfering with the University students' commemoration of the death of Josiah Mwangi Kariuki – the Member of Parliament for Nyandarua North constituency. Unlike March 2nd of 1976, 1977 and 1978, March 2nd of 1979 – the date of JM's commemoration – went by without the usual running battles between university students and police. However, as argued by Wanyiri Kihoro in his book *The Price of Freedom*, these democratic gains took place as Moi quietly gave himself powers to detain any person without trial – powers he had previously wielded ruthlessly as Minister of

Home Affairs when he signed the detention orders of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and other Kenyatta-regime dissidents. Soon enough, the University students saw through his stratagem when he tried to establish a branch of the ruling party – KANU - at the University of Nairobi. The students later protested the ruling party's move to bar Jaramogi Oginga, Achieng Oneko and George Anyona from taking part in the 1979 October elections. In the aftermath of the protest, Rhumba Kinuthia - chairperson of the University's student union - would be among the first detainees and torture victims of the Moi regime.

1980 and 1981 were equally repressive years. Moi banned organizations such as the University Staff Union and 'tribal' organizations such as GEMA in the former, and his regime outlawed a Doctors' strike which the University students supported during the latter. University student leaders at the forefront of this show of solidarity were expelled and some detained. Political candidates such as Jaramogi Oginga and William Difu, considered pariahs by the ruling party, were barred from vying in by-elections held later that year.

The repressive excesses of the Moi regime would reach a crescendo between May and July of 1982 following a wave of detentions which came in the heels of the passing into law of a bill that made Kenya a single-party state, effectively outlawing the existence of alternative political parties besides KANU. The bill, proposed by Charles Njonjo and seconded by Mwai Kibaki, was presented to parliament against the backdrop of efforts by Jaramogi Oginga and George Anyona to establish the Kenya Socialist Party as an opposition party. It is within this context of repression that the attempted coup of 1982 should be looked at. With the regime's dissidents purged or excluded from political life, strikes banned and Moi's administration dictating what kind of political expression was permissible, an underground movement, comprising soldiers and civilians with links to disaffected and frustrated members of the political elite, attempted to take matters in its own hands. In this respect the Moi regime was majorly, if not squarely, responsible for the attempted coup. He was more of an enabler of the coup attempt rather than its victim. This not only invalidates the idea that he was a responsive leader prior to the coup attempt but also turns the notion that he was a victim of circumstances on its head.

Kenya African Nationalism: Nyayo Philosophy and Principles

After succeeding Kenyatta, Moi pledged to follow his predecessor's footsteps (Nyayo) – a shrewd proclamation meant to placate those who were uncertain of the administrative direction his regime would take. With time however, he would breathe more life into the name Nyayo , enabling it grow into an ogre of its own. State infrastructure and services carried the name - Nyayo tea zones, Maziwa ya Nyayo , Nyayo stadium, Nyayo Bus and many others. As the idea became ubiquitous, he came to embody it. His preferred medium of praise – choral music – championed the same message with one of the most notable songs Fimbo ya Nyayo praising his signature ivory-made club for leading Kenyans in the right direction.

His administration would give the slogan a theoretical

foundation. The Nyayo philosophy, described in the book Kenya African Nationalism: Nyayo Philosophy and Principles, put a disproportionate premium on unquestioning loyalty to the government in the name of nation building. To put it cynically, it was a philosophy that encouraged subservience to Moi – in the same way he pledged to follow his predecessors' footsteps; Kenyans were also required to follow his footsteps without question. This philosophy was echoed in music, a loyalty pledge recited by school children as well as in the packets of Nyayo milk that school children drank. While using state machinery to promote the philosophy, Daniel Moi earned the Nyayo moniker and became an embodiment of what the philosophy came to represent – absolute, unquestionable and ubiquitous power. This was reinforced on radio and television where news almost always began with anything that Daniel Moi had done or said. In summation, the Nyayo philosophy was a doctrine designed to protect Moi's power. Closely connected to the doctrine was his widely-quoted yet misinterpreted saying – Siasa Mbaya Maisha mbaya (Bad politics, Bad living). On the surface this seemed like a neutral truism though it really meant that those regions not supportive of his administration would suffer neglect and would be marginalized until they fell in line. Nyanza and Central provinces would suffer such neglect under his regime.

Moi the statesman and Prophet: Multipartyism will bring "tribalism"

Perhaps as a result of election-related violence in 2007-2008, and other spates of electoral violence and ethnic mobilizations that marked the Kibaki and Uhuru eras, there has been a recent tendency to look upon the Moi years – prior to the return to multiparty politics - with ill-informed nostalgia and to lionize him as a statesman who cultivated national cohesion. Let's scratch below the surface for the facts. His move to ban ethnic-based associations in 1980 may have seemed progressive. This is of course until one understands the threat that GEMA (Gikuyu Embu Meru Association) posed to him then and how the leading lights of the association such as Kihika Kimani, Njoroge Mungai and Jackson Angaine plotted to thwart Moi's succession of Kenyatta before they were stopped on their tracks by the equally ambitious Attorney General - Charles Njonjo.

More significantly, however, he cultivated the KAMATUSA elite which proved useful in protecting his power particularly when the demands for multi-party politics reached a climax in the early 1990s. Moi's prophecy that constitutional reform to allow for a multiparty political system would bring tribalism turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy; the elite which enjoyed his tacit support framed the demand for multiparty politics as an assault on Moi's presidency and in response held a series of rallies in the Rift Valley region where they threatened to expel "guest" communities from the region who happened to be co-ethnics of prominent advocates for multiparty politics. Violence targeted at these communities broke out shortly after these rallies. Instigators of the violence were not brought to book - a sign of Moi's tacit support for them.

Moi the Beneficent: Generous with handouts

In many recently published personal accounts based on encounters with Moi, his kindness emerges as a running theme. Many of these encounters, according to the accounts, ended with Moi doling out bundles of cash to those who met him. The notion of Moi's generosity however, can be challenged on two counts – the intention of his apparent kindness and the cost at which Moi got the means to be generous.

As a member of parliament in the early years of Moi's presidency, Koigi wa Mwere narrates how Moi offered him money as an overture to get his political support. This speaks to the first count on which Moi's apparent beneficence could be challenged. The second count is laid bare through numerous corruption scandals as well as the collapse of various parastatals during Moi's 24-year-old reign. The attendant corruption that came with Moi's supposed generosity left poverty and inequality in its wake, while bestowing the control of Kenya's wealth in the hands of a tiny minority. Indeed, shortly after the end of his reign, a risk consultancy revealed that Moi and his associates had siphoned more than £1bn and stashed it abroad.

A 24-year-lesson of how Power works lives on to the Present

The Nyayo years serve as a salutary lesson of how power, through populism, works. Those in power will use populist mind games to appear approachable or to sanitize themselves to those they govern. This has the effect of attracting sympathy for and deflecting blame from those who rule. Growing up in the final decade of the Nyayo years, I observed that the saying "Moi si mbaya ni wale wenye wanamzunguka ndio wanamharibia," (it is not the President who is bad, it is those who hang around him that are soiling his reputation) was frequently repeated; perhaps as a result the pious, down-to-earth persona that he had cultivated for himself over time. Corruption, massacres and even murders were blamed on senior government officials or amorphous groups like YK'92 while Kenya's chief executive feigned innocence.

Scratching below the surface would, however, reveal that the proverbial iron fist was responsible and complicit in detentions, torture as well as killings. The populism served as this iron fist's velvet glove, a pillar that supported it for twenty four years. Although his charity and supposed kindness may have had its beneficiaries, the ultimate beneficiary was the man it sanitized – Daniel Moi.

Today, former acolytes and associates of the late President, who learnt from his rule book, are the engine of Kenya's ruling class and have carried on this populist tradition. The Building Bridges Initiative, an elitist arrangement cobbled by President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga at the height of a post-election stalemate in 2018, is now the dominant debate of the times. Both leaders, former acolytes of the former President, have claimed that the initiative – whose taskforce has suggested expansion of executive positions of power – will serve as a panacea to the cycles of electoral violence which affect vulnerable Kenyans. However, there are indications that both are

"His administration would give the slogan (Nyayo) a theoretical foundation. The Nyayo philosophy put a disproportionate premium on unquestioning loyalty to the government in the name of nation building. To put it cynically, it was a philosophy that encouraged subservience to Moi in the same way he pledged to follow his predecessors' footsteps, Kenyans were also required to follow his footsteps without question... While using state machinery to promote the philosophy, Daniel Moi earned the Nyayo moniker and became an embodiment of what the philosophy came to represent – absolute, unquestionable and ubiquitous power."

angling for positions of power in the next government. Indeed, if they were genuinely motivated by the need to heal the country, the families of victims of the 2017 electoral violence would already have received some form of compensation before the duo's minions began canvassing for the creation of new positions of power. It was under a similar pretext of peace and unity that the Moi regime sold to the public its reluctance to amend the Kenyan constitution to allow for a multiparty political system. At some point, the regime framed its resistance to constitutional change as necessary for the public weal.

One would be naïve, however, to believe that critics of the initiative within the political class are opposing it on principle. On the surface, their argument that the expansion of executive power is a selfish ploy by the BBI proponents to entrench dynastic control of state machinery may look like a genuine attempt to highlight Kenya's class differences. However, the wealth that this group of politicians has gathered over the past few years is disproportionately huge compared to what the millions of Kenyans living in poverty own. Just like their counterparts who support the initiative, this elite group has dressed up its interests to look like the interests of the masses – a throwback to the Nyayo years. It would appear that the populist legacy of Nyayoism lives on through the current political class.

***Monaja is a Hip Hop artist with an academic background in History.**

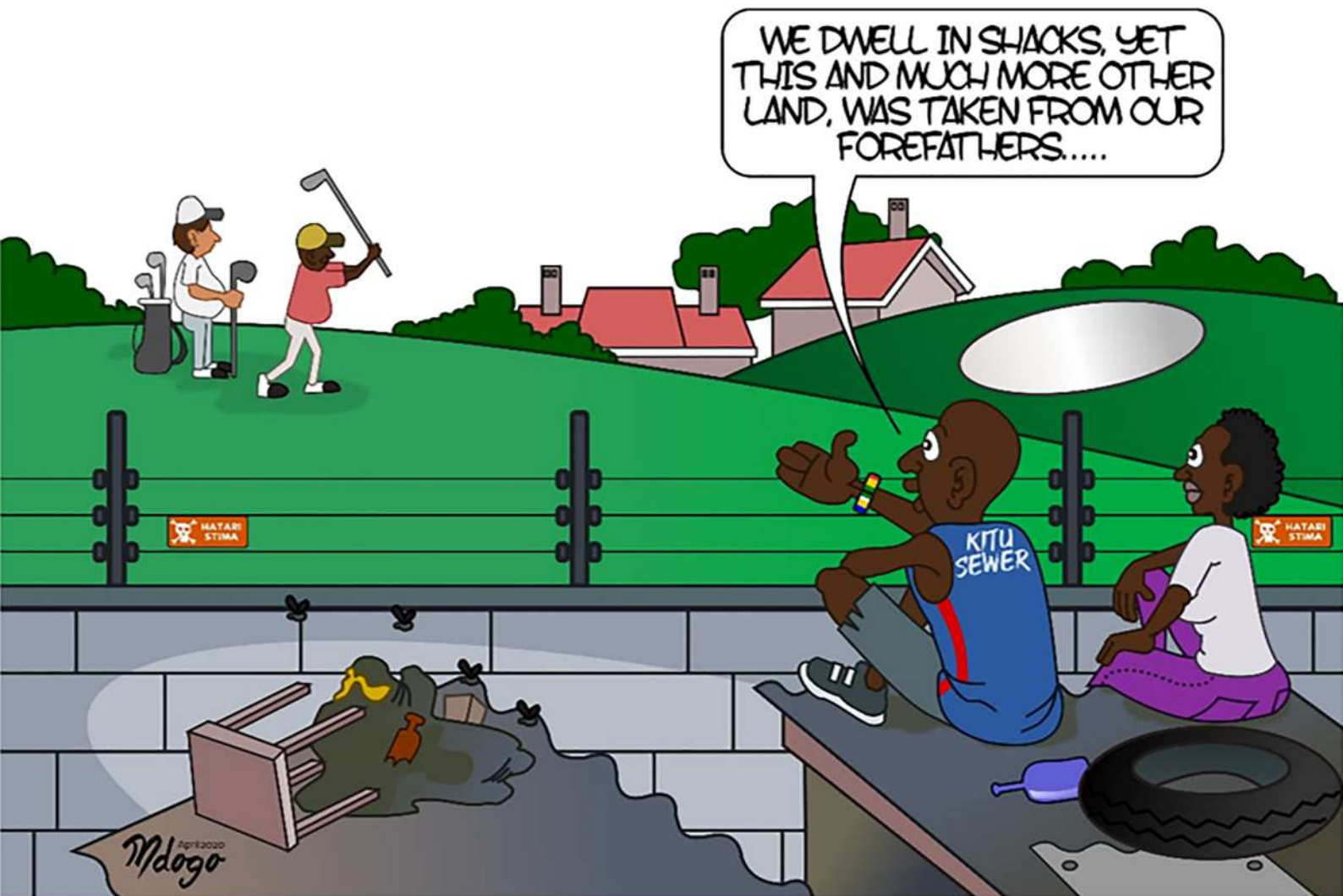
Ya Weusi

Tumetoka mbali, tukasifirishwa mbali pia,
Inakaa ni ka Mwafrika ni mzigo wa dunia,
Inakaa ni ka ngozi nyeusi ni ya kujutia,
Inakaa ni ka juu ya hiyo story watakuchukia,
Majuu watakupiga rithe juu ya kukushuku,
Ndivyo makarau hufanyia maskini wa huku huku,
Kufanya raiya ziishi maisha ingine ya duku duku,
Kupita miaka flani ni ka umeponea chupu chupu,
Maisha duni huku kufanya tusake kazi uarabuni,
Kumbe tukienda huko tunafanywa watumwa maisha duni,
Tulikuwa watumwa tukapelekwa kwa meli uzunguni,
Sa tunaenda huko na ndege juu huku kwetu maisha duni,
Leaders zetu wanatuza, ka wale waliuza wenzetu,
Kushirikiana na wawekezaji, kujitajirisha na mali yetu,
Ndio wapatiwe maganji, wanyamazishe sauti zetu,
Watuharibie mazingira, wadunisha kuishi kwetu,
Kampuni za madini kudhulumu wacongo,
Wapate madini za kutengeneza simu za mkono,
Tukisema hatushirikiani nao litakuwa jibu la uongo,
Ukoloni mambo leo bila nyaunyo ya mgongo,
Juu Tunanunua hizo simu wakongo wakichujwa kwao,
Kampuni zinakanja masoldier wanabaka wadada zao,
Tunasupport wanasiasa wenye waliunda raisi wao.
Umoja wa Afrika bandia juu maisha si rahisi kwao
Slavery ya waarabu ni si tuliipitia
Slavery ya walami ni si tuliumia,
Kubaguliwa na wahindi tushaivumilia,
Kwani mwafrik anachukiwa na kila mtu wa dunia?
Siwakumbushi hizi story muanze kuwachukia,
Ni vile tu ni muhimu hii hali kujijulia,
Ka mwafrika ukiwekwa pande yoyote ya dunia,
Ntakuphakikishia kwa njia moja au ingine utaumia,
Kabla ukoloni walisema hatuna ustaarabu,
Mpaka wakasema Kiswahili lugha ya waarabu,
Ati si waafrika hatuwezi unda vitu za ajabu,
But ntarekebisha hiyo, tafakari ya babu
Mapioneer halisi wa ustaraab sisi,
Msisahau si ndio tuliunda vitu za ajab misri,
Watu wa kwanza wa kwanza binadam ni si,
Na kabla ukoloni si tulikuwa na wataalam sisi?
Continent ile moja ya undugu ubuntu,
Tunapigana wenyewe kwa wenyewe mundu humundu,
Tukaekewa system inasbabisha uchungu vurugu,
But itaanguka siku moja ngumu kudumu,
Juu wachahe wanamiliki mali wengi zaidi wakikosa,
Wachache wanamiliki mali wengi zaidi wakisota,
Wachache wanamiliki mali wengi zaidi wakikopa,
Wachache wanadhibiti mali wengi zaidi wakiogopa
So wacha nifunge hii story kwa kutabiri hii,
Tajanjaruka siku moja tupate ujasiri si,
So wacha nifunge hii story kwa kutabiri hii,
Tajanjaruka siku moja tupate ujasiri si.



***Monaja is a hip-hop artist with an academic background in history**

Land, Bread, Water



Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children. . ." ~ Amilcar Cabral

Decolonization is not a theoretically eloquent dance to nowhere. It's the awakening of a sleeping people taking over the means of production, and in that very material struggle of the last becoming the first, qualitatively supplanting the ideologies of the ruling class with the revolutionary ideas and cultures they have developed during the great showdown between the people's army and the minions of private property. Decolonization is the fire and fury unleashed onto the world in a historical encounter that is inevitable in this epoch of neocolonialism and capitalism-imperialism – and with this, an inauguration of another way of being.

At this point we must clarify that we do have a philosophical component to this fight. A war of worldviews and of the class, race and gender elements whose reactionary hegemonies in the life of the mind must be challenged with progressive ideas and theories to win the material struggle. Our only clamor is that to philosophize without changing the materiality of social life will give no credence, no power, no reality to these progressive values and worldviews we today are busy talking, writing and theorizing about. We must learn the art of merging theory and practice within the organized masses of our people to win the

ideological war at hand in this long protracted struggle. That in a nutshell is the thesis of this essay. Let's move on, then, and hold this conversation.

Land, bread, and water – not a complex intellectual discourse on the ontologies and epistemologies of colonialism and its antithesis – are the deepest interest of the masses. Our people are today clamoring and hungered in the billions by the constant extraction and oppression of corporations, and as such, are caught either in the whirlwind of a vicious cycle of wage slavery or in the labour reserves of big capital. For a mass like that it would be disingenuous to come with a decolonial program that is not rooted in qualitatively changing the objective material conditions. It would be basically fighting a futile battle against ideas and ideologies that are informed ever deeply by the superstructure that owes its lifeblood to the ever-thriving exploitative economic base that sucks the life, blood, and depths of the third world soils. That's to say, if the program isn't materialist and practice-based, it's more useless than a toothless, clawless, caged lion.

To thin the mist of history a bit, let's remember that when the

righteous masses of the colonized Global South were being rallied in the anti-colonial struggles of yesteryears, the revolutionary leaders didn't expose them to a program of fighting against mere racist ideas. They didn't come with a complex decolonial philosophical program and neither did they busy themselves with the frivolous endeavors of competing in speaking and writing a language the masses will never understand nor decipher. They came with a simple program and named the enemy. The program was let's win self-determination so we shall no more live under the shadow of another human being as subservient economic and political slaves. That our enemy today is the colonizer and he must be booted out by any means necessary. And our people understood that. They yielded whatever little weapons they had, and as they sharpened their machetes, their determination to become independent people who would win a glorious fight so their conditions are bettered permanently knew no bounds.

Today's decolonial program must then be based on where we are today. It must be based on contradictions inherent within our nations and people. It must be class conscious. It must be materialist. It can wear a dashiki and glorify ancient Egypt, but it still must be dialectical. It must invest in winning over the productive forces of our people in an organized fashion to reclaim what rightfully belongs to them and walk the long road to the progress and happiness of all of humankind. It must study yesterday, but not get caught in it. It mustn't be romantic. It must waste no time in endless masturbatory insults on classic colonialism, but study objectively the gains made in the liberation struggles, and use those facts in fighting to win against neocolonialism and the comprador class that has risen from amongst us. It must be a mass-based program whose focus is the creation of a people's popular history that is classless and communist; anything less than this is but a waste of time and an attempt at marching into a dead end. Because great ideas that have no bearing in changing the conditions of the people are just that: great ideas – nothing else.

Decolonization is about land. Therefore, our nationalism is righteous, whether it be the nationalism of the indigenous of the Americas, the peoples of Africa, or the aborigines of Australia. It's about winning the land back and building independent societies from the ravages of settlers to the adventures abroad of big money. Today the masses are calling for expropriation of land without compensation as part of an active decolonial program, because without land, everything else fades into thin air whilst the starvation, the sickness, the clamor, and the squalor spiral ever on in the shantytowns, slums and favelas. Decolonization is winning the land to honor the resolve of our ancestors yesterday and descendants who will survive the beautiful tomorrows yet to come. To this vein we stand today with the fighting people of occupied lands from Azania to Palestine in their righteous struggle for their lands.

Decolonization isn't woke, it's a nightmare. It's a messy, habitual, continuous nightmare that plagues both colonizer and colonized in the suburbs and shantytowns. Because the colonizer and colonized are old friends, they have become synced in their anticipations of the dreadful end. An antithesis whose

contradiction will only be resolved in the burning-down-to-the-ground of the master's house. The happiness of the colonizer is the wretched state of the colonized, and vice versa. There is a dialectical relationship that can never be woke, since the day it wakes up it will result in the eternal sleep of the benefactor. So the work today is to awaken the beast within the neocolonial peripheries and remind it of the ending of the friendship. That it won't be transformed into a complaining Philosophy or a harmless aesthetic, but a program of action whose basis is righteous indignation at the forces of oppression that have stolen the land underneath their feet. For the day the third world wakes up, the first world goes to an eternal sleep filled with nightmares of the aforesaid colonized – again, the dialectic, but overturned, this time, to serve the ones that rightfully deserve it.

Decolonization, then, is to organize for socialist revolution. It's not academic conferences and coffeehouse bullshit. It is scientific in its analysis and materialist in its theory. It doesn't beg to be heard in ivory towers, because it's catching fire in the working class and peasant quarters of the Global South. It is calculated in its advance and its highest development is found in the proletarian and peasant movement that denounces the labor aristocrats of the colonial metropole as it marches forward in seizing production and changing the tide of consumption. Knowing it has nothing to lose but its shackles and in winning worlds it will bring forth the historically-needed economic, social, cultural, political destiny of the world to a radiant beginning(s). It's the great poetry in motion of a people finally taking ownership of their own dance as they walk into a newness hitherto unseen by the reactionary forces of a decadent world; a reality of their own making, becoming and being in a zeitgeist that's made through fire, hail, and brimstone.

To conclude, our decolonization today must sit and converse with the people in a language they understand. It's a striving at naming and knowing the enemy and the friend of the colonized. It must know that we will never mentally decolonize without winning over the economic base and replacing the ideologies of the bourgeois superstructure with that of the progressive masses. It's primary insofar as land, bread, and water remain the province of the private. It's popular, messy, beautiful, poetic, bloody, and in the end, worthy of the final becoming of humankind in its continuous motion and movement to happiness and progress as it enters the vortex of the very eternal.

***Alieu bah is a Gambian writer and activist.**

"Today the masses are calling for expropriation of land without compensation as part of an active decolonial program, because without land, everything else fades into thin air whilst the starvation, the sickness, the clamor, and the squalor spiral ever on in the shantytowns, slums and favelas."

JUKWAA LA UKOMBOZI*
PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 9, 2020 – Nairobi, Kenya

RESIGN NOW! YOU HAVE FAILED KENYA

We, sovereign citizens of Kenya, acting together as Jukwaa La Ukombozi, demand for the immediate resignation of the administration of Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, together with all government officials and state officers serving under him, across all the branches and levels of government.

Now in its second controversial term in office, it is evidently clear that the Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta administration is incurably incompetent in fulfilling its constitutional obligations in the service of the people. Majority of Kenyans are worse off under this administration. Our country shall be better off without it.

Despite Kenya having a supportive legal, policy and constitutional framework to solve our nation's historical and ongoing challenges like poor public service delivery, official corruption, ethnic bigotry, structural marginalization, electoral fraud and manipulation, mass poverty and want, disrespect for rule of law and constitutionalism, sexism and environmental destruction – the government of Kenya has outrightly failed to harness these opportunities to improve the quality of life for citizens.

Instead of focusing its attention and effort towards resolving the most relevant and urgent problems facing Kenyans, government machinery has now been grabbed for elite causes whose objective is to subvert the Constitution and customize it to fit personal power ambitions of a few wealthy individuals and power cartels. We reject this.

Kenya belongs to all of us. Kenya is not the private property of the wealthy few who have captured government and state power for personal benefit since independence. These baronial networks continue to view and treat citizens like slaves. They have no business exercising any public authority in our name.

Granted that this administration is in power thanks to the 2017 problematic elections, its total failure and abdication of duty to citizens makes it urgent for us, sovereign citizens of Kenya to invoke Article 1 of our Constitution to directly exercise our democratic rights and banish from power all those exercising delegated authority in our name but who have betrayed our public trust.

We, citizens of Kenya deserve and want better for ourselves and coming generations. We refuse to tolerate in power a government that will not stand for, nor represent what matters to us the most: A Government of Kenya that is about ALL of us and works for us in word and deed.

We refuse to continue accommodating in power an anti-people regime that has failed and is structurally incapable of:

- Respecting our Constitution and upholding its full and impartial implementation;
- Ending corruption and misuse of public wealth as officials are protected looters;
- Creating an environment that enables equitable and sustainable economic opportunity and growth for all;
- Addressing and putting an end to extrajudicial executions by the police - mostly targeting poor youth;
- Putting a stop to careless debts and the systematic auctioning of our sovereignty and futures to foreign capital;
- Providing equitable and quality public education, health, water, housing, safety and security, transport and infrastructure;
- Respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human rights and dignity of all Kenyans; and
- Inspiring the nation to defeat the backwardness of toxic ethnicity and politics and its negating effect to the growth and consolidation of our nationhood.

It is now time for this failed government to resign to pave way for the establishment of an authentic Government of the peoples of Kenya. In this new government, individuals who have served in all the anti-people regimes since independence will be barred from holding public office.

We, sovereign citizens of Kenya, can no longer watch as this failed regime drives our country into further economic ruin, job losses and unemployment, high cost of living, debt, poverty and avoidable illnesses and death.

The gravity of this government's failures calls for its urgent dismissal. We therefore demand an immediate end to its term.

The way forward for Kenya must be a radical break from the status quo and reliance of its operatives for solutions to problems

they have caused. Only a fresh start in the manner in which we govern ourselves can save Kenya from sinking further.

It is time for citizens, to work in one accord and dismiss from power a government that has failed.

...ENDS...

**Jukwaa la Ukombozi is a platform of diverse social, political, economic and cultural movements and organizations of active Kenyans representing all 47 counties. We are united in our commitment and everyday struggles for the total freedom and liberation of Kenya from the exploitation of the many by a few and the defeat of those extractive forces that have captured the Kenyan state for their private gain since independence.*