



POWER IS NEVER GIVEN ON A SILVER PLATTER.

IT IS CLAIMED AND SEIZED.

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True and genuine leaders of the people often emerge in the process of the struggle. For the left in Kenya, the revolutionary movement would be radical and meaningful when based on the pillars of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, Pan Africanism and feminism.

EDITORIAL | **Guideposts for a Revolution**

The uprising of the youth in Kenya, led by the Gen-Zs, dismantled grandeur illusions of political power by the elite. Similar to the Mau Mau Movement in the 1950s, new political players have burst onto the scene with youthful energy, vibrancy and creativity. They are armed with the logic of the time-tested means of mass protests, taking over the streets and using social media as their arsenal.

However, while the youth, and other genuine political players in Kenya are yet to find common ground and direction as a united force, the old and habitual political elite are regrouping. They are regrouping to take advantage of the waves of discontent in the country against the Kenya Kwanza Regime and their greedy bedfellows from the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM).

The lingering question, “What is to be done?” famously posed by Vladimir Lenin during the Russian Revolution bares its fangs urgently at this point of movement crisis in Kenya and elsewhere on the African continent. The question has variously also been posed by the likes of Dedan Kimathi, the overall leader of the Mau Mau, Julius Nyerere, and other political leaders of the people.

No one can lay claim to having a blueprint for the revolution. However, in the current revolutionary context in Kenya, there are some pointers that can guide the revolution out of the movement crisis.

Firstly, the fire of this revolution is in the court of the youth. The mission of this revolution should go beyond the short-sightedness of the feuding political elite whose express agenda is to replace the figureheads of the ruling regime with themselves – similar cabals of corruption, exploitation and impunity. The mission of the revolution is to bring about a fundamental change of the status quo. This entails bringing fresh and untainted leadership that would smash the neo-colonial state and institute people first and people-centred leadership.

Secondly, power is never given on a silver platter. It's claimed and seized. This was articulated well by Frederick Douglass, the American anti-slavery abolitionist when he said “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” The youth in Kenya, have the ability, resources and power to seize the moment.

Thirdly, there should be a convergence of radical youth, and those from other generations, who have consistently struggled against the status quo.

Fourth, hopes for the new republic in Kenya should

not be forged on a messianic figure, and lone ranger tactics. It should be forged by a team of dedicated servants of the people whose leadership will only be first among equals who will serve the country on behalf of the oppressed masses. Anyone who is fronting as a messiah, or exhibiting some lone ranger poses, should be shunted aside. Such a person is likely to end up as a dictator, or a dealer in various forms that entrench the status quo, including local and foreign commercial interests. The new republic should be led by a leader who works in a team to lead the masses towards a future of promise, health and wealth. Such a team of leaders, and the one



Youth defiance personified

who emerges as the overall leader should come out of the active struggles of the people. True and genuine leaders of the people often emerge in the process of the struggle. For the left in Kenya, the revolutionary movement would be radical and meaningful when based on the pillars of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, Pan Africanism and feminism.

Contributions in this issue of Ukombozi Review continue to exemplify and to ground the mission of a revolutionary uprising against the status quo in Kenya. Karibuni to the 21st issue of the Ukombozi Review.

Comradely,

Njuki Githethwa
Managing Editor

The Colonial Gun in Black Hands

By Kinuthia Ndung'u

Inside the silent corridors of the Kenya National Archives, on the first-floor gallery wall, hangs a series of portraits, framed faces of Kenya's police commissioners, stretching from colonial rule to the present day. The first is Sir Donald William Stewart, the first British Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, who served from 1904 to 1905. He stares out with cold authority, like a ghost that refuses to leave. Next to him, another portrait. Then another. Slowly, the faces begin to darken. Then comes Bernard Hinga, the first African Commissioner of Police after independence in 1964, followed by a succession of other black faces decorated in medals earned through the enforcement of state violence.

In colonial Kenya, the police force was not built to protect but to keep the "native" in line. Ask the scorched earth of Hola detention camp, where in 1959, detainees were clubbed to death by colonial police. Ask the ghosts of forests where the Mau Mau fought, only to be betrayed by the same Home Guards, black men in khaki shorts who killed for the Queen. It was a colonial tribal police officer named Ndirangu who shot Dedan Kimathi. It was also a colonial-trained Black officer who tied the rope.

From Stewart to the current police boss Douglas Kanja, the institution holds steady. The legacy of violence, rooted in colonial repression, persists. The same boots that marched for the empire now march for the new elite. Jomo Kenyatta replaced the Queen, and the instruments of violence remained at his whims. Every regime since has used the police as its personal weapon.

In the 80s, they killed and broke bones in Nyayo and Nyati House torture chambers. In the 90s, they dragged students from lecture halls and brutally crushed protests. And today? They abduct, torture, and kill those that dare to speak truth to power. They intimidate and lob teargas at school children bold enough to see through their

paper-thin deception.

The Kenyan police, under the current system, are trained to protect private property and the illusory peace of the rich minority.

From Kimathi to Rex Masai, the chain of state brutality remains intact. Rex didn't die by mistake. He was executed for the crime of marching with others who dared to demand dignity. The state called it a "stray bullet." We know better. There are no strays in a system trained to silence dissent on sight. But here's the tragedy: The man who pulls the trigger is just as trapped as the one in his line of fire.

The Kenyan police officers are not free. They are psychologically brutalized long before they brutalize others. They wear uniforms soaked in the sweat of humiliation. They are trained like animals in camps that resemble torture chambers.

Screamed at, beaten, and broken. Then handed a gun and told: "Now you are the law."

So they walk the street with rage in their chests, armed with their power—the handcuffs and rifle. They see the citizen as a threat. They are owed by the same system that owes us. But instead of turning their weapons on the slave masters, they are taught to shoot the fellow slaves.

They earn a salary that disappears in loans. They live in undignified dwellings and die in public hospitals with neither facilities nor doctors. They are not just enforcers; they are trapped in the same web of exploitation. They are both the jailer and the jailed, trapped inside an institution built to crush humanity, their own included.

When the political class is rejected and called out in the streets, they send the police—our parents, siblings and neighbours—to brutalize us into silence. When the people march in the streets for dignity and accountability, they meet baton-wielding, blood thirsty officers. But

behind the gun is a woman who skips meals to afford school fees. Behind the shield is a man who hasn't paid rent. Behind the tear gas mask is a father with no

From Stewart to the current police boss Douglas Kanja, the institution holds steady. The legacy of violence, rooted in colonial repression, persists.



Mau Mau homemade pistol

insurance for his sick child.

And when the political class is overpowered, as they were by Kenya's Gen-Z, they unleash their final weapon: the military. This regime came face to face with its biggest fear when youth protests broke through police lines and occupied parliament. For the first time in decades, power trembled. The state responded by not just using the police to brutalize and kill the protestors but by invoking an executive order to deploy the army, turning our streets into militarized zones. That order is still in force today. It is a silent threat. A reminder that the system is ready to use their instruments of violence to kill again.

This pattern of state violence is not new. In 1969, during President Jomo Kenyatta's visit to Kisumu, security forces opened fire on civilians. The government attempted to cover up the extent of the massacre, and virtually all documentary evidence from the day was destroyed.

In 1984, the Wagalla massacre occurred when the Kenyan military killed ethnic Somali men in Wajir County. Government troops detained some 5,000 Degodia men at an airstrip, denying them food and water for a week, and then massacred them.

And when one of their own dares to speak, to question orders, to serve the people, they are hunted from within and made an example to the rest. When Cop Shakur, a former prison officer, dared to stand with the youthful patriots during the historic Gen-Z protests in Kenya, he was suspended from the force and later arrested and charged maliciously for his solidarity. His courage reminds us that even within the system, there are those who recognize its rot.

Throughout my childhood in Mathare and Kariobangi in Nairobi, violence was the air we breathed. We grew up watching police raids tear through our streets, their boots kicking down doors and extrajudicial killing of petty criminals. We saw mothers wailing over their beloved sons who never made it back. We learned early that to be poor in Kenya was to live under the constant threat of a rogue force.

Today, as an organiser, those memories are no longer distant. I have stood on the frontlines and watched history repeat itself. Last year, during the height of the anti-government protests, I was brutally assaulted by a group of General Service Unit (GSU) officers along Kimathi Street. My only 'crime' was questioning the arbitrary arrest of my comrade, Kiritu Chege. That day, they beat me to the ground, their rage echoing the brutality I first glimpsed as a child. The assault was captured on video and quickly went viral, becoming a stark testament to the unchecked violence meted out by the state.

During the 2024 Nane Nane (8th August) protests, I sustained a cracked rib from police batons in downtown Nairobi. But I was lucky. Some have not been. Many families mourned children stolen by bullets and buttons. Many mothers are still grieving.

This cycle of violence is not theoretical; it has left scars in our communities riddled with grief, on our broken bodies and in our memories. We carry the weight of this brutality

every day.

But the system is not broken, it was built this way. The colonial gun cannot be reformed overnight. The police and military, as instruments of state violence, have repeatedly shown their unflinching allegiance to unjust power and not the people. Their actions are a testament to this.

We must continue to organize, to build movements rooted in social justice and accountability. When we capture power, we must dismantle this oppressive system and rebuild it into one that serves its people. A system where no child will have to breathe violence. A system where no mother will have to bury a child lost through police violence. A system where police uniforms will no longer be soaked in the blood of the people.

Until we break the colonial gun, it will never be our hands that hold it.

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Bildad Kaggia: A Legacy in Patriotic Courage

By Njuki Githethwa

October 20th is an auspicious day on the national calendar for what it means for the freedom struggle Kenya. At one time, activists from the Release Political Prisoners (RPP) Pressure Group and others in exile abroad had wanted the day renamed Mau Mau Day from Kenyatta Day, as it was originally called. The activists wanted to wrest it from the falsified history that had personalised it around Jomo Kenyatta, the country's first president, after who it had been named.

The date would later be renamed Mashujaa Day (Heroes Day) with the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution to honour all Kenyan men and women of courage to safeguard our freedoms before and since independence.

The conversation to change the name often comes to mind when I think of Bildad Kaggia, the celebrated Kenyan freedom fighter and socialist. In 2000, the RPP activists had dedicated October 20th that year as a day to reflect on the legacy of the patriotic courage of the independence freedom fighter.

Kaggia was then ailing, struck by a debilitating illness that confined him to bed. He suffered lapses of memory and often could not tell those around him. His wife, Deborah Wambui, was also bedridden at that time. He remained in the minds of many. Pilgrims of progressive politicians, activists and patriotic Kenyans would visit him at his humble home in Kabati in what is now Murang'a County to pay homage to his patriotic commitment. Kaggia died of stroke on 7th March 2005 aged 84 years. His wife Wambui had died five years earlier, in 2000.

After Kenya attained independence from British colonial rule, Kaggia refused to be party to the avaricious self-centred leaders in the regime of Jomo Kenyatta who had betrayed the aspirations of millions of Kenyans, corrupted the country and mortgaged it to imperial and neo-colonial interests. Kaggia's stand on land in particular was a study in patriotic courage, alongside his unwavering commitment to better the

lives of ordinary Kenyans. When he was the Assistant Minister for Education in the first government, he received a letter from Jomo Kenyatta instructing him to stop criticizing the government's land policy. Kaggia did not reply to the letter, opting instead to raise

the matter in Parliament in the presence of Kenyatta who was officiating a session. He said:

"I have been elected by the people of Kandara. They are my boss. You (Kenyatta) did not elect me. If the people of Kandara had not elected me to Parliament, you would not have appointed me as an Assistant Minister."

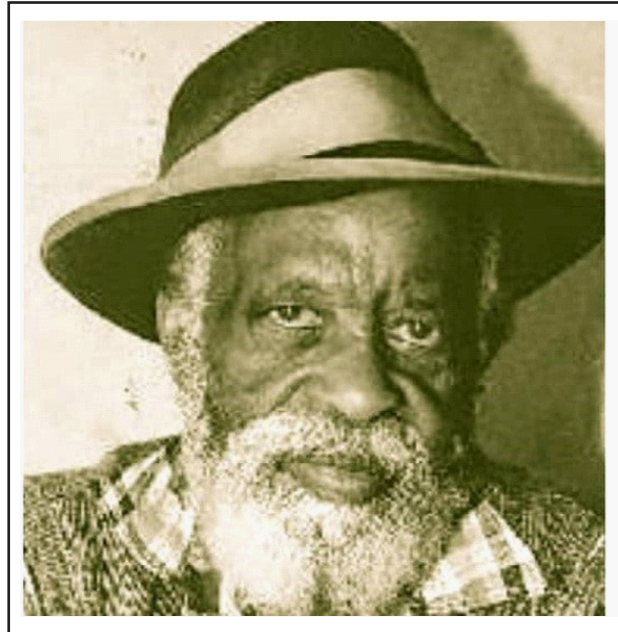
Soon after making that statement, Kaggia was dismissed from the government. That was in 1964. And thus began his political struggles with Kenyatta's neo-colonial regime.

Kaggia was born in 1921

at Dagoretti in Nairobi, where his father, Mwaganu, had settled from their home district of Murang'a, then known as Fort Hall, having found work in the city. In his autobiography, *Roots of Freedom*, Kaggia writes of his childhood:

My father was a poor man. He lived all his life outside his own district. His parents both died before I was born and all the land which belonged to my father were taken over by relatives. My father had no land which he could call his own. We were given plots to cultivate on the estate. Although we had enough to eat from these plots, my father's wages were never sufficient.

Kaggia started his primary school education at a school located at Santamor Estate where his father worked. After passing his Common Entrance Examinations, he was admitted to Kahuhia Central Primary School in Murang'a. He passed his final examinations very well and qualified to join the coveted Alliance High School. His family, however, could not raise the required school fees. Kaggia got a job at the office of the District Commissioner in Murang'a where he rose from an office messenger to a clerk. Here, he encountered racism firsthand. Later, while still working in Murang'a, Kaggia was conscripted into the Imperial British Army to serve in the Second World War in a



Bildad Kaggia

tour of duty that took him to many Asian countries. He was discharged from the imperial army in 1946 and came back to Kenya a changed man, fired with a mission to liberate the country from the yoke of colonialism. He writes:

The politics of fighting for independence, the politics of the liberation of the African people were not so popular with the people. Much had to be done. The fear of the *mzungu* among the masses had to be removed. People needed to be told that Africans were equal to whites, that Africans were capable of doing everything that the *mzungu* could do.

Kaggia joined the mass party then known as the Kenya African Union (KAU) in which he rose to be an official in Nairobi. He at the same time also founded an independent religious movement which came to be known “Dini ya Kaggia” (Kaggia’s religion). Kaggia wanted an independent religious movement based on African traditions and customs that was divorced from European and colonial domination and doctrines. Kaggia’s movement had large followings, especially in Central Kenya. This alarmed the colonial church and their leaders asked the colonial regime for help. Kaggia and his followers were arrested and imprisoned many times for holding what the colonial regime termed as “illegal meetings.” Nevertheless, Kaggia’s doctrine spread and he had followers from all denominations and his religion was spreading into other provinces, even to the then Nyanza province. Kaggia was opposed to giving the movement a name, but the people started calling it Andu a Kaggia (Kaggia’s people). Later this became Dini ya Kaggia

With KAU going moribund under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, Kaggia shifted his interest to the trade unions. He admired the fire and militancy of leaders like Kubai and Makhan Singh. He founded the Clerks and Commercial Workers Union, and in 1948 became its chairman. The new union soon joined the regional organisation, the Labour Trade Union of East Africa, as a member. And in 1950 Kaggia became president of the Labour Trade Union of East Africa. He writes:

In the trade union movement, I found the right place for my ambitions. The people I worked with were militant and revolutionary as myself. They were not suffering from any inferiority complex. People in Nairobi looked up to the trade unions for leadership, not to the ‘political’ leaders of KAU.

On 12 January 1947, Kaggia married Deborah Wam-

bui Nelson Gitau in a simple Christian wedding that was unconventional to the eyes of many people. Unconventional in that it was conducted without a pastor or priest from one of the established churches, and no European food was served to the guests. Wambui became Kaggia’s trusted friend and companion. They both inspired and supported each other in their moral crusades and political struggles that were to follow.

Kaggia then engaged in many other struggles. He was the branch secretary of Murang’a Education Society and Secretary of Kariguini Union. Between the years 1951 and 1952, he founded a Gikuyu language magazine called Inooro ria Gikuyu (Whetstone of Agikuyu) and a Kiswahili weekly called Africa Mpya (New Africa). As the editor of the two publications, Kaggia reported on the activities of KAU and gave vent to the voices of the independence struggle. He writes:

It was the period of great strides in oath administration throughout Kikuyu country; a period of change, when people were beginning to lose faith in gradual constitutional progress. Many young initiates were very impatient. They were always asking when we were going

to take up arms and fight for our rights. The newspaper editors had to write for this audience, even if it meant being prosecuted. We had only one aim: to arouse people to the point where they would be ready to do anything for Kenya. We didn’t consider our safety or welfare.

Kaggia and other KAU militants such as Fred Kubai were initiated into the underground Mau Mau Movement. Later they became members of the Mau Mau Central Committee which was charged with the duty of coordinating the movement and recruiting more members. Kaggia writes of the Mau Mau:

Mau Mau was an organization formed by KAU militants who had lost faith in constitutional methods of fighting for independence. The strength of the colonial government and their vested interests in Kenya were well known to us. It was clear that the government would never give way in Kenya without a struggle. For a long time, KCA and later KAU followed constitutional methods. But instead of the settlers or the colonial government granting any concessions, behind the scenes policies were being enacted by the government to maintain settler control. Instead of gradually introducing changes to give Africans self-rule, the government was passing harsh laws whose only purpose was to curtail African political activity.

In the middle of 1952, the colonial regime which was increasingly getting worried about the growing strength and violent activities of the Mau Mau Movement organized a series of meetings in the country to denounce the movement. The regime used Kenyatta, owing to his popularity, to lead the crusades of denunciation. After the first meetings in Kiambu, the Mau Mau Central Committee decided to put an end to such meetings. They summoned Kenyatta and warned him of dire consequences if he went ahead with further meetings of that nature. Kenyatta heeded their warning, for he knew the seriousness in it and cancelled all the remaining meetings. Though Kenyatta was charged at the Kapenguria trial of managing the Mau Mau, he was not a member of the movement. In fact, Kenyatta loathed the Mau Mau, referring to their violent activities as from “those of diseased minds.” In a meeting at Kirigiti Stadium in Kiambu, Kenyatta denounced the Mau Mau by saying in Gikuyu, “Mau Mau irothiĩ na mĩri ya mĩkongoe”, meaning that Mau Mau should completely disappear like the roots of the mythical mukongoe tree. Even after independence, Kenyatta, while addressing colonial settlers in Nakuru, would derogatorily refer to the Mau Mau as a disease that had been healed and its veterans as hooligans.

On the night of October 20, 1952, a state of emergency was declared in Kenya. The first crackdown was known as Operation Jock Scott in which 183 KAU leaders were arrested, including Jomo Kenyatta, Paul Ngei, Achieng Oneko, Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai and Kung'u Karumba. Kenyatta and the other five leaders of KAU were charged in the infamous Kapenguria trial with managing, or assisting to manage, the Mau Mau. Following the declaration of emergency, KAU was banned and public meetings prohibited. The declaration of the state of the emergency drove many militants of the Mau Mau Movement into the forests. From the forests, Mau Mau waged a no-holds-barred armed resistance against the colonialists and their collaborators.

Through his struggles for “the real” independence and liberation, both during the colonial and neo-colonial period, Kaggia never wavered from his steadfast political beliefs which were grounded in speaking and working for the oppressed classes in the country. When the Kenyatta regime took over the reins of “uhuru”, Kaggia continued to question its commitment to

people’s freedom and uplifting the poor from the morass of poverty and degradation. Kaggia in particular castigated the Kenyatta’s regime declaration of “willing buyer, willing seller” to calm the white settlers’ concerns about the government policy on land acquisition. Kaggia argued that the African people could not be expected to buy back land from the colonialists who had robbed them. He lashed at the leaders around Kenyatta for amassing wealth, education and power as the Mau Mau fighters received little or none despite shivering with cold in the forests and many patriots languishing in prisons and detention camps during the struggle for Kenya’s independence. Kaggia charged that, after the leaders of the regime had negotiated for uhuru to secure wealth, their interests and those of their neo-colonial masters, they were now hell bent on suppressing and exploiting the people.

For their patriotic stand, Kaggia and his comrades such as Pio Gama Pinto, Markhan Singh, Oginga Odinga, Wasonga Sijeyo, Peter Young Kihara, Onyangi Mbaja, and others, broke ranks with Kenyatta’s neocolonial regime and formed the Kenya People’s Union (KPU). Kaggia became its Vice-President. A progressive land policy and social justice was high in KPU’s people-centred policies. KPU was the progressive people’s party in which Kaggia and his fellow comrades truly belonged.

Some of his comrades such as General Baimungi and Pinto were assassinated. Many others were thrown into detention with the proscription of the KPU in 1969. During the many visits human rights activists made to Kaggia, he disclosed how Kenyatta’s regime had on numerous occasions attempted to assassinate him. One such attempt was led by Wanyoike wa Thungu, a confidant of Kenyatta, who was for a long time in charge of his security detail.

For over 20 years, Kaggia chose to labour for his daily bread at his posho mill at Kenol town near his home in Murang’a rather than serve the interests of Kenyatta and Moi’s anti-people regimes. He repeatedly refused cash handouts and eschewed any association with self-seeking politicians.

Kaggia’s life is a mirror of patriotism. A true man of the people who stood up against all forms of injustices, regardless of their perpetrators. Kaggia was a true son for the struggling masses in Kenya and elsewhere in the world. He is a shujaa.

Dominance is the altar, and manhood its most devout offering

The system impressed it upon him first, long before the boy could shape questions with his tongue. It was in the rigid shoulders of men who filled rooms with their absence. In the rough clasp of hands teaching him how to strike before he could heal. Power wasn't inherited; it was proven — again and again. A ritual of conquest burned into flesh and memory.

To be a man was to hold dominion. Over women, over land, over the trembling parts of himself that dared to soften. Vulnerability was a trespass punishable by exile. The unspoken contract was clear — control or be consumed.

But the weight of that inheritance bent spines, even as it crowned heads.

Manhood became a mask that devoured the face beneath it — a constant reckoning between the hunger to belong and the exhaustion of performance. He saw it reflected in the hollow eyes of elders, men who sat atop thrones of brittle pride, their silence louder than their war cries. The more they claimed, the more it consumed them.

Patriarchy's greatest trick wasn't in the way it shackled women. It was in how it chained men to the illusion that freedom lay in dominance. The tighter they held the reins, the more the ground crumbled beneath them.

But what if manhood wasn't a yoke?

What if it could be the wind that carried seeds, not the axe that felled trees? He wondered if strength could blossom in spaces untouched by fear — if it could be found in the willingness to lift rather than crush, to cradle rather than conquer.

It was a dangerous thought. One that smelled of revolt yet tasted like truth.

And so, he carried it carefully — like a spark in dry grass — watching, waiting, wondering if the world was ready to burn or to grow anew.

Exile. The unspoken contract is clear—control or be consumed.



TΔfahri

To be a man was to hold dominion. Over women, over land, over the trembling parts of himself that dared to soften. Vulnerability was a trespass punishable by exile.

From Struggle to Organizing: Overcoming Mental Health and Substance Abuse through Community Organizing

By Wachira Nyaga

After finishing high school in 2012, I found myself struggling to survive in an economy designed to keep the poor in chains. Like many young people, I hoped to uplift my family from the suffering imposed by the neoliberal system. In 2015, I started working as a tout in the chaotic and exploitative matatu industry, plying the Githurai 45 route from the rapidly growing suburb of Ruiru to Nairobi's Central Business District.



During work shift waiting for passengers to fill up the bus (2015)

After three years in the industry, I realized that my economic struggles would not be solved by working as a tout. The challenges were grotesque. I was constantly harassed and arrested by county askaris and the police. The matatu business is one of Kenya's most corrupt industries, with state officers openly collecting bribes from the wee hours of the morning at roundabouts and roadblocks, never caring whether the casual workers they extort have even made a profit or had breakfast. You either pay, or you suffer the consequences. The rampant arbitrary arrests and ignorance of the law by the participants in the industry put young workers at risk of spending much of their youth in prison, fueling my realization that the police and justice system exist to protect the rich while oppressing the poor.

It was through this experience that I developed a deep yearning to fight for change. The same youths I worked with who were parents, siblings, and friends continue to suffer under the weight of systemic poverty. As I searched for alternative work, I found myself in the unstable world of small-time hustling, selling whatever I could to survive. But in 2018, everything changed.

Turning a New Leaf Through Community Organizing

I met Edgar, popularly known as Liberator, who introduced me to community organizing under the banner of the Githurai Human Rights Network. I began working with community groups to raise consciousness about human rights, accountability, and the constitution. Through Liberator, I later met Garang Mzalendo, both of whom were radio presenters at Ghetto Radio, hosting the popular Changamka Show, which combined social justice with reggae music. Their work inspired me, and my focus sharpened, culminating in the formation of the Githurai Social Justice Centre (GSJC), which later became part of the Social Justice Movement Working Group.

Through Liberator, I later met Garang Mzalendo, both of whom were radio presenters at Ghetto Radio, hosting the popular Changamka Show, which combined social justice with reggae music

As GSJC grew, I became deeply involved in organizing across Nairobi's informal settlements. My revolutionary mission became clearer I had a duty to fight for justice and freedom for the people. But community organizing is not without its challenges. The work is unpaid, yet human rights defenders carry

the immense burden of documenting injustices, from extrajudicial killings to gender-based violence. The emotional and psychological toll is heavy. The lack of psychosocial support for organizers meant that I was absorbing all the trauma without an outlet.



Researching challenges faced by ex-convicts to reintegrate into the community after serving jail time (2019)



Community Dialogue Meeting at Nembure, (2023)

Effects and Overcoming Mental Health and Substance Abuse

As the work of defending my community intensified, I unknowingly sacrificed my well-being. I started using drugs such as khat (Miraa) and alcohol (Chang'aa) to keep up with the demands of organizing. The situation worsened when my house was demolished and I was forcefully evicted leaving me homeless. With no community support and a growing sense of despair, I became trapped in alcohol abuse. What started as a way to escape my struggles, quickly consumed my life.

I spent my days drinking in local chang'aa dens, often skipping meals, and losing touch with my responsibilities. My young family suffered and my wife, child and family members became ashamed of me, while the community dismissed me as a lost cause. Human rights defenders are often vilified, perceived as nuisances rather than defenders of the people. My struggles reinforced that perception, further isolating me.

I spent my days drinking in local chang'aa dens, often skipping meals, and losing touch with my responsibilities.

One thing I had always believed was that change begins with me. I had wasted years drowning in alcohol, and I knew that if I remained in the same toxic environment, nothing would change. I had to make a choice to either continue on my self-destructive path or reclaim my life. I decided to leave Githurai and return to my rural home in Embu.

Turning a New Leaf Through the Community Kitchen and Organizing the Embu Community Justice Centre

Leaving Nairobi was not just about escaping substance abuse; it was about creating a new environment where I could rebuild myself. As a cadre of the Social Justice Movement and an adherent of the Revolutionary Socialist League, I knew that only militant discipline would get me back on track.

In Embu, I sought out new ways to sustain myself while remaining committed to the struggle. I started a community kitchen, which became a means of survival and a new space for organizing. The kitchen provided a platform to engage with farmers and rural workers about their struggles, helping me realize that the same oppressive structures in urban informal settlements existed in

rural areas. Farmers were being exploited, the government was failing them, and their struggles were no different from those of the urban poor.

A soldier without political ideology is a potential criminal – Thomas Sankara

Through these conversations, I saw the need to organize. The Embu Community Justice Centre was born out of this realization, providing farmers and workers with a platform to collectively fight for their rights. By advocating for coopera-



Sabasaba March For Our Lives Protests In 2019

tives, trade unions, and revolutionary consciousness, we began laying the foundation for an alternative system that prioritizes people over profit.

Conclusion

My journey from substance abuse to organizing a new justice center was not easy, but it was necessary. The capitalist system is designed to break us, to push us into despair and self-destruction. But the fight for justice is not just about confronting the state—it is about confronting the conditions that weaken our people, including mental health struggles and substance abuse.

My journey from substance abuse to organizing a new justice center was not easy, but it was necessary

Community organizing is not just political; it is deeply personal. By rebuilding myself, I was able to rebuild my commitment to the struggle.

My experience has shown me that revolutionary discipline, collective care, and political consciousness are essential for sustaining both individuals and movements. The fight continues, not just in Nairobi, but in every corner of the country where people refuse to accept oppression as their fate. For a free, just, and organized society—one community at a time.

Aluta Continua and forward to land, food and freedom!

Wachira Nyaga, is a community organizer with Embu Community Justice Center and a party member of the Revolutionary Socialist League.

It's Time for Another Story

By Ndungi Kimathi Waruiru

Chemotherapy ulipe cash. Dialysis ulipe cash. Mamako auziwe mchanga kwa gunia ya fertilizer. Stima watuzimie seven hours. Wakate misitu. Watufungie Public places za kupumzika. Wachukue loans na tittle za public lands. Na sisi ndio the treasonous ones juu ya kutaka matanga Sugoi? Ngumu – Shoba Gatimu, X (Twitter)

Words are slowly running out. The cries of bereavement have turned hoarse and papers for printing banners are quickly dwindling away.

Kenya is presumed to be an independent state for sixty-one years now, but land and freedom are still a foreign concept here. Majority of the population still cannot be able to meet their basic needs, and when they try to demand for better living conditions, they are labelled as 'threats' and 'children' who 'want to destroy the country'. Freedom of speech has been curtailed. Cartoonists and bloggers are being abducted in broad daylight for a mere satirical comment or picture. And as if that is not enough, our nations' assets and sanctuaries are being auctioned to the highest bidder.

In actual sense, we never truly achieved full independence and we are still being stabbed in the back by the very same ingrates who were 'rewarded' for sympathising with the white colonisers. They traded our people as slaves back then, and now they are exporting human labour to go work under slave like conditions in Arab countries.

I mean, how much more truth is there to tell? The people are tired. Tired of living from hand to mouth each day, unable to visual-

ize a brighter tomorrow. Tired of inheriting their ancestors' mess, being punished for their fathers' and grandfathers' actions. Tired of politics that are divided by ethnicity driven by the same tribal lords, with the same script and cast as colonialists. Tired of all the unlawful abductions, tortures and killings.

How many more lives have to be lost for this regime to continue misruling us?

Judging from past and current events, we have had tyrants masquerading as politicians who are thirsty for power and are ready to murder thousands of innocent lives just to quench their greed. When they seize power, they are ready and willing to burn down the country just to rule over the debris and ashes.

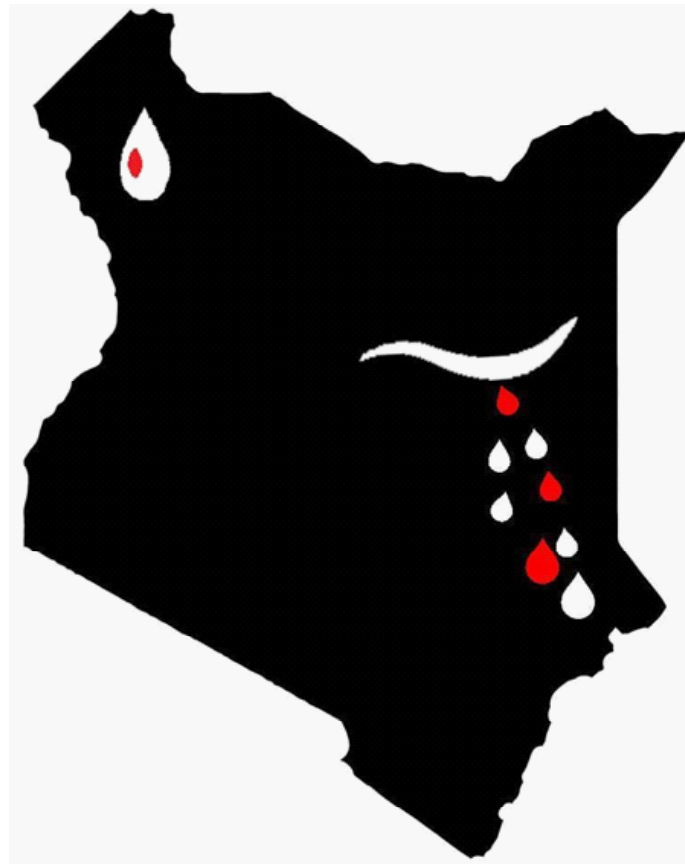
For decades now, the so-called leaders have been taking people's lives to gain power. As if that is not enough, today they are coming back for those survivors who were left behind. All this bloodbath for just a few more years of something that they already have.

Why attack, demean and abduct because one has failed to convince?

Can law and order be found in a country where the police are protecting the rich. The police kill innocent civilians using bullets bought by the same civilians through their hard-earned sweat and highly taxed money. In countries where democracy works and the rule of law is upheld, the police are tasked with protecting life and

property. This is a huge contrast to the situation here where they are manipulated into killing, looting and extorting poor civilians.

Clearly, our existence in this land right from birth has not and does not come without a fight or a price. And that has been our story. A story of fighting rogue governments and paying a heavy price with our lives.



A story is often told only in one way because it is largely dependent on those in power. Those in power are the main orchestrators of the story. A story that has made what was once a bright future for a promising country and its citizens now looms in darkness. A story that has been built on a structure meant to cripple us. Characterized by unlawful killings, exploitative laws, bills and taxes.

It is the time we changed that story. No one has the monopoly of writing or telling stories. Stories

that are personal and dear to one can only be written and comprehended by those who have walked in the same shoes. Let narrations to future generations be done in freedom, joy and the fulfilment of victory instead of the pain, tears and gloom that has filled current stories.

Although, I must confess that politics can be awful in all forms and ways, especially here in Kenya, refusing to participate in it has proven that it can never be an answer. “Kuna shughuli inatakanga mbogi !” There comes a time when the nation is more important than an individual, and this is one of them.

At this rate, who really thinks that the government really has our

interests at heart? Can you believe even for a moment that they have us in mind they make private deals with foreign billionaires? Deals, mind you, that would not have been exposed to the public were it not for a patriotic whistle blower.

As things stand, we look des-

I strongly believe that Kenya is going to be a powerful and wealthy nation once we unlock her full potential.

tinued to continue digging ourselves deeper into the holes of poverty and oppression if we do not put up a brave act. Unless we unite together and remember that the enemy is not me or you but the rogue politicians, then our story will continue being told by others. We must

learn and sensitize one another to never shy away from holding the government accountable. Never be afraid to demand for justice and better livelihoods

I strongly believe that Kenya is going to be a powerful and wealthy nation once we unlock her full potential. If the youth, who are endowed with intelligence and creativity can get a space to channel to their creativity. If people’s labour is positively tapped into building the nation, and conditions made conducive for businesses and entrepreneurship to thrive, we can achieve much as a country. This will also give us a chance to write our own stories.

Long live the spirit of Kimathi: Speech on Kimathi Day 2025

By Mohamed Amin Abdishukri

I see the DRC flag here today among many other flags and I want to say something about this that will connect to the spirit of Kimathi. I came across a Somali song the other day from 1961 when the great Patrice Lumumba was assassinated. The song is called Heesta Lumumba and it was written by the late great Somali musician and songwriter Abdullahi Qarshe and the chorus of that song goes something like this:

*“Lumuumba ma noola mana dhimanee/
Labada midna ha u malayninayee/
Muqiisa la waaye mooyaanee/
Inuu maqanyahay ha moodinayee.*

Which translates to:

Lumumba is neither dead nor alive/
Don’t believe either of them/
It’s only his presence that has come to be lacking/
Don’t believe that he is absent.”

Immediately I heard these words my mind instantly thought about our own great liberator and shujaa and martyr, Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi. Like Lumumba, like Sankara, like Cabral, like Pinto, like all the martyrs of our cause - the cause of liberation - Kimathi is not absent. His spirit and all that he stood for remain immortal



and eternal.

But what I want to ask is, how much of Kimathi’s spirit lives within us? How does it speak to our present and recent past?

One: Does his organisational spirit live within us? When I look back at the “reject finance bill” protests of last year,

I always get emotional for a number of reasons. Of course we lost many of our beloved comrades whose memory we should honour forever. But we had the numbers, we had the courage, we had the zeal, we had the energy, we had so much going for us. But how organised were we? Although some people might use certain metrics to claim that the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA) failed, the truth is that the “Mau Mau” were successful. And the reason why they had the impact that they had, the reason why they could out manoeuvre the colonisers the way they did was because of their organisational skills and because of the strong leadership that they had. Kimathi was based in Nyandarua where the headquarters of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army was but he had established a solid, elaborate and formidable network of field secretaries and couriers who kept him in contact with the KLFA leadership in Nairobi, the front-line commanders, the village detachments and the Kenya Parliament. There were many moving parts and we know the role the likes of Pio Gama Pinto played in securing arms and so on. In short there was clear organisation and structure. Again I ask dear comrades, how organised were we last year during the protests and how organised are we today?

Two: Does Kimathi’s spirit of unity and solidarity live within us? What we’ve come to know today is that the Kenya Land and Freedom Army and the war of independence that they launched was a multi-ethnic, multi-racial and nationalist project. It wasn’t just “watu wa mlima” who were involved in the Kenya Land and Freedom Army as some would claim. The war of independence was primarily one for Land and Freedom, and anyone who believed in this cause, was welcome to participate in it. Which leads me to my third question.

Three: Does Kimathi’s ideological spirit live within us? Unity is a meaningless word without ideology. We can sing “solidarity forever” in every event, function or protest that we meet at but that collocation becomes a mere platitude if we don’t have a shared understanding, a shared consciousness and a shared ideology. To paraphrase Cabral: ideological deficiency within national liberation movements constitutes one of the greatest weakness in our struggle against imperialism. The struggle for liberation therefore is above all else a struggle for ideological clarity. And Kimathi and the Kenya Land and Freedom Army had a clear ideological stance that fought imperialism which at the time was in the form of colonialism. “Our real fight is not against the white colour but against the system carried on by the white rulers.” This is a direct quote from Kimathi which you can find in the Kenya Land and Freedom Army Charter published in

October 1953. The system Kimathi fought against didn’t die with colonialism - it evolved! The same foreign powers that hanged Kimathi now strangle our economy with debt. The IMF and World Bank have replaced the colonial office. The multinational corporations have replaced the settler farmers. And the homeguards have been replaced by the Government of Kenya (GoK). And this is where a divide became evident within the movement that took part in the reject finance bill protests last year. A good number of the protestors were reformists. They wanted to fight corruption but not really capitalism, to fight the bill but not the imperialism behind it, to fight the symptoms and not the systems. And that’s why opportunists like Jimmy Wanjigi, who are beneficiaries of the same system that we rose against took advantage and became leading and even trusted voices. This is where the Kenya Left comes in. We have so many struggles going on simultaneously and independently in the country.

The coffee farmers, the doctors, teachers, uber drivers and so on and so forth. How hard are we working to raise these people’s consciousness? How hard are we working to reclaim our trade unions? How hard are we working to answer that famous or infamous question that Lenin posed over a century ago: What is to be done? Will we, to paraphrase Issa Shivji, continue conversing or will we finally unite and answer the questions of what to do and how to do it?

What is to be done? Will we, to paraphrase Issa Shivji, continue conversing or will we finally unite and answer the questions of what to do and how to do it?

Four: Does Kimathi’s spirit of non-compromise live within us? We’ve had many traitors in the struggle. We’ve had individuals who’ve betrayed the struggle and joined the other side. We all know how the Kenya Land and Freedom Army dealt with home guards and traitors. We all know the content of the letters that Kimathi sent to the collaborator chiefs and headmen. Let me give a disclaimer here: I am not saying we should tie people to a pole and execute them. But why are we still platforming some of these individuals, why are we tolerating them and why are we not relegating them to where they belong - the dustbin of history?

In the beginning I said the spirit of Kimathi will remain immortal and eternal with or without us. We all know that famous quote by Frantz Fanon: “Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.” Kimathi and his generation fulfilled their mission and that is why they will remain immortal. Will we rise to meet their immortal spirit? Will we be worthy of it? Will we transform it from memory into movement, from history into action, from past into future?

Aluta Continua! The struggle continues! But only if WE continue with it!

Asanteni sana, and long live Kimathi!

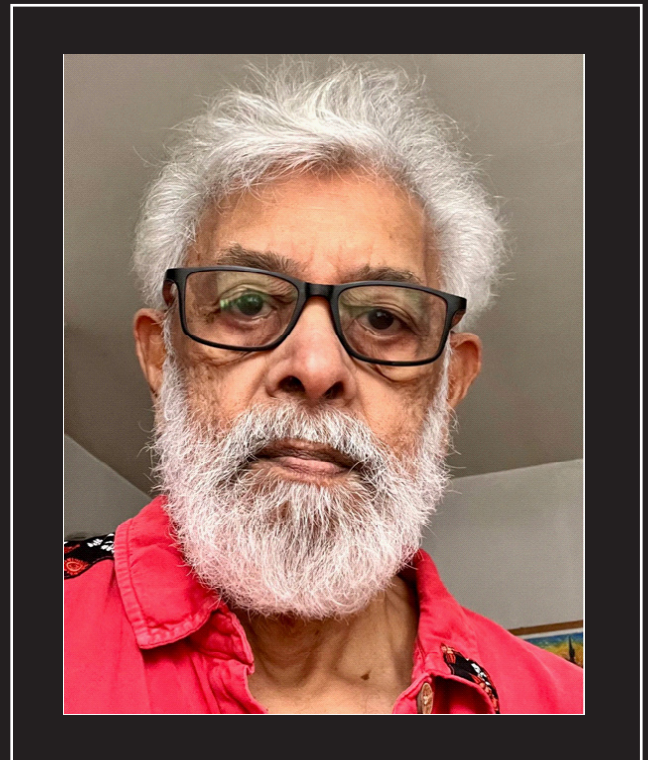
Kwaheri to Vita Books after 37 Years

‘Change, like death, is inevitable’, said Karimi Nduthu. And change is coming to Vita Books as it marks 37 years since its foundation in London in 1987. During all this period, it has remained faithful to its founding principle which it proclaimed on its London website:

Vita Books is an independent Kenyan publisher supporting people’s struggles to create societies based on the principles of equality and justice. It aims to redress working people’s lack of power over information, communication and the media which then restricts their access to ideas and experiences to resist imperialism. Vita Books strives to connect and unite progressive people everywhere in their battles for justice and equality for everyone.

Vita Books moved to Nairobi in 2017 and I have supported it, financially and in many other ways, to ensure that it sets its roots firmly in Kenya. There were two concerns I had: one, to make a continental leap so Vita Books returns to Kenya from Britain. Second, I needed to make sure that Vita Books makes the generational transition so that the new generation continues its vision and aims. Both these have been fully met. During its time in Kenya, Vita Books published some of its most important titles.

After 37 years with Vita Books, seven of them in Kenya, it is time for me to say Kwaheri to it. It is also a time for the new generation to decide its future direction. Today, Kenya faces one of its most difficult conditions since independence in 1963. The political and social climate is dangerous for anyone daring to protest human rights violations. In this situation, those who manage Vita Books may feel it is time to change tactics as they face new challenges. My leaving will make such changes easier. So this is my farewell to Vita Books. I wish Vita



Books all the best for the future. I would like to thank authors, designers, printers and all those who worked with me during this period. In particular, I would like to thank Kimani Waweru for his dedication and hard work to make Vita Books a success. I also thank African Books Collective which enabled Vita Books to be read globally.

Abdilatif Abdullah says:

*Bado Safari ni Ndefu
Wasafiri Tusichoke*

And so I carry on with my safari outside Vita Books.

Shiraz Durrani

See “Patria O Muerte! / Homeland or Death”, a preface by Dr Willy Mutunga to Shiraz Durrani’s 2nd edition of the book “From Mau Mau to RutoMustGo” which he co-authored with Ruo Kimani-Ruo. Page 23

A Bow to Shiraz Durrani: Publishing the Struggle

On January 1, 2025, in what appeared to be out of the blue, Comrade Shiraz Durrani announced his retirement from Vita Books. While this unfamiliar new year gift of an announcement marks the end of an era, it is also a moment to celebrate a towering figure who has dedicated his life to merging activism with intellectual labour.

When asked by a journalist how he managed to be

in the struggle and still write very well, South African revolutionary Alex La Guma famously responded that he indeed wondered how anyone could be out of the struggle and still to write anything useful. This insight resonates deeply with the life and work of Shiraz Durrani. He did not merely write or publish; he published the struggle, ensuring that stories of resistance, liberation, and hope were told, preserved, and dissemi-

nated. But beyond that, Shiraz actively engaged – and to continues to engage – in the struggle.

Shiraz’s journey as a revolutionary publisher began long before Vita Books. He was one of the early members of the underground December Twelve Movement (DTM), a vanguard group committed to fighting injustice and championing progressive ideals and liberating Kenya. At the University of Nairobi, Shiraz served as a progressive librarian, using his role to challenge hegemonic narratives and to nudge faculty and students toward the direction of critical thinking. His radical stance and fearless advocacy for justice inevitably drew the ire of the Moi regime, forcing him into exile.

Exile, however, was not an end but a new beginning. Upon arriving in the United Kingdom, Shiraz founded Vita Books, a publishing house that would become a beacon for progressive thought. Prior to that, literature from Kenya’s underground and overt anti-imperialist struggles found it hard to get published, save for efforts of a few foreign publishing houses like Zed Books. Under his leadership, Vita Books published a wealth of literature not just on Kenya but Africa by extension, extending the horizons

Shiraz’s journey as a revolutionary publisher began long before Vita Books. He was one of the early members of the underground December Twelve Movement (DTM), a vanguard group committed to fighting injustice and championing progressive ideals and liberating Kenya.

of freedom of expression and amplifying the voices of the marginalized. Through Vita Books, Shiraz ensured that the histories of struggle and the dreams of liberation would remain accessible for generations.

As Shiraz passes on the mantle, we can only be confident that the tradition he has established at Vita Books will be perpetuated. His unwavering commitment to the ideals of the Left, social justice, freedom, and equality has inspired countless others to continue the work he began.

This should not sound like an obituary for we are used to tributes coming only after one has died. This a celebration of a monumental contribution in service of humanity, freedom, and truth. Shiraz Durrani’s legacy reminds us that the pen, when wielded with conviction, is a powerful tool for liberation. This and, hopefully, his future contributions will forever illuminate the path for those who believe in a better, fairer world. Another world is possible. A new Kenya is indeed necessary.

**Oduor Ong’wen
January 5, 2025**

Lessons from Jesus, the First Revolutionary and Socialist I was Indirectly Taught About

By Wavinya Kavivya

Bob Marley was a Rastafari, believed in Jah and the Ethiopian God, but often quoted the Bible. We are taught by the Bible to be good. If we do so, we won’t get an ass whooping (oops), instead, we’ll get rewards from a space daddy. If that sounds blasphemous, it is because that’s how Christianity is delivered today. I don’t know about Allah, or Buddha or any other space daddy out there. But the thing is, even though I was raised in church and was a Sunday school teacher for the longest time and a preacher for some time, I got lost. Then one day, I ran into some beautiful humans and they taught me about socialism and my relationship with capital and THE PEOPLE. While reading about capitalism vs socialism, I couldn’t help but finally ‘hear’ what I so loudly talked

about as a little girl, quite often to crowds. Be a messenger of love. Old wine must be thrown out of the cellar for the new wine to brew well. In other words, tear down the old tyranny and build one that prioritizes social capital and environmental protection.

Many across the globe celebrate Christmas in malls. Trees are decorated with lights so bright that the birds and squirrels can no longer inhabit them. Others have special meals, while others buy new clothes and take day out as a family.. But the history of Christmas day as passed down to us, has nothing to do with Jesus, or what he was here for. So, here are some of the lessons I have gotten from Jesus for the last one year (I am still learning. Note, the Bible is the greatest book of magic ever written if you know how to read it.)

Don’t talk about love, be about it, love for yourself, love for your neighbor, love for the environment, love

for your enemies.

The heart of any revolutionary movement calls for love, not just for our comrades or for the people we fight for, but love through Utu and or Ubuntu. Recognizing that everything on this earth requires our protection, and it is not by accident that we humans were granted the greatest responsibility to be thinkers and innovators. We should fulfil that responsibility through our love. This calls for a love festival this “Holiday” season. Love your neighbor as yourself.

1. Your Faith is all you will ever need at certain moments

Times are hard. For a revolutionary much worse right now. The capitalist system adapts with every progress we make. Faith is going to be enough to keep it together when you are arrested or when they martyr some of us. We have got to be out there, keeping the faith. while keeping in mind that this fight is not going to be fought by us only. When they kill us, our children will continue with the struggle. Keep the faith dear brothers and sisters.

2. Keep your tools ready and always be prepared for the revolution

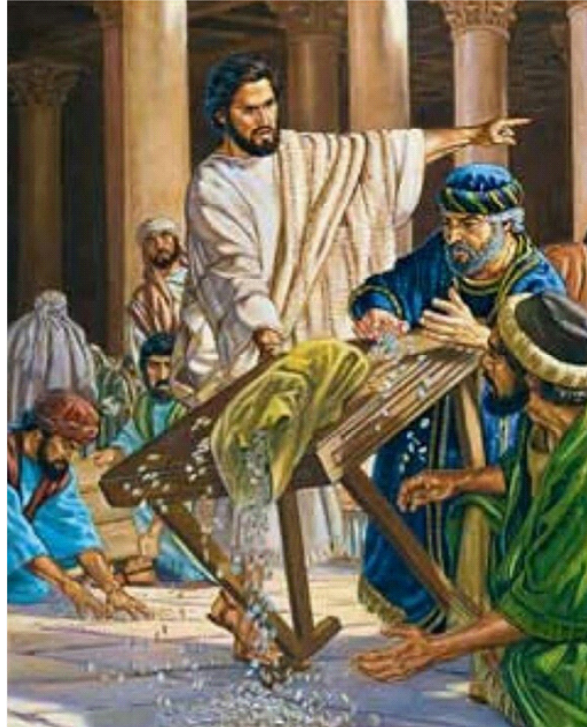
Read your books, keep physical. The day of reckoning cannot be ascertained. We learnt this with the Gen-Z movement. Let us read our books, let us go for the runs and physical hiking, let us learn from the Mau Mau and Black Panthers, and let us stay prepared.

3. Keep the masses prepared and engaged

We have no better weapon than our organizing. Keep your community informed, keep the people engaged and interested, keep them loving one another and understanding the enemy and why he needs to be fought. Keep them in the know of the systems around them and how best they can navigate now and during the time of revolt. Teach the masses, always. Organize, educate, liberate.

4. Keep your comrades' close by and when you can, recruit more especially those you think are unfit

12 proved to be a magic number for Jesus's apostles but let's have as many of them as we can, internationally and at home. Let us look out for one another and devote our brotherhood and sisterhood to building a strong army as we prepare for the revolt.



A depiction of Jesus calling out money lenders' usury, which tended to exploit the poor and needy

5. Learn to learn and grow from hard moments

Learn to frame your material struggles as an opportunity to learn about a system meant to oppress you and fight from it. Use instances of police brutality as moments not to just mourn and plant trees for our lost comrades but as an opportunity to dismantle colonial legacies, use trying moments to build solidarity and love for one another and for the masses.

6. Take time away and learn from those who were there before you

We can learn about past movements by reading. Learn to take time away and recharge, lest you become a celebrity of the movement

having done or achieved nothing for the people.

7. You will be betrayed by those closest to you, always be prepared for it

We are talking about you Judas, we see you Judas. Be prepared for it. Send them away with love, and learn that you can still win your battles regardless of the wars waged against you.

8. Your commitment to the struggle is for the greater good

Love and pursue the revolution more than you will desire material gains, they're very important yes, but the masses don't have them. Teach them how to survive while fighting for the new order.

That's a lot of learning. There's plenty more when you learn to read the book. Whether you read it for yourself, or not, the book was forced on us anyway and many of us have the above lessons at the back of our minds.

Wavinya Kavivya is a social Innovator. She is the Founder of Vinya Weaving Lab, a social enterprise working with marginalized women.

Might Baltic Singing Revolution lend a leaf to Kenya's political struggles?

By Gitura Mwaura

There is the truism that unless you name a problem (i.e., understand it), you may never begin to solve it.

Sun Tzu, the Chinese military strategist and philosopher, put it more dramatically: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles".

A recent post by Dr Njuki Githethwa in the Ukombozi Writers Forum he convenes on WhatsApp read like this: "The protests quickly morphed into the #RutoMustGo movement which had – and still has – the potential to be a truly revolutionary movement if we can agree on two things. First, the noun 'Ruto' does not refer to William Samoei Ruto the individual, but rather the system that he represents, the system that produces Rutos. The second and more important thing we need to agree on is that ideological struggle must precede power struggle."

The protests referred to in the excerpt are the now celebrated "Gen Z" demonstrations in June 2024 that drew global attention. The passage was culled from an article titled 'First Win the Mind': The Need for a War of Position in Kenya by journalist Mohamed Amin Abdishukri in Ukombozi Review.

Despite reference to "war" in the article's title, and as suggested in the excerpt, the article does not so much invoke a war cry as it expresses deep disappointment with studied intent for change.

Disappointment, as I've been learning from Rafael Holmberg, a researcher in philosophy and psychoanalytic theory at University College London, is not just a feeling, it is a political force.

It is, he observes, socially situated and politically structured. When political regimes fail us, it is disappointment that holds the radical potential for change.

As matters stand, to borrow another of Dr Githethwa's observations

elsewhere, the battle for change is in "a lull at which point a revolution seems to have subsided, or gone under. When the combatants on the frontline have taken a break to replenish their energies, to reassess their mission and to refocus their visions."

It is about the vision. But Abdishukri in his article wonders "whether [the envisioned movement] will be another almost-revolution, another footnote in Kenya's history of incomplete revolutions, another moment of rage contained and conquered by the ruling class, or whether it will be the beginning of total liberation brought by radical political education and consciousness."

Disappointment, as I've been learning from research in psychoanalytic theory, is not just a feeling, it is a political force.

I would think that success cannot be other than by harnessing public consciousness, a part of "know yourself" in Sun Tzu's take. If the activists in this model are the tip of the spear, the people must be the shaft that backs their claims to legitimacy and provides the momentum for change.

Abdishukri, therefore, is prudent to wonder whether it will turn out to be another dud revolution. Note that while he has named the "enemy", the said enemy has likewise named its "enemy" and will be better prepared next time, especially after the novelty and spontaneity of the "Gen Z" ambush.

When my phone pinged alert to the WhatsApp post referred above, I had just finished reading about the



2 million people held hands in a 600-kilometre-long human chain spanning three countries in a key moment of solidarity during the Singing Revolution

Singing Revolution that waltzed the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to their freedom and independence.

I thought that perhaps a lesson might be borrowed from it, not only to make a statement but probably derive a more enduring outcome.

A key highlight of the revolution was the moving spectacle of the 1989 human chain of two million people holding hands over a distance of 600 kilometres across the three states that would prove pivotal, propelling the momentum to their freedom.

The human chain was an expression of public consciousness that would also prove influential, birthing similar chains in other countries around the world, as noted below.

This is bearing in mind that each country is unique to its situation and circumstances and would require a solution distinctive to its experience.

It is also bearing in mind that, even in Kenya, there cannot be any illusions about how the world has evolved socio-politically, of which the Kenyan experience includes the past hard-won struggles that gave us the 2010

Constitution. Yet despite the relatively new constitution, as the Gen Z and other protests have shown, the work may not be complete.

The current struggle might, therefore, feature somewhere among the continuum of Sun Tzu's rhetorical "a hundred battles".

And, thus, the case for winning the hearts and minds of the people to power completion of the work, though this may depend on the scale such as the movement Abdishukri envisions.

Perhaps, then, the Singing Revolution, though removed from Kenya in time and circumstance, might lend a leaf?

It would best serve to tell it in some detail.

The three Baltic nations, together with Finland, Romania and part of Poland, had been Soviet spheres of influence beginning August 1939, after the signing of the non-aggression treaty between Germany and the Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics. The treaty would come to be known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, named after the two countries' respective foreign ministers who signed it.

The pact would also lead to the outbreak of World War Two a month after its signing. And in June 1940, as the war raged, the Soviet Union invaded and occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, voiding the pact

with Germany.

The decades that followed saw a process of aggressive Russification (forcing adoption of Russian culture and language) on the occupied states. It also saw exploitation of natural resources and encouragement of Russian immigration into the countries.

In Estonia, for example, ethnic Russian émigrés would comprise 40 percent of the country's total population. Soviet songs were composed praising the Soviet state and the Communist Party. It became illegal to display the occupied countries' national symbols such as flags or express nationalist sentiments including patriotic poetry and songs or music.

As needs not saying, but the sum of it was that it could only breed people's resentment and yearning for freedom.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in the Soviet Union and introduced the reform policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) that opened up the economic and political space.

It is about the vision. But Abdishukri in his article wonders "whether [the envisioned movement] will be another almost-revolution, another footnote in Kenya's history of incomplete revolutions..."

Soon afterwards, People's Fronts in the three countries — the Popular Front of Estonia Rahvarinne, the Popular

Front of Latvia and the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sajūdis — began to organise, drawing from their similar cultural pastime of poetry and folk songs going back centuries.

They used their musical traditions as a strategy to not only curry nationalistic fervour but to fire the protests and demonstrations that followed, especially beginning in 1987. It is these that would constitute the Singing Revolution, which Estonia best illustrates.

For a tiny country of only about 1.37 million people currently, as narrated by the International Centre on Nonviolent Conflict, Estonia is reputed to have one of the world's largest repertoires of folk songs which they used as a political weapon for centuries. Songs were used to protest German conquerors as far back as the 13th century and as an act of resistance against the occupying army of Russian czar Peter the Great in the 18th century.

Laulupidu, a choral festival introduced in the mid-19th century, could attract crowds of hundreds of thousands around the country. Drawing from the tradition, it is the cornerstone of the resistance against the Soviet occupation, when—in addition to singing the requisite songs praising the state and the Communist Party—the organisers defied Soviet officials by including banned nationalist songs and symbols.

Despite divisions within the nationalist movement, and despite violent provocations by Soviet occupation forces and the Russian émigrés, the movement gained strength employing various forms of nonviolent resistance including public protests and nationalist displays such as the flag. These acts of defiance were replicated in the Latvia and Lithuania and would constitute the Baltic Singing Revolution.

On 23 August 1989, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the People’s Fronts of three Baltic states organised what came to be known as the “Baltic Way”, the 600-kilometre-long human chain connecting the countries’ capital cities.

Each state needed around 200,000 attendees to make the chain feasible, bringing a total of 600,000 people. Instead, two million showed up. A Wikipedia entry observes that video footage taken from airplanes and helicopters showed an almost continuous line of people across the three states.

The chain of peaceful demonstrators would last only 15 minutes, as the organisers had planned it. But it would

prove a powerful symbol of solidarity and people’s will to freedom and independence.

Seven months later, in March 1990, Lithuania declared independence. Estonia and Latvia would gain theirs the following year in 1991, with the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics breaking up shortly after.

So impactful was the Singing Revolution and the Baltic Way it engendered that documentary material detailing the history leading to the human chain has, since 2009, been inscribed at the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The Register is an international initiative aimed at safeguarding the documentary heritage of humanity so that it may never be lost or forgotten.

In the meantime, the Baltic Way has since inspired similar human chains in Taiwan with the 487-kilometre 228 Hand-in-Hand Rally in 2004, the 400-kilometre Catalan Way in Catalonia, Spain, in 2013, and, among others, the Hong Kong Way in 2019.

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When the Wretched Strike Back: Lessons from My Village to the World

By Kinuthia Ndung’u

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. - Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

One chilly evening, my late father returned from the village – our homeland nestled among the gently rolling beautiful hills and ridges of Iganjo. His face, usually clouded by the anxieties of city life, carried a rare glimmer of joy and calmness, like someone who had just encountered truth.

He had been spending more and more weekends in the village, drawn back to the place he had once fled during the economic upheaval of the ‘80s. Back then, structural adjustment programs had devastated rural livelihoods, forcing many, including him,

to abandon their ancestral homes and seek survival in the city.

But now, as age caught up with him and the city grew more hostile, he found peace in the serenity of Iganjo. The land was calling him back, not just as a place of rest, but as a symbol of belonging. A profound connection between place and self.

Curious about his calm joy, I asked him what had brought it on. He leaned back and began to tell a story, one that had unfolded during his recent visit to the village. It was filled with bravery, anger, and a long-awaited sense of justice. It felt deeply rooted in our land’s history and incredibly relevant to the present moment.

It was the story of a retired head teacher in the village. With a few herds, relatively expansive land, a stone house, his treasured Pajero, and stories of his days in public service, he had long made himself lord over village affairs, meddling in land disputes, silencing dissent, and brib-



ing local authorities to have his way. A retired school principal and former civil servant, he returned from the city with a pension, a sense of entitlement, and a hunger for more.

This time, his victim was a poor widow and her two sons, an easy target in a society where land is not just property, but sustenance, dignity, and memory.

The old man, drunk on entitlement, had illegally annexed the widow's land after her husband's demise, preventing her from cultivating or even stepping on it. He weaponized his unprincipled connections with the local administration – the corrupt chief and police, relics of a colonial system – to humiliate, harass, and occasionally detain the widow and her sons on fabricated charges. And as always, the community watched, whispered and prayed about the injustice in private, but did nothing.

Until that fateful morning when the widow's family couldn't take it anymore.

Desperate with hunger and no land to till, the widow and her sons had to make a decision, to either die from starvation or fight for their land. Their hunger echoed louder than fear; they took their jembes and machetes and went to occupy their shamba (land). The old man, seated on his balcony, saw them from afar, mounted his Pajero in fury, and drove down. He arrived and immediately began hurling insults and threatening the family. But what he didn't realize was that the family had reached the edge. The point where the old dies and the new is born.

What followed was swift and final. The family, long simmering with resentment, attacked him. The machetes landed hard. The man's head rolled, severed from the body. His blood mixed with the earth, the same land he had stolen, now reclaiming its dues.

But what made this story unforgettable, as my father told it, wasn't just the act of violence – it was what came after. The family did not flee the scene. They walked themselves to the authorities and surrendered.

As they walked, the villagers lined the road. No one said a word. Tears mingled with applause. Men lowered their heads in shame and awe. Sadness hung heavy in Iganjo, knowing that this poor hard working family might spend the rest of their days in prison. Yet, there was a newfound courage among the villagers. For once, the rich felt the wrath of the oppressed. It was a moment of rupture, a collective awakening.

In this act of resistance, the widow and her sons em-

bodied Fanon's assertion that violence can liberate the oppressed from internalized inferiority and despair. Their decisive action shattered the psychological chains that had bound them, transforming them from passive victims into agents of change. This transformation extended beyond their family, igniting a sense of empowerment within the entire community.

And from that moment, everything changed. The silence became questions. "If the poor widow and her sons can fight back, why can't we?"

This act, this explosion of long suppressed cry for justice and dignity was not isolated. It was part of a global echo of resistance by the wretched of the earth.

On October 7th, 2023 the Palestinians, after decades of brutal occupation, genocide, blockade, and international neglect, rose up in defiance against Israeli Occupation. Just as the widow and her sons reached a point where death was better than submission, so too did a people long suffocated reclaim the right to fight for dignity on their own terms.

Further west, in the Sahel, in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, a people tired of imperialist exploitation and neo-colonial dominance, are rising. Like the widow, they are reclaiming their land and the right to shape their own future.

Even here, in Kenya, the fire is growing.

On 25th June, 2024 when Kenyan youth stormed Parliament, it wasn't just about a punitive IMF and World bank-imposed Finance Bill, It was a reaction to the decades of humiliation and dispossession by the powerful. It was about a generation saying: Enough is enough.

Frantz Fanon understood this better than anyone. That violence is not just destruction. For the oppressed, it restores their humanity. It silences the internalized voice of submission.

From the breath-taking hills and ridges of Iganjo, to the blood-stained streets of Palestine and the scorched fields of the Sahel, the story of the widow's family's act of defiance is a call to challenge the injustices our people have long endured, a reminder of the moral obligation of every oppressed person to resist their oppression through all means. Just like the land eventually swallowed the old tyrant from my village, so too shall all oppressed people reclaim their dignity, with fire and fury!

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BOOK REVIEW

Keeping the Anger Burning. A Review of Darius Okolla's Generation #Occupy: The Anatomy of an Evolving Riot

By Kingwa Kamencu

Darius Okolla's *Generation #Occupy: The Anatomy of an Evolving Riot* is brilliant, well written and delivered with sparkling clarity of thought.

Structured like an entry point into the abyss that the period between May and August 2024 was, each chapter is a portal that allows one to immerse themselves into and explore a particular section of the events.

This first chapter describes the genesis, background and context of the discontent, which could be summarized as four things - a heartless, callous, and uncaring political class; a predatory political system inherited at independence; rapacious international ties and agreements; and an army of unemployed yet highly intelligent Gen Zs no longer willing to subscribe to bad governance.

The second chapter explores the experiences and realities of the different generations. Aging Gen Xers unable to retire due to unpaid pensions and jobless dependents; cash-pressed millennials raising young children, supporting older parents, and suffocating from inflation and the high cost of living; energetic Gen Zs lacking jobs or future prospects, disinterested in politics, but cognizant of the correlation between working public systems and a decent quality of life.

Chapter 3 outlines the origins of Kenya's corrupt ruling class, coming from Kenya having been set up as a 'white man's country', to extract resources to serve a tiny aristocratic minority. Independence exchanged the white aristocracy for a black aristocracy, but the philosophy remains the same.

Chapter 4 looks at the narratives that were created during the protests, and how they spread across the social body. Mobile phones were key in mobilizing, documenting and pushing the momentum via narratives, even though they were later used to abduct protestors.

Chapter 5 explores how Kenya is perceived internationally, but even more, outlines how Kenya's current international relations are set up to plunder the country

and serve foreign interests, leaving local citizens worse off.

Chapter 6 uncovers how the dynamics between the media, citizens and the state played out during the protests, while chapter 7 looks at how art, such as music and literature were harnessed.

Chapter 8 dwells on how Kenya can prevent a falling into the abyss as a result of state capture by finally resolving its people's

historical grievances; chapter 9 surveys the motley of characters involved in the protests.

The theme that emerges most blatantly through the book, is the reality of a heartless, callous, uncaring political class, propped up over the years by a subdued, yet silently angry citizenry.

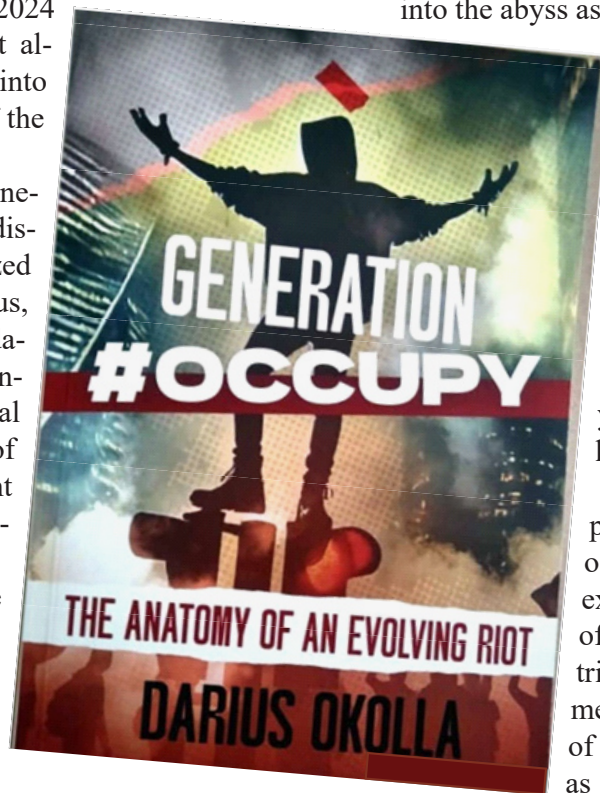
Generation #Occupy paints a picture of how the corruption, ostentatious displays of luxury, extensive global tours, billions of shillings spent on foreign trips, all laid bare on digital media, drove citizens to a point of madness. They viewed these as "... a middle finger to their collective pain that the political

class seems unaware of, and uncaring about."

Hand in hand with the heartless political class, is a predatory governance system more driven to exploit and extract from its citizens, than to nurture and facilitate their wellbeing.

The rapacious governance system generally reveals itself in the availability of money to waste and splurge on political leaders, while absent for development and service delivery for citizens. The trillions of stolen money revealed by activists such as Morara Kebaso funding luxury lifestyles, the billions paying the bloated government with hundreds of advisors and unconstitutional CAS positions, all at a time when medical interns were fighting to get hired, junior secondary school teachers were fighting to receive contracts, and there had been a continual lack of oxygen cylinders in hospitals, and lack of vaccines in health facilities.

Finance was at the heart of the protests, given that



the spark that exploded the flame was the passing of the IMF-led finance bill that sought to increase taxes to citizens already bled dry. The depressed economy that never picked up after the 2022 election, the exit of multinationals, the cutting back of jobs and closure of local companies, the cutting out of social welfare programs, had all come together and compounded.

Okolla reveals the blindness of the political class in not seeing the 8 million people - majority young - who did not vote in the 2022 elections, and the more than 18 million Kenyans who did not register to vote. Gen Zs as a generation, "...have built an entire identity and persona online that is not beholden to the current political architecture."

Rapacious international ties that lead to high taxes and lack of budgets for service delivery and social welfare are the third thing that Generation #Occupy calls our attention to. There is no intentionality about achieving financial sovereignty, the regime is all about incurring bad debts for political survival.

The number of bills and policies in agriculture, security, data privacy, human rights, proposed and passed in parliament are more oriented towards facilitating foreign interests at the expense of the citizenry. Laws set up create a tough predatory environment for citizens, laws are used to bully wananchi. It is as though the people's representatives go the extra mile to work against the interests of the people that elected them.

The clarity with which Gen Zs recognized and pushed back on the problem in their numbers, was the real crux of the matter.

They came of age in a time when decades of economic, cultural and political violence had never been addressed. At personal, family, community and national levels. In their pushing back, they were saying no to the intergenerational trauma being served down to them.

Generation #Occupy highlights that while other generations have been content to play games designed to make them lose in this last decade, Gen Z were the ones prescient enough to step off of the treadmill to nowhere. "The Gen Zs, therefore, can be said to be the generation that lives at the end of an illusion of the Kenya state; a false equilibrium that demanded complacency from the citizenry. And even when it didn't deliver on its promises, it could effectively deploy violence or the mere threat of violence to keep the masses in check."

The last salient aspect about the Gen Zs that the book brings out is their lived reality as digital natives. In an age in which digital architecture and infrastructure have overridden, surpassed and engulfed real world architecture and infrastructure, they are not as beholden to the

political class for favours and opportunities as their elders. They therefore do not feel that they have to remain silent or stifled about their pain and the injustices they see; all the world will know about it.

The digital world allows them to track corruption, the ostentatious lives of politicians, regime promises and completion rates and judicial court cases and outcomes of politicians.

While the book does not overtly centre trauma theory, it makes nods to the fact that Kenyans are not well – mentally, emotionally, and physically. Citing Hofstede's Power-Distance Index which reflects the extent to which the masses will side with the powerful even at the expense of their own interest, Kenyans score high on Stockholm Syndrome, at 64 out of a possible 100.

If a traumatised, suppressed, gas-lit, beaten down citizenry afraid to engage with their victimized reality has been the obstacle to change, Generation #Occupy begins to formulate solutions.

"The future of this revolution lies in the ability of Kenyans to defactionalize national problems. We have to legitimize people's feelings and frustrations, and give proper definitions to the national issues."

Anger, often preached away by religious leaders to pacify their sheep, is the answer. Kenyans need to give the hot potato of shame back to their political leaders. "They make Kenyans interpret the public debt, ecological, political and economic issues as signs of personal failings rather than the manifestations of a perpetually incompetent leadership. The masses, must draw these clear mental demarcations and proper definitions of the Kenyan reality. We cannot continue to carry the weight of a mistakes-prone ruling class as our own problems, which they obviously aren't."

One year down the line, nothing has been resolved. A second showdown is clearly looming. "..... the economy is still in the doldrums and the president has to continue borrowing to keep the government operations going. The president's men continue to make unforced errors which doesn't help his image both at home and abroad. Gen Zs have the upper hand and they are biding their time..... the regime's mishandling of the economy, and the long litany of terrible bills will keep fueling anger from the civic public. The regime's blunders, more than anything, are what will keep the revolution going into the future."

The protests having tapped into a level of collective anger that none of us were aware existed, it would do well to keep fanning it's flames so as to burn down an old and obsolete political way of life. Get yourself a copy of this book, and be enraged.

Okolla reveals the blindness of the political class in not seeing the 8 million people - majority young - who did not vote in the 2022 elections, and the more than 18 million Kenyans who did not register to vote.

Patria O Muerte! / Homeland or Death

By Willy Mutunga*

This is adopted from the preface of the book, FROM MAU MAU TO RUTO MUST GO: Essays on Kenya's struggle against Imperialism, that Dr. Willy Mutunga presented on Kimathi Day on February 18, 2025.

**Hasta la Victoria Siempre!/Until Victory, Always
Patria O Muerte!/ Homeland or Death
Aluta Continua!/The Struggle Continues
A Vitoria e C'erta!/ Victory is Certain**

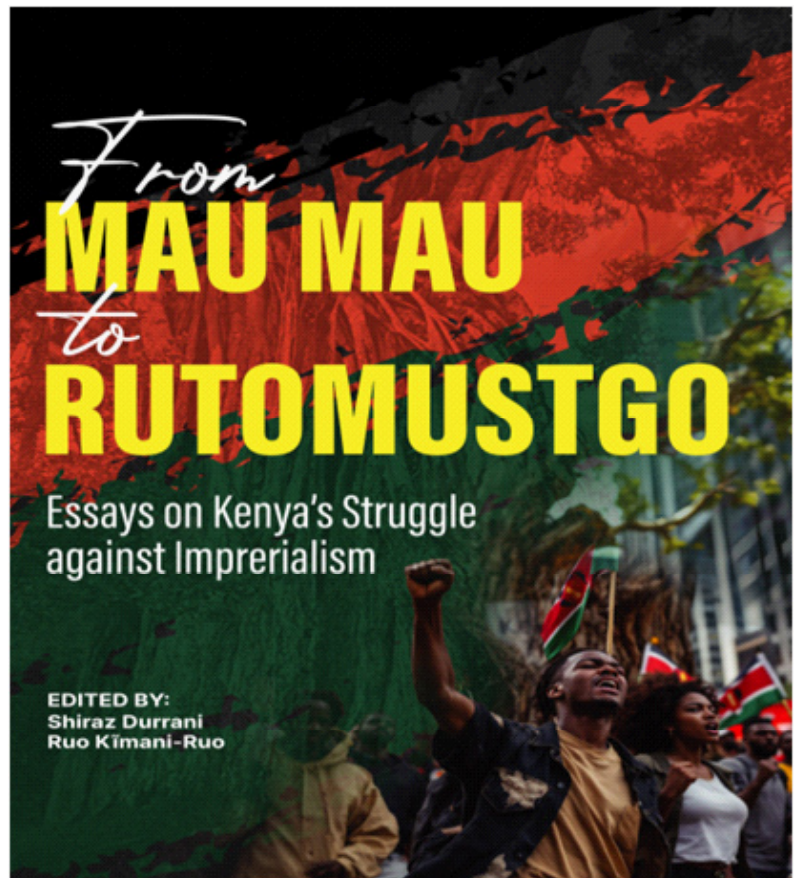
From June 18 2024 and other days in June, July and August 2024 Kenya witnessed the beginning of what would be called Gen Z uprising/mass action/ rebellion/revolution. Specifically against the Finance Bill 2024, Gen Z were explicitly against the status quo in Kenya. Making clear political demands framed from Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, they demanded to withdraw its sovereign power from both the Executive and Parliament. The youth went on to demand the direct exercise of this sovereign power by what they called the occupations of the two arms of the State. The KANU-RUTO dictatorship responded by unconstitutionally using its machinery of violence. Abductions, kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, false arrests and malicious prosecutions, torture, maiming, and femicide were unleashed on the Gen Z and Millennials. This reign of terror continues to this day as, indeed, the resistance also continues. The Gen Z and the Millennials, through their political parties and movements, have been busy discussing the agenda for Kenya. The country expects the agenda to be tabled during the first anniversary of the uprising/mass action/ rebellion/ revolution in June this year.

In this book, FROM MAU MAU TO RUTO-MUSTGO: Essays on Kenya's struggle against Imperialism, edited by Comrades Shiraz Durrani and Ruo Kimani-Ruo we have an excellent example of the teachings of Rodney that I discuss below. As the book has many themes, I have decided to signal only two themes for reflection that are, I believe, worth of debates about our struggle against imperialism, going forward:

FIRST: Walter Rodney has taught us that links and continuities of struggles for liberation and revolution have to be studied in their historical trajectory. Such historical trajectory allows us to celebrate and consolidate the gains made while the lessons of failure are learnt. This

revolutionary approach shuns dogmatism, is innovative, inventive, and learns from the practice of the ongoing struggles. This approach is also a trajectory of class struggles in our country. In the context of Kenya it is a struggle by Kenyans against the enslaving foreign interests and the comprador bourgeoisie, the house niggers in the colonial plantation we call Kenya. We have called the latter class in Kiswahili the following: Wanyonyaji, Mabeberu, Makabaila, Matumbo Hayashimbi, Nyang'au, Walalahai, Walawatu, Wanyapara wa Ukoloni mambo leo. The country needs an alternative political leadership. We have not had a formidable opposition since Kenya People's Union (KPU) The Kenyatta-KANU dictatorship banned KPU in 1969 and detained all its leaders. Since then what Kenya has had is a ruling class situated in the government and in the so-called opposition. It is important for Kenya to historicize, problematize, interrogate, and critique the substance of resistance in our struggle against imperialism.

SECOND: Debates on the state of the planet have be-



come fundamentally important in our struggles for revolution and liberation. These debates include the status of the imperialism of the TRIAD (US, Europe, and Japan); Social imperialism (The Chinese communists coined

these words in 1963 to describe the state of soviet socialism; and two African Marxists Dani W Nabudere and Lucas Khamis have also written on the issue); the BRICS and the struggle for a multi-polar world; Neo-fascism and the possibility of World War II (WWII); New Pathways to socialism; and the rising global consciousness in the South and North against the planetary status quo as witnessed in Black Lives Matter Movement, Global Reparations Movement, Struggles against Genocide in Palestine, and other global movements. This growing consciousness is critical in identifying the enemies of the global citizens, globally, regionally, and nationally. In all these debates lie great intellectual,

ideological, political, and revolutionary opportunities for global citizens to struggle for a planet that is just, peaceful, non-militaristic, non-sexist, non-eugenicist, non-racist, humane, gender just, non-homophobic, ecologically safe, prosperous, equitable, and socialist.

In FROM MAU MAU TO RUTO MUST GO, we have a revolutionary book that will help radical parties and social movements in Kenya and beyond to continue to think through the practice of our struggles for a planet we wish to see.

*Chief Justice & President Supreme Court, Kenya, 2011-2012
Adjunct Professor in Public Law, Kabarak Law School

POETRY

Auri Sacra Fames

By Mamka Anyona

The barons, tycoons, hustlers,
Moguls, big shots—
Thieves, the lot of them.

They strip man, woman, child,
Of the human being inside of them,
Stealing bodies, minds, souls—
All for profit. What profit?!
They lose themselves as well.

Brother Fanon said it right:
Dehumanize another, dehumanize yourself.

These soulless beings,
Riddled with auri sacra fames,
Vampires of horror,
Must eat flesh of their oppressed,
Defile, degrade, destroy—
For nothing is ever enough.

They're lost to the world,
Living dead with empty souls—
Hungry.

Eat and eat until nothing's left,
Bone dry. Eat they must.

For their sickness is without cure,
Only the wrath, of a people revolting,
Will rid us of the lot of them

September, 2024. New York, USA

Children of Palestine

By Augustus Onchari Nyakundi

The USA like the priests and Pharisees in Jesus' day
Leads the civilized world
Condemning wars and warmongers
And injustices inconsistent with its interests
Especially atrocities visited upon children!
In Liberia and Sierra Leone
Where children were drugged and given guns
In Somalia, Rwanda, Nigeria, the DRC and Sudan
Where children were hauled from homes and schools
Girls violated and dragged into forests as wives
Thousands driven into refugee camps
Many dying of hunger and malnutrition
Diarrhoea and typhoid
Luckily, food and medicine were allowed into the refugee camps
But it is not so for the children of Palestine!
Whose fathers and all men
"Terrorists"
Are commonly killed
Or safe in jail!
Fighting for their land.

The children of Palestine die of hunger
They die of dehydration
They die in their bombed homes
And in schools and refugee centres
Because Israel blocks food aid trucks
And water tanks
From reaching them!
Lest the "terrorists"
May eat, or drink and live!

The children of Israel
Malnourished
Sick with diarrhoea and typhoid
Die in hospitals
Because trucks carrying medicine
Are blocked by Israel
Lest the "terrorists"
May also be treated and live!

The injured children of Palestine
Rushed to hospital by targeted ambulance drivers
Surviving special sniper shots in the streets
Or a hail of bombs on their homes and schools
Are blown-up and burnt-up in mangled shells
Hit by the highly trained Israeli Air Force.
When media,

Unfriendly to the “civilized world” reports,
Israel promises to investigate.
But must finish its latest stock of bombs!
The USA and Europe hail the suggested investigations!
Issue tough warnings to “terrorists” and their allies
“Israel must defend itself,” they say.

The children of Palestine are not given guns
By heavy-bearded verse-reciting men
But are often shaken
Seeing sophisticated guns
Aimed at them by highly-trained clean-shaven military officers
Blowing off fathers’ brains
As dazed children and mothers coil,
Covering their eyes!
From horrors civilized media prohibits children from watching!

Hundreds of the children of Palestine
In Gaza, East Jerusalem, the West Bank
Have one or no leg
Their bones shattered by Israeli drones
Supplied by the USA and Europe
The civilized world!

What will the orphaned and homeless children of Palestine
Whose all known relations, friends and neighbours
Are buried in the rubble in Gaza
Say about the civilized world?
What will the surviving children of Palestine
Whose playmates in Jenin, Nablus and Ramallah
Were hit running away from gunfire
What will they say about the civilized world?
That supplies Israel with bombs, fighter jets, tanks and drones
To wipe out Palestinian children, men and women!
And their homes!
And their playing fields!
And their schools!
And their hospitals!
And even their refugee camps!
And the “civilized world” history
That horrifies Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich?

What will the orphaned and homeless children of Palestine / Whose all known relations, friends and neighbours / Are buried in the rubble in Gaza / Say about the civilized world?

Prayer for the taken

By Mamka Anyona

You told me that sometimes, in the dark of the night
You pray
When reminded that we are just but mere mortals,
Helpless
You pray
Even if it has got to be to a god that you do not believe in
You pray.

Now, in my own turn, I am helpless
So, I pray.

I'm told that the fascists are at your door
That they have taken away your freedom
With their guns and with their batons
With their boots they crush your body.

See, even though I know that your spirit
And the glory of its revolutionary valour
Will never, ever be theirs to break
I pray, anyway.

I can't see you now, I can't hear your voice
Only memories of our laughter
Warm the cold of this dark night
As I pray.

That you come back to us
Safe, sound and strong
To finish this fight
I can only pray.

August, 2024. Nairobi, Kenya

Traces of Grace

May the quiet bloom
of your spirit rise like dawn
over ancient hills.
May the flowery flame within you burn soft and steady,
casting light through your gaze—
bright enough to guide,
gentle enough to warm.
Let each breath draw you closer
to the stillness
where beauty waits,
where the world leans in to listen.
May this day find you grounded,
your steps leaving traces of grace,
and may the coming days open like petals in the sun—
full of quiet miracles and fierce tenderness.

TΔfahri

~ Under the Jacaranda Tree ~

Under the Jacaranda tree
my unruly hair is caressed
by the mischievous wind

my sweet southern soul sings
as I dance along the lilac path
enveloped by untamed beauty

you see,
where I come from
everything is polished
neat
organized and controlled
valuable time and money wasted
on destroying true beauty
replacing it with precision
a dash of color between the concrete
manufactured nature with the facade of sincerity
lifeless.

where I come from,
we toppled our gnarled oaks
and replaced them with concrete kings

but gliding down Nairobi streets
I'm no longer separated from the real world
instead—
mesmerized by the striking beauty
the genuine faces
not hiding behind masks or pretension

And instead of feigning arrogance
we join in the chorus with the birds
we dance with the leaves in the wind
we spin with the raindrops
and paint with the dirt
and glide with the butterflies
and scream with the thunder
the cats and I walk the same streets
the monkeys and I climb the same trees

here, life isn't artificially separated from nature
and creation isn't harshly controlled
destroyed
replaced

here, under the Jacaranda tree
I feel my regulated soul begin to dance free

Jaida Perkinson

Wailing for a nation

Wrist shackled in pairs,
they sat shoulder to shoulder
on the hard wooden benches of the courthouse – a relic of the old colonial masters,
now inherited by their shadows.
The air hang heavy with the scent of sweat and dust,
thick as the silence
that followed the clash of streets and shields.

And together they sang —
A defiant song,
Hoarse voices echoing off stone walls,
Their weary bodies swaying,
Fists rising with the rhythm,
Wailing it like a dirge,
Not for themselves,
but for the nation
drowning in the greed of its own sons.

The magistrate shifted in his seat,
eyes narrowing beneath the weight of their gaze.
Outside, the streets simmered –
footsteps and whispers growing louder,
waiting for the doors to open.
The guards stood stiff,
as if holding their breath,
knowing that the song spilling from parched lips wasn't fading.
It was multiplying.

TΔfahri