



Existence is Resistance!

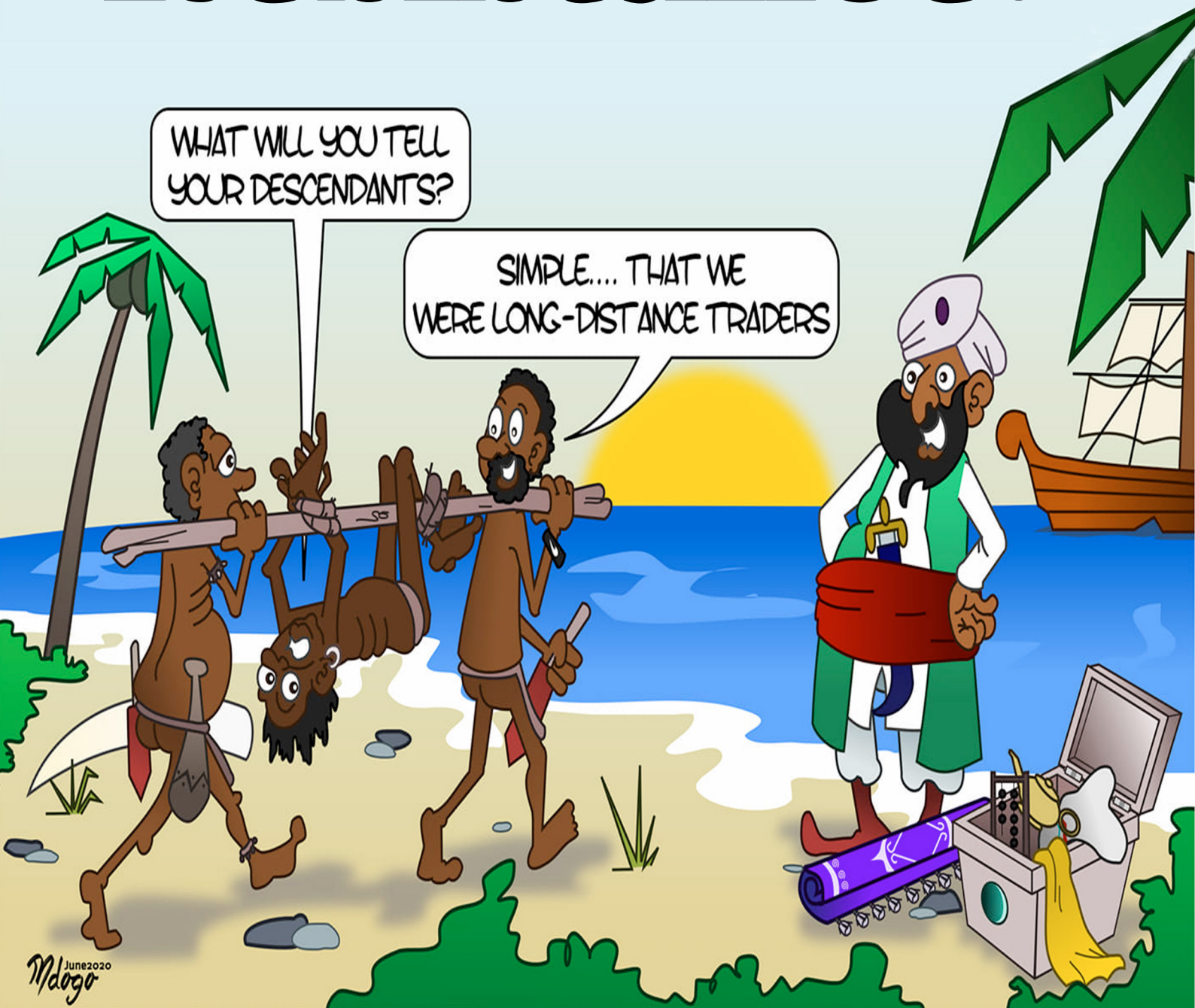


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Editorial

We released the first issue of MWAMKO in April 2020. It was received with joy by Kenyan youth, other progressive people and their circles/organizations. It related a historical analysis to unfolding events, and covered a variety of issues, including the coronavirus pandemic, the Moi dictatorship, and our old struggles for land, bread and water. It *historicized, problematized* and *politicized*.

This issue, titled *“Existence is Resistance”*, also comes in the midst of a continuing global pandemic. The poor - forced to contend with massive layoffs and unemployment, mass evictions and state violence - continue to bear the brunt of this pandemic.

Whilst this issue was slowly coming to life, we commemorated the 57th anniversary of Africa Liberation Day on 25th May, and the 30th anniversary of Saba Saba on 7th July. Marked by gatherings and marches, this sabasaba was used to escalate the push against police brutality and killings - as well as renew calls for implementation of the constitution. Indeed, “the struggle of people against power” as Milan Kundera reminds us, “is the struggle of memory against forgetting”.

Continuing where the first issue ended, this issue is an analysis of our existence as a people, our cultures, languages, literature, organisation - and the sparks of resistance that reside within them. It also includes Amilcar Cabral's National Liberation and Culture speech, a book review and an accompanying reading list that might be helpful in shedding more clarity on some of the issues echoed in these pages. We hope that this issue - like the previous one - will educate and raise consciousness, spark conversation around our lived experiences and material conditions as young Kenyans, enabling us to speak truth to



power and challenge existing hegemonies.

Continuing where the first issue ended, this issue is an analysis of our existence as a people, our cultures, languages, literature, organisation - and the sparks of resistance that reside within them. It is an account of our conditions, an analysis of some of the issues that today confront us and a glimpse into continuing struggles for a just and equal society. It also includes a book review and an accompanying reading list (especially Amilcar Cabral's National Liberation and Culture speech) that shed more clarity on some of the issues echoed in these pages. We hope that this issue - like the previous one - will educate and raise consciousness, sparking conversation around our lived experiences and material conditions. I believe it will be informative for both individuals and people's organizations, enabling us collectively speak truth to power and challenge existing hegemonies.

We are descendants of those who survived the ships, the plantations, the colonial enterprise, and we continue surviving/resisting its scion, the neo-colonial state. Our existence is an act of resistance.

*Yours in love and freedom,
Sungu Oyoo - Edit*

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Covid-19: A Crisis, a New Normal, and Community Organising

State response and community organizing during the pandemic

By Leonida Adongo - 25 June 2020

Since the first case of Covid-19 was reported in Wuhan-China in 2019, the world has in many ways come to a standstill. Jobs have been lost, families have buried their loved ones, police brutality has spiked up and many are nursing injuries brought about by domestic violence at the hands of their spouses. The state meanwhile, has introduced various measures to contain the spread of Covid-19. These include Legal Notice No 50 on restriction of movement of persons in Kenya, quarantine, distribution and sale of face masks among others. But have these measures met communities at their points of need? And in what ways are communities better organising themselves to bridge the gap between their needs and measures implemented by the state?

Some people claim Covid is an equaliser because the affluent can no longer travel abroad for medical check-ups and treatment as has been the norm, as most countries [in the west] have closed their borders. However, for poor Kenyans who depend on daily wages, Covid being considered an equaliser is a fallacy because the restrictions on movement, the imposition of curfews and the ever present fear of police brutality during enforcement of the curfew have pushed many of them deeper into an already worrying and precarious existence. Reality is that the most impacted by Covid-19 in Kenya are the poor and those living in pockets of poverty.

Covid has fundamentally changed the way Kenyans interact. With the stay at home directive as part of containment of Covid 19, many workplaces, both formal and informal, have been closed over the last three months - some for good. Over 1 million people have lost their jobs[1]. For many in informal settlements who depend on wage labour as a source of livelihood, the closure of businesses and loss of job opportunities in sectors such as construction (popularly known as mjengo) or doing laundry (mama fua) means that daily cash flow into households are disrupted.

Furthermore, the closure of schools to contain Covid has disrupted learning for 17 million learners

since March, and proposed shifts to online learning have brought to the fore the digital divide in access to education. While some students can afford to continue attending classes via zoom or alternative online platforms, many children and students from informal settlements and other pockets of poverty are unable to do so and will have to stay at home until some form of normalcy is established to continue with their schooling. The digital divide in education is also experienced by students in university and other institutions of higher learning. When the administration of the University of Nairobi proposed digital learning in May for instance, students came out to express disapproval and inability to adopt online learning through the hashtag #UONboycottonlineclasses. Some had travelled back to their rural homes where they have no electricity, others did not have access to laptops or desktop computers, while for others it was too expensive to buy enough data bundles to undertake 2-3 hour learning sessions.



One student succinctly captured this situation in a tweet, "I am from Baringo and there is poor network and no electricity in my area. I need to walk for 3kilometres to access 2G network. How am I supposed to attend online classes?" Reality is that it still is not automatic that university students have access to a laptop or a desktop computer. For some students, especially those from humble backgrounds, digitalisation remains a mirage - except when they are within the university compounds. This is why many make use of libraries where access to university Wi-Fi is assured, or cyber cafes which remain expensive and unsustainable.

With the many economic and social disruptions, Kenyan households have increasingly become zones of



violence, as evidenced by a sharp spike in incidences of domestic violence during this Covid period in comparison to the pre-Covid period. This increase can be attributed to shattered sources of livelihoods and the inability to afford basic necessities such as food and shelter, lack of mechanisms to psychologically cope with the aftermath of the pandemic, poor communication at family level among other reasons. Many cases have been reported of families sleeping out in the cold for lack of rent for example in Kayole[2], while recent evictions in Kariobangi[3] left over 5000 families homeless and at an increased risk of infection by the coronavirus and other respiratory diseases because that demolition happened in the middle of the rainy season.

State response at community organising during the pandemic

Quite fundamentally, the support being availed by the state in informal settlements and other pockets of poverty has not done much to address the plight of the poor, and has further dehumanized the people. Over the past few months, the media has been awash with incidences of people getting injured in stampedes during food distribution like in Kibera[4], or through incidents of police brutality like we saw at the ferry in Mombasa. There have also been multiple incidences of people fleeing from quarantine facilities[5] and the inherent stigma that comes with Covid infection.

It is against this bleak backdrop that communities in informal settlements are organising to survive in the wake of Covid-19. Some are sewing masks and distributing them to fellow community members, while others are making soap or mobilising food and other forms of support for vulnerable households. Young people are utilising their creativity and are for instance creating talking walls in different informal settlements. The Social Justice Centre Theatre Group is packaging information on Covid-19 and creating awareness in informal settlements to protect communities by enabling them access to much needed information. In other places, Mpesa has been used to mobilise resources to buy food, pay rent for families on the verge of being evicted by landlords or sleeping hungry. Others are educating the young in their communities on the dangers of unsafe sex and distributing sanitary towels to vulnerable women and girls. With disrupted sources of income, getting 85 shillings to buy a packet of sanitary pads is a challenge for many Kenyans - for despite closure of airspaces and travel, or cessation of movement, men-

struation among women and girls has not stopped due to Covid.

Community organising is a process, and change does not come overnight. While Covid 19 has reawakened the spirit of creativity and humanity within informal settlements and pockets of poverty, these creative and humane efforts must give cognisance to the fact that community organising is a pathway through which people come together to collectively address issues affecting them. When communities come together, new ideas emerge, new solutions are created and new skills acquired. It is a process of having one's eyes opened to existing capabilities and alternatives. For community organising to be effective, it must originate from the level of the concerned communities. This is because it is the community that understands the problem they are going through. You cannot talk about lack of jobs when you have never been without a job, or understand what it means to have no food if you have always had something to eat. In addition, individuals who've had to sleep in the cold at some point because of non-payment of rent for instance, are better placed to understand the pain and agony that comes with forceful eviction. The issues our communities organise around must thus be reflective of the lived realities and conditions of the people. These conversations must be anchored on the people.

Community mobilising is an integral part of community organising. Mobilising communities to take action means that they are ready to respond to the issue(s) at hand. It is of fundamental importance for communities to continue organising post-Covid because it seems Covid will be with humanity for a long time to come. We must also celebrate the various strategies being adopted at the grassroots to ensure survival in an uncertain environment and the many unsung heroes and heroines who are contributing to making life bearable in informal settlements.

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- [1] <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/Covid19-Over-a-million-rendered-jobless-in-Kenya/2560-5571598-uu6l8d/index.htm>
- [2] <https://nairobineews.nation.co.ke/news/16-families-in-kayole-look-uhurus-intervention-after-landlord-kicks-them-out-over-unpaid-rent>
- [3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AmOdRuxqf0>
- [4] <https://www.africanews.com/2020/04/11/covid-19-mad-rush-for-food-aid-in-kenya-creates-stampede/>
- [5] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52381583>

The Wake up Call from Mutemi Kiama's Abduction

By Cyprian Orina-Nyamwamu - June 10, 2020

Most of us do not like history. You like moving forward most of the time into ditches that are visible but which most do not recognize are ditches. One of the ditches is the BBI ditch. Yes the BBI is a ditch. The national liberation vehicle will be stuck in it for some time. When you see the Kenyatta family supporting anything, it is your confirmation that whatever they are supporting is for keeping them in power and ensuring the system remains intact. Do not be fooled by Raila supporting it. Raila is a State outsider who has frequently relied on borrowed soldiers to stay alive politically. Unfortunately the borrowed soldiers have abandoned him when it is convenient for them but when it is most inopportune for Raila.

I write this brief reflection on the day Mutemi Kiama is finally released after being abducted and taken through a horrifying night in the hands of dangerous men from the Police force. It is still a force and not yet a service. It is a force for silencing and brutalizing the people so that they do not ask those in power uncomfortable questions. Wanjeri while on Spice FM in a sentence blamed our (those of us who say we stand for Kenya Bora Tuitakayo) disorganization as the key factor that emboldens the men in power to target those who expose their evil rule. I disagree with Wanjeri and agree with her at the same time.

I have been organizing for National liberation and in the struggle for the *Kenya Bora Tuitakayo* for 25 years - continuously and actively. In 1995 when I came into this broad struggle, mission and calling, I only used to rely on newspapers and reports of organizations to know what was going on. That is the year I entered students' leadership as a first year student at the Kenya Polytechnic and started reaching out to other students' leaders across the country. I wanted us to go beyond students' politics and become students in politics. Most of the Students Unions had been proscribed by the Moi regime. In 1996 I interacted with members of RPP(Release Political Prisoners) through Ndungi Githuku my college mate at the time. RPP Pressure Group was a very active group fighting for human rights, social justice and the freeing of political prisoners. I was very inspired by the



Mutemi Kiama was violently abducted from his house by officers of the dreaded DCI "flying squad" now rebranded as Special Service Unit (SSU) notorious for extrajudicial disappearances.



story of RPP and the mothers of Political Prisoners including Prof Wangari Maathai and how they survived months of hunger strike at freedom Corner and how the Moi State had brutalized them so badly until the mothers undressed for the whole world to know that KANU was running a criminal state of torture. RPP really focused on the criminal justice system- from policing and police brutality, to prosecution of cases, the judiciary and the prison system. RPP was working very closely with Kenya Human Rights Commission(KHRC) in this regard under Maina Kiai's leadership as the then Executive Director. In 1997 I got to know about the formation of NCA-NCEC by the leading lights such as Willy Mutunga and Kivutha Kibwana. At the NCA I got to know of Youth Agenda and Kepta Ombati. I joined the National Youth Movement (NYM) that year and got to know about all the other interconnected struggles since 1902.

From the above paragraph you realize that we no longer have the NYM, we do not have the RPP Pressure group, we no longer assemble as NCA-NCEC, KHRC is not as sharp as it used to be, the Students movement in Kenya is dead and non-existent. We are no longer working hand in hand with the religious leaders, the opposition political parties, the lecturers and professional associations as we used to in those days. The movement is scattered. It is no longer clear who is for Kenya and who is for KANU because even William Ruto's Tanga Tanga is broadly defined as part of the struggle. It is no longer clear when one crosses over to the other side which is why it is hard to see that Raila and ODM are on the other side strengthening the hand of the oppressor. In this regard I agree with Wanjeri.

This article is about two messages for going forward:

First is that we (I have defined who I am referring to) have a vision: the Kenya Tuitakayo Vision of 1996 is clear: a) enact a democratic constitution to re-arrange power and make it accountable, create democratic institutions and set out just rules of the game; b) then get the right people in office to manage these institutions for justice to flow; then transform the material and social structure and relationships among Kenyans in order to deconstruct the colonial violent and dehumanizing state and society and birth a just, democratic and people centered State. We got a democratic constitution and promulgated it on August 27 2010, ten years ago but lost the plot there and then. This vision was in the document titled Njia Ya Kufikia Katiba Mpya- Kati-

ba Mpya Maisha Mapya.

My Second message is this: We must recapture and follow the vision of Kenya Tuitakayo or we will keep going round and round and round the same spot without knowing why we are stuck. This means that we must get back to where we missed the turn: we must get the right people in the offices and institutions and ensure that we radically and fundamentally reconstruct the state and our culture to give life to the constitution we promulgated in 2010. We lost the track when the wrong people captured the constitutional offices and decapitated the journey. 2010 became a false dawn of giving sharper tools to the enemy to hurt us on a more deadly scale. The solidarity that delivered the Katiba (constitution) disintegrated and the coordination to ensure that the Katiba is implemented faithfully was simply not there anymore. A few people and organizations tried to push for this faithful implementation but were swept aside.

How did we lose the plot back then in 2010? Because we lost the plot in 2008. In 2008, the unprecedented scale of our own ugliness displayed by the Post election violence, the sheer grabbing of power through the KICC Coup by the GSU, the swearing of Kibaki, the more than seven thousand rapes of women and the macabre atrocities we meted on each other simply deflated the movement. In that year, the Grand Coalition government set out to implement the Kofi Annan Panel recommendations. Once the reports from the various commissions came in, they landed in the hands of Mwai Kibaki and the ICC suspects who were involved in the 2007/8 post election violence and power grab. Even my calling it the power grab is contested by very many pro-democracy and civil society actors. But before the reports came in, in 2009 William Ruto hosted Mwai Kibaki, Uhuru, Kalonzo etc in Eldoret. This is where Ruto moved his MPs from ODM to Mwai Kibaki's PNU side giving PNU the superficial majority in Parliament yet on paper, ODM had the majority in Parliament. I have called this the ICC Alliance. That Eldoret meeting was decisive. By the time the Abdikadir Mohamed-led Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution arrived in Naivasha, PNU had nearly 80% control of the committee which is how they managed to get the Presidential system and to insert killer clauses in the constitution including Article 99 (3). Do you know what this provision says? Here we go

“99 (3) A person **is not disqualified** under clause (2) unless all possibility of appeal or review of the relevant

sentence or decision has been exhausted. This is how our court case to disqualify the ICC indictments from running for President and Deputy President was thrown out. The two were in Naivasha to ensure this clause was inserted”.

The PNU control of Parliament/The ICC Alliance was then granted the power of populating people into Constitutional commissions, the Judiciary, and all the other new offices. This ICC Alliance got Charles Nyachae to head the Constitution implementation Commission, Keriako Tobiko as Prosecutor, Githu Mui-gai as Attorney-General, Isaak Hassan as IEBC Chairman, Visram as Chief Justice etc. We had to go to court to stop Visram from becoming CJ, Kioko Kilukumi from becoming Prosecutor and to get Dr Mutunga and Nancy Baraza as CJ and DCJ. The wrong people later in 2013 became President and Deputy as well as MPs in the National Assembly and the Senate and went on to get the wrong guys as cabinet Ministers, mostly wrong governors who betrayed devolution, wrong IG, wrong DCI Director, wrong Speaker of the National Assembly and the story goes on. Let me remind you what Kimemia told us in 2011 August at the SID Forum on the first Constitutional Anniversary: He told us that the Constitution of Kenya (2010) is a creature of the State in delivering the Vision 2030 Political Pillar requirements. Therefore, the State shall implement it as the State’s document. Kimemia asked us: “Who arranged the referendum in which Wanjiku voted for the constitution and who paid for the COE and the civic education?” I there and then understood that the struggle had been captured and that the Constitution had been allowed to immunize the system from imploding. I have written about this in greater detail elsewhere.

We cannot get to the Kenya Tuitakayo if we do not have the right and aligned people, those who conceived and birthed the baby and the vision; those who believe the Kenya we believe in. NO. It is impossible to have a breakthrough. We cannot change the rotten culture of the six Us (Ufisadi, ukabila, ukatili, unyonyaji/ unyanyasaji, ubaguzi, ukoloni mamboleo) if the right people are not in office. But to succeed in this, we must get the masses of the citizens of Kenya on our side. They are not on our side, they are with Tanga Tanga, Kieleweke, BBI, Wiper etc. We must snatch them from that side to the side of Ukombozi. There must be two teams in Kenya: Team Ufisadi/Ukabila and our team-Team Ukombozi.

My generation have been organizing consistently

for Kenya Tuitakayo for at least 30 years nonstop. For the likes of Dr Willy and Raila Odinga it has been since 1975. For Mzee Gitu Wa Kahengeri and Mama Jael Mbogo (now 87) it has been since 1955. And all of them are part of the same movement which is scattered and uncoordinated. We now have youngsters born in 1985, 1995 in the movement but we have not been speaking to each other. We are dismissing the work of that group, that individual that generation yet we are supposed to be members of the same team. There is need for connectors in the movement to create the intergenerational dialogue within the struggle, do mentorship and transfer institutional memory to the upcoming generation. I consider myself part of those who should be connectors. We cannot sit and complain the way the younger generations do not want to be mentored. Profs Jill and Yash Pal Ghai, Kepta Ombati, Catherine Mumma, Ombok, Dr Willy Mutunga, Dr Mshai Mwangola, Mutemi Kiama, Francis Kuria and many others have made themselves available to the younger generation in their struggles and they are mentoring the next generation as circumstances permit. This needs to be scaled up and institutionalized.

After Mutemi Kiama’s abduction and harassment this week, it has become clear that the other side is not going to rest until it has destroyed the movement and scattered us. Yet it is by attacking Kiama that we have been woken up to the urgency and need to be organized or we shall be isolated and smothered by the repressive Jubilee machinery in our separate corners.

Our disconnected selves is the problem. We are doing our good work in very many places, areas and across many issues. But we are not connected and therefore powerless. It is not just good work that is going to make a difference but getting connected and acting and flowing in the same direction. The most important factor in struggle is the direction. Mzee Gitu Wa Kahengeri told us in one of the RPP Cultural weeks in 2001 (just before 71 of us were taken to Kamiti maximum Remand) that little streams flowing in different directions cannot drown the oppressor. They end up nourishing the oppressor actually. What you need is to flow in the same direction as they did under KLFA/Mau Mau, as they did under FORD, as we did under NCA/NCEC, as we did under NARC.

That is why we must get everyone to act together under the National Citizens Assemblies. We saw what organizing under the Citizens Assemblies for two months achieved in December 2017 and January



2018 to push for electoral justice before the “Handshake” was enacted. We must get The Okoa Mombasa, Red Vests-Zero Corruption, the Social Justice Centres across Kenya, the Save Lake Turkana Action Group, the National Students Caucus, The Kenya Tuitakayo Committee, The Women’s Agenda, all the voices standing up for slum communities etc working in the same direction; all of us must now come under one big Tent- the Citizens Assemblies- Not Assembly but Assemblies. A big Tent must allow for organizing to go on at all levels and around various issues, but of necessity is the need for all to flow to the same direction.

Which direction are you talking about? I am talking about The Ukombozi direction- The Kenya Bora Tuitakayo Ukombozi direction which has four components:

- a) The direction of a common stand on constitutional amendments as proposed by the BBI Alliance;
- b) A common strategy of how to do resistance and hold the current state and system accountable, how to resist and how to protect and defend our people from the deprivation, oppression, persecution and exploitation (DOPE) of the current state and neoliberal system. Our farmers in Rift Valley and across the country are exposed to the annual ritual of extortion, where the millions in the budget intended for paying them for their produce ends up in the pockets of ghost and imaginary farmers. Two years ago a lady received 42m for maize she supplied from her farm in Bungoma. When investigations were done, it was realized that the lady does not have any farm in Bungoma and that she actually comes from Muranga. She had been used as a conduit to loot the farmers’ money. Kiunjuri, the former agriculture minister, is likely to be Ruto’s running mate in 2022. Daily, our people are being squeezed and their blood sucked by the state and the system. We have been missing out in their struggles. Under this component, ***we must prepare thoroughly for the onslaught from the other side because that onslaught is going to be strong and vicious***, but that is to be expected. Defending the constitution and fighting for justice and liberation cannot be a song in the park. It is hard and painful work.
- c) An agreement on the people we will place in offices who are aligned to our vision. And when are we doing that? In Sudan they decided to get Al

Bashir’s dictatorship out of office before elections; every other month commissions are getting new commissioners and Parastatals new CEOs; the wrong people are being placed in power who then continue to renew the system of oppression against the interests of the people of Kenya. Currently there is a scam going on as regards the appointment of the Auditor General and we have not been seen strongly on this matter. There are serious schemes to get CJ Maraga out but we seem to be waiting to see how he will be humiliated not if. We are not discussing which judges should come into the Supreme Court.

- d) Fourth; is on how to undertake a serious cultural revolution to ensure that we have an enabling national ethos and behaviour that is embraced by alternative citizens across the country- citizens who champion and socialize themselves and their children to the values of the revolution and liberation agenda. There are many struggles within the struggle. Women in the struggle have to struggle to be heard and recognized for their contribution in the liberation struggle. The sexism, tribalism, discrimination in our side of the ideological divide remains real. The Citizens Assemblies must be inclusive, sensitive, national, multi-ethnic, multi-religious etc for there to be real movement toward creating the new Kenya Bora Tuitakayo.

How do we move in this direction? We must convene Citizens’ Assemblies in every single village/Polling Centre Area, at every of the 1450 Wards, at the 290 Electoral areas, 47 County Levels and then the National Citizens Assembly. This work should be officially launched on Saba Saba 2020. In each County there are individuals or a Movement Building Organization (MBO) or several such to rely on. Let us start from there on Saba Saba 2020. By December 2020 we shall have convinced ourselves that we are a mighty movement that has been disconnected, we are a sleeping giant. Because we are.

Cyprian Orina-Nyamwamu is the General Secretary of the NCEC and the Director of the Future of Kenya Foundation;

Saba Saba, the 2010 Constitution & Contempt for the People

By The Social Justice Centers Working Group – July 10th 2020



A wall mural on extra-judicial executions in Nairobi's Kiamaiko neighbourhood. Photo credit: Mutua Arts, member of the Arts For Social Justice team (led by Javan the Poet), a collective of progressive arts in the informal settlements of Nairobi and beyond.

Tuesday, July 07, 2020 marked the 30th anniversary of Saba Saba; a memorable day in July 1990 when a multitude of courageous sons and daughters of Kenya fearlessly challenged a repressive government, ushering in possibilities for the realization of democratic ideals and practices in our motherland. The brave actions of patriotic Kenyans before, during, and after July 07, 1990 eventually forced the Moi dictatorship to repeal section 2A of the Constitution, paving the way for the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Kenya. Saba Saba has since been commemorated annually to honor all Kenyans who made great sacrifices and even lost their lives in the struggle for our collective freedom.

The July 07, 1990 rally that demanded an end to single-party rule in Kenya was cancelled by the police and some of its organizers arbitrarily detained prior

to the D-day. This did little to deter patriotic citizens who nevertheless converged in the thousands at Nairobi's Kamukunji grounds - only to be met with police violence - resulting in protests which quickly spread to other towns and lasted for four days. That day signaled a resurgence of the struggle for political and constitutional change in Kenya that culminated in ushering in a multi-party political dispensation.

The commemoration of Saba Saba continues to serve as a great opportunity to bring to the fore pressing issues of national importance, defend freedoms and constitutional gains made over the years. Indeed, the meaning of Saba Saba and its symbolism of freedom lives on.

This year's Saba Saba was commemorated in different ways by citizens across the country. In Nairobi, the *Saba Saba March For Our Lives* organized and



convened by the Social Justice Centers' Working Group to demand for implementation of the constitution (*Tekeleza katiba*) and an end to extra-judicial killings in our communities – was violently disrupted by the police force.

In our poor neighborhoods and slums which are home to a majority of Kenya's urban-population, or other structurally marginalized areas across the country, the police consistently act in utter disregard of the law, engaging in acts of violence and killing countless Kenyans with impunity. Over 100 Kenyans have so far lost their lives to police violence in 2020.

Having previously engaged various state offices and institutions on the issue of extrajudicial executions without receiving meaningful responses and attention to help address these pervasive issues, young people, mainly drawn from the Social Justice Centers, decided to petition the Office of the President this Saba Saba - but their determination to peacefully deliver a petition against police brutality was met with more police brutality. Acting in blatant disregard of Article 37 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) which guarantees the right 'to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket, and to present petitions to public authorities', the police, without any provocation, fired teargas at citizens converging at Mathare Social Justice Center even before the march had kicked off. They also blocked several roads to prevent protesters from accessing Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD), beat them up and made several arrests in Dandora, Mathare, Kayole, Kibera, and later on, in the CBD where they also used teargas and live bullets against peaceful and unarmed protesters. By the end of the day, 56 protesters - including protest leaders, community organizers, and mothers of some of the slain victims had been arrested and booked in various police stations – simply for asking that the dignity and sanctity of human life be respected by the police. That they were not allowed to deliver their petition marks a continuation of this administration's contempt for the masses - especially poor people - and their opinions.

Despite Kenya having a supportive legal, policy and constitutional framework to solve our nation's historical and ongoing challenges - the government of Kenya, having outrightly failed to harness these opportunities to create an environment that enables equitable and sustainable economic opportunity and growth for all – has gone on to criminalize poverty, and

in the process, systematically targeted youth from poor neighborhoods. The Kenyan state must stop criminalizing the very poverty that it has historically played a role in creating - for poverty does not fall from the sky, it is 'manufactured'.

First they degrade you. Then dehumanize you. Treat you with contempt, or kill you.

Kenya's younger generation grew up witnessing extra-judicial executions in the narrow streets and alleys they played in. Many of their older friends and siblings are no longer with us, their lives ended by police bullets that snuffed their dreams and aspirations. But they live on in the hearts and memories of their communities, for before their lives were cut short, they were fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends and neighbors in those communities. Many in this generation continue to lose family and friends to police violence, always wondering whether they are next. Their only way out is to speak truth to power and demand for full implementation of the Kenyan Constitution which guarantees our rights and freedoms, including the right to life. Their struggle today, like the struggle to repeal section 2A of the constitution 30 years ago, is a righteous one.

Our youth are not the only ones who are traumatized and disgruntled with the state of our nation. Millions of Kenyans continue to suffer under the yoke of a system that dehumanizes them on a daily basis through inhumane living conditions, poor public service delivery, institutionalized corruption, ethnic bigotry, structural marginalization, electoral fraud, mass poverty and want, sexism, environmental destruction and utter disregard of rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution. The economy, meanwhile, is in tatters and the unemployment rate has been worryingly high for years.

All disenfranchised and dispossessed Kenyans must recognize that their struggles are the struggles of these young people, and the struggles of these young people theirs too – for they are caused by a system of the few who continue to subvert our constitution either for personal gain or on behalf of capital and the forces behind it.

Enter the 2010 constitution

The promulgation of the Kenyan constitution in 2010 was a victory for the people in their struggle against



unfettered powers exhibited by the ruling class, especially during the Kenyatta and Moi dictatorships that abused the constitution to consolidate power and wealth among a small coterie. It was a victory because this constitutional document affirmed the sovereignty of the people; had a robust bill of rights; affirmed justice and dignity; and provided mechanisms of eradicating some of the challenges we face as a nation. It generally was a tool for the betterment of Kenyan society.

While some monumental gains have been made under the new constitution, with regards to devolution for instance, reality is that the constitution has not translated into tangible gains on many other fronts - not because of weaknesses or gaps in the constitution, but because the ruling class, in their push-back against the constitution and the gains it portends for Kenya, have violated and subverted the constitution on countless occasions.

We will be marking the tenth anniversary of the promulgation of the Kenyan constitution in August 2020. But then, ten years after promulgation of that constitution, Nairobi is run by a military outfit, and not democratically elected representatives as constitutionally stipulated. The servers are yet to be opened years after the supreme court ruling. A third of the Kenyan budget is lost to corruption. Chapter 6 of the constitution was discarded in 2013. Some sections of the constitution, like the two-third gender rule, remain to be

enacted. Kenyans were evicted from Kariobangi the other week. Our youth march for their lives. The list is endless...

Contempt of the constitution, and the people by extension, continues to manifest in new forms every other day.

While the handshake between Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta calmed down tensions and violence that followed the disputed 2017 elections, it also came with the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), a proposed pathway to a united and inclusive Kenya with shared prosperity. Reality is that the ruling class has instead set in motion a series of events in defense of its own selfish political and economic interests. That is why they today tell us that amending the constitution and creating more leadership slots will solve the problems of ethnic antagonism and divisive elections in Kenya.

The BBI process has largely been opaque. Kenyans have not been given enough room to input into the process, and the discourse around it has not focused on tangible gains for the citizenry, but on political positions and how they are to be shared.

Divisive elections in Kenya and the tensions that follow them are caused by an intersectionality of issues including but not limited to; electoral theft; toxic tribalism that sets Kenyans against one another, sometimes by capitalizing on ethnic stereotypes or historical grievances; state interference and violence; blatant disrespect of the constitution; and the class question which these are linked to. Implementation of the constitution would be an honest starting point in the process of curing what the BBI pretends to cure.

This year's #SabaSabaMarchOfOurLives was a reminder of the urgency of defending our rights and freedoms as enshrined in the constitution, our arms linked in a chain of resistance as our voices echo our aspirations for a better Kenya. It was a timely reminder that the best way to celebrate a decade under the new constitution is for all progressive forces in Kenya to come together and demand full implementation of the constitution under the Tekeleza Katiba campaign.

#TekelezaKatiba
#TekelezaKatibaBoreshaMaisha



Sabasaba at 30: The People's March Continues

By Sungu Oyoo - July 7 2020

With backs against the wall.
 With resistance of students and firebrands,
 with solidarity of intellectual and clergy,
 with unity of people and organization,
 a people dutifully engaged in their struggle against power.
 Armed only with grandma's wisdom,
 they started there, there where they were standing.
 Or sitting.
 Or being.
 Or becoming.
 They started there.
 Found others.
 Gathered.
 Marched on amidst teargas and teary eyes.
 Bullets and brute force.
 Despotism and detentions.
 Many paid the ultimate price,
 before section 2A was repealed.

And 30 years later, the people recall their history.
 Demanding their dignity and humanity,
 they listen to grandma again,
 "Start there, there where you are standing,
 Or sitting,
 Or being,
 Or becoming.
 Start there,
 Find others,
 Gather".
 The dispossessed gather to express dissatisfaction.
 The forgotten march for social justice.
 Our youth march for their lives.
 The people's march continues!
 Emboldened by impunity, the anti-people continue marching.
 But one day, not far from today,
 the people will out-march the anti-people.
 The people will keep on marching...

#SabaSabaMarchForOurLives
*Sungu Oyoo is a writer-activist,
 and a Pan-Africanist*

Sabasaba at 30
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In Defense of Kiswahili

By Mkoka Mwamburi - May 9 2020

Swahili is the most widely spoken language in Kenya and is a national language to boot. It's also the most widely spoken African language on the continent. But with changing cultures and ways of existence, many are shying away from it, forgetting that language lies at the heart of culture – and that culture lies at the heart of human existence, shaping behavior, interactions and worldviews.

I regularly watch parliamentary proceedings on television. Sometime in March/April, I remember Mvita MP Abdulswamad Nassir moving a motion that sought to waive charges payable by those placed under mandatory quarantine - excluding those placed under quarantine for violating social distancing and curfew directives. I also recall the house passing the proposed amendment.

However, today's article does not focus on the amendment by the MP for Mvita constituency, but on what transpired as he proposed it. He spoke Kiswahili from the onset. This was met by murmurs, and later, some MPs seeking clarification from the Speaker whether he had indeed proposed the amendment in the stipulated norm and order. The Speaker responded that Abdulswamad had rightfully done so, adding that if the members listened and understood Kiswahili, there was no need for such clarification. A little debate ensued before an assumed consensus was reached. Members agreed that English would be best for everyone's ease of understanding when proposing amendments to motions', and Kiswahili could then be open

to unlimited use during normal debate in the house.

If I hadn't watched the proceedings, I'd have perhaps assumed that it's MP Abdulswamad's Swahili accent (which isn't even as thick) that got the other MP's lost in translation, and perhaps been a bit lenient on them. But no, this is an attitude towards Kiswahili problem. My trips to the Hansard and articles on the subject by Wahome Thuku and Caroline Wahome tell me this isn't the first, neither will it be the last debate on the use of Kiswahili. I will reference two incidents.

July 17th, 2019 – On this day, Senator Agnes Zani referred to the Speaker as *Mzungumzishi*. Senator Ledama Olekina stood on a point of order remarking, “*Mheshimiwa Spika, sijabobea katika lugha ya Kiswahili lakini ningependa dada yangu afafanue kile ambacho anachokiita mzungumzishi kwa sababu mimi ninajua kwamba wewe ni Mheshimiwa Spika unapoketi hapo*”. A moment of pure comedy no doubt. Senator Zani clarified her use of the word by saying that an act of *kuzungumza* can have the moderator, in this instance the Speaker, as *Mzungumzishi*. The Senate Minority Leader, James Orengo, chimed in, saying the word *mzungumzishi* does not exist *kwa Katiba ya Kenya*, in which we are guided by, or *Kamusi*, unless the Kiswahili she is referring to is the kind spoken in Kwale. He argued that the Senator should strictly stick to *Bwana Spika*. The flames were further stoked when Senator Madzayo stated that by calling the Speaker *Mzungumzishi*, she had literally referred to him as a chatterbox. A visit to the Cambridge dictionary will have you see a chatterbox defined as a person, especially a child, who talks a



lot. The Speaker was not amused.

Senator Faki, trying to calm the situation, said even the word Tarakilishi didn't exist before but was brought about by a developing society and a growing language. Nonetheless, the Speaker directed that Senator Zani switches from *Mzungumzishi* to *Spika* when addressing him. Senator Zani avoided using both *Spika* and *Mzungumzishi* until she could present a more formidable argument but that was translated as an act of disobedience, and she was asked to leave the chamber for the rest of the sitting for gross disorderly conduct.

July 25th, 1969 – This is a date that should go down in infamy. At independence, part of the political elite fought hard to counter the adoption of Kiswahili as a national language. Prominent among this group was the then all-powerful Attorney General Charles Njonjo. His argument being only 40% of Kenyans spoke the language and even those who spoke it did so in different dialects. He additionally argued that he could not comprehend how laws could be translated into Kiswahili. 5 years later, the KANU National Governing Council approved the use of Kiswahili in parliament's official debate. Shortly after, in parliament, Ronald Ngala would ask Charles Njonjo in Kiswahili how the government planned to deal with religious sects that broke the law and Mr. Njonjo would reply that his knowledge of Kiswahili was very limited and he didn't understand a single word from the question Ronald Ngala had posed to him.

The above incidents reflect a view of Kiswahili prevalent in segments of Kenyan society. The elite, who comprise a greater proportion of this segment, and who also wield state power or hold other significant political and institutional positions, are partly responsible for the rigidity and lackluster approach towards the development and growth of Kiswahili. The

views of many in this segment, the elitist view, are that Swahili is not for the learned. However, being the language of the masses, Kiswahili maintains a high transactional value for the political wing of this elite who continually use it to maintain a connection with the masses, especially when chasing after votes.

As I stated earlier, the growth of Kiswahili has been stunted by the attitude towards it. I will dispute any argument that my assertion is biased because I hail from the Coast. Kiswahili is our national language - all of us, whether from the coast or upcountry. Upcountry Kenya has in fact produced many Kiswahili scholars

and writers of some of the language's finest literary works whose only interaction with the Coast while growing up might have been a school trip to Jomo Kenyatta public beach and Fort Jesus. The late Ken Walibora (SikuNjema) and Prof. Kithaka wa Mberia (Kifo Kisimani) are a few examples.

Mzee Jomo Kenyatta himself was an above average Kiswahili speaker, complete with obscenities; you would think he hit puberty growing up in Mjii wa Kale. He will get my credit for his defense of the language at a time his cronies

were against its adoption but just that. He did little else to nurture it. Same goes for his predecessor who always switched from English to Kiswahili and back to English in his speeches and never to his mother tongue but left his contribution to that and little else.

Kiswahili is today spoken by around 140 million people on the African continent, making it the most widely spoken African language. It is also one of the official languages of the African Union (alongside Arabic, English, French, Portuguese & Spanish). There is a push within the African Union for its elevation to a continental language, meaning there will be a Kiswahili translator in all its official meetings, and AU documents, treaties and agreements would also be pub-



A sign-board at Kaptagat Girls High School in Elgeyo Marakwet County

lished in Kiswahili. Last year, SADC adopted Swahili as its fourth official language, and South African schools now offer it as an optional language.

Having already missed out on the Hakuna Matata wave, an opportunity presented by the global success of the Lion King film, we definitely should not miss out on this popular wave that emanates from within.

Moving forward.

So what do we do? Well, I will not try to limit the solutions to Kiswahili's growth to a single article. In so doing, I will have adopted the same lackluster approach I am speaking against. I therefore welcome your views and contributions on this subject.

Nevertheless, as we research and debate, why not individually start tweeting in Kiswahili often? Why not have some of the public, organizational and corporate twitter handles tweeting in both English and Kiswahili? Why not have your children watch 'Akili and Me'? Akili and Me is a cartoon that's available in English, Kiswahili, and Kinyarwanda. It follows the exploits of Akili, a girl growing up at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Whenever she sleeps, she goes to a dream world called Lala Land, where she learns letters, numbers and art together with her friends Bushbaby, Happy Hippo, and Little Lion.

Akili and Me is admittedly a favorite of mine, yes, even at my age. It used to air on Citizen TV on Saturday mornings, and should be available on YouTube as well (I used to religiously watch it two or three years ago). The cartoon's target audience though is children

of ages 3-6, for obvious reasons. Starting out the kids early in cultivating the love of Kiswahili will put their generation in a better position to be great users and proponents of the language.

And why can't the government invest more in the arts, enabling the translation and dramatization of more critically acclaimed literary works into Kiswahili? Perhaps creating the much-needed but ever-absent jobs in the process. More fundamentally, are our trained Kiswahili teachers and scholars firmly located within the popular wave we are talking about? Food for thought.

There is one funny assessment of Kiswahili as it currently is. That Kiswahili was born in Zanzibar, grew up in Tanzania, fell sick in Kenya, died in Uganda and was buried in Congo. Once the laughter has died, you clearly see where the resuscitation has to take place for the patient to survive.

Mkoka Mwamburi is a storyteller found anywhere & everywhere along & around the Kenyan Coast, serving one community after another in his capacity as an economist dealing with water services provision. He writes on coastal history, experiences and human-interest stories.

This article originally appeared on Pwani Tribune and been reproduced here courtesy of a collaborative effort between Mwamko and the Pwani Tribune.

Traditional string musical instruments of Kenya

String musical instruments are almost as diverse as the communities and cultures of Africa. They come in different shapes and sizes and an instrument can have anything between one and eight strings. These instruments can be played by bowing, plucking, striking or strumming – depending on the particular instrument. Here is a compilation of some of them.

One string:

- Orutu – Luo
- Ekegogo – Kuria
- Isiriri – Luhya
- Mbeve – Kamba
- Wandindi – Embu
- Wandindi – Meru
- Entono – Kuria
- Uta – Kamba
- Musical bow – Coastal tribes
- Limoyi – Bukusu
- Nderemo – Kikuyu

Two strings

- Wandindi – Kikuyu

Five strings

- Chepkem – Kalenjin
- Adeudeu – Ateso

Six strings

- Bugandit – West Pokot
- Kipkandit – Tugen
- Pugandit – Elgon maasai
- Chemonge – Nandi

Chepkongo – Kipsigis

- Seven strings
- Litungu – Bukusu

Eight strings

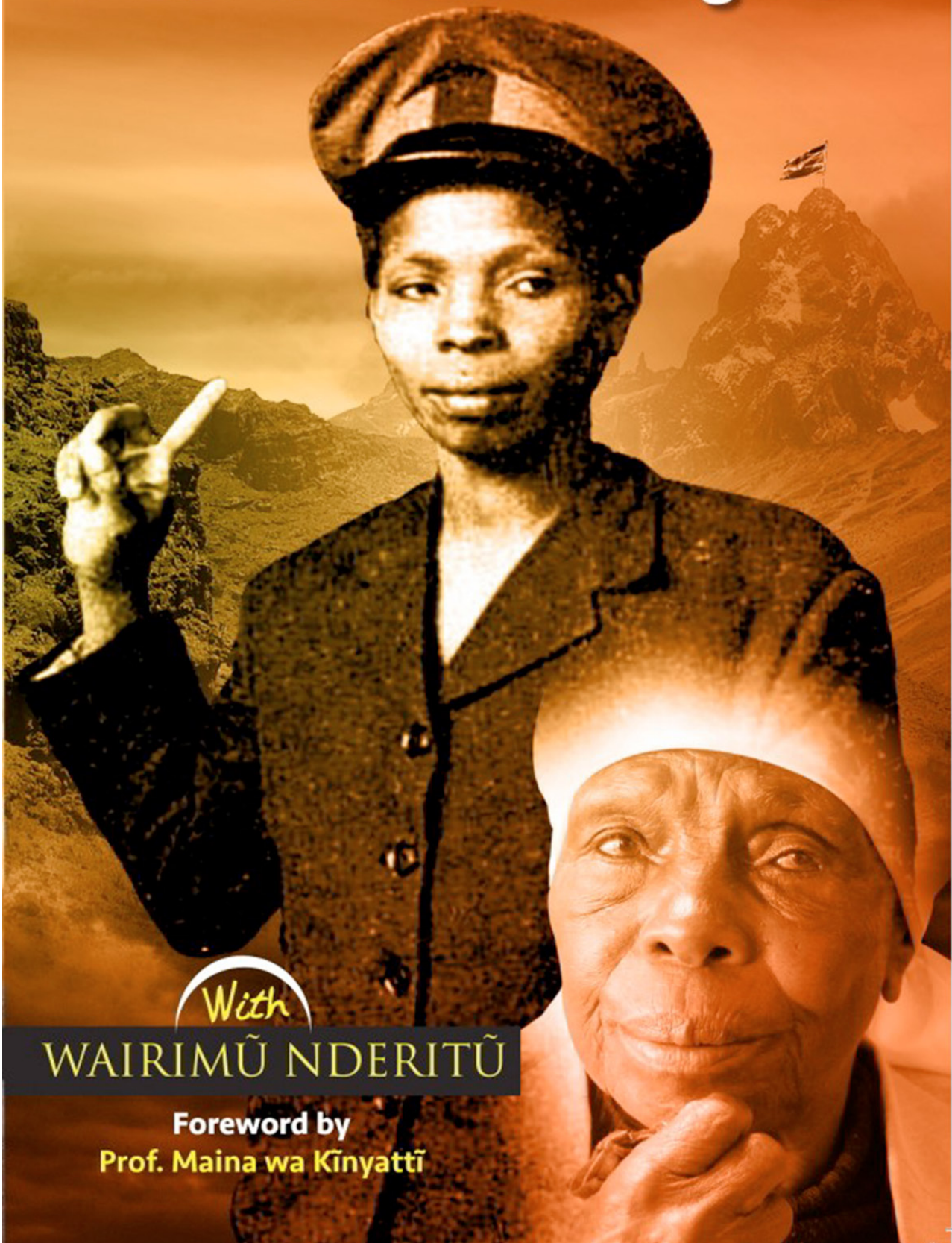
- Nyatiti – Luo
- Obukhana – Marach
- Obokano – Abagusii
- Iritungu – Kuria
- Kitubeti – Kipsigis
- Ketuba – Nandi

Editors note: Interested in helping us update this list? Get in touch.



MŪKAMI KĪMATHI

Mau Mau Freedom Fighter



With

WAIRIMŪ NDERITŪ

Foreword by
Prof. Maina wa Kĩnyattĩ

Cover page of Mukami Kimathi, Mau Mau freedom fighter. The book is written by Alice Nderitu

Review of “Mukami Kimathi”

By Bettie Waithera

“Mukami provides the lens to see the wider picture of women in the independence struggle, the neglect and betrayal of wives of MauMau fighters in particular and women in general in Kenya’s making.” - Wairimu Nderitu

“What right has the west to teach us about democracy, when they executed those who asked for democracy during times of the colonial era?” - Nelson Mandela, 1990

“Our women had such revolutionary courage and firmness, commitment and dedication that neither promise nor persuasion could have made them abandon the armed struggle, neither humiliation nor torture could have bent their patriotism.” - General Mbaria, 1979

“The women were the mothers and spirit of the revolution. We could not have survived in the forest without their overwhelming support, moral encouragement and revolutionary love. Together we have written a glorious chapter in the history of our country.” - Major M’ngaruchi

Mukami Kimathi was a freedom fighter. She was a member of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (popularly known as MauMau), and fought Kenya’s war of independence. The book Mukami Kimathi is written by Wairimu Nderitu.

The role of women in armed struggles, especially from the late 1800s into the post colonial period has for the longest time been anchored on discussions about the women’s debt in narratives. It is about the untold stories, and here is one of a kind - a narration transcribed from Mukami Kimathi’s Karugano, as written by Wairimu Nderitu. This book is not only an immersion into the African practice of storytelling and passing of wisdom across generations, but also a pointer toward the need for continuation of revolutionary African organizing.

I choose to view this book; Mukami Kimathi, as a most deserving homage to the great women of Kenya - and not just as a tale about our great women after whimsical debates about the role of women in liberation.

The fight against the imperialist as vividly thrown to our disposition by Maina Wa Kinyatti in his foreword, reveals that the armed struggle and the resolve of women to charge into the revolution and battle was guided by profound visions.

The battle of the women was well defined. It was a fight in defense of the basics that is land, freedom, culture and human dignity. Inherently, women in Kenya are today constantly confronted by the uncertainties of gender struggle, identity politics and the effects of ‘civilization’ that further entrench patriarchy, dividing the woman’s agenda and attention from the fight for the basics. This is just my opinion.

This book welcomes one into an African style of writing reminiscent of the African tradition of sitting down to listen to oral stories. It throws me into Mukami’s nostalgic memories of her childhood, and elicits anxiousness in a good way.

It goes deeper to paint a picture of a society that was not flawed till the launch of the ordinances and pass laws locked Kenyans into agitation and desire for change. The constant mourning for their loved ones killed by the colonial machinery, meanwhile, built up their zeal to fight. It is taunting that a white visitor would just show up, and within a decade introduce civilization - whose unfortunate benefit to the people was loss of land, freedom, blood,



social structures among others. And the 'good willed' ministers of Christianity would pave way for the imperialists.

Mukami has the right upbringing in terms of information, helping shape her thinking and growth into a woman who despite a tough and rough upbringing finally has her courage and leadership crowned. Imperialism had outlawed the culture of Ubuntu and left homes broken. While Mukami's father's resolve was one of self sufficiency and violence, his daughter re-calibrated this agitation into the right energy, making her the queen warrior, one of the greatest mobilizers there ever lived, and an informant of the greatest army there ever lived.

Her intelligence is natural, and this enables her to share many thoughts, reflections and quotable quotes with no strain. This book is the best gift Wairimu Nderitu could have given to the young people of Kenya.

One of Mukami's life's wishes is fulfilled on page 281 of the book. She says, "I want my story to be told and written so that when I leave this Earth, young girls will be inspired to stand up for justice and for what is right." You do not read this book and feel incapable of doing something that can help make the world a better place.

However, a few occurrences in the book need to be reconciled. My soft nails - not close to hardening like Warrior Mukami's nails, now old and frail - pounced on this book and the first thought that hit me was how much information on Kenya's liberation war I would mine from it. The few illustrations leave me in awe, but information on how the Kenya Land and Freedom Army organized is difficult to mine. Yes. Because of the oath.

The Mau Mau war will definitely remain the greatest fight in Kenya till the day a fourth wave of Kenyans hit and swirl the system to infinity. It will be hailed for recognizing that the oaths were based on dynamics of the then times; and that their demands were flamboyant and elaborate.

We are today torn, and have illusions of who and how our liberators should look like, sometimes based on what they purport to be.

Mukami Kimathi's story lays thoughts toward the right direction. That Kenya's fourth liberators will be normal persons with a grasp of the issues at hand, those looking into posterity as opposed to immediate gratification. They will be people who experience Kenyan issues explicitly and innately, and will not necessarily need to have been to schools of theories and ideologies. Freedom and dignity will be their ideology and along the way, pacts, the art of war and their zeal will tip

the flow in favour of economic and political freedom.

She out rightly and prophetically mentions this on page 276 of the book. That, the war ahead is about fighting ethnicism. And if I may add, fighting ethnicism, though not the end goal, is part of our journey toward forging a united front of all progressive forces on our land.

The read about Mama Ngina Kenyatta in this book is what I could not make peace with. Mama Ngina Kenyatta is portrayed as sympathetic to Mukami Kimathi and her family. She is the Mama Ngina who sat in prison with Mukami, Peris Njeri and tended to among others, Maina - Mukami's son. But of what essence is it for her to be seen in this book as an adherent and a person who lived through the Kamiti persecution, while Mukami Kimathi wallows in poverty, her children living as laborers and their future never promised?

The following chapter addresses the pain of Mukami and the rest of the disinherited fighters. But who disinherited Mukami Kimathi, her husband Kimathi Waciuri and the rest of the fighters, if not Mama Ngina Kenyatta's husband - hailed as 'Kenya's Founding Father'?

If we are to, in Mukami's words, live harmoniously, we must have the courage to confront our 'disinherited'. Kenya's enemy within, an enemy with the same colour and from our clans and backyards, is the person bleeding Kenya dry, either directly or indirectly. And we fight.

It is discomfoting to see Jomo's son dedicated in a chapter of the book as a man who does 'Mukami Kimathi favors, the fourth president who is only a call away'. This discomfoting clash of ideas does not serve justice to the ideas we have of Mukami Kimathi and her role in inspiring us. It is not justice to visionaries and revolutionaries.

The book ends on a note of inactiveness. That there is no need for war or liberation. That they fought and won. Kenyans meanwhile remain destitute because the people Mukami sees as her sympathizers continue to hold our economy by the neck.

It does not serve us right that Dedan Kimathi's wife during the armed struggle is a memory that was allowed to fade into the background for so long. Her name, like Kimathi's, will live on through this book. Mukami is etched in history.

This was an amazing read.

Bettie Waithera is a political and economic activist. She is co-Convenor of the Red Vest movement, and a member of Jukwaa la Ukombozi.

Liquidate Racism

By *Abubakar Junior*

The world was shocked these past few weeks. Though George Floyd was not the first person subjected to such inhumane treatment, the sight of a police officer putting a knee to his neck while he screams *I can't breathe* is something that cannot easily be forgotten. It was sheer brutality, abuse of power, and gross lack of humanity.

I am a young Black man.

I am outraged by what has been happening.

I empathize, and I am hurting alongside you and with you.

If any of you have been feeling angry about everything that has been happening, you have every right to be. In fact, we should all be angry. All black and non-black.

But how do we utilize this anger?

Sign petitions. Protest. Educate yourself. Research. Read. Watch documentaries. Be curious. Write. Donate. Do something. Start from home: have the tough conversations that analyze racism, its patterns, and the structures that support it. Use your social media platform. Let your voice be heard. Check in on your friends. Support our businesses.

The overarching need is to affirm that #BlackLivesMatter.

Say it louder.

Say their names.

Keep their memories alive.

But don't all lives matter? The answer is yes - but that is not the main focus right now. Instagram user @sandatlas phrased it best: "If one house is burning and the other isn't, would you rush

to help the house that is on fire or the one that isn't? Are you going to rush to help the people that have been oppressed and constantly disregarded, or the people who can do daily tasks without fearing for their life?"

When someone is unable to jog without being seen as suspicious, unable to rest in their own home without the fear of being shot, and is constantly threatened with violence just because of the color of their skin - that damn better be our problem right now.

As Martin Luther King Jr. said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."






In fact, many of us have been subjected to racism in Africa.

Do not turn a blind eye and say that this is not your problem, because it is. Let's not only talk about racism when it's in the news. Remember, the struggle against racism is not a trend—it is a life-long movement. Set long-term goals and plans to address racism and its effects in your hearts, in your homes, your societies - and in our world by extension.

I say all these aware that some of you may not fully understand why you should stand with us.

But the world is waking up.

MWAMKO Reading list:

-  **Mukami Kimathi - Wairimu wa Nderitu**
 -  **Devil on the cross - Ngugi wa Thiong'o**
 -  **Not yet Uhuru - Jaramogi Oginga Odinga**
 -  **Groundings with my brothers - Walter Rodney**
 -  **National Liberation and Culture - Amilcar Cabral**
- (available at www.mwamko.net)

#BlackLivesMatter

Abubakar Junior is a Kenyan activist, writer and poet

In the Age of the 'Rona: A Message to the Workers of the World

By Alieu Bah

"Look out for each other, even across the oceans, because the worker has no country, just chains she must cut loose. The system at this time will want to come through, to act as if it's the most caring and egalitarian commune there is. Don't fall for it..."

To the proletariat,

This is the biggest sit-in, protest, strike against capitalism we have yet seen, kindly delivered to us by nature and proliferated by greed. It's been shown clearly that the drive for profit is ever more important for capital than for the well-being of humanity. The rising cost of living, the enclosure of the commons, the concern with the market over human life, the naked and wanton disregard for the poor billions, and the list goes on — please do add on.

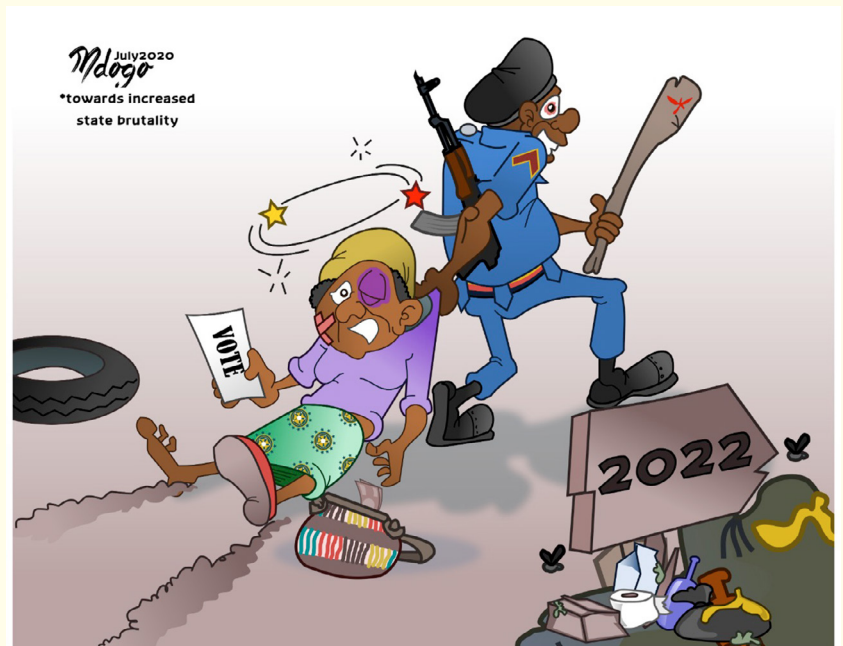
All of this shows us one thing, a thing that has (and is still) consistently echoed for two centuries now: the self-evident truth that **capitalism is anti-life**.

Read that again, don't just gloss over it. Internalize it then go on and read the debates of politicians and corporate leaders. Then try remembering that phrase and reflect through a soliloquy.

You will be home mostly these days, especially if you live in the West. For most workers in the Neo-colonial periphery though, there is no break, for you would rather risk dying from the Corona than from starvation. In the Third World, you choose your cause of death wisely. There are no promised subsidies, just the fight against the government to care for life a little more this time and close the airports from the corona-carrying westerners — we beg, because they love massa too goddamn much not to let them in.

These woes are being recounted to remind ourselves of the unbearable light of privilege out in the west and the burden of privation on neocolonial beings. Regardless, these are times to remind one another of the imperative for Revolution, with a capital R. Today we are bounded together, whether you are in the plantation or at home, by the open fact that profit and its drive is dead without you. That, without your working hands and minds, the system grinds to a standstill, and even toilet paper becomes more relevant than capitalism's most sophisticated machinery. The working class at this moment shines a radiant light that has hitherto been obscured by the profit-pollution of capital's monstrous night sky.

As you stay home, start with the little things. Feel how leisure really permeates your tired and restless bones. You haven't felt this in a long while, cuz even the short vacations and holidays don't feel like anything but sleepwalking through a nightmare before heading back to the assembly line — whatever it resembles today. Read that book you have put off for a long time. Share those readings with those close by, physically or virtually. Reach out to long lost friends and comrades and start building something, a solid thing that will not resemble hazy mindless bar room meetings. Build and organize around a mutu-



al aid, cooperative, solidarity and gift economy. Look out for each other, even across the oceans, because the worker has no country, just chains she must cut loose. The system at this time will want to come through, to act as if it's the most caring and egalitarian commune there is. Don't fall for it, just like how you don't fall for those little messages from cellular companies or any such corporations about how they care about you as they rob you dry. Trust only your fellow suffering sister and brother.

As you build this beautiful economy to sustain each other thru the times, don't forget the need for a complete overthrow of this wretched system. The end goal of looking out for each other isn't a crisis, a panic driven attempt, but rather a genuine alleviation of our common suffering. Since the suffering comes from a common agent, why don't we band together, destroy it, and expand our model of economics? If it's being imagined, it can be done. If it can be done, the organization and foundations must be well underway. And the best time to defeat an enemy is to attack at its moment of weakness – and trust me, they're getting weaker by the day, as if infected by a virus all their own. But it's not my objective to dwell on the enemy, I am only offering word to eat them and build new and dope worlds within this one.

Be careful of their media, because they will try to fill you with anxiety that has nothing to do with the virus, because this system works through fear. Don't let them steal your joy. They will monger all types of fear, but just remember one basic fact: you have nothing to lose but your chains. You'll find them talking about the shortage of foodstuffs and all such necessary things for our survival and how that's going to bring down civilization as we know it. But this, comrades is supposed to make you even more angry and ready to tear down this rotten system. Look at it like this: who created a system where things are not produced for the sustenance of everyone, but just for the profits of a few? Who made drugs and medical care private and so expensive when it can be available for all without affecting anyone's pockets? They will go on and on, but in essence what they are complaining and pontificating about isn't for you, but for them. They're talking about the losses they will accrue. About the plummeting rate of their stocks or whatever other near-mystical terms they have for ripping you, the workers, off.

As for the worker in the neocolony forced to choose

between going out and striving for a morsel or staying indoors and starving, the place isn't buzzing as hard. Imperialism is busy trying to save itself from dying in the mother countries. This is the time for us to come together and study once more the neocolonial state which is busy trying to convince us that we will survive it all because they have "put proper measures in place," a typical phrase that translates to "we don't care or know what we are doing, just die already." Organize one another during this weakness and carefree attitude of the state. Show those who are unconscious the very evident truth that the neocolonial state doesn't care if we live or die. It has become apparent, now more than ever, the complete emasculation of a state that is always at the beck and call of outside powers, in good and solemn times alike. The work of the politically conscious remains: to educate, organize and demonstrate how the virus is also a political pandemic — this must be scientifically proven through a thorough conjunctural analysis.

This is also the time to activate the age old communal way of living and to support one another and be vigilant so that no shop owner or big supermarket in the impoverished neighborhood hikes prices. We must create our armies to defend our territories from economic bandits. No hoarding, no price hiking. Ours is also a society steeped in deluded self-assurance based in superstitions, thanks to colonialism and corrupt regimes with bad education. In these times we must educate that no power on high will destroy the virus other than our own fallible human efforts. To follow protective measures, and not believe that black and brown people are immune to these pandemics. On and on to anything that will protect and propel us to a more dignified future.

Workers of all nations, of all hues and tongues: this is the time to break the old chains. To burn the master's house to the ground and own the plantation as a mutual trust. Your enemy is the boss, not the worker next to you. Revolution is your birthright and your responsibility for the creation of brilliant futures which will have radiant descendants. Wash your hands and break your chains! You have a world to win!

Aliou Bah is a socialist activist from the Gambia. He is a writer and organizer working towards African unity under scientific socialism.



Statement of the Revolutionary Socialist League-Kenya on African Liberation Day - May 25th, 2020

By RSL Committee - 25th May 2020

This year marks the 57th anniversary of the annual African Liberation Day, a historic day when 32 African leaders convened a summit and founded the Organization of African Unity (replaced by African Union on July 9th, 2002) on May 25th, 1963. These leaders of independent African nations renamed Africa Freedom Day to African Liberation Day that has been marked ever since on this historic date. This day has helped to raise political, economic, social, and cultural awareness in African communities across the world and remains a great source of information about struggles for total liberation and development of the African people and continent.

On this great day we celebrate and salute the hard-fought struggle waged by our liberation heroes and heroines in the colonial struggle for freedom and independence from European powers. We honour those who continue this struggle against the capitalist, imperialist and neo-colonialist powers in modern day Africa and reiterate our commitment to the struggle for a truly liberated African continent.

Throughout the years, there have always been themes used in celebration of this day. These themes have always varied from nation to nation, but the chief message has always been similar. In Kenya, our celebration this year is anchored around the theme of "Reclaiming our Sovereignty" because we understand that our African nations and people are not truly sovereign in all political and economic spheres. The dark forces of colonialism have been replaced by the vicious hands of imperialism, capitalism, and neo-colonialism. These forces have further divided African people along ethnic lines, artificial borderlines, languages, financial institutions, cultural beliefs, classes among others that continue impoverishing the African masses. Our call for an alternative political and economic model for Africa could never be more appropriate than now. And that call is Socialism.

A fundamental analysis of the work of these neo-colonial forces remains key in understanding the role they play in keeping our African masses ill-informed, misguided and always falling into the economic traps of the imperialist puppets oppressing and exploiting the African people. In collaboration with the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, we also call for Africans everywhere in the globe to fight and demand for the withdrawal of the imperialist sanctions on Zimbabwe, Cuba, and Venezuela, which are all acts of war.

As the Revolutionary Socialist League, we reiterate our undying support for all progressive and revolutionary liberation movements across Africa and the world fighting imperialism, capitalism, and neo-colonialism. We support the peoples of Western Sahara, Palestine, West Papua, Kurdistan and all those fighting for their independence, recognition, and human dignity. Their struggles remain our struggles, and their victories remain our victories. The total liberation of the African continent truly remains the gateway to the liberation of all the oppressed and exploited people in the world, and for this reason our international solidarity for workers and liberation movements across the world remain solid.

In reclaiming our sovereignty, we call on the African people to unite for our victory lies in our unity as the masses of Africa. From the industrial workers in South Africa, the farmers in Madagascar, the students in Algeria, the community activists in Kenya, women movements in the Congo, revolutionaries in Ghana, and every other exploited social group of the oppressed class in the continent. Despite the different socio-cultural settings of our multi-ethnic Africa, we all suffer under the same economic and political enemy who we must unite to defeat. These are the enemies who benefit from the political instability of the Central Africa Republic, South Sudan, Sudan, northern Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia, Chad, among others. They are responsible for the economic exploitation of the DRC, Zambia, Gabon, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Ivory Coast among other countries. Furthermore, they directly contribute to the right-wing terrorism of the peoples of Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, and other nations.

It is therefore our revolutionary goodwill to celebrate this day together with every African who shares the same political and economic identity and ideology of total liberation anywhere in the world. Our call for a united Africa under socialism will continue until it reaches the furthest receptive ear. We believe that for this to be achieved, Africa needs a new identity of a human being. As Kwame Nkrumah puts it, "For this end Africa needs a new type of citizen, a dedicated, modest, honest and informed (wo)man. A man who submerges self in service to the nation and mankind. A man who abhors greed and detests vanity. A new type of man whose humility is his strength and whose integrity is his greatness".

Finally, we offer our revolutionary greetings to all the children of Africa, to the oppressed and exploited people of Latin America and Asia, and to all the progressive revolutionaries in Europe, North America, and Australia. The liberation of Africa remains the golden key to the liberation of the masses of the world and the answer to socialism internationally.

Revolutionary African Liberation Day!
Forward with the African Liberation!
Afrika Moja, Afrika Huru.

RSL Committee,
Nairobi Kenya,
25th May 2020

