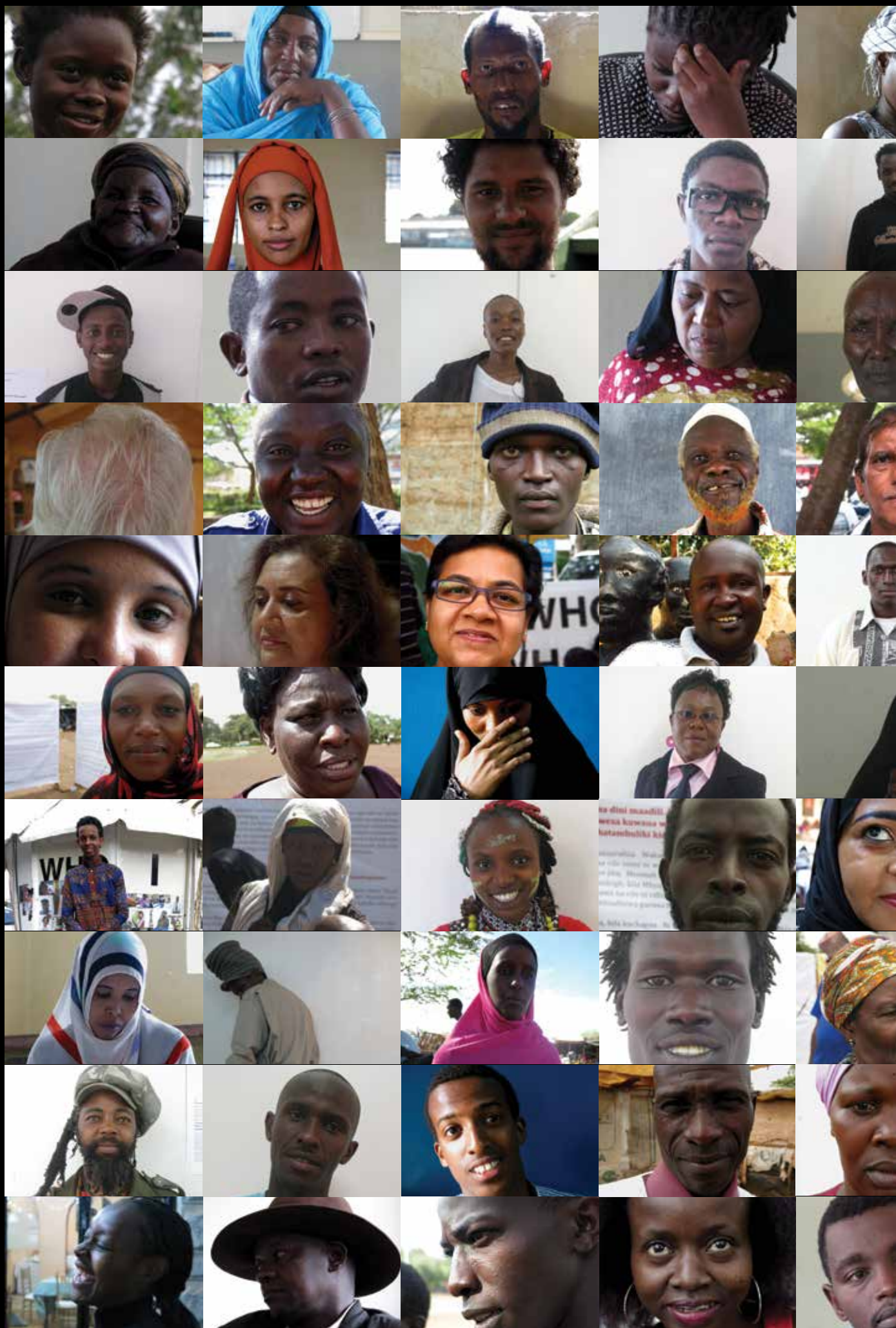




**An Art Project on Kenyan Identity
by Wambui Wamae Kamiru and Xavier Verhoest**





Who I Am, Who We Are

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Deep insights, new questions, soul searching, sadness, laughter, excitement, a fleeting, and yet deep sense of how belonging felt during a Body Mapping session. Old beliefs revisited, new hopes felt, promises of what an individual participant and an entire nation could become – this and much more we were privileged to trigger through our support to this wonderful, breathtaking public art project “Who I Am Who We Are”.

It seems a harmless almost trivial question: what makes me who I am and therefore belong to a particular group of people? It is only in answering this that the rational, emotional, historical and aspirational dimensions of this proposition are revealed, leaving one startled with the complexity and fragility of identity.

Meeting Wambui Kamiru and Xavier Verhoest immediately filled us with curiosity and deep appreciation for their sincere and reflected professionalism in shaping a project that would do justice to the task of exploring questions of identity in Kenya. The journey of ‘Who I am Who We Are’ started with questions seeking honest answers rather than assumptions.

The project presented in this book has taken a first bold step in this direction. “Who I am, Who We Are” is a declaration. Look and read: this is “Who I am, Who We Are”.

Seeing so much beauty for the eye and the heart created through individual and shared considerations is far beyond what any donor can hope for. We are humbled and immensely grateful to have been passengers on this adventurous train ride.



Laila Sheikh, Regional Director



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Horn of Africa



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
A Poetic Benediction for WhoWeAre by Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor	3
INTRODUCTION: WHO I AM, WHO WE ARE	4
A Map: Who I Am, Who We Are in Kenya	6
I am Kenyan Because I Choose to Be: I Am Aware of that Choice Every Day by Wambui Wamae Kamiru	9
Sometimes, Like Voyagers, Artists Leave Their Homes to Find Home by Xavier Verhoest	13
Why Kenyan? by John Sibi-Okumu	16
Language of Tribes by Sitawa Namwalie	18
INTRODUCTION: IN A SILENT ROOM	21
A Selection of Voices from the Silent Room	22
In a Silent Room, post-reactions	27
KenyanAndIndian by Aleya Kassam	30
INTRODUCTION: BODY MAPPING	35
Creating a Body Map	36
The Kenyan Vow by Waruguru wa Kiai	40
SELECTION OF BODY MAPS: ARTWORK AND STORIES	43
REFLECTIONS	155
Democratic Process, Elections, and Personal Threat Belonging and Self- Identification Values, Similarity and Unity by Wambui Wamae Kamiru	
A people's history of Kenya	180
The Internally Displaced by Neo Musangi	182
The Body My Home by Suki Mwendwa	184



Who I Am, Who We Are would not have been possible without the support and commitment shown to us by many people, both Kenyans and those who love Kenya.

In particular, our deepest gratitude goes to Laila and Katrin for their belief in this project. A big thank you to those who came with us on this incredible journey: Sylvia, Endy, Verena, Judy, Nanjala, Rhodia, Rosemary, Amin, Mirko, Wycliffe, Aggrey, David, Ernest, Mungai, and many, many more.

Words cannot express the gratitude we feel to the people who came into the Silent Room and opened up to us, and to the people who took part in the Body Mapping workshops, breaking down their walls to reveal themselves.

We see these moments of artistic transcendence as a dissemination where selves are shared and connections created between us all. There is so much to explore behind our daily lives, where we navigate issues around individualism, community-hood, corruption, loyalty to country, injustice and love.

Who I Am, Who We Are is an echo of each of our journeys through life, with its secret bends and turbulences, its mountaintops and valleys.

We hope this is one way to move towards new beginnings and mutual understanding.

We express admiration and heartfelt thanks to all who made this journey possible in this land called Kenya.

"I am a searcher, I always was...and I still am...searching for the missing piece." — Louise Bourgeois



A poetic Benediction for WhoWeAre.

Longing to be. Be/longing (Are you Kenyan?)

Kenya. My country. *Our* country.

Here we are in this space, this place, this mirror that exposes our myriad inner hearts, our yearnings to become as one...here we are in our colours, textures, questions and forms; men and women gathered around intimate portraits on a white wall—these prayers from suddenly opened up bleeding hearts, hearts forged by your exquisite geography, Kenya, speaking hearts, hearts speaking to you, of you, with you. My country. *Our* country. Here we are. Waiting for you amidst vast secret silences so many of which make us so afraid that we cower, or plot to leave. We plan to escape, decide to depart because to choose to stay with eyes wide open is to agree to impale our lives and fiery hopes on ceaseless thorns that pierce and wound our choicest longings, obscuring the beckoning vision of your wholeness (and ours), your grand and gracious beauty (and ours), your lavish promises, your mothering embrace, its sublime light (and ours)—this vision of becoming. But Kenya, when we would have fled, we paused here, in this place, to breathe a moment, to breathe in colour. Look, Kenya. See what we have found! Invisible presences on a wall that press truth into our deepest hearts, your response to that question (Am I Kenyan?), this persistent, relentless echo—

Can you love me—Can you love me even like this—Can you love me through this—Can you love me anyway?

Borges, that exalted writer and poet, once spoke of the solitude of the artist, and the margins they occupied. In this room, in this instant, the citizen-lover is included in the scope of Borges' artist. He adds, though, that at some hard won point in the journey into becoming, the artist (and you too, the citizen-lover) discovers that they were never at the margins, they actually occupied the centre, and were surrounded by invisible friends who loved them, who have always loved them, whose love had powered their sojourn, their dreams, their often difficult choices.

So there, you lovers of Kenya, you are not alone. You are not alone.

For the gift of this lesson, this message, thank you Xavier and Wambui. Thank you for the daring and creating during this strange season of new Kenya uncertainties, of fragmenting darkness, of disruptions and threat to collective whole-Kenya-being, of our suffering yet again a disillusioning set of leaders—men and women so incapable of (or coldly unwilling to) dreaming to contain the Kenya-whole in their miniaturized imaginations; who are content to split, divide, wound, unsecure, curse and kill the land and its people. Yet Wambui, Xavier and your collaborators and co-creators— somehow through this space you manage to whisper into present Kenyan fragility another access point and pathway. Here you declare that even if there are those who command that our diversity of Kenya voices shut up and conform, we can still sing resoundingly, compellingly and with healing out of the depths of Kenya-fed, Kenya-loved and loving-Kenya hearts. For this, thank you.

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor is a Kenyan writer. She won the 2003 Caine Prize for African Writing for her story "Weight of Whispers". Her debut novel "Dust" won the 2015, Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (adult fiction category) and was shortlisted for both the 2015 Folio Prize and the FT/Oppenheimer Emerging Voices Prize.

WHO I AM, WHO WE ARE

Who I Am, Who We Are is an art project which examines the idea of Kenyan nationhood and how this is embodied through a sense of identity and everyday interactions.

The project uses art and self-expression to create spaces and conversations for personal reflection on the themes of citizenry, civic responsibility, race, belonging, 'ethnicism' and nationalism. This is against the backdrop of the events surrounding the 2007 Post-Election Violence, the new Constitution and the 2013 Presidential Elections.

The aim of Who I Am, Who We Are is to reflect people's views and perhaps indicate a future for Kenya that will see people understand their role in what Kenya can become.

Two artistic approaches were used to gather material on what it means to be Kenyan today. One, in the form of life-size paintings called 'body maps' and the other in the form of recorded interviews through a confidential installation in the public space called "In a Silent Room."

A total of 1,600 Kenyans were directly involved in making their body maps and in recording their voices in the Silent Room and another 8,000 experienced the project through its dissemination in various forms. Between 2013 and 2015, **Who I Am, Who We Are** approached different communities: first in Nairobi - Kenya Cultural Centre in Nairobi City Centre, Mukuru Lungu Lungu, Diamond Plaza in Parklands, Eastleigh, Sarit Centre in Westlands, Spring Valley- and later in Kisumu city, Isiolo town, Lamu town and Nyeri town.

Who I Am, Who We Are has collected archival material comprising of 80 body maps with their accompanying stories, 1,500 audio recorded interviews in the Silent Room, 9 documentaries, 80 interviews and 2,000 photographs.

The material gathered forms a basis to explore Kenyan identity, post-colonial thought and projections for the future of Kenya. These materials will be housed in a public archive, allowing Kenyans and those interested in Kenya to access the voices and narratives of those who participated in the project.

The project creates spaces for dialogue and introspection. It provides opportunities for individuals to question diversity and some of the stereotypes and misconceptions they hold as individuals within one nation. By starting conversations within this space, the project triggers a domino effect of similar conversations beyond the project's controlled space. These conversations revolve around actions to change the present situation. It allows the participants to think about themselves as individuals, not just as spectators but also as actors in the trajectory of Kenya's future.

Individuals are left free to define how they belong to Kenya and it is within this space that the project tries to begin to understand what a “Kenya for all” would look like. The project is not an end in itself. It creates a starting point for further critical thought about the idea of responsible citizenship and Kenyan nationalism.

All the materials gathered during the past two years belong to Kenyans and act as a bookmark in this chapter of Kenya’s history - 50 years after independence from British colonial Rule.

This book is the beginning of a journey and it speaks about a diverse people who identify either positively or negatively with Kenya. This book is about a nation’s journey to define itself and what it means to be Kenyan. It is about who I am and who we are.

Wambui Wamae Kamiru: born and raised in Kenya, she has been developing artwork around the themes of colonialism, identity and independence in Africa.

She holds a MSc. in African Studies with a focus on Kenyan history from the University of Oxford. She lives in Nairobi and runs The Art Space – an independent contemporary art gallery.

www.wambuikamiru.wordpress.com.

Xavier Verhoest: born in DR Congo, he studied film editing in Belgium before joining Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) between 1992 and 2001. Since 2001, he has been working in Kenya as a multimedia artist and curator. In 2006, he co-founded Art2Be, a group of international and Kenyans artists and therapists who aim to bring positive living and social change in our society.

www.art2bebodymaps.org

4. Nairobi: Eastleigh (Kenyans of Somali origin)

Established in 1921 after the colonial government allotted Nairobi's residential estates according to race, Eastleigh was marked for Asians and elite Africans who worked as clerks, builders or shoemakers and it became a large enclave for Kenyans of Asian origin until independence in 1963. Today, Eastleigh is predominantly a neighborhood for Kenyans of Somali origin. It is a vibrant trading area which has often been referred to as 'Little Mogadishu.' In recent years, the suburb has seen a growing number of Somali immigrants. Since 2012, this area has experienced a number of terrorist attacks linked to the Al-Shabaab militant group, which was launched in retaliation for the Kenyan military's deployment of troops in southern Somalia.

September 2014

Silent Room: 178 participants
Body Mapping: 8 participants

1. Nairobi: Kenyan Cultural Center

Nairobi is the capital and largest city in Kenya. The name Nairobi comes from the Maasai word for "Place of Cool Waters." The city was first founded in 1899, originally as a railway depot for the railroad that connected Uganda via Lake Victoria to the Kenyan coastal town of Mombasa. With a population of 3.3 million, Nairobi is the 14th largest city by population size in Africa and it is home to the headquarters of the United Nations Environmental Program. Nairobi is a diverse city in terms of race, religion and ethnic groups.

December 2013-January 2014

Silent Room: 218 participants
Body Mapping: 14 participants

2. Nairobi: Mukuru Lunga Lungu

Mukuru kwa Njenga is a slum situated in Nairobi's industrial district. It was started about 35 years ago when people began to build make-shift homes near the factories they worked in. Mukuru is today one of the largest slums in Nairobi with an estimated population of between 300,000 to 400,000 people. It is subdivided into 8 villages where most of the people live in corrugated iron shacks. Many of the slum dwellers in Mukuru work as casual laborers in the manufacturing industries situated close to the slum. Others operate small-scale businesses selling vegetables and fruit or hawking various items. Earnings are low and often inadequate to feed their families. There is a high level of crime in the area due to the poor living conditions.

February 2014

Silent Room: 151 participants
Body Mapping: 9 participants

5. Kisumu

Kisumu is a port city on the banks of Lake Victoria and its name derives from the Luo language (Dholuo) meaning a "place to look for food." It is the third largest city in Kenya and the main city of western Kenya with a population of 500,000. The port was founded in 1901 as the main inland terminal of the Uganda Railway. By the 1930s and 40s, the city had become a leading trading, administrative and military center. It is the home of Kenya's foremost political opposition leaders, the late Jaramogi Odinga and his son Raila Odinga. Until 1977, the port was one of the busiest in Kenya, but declined with the collapse of the East African Community (EAC). The port sat virtually idle for two decades. Kisumu is also home to a large number of Kenyans of Asian origin who have lived there for over 100 years. Their ancestors came from India as laborers to build the railway.

October 2015

Silent Room: 174 participants
Body Mapping: 10 participants

3. Nairobi: Diamond Plaza Parklands (Kenyans of Asian origin)

Established in the late 1930s, Parklands has grown to be amongst Nairobi's most attractive commercial and residential suburbs. During Kenya's colonial days, the British demarcated the area as a residential neighborhood for civil servants. During the 1940s and 1950s, Parklands was one of the most congested suburban areas of the Nairobi metropolitan area. A neighborhood predominantly for Kenyans of Asian origin, its central business area is the Diamond Plaza shopping mall which is sometimes referred to as 'Little India.'

June 2014

Silent Room: 155

Body Mapping: 7

9. Nairobi: Spring Valley (Kenyans of European origin)

In 1884, two Europeans began the exploration of the interior of Africa that would allow access to missionaries and eventually the colonialists. British East Africa came about after the Berlin Conference (1884 – 1885) when Britain "acquired" Uganda and Kenya in what was called the "Scramble for Africa." Initially, Kenya was of little interest except in providing access to Uganda and Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile River, from its port at Mombasa. By 1920, there was rising tension between the White settler population and the African population over land ownership and use. This clash led to the rise of a guerilla army, the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau). The White settler population consisted of British aristocrats, British servicemen, British soldiers, Boers, Eastern European and Jewish refugees from the Second World War in Europe.

With generations of Kenyans of European origin who can trace their heritage in Kenya over 110 years, this Kenyan minority ethnic group has played an influential role in politics and in the state of its current society.

September 2015

Body Mapping: 5 participants

6. Isiolo

Isiolo town and County lie 285 kilometers north of Nairobi and is a crucial strategic gateway between northern and southern Kenya. It was designated as the headquarters of the Northern Frontier District by The British East Africa Protectorate in 1922. The main town grew around the local military camps and much of the population descends from former Somali soldiers who fought in World War I as well as other Cushitic-speaking pastoral communities and the Meru community.

Today Isiolo has an estimated population of 80,000 people, most of them living in the rural areas of the County. It is set to become a major part of Kenya's economic development plan as a link of the newly built Lamu Port - South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor Project. Isiolo will become the transport hub for the LAPSSET Project and will host casinos, hotels, upscale retail outlets, a modern airport and transport facilities.

December 2014

Silent Room: 148 participants

Body Mapping: 10 participants

7. Lamu

Lamu is Kenya's oldest continuously inhabited town, and was one of the original Swahili settlements along coastal East Africa. It was founded in 1370. A recognized UNESCO World Heritage Site, Lamu is a region rich in both ecological and cultural diversity. However, many see Lamu as one of the world's most ecologically vulnerable sites on the verge of irreparable loss and damage, citing insufficient management and development pressure as the primary causes.

With a population in the county of about 100,000, the indigenous communities mainly derive their livelihoods from fishing, farming, hunting and tourism-related activities. In recent years, Kenyans from the mainland have settled in.

Lamu is currently experiencing a drop in tourism due to concerns over insecurity. Two attacks in the vicinity of Lamu in July 2014, for which Al Shabaab claimed responsibility, led to the deaths of 29 people and renewed security concerns.

Lamu is set to become a major part of Kenya's economic development plan with the construction of a multipurpose transport and communication corridor known as the 'Lamu Port - South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor Project'.

April 2015

Silent Room: 155 participants

Body Mapping: 8 participants

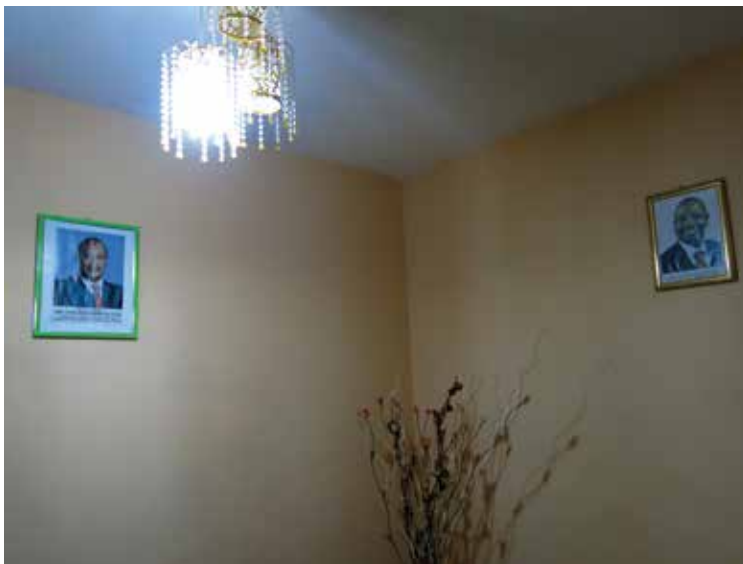
8. Nyeri

Nyeri town, with a population of 160,000 people, is the capital and largest town in Nyeri County. Historically, it was a hub for the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (Mau Mau) who fought against the British colonial power. While small business activities are vibrant, Nyeri is essentially a Government administrative centre. The town is situated in the country's densely populated and fertile Central Highlands on the western slopes of Mount Kenya. Much of the surrounding area is utilized for farming. Coffee and tea are important cash crops.

June 2015

Silent Room: 154 participants

Body Mapping: 8 participants



"I am Kenyan because I choose to be. I am aware of that choice every day"

by Wambui Wamae Kamiru

When Xavier suggested that we take the Who I Am, Who We Are Project to Nyeri, I resisted. Instantly. I felt that what the Nyeri community felt about Kenya and wanted Kenya to become was common sense. I asked why we needed to explore Nyeri instead of going to some "far off" place like Mado Gashi to find out what the community there wanted?

It was at that moment that I became aware of my own micro-inequity, that I understood how I was "acting Kenyan." I had assumed that because I am from Nyeri, I knew what people in Nyeri wanted. This is a faulty belief especially because I am actually from Nairobi with ancestral roots in Nyeri. Or possibly Ethiopia. Or possibly South Africa. And maybe West Africa. Actually where am I from? Am I a Kikuyu from Nyeri, a Bantu from West Africa? Or an African?

We live in a country where one is supposed to be able to trace their essence to the smallest denominator. I can go wide and relate to a continent or I can relate to a clan origin that dates back, in my case, to 1700.

Does this make me more entitled to Kenya? I don't think so. I think it just entitles me to membership to the human race. However, given that this was the place where I happened to be born and raised and to which I have the privilege of owning an ID card, then these are the beginnings of my "origin" as a Kenyan.

I am Kenyan because I choose to be. I am aware of that choice everyday. I am aware of it when the sun hits my face in the same way it hits the face of a politician or a street child. I am aware that my being Kenyan, comes with a celebration and a burden.

I am Kenyan because I choose to be. I carry out my civic duty and abide by the laws of this country.

I am Kenyan because I choose to be. I see other Kenyans and I feel a sense of sisterhood with them.

I am Kenyan even when others feel I should be less Kenyan because to them, I am more Kikuyu.

For me, this project has been about exploring that aspect. The one that dictates that to be Kenyan one must first lose their attribution to race, ethnic group or religion. I don't believe this to be the case. I believe I am as much Kikuyu as I am Kenyan. I am as much African as I am human. The labels are but descriptors of shades of my origin. However, they remain the same thing. They remain me.

While talking to the participants in Nyeri, I realized that I wasn't from Nyeri. I was from Nairobi and specifically from middle-class Nairobi. What those participants were saying was what other participants from other sites were saying. I heard from them the same things that I heard from the Kenyans of Somali origin and from the Kenyans of Asian origin. They had a need to belong. We need to belong.

They didn't want to be defined by others. They didn't want to be favored. They simply wanted a peaceful climate to do business and access to the same opportunities that others had. They wanted access to Government services, they wanted access to health care and they wanted access to education among other things that are owed to them as citizens of Kenya.

The journey that has taken this project to Kisumu, Lamu, Isiolo, Nyeri and parts of Nairobi has shown me that

we take for granted what we enjoy freely, as a Nairobi middle-class. The divisions in this country are not based on ethnicity. They are based on the capacity of access to health care, access to education and other infrastructure and services. They are about access to basic human rights.

It matters not that I am from Nyeri when we have other things to be concerned about as Kenyans, Africans or humans. My navel - gazing on my Kikuyuhood does not change the fact that right next to me another individual is being denied access to basic human rights because of corruption or inequitable distribution of resources. It is essentially greed that has brought us to this place.

It has to start somewhere, this battle to unite to fight greed. It has to start where people feel that the country belongs to them and by extension should be shared, because it is so dear that they need to protect it. We can't continue to be greedy for money or power. This inevitably will only cause more and more division. My starting point and my heavy belief in the way that Kenyans will unite against greed, naked corruption, is by understanding and valuing this great nation called Kenya.

Until we have a strong sense of patriotism and a strong sense of justice, we will be unable to provide access to basic rights to the majority of our fellow humans being who exist within the confines of our borders. We will be like penned in animals that tear each other to shreds.

I love being Kikuyu. I love being middle class, I love being Catholic, I love being Kenyan. I love being African. I love being Black. I love being a woman. I love being human. Surely we should all love who we are.

We are many aspects of ourselves and sometimes we are different aspects at different times. To be Kenyan is to be many aspects. We should be comfortable with these many aspects – such that these aspects are not cause for division. I am because we are.

It is my hope that this book enlightens all of us to the things that cause us to overlook each other (and sometimes our true selves) in determining our differences. The material analysis of the cross cutting themes within this book is my opinion on what the works say about Kenya. In looking at democracy, affiliation and value, I attempt to build insight into what it means to be Kenyan in this time. However my analysis is not the important part of this publication. It is the individual voices from the body maps to the Silent Room recordings to the poetry that tell OUR story.

The materials cannot be exhausted by this publication and as such the materials are available for further scholarship on the Kenyan identity.

Who I Am, Who We Are has been about igniting the sparks that get people in little corners across the country to begin to talk to one another about what they have in common as opposed to what they have in difference. It is not about negating our diversity; rather it is about clarifying what makes us one, especially with our diversity.





"Sometimes, like voyagers, artists leave their home to find home"

by Xavier Verhoest

Art is Freedom

"As you are alone in the Silent Room, slowly its starts to flow in your mind and you feel free to talk about yourself and Kenya " - In a Silent Room, 2013.

Who I Am, Who We Are is made up of testimonies. They have all been made by Kenyans in various locations across the country. Each of them negotiates a delicate course between social commentary and personal disclosure, the narratives shifting continuously between the private and the public, the individual and the community.

This is public art made by Kenyan people for Kenyan people. Public art is art that is defined by its place in the public sphere and that can generate interaction, participation and interpretation. This project opens new, safer and inspiring channels of communication that allow participants to take ownership of this process. Whether it is emotional, philosophical, aesthetic, historical, political or cultural, these testimonies have a meaning for each of us.

'The Body that Feels the Mind and Thinks with Senses'

Most of the participants have experienced another body through this project: the body map, painted and mirrored, then shared with others, and the body in the Silent

Room projected into the public space. Both experiences exposed the participants to their inner and outer Kenyan identity.

The journey into this project meant accepting an invitation to express and share. It is about questioning and finding some answers within ourselves.

From this whole experience should emerge a realization of our place and our role in Kenya.

These are our voices.

'The door of the Silent Room and Body Mapping as a door'

The door is a metaphor. Doors by their nature have complex meanings. They can break the wall between two rooms, two environments, and at the same time, they can create an opening or a closing.

I see this project as a doorway to dialogue, a migratory door that enables us to enter and exit our lives as Kenyans resulting in beautiful outcomes like paintings, storytelling, cathartic moments, stocktaking, sensory and bodily experiences.

Our stories are all interconnected thus making our personal borders porous.

'Every Kenyan is an Artist'

Most of the participants were not professional artists

Some body maps caress our senses and our relation to the world, other pieces are like swords. Some are healing, for their wisdom and beauty and act as a balm to our sorrows. Others arouse our critical intelligence and make us aware of evil and injustice. Some offer us a silence, a pause in the madness of our lives, a space for meditation. Others act as batteries with the power and the meaning they carry.

These are works of extraordinary clarity. The body map as a representation of our lives and bodies makes us share through visual identification. It helps us give meaning to our lives. By inviting the public to share these works, each viewer can project his/her own experience into these paintings and testimonies. Because they are very explicit, almost literal, they open up a communal space in which a relationship between an artist and an audience becomes possible and in which the various meanings of the works begin to coalesce.

Every moment in this project is a chance to share moments of sincere and creative breakthrough that each of us is capable of because in this respect, each of us is an artist.

Art, Culture and Politics

"Are you Kenyan? How are you similar to other Kenyans? How are you different from other Kenyans? What makes you proud or not proud about Kenya and how do you see yourself in 5 years in Kenya? What does it mean to be Kenyan?"

Every question asked in the project makes explicit the invisible working of culture and politics in our land, reminding us that for most Kenyans this is a society in which some are dominant or privileged and others are or perceive themselves to be marginalized and deprived of the potential to make meaningful change.

The human body constitutes a site on which the tensions between private and public are played out. The body must be understood beyond its biological being and be seen here as a cultural production, a political body, a civil entity and a legal identity.

Who I Am, Who We Are is not dogmatic, it does not instruct us in thinking in one way or another. Rather it offers a choice to open ourselves up to new possibilities. The work's interest lies in its openness.

Where do I belong?

The path of this project takes most of the participants to a different place by breaking them free from the burden of their own stories and escaping prejudices and stereotyping. Here, disconnected memories, disparate places, diverse phenomena are evoked. These stories are common to all of us because they place us before the contradictions of our nation. They make us at times happy, sad, infuriated, motivated, powerless and hopeful.

Maybe the repetition of words, conversations and images can help to channel a power capable of transformation. It is a process of self-exploration where life experiences, emotions, questions and dreams are transformed into art. Art is knowledge and liberation.

Every Kenyan wishes to convey a message or a vision, be it ideological, political, poetical or aesthetic. Every Kenyan deserves a time for introspection. Kenyans also wish to communicate, to shape their sensations, their views and their awareness of this land and themselves, and most Kenyans wish to say something important, and they want to be heard.

This is their testimony.



Why Kenyan?

From many years spent as a classroom teacher, my inclination to proceed by analogy and anecdote remains very strong. Analogies cannot always be sustained and anecdotes can be apocryphal. However, both serve to give an explanation, a graphic focus, and I wish to use them in addressing the consideration: to be or not to be a Kenyan? And why?

I bear the appellation 'Kenyan' much as I bear my family name: It was foisted upon me, I have always been thus and, therefore, my first impulse is to bear it with pride. Being Kenyan makes me part of quite a large family of what we have recently come to call communities, in a bid to avoid speaking of tribes any more. Kenyans of African origin remain guilty of mentally excluding other races desirous of inclusion in the family. Of course, I would like that family to grow large enough to be continental in size. "The United States of Africa" has always been a very appealing notion. And of course I would like to be a member of the "United States of Human Beings." But for the moment, being Kenyan is all I have when it comes to flags rustling in the wind, stirring national anthems and acquiring travel visas. And should there be any conflict of loyalties I am definitely with Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* (Part 1): 'Fredo, you're my older brother, and I love you. But don't ever take sides with anyone against the Family again. Ever.'

But as time goes by one confronts some disturbing truths about one's family and, suddenly, the feeling that it is the best of all families in the world becomes severely challenged. So, am I 'proud to be Kenyan,' in the words of the car sticker? My answer is, with the qualification *remaining ever hopeful for the future* ...not entirely. And this is where the anecdotes come in: It fills me with dismay that in place of the metal *kipande* around my grandfather's neck in colonial times I myself have to carry an identity card which, quite apart from stating my name and gender, informs one that I come from Busia District, Budalangi Division, Bunyala South location and Mudembi sub-location; all setting me up for paramount identification by ethnicity rather than by nationality. And my name being Okumu, whoever processed my PIN number saw it fit to insert on the accompanying card that I came from 'Luo' Kisumu, thus instantly giving me a dual legal identity. It fills me with dismay when people tell me, in all seriousness, that I should change my surname to Sibi alone, the better to communicate to the

world that I am Luhya and not Luo and, therefore, the better to receive recognition and to get ahead. It fills me with dismay that taking out 'kitu kidogo' is the expectation around almost all my transactions in state institutions. Having enjoyed the privilege of a multi-racial and multi-ethnic education from the outset, my utopian thoughts have been summarily dashed in the course of the first fifty years of Kenya's existence through the destructive consequences of tribalism and corruption. My hope is that in the years to come, my beautiful and beloved country, will progressively acquire binding, national values from a national education system which will allow it to call itself a real nation beyond having national boundaries and a lovely flag and national anthem. And that hope lies in the young, full as they are of raw energy and intelligence.

John Sibi-Okumu is a broadcast journalist, actor-playwright and media consultant.

L_a_n_g_u_a_g_e__o_f__T_r_i_b_e_

I am well versed in the language of tribe,
Having acquired the script long ago
From family, friends, school;
From my whole existence as a Kenyan, really,
And I speak it with fluent authority.
There may be times when I look different;
Special, even, as if tribe
Were beyond my understanding.
After all, I can cite my - marriage;
I didn't marry someone from my tribe!
My children speak only English;
My friends are Kikuyu, Kamba, Luo, Luhya, Kisii,
Kenya Cowboy, KCs, Somali, even an Asian or two.
But I am like everyone else.

This uncomfortable truth led me on a journey.
I wanted to know
What is this thing?
That has us all by the neck:
What does it look like?
How does it feel?
How do we live with it?
Laughing one moment with my tribal protagonist
And the next, glaring at each other
Across a wide abyss, a yawning space
Unbridgeable by the smiles of my former friends.

If tribe were a taste,
Kama kabila ingelikuwa kionjo
a sound, *sauti*,
a feeling, *hisia*,
a thing alive, *au uhai*,
How would it be? *Ingelikuwaje?*

My experience of tribe is sharp acid on the
tongue, clanging metallic noises!
Kwangu mimi ukabila ni kama shubili kwenye
ulimi, vyuma vikigongana na kutoa sauti!
A rising tide of ill will!
Ongezeko la mawimbi yenye nia mbaya!

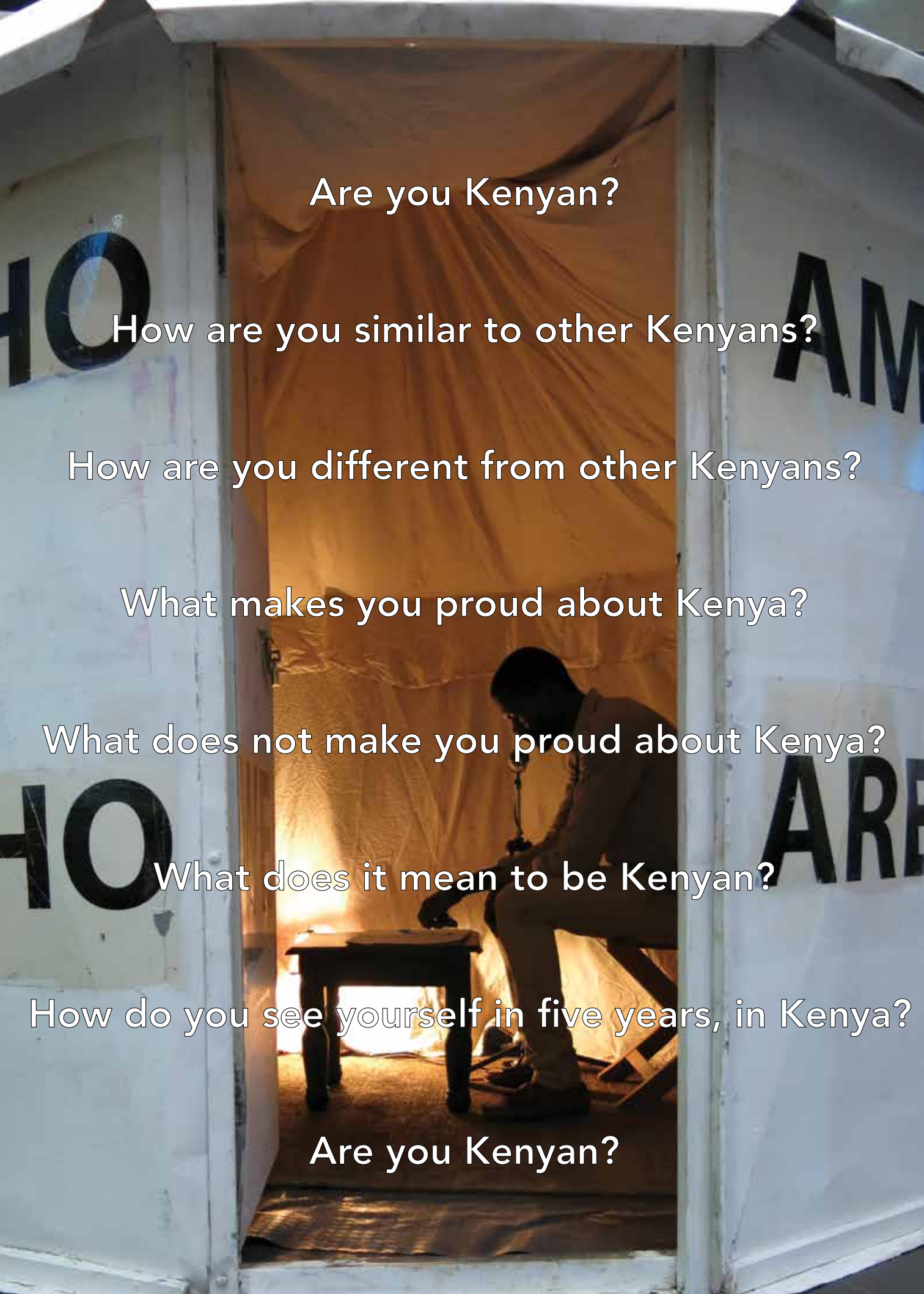
*Ukabila wajitokeza, kichwa chake kibaya
kikitizama kwa matarajio ya kunyakuwa keki na
kula kwa hamaki!*
Tribe grates loudly in my ears; it must be heard!
Ukabila ni mshindo mkubwa ndani ya masikio,
Lazima usikike!
It has me believing it is natural,
As inevitable as ugali and sukuma wiki.

*Ukabila umenifanya kutenda mambo kisiri,
Umenifanya kujificha ndani ya umati wa watu,
Kusoma magazeti na
Kutizama nikiwa nyuma ya taarifa za habari,
Huku nikiwa mwangalifu tu njiani.
Nikihesabu wazee wa kanisa,
Tena na tena.
Na hesabu ni mara ngapi kabila langu
linapohusiswa,
Nikihakikisha kwamba lipo,
Basi sina budi kutabasamu.*

In my mind I add up all mounting disadvantage,
To store in my prized basket of grievance.
I am expert at computation:
22 % of my tribe in the cabinet,
35% in church,
76% at my place of work!
I am no longer conscious of what I do.
You see, I am a victim, innocent,
But for the tribal designs of others.

The 'truth' is revealed in broiling ethnic conclaves.
Here, secrets of the heart are safe.
I bring my hush-hush bliss to the fore,
The bliss of playing victim:
To bemoan with relish my miserly pickings,
Condemn with glee the crumbs I feed on,
While others hog the national cakes.

*Sitawa Namwalie is a Kenyan poet, playwright, writer and performer.
This poem was first published in her book 'Cut Off My Tongue' in 2009.*

A person is sitting on a small wooden stool inside a tent. The tent is made of a light-colored fabric and is illuminated by a warm, orange light source, possibly a lamp or a fire, which creates a strong glow and casts shadows. The person is wearing a dark shirt and light-colored pants. The tent is set up inside a white structure, possibly a container or a large tent, with the word "HO" visible on the left and "AM" on the right. The person is looking down at something on the stool.

Are you Kenyan?

How are you similar to other Kenyans?

How are you different from other Kenyans?

What makes you proud about Kenya?

What does not make you proud about Kenya?

What does it mean to be Kenyan?

How do you see yourself in five years, in Kenya?

Are you Kenyan?

IN A SILENT ROOM

"In A Silent Room" is a confidential and intimate space installed in a public sphere that creates conditions for self-reflection and expression in an individual way. The space comprises of an insulated, stimulant-neutral room where the public, one visitor at a time, reflects upon themselves. This process is voluntary. Inside the Silent Room each visitor listens and responds to questions related to identity, memory and history.

The Silent Room is a little white "mabati" (iron sheeting) structure of eight sides that pops up in the busiest parts of different towns all across Kenya. It is an open controlled space which, because of its unique appearance and function, arouses the public's curiosity.

Eight open-ended questions are asked in a circular manner, the idea being to provoke introspection on identity and belonging. The room and related materials are neutral in color and design with blank walls of white canvas- so there are no distractions for the interviewee.

The interviewee is afforded full control of the process with some guidance through a series of questions. In the Silent Room, the interviewee is alone and interacts with the outside world through a microphone and speaker through which he/she is asked questions by an interviewer who sits outside the Silent Room.

The responses were recorded and all responses were then archived.

Are you Kenyan? I'm Kenyan. How are you similar to other Kenyans? I'm similar to other Kenyans because I am very persistent and resilient and I feel most Kenyans no matter what hardship they undergo, they always remain persistent. How are you different from other Kenyans? I think I am different from other Kenyans because I believe one day we are going to be one true full nation, I think most Kenyans do not believe in patriotism. What makes you proud about Kenya? The different cultures and how we are able to still interact, our landscape, our resilience, I feel that that is the biggest thing about being Kenyan and this 'Kenyans'. What does not make you proud about Kenya? Corruption is becoming something that is being accepted and nobody seems to be fighting against it, tribalism as well is affecting the youth, and it is something I never thought that it would affect my generation. How do you see yourself in 5 years, in Kenya? That a woman should be accepted as a similar human being to men, I feel that as Kenyans we are very biased towards women and we judge women harshly, so I hope and believe that in five years, women will have an easier time in politics, in the work place, and in society. What does it mean to be Kenyan? I believe in our national values, in our Constitution, it is about believing and understanding our national anthem and to try to practice it, to truly love the land we live in. Are you Kenyan? Yes, I am Kenyan by birth, language, roots, parents, and the rights I claim for my position in this country in terms of being born here, having generations that have gone past, the names that I have inherited from my forefathers. How are you similar to other Kenyans? I carry a Kenyan name. How are you different from other Kenyans? I think it is the character. My genetic makeup is different from any other Kenyan, there's only one me and possibly there could be somebody else sharing that name but this person here is just me, not even my siblings can be like me. What makes you proud about Kenya? Besides nature, I'm proud of the aspect of people being able to join hands and do things together as one group. When we have disaster striking us, when people are in need, Kenyans are able to come together and call Harambees and join hands and do many things together. There's that togetherness. The environment of this country is unique and if all Kenyans are as unique as I am then we are one unique nation. What does not make you proud about Kenya? There are many things: corruption, greed, mentality of 'this is mine', this is my course, and then God will take care of each of us. I'll do anything to make sure I get my cake and eat it and not share it with anybody else. I don't like the greed that has led to corruption, our tribalism and our religious fanaticism. I'm not proud to say I'm Kenyan if I have to identify myself with religion because it is one country full of fanatics and religion is the opium in the community of man, if it is used by greedy people to gain wealth against the poor people. How do you see yourself in 5 years, in Kenya? I would want to be a Kenyan who is happy, to be here without fear, not to worry about the issues of greed, insecurity, hunger, it is bothering me; I would like to be a happy parent, a husband, a role model for many people. An outspoken Kenyan who is able to impact positively on others, be a role model, to see some change in way people behave and think; I would like to be a Kenyan who enjoys that kind of environment. What does it mean to be Kenyan? It means politically to have Kenyan citizenship, to be born here, to be allowed to be in this country, to identify with a language. Socially, it would mean one in so many people who live within the borders of this country. One who behaves like Kenyans, who speaks the language, who sits and eats among them and that makes you Kenyan irrespective of your race, it is a social definition, and political is paperwork, boundaries and the rest. Are you Kenyan? Ethnically I'm Kenyan. How are you similar to other Kenyans? I'm similar to them because we live in the same environment; we share cultures and lifestyles, so that makes me believe I'm Kenyan and similar to them. How are you different from other Kenyans? I'm different from other Kenyans because we have particular identities depending on where we come from across the country. What makes you proud about Kenya? It is the way we interact with each other, the way we appreciate our different lifestyles in our diverse communities, I will be proud to know how a particular community does

certain things and the way they celebrate certain things in their life. When we go to Western Kenya, we talk about bull fighting; when we go to the Lake Region we talk about fish mongering; these are the very things that make us proud of ourselves. **What does not make you proud about Kenya?** Ethnicity. Somehow we may say that we are living a lie. If you look at it clearly, it is like we are living a lie because there are those deep seated hatreds among us that we don't want to talk about it, we don't dialogue about them openly. **How do you see yourself in 5 years, in Kenya?** I look at a situation where we are able to sit with each other as Kenyans from different parts of the country and talk to each other and engage each other on positive things around us and just appreciate that we are different but in our differences, we make a great nation. **What does it mean to be Kenyan?** I don't know that. I'm Kenyan. **Are you Kenyan?** I'm Kenyan. **How are you similar to other Kenyans?** My similarity with other Kenyans is that I live in the same geographic space that was carved out for us, so we share common space with other Kenyans, to some extent we share a language that is common to Kenyan people. I'm similar to those who have gone through formal education of the 8-4-4 system plus the socialization that comes with Kenya, the patriarchal socialization that defines who lives in this space. I also share a name that is common in Kenya. I also share the Kenyan Psyche of competitiveness. At times I try not to share that but I get to be Kenyan like that in terms of far ahead and how ambitious I am and how much I am able to access opportunities presented to me. **How are you different from other Kenyans?** I'm different in terms of not necessarily banking on my status in society or my ethnicity to network with others. I tend to imagine Kenyans bunch together along similar cords, but I find that I differ in not conforming to a stream that is expected, I'll interact with anybody literally and feel comfortable in any given space whether I'm with a group of people who don't necessarily share my ethnicity, social status, my status as a woman, who is married and with children. I mingle easily and I think I could fit pretty much anywhere in this country without feeling unwanted. Another difference is that I have lately found myself fighting against the Kenyan psyche of competitiveness and ambitions, unhealthy competitiveness, so that my advancement is benefitting those around me and their advancement is for my benefit too. So I'm cutting away from the cut throat capitalist type of person and breaking away from that to become more socially conscious and fair. I think that is not very usual for us Kenyans to ask ourselves tough questions e.g. why must I do things like this, because it was said? So I start to question a lot of things, I start to question my space, if it is what is meant to be or can it be better? What can I do to make it better and who can I push also to make things better for me and for us? **What makes you proud about Kenya?** The geography and landscapes, we have a beautiful country! I'm proud that we have a free country, a place I can cross from East to West, lately not so much North but at least to the South. It is very sad that a lot is changing in our freedom of movement but I like that we have freedom to interact, be open to one another, to speak our minds; I'm proud that we aren't an African society that is closed up in civil spaces. I'm free to move, write, read, study and to build my country. I have that chance right now and am proud of that. **What does not make you proud about Kenya?** To see us oppressing one another; it really pains me that a Kenyan or a human being will sexually molest a child or another fellow human being and get away with it. It pains me that we accept mediocrity as a society, mediocrity in what should ordinarily be our right to good governance. But we are okay with mediocre governance, with human rights abuses; we seem to be losing a fiber of our communal spirit and of caring for one another; of protecting one another to an extent that it is okay, a way of life to see molestation. I don't think we are crying out loud enough as Kenyans when it upsets us. We are fine just waking up and going back home and saying, 'Oh my day didn't come today because of fate', fate is what we believe in. We shouldn't believe in fate. We are designed as a people to excel and to be united. I wish I could see more of that fiber growing and not the fiber that says I close my eyes if it isn't me who is hurt. I'm not proud of Kenya's outlook also on equality. I'm not proud of seeing very

dirty poor people living and sharing the space with mega rich people and we are okay with it. I'm not okay with it. **How do you see yourself in 5 years, in Kenya?** I see myself building my nation really actively; actively making a difference for the people of Kenya, and successfully moving action and policy, governance that leads to the better outcomes for the children in Kenya. I see myself contributing to growing a body of knowledge that can inform other communities that surround us or a global community to inform them about the great that can come and is going to come from Kenya. I see myself still living in a free society where I can exercise my intellectual and physical capacities to actually develop our country. I also see myself financially and personally stable enough to be able to carry others; to hold others who may be weaker than I will be. **What does it mean to be Kenyan?** It means to love, to carry each other, to hold each other's hands, to contribute to a global society. Kenya cannot exist on its own; we live in this cocoon called Kenya because it's where we occupy space on the planet, but what it means to be Kenyan is to be a global, positive community to enrich the global community, meaning that our strengths must collectively improve the outlook towards our neighbors, for our individual communities and the collective global community. **Are you Kenyan?** I'm physically or geographically placed in Kenya, but I don't think I feel a Kenyan spirit that I associate with. At least it's not a big enough Kenyan spirit, it is just a few who may be starting a movement called Kenyan. So, no I'm not Kenyan, I think I'm more universal than Kenyan. **How are you similar to other Kenyans?** I'm similar to other Kenyans I think because I have a tribe, I have an identity but my tribe is not my identity. I'm a young and I think that makes me similar to other Kenyans; I'm a dreamer as well similar to other Kenyans **How are you different from other Kenyans?** My difference with other Kenyans is that I choose to see things in my own perspective. I know someone said that it is arrogant of someone not to try and identify with politics, social events, of what is happening in one country. I tend to see things in a beautiful way. I tend to see I'm Kenyan in a beautiful way. **What makes you proud about Kenya?** I would sit here and start telling you that I don't like Kenya because there was an Al Shabaab attack or because of its corruption, but I choose to sit here and tell you that I love Kenya. It is the one place I have enjoyed travelling around; I'll give anything to keep travelling in Kenya. I love this world, the atmosphere; I love the realness of being Kenyan, because I don't want to see it in a negative way and there are a lot of negative things and I just choose to see the beautiful side. And that makes me different as people complain about politics, corruption. I don't know who did what, but I choose to sit down and think I'm happy, I'm Kenyan, I have an identity, I'm patriotic, I love my country and I love who I am; I am black, a beautiful black girl and I don't need someone else to give me an identity and that makes me different. I don't choose to look at things in a different way to give identity and I choose to embrace what is there. And that gives me the identity. **What does not make you proud about Kenya?** I would say I wish we would change some cultures. I would love to look at how I wouldn't be proud of Kenya but I choose to go the other way, whereby I would like to change some things; not that I'm not proud to be Kenyan. Of course, sometimes the Al Shabaab attacks happen i.e. terror attacks, they happen and sometimes you wonder, why do they keep on repeating themselves? What are we doing and the worst character of Kenya is laxity and corruption. When you are so relaxed, you are in a comfort zone, it never gets things done at all. But when we get out of our comfort zones, when you see things you aim higher, you start getting things done. You start to get rid of corruption, you realize today I will take home Ksh.10,000 (USD100) but tomorrow your daughter will be involved in a terror attack, a situation you can't control, but who would have controlled it? If you don't take the Ksh.10,000 (USD100), it is like you gave a life for some petty cash. And that is the one trait for Kenya that I just wish people would look above the sky, the small petty cash, those petty nice things that maybe you have been wanting but aim higher, when you have a dream and you look above, sometimes we get temptations, sometimes you want something so badly then you want to get it so fast and you wonder is

it really how you are supposed to be getting it. When you realize it isn't the right way you can take time and be wise to go all the way to the end, you realize that petty cash and petty things are not helpful. Kenya would go a long way. Nairobi in 2014 was the best city, it was the best upcoming city, Nairobi has grown, things are moving forward and there are just those people who want it to move backwards. That is the one thing I'm not proud about or would change about Kenya. **How do you see yourself in 5 years, in Kenya?** Personally in the next five years I will grow and I hope that as 'feminist,' gender equality would be on the forefront no matter who you are, skin color, or whatever; all of us should be on the same basis, so I hope to have educated people around about importance of gender equality because that is what we do and I pray that Kenya will have outgrown some of these petty things and will be hosting bigger things. Telling bigger stories of how far we have come and how we are yet to go in a positive way. I hope our economy will grow because there are so many youth out there looking for jobs. I also hope that the youth will grow in a way that we don't need employment or white collar jobs, that we can do beautiful art like this project and communicate about us. It is a way of bringing out who you are in a very nice way because you are. What is better than that? **What does it mean to be Kenyan?** Being is first whether you are proud to be one as to know what it takes to be Kenyan. It is appreciating your country. It isn't about ethnicity, tribe, where you come from, your social status, how rich and poor you are; do you sit down and thank God you were born in Kenya? Take Kenya to be the best place in the world? If yes, then maybe that is what being Kenyan is all about. **Are you Kenyan?** Personally I'm Kenyan because I believe I'm happy I was born in Kenya, I would never want to be born in any other place. That makes feel I'm Kenyan. Maybe I'm Kenyan because I do love my country Kenya. Yes, I am Kenyan.

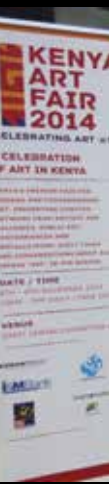
*A selection of voices from The Silent Room
2013 - 2015*



Kisumu 2014



Nyeri 2015



Nairobi, Diamond Plaza - Parklands 2014



Nairobi, Mukuru Lungu Lungu 2014



Nairobi, Eastleigh 2014



Nairobi, Kenya Cultural Centre - City Centre 2014





Nairobi, Sarit Centre - Westlands 2014

In A Silent Room, several post-reactions in Kenya between 2013 and 2015.

"I was just in a little room answering questions. I was calm and peaceful. I felt isolated and cut off from the entire world. In that space talking about Kenya while in the middle of a mall in Nairobi. The questions were relevant and very thought provoking. We say we are Kenyan but we don't really think about it and don't really define why. Actually you have raised questions in me, which I will go mediate on further in terms of making that connection on what makes me Kenyan. The questions were deep, very deep. I have never thought about them before. This was a first. I will share this with my friends and tell them about my experience and ask them to pass by. I will come back and read more about the exhibition because I still feel I need to connect some more."

Female, 2013



Lamu 2015

"It's interesting, because the question "Who am I as a Kenyan?" made me become introspective. Who am I? What is it to be a Kenyan? Now I am thinking, "What does it mean to be Kenyan?" Do I have a Kenyan identity? Is our common aspiration nationalism, patriotism? Things I have never thought about. The experience was humiliating, but a deep sense of belonging also came to me. The questions were hard in the sense that I have never thought about them. I expect recognition of us a community, on my flag. I want to be identified as a common Kenyan. I don't want to prove that I am a Kenyan every time. Kenyan is my tribe. I am thinking of bringing my people along so that they can experience this. Let's understand that my contribution is not only about working but includes my contribution as a Kenyan. Our responsibility is common. Just like the way we take care of a house, we have to take care of Kenya."

Male, 2014



Isiolo 2014

"The Silent Room is a peaceful place, I would wish the Silent Room to be taken to the ghettos, because people from the ghetto know how life goes, and they have hard brushes with life and have a different view of life. I also think this should also be taken to the guys there on top, they have a very different view of life. These are two characters of people living in the same country but are totally different when it comes to the way they both view Kenya and themselves as Kenyans."

Male, 2014

"If I come out of this room calling myself a different name then it is because I have discovered I'm Kenyan probably by name and nature, than any of my first British names, or French name or whatever it is. So it is helping discover ourselves, discover the environment, situation, the country we are in."

Male, 2015

"Being in the SR brings your life to a different point of view. I have learned that being Kenyan means more than being born in a country, or having parents of that citizenship. There is more to being Kenyan. It makes you see Kenyan from a different point of view, to reflect on what Kenya is about today and the relationship with people around you, because we have lost a sense of who we are, because of changes in the country, economically particularly. The questions were neither hard nor easy because they depend on how a person sees things and a person's thinking."

Female, 2015

"The Silent Room was calm but I don't think I was well prepared. I thought I would have someone to sit with me. But it was it is actually liberating because you can have time to think without the pressure of looking at someone's expression or them looking at you. I have not really thought about these questions. The easiest question was, "Are you Kenyan?" It was a bit hard to answer, "What makes you Kenyan?" I can't remember what I said. I feel very few of us have a good story to tell about Kenya which is sad because not all is bad."

Female, 2013



"It is time we stop ignoring and taking what is happening for granted and take and learn that ignorance has no defense. Every Kenyan should think and open up to reflect on what it means to be a true, loyal, patriotic Kenyan. A true identity of who we really are."

Male, 2015

"I felt isolated. You can't see other people. That is why I asked him to sit inside with me to support me. This is

Kenya. In Kenya some things you don't talk about in public. This was a private experience. I would not want to talk about it in public."

Male, 2014

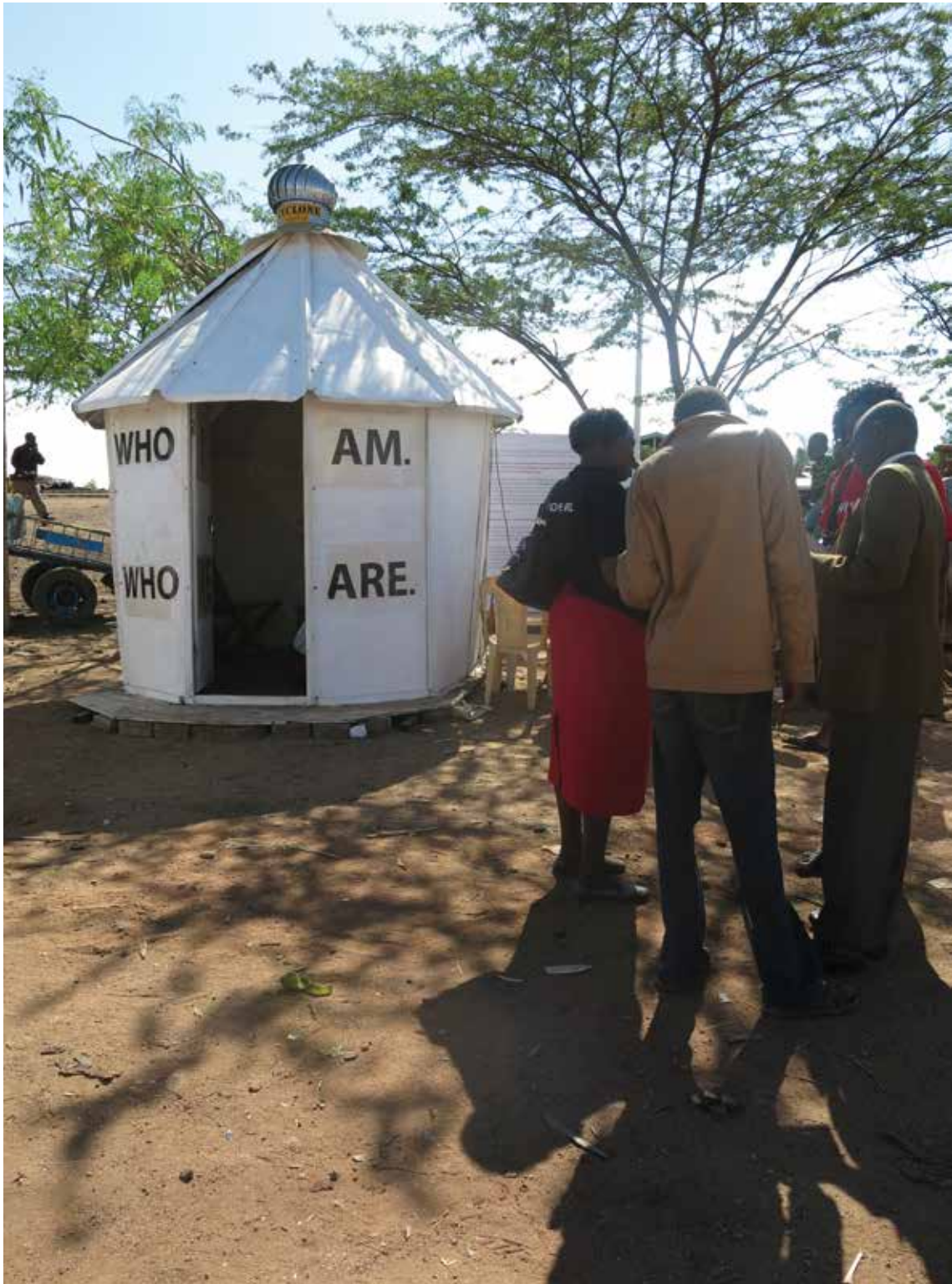
"Obviously when you are speaking about your country, it gets emotional. It is not like speaking about football. It is about your country, the only thing I have ever known. I found it comfortable because I was talking about myself and my country and my people. The questions were relevant especially for self-evaluation about your pride as a Kenyan and where you are heading and what else you can contribute towards the building of the nation. I can't say that the questions were difficult. I have thought about the questions before, like when you are asked where you would like to see the country in five years time, you and your country. I would share these questions with my friends because I know it is to the benefit of the whole country. It is important that people know about their country and where they are heading. The project is not just how interesting it is but what is the interest of the country and the people."

Male, 2014



"I don't feel intimidated with the person I am talking to. I don't feel answerable, I can say whatever I want, I can be fidgeting with my fingers as I speak and I don't look like I don't know my answers. I have confidence, it makes me feel good."

Female, 2014



KenyanAndIndian

What is the sound of thousands of Indians rolling their eyes?

This evening sitting in traffic, suffocated by a furious heat, I listened to the news on the radio. There is something odd about being alone in the bubble of your car, right next to someone else in their bubble, both of you listening to the same thing at the same moment. A shared experience expressed privately. As I learned of the identity of the alleged private developers who grabbed the playground of Langata Primary School, I joined thousands of other brown people in Nairobi snorting in their own air conditioned bubbles.

This was my inner monologue.

Seriously? Come on guys. Do they really have to be Indian!? Great. As if suffering through Brother Paul/Pattni wasn't enough. Why do you need to go out and add another nail to the coffin that is 'Indians are thieves and stealing this country.' That's like a Luhya going to a sushi restaurant and ordering chicken.

Yet for every Pattni there are thousands of Sunny Bindras, Zarina Patels, Farrah Nuranis, Shamit Patels, Nivedita Mukherjees, Shailja Patels, Rasna Warahs, Zahid Rajans.

Predictably, the witty Kenyan Twitter community reacted with breakneck speed, delighting in their discovery of the versatility of the name Singh. A new hash tag was born, which within an hour was trending #NgiluSinghJokes. I have to say, y'all are late to the game. The rest of the Indian community have been making Singh jokes for decades, and I thought I had heard them all, but KOT are amaSINGHly creative.

A lot of people raised eyebrows at the identity of the land grabbers, claiming that Ngilu's naming of the private developers was unconvinSINGH.

Others murmured apprehension that this hash tag would go too far and end up ostracizing an entire community for the actions of four individuals. Another hash tag from last year was revived #KenyanNotIndian where Kenyans of Indian origin asserted their patriotism. It says something about us as a society when your gut reaction is to distance yourself as far away as possible from a part of your identity for fear that it will be used against you in

some way. I suspect this has some visceral effect on an individual, deep inside where memories nestle. I hear the exhaustion of feeling, the need to apologize on behalf of an entire skin colour for the actions of a few individuals.

Africa is a country.

Indian is a skin colour.

But we don't see other Kenyan communities apologizing for their rogue individuals who have pillaged, eaten and vomited all over the shoes of Kenyans. And yet. The Somali community in Kenya is individually and personally being made to pay a traumatic price for our hypocrisy when it comes to this. Divide and Rule. We learned from the Masters.

Even as I write this, I am exhausted by the issue. Imagine. There is more to me than being a "muhindi." Not that you'd know it from reading my blog. It irritates me a little that I find myself consistently drawn to this theme. I don't want to be just that Indian chick continuously droning on. But I realized something. We belong. Yet, if you look at the history books of Kenya, you won't hear our stories from our mouths. There is so very little that has been written and is being written about the community, by the community. We have largely put our heads down and worked away industriously, but where are our voices when it comes to the narrative of this country. So I am claiming this space. I want my story, my existence to be in the cataloging of Kenyan history. Because it's not just mine, it belongs to thousands. And if I don't write it, dammit, who will.

End of rant.

Back to KenyanNotIndian. Here is the thing. It unsettles me. Doesn't fit snugly on my skin. If anything it feels like uncomfortable spanx underwear that you squeeze in to hide the parts of yourself you don't want to subject to the world's gaze. Never mind that you can't breathe and your stomach is spooning your esophagus, at least your lumps aren't showing.

I am Kenyan AND Indian. It is quite simple really. I don't believe the two are mutually exclusive. They sit very comfortably together in me. There is no contradiction and one doesn't take away from the other. My nationality is Kenyan and my ethnicity is Indian.

What does that mean 

My loyalty, allegiance, heart, patriotism and soul belong to Kenya the country. But I embrace and I am proud of my Indian heritage.

What does it actually mean?

I would go to war for Kenya (if I believed in that sort of thing), but if I was hit, my last words would come out in Gujarati.

My blood, sweat and tears belong to Kenya. But the sweat probably smells a little like curry.

What makes me Indian? I don't really know the answer to this. I can't trace my ancestry very far and I don't have a "shags". It makes me feel deeply unsettled this. Not knowing my roots. I envy you who have your forefathers buried on soil that has tasted your blood. What's my lineage? Who were my people? What did they stand for? What was their legacy? What were they known for? When they talked of the Kassams, did they extol us for our virtuous nature or mutter under their breath in disgust? Were we known for our brains or our hands? Were we do-ers or thinkers? I would like to know these things.

A few years ago, I went to India for the first time. It was like going back to the Motherland. Aside from the bizarre sensation of being surrounded by brown people, and for the first time not being the minority, it felt rather comforting. I was curious to see if I would feel a tugging. A belonging. And I did a little. It was in the Indian sensibility. An intangible something I couldn't put my finger on. Yet, it was clear we didn't belong. Everywhere we went, Indians asked us where we came from. Which was discombobulating.

But I speak Gujarati (very badly). I cook chicken curry (not very well). I dance to Indian music (terribly). I wear punjabi suits (as often as I can) and the ultimate test; I live in a mad huge household spilling at the seams with family who are always in each other's armpits.

I mellow out my father's fiery chicken curry with mounds of Ugali. When I want music that will squeeze my insides I listen to Nyadundo and Nusrat. My favourite sari is made from an emerald green kikoy. My family enthusiastically infuses the Lipala dance with Bhangra moves.

What makes me Kenyan? I don't really know the answer to this either. I was born here. Surely that in itself is enough. I have been known to use my mouth to point out directions. My language is peppered with Kenyanisms. Wololololo. Ngai. Ati. Kumbe. Kwani. In fact, half the time, I am not sure whether the word I am saying is Kiswahili or Gujurati, they feel so interwoven. Which is only fair, considering Kenya stole chapatis. Ultimately, I am only as peculiar as the next Kenyan.

And the question in itself is a loaded one. I am no less Kenyan than the Bukusu who would have been Ugandan had the Queen sneezed when she was tracing the borders of East Africa.

I love being Kenyan. The camaraderie, our ridiculous sense of humour...and personal space. The sense that we are in this together. And what an enormous privilege it is to be afforded the opportunity to participate in the shaping of your country. Don't take this lightly. To be able to make a meaningful impact on the country you will pass down to your children is not something every citizen of the world has.

So here is my challenge to anyone who feels the understandable visceral need to assert your Kenyan-ness. Let it not be a reaction to a perceived threat. If you give a shit, and frankly none of us has the luxury not to anymore, then make your voice heard and your actions felt. Participate in the shaping of society. Actively. Jostle for space. Don't hold yourself at a distance. Get involved. Participate. Building yourself is not enough. It is time to build the Kenya you want your children to inherit.

Tonight Irungu Houghton declared that there are legacies to be grabbed. Don't be left behind. As he said, 'If you can't do something great, do something small in a great way.'

Let us re-shape the narrative of what being KenyanAndIndian means.

Aleya Kassam is a Kenyan reader, writer and performer. This text was first published on Aleya Kassam's blog: chanyado.wordpress.com, January 22, 2015



BODY MAPPING

Body Mapping is an artistic method that enables people to look at past and present experiences to reflect on future actions. The participants, through visual creation and conversations in a workshop, create life size paintings as a form of expression.

Between 2013 and 2015, **Who I Am, Who We Are** conducted 10 workshops throughout Kenya. Each lasted three days and triggered a variety of reactions to questions about choice, freedom, support, aspiration, identity and diversity in Kenya. In total, 80 body maps were produced.

For each workshop, groups of 6 to 10 participants were selected on the basis of the following criteria: age, gender, ethnicity, religion, experience and socio-economic background. Through community-based organizations and sometimes through informal networks, participants were identified to create their body maps.

A narrative of the participants' experience accompanies their work and the final artworks have the potential to create a better understanding between people and break down some of the existing barriers in Kenya. These barriers include race, religion, ethnic group, social class, and gender inequality. They are the fractures through which Kenyans live on a daily basis.

In the same way as no two individuals are the same, no two body maps are the same. They talk about one Kenya from very different viewpoints, but in ways that are familiar to all of us.

The body maps and their stories act as mirrors and attract the viewer with their freedom of expression, sincerity and often surprising symbolism.



Creating a Body Map

Each workshop is structured as a set of activities using the same method: a question is asked to each participant and the response is made in the form of a drawing on a sheet of paper. No words are used. After 15 minutes of individual work, the content of the drawing is shared in a group session discussion. At a later stage the same drawing is placed within a life-size painting the participant makes and helps him/her to create his/her body map.

Pages 38 + 39: a selection of drawings and reactions to questions: Where do you come from? How do you see yourself today? What is your aspiration for Kenya? Why drawing, painting and talking?



How do you see yourself today?

As a kid, I used to see the representation of the sun smiling. I never figured out why they would represent the sun smiling. But now just like the sun transmitting rays in all directions, I'm a happy man, trying to spread that happiness to other people. I don't want to limit it to myself. I want to be happy and make others happy too. Just the same way the sun sends rays in all directions.



Where do you come from?

I wish it would come more from the heart. There is too much from the selfishness of individuals. We got it wrong somewhere. To have that heart to pull people together, to recognize one another, to bring joy, to guide what resources we have for the benefit of all the people rather than a few individuals. I see it from my dream for Kenya at Independence.

On the windows into my life

The drawing gave me an idea of where I came from, where I have reached, what has been happening to our Kenya, the fears and the great things we have. It is a process that you are able to feel the inner part, trying to draw things that you may not be so sure about and at the end of it, you come up with something important. Mine was a bit like a surprise. It is helping me to come up with ideas. Helping me to focus and realize what we need in the future.

This is where I come from  was brought up in a military camp in Nakuru, but Mama used to say as a Somali girl this is how life is at home and she had pictures all over the walls. Every evening, she was narrating these photos: it is very hot where we come from and under these trees is where we seek shelter. So one day, when I had just passed Form Four, Mama told me: we are going home and you know you are from Somali origin, from this clan. I was a normal child growing up with Wangari, Wambui, Otieno as my brothers and sisters.



What is your aspiration for Kenya?

God created us and we came through Eve - I am confused – but I understand that God created Adam and Eve and that we come from that family. I draw the man and woman and the sky, the house. We come from God and now we are in the small houses. The people that have good life and we in the small houses have a bad life. I feel shame because the time I try to find help from the government or that community, you find that it is difficult because some will say that these people, they call us IDP's, are not genuine victims while you know you are a genuine victim. I feel like I don't know where I am going.

I think at this time I am not comfortable with that life, my drawing means that there is no help to these poor people. If you go there you will understand that others have their own houses, a place to farm, a church to worship so that they can stay like ordinary Kenyans.

That is when one can feel like a citizen. In the middle of the drawing, I am lifting my hands; it is me, when I will receive my land. I will lift my hands and thank God and feel comfortable.



On drawings and painting as the answer to a question

It is something very hard, to paint about a question and you to answer about your childhood, how do you see yourself in the future. I went home and told my daughter what we were doing here. I tried to explain what Body Mapping was, lying down in any position and painting according to the questions you have been asked. She asked me how you can paint a question! I told her that it is the hardest thing I have ever done, I have been painting before but not to that level. Here, art comes from inside and not from outside, it is not what you are painting that matters; it is what you paint from your heart. It taught me something, expressing myself about my childhood. I thought it was something that had passed but it is still inside me. It was a new experience, another feeling of seeing that anybody can be artist in their own way.



The Kenyan Vow

I am a Kenyan on a mission,
I am going to stand at the altar of present
And call upon history for a duel
I will mock history
Wrestle with its stale tales
Break free from its slave chains
And re-write history.

How you ask?
I am going to stand at the altar of today
Brave and ready.
The might of history will laugh at me
And take me on a journey
I will not want to go.
A murky journey full of hatred, tribalism and violence.
History will remind me of my failures
History will tell me:

"Look, at the internally displaced persons, you did that."
"Look at the dead children in Tana, that is all you."
"Look at the tribalism in Mathare, you did that."
"Smell the stench of death at Baragoi, that is all you."
"Look at the explosions in Garissa, you did that."
"Count the ribs of dying women and children, in Pokot, Ukambani, count!!"
"Count the money you have stolen from public coffers, count!!"

I will drop on my knees
I will be shaken
I will be ashamed
I will almost give up
Give in
But I will not.

You see
I have leverage against history
A burning spirit that refuses to die down
I have today, against history.

At the altar of today
I am going to offer a spirit
A spirit that runs wild
Untamed and Unbowed
In the eyes of Humphrey Kayange when he scores
in the name of Kenya.
In the vision of Dedan Kimathi who fought for today for the love of his children.

I have seen women boil tea- for days - for our forces as they fought terrorists
I have seen Kenyans give blood to save brothers they have never met, without asking where they came from
I have seen Christians and Muslims eating from one plate
I have eaten potatoes and omena in the name of Otieno and Njeri's love
I have seen a minute long handshake from neighbours who
Once upon a time never saw eye to eye
The Kenyan army has gone to war on twitter
No one has ridiculed us and got away with it
CNN is my witness, I swear!
And I was alive when Jadudi asked for help and got six million in four days for his operation, I witnessed!

History will be fooled
To think that my spirit is only a whim
Alive only for moment
Or buried in the words of my National Anthem,
How wrong, history will be.

Dear neighbor:
"We may speak different languages
Hold different past
Hold different beliefs
Align in different alliances
But you are my neighbour
Let us live today
Together in alliance
Celebrate our divergence
And inherit our heritage of splendor
Together, come what may".

I will tremble at the heights of my success
And stand tall
Watching the fall of history
You watch me be Kenya!

*By Waruguru wa Kiai is a poet who gets to tell the world "You are out of order" in her own way, in our way.
She was shortlisted for the 2015 BNPA Poetry Prize.*

of Body Maps

The body maps and stories shown in this book are only but a small selection of the inspiring collection made by Kenyans across the country. The attached narratives are told in the words of the artists and little has been done to alter them. Hence, they contain the individual speech patterns and sentence structures of each participant.

The selection in this book is based on cross-cutting themes that arose regularly during the workshops. The artworks raise numerous themes and the ones discussed in this book are by no means a reflection of all the conversations, rather, they are springboards for further reflection.



"Lost in Transition", Nairobi 2013

- *The artist is 27 year old. He lives in Mukuru Lunga Lungu, a slum area in Nairobi, and runs an art program for children there.*

"If I see you, I should see myself."

I was born in 1986 on a very rainy day. Shelters weren't made of iron sheets then as it was not allowed. They were temporary settlements, made of plastic sheets and cardboard boxes. I haven't enjoyed Kenyan freedom. You don't need to be a slave to know the value of freedom but the instability of the nation has denied me these rights.

I went to a community school funded by the Japanese. The food was good and the art training even better. When its management changed, adapting to a newer syllabus without art or music. I became so disturbed by this change that I discontinued school at the age of twelve.

"A beautiful forest has a variety of trees and flowers. In the same way, our diversity should be celebrated and unite us - rather than the opposite."

It is hard to be a gazelle; you can be a gazelle in an environment where there are other gazelles. That is who you really are. But when you go to a society where there are lions, you have to become a lion. Our society is one of camouflage; it is a strategy to adapt to a different environment. I'm afraid of society here. Becoming

an artist is a way of escaping that fear. I think everyone feels the fear but they hide it or are running away from it. What I fear most has to do with human values and the ways we are changing. We have disconnected ourselves for so long. For sure we know where we are coming from, but we are changing without knowing where we are going. We are changing without a destination. We don't have a collective destination as a nation or as a social entity. As humans we live and adapt by changing, but there is a law behind it. We are changing beyond laws, we are becoming like scavengers, scavenging each other. We should come back to our senses. We should value humanity and see each other as a mirror. If I see you, I should see myself.

Mistrust all started by exposure to traumatizing events, and as a nation we never really took time to reconcile these events. When we are exposed to trauma, what we get is financial compensation. Trauma is not healed by compensation but by a therapeutic process designed to guide us through. To change this, we need to revisit our mistakes. We can't just bury injustice and hope to get away with it. We need ways which involve people - both the victims and the oppressors - so as to give reconciliation and justice. In the Westgate incident, counselors and trauma specialists were brought in to help victims but this was never done for the Sinai people in Mukuru slum. They were just given KSh.10,000/- (USD 100) compensation.

Justice will always drag us back to what we are running away from. Demand for justice has always been there both locally and internationally but we always go back to our tribal cocoons and lose sight of the truth. The ICC was treated like a tribal thing.

During elections, criminals tend to bind the people to their tribes instead of seeing the individual for what he is. A criminal or suspect should stand and face it alone rather than sacrifice the whole country. When we do this, those in the lower classes are the ones who suffer most as a result of embargoes, pressures and so on.

Ethnicity is never used as our strength or national heritage but rather as a political tool to divide and rule.

Ethnicity becomes important during election time; people really like to use it. This is the cause of a lot of injustices in our political history. We need to do away with ethnicity for there to be justice. A beautiful forest has a variety of trees and flowers. In the same way, our diversity should be celebrated and unite us - rather than the opposite.

My Body Map - "Lost in Transition"

"I'm a Kenyan but I'm not really myself. If I could be in an environment where I could be myself, I would have more as an artist. I would feel I could do more."

I gave my body map a theme of "Lost in Transition". We all long to leave some legacy behind or create a change for the better in society. Many things are not going the way they should; they got lost somewhere in the system or in the way we do things. I'm a Kenyan but I'm not really myself. If I could be in an environment where I could be myself I would have more as an artist. I would feel I could do more.

Art is only a way of trying to be happy because it is a free world. I have three things in my nature: I'm strong, creative and I have the soul of a gypsy. I'm free and can move away when things get worse.

My timeline started when I began to realize what was happening politically. That was in 1997, when I started hearing about Saba Saba and Matiba. In 2002, I was very happy to vote. I woke up very early to just go and vote. Then the Referendum came in which I was also very active, and in 2007 when there was political violence. It was really a big burden to me because of where I come from. I have a group of children I work with, and I could see that even within this group, things were changing. Children were not relating to each other in the same way as before. In the slums, I could also feel some separation between different ethnic groups. People only feel secure living in ethnic cells - even if they belong to the same slum.

With the new Constitution, I thought we had reached the turning point for our country, but since the election of 2012, I see that we are going backwards instead of taking up the new Constitution which gives power to the citizenry. I think we lack the human values of love and connection, a feeling of belonging to this nation.

My source of strength is in self-questioning and I often do this: about who I am and what will I be. A male child in Africa is the son of the family. You are everything to the family despite the situation you are in. I don't like to live with hope alone. Instead, I think my way through. I live in reality, and hope is found only at the very edge.

"We are part of politics. If something is wrong with politics, then there's something wrong with our thinking."

I never had a free conversation with an Indian Kenyan like I did here in this workshop. It opened my mind to a realization that we are all longing to be one. It was very strong, breaking through our barriers and just sitting together for a dialogue. We were not led by false perceptions. This project is powerful and should be introduced to schools.

The three days have been tough for me in terms of how I perceived the questions and the process of internalizing them. Despite having an outer home, everyone also has a home deep down in their hearts.

If something gets worse, you long to move to a safer place and feel at home there. So you carry your home with you. But I have learnt that when your home is bad, you need not run away. You just need to change, and the change starts within you.

Politics are just an organ connected to all we do, whether economic or social. We are part of the politics. If something is wrong with politics, then there's something wrong with our thinking. When I say I'm a Kenyan, my social relationships come to mind. We are all connected in some ways because we have something in common: a common destination, which is to be happy within a society that puts a value on humanity. ◀



"Rise, Oh Phoenix!", Nairobi 2014

- *The artist is the Director of a company that focuses on skills development. She comes from a family that played an integral role in the history of Kenya, especially during the Emergency period of the 1950s.*

"We lived with my grandfather in his palatial home in Parklands, Nairobi. This house also had memories of Margaret Kenyatta, the late Kenyatta's sister, and other siblings who often sought asylum in S. G. Amin's home - my grandfather's home."

I was born in Uganda because my mother wanted to have me in the presence of her cousin whose family owned a company called Uganda Hunting and Fishing. We all then returned to Nairobi with my father, mother and uncle who drove the whole five hundred miles. My birth and early childhood were just before Kenya's Independence. We lived with my grandfather in his palatial home in Parklands, previously known as Pratap Road and now called Bhandari Road. We were located behind MP Shah Hospital and there was only a forest surrounding the area. This old stone home was built on stilts and one could enter a secret hide-out through the floor boards in the house. The area down below was my favorite place to play 'hide-and-seek'.

This house also had memories of Margaret Kenyatta, the late Kenyatta's sister, and other siblings who often

sought asylum in S.G. Amin's home - my grandfather's home. I can remember the British authorities raiding our home on suspicion that we were hiding political figures. We would hide them below the house in the hide-out.

S.G. Amin was the only Indian lawyer in pre-independent Kenya and was the president of the Indian Congress in the early 60's. He represented the rights of Kenyans and Indians regarding discrimination, landownership and unreasonable taxes levied by the British. He secured scholarships for Kenyans to study at Indian universities. Some of his close friends were Achroo Kapila, Makhan Singh, Pio Da Gama Pinto and many others who fiercely fought the British colonizers. It is in this environment that I grew up, attending political rallies with my grandfather, and with a family album of pictures showing the young Mzee Kenyatta, the Senior Odinga, and Daniel Arap Moi at a political rally in honour of the young Mrs. Gandhi. My grandmother, a strong woman who wore Indian white cotton saris as a sign of solidarity for Indian fabric, fearlessly walked around the grounds of the home firing bullets from a shotgun to frighten away human intruders, leopards and other animals. I am proud to have the history of Kenya in my early childhood, listening to Mzee Kenyatta's charismatic voice and speeches on the local radio.

The coming of Moi into power led to an attempted coup and coincided with an incident where my brother was pushed into a military truck to be taken to some unknown destination. This is when my mother fought like a lioness, refusing to allow them to take him. She pleaded and reasoned with the officers that we were praying for peace in Kenya and had no intention of committing any anti-Kenyan activities. After a long struggle, they released my brother. However, she had to part with Ksh.3, 000/-, which was all our income of the month, as 'kitu kidogo' to the General Service Unit. It was a painful experience.

I am proud that my father was a high school teacher. This meant we did not grow up with the kind of affluence that many of the other Indian families had. We struggled to make ends meet. As a kid, I watched my mother stitching curtains, teaching French to adults and later running her

own nursery school in Nairobi West, as well as taking food and catering orders.

My father's home in Nairobi West, Tysons Maisonettes on Swara Crescent, held another equally important set of beautiful memories. From 1972 onwards, we were privileged to live with different African Kenyan neighbours, as well as Indians, Ismailis and many young Kenyans who had brought home wives from Yugoslavia, Russia, Czechoslovakia and Somalia. Without realizing this, I grew up accepting African Kenyans and Indians as one people. Some of my fondest and life-changing memories come from living in Nairobi West.

Having grown up with struggles to make our livelihood through sheer hard work, I always felt different, as the wealth of my family did not compare with other typical Indian families. Many Indians were business owners, doctors, engineers or accountants, whilst we were merely teachers. Still, I feel privileged for not having had a financial inheritance. Instead, I gained a rich experience of life through the variety of people we interacted with in Kenya – the black, brown, white or yellow – whichever label we may call it.

"I am a Kenyan. For a long time I said I was a Kenyan Indian and this workshop was a huge growth curve for me. Now, I do not want to be called a Kenyan Indian, or for it to be said that I am not an indigenous Kenyan."

Some of the differences I experienced growing up were that many of my classmates had access to international education as they had the financial means. Secondly, the different backgrounds of my parents (my father being a Punjabi and my mother being a Patel) was a big taboo back then. Those communities were good at keeping you outside their social and developmental activities. We had many experiences of this discrimination from the early 1960s to late 1970s. Fortunately, by the time I reached my twenties, things started to change and mixed marriages became more acceptable within the larger Indian community.

I am proud of who I am today and the decisions I have taken to make changes both in my personal and professional life. I have learnt much from my growing children and their views and opinions, and how their definition of being Kenyan is different from mine. The only regret I have in raising them is that they do not read or write our Indian languages; that is a loss for them. Like any language, they lose the richness of Indian literature, poetry and music because much is lost in translation.

As Kenyans, we are too accepting of many wrong doings, which we laugh at. We don't question the actions of leaders, discrimination exercised in work places, or rampant corruption and insecurity. We are so complacent and continuously say: 'If God wills, then this is how it is.' No one says: 'If God wills, then we must do the right thing.' We are driven by the need for money; we find it easy to create justifications for corruption and we allow wrong actions to be taken. As Kenyans, we are hypocrites when we say we are God-fearing people.

For a long time I said: "I am a Kenyan Indian." The conversation we had during this workshop was a huge growth curve for me. Now, I do not want to be called a Kenyan Indian or for it to be said that I am not an indigenous Kenyan. I am a Kenyan.

My Body Map - "Rise, Oh Phoenix!"

"I call on all of us to fight for the right things, to build on strong virtues"

and to take right actions
in Kenya - a growing
country."

My feelings are reflected in the choice of colours and show I was responding from my heart and not my head. I chose dark colours for my early childhood. A figure in white reminds me of a Godlike memory. My grandfather's spectacles reminded me of many memories which shaped my growth as a person. The change of colours from dark murky colours to green depicts the various periods of challenges and growth, both for Kenya and in my life. The red flowers represent anger at being helpless or at the mercy of circumstances. Luminous blues, whites, yellow and purple reflect my inner journey and search for a meaning in life, leading to spiritual growth which is white, like the meaning of my name. My face is white because it does not matter what colour we are. We must strive to become enlightened: thus the gold colour for my hair and eyes.

I call on all of us to fight for the right things, to build on strong virtues and to take right actions in Kenya - a growing country. ◀



"Gloom at 50", Nairobi 2013

- *A former political prisoner and detainee who spent two years in solitary confinement, this artist is Kenyan by birth and holds a Kenyan ID and passport. His identity was later stripped from him through imprisonment.*

"There was a lot of harassment by the prison warders. You are segregated from the rest of the prisoners, and you stay alone inside a cell for about 23 out of 24 hours."

I was born 53 years ago, in 1959 to be precise, in a place called Nyeri in Central Kenya. My early life wasn't very eventful; it was a normal one. I went to school and it was emphasized that going to school would lead to a bright future. I went to primary school but then I had to leave Nyeri and came to Nairobi where good facilities were available.

The coup attempt of 1982 happened while I was still at university, and there was a lot of jubilation within the student community. We joined soldiers of the Air Force and we were riding on Land Rovers and enjoying the moment. It was a short lived enjoyment, however, because the Air Force was ousted by the Army and things at school soon returned to normal. It was a defining moment in the sense that Kenya was running as a kind of a police state at that time. There were so many informers informing on student activities and information was relayed to the Special Police. Some of us were arrested, while some were not.

After I left university, the Government started talking of an underground movement called 'Mwakenya': supposedly, it was the one responsible for some acts of sabotage and many other things. As I reported to the office that day, seeing my friends being picked up by the police, I never thought I would be the next. I did not take it seriously when they came for the next person. It was not important until they came for me.

On the morning of the 2nd December 1986, three policemen pushed me into their vehicle and told me they wanted to take me back home. I did not know what they were looking for. They asked me questions, wanted me to answer them. After being beaten, I was totally disoriented. The beating ceased and I collapsed and lost consciousness. Then I was dragged from that place and taken via a lift to a cell. In the cell, they stripped me naked: they took the hose pipes off the fire extinguisher and started spraying me. The water was very cold and very powerful: it brought me back to myself and pushed me back against the wall. They sprayed me until the water was ankle deep. Afterwards - bang! They locked me in and left me inside in total darkness. Every morning, they used to come and ask if I had something to say or not. That is how sessions at Nyayo House were conducted.

I remained there for seventeen days. I was completely not myself anymore. I started to hallucinate and began believing that what they were telling me was true. I was threatened with death: they put a gun to my head and asked me if I wanted them to shoot me. At times the barrel was empty. It was terrifying and scary.

I was sentenced and handed over the same day to prison warders. Prison was another scary experience because I was subjected to solitary confinement. I was deprived of books except for the Bible and the Quran. There was a lot of harassment by the warders. I was segregated from the rest of the prisoners. I was alone inside my cell for about 23 hours out of 24. In the cell, I never experienced natural darkness. At night, high-voltage bulbs were used so I couldn't sleep. My stay in prison lasted for two years and eight months.

"Yet deep down within yourself you want

to belong: but there's no opportunity to belong."

I share the sentiments of my colleagues that although we are very different, we are also very similar. The feeling we have of not belonging is due to many forces. Yet deep down within yourself you want to belong: but there's no opportunity to belong.

When I was young, I dreamed that I would want so badly to go to school and get a job: then buy a big car and become rich. But somewhere along the line, it had to change. It wasn't my choice but there were forces which were against me. But that opposition educated me. I came to understand this country more than I could otherwise have done.

It has been said before that in Kenya there are the citizens and there are the owners of the country. The owners control almost everything - from the economy through corruptly-acquired wealth: they still hold the people at their mercy. That commonality between them makes them look down upon other Kenyans. They make ordinary voters very gullible through propaganda: and we buy it. Kenyans adore leaders who are criminals; we adore people who are corrupt. We don't choose clean people who are poor. I look back with nostalgia to 2003 when citizen arrest of officers involved in malpractices was introduced. If we had continued along that line, things would be different by now.

My Body Map - "Gloom at 50"

"I only hope that we can actualize the new Constitution: then we may be able to overcome some of these problems."

My heading is: "Gloom at 50" and above it is a cloud which is hanging over our country like an IDP. The things we were talking about at Independence are the same things we are grappling with now - poverty, ignorance and disease. I only hope that we can actualize the new Constitution: then we may be able to overcome some of these problems. The problem is the kind of leaders we have in Parliament. So I think that the real spirit of the Constitution lies in Kenyans feelings for other Kenyans.

Corruption has been a big problem for this country and we need to deal with it. That is why I have indicated 200% intolerance to corruption. On a daily basis, what we see are people becoming more and more corrupted. We are faced with the problem of institutional collapse. We now find that Parliament is very busy crafting laws and legislation which are meant to kill the institutions that we already have.

I think that is all I have to say. I hope the picture speaks for itself. We can serve as the agents for change for the future we want. ◀



"Kenya at 50 and Who I Am", Kisumu 2014

- *The artist is Kalenjin, married to a Kisii man and living in Kisumu, a predominately Luo community.*

"Before I got married, I was told not to marry a Kisii. People believed that Kisiis eat people and practice witchcraft. I just made my own decision and so far people are surprised that a Kalenjin and a Kisii can match up. I am happy!"

Before I got married, I was told not to marry a Kisii. People believed that Kisiis eat people and practice witchcraft. I just made my own decision and so far people are surprised that a Kalenjin and a Kisii can match up. I am happy! I had a lot of pressure from my friends and family. They now understand because I have not been eaten (as they thought), and nothing has happened. I am encouraging more and more girls not to fall into stereotypes about others.

I am Kenyan because of the Constitution. I was born here and have my constitutional rights. I am similar to other Kenyans because we share one nation and Constitution. We face the ups and downs together. I am different because I am who I am. There is no one else like me.

I am proud of my country because of the national resources that we have that attract tourists. I am proud of Kenya because - unlike other countries - we have peace. Apart from the 2007-2008 post-election

violence, I am proud of our peace. What happened then was painful. I lost my job in Kisumu. Because of insecurity, people were scared. I went home for a break and came back to find someone else had been offered my job. People lost lives and properties. I wouldn't want any other Kenyan to go through that again, just because of someone else and politics. God won't allow it to happen again.

I don't think tribalism will go away. It is not easy: we pray it will end. People here will talk to you in Luo whether you understand it or not. Or people call you according to the place that you come from rather than by your name. It makes me feel like I don't belong because I am not from here. People talk about my community on a daily basis. If a politician from my community does wrong, they relate it to me personally and to others from my community. I have nowhere else to go because I am here to earn a living, but it makes me scared. It is painful to live in a country where you are not free, where you live in a community that can be violent towards you because you are Kalenjin.

I live in fear. I can't walk freely in Kisumu because I am Kalenjin. I can't express myself. I will be told to go to my place of origin and talk about my support for Ruto. I can't talk ill of a Luo politician. I could be stoned! We need to live as one and not in this divided way. I want my children to get an education and live peacefully. I want them to grow above tribalism and to view another Kenyan from another tribe as a brother or a sister. I want my children to live a Kenyan life not based on tribalism. I want my children to live as Kenyans.

My Body Map - "Kenya at 50 and Who I Am"

"The red leg is the past, with tribalism, and the black leg is stepping into the future."

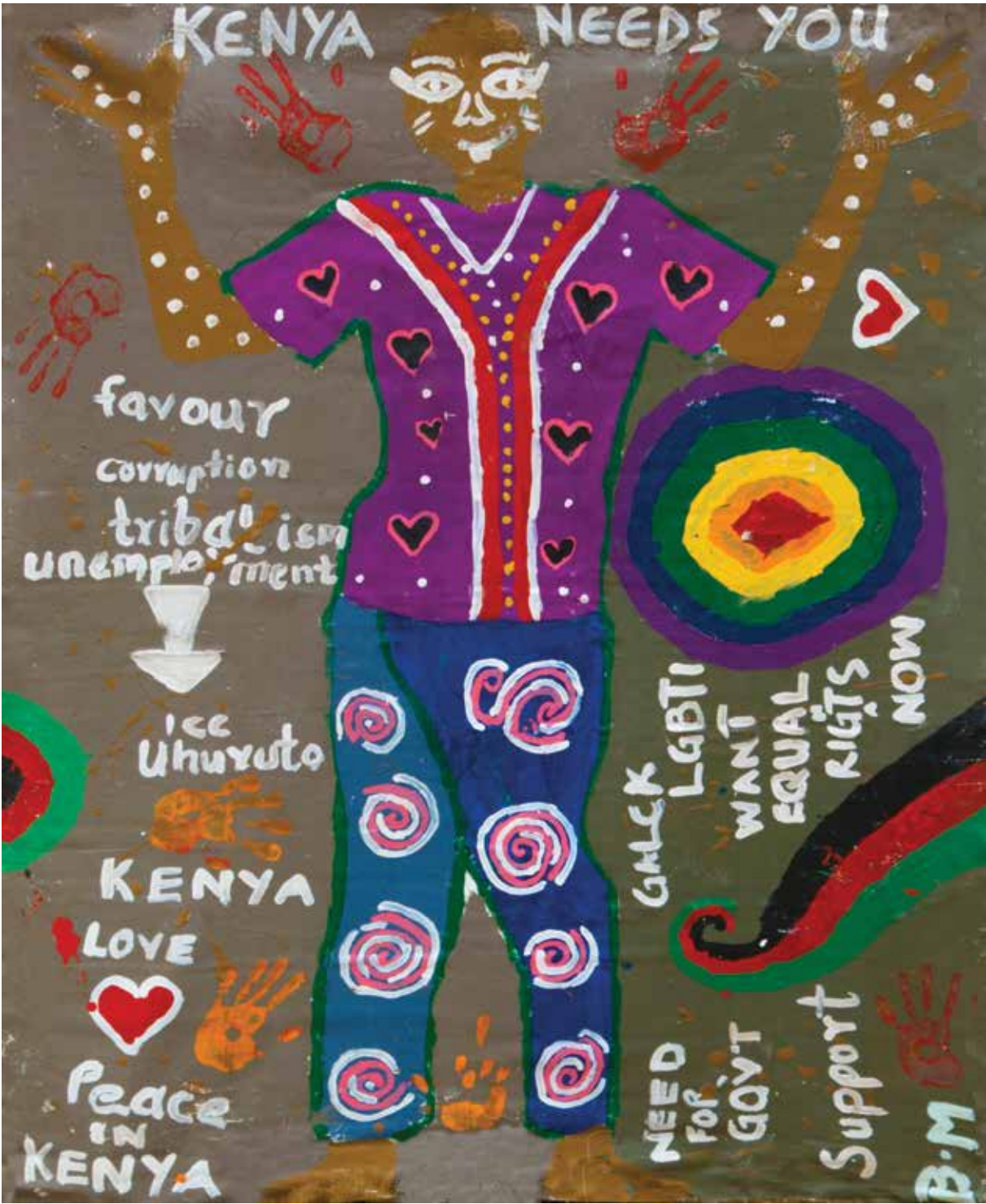
I didn't know my body map would come out like this. I didn't know I could paint. This is my first time. I put yellow to define a dawn in our country, a new thing. I put red on one leg and black on the other. The black represents us as Kenyans in our country Kenya. The red leg represents something I am stepping on, tribalism in this case. We

should step on it. Green represents our environment and white on my hands means peace in our country. After my body was mapped, I realized what it meant. I saw my hands representing us being open about Kenya. My palms are green to mean that we should work. My brown feet stand for our brown soil. I put the flag of Kenya as my place of origin. The yellow and green spots on the flag represent my village. I am in a small village within my whole country.

On the outer part of my body map, I put a heart to represent love. There is a chain to show the differences that we have and the need to have endless unity: like a chain, all together. I put a money note to stand for how capitalist we are. You can't even send a small child on an errand without promising something in return. I don't encourage corruption as a Kenyan and that is why the note is there.

1963 is important to me because my country got Independence then. I was born in 1987. 2007 is when post-election violence happened. On my timeline, each happy event is in yellow and each sad moment is in black. I lost my job in 2007. 2010 was when I found the love of my life and in the same year we got a new Constitution. I also lost my brother that year. I decided to put the words that others use to describe me at the bottom of the painting because those are other people's descriptions of me. What I think about myself is on the inside of my body. These descriptions are part of me.

"Kenya at 50 and Who I Am" is the title of my painting and is meant to be self-explanatory. I am shown running in this body map. The red leg is the past, with tribalism, and the black leg is stepping into the future. I chose grey as my background because it is a cool colour. This process was creative and we don't have to wait for Government and politicians to come to help us do something like this. Our young people have to wake up. ◀



"Kenya Needs You", Nairobi 2013

➤ *The artist is a student at one of Nairobi's universities.*

"My definition of being a Kenyan does not revolve around my origin: I don't really identify with it. It is not about a locality, it is beyond that. It is just getting into a space where you are comfortable."

I come from the central region of Kenya near Mt Kenya - a beautiful place, but I have only been there twice, so my definition of being a Kenyan does not revolve about my origin. I don't really identify with it. It is not about a locality, it is beyond that. It is just getting into a space where you are comfortable.

I'm in the middle. I like to be here but there are reasons that make me want not to be Kenyan anymore, such as politics and the failure to appreciate cultural diversity. This makes me look beyond borders and start planning to appreciate other places and other people.

I have just turned 23. I had a very nice childhood with a strong relationship with my Mum as my Dad was in UK. They were separated long before I was born.

From an early age, I learnt that I liked boys quite a lot. That was the most important discovery because it changed everything. Getting to accept myself was a struggle and it wasn't until I finished school that I confidently accepted that I was gay.

I remember being suspended from school because I had a relationship with another boy. It was a very dark moment in my life because the school notified my mum and it really affected my relationship with her. I had to come clean as my behavior was seen as inhuman, demonic and unorthodox. It was a 'from the frying pan into the fire' experience.

I went to Uganda to find peace and studying there enabled me to rebuild myself. I never disclosed to anyone that I was gay, given my experiences in Kenya.

My intention was to not come back. I wanted to remain in Kampala and join the university. But by the time I finished A-levels, I just couldn't wait to board a bus and get back here. I missed Kenya so much and during those two years, the gaps between me and my family were slowly closing. Time heals wounds indeed, and it did.

I'm now in my final year at the university and I have learnt to be content. What made me better was to know that in Kenya there was a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex movement working towards the realization of equal rights. I joined the movement in 2011. With the strong movement that we have now, it's high time we started a real dialogue about gender and sexual minority issues.

I want to learn the best ways to express myself better. I would love to continue working on body mapping.

My Body Map - "Kenya Needs You"

"I joined the struggle against discrimination against gender and sexual minorities because -within the sexual minority - many of us don't want to speak out for ourselves."

The reason I did my portrait in white is because white is a symbol of peace and it should be our guiding factor in everything that we do.

I chose a spiral design as a symbol because I feel it is an issue that is intertwined with celebrating 50 years of Independence. Looking at the outside of the body map, there are a lot of things. There are the national flag colours, because I'm a patriot. I love Kenya and have a passion for Kenya. In spite of Kenya being a single region, the different people here are patriotic unity-seekers, and we need to appreciate that.

I have tried to bring as much colour as I can into the canvas. The rainbow is a symbol of openness and diversity with its own uniqueness. I have painted in the colours, green, blue, purple and yellow; all bright colours. Bringing them all together is a sign of unity and oneness.

The sun is in different colours because it symbolizes different situations surrounding this period of time in Kenya. At this time, there is both dark and bright; a mixture of emotions, feelings and situations.

The green hands and eyes signify the wealth of the country we live in. The covering is the tendency of some of us to be opposed to meaningful political change. I want to share the responsibility of the burden of making Kenya a better country to live in. I want to see Kenya as a free, safe and conducive environment. That is why I joined the struggle against discrimination towards gender and sexual minorities because - within the sexual minority - many of us don't want to speak out for ourselves.

"We have issues including corruption, tribalism, the ICC and insecurity. As we celebrate, we should be reminded that these are our issues. We should admit their existence and address them."

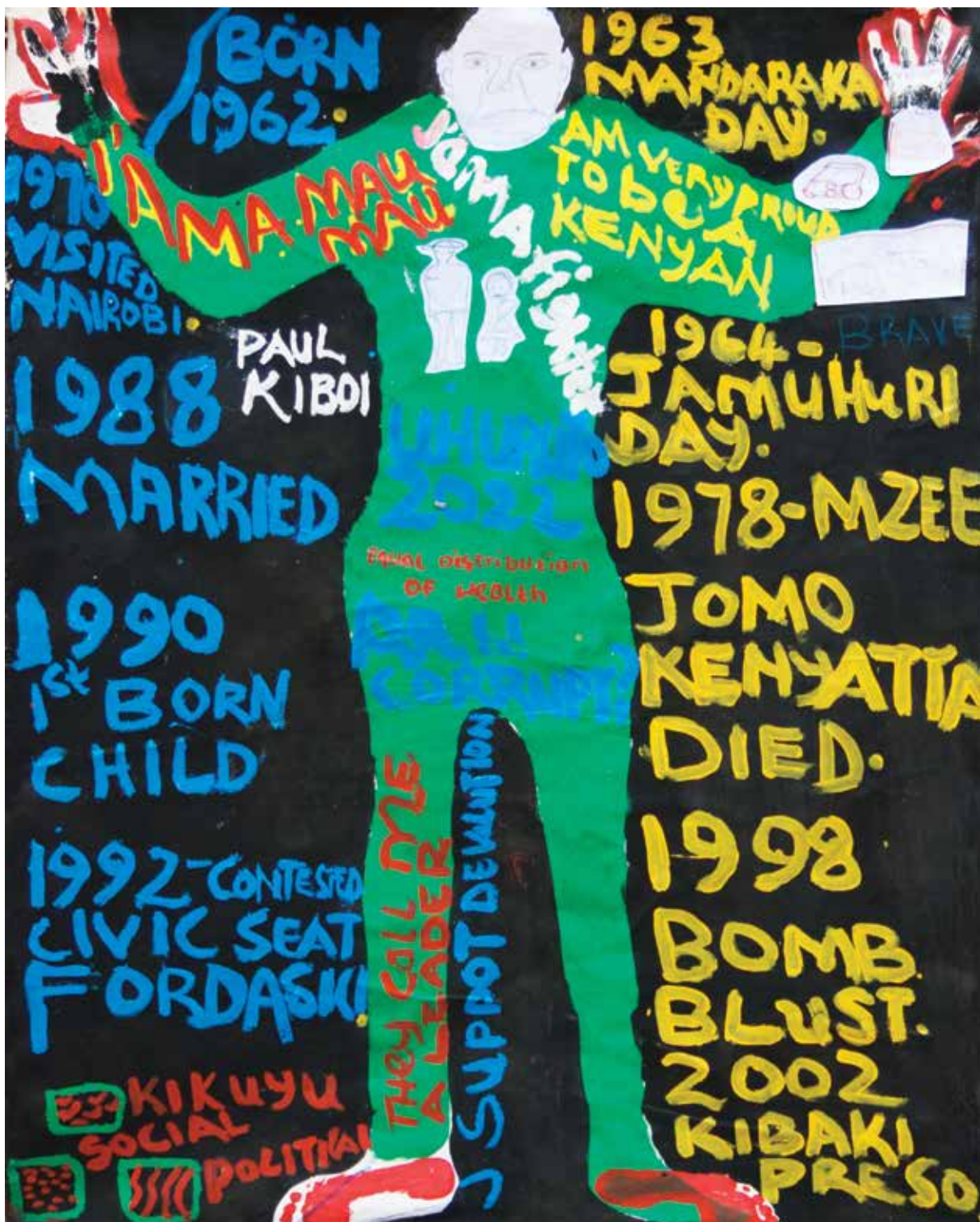
Love plays a very important part in promoting cohesion in Kenya. I curved the heart with white. This love should be pegged onto the bloodshed during the struggle for Independence. Because of that blood, we should share our freedom amongst ourselves and also with people outside. Black symbolizes our African heritage.

Despite resistance and opposition, we have made big strides in terms of recognition and awareness is rising. We have, for example, incorporated at policy level issues like HIV/AIDS. It is a massive achievement. But there is still a lot to be addressed. Our slogan is: "We want equal rights now!"

The fingerlings are a symbol of various people in the society, such as Wangari Maathai, Jomo Kenyatta and others who have done something for Kenya. I put their fingers in red because they had to pay for it. Red is the best colour to symbolize their steps and efforts in helping Kenya.

This entire process has been interesting and has got me thinking deep within myself as a person: what are my beliefs? Why do I want to do this or that? The guiding factors within myself, I am hardly able to internalize on. It is very important to re-evaluate the value you have put not only on yourself but also on others around you.

I can't share my body map with my mother, but I would like people to see it. ◀



"Brave", Nyeri 2015

- *The artist is a father who is a member of the Mau Mau Veteran's Association. He agitates for the rights and recognition of the war veterans of Kenya's Independence struggle. He lives in Nyeri County.*

My Body Map - "Brave"

"In 2022, the ICC case will be over and Ruto will contest for presidency of this country using Jubilee Government as the JAP political party. We expect him to contest as the President of this country."

My work is titled: "Brave" - meaning I must be strong and brave.

I like my body map because it is my image and I have almost captured all that belongs to me. I put in many words and dates.

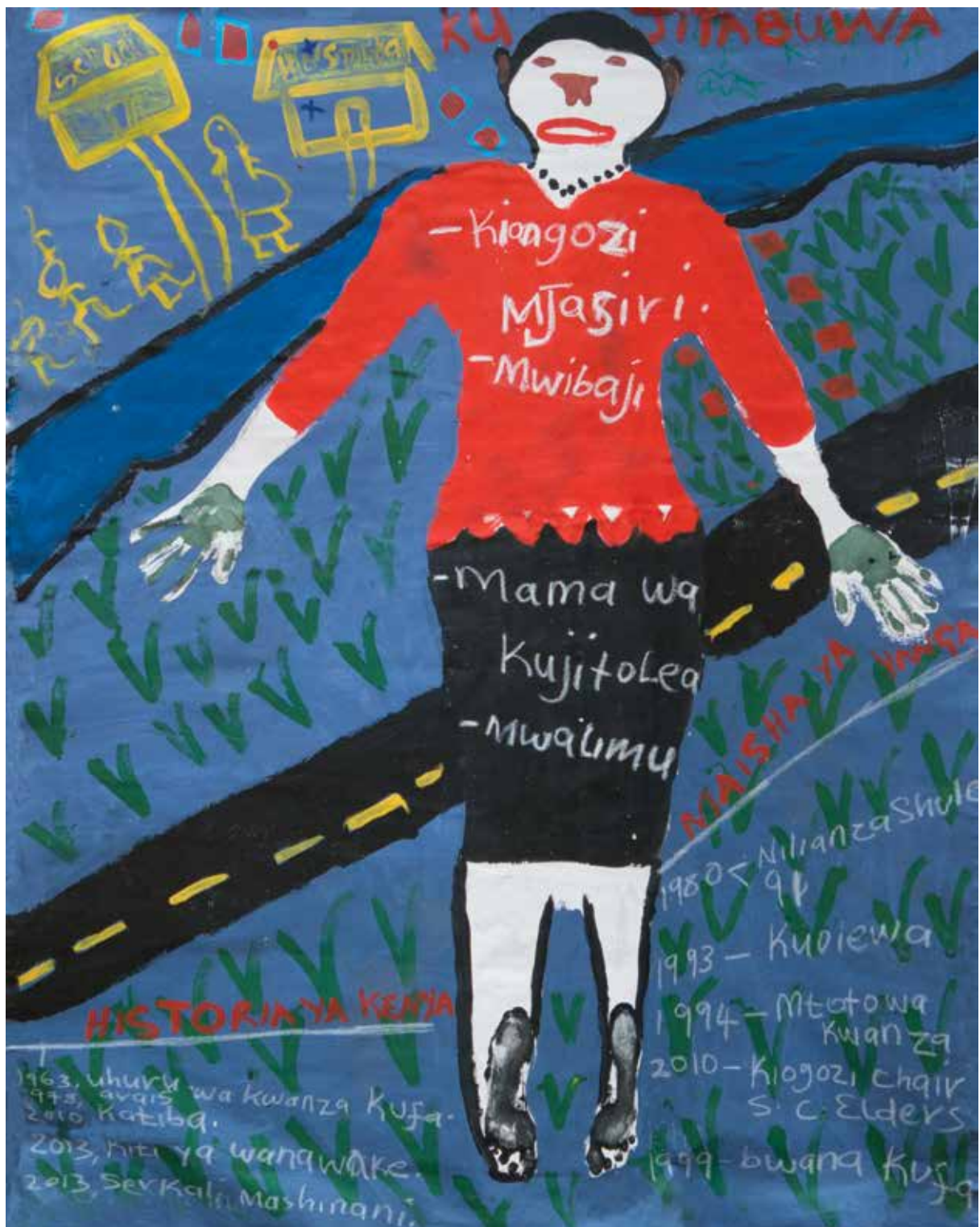
I was born in 1962 and visited Nairobi for the first time in 1970. In 1988, I got married and in 1990, I became a father. In 1992, as a member of the Ford Asili party, I contested in Kenya's first multi-party elections. In 1963 we had Madaraka Day and in 1964, we had Jamhuri Day. In 1978, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of this country, died. In 1998, we had the bomb blast and in 2002, Kibaki was elected President of this country. These were the important dates in my lifetime.

My body is green because I am a Mau Mau. We like the colour green; I was born in a green environment. Black means I am an African and a Kenyan because that is our colour. My feet are red to represent blood which is internal.

I interact with many people and I often participate in political forums. I identify myself as a Kikuyu and live with other Kikuyus in Tetu Constituency. I am from Tetu where almost 90% are Kikuyus.

The Alliance Uhuru slogan is intended to unite two tribes. People talk about conflict but we now note that even before 2013 the two tribes were not on good terms. The majority of Kikuyus live in the Rift Valley. The two

tribes have their representatives: the Kikuyu representative is Uhuru, and the Nandi representative is Ruto. We are trying to unite the people that way. The pillar for the Kikuyu is Uhuru and the pillar for the Nandi is Ruto. In 2022, the ICC case will be over and Ruto will contest for the presidency of this country using Jubilee Government as the JAP political party. We expect him to contest as the President of this country. ◀



"Kujitambua", Isiolo 2104

➤ *A mother of two, this artist has also served as the Chairperson for the Samburu Council of Elders.*

"Our small number has been a handicap in achieving any leadership seats within the county. Somalis also fall in the minority. The only way we can change this is through education, when everybody can learn that anyone can be a leader, regardless of tribe. Then people will vote for leaders from tribes other than their own."

I'm from Burati Ward, Samburu. I'm a mother of two and a teacher. Isiolo is a metropolitan county, with many tribes living together but it has its own challenges. Most people here are pastoralists who practice a little farming. We have big tribes like the Borana, Meru and Turkana who produce most of the leaders here. Smaller tribes like the Samburu cannot get any seats because we are few. Our small number has been a handicap in achieving any leadership seats within the county. Somalis also fall in the minority. The only way we can change this is through education, when everybody can learn that anyone can be a leader regardless of tribe. Then people will vote for leaders from tribes other than their own. Education levels here are low and the levels need to be boosted so as to produce a variety of leaders. Some areas are poor in infrastructure thus unattractive to people such as teachers.

"The Samburu culturally feel they have a right to kill and steal cattle. They believe all cattle in this world are theirs. Before, they used spears and rungus, but today guns have emerged. Guns -unlike other weaponry - do not spare someone's life. The Government needs to go into the interior and disarm these people immediately."

Customs such as cattle theft are a big challenge for us. To the Samburu, that is part of the culture, and they are proud of it. However, it is a culture that is a source of much conflict within this county. Yesterday, thirteen

Turkana were buried after being killed by the Samburu. It is painful and as leaders, we need to sit and talk. We need to find ways like micro-finance to motivate people into activities other than herding a few cows every day or idling. The Samburu believe all cattle in this world are theirs. Before, they used spears and rungus, but today guns have emerged. Guns - unlike other weaponry - do not spare someone's life. The Government needs to go into the interior and disarm these people immediately.

"One day I will contest for the seat of Women's Representative in Parliament. The only handicap is financial. Money would be helpful for campaigning. I believe I would be elected across the board."

I am both Kenyan and a Samburu, and I'm proud to be both despite the negative aspects of Samburu culture which have led to atrocities. My similarity to other Kenyans is that we share the land, skin colour and geographical environment. Our differences are just in languages and behavior. Other people fear the Samburu and lack confidence in Samburu people, but we are good people when motivated.

Education and exposure to the outside world would be helpful. Because of what the Samburu do, I'm afraid as a leader to access Government offices because other people look at me in a bad way. But

I'm helpless to do anything about bad behavior: I can't meet those Samburu men. I can't reach them due to lack of transportation: I need to go there; I need a vehicle. If the Government facilitated this, I would have something to tell them. The Government could organize meetings in various places because the Samburu people are nomadic. Those who perpetrate violence are those from the interior. Honourable Samar has been instrumental in facilitating my meeting with those people in the interior and we have talked to them. So, if their leaders take the initiative seriously, we could get there and they would change.

Power in this country is owned by the Kikuyu and Kalenjin. Since the beginning, they were educated earlier than other tribes. Those who knew writing and reading earlier locked others out. In Samburu, those who have gone to school are now fourth generation. I'm now 41 years old and I thank God for the recognition I have as a leader. One day, I will contest for the seat of Women's Representative in Parliament; the only handicap is financial. Money would be helpful for campaigning. I believe I would be elected across the board.

I am proud of Kenya because the way we are moving; the same rights have been opened to all. Therefore, if I myself don't make it, my children will reach the top. My daughter is currently at University, and soon she will be at the top of the list of Samburu girls in Kenya.

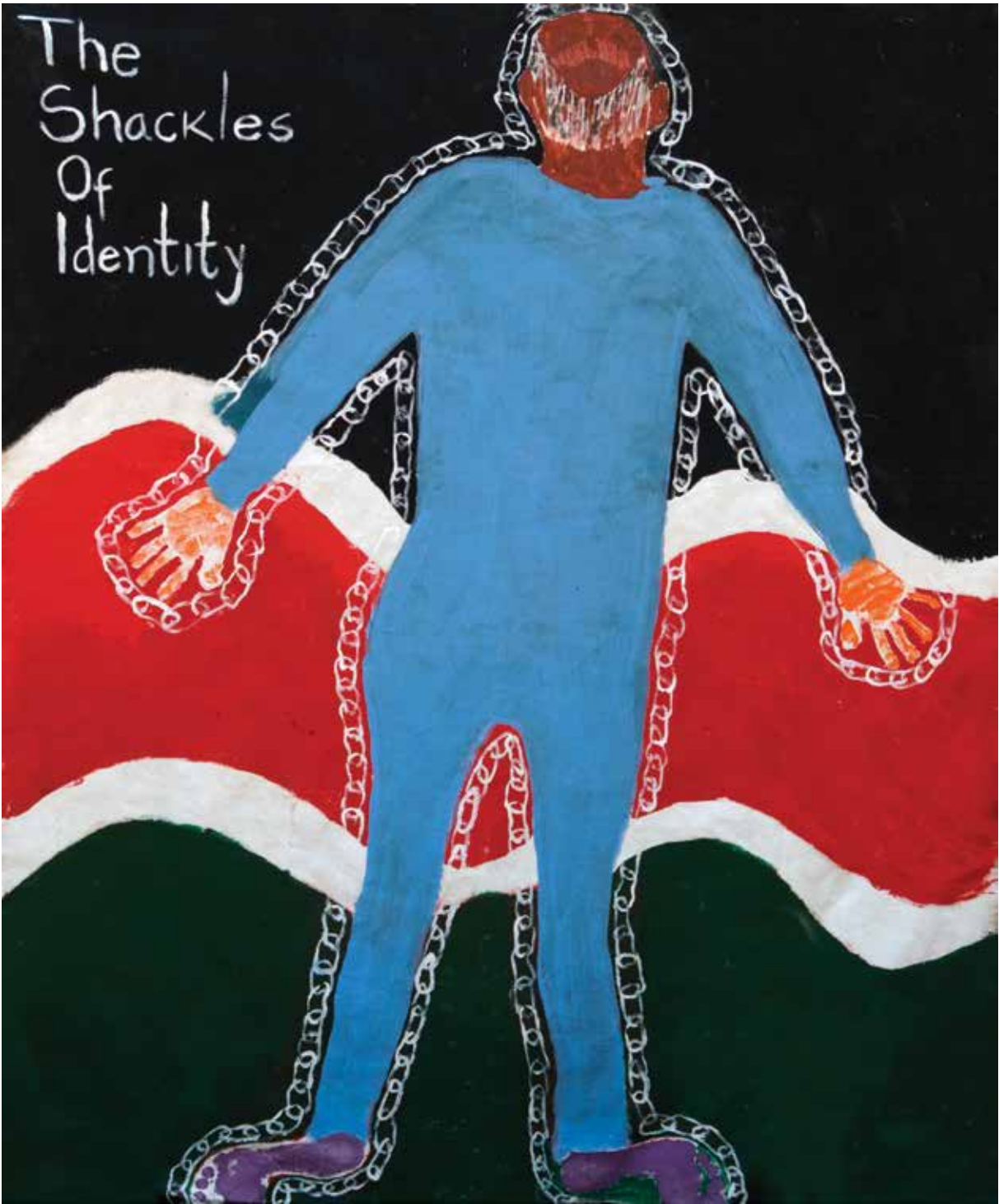
My Body Map - "Kujitambua"

"In my picture, as it is in real life, I'm very strong and smart. That is why I have chosen this posture that shows me standing firm."

This is my drawing which I did myself and I expressed myself through self-discovery. I have discovered I'm a courageous leader, not intimidated by anything. I also sing and others know me as a self-sacrificing mother. I'm very outgoing and a good teacher. In my drawing, my origin is in Isiolo North where a river forms the boundary with Bore Constituency. On the other side of the road is Isiolo County. I love peace -hence the colour green. I would like Kenya to have good roads and enough water supply to enable farming. There should be schools for our children and hospitals for our women to deliver babies safely.

As a Kenyan, I remember our Independence in 1963, the death of Mzee Kenyatta in 1978, the new Constitution in 2010, the introduction of seats for Women's Representatives in Parliament and Devolution in 2013. These together with others I didn't mention are major occurrences. I won't forget them as a Kenyan.

I went to school until 1991 and in 1993 I got married. In 1994, I had my first child and learned what it means to be a woman. In 2010, I became a leader as the Chairperson of the Samburu Council of Elders. In 1999, I lost my husband through a road accident. In my picture, as it is in real life, I'm very strong and smart. That is why I have chosen this posture that shows me standing firm. Green is for peace, black is my 'Africanness', while red is the Samburu's favorite colour. I would like my picture to accompany others to all parts of Kenya. ◀



"Shackles of Identity", Nairobi 2014

➤ *The artist is a 38-year-old resident of Nairobi, Eastleigh. He is a social activist and originally from Garissa.*

"Nationality gives you pride, ethnicity, identity and religious virtues. All these are things an individual needs. Muslims have of late been tagged as terrorists. My fellow Muslim might kill innocent people but the mistake is in collectively stereotyping the whole religion. To me the person who kills should be called a criminal and not be identified with religion."

My place of origin depends on who is asking the question. At one point I'll answer that I'm an African, if someone outside Kenya or the Continent is asking me the question. I'm also Kenyan at another point. But I also have other identities. I'm equally of the Somali ethnic group, one of the 42+ tribes of Kenya. Whether the 42+ tribes of Kenya feel fully Kenyan - that is a question that is very contentious, and different people will answer it differently. A Somali may not feel as much of a Kenyan as, say, a Luo or a Kamba, who are recognized Kenyan tribes.

Although I am a resident of Eastleigh, my home is in Garissa. If I say I'm from Garissa, someone can easily tell which Somali clan I belong to. In the same way, when someone tells you he is from Nyeri, you can tell he is a Kikuyu. Similarly, you say this person is a Kamba because he comes from

Machakos. So, my place of origin is Garissa. But it asked that question in Garissa, I'll then be forced to identify with a certain clan and, further, with a sub-clan. I have many identities: but I'm first a Kenyan. I'm African and a Kenyan from Garissa.

To be a Kenyan is a birthright. I'm a Kenyan by default. I never chose to be a Kenyan; it is something that was predetermined before I was born. My parents were Kenyans and it is a citizenship that I identify with although I personally don't fully feel Kenyan.

I have so much I share with other Kenyans. We have more similarities than differences. We belong to one country called Kenya, bound by a boundary, a Constitution, laws, political norms and cultures, and a national language. I can meet someone outside Kenya and we can speak Kiswahili to each other. Or I see someone eating ugali and sukuma wiki outside Kenya and automatically, I'll identify that person as a Kenyan.

Nationality gives you pride, ethnicity, identity and religious virtues. All these are things an individual needs. Muslims have of late been tagged as terrorists: my fellow Muslim might kill innocent people but the mistake is in collectively stereotyping the whole religion. To me, the person who kills should be called a criminal and not be identified with religion. The media have come out as the main agents influencing other Kenyans' attitude towards the Muslims. The way other people perceive me is not my true representation.

"Long before Kenya entered into Somalia, part of Somalia was literally occupied by the Al Shabaab terrorist group and my relatives and people in Garissa bore the biggest brunt, due to the insecurity and the porous border Kenya shares with Somalia. So when Kenya took KDF into Somalia, I can say without any sense of contradiction that there was a sense of jubilation in Northern Kenya. For once, we felt that the terrorist group that was across the border would be wiped out. I was and

I am still happy. But the consequences of the invasion were grave."

I recommend engagement in attitude-change in the Government. To make them understand what we are entitled to - that is, our rights- through multi-faceted approaches. In Eastleigh there are many activists but many of them still feel like we are still in the era when speaking up against Government would result in your arrest, or one would be extra-judicially killed. Fear suppresses the individual's ability to speak up.

The mere sight of the Kenyan flag makes me proud of Kenya, like when Kenya wins in athletics.

My Body Map - "Shackles of Identity"

"I feel so proud to be a Kenyan. I have seen or realized that my fellow Kenyans have some prejudices about me. I consider it as a problem in their minds not mine. It is theirs to outgrow: they must learn to accept me as a Kenyan and fellow- citizen."

I took three days to draw this. It explains itself very well. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Mine speaks many thousands of words, actually!

When you look at this picture you will see an individual, obviously a Kenyan. He is not turning his back to the flag; he is embracing it. The individual in this picture is me and I am chained, meaning I am chained to this country. The shackles imply the marginalization I experience. I didn't choose a particular timeline because I feel that from Independence until today, I don't belong to this country. Successive regimes have marginalized north-eastern Kenya, the area I come from. Comparing poor Government services and police harassment in our region with the rest of Kenya, it is clear that there is an imbalance of resources. My identity or citizenship, I feel, puts me in shackles. I cannot get out of them, nor can I abandon my citizenship for another country.

And yet I feel so proud to be Kenyan! I have seen or realized that my fellow Kenyans have some prejudices about me. I consider it as a problem in their minds not mine. It is theirs to outgrow: they must learn to accept me as a Kenyan and fellow-citizen. When I started drawing, I didn't know that I would end up with a background of the National flag.

Orange is the colour of courage or strength. It is a strong colour, giving you encouragement, despite your situation. I have chosen to have brown hands but purple feet. I chose purple for its easy visibility.

This exercise has brought out the artist in me and increased my passion for art. I want to buy more colours and continue exploring art.

When everyone else was showing his/her portrait, I became very bold. I couldn't face away from the flag. Nor could I hide the truth. I have even shown my baldness, which I'm proud of! I would love to share my picture with my fellow Kenyans, my friends and family members. ◀



"Untitled", Nairobi 2015

› The creator of this piece is a photographer who was born in Kenya. Both her parents had British passports and one of them was born in Kenya. She was given a British passport when she was seven years old. She is currently trying to get her Kenyan citizenship.

"I was the only *mzungu* in the whole class. It consisted of younger Kenyans, middle class and educated. I was nervous about being completely different, but I was treated just like everybody else in an amazing way; I made great friends."

I was born in 1980, went to boarding school in 1994, and later had a really life-changing experience in Nepal, where I spent around a year in a village teaching in the middle of nowhere, without electricity. I studied Anthropology at University. That took years because I kept deferring. I travelled over a period of two and a half years working on *Survivor*. I then came back to finish my degree and eventually came back to Kenya.

I had an extremely positive experience in Kenya: I did a graphic design course and there were about forty people in my year. I was the only *mzungu* in the class. It consisted of younger Kenyans, middle class and educated. I was nervous about being completely different, but I was treated just like everybody else in an amazing way; I made great friends. It was fabulous. This is really an amazing Kenya!

I think that sometimes there is just *difference* and not *culture*. My great-grandfather was Austrian Jewish; he left Austria before the holocaust. He went down to South Africa and later traveled up to Kenya in a horse and cart. He went to boarding school in England and was teased so ruthlessly for being different that he ran away. He was left with terrible emotional scars from that.

He was brought back to Kenya which had a very British culture then. As a result, he had four daughters - including my mother - who were brought up in a completely secular environment. No religion. Judaism was never ever mentioned! On his deathbed, when my mother said to him: "Why have we never had Judaism in our life? Why has it never been mentioned?" His reply was: "There is no place for us in this world." And that was the end of it. That is an example of *difference*.

My Body Map - "Untitled"

"In 2007/2008, there was post-election violence. This shook me to my roots. With so much travelling abroad and being away so much, I didn't know I would be so affected by it. It really surprised me."

I went from Kenya to a boarding school in England. It was a very hard five years of my life. My boarding school experience has two opposing colours. Subconsciously, I mirrored my face in my map, and I really love that!

I've painted my leg going out of the picture. I don't know how that happened, but I quite like it. I like the fact that it disappears off the page. I thought of putting it somewhere else but I like it there. Deeper blue is my favorite colour and that is why it became the colour of my body. In my map, the red represents the Kenyan people and the green is little me, a tiny minority. Red shows my external feelings and purple indicates total confidence. Out of this, purple arrows indicate powerful emotions. I feel like an outsider, but I also feel included. These conflicting emotions have allowed me to forge ahead. This is where I am now in my heart. I think that we have got to start really thinking of how we can approach the world as citizens of the earth.

I come from a white light and I show the peace that accompanies that. My position on my map is like a yoga position in the Africa Yoga Project. It represents my aspiration for Kenya and I thought that body mapping would be a key place to put it. When I look at the AYP yoga teachers and the people who attend classes, everybody is part of it and that is how I see Kenya. It is such a wonderful space for the people to grow in. There is so much within that little picture: growth, huge growth, protected by peace, duality, nature and people who live in nature. All of us need to be living in that space. Kenya is a gold medal, a shining light. We need to be a beacon for the rest of the world.

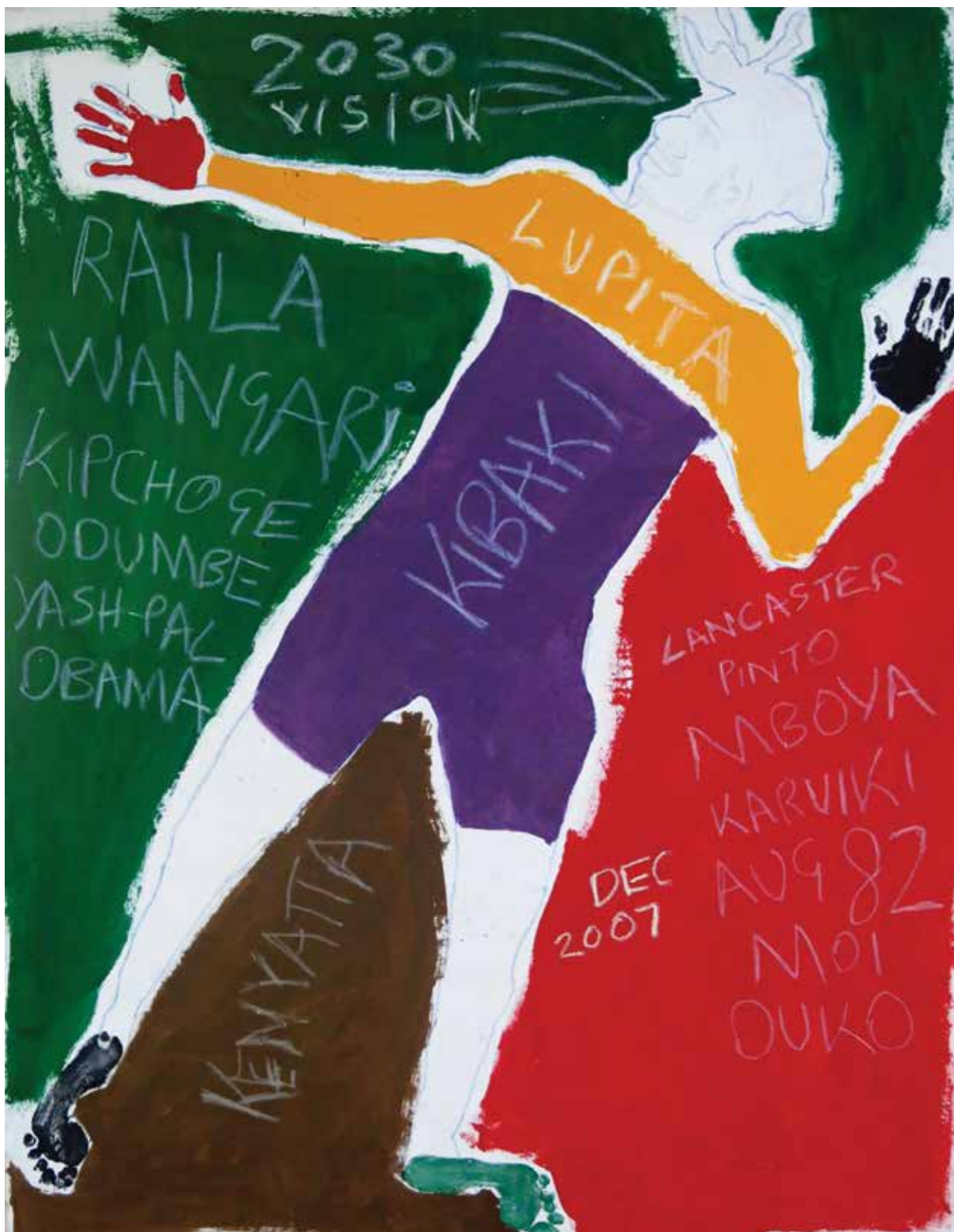
My hair is just crazy and has always been like that. So it was fun to depict it as though it was made out of my feet. I looked at the whole picture and I felt as if it were floating. Too much in the air; it needs to be grounded. I need to get a grounded feeling and I need to be grounded. So I threw earth on it; Kenyan earth. I added more leaves to represent my kind of grounding.

Dark colours represent a serious passion for photography; for people and portraits. Photography is a huge part of my life and career, so this is very important for me to put in here.

This is how I see myself: complex, a peacemaker, a growing consciousness towards the environment and to myself. I am healthy and creative. I have painted in Samburu people, with whom I am doing a big project

right now.. They are very much connected to nature. The crumbled leaves signify that unless we consciously act to improve our environment, we are crumbling, weathering into dust.

In 2007/2008, there was post-election violence. This shook me to my roots. With so much travelling abroad and being away so much, I didn't know I would be so affected by it. It really surprised me. ◀



"2030 Vision", Nairobi 2014

➤ *The artist is a creative man who is of Luo/Arab/Indian heritage. He grew up in Western Kenya and experienced racism from both sides of the racial divide. He lives every day with his ability to engage in his multicultural heritage.*

"When we came to the painting, it was just about me and how I got here, and how I found the courage to do this."

My hopes are based on an infamous Government slogan used as an excuse for poor service delivery to the public. 'Vision 2030', we are led to believe, will be the magical date when Kenya will mysteriously become a global super-power and champion of human rights, in addition to having enough resources for all its citizens.

My Body Map - "2030 Vision"

"The names I painted in are important to me because they have been repeated to me in my social life as a Kenyan, repeated in news, storybooks and on my ID. They created expectations and obligations as a Kenyan."

When we came to the painting, it was just about me and how I got here, and how I found the courage to do this. The title of my artwork '2030 Vision' makes me feel I have bionic vision. Everything behind that future date is nothing but history.

The names I painted in are important to me because they have been repeated to me in my social life as a Kenyan, repeated in news, storybooks and on my ID. They created expectations and obligations as a Kenyan. I am associated with these names and some of them make me proud. Some teach me lessons. Another reason why I have used names to decorate this simplistic art piece is that names today can be searched on Google and Wikipedia. So anybody who is going to see this and feels that it is just a silly piece of art will find out what I am talking about by doing some research.

When I was growing up, I was told that tears are associated with weakness. It is only in my adulthood that I have learnt that there are also tears of strength; those that have no explanation. It is only when you climb to the top of the mountain and then look down, that tears flow because of your achievement.

My timeline starts with Kenyatta at the bottom because he owns the land. His family owns a lot of land.

I grew up in the Moi era and in a region that was an opposition stronghold. There was no development because we were not on the right side of the Government. I am not proud of what Moi did.

When Kibaki came into power, I believed that the economic situation of the country would improve. I believe he is part of the many reasons I can make money: he created a sense of entrepreneurship. It somehow filtered through to the ordinary Kenyan. I like the former President Kibaki for many things. Although I hold him responsible for dividing the country along tribal lines, he did improve the economy of the growing middle class.

When I was a teenager, walking around town at night was adventurous and thrilling; it gave a wonderful rush of blood to be on Moi Avenue and Tom Mboya Street at 9.00 p.m. and see ten policemen coming into view on one end of the street and ten thugs robbing pedestrians on the other. When I came to Nairobi for the first time as an adult, there were lights in town and you could walk in the streets even after dark. It was Kibaki who made the difference.

I put in Lupita Nyong'o and I'm going to associate her with the green section of my painting. I have painted in about six people altogether; names of people I think are recognized for exceptional abilities, great things – even though some do not get the media coverage they deserve. For me these people are like heroes in our daily lives. I wrote Raila's name in because he battled in multiparty political issues to a point where he won an election. However, after what took place when he won the election, there are also lessons to be learned. I would not say that he is perfect and there are many questions that can be attributed to his character but at this point, I'm looking at the positive things he did.

Wangari Maathai was not perfect either but her struggles are the struggles of an African woman. First, it was an achievement for her to have been called Professor Wangari Maathai. Secondly, she planted trees and stood up for what she thought was right. She was beaten and ridiculed. She is one of the few people who stood up to monstrous opposition.

“We have been 3000m steeplechase champions for forty years - that is four whole decades. Nobody has dominated a particular sport for such a long time as we Kenyans have.”

We have the longest-running records in track events: Kipchoge Keino started our success story in 1966. We have been 3000m steeplechase champions for forty years. Nobody has dominated a particular sport for such a long time as we Kenyans have.

Morris Odumbe is a less known personality. He played cricket against the West Indies in the 1995 and 1997 Cricket World Cup. I like the fact that he comes from my village.

I put Yash Pal Ghai here because he is an Asian and a very meek man; a typical Asian man, not aggressive in his approach; a gentleman. He managed to withstand the powers of many politicians for many days, with his intelligent conversations, until he was able to give birth

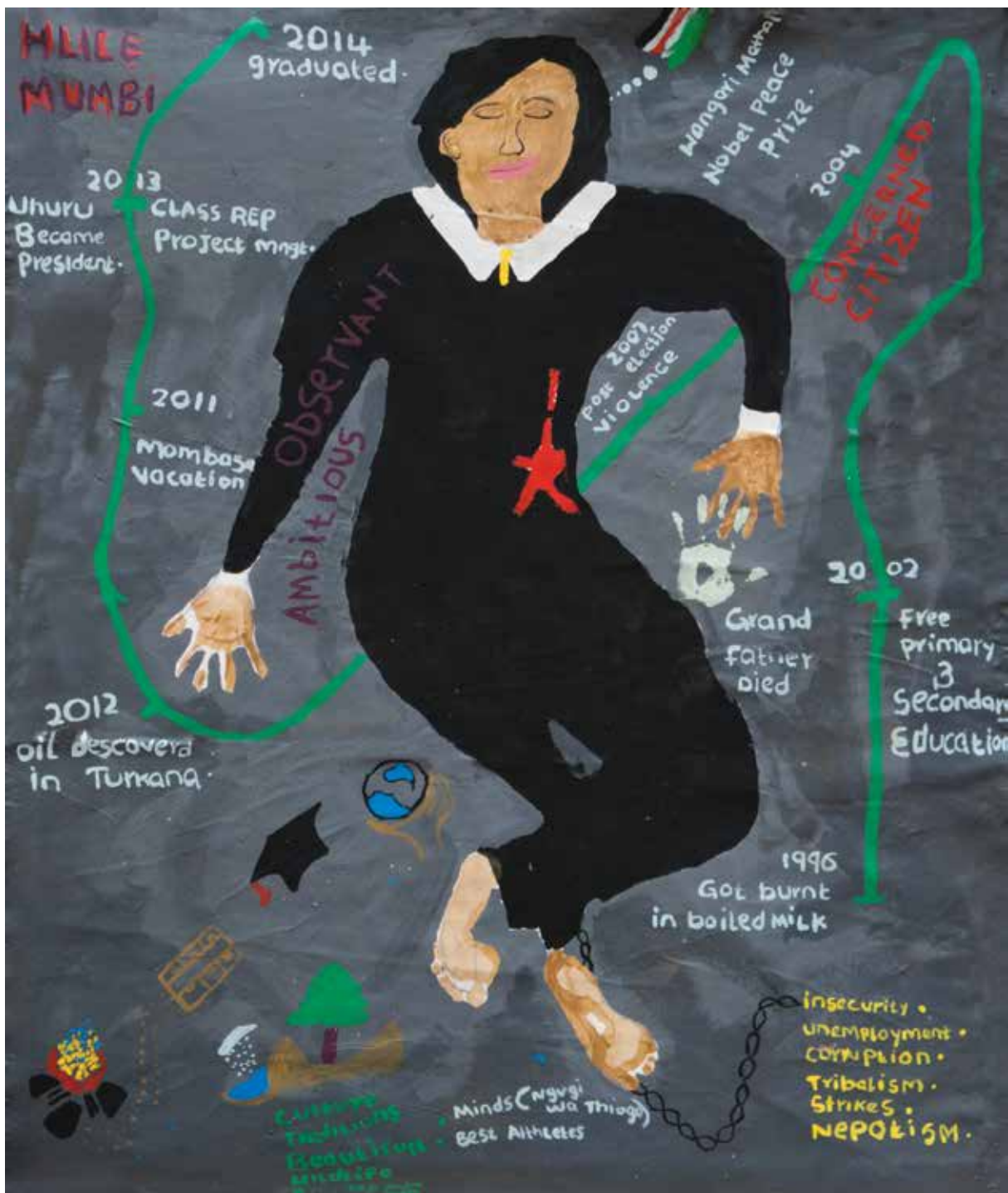
to a new Constitution.

Obama, for all the right and wrong reasons, is definitely the most famous person on my body map because he is now the King of the World in the political sense, the man with his finger on about 4000 nuclear warheads. He is the Commander-in-Chief of the world's most powerful army. His father comes from my village. This shows the world has come full circle in terms of integration. It shows how much a human being can attain.

The color scheme is centered on the Kenyan, Indian, Jamaican & Ethiopian flags with a little bit of green and red.

The people who were killed in the post-election violence taught us about our morality and humanity and how far we go in destroying ourselves. All this red is the blood of very important people: teachers, farmers, shopkeepers. They all shed blood and we all learnt that it was not right for blood to be shed - for whatever reasons, but especially not for political ones.

The yellow I used is very important. It is painted close to my heart and goes on to my hands which do the day-to-day work. The yellow represents brightness and also gold. It is all about wealth and future capitalism. Purple is the colour of royalty and importance: that is why it is very close to the centre of my map. ◀



"Concerned Citizen", Nyeri 2015

- *This body map was created by a young woman who was raised by her grandfather, grandmother and mother. She is now a consultant, living and working in Nyeri.*

My Body Map - "Concerned Citizen"

"2013 was my happiest moment because Uhuru Kenyatta became President of our Republic of Kenya. This gave me hope that he would at last transform our country and make it a better place for us young Kenyans."

In 2014, I graduated in Project Management. Looking backwards on my timeline: in 2013, I was a class representative in my college. In 2011, I went on vacation with my sister and mother to Mombasa. It was very memorable; an opportunity as a family that is still fresh in my mind. In 2002, my grandfather died. He was a mentor since I was young and was always there for me, alongside my mother and grandmother. In 1996, I got burned. I was young and curious. I was trying to be responsible and copied what I saw my grandmother do. I was trying to pick some firewood from outside so that I could place it in the stove. Unfortunately I tripped over the firewood and got burned. I healed after a few months. Now I am grown and the marks are a bit faded. I used a green line to represent the burns which are still fresh and permanent in my mind.

In 2002, I was in primary school and I was happy for the free primary and secondary school education. I was happy at the prospects for our future. Most of us come from single parents and a humble background. At least we will be able to be nurtured by our education.

2007 was the worst moment in my life because there was post-election violence. It started in 2007 and got worse in 2008. It was very emotional and I wondered what sort of Kenya we were expecting for our future.

2013 was my happiest moment because Uhuru Kenyatta became President of our Republic of Kenya. This gave me hope that he would at last transform our country and make it a better place for us young Kenyans. In

2012, I was very pleased with the oil discovery in Turkana. I saw the economy growing and a future for the Turkana people: I saw something bright in Kenyan faces.

Grey is the background of my portrait. It is neither black nor white. It is there at the centre: It is cool, not very attractive, just there. I am waiting for something, maybe full of curiosity. I put yellow in because it is a very attractive colour; you can spot it easily. As a Kenyan, I put it here as a word of hope. Maybe something will open up and someone will see the future, be a concerned citizen and come up with something. The white colour represents job opportunities – not necessarily white-collar jobs but something smart. It is white to represent hope and it is bright. It is waiting for someone to make it more visible for us Kenyans.

My posture shows a lady lying there, eyes closed, just a smile - not broad, just a curious smile. Her thoughts are on our nation, wondering about what is actually happening in Kenya. What can we expect in Kenya?

I have drawn in a fireplace, representing where I came from. I came from Nyandarua County, went to school and graduated. I am wondering what I can do to save this nation, our country. I am just holding on here. I am proud of our nature, culture, the beautiful minds like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the wildlife, Mt. Kenya and the fact that the best athletes come from our country.

"Why can't we talk rather than protest in a violent way? Why can't the Government hear our voices? Why can't we talk and have a conversation and come out with something reasonable?"

The pretty face and the red lipstick represent the young generation, including myself. The white line at the bottom represents peace. I have hope for peace – seriously! ◀

My feet are chained at the ankles, not allowing me to move forward because of a few problems affecting our country: insecurity, unemployment, corruption, tribalism, nepotism and strikes. People hold strikes – just for the sake of strikes. They affect our country and are destructive. Why can't we talk rather than protest in a violent way? Why can't the Government hear our voices? Why can't we talk and have a conversation and come out with something reasonable? These are the things that are pulling us down as concerned citizens and if we don't break the chain, they will keep us there.

After my grandfather died, my Mom came to Nyeri. She brought me here and she has always been there for me. The handprint represents her. She is always concerned, and I am proud of her.

The red spot represents danger and pain and it is moving towards the heart. It begins initially in the stomach. It is like when you are sad about something and then there is that pain that starts in your stomach and moves to the heart even before you can think about what you are trying to say. I was wondering what I was thinking about Kenya. So many thoughts came to my mind.



"My Life Line", Lamu 2015

➤ *This piece was created by a 75-year-old man who lives in Lamu.*

"Without patriotism one should not be called a citizen of a country. Because of that I am a Kenyan, similar to other Kenyans."

I'm proud of being Kenyan. I'm in Lamu which is part of Kenya and I feel patriotic about it. Without patriotism, one should not be called a citizen of a country. Because of that I am a Kenyan, similar to other Kenyans.

I was born in 1940 or around there. It was the Colonial Period. I was born a year after the beginning of the World War II. I remember the war between the Germans and the Allies where the British had to look for help from their Colonies. I saw soldiers from West Africa walking through the streets of Lamu. I was very young indeed then, but I did see them.

The Colonial epoch was from 1893 to 1963, when we got Independence. When the British flag came down and the Kenyan flag went up, this was a great moment for us and we were very happy indeed. Then we went on to have several regimes with Jomo Kenyatta followed by Moi, Kibaki, Kibaki with Raila; and finally now we are under Uhuru Kenyatta's regime. All of their presidential messages ensured us that nobody would go hungry, uneducated or suffer from serious diseases. They all promised to accomplish all these. Generally, we were a good country, enjoying our ups and downs.

I grew up and became a teacher from 1962-96; I taught continuously for 36 years.

Recently, what is going on in Kenya - Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab and general insecurity - is a most pathetic thing. It really does not give me a good night's sleep. According to me, I think we made a very big blunder to go and fight in Somalia. Although internationally, we were called upon to help, it would have been better if we only protected our borders with Somalia without interfering in their internal affairs. A Somali President being sworn in in Nairobi and taken to Somalia is something unworkable. This war is a guerrilla war. Fighting someone you do not see is very different from normal war. Therefore, I pray that we talk about it seriously. Somalia does not want to solve its own problems. It is for them to resolve, but if it is on our borders then, unfortunately, we have a right to interfere.

We have so many Somali refugees, over 300,000 people in our country, and all of one ethnic group. We do not know which ones are for us and which ones are against us. A solution needs to be found here. To me, the refugee camps should be closed. This is a very sensitive issue in Kenya. If you are perceived to be pro Al Qaeda or pro Al Shabaab, or if the Government thinks you are, you will be in very hot soup for the rest of your life. Whichever position you are in, it could be dangerous for you.

"I live in a democracy. I can have my rights protected constitutionally."

I live in a democracy. I can have my rights protected constitutionally. I'm different from other Kenyans in matters of individual religion, culture and language. I might be considered as being different because I'm Swahili, and I'm very proud of that. If someone does not like my being Swahili, that becomes our difference. All Waswahili speak one language although with different dialects. Kenya consists of 42 tribes. And now, it has been divided into 47 different entities called 'Devolved Governments'.

Sometimes, I'm made to feel different from other Kenyans and in that sense I have to be patriotic. There are things

that make me feel different. The Constitution says one thing but in practice the leaders (the Judiciary Section) does practically the reverse. This makes people feel they are not part of Kenya when actually they are Kenyan citizens. Some even have a higher qualification for being called Kenyan. Are you Kenyan because you are black? One is not a Kenyan because he is black! We know some black people who became Kenyan recently while others of White-Arabic origin have been here as indigenous people for over one thousand years.

In South Africa, the Dutch were there for over 400 years before it became independent, and Mandela never said he wanted the Dutch to go away because they were not Africans. Instead, he said he was against apartheid being enforced on the basis of colour. A long stay in a given place gives one the right to citizenship. Unfortunately, in Kenya, sometimes, we have all the tools that are supposed to work to make everyone feel proud but practically speaking that's not the case. Today if you want your citizenship as a local Arab - one of the 42 tribes, but one which has been here for more than thirteen centuries - you are required to produce many birth certificates of so many kinsmen, whilst to another Kenyan, citizenship comes with just one birth certificate. The Constitution doesn't say that: but somebody does. If we lived by the Constitution, we would be living in the Kingdom of God in heaven. But not on earth, unfortunately.

My Body Map - “My Life Line”

“What interested me very much in the activities here is being able to represent my feelings. That is the most important thing.”

When I was invited to the body mapping workshop, I thought we were going to be taught how to draw. To some extent, I did learn how to draw: but the purpose of this body mapping is to show your personal feelings, about who you are, where are your origins and where you are now as a Kenyan: from a young man to your present experience as a full grown person and your hopes of the future. So I have here both my history starting from where I was born to what I went through until now when

I'm about 75 years old. Going through the ups and downs, I saw good things and also some frustrating things. In this, I am giving my entire history and expressing myself with words and pictures of my history in Kenya.

As humans, our origins are in Adam and Eve but in this case, we are looking at where we came from so as to be Kenyans. The original home of my ancestors dates back to at least the eighth century, in the Aljazeera Peninsula in Arabia. This is represented by the palm tree. Most of Arabia is 'Jazeera' because of the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and then the Persian Gulf. My great-grandparents came from there and settled on Lamu in Mtanweni Village which is represented by a dot and a Kenyan flag on my body map. There is a picture showing my childhood when I was about fourteen years old playing tennis. Because I came from a very humble family, I had to work at picking up the balls for the players. This work paid me about Ksh.12/-. To get that money at that time was no joke.

What interested me very much in the activities here was being able to represent my feelings. That is the most important thing. I told my people at home that I thought we were going to be taught the rules of art and how to put things in proportion, but what I learnt through all this is that you can represent your feelings through painting and drawing. I also learned that differences in colours can show different things, indicating different meanings.

I also treasured the opportunity to express myself. The discussion actually made everybody open up without fear to express him or herself: we knew what others were thinking in a very understanding way. When we talked of things we are proud of, we explained why. When we talked about things we aren't proud of, we were also able to explain the reasons why. Besides just knowing of the problems, we understood that we could come together to ensure that Kenya is a peaceful place. We all can contribute to make Kenya a better place. It is a new way of expressing myself, rather than just talking and talking. ◀



"Palace", Nairobi 2013

➤ *In the 2007/2008 post-election violence, a woman in her late thirties was attacked, became a displaced person (IDP) and was never compensated by the Kenya Government. She lives in Ruaraka and is not recognized as an IDP.*

"I'm a Kenyan, and proudly so. I was born here, will die and be buried here. My ancestors were buried here. I'm a Kenyan by nature."

This is our home, as represented by my mother. It is very green. My memorable moment was when Mum bought me a new dress when I was five years old. I was very happy in school. I love peace, and that is my dream for Kenya.

In 2007-2008, during the post-election violence, I went through hardship and rejection. A period of a half an hour changed my life. I was staying in Ruaraka where there was a lot of looting. At around 8.30pm, a group of men entered our compound shouting "Haki Yetu!"* and then came in. They were armed with crude weapons. They started killing the animals, chopping off their body parts while I peeped through the window to see what was happening. They had left the animals alive without limbs, howling in pain. Some of them came to the house where I was, broke the door open, hit me with a club and dragged me across the floor. Then one of them sat on my chest. It was painful, I felt dead. They tore my clothes off with a machete. One claimed it was his right to step on my

stomach. They raped me and at the end rammed a piece of metal into my private parts. When I woke up, I was in a pool of blood and water and they had torched all the houses in the compound. My house was burned to the ground. I had to start all over afresh.

It was difficult to stand up or even walk as I pulled out the metal they had inserted in my private parts and tried to move away from the place. I went to a nearby Catholic Church where I took a bath. I was all naked. I was bleeding from my head and other parts of my body. Some women from the nearby village visited me in the morning and covered me. The commotion was still going on, the looting, stealing and burning of houses. When we went to a nearby police station, we were told: 'Let the work continue!' And it continued.

We waited until we were big in number - about one thousand people - when we forced our way into the police station. Since we were weak, they could not chase us away, so we camped there for a while.

I'm a Kenyan and proudly so. I was born here, will die here and be buried here. My ancestors were buried here. I'm a Kenyan by nature. What I am proud of as a Kenyan is that it is my origin. On the other hand, what I don't like about Kenya are the politicians and politics.

*Haki Yetu – our right

My Body Map - "Palace"

"My feelings vary at times, but I am still the same. The purple colour means my so-called 'palace'."

Whether things are good or bad, every day the sun shines: every night a star shines.

This project makes me forget about what I went through. It keeps me happy for a moment. My dream is to see a better Kenya, with politicians who make good changes, and where everyone loves each other. For we share a common blood colour.

Sometimes you can feel as if things are very clear as you can see here in my body map, but after a while, things start fading off to yellowish which signifies lack of strength. Always the heart will remain red, signifying blood, or the life in us. My feelings vary at times, but I am still the same. Purple means my so-called 'palace'. Making my palace is impossible due to the many responsibilities I have such as educating and feeding children.

There's a map of Kenya on one side showing my origin, which I love. My map appears like someone sleeping. I started with black - our colour - then when the Europeans came we started being greenish. Then it started fading again into yellowish attached to a red heart representing all people and a peaceful place. My palace is near State House in Nairobi. I'm running towards that paradise. I have drawn some palaces that I will access whenever God wills.

The three days I have been here have changed my life totally because I didn't I think I could do such things: I thought they were childish. It was wonderful for an old lady like me to draw and paint something and to talk like this. I'm ready to share with anyone interested and I want to take my map home. ◀



"My Land", Nairobi 2014

➤ *The artist is 23 years old, a resident of Eastleigh. He is originally from Mandera.*

"I feel I am a different sort of Kenyan because we don't get the same opportunities and services as other Kenyans."

My place of origin is Mandera. Mandera is in Kenya. It is where I belong: my land and the land of my ancestors. When I go there, my father takes me around, showing me my ancestors' graves. It is a historical place for me, where I feel at home. I don't feel very much at home here in Nairobi.

I feel I am a different sort of Kenyan because we don't get the same opportunities and services as other Kenyans. For example, Huduma Centres are working everywhere but finding one in Mandera is very difficult. If you want to register with N.S.S.F. in Mandera, you have to travel to Wajir which is very far away. However, in other parts of Kenya, every district has its own services.

The Government had good reasons for the Usalama Watch Operation but the way they carried it out is wrong. The Government is meant to be fighting terrorists, but it is terrorizing you. People knock on your door at 2.00 a.m. without identifying themselves and you can't refuse to open even though you don't know if they are Government or thieves. Refusing to open would force them to break in.

My similarity with other Kenyans is the map of Kenya. Where I come from is on the map, meaning that we are all ruled by Kenya. We are given a chance to vote: I can choose leaders who represent my voice in Parliament. I don't feel well represented, however. The people we choose do what they like. During Usalama Watch most of our MPs used to go to State House to meet the President but nobody listened to their requests. I won't stop voting. We trust in them; they can fight for us. But the bigger people neglect us. Our complaints fall on deaf ears. A day will come when the people from Northern Kenya will sit and fight for their rights; whether to be given their

Independence, or autonomy as with the UK and Scotland.

"The fight is between Kenya and Al Shabaab not between Kenya and Kenyan Somalis."

When an incident of terrorism occurs in Nairobi, what comes to most Kenyans' minds is Eastleigh because it is the Somali area of Nairobi. For example when Westgate was attacked, they said it came from Eastleigh. If a matatu is bombed, they say it is the Somalis. That kind of thinking comes from the fact that the Kenyan Defense Forces are in Somalia. What happens in Kenya is what Al Shabaab has planned, not Kenyan Somalis. The fight is between Kenya and Al Shabaab, not between Kenya and Kenyan Somalis.

Nothing makes me proud of Kenya apart from the peace I am currently enjoying.

If devolution works and we are recognized as part of Kenya in terms of education and other services, then we will be willing to be part of Kenya. I will be fighting for every Kenyan Somali to get their rights. Unlike in a slum where you will find many communities living under poor conditions, Northern Kenya is a whole province consisting of one community that lives in poor conditions. For instance, from here to Kisumu the road is tarmacked and there is air travel to Kisumu from Nairobi. There is nothing like that from here to Mandera. I think devolution can work.

If it does, we shall finally be equal to other Kenyans in terms of resources. There have already been some improvements in Mandera County. The Government has employed about 3000 employees.

My dream is to become a voice for the voiceless.

My Body Map - "My Land"

"I chose to stand on one leg because most Kenyans do not recognize me fully as a Kenyan. They call me a Kenyan Somali. At times they take away my ID card and then take me to Kasarani where I have to purchase my freedom."

Starting from the bottom of my map, there is a Kenyan flag. My picture has me standing on one foot and next to me are flowers and two snakes. The snakes painted in the National Flag colours signify that if I move forward, I will be bitten, and if I move back the same will happen. I am at the mercy of the Government and I don't belong. I don't feel Kenyan.

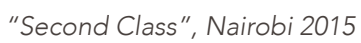
I chose to stand on one leg because most Kenyans do not recognize me fully as a Kenyan. They call me a Kenyan Somali. At times they take away my ID card and then take me to Kasarani where I have to purchase my freedom.

"I see a bright future, represented by the yellow colour of my land."

On one side of the map, I painted a white bird and a leaf symbolizing peace, and a walking stick symbolizing leadership. I see a bright future, represented by the yellow colour of my land. I painted red on the other side, representing the Kenya Police. I'm wearing a yellow and brown striped shirt symbolizing African culture. The faded area on my back is the torture we experienced during Moi and Kenyatta, and up to today.

1986 was a sorrowful moment of my life. The Wagalla and Marikamari massacres took place and the Government slaughtered people in my land. Today those places are historical sites. In 1991 there was the collapse of the Somali Government. The flag of Somalia reminds me of a lot. In 2008, there was a KDF operation to disarm the people involved in the tribal clashes in Mandera Central. The approach they used was cruel, beating everybody - including women and children - and burying others only half dead.

They indiscriminately tortured us in search of guns. In 2014, there was the Usalama Watch Operation in Nairobi where you were told to purchase your freedom whether you had a Kenyan ID or not. The same year, there was the tribal conflict in Mandera and Wajir County over boundaries. ◀



➤ *The creator of this piece was born and raised in Kenya. She has dedicated most of her life to studying and recording Samburu culture before it disappears. She is now in her seventies.*

"I am white, and many Kenyans tell me I can never truly belong here. They don't care how long I have lived here, or that I speak Kiswahili. According to them, I will never be a Kenyan."

I was born here. My parents were penniless refugees from Eastern Europe. They went through hell to get here. Their journey took two years. I was born two months after their arrival in Kenya. Call it karma, or destiny, or fate ... or whatever. I have nowhere else to go. So, yes, I am a Kenyan!

I am white, and have been told I can never truly belong. I often feel like a second-class citizen. I think quite a few of us feel that way. We belong, yet we are not really accepted. I don't like that! But maybe I would rather be a second-class citizen here than first-class somewhere else, because I don't belong anywhere else? I think this is the best I can do for myself. This is it. But, yes, I do feel second-class.

Our national flag is such a powerful symbol of our struggle for Independence. And Mount Kenya, so high and proud, and reaching up to the sky: another powerful symbol. Most importantly, I do feel black. Very specifically, I do feel Samburu. I am

so tied to them! I know that's tribal, and not national, but that's how I feel. I am Samburu in my heart and soul. That is what makes me belong here.

My Body Map - "Second Class"

"I stamped those words officially right across my body. That title says it all."

My body fell into a natural position diagonally across the canvas, and I always listen to my body. But when it came to painting everything, I found out I had made it very awkward for myself. Because I have a bad back, I had to lay the canvas across a narrow table. I could never see the whole thing all at once, so I found myself going round it in circles, and sometimes writing upside down. In the end I decided it didn't matter.

The first thing I painted was a circle around my neck. I realized I was painting a large flat necklace, rather like the beaded collars the Samburu girls wear. It may look Samburu, but to me it symbolises the forty years I spend collecting beads and making jewellery. So that was the central character, if you like. That is what I felt born to do. Everything else came later. By now I'm a very well-rounded sort of person, with a lot of different experiences. I have tried to put them all on one canvas – something I have never done before. I enjoyed the process of doing all that.

My timeline is mainly symbolic, beginning with my parents coming here as refugees in 1942. I looked up the relevant national flags, so I could put Poland and Romania in my story. They left Europe in 1939. By the time I had drawn in the two years it took them to get here, I realised I could see my body as the map of Africa, with them gradually getting nearer.

The next most important date is 1952, when my parents first took me to visit the Samburu. I fell in love immediately with that part of Kenya and with the people. They became my life's work. It was like being guided, and I still go for it. In my map, I have put my Samburu name, Noongishu. It was given to me when I was officially

adopted by a Samburu family in 1990. I also have another tribal name. I studied another pastoral tribe, called Borana, and they gave me the name Hadaweche. So you can begin to understand that I am a very complex person, with all sorts of weird experiences behind me.

The long wavy hair came from the fact that I have a very small head, and I have always wanted it to be bigger. Since my hair is untameable anyway, I just capitalised on that, and made it bigger with paint.

I studied Samburu star lore in depth, and stars became very important to me. That's why I painted in the constellation of Orion. The Samburu see it as God's family in the sky. Whenever a Samburu marries, the constellation must be replicated on earth by human counterparts. Those stars form the bridal procession.

I had a hiatus in my life when I married an American and moved to New York. I hated the experience, divorced and came back to Kenya in 1981. Those dates are upside down. Maybe psychologically they are meant to be?

The most important date in my timeline in terms of career came in 2000. I was invited to lecture on the Samburu at the Royal Geographical Society Headquarters in London. There were 700 people in the audience, and I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (F.R.G.S.) in recognition of my work. That is my only academic qualification and validation of everything I have worked for with no reward at all.

At the bottom of my map, I wrote AHITI (Animal Health & Industry Training Institute), which my father founded in 1965. That was my father's main contribution to Kenya. It became a negative influence for me when I recently attended what was supposed to be the 50th Anniversary, and found that the Principal had changed the facts and that my father was not even mentioned. I felt – once again – a second class citizen.

In my map are two arrows pointing north. These are my safaris. I'm always going northwards. I feel at home there.

In 2015, I visited Maralal for the umpteenth time, looking for a project to support. Samburu culture is dying, and having recorded it for posterity, I realise that their future can only come through education. I found a high school to support. They need books, water, electricity, a laboratory ... everything! The school represents my aspiration for Kenya's future.

I should try to explain the coloured stripes I painted across my body. I think they mean I'm schizophrenic? Well, as a second-class citizen, I probably am! ◀



"Dear Kenya", Lamu 2015

➤ *This young man is an artist who was born on Pate Island and who now lives in Lamu.*

"When our flag is flying, all of us feel Kenyan; we feel like one thing. The feeling gets inside our hearts and we know that something special is up there."

I was born in 1980 and got married in 2005. On Pate Island, where I was born, we used to play naked.

According to my belief and study, every religion has got good people and bad people. In every community it's the same, everywhere; there are good people and bad people. In Kenya there is justice and there is no difference between tribes and religions. In Courts, we are all judged under the same law.

Next is the philosophy: 'unity is power', which is being missed out in my country today. If people unite they will be blessed by God as well. If not, then we shall have problems and nothing good shall come to us. Forgive and forget. It is good to forget and forgive. This creates friendships between people.

When the Kenyan flag is flying, all of us feel Kenyan; we feel like one thing. The feeling gets inside our hearts and we know that something special is up there, so we all respect the flag and feel as one. And when we hear the National Anthem, everyone is respectful and everyone is happy. We stand still; maybe sometimes people are even shaking hands. But, my friend, when the flag comes down in the evening, when there's no national anthem - everything ends.

The land problem is big everywhere. Suppose you are in Lamu and you have land somewhere else and you do not use it, what is the problem if someone from another place in Kenya comes and uses it? It is good if people invest and give jobs to locals. It becomes a problem when someone from outside Lamu asks the Government to allow him to use idle land here and yet the same does not apply to the land the person in question left at his other place. In Lamu it is easy to get land, but it is not so

in any other place. It is 50% of hate and 50% of love: it is a question of money and power.

My Body Map - "Dear Kenya"

"Dear Kenya, I really love Kenya. Save Lamu!"

The body mapping project has helped me explain myself and define who I am and who we are. Am I similar to other Kenyans? This is me after being drawn by my partner. I glued it on and did some painting on it. After that we drew each other with eyes closed. Here we learnt that even the blind can do some things: it is a clear indication that everything is possible and nothing is impossible.

Here I am, and a map of Africa is here, and at the center of it is love. Then in every direction is an arrow indicating that whoever comes inside this point will get some love: whether you come from South Africa, America or wherever, you will get love at this point. It is a very important point for the whole world. Next you see a big fish eating a small fish. This is what is happening not only in Kenya and Lamu, but almost everywhere in the world. Dear Kenya, I really love Kenya. Save Lamu!

There's someone who is drowning and there's another man going to save him. So it should be in life: there must be saving. Neighbours should help neighbours: a husband should help his wife. A teacher should help the student and all Kenyans should help each other. This way, we will save Lamu, and the whole of Kenya.

In my body map, there is someone who is not feeling good here. He is not happy because in every direction he looks, and whenever he sees television, all he hears and sees are killings. This is myself. Most people do not feel for others. Don't do to others what you don't want others to do to you! On television, in Garissa, I saw disturbing news and couldn't sleep that day. We should be very careful.

When I was young, I used to play with balloons and times were good. On my body map, there is an eye that sees love and that eye loves everybody. This way, others will love you back. I also painted a rope and someone showing the word 'distraction' - meaning the law does not take things seriously. Instead of killing the killers, the law allows the rich to buy justice. Things are wrong and bad. Let 'yes' be 'yes' and 'no' be 'no'. Constitutionally and otherwise, always one half of the people say 'yes' and another half say 'no', making things difficult. In the centre, nothing happens: that makes people suffer. One day we shall find a way, we should pray to God and He will help us.

The rainbow is for the beauty of Lamu Island. The sun smiles on us all. ◀



"Thomas Mboya", Nairobi 2013

➤ *"Thomas Mboya" was created by a pastor and counselor who was raised in a single-parent household. He was admitted to university but could not afford to pay for it and could not secure funding through the Government.*

"I felt more Kenyan while in secondary school than I do today. I used to idolize some of the leaders but as I grew up, I realized Kenya is a name and Kenya is me, so everyone makes his/her own Kenya."

I see my starting point as a seed, a seed dropped somewhere in Kenyan soil. I didn't have a choice in that. I see God as the source. I grew up in Western Kenya and later in Nairobi. I'm not tribal; I can relate to any other seed. I see people for who they are. If you look at Kenya without bias, you'll realize it to be a very beautiful country.

I felt more Kenyan while in secondary school than I do today. I used to idolize some of the leaders, but, as I grew up, I realized Kenya is a name and Kenya is me, so everyone makes his/her own Kenya.

"Our flag comes to my mind as the unifying factor. Our forefathers' dream is in that flag. All our values are in that flag. But we seem to be running away from it."

We lack a collective Kenyan dream. We seem to be competing against each other, knocking down our perceived opponents even though they are fellow citizens, in an attempt to climb the ladder. I yearn for that collective dream, a revival of values and demolition of social classes. We need common ground between the haves and have nots.

The political system gave my life another direction, away from what my dreams as a young man were. When the multi-party system was introduced, when FORD promised so much and KANU was determined to stay in power, Kenyans were hopeful of a change; a change that we all visualized in different ways. Hopefully with the new Constitution, the private sector will venture into public life and change things for the better by bringing in their discipline.

When asked if I am a Kenyan, the image of our flag comes to mind; to me it is the unifying factor. Our forefathers' dream is in that flag. All our values are in that flag. But we seem to be running away from it.

We were told that the State would provide the means through which I would access quality education without really having to bother my mother who couldn't afford it. Unfortunately, even though I passed the exams, a cost of Kshs.6,000/- (USD 600 at the time) was introduced as a contributory measure. I can still remember the voice of the Dean of Faculty telling me that I was unfortunate because nobody would pay for my studies. I left Egerton College a dejected person and almost lost my mind in Nakuru.

For the first time, I said a prayer. This resulted in an instant miracle, in that it restored my peace of mind. I can understand today how this experience might have negatively impacted on my life; I often push away people who could have been significant in my life.

As a counselor, I use my time and energy to try and ensure that people out there do not experience the same confusion I went through. I help people to find themselves.

In Kenya, we are lacking in genuine love for others. We have the resources, manpower and institutions but that genuine love for others is missing. Politicians are capitalizing on this by sowing divisive seeds to divide us even more. We swallow that poison, we talk, we relate but we half-heartedly play games of deception without commitment. It is all about individual accumulation of wealth. It is what you have that determines what you are and not the other way round. The pull for self-advancement is suffocating. As a believer, it hurts me a lot.

Children with meager resources are also suffocating. I don't wish my kids to miss out on education and thus continue the vicious cycle of my complaints.

I'm a humanist, opposed to capitalism. I like who I am inside and what I feel I should be. But when I look around, I realize so many doors are shut that we usually fail to become what we want to be. I think the problem is with our family units; most of the garbage we carry in our minds emanates from parental failure or negligence in their roles, which they, in their turn, probably inherited from their parents.

My Body Map - "Thomas Mboya"

"I believe men make men. If Kenya becomes a dishonest country then we will produce more dishonest people."

I gave my real name to this painting because the name 'Thomas Mboya' is historical. I resurrected him. Even though he and I were at different levels, we share the same vision for Kenya. This made me realize the big disconnection between my personal vision and the leader's vision.

Here I am celebrating Kenya at 50 and I realize Kenya has two sides, the positive and the negative side. I represented the positive side with a dove and the negative with a viper. The positives are education, freedom and opportunities to advance. The negatives include social classes and erosion of values; corruption,

which is synonymous with the Kenyan name; lack of a common Kenyan dream; dishonest leadership, and negative ethnicity. Those are our main dark attributes.

I believe men make men. If Kenya becomes a dishonest country then we will produce more dishonest people. Liberation represents prosperity and happiness for all. Today very few are happy in Kenya and even fewer are prospering. We all go through struggle and we all work hard, but we are trying to control almost everything at the expense of everyone else.

In my timeline, I highlighted Independence in 1963, multipartyism in 1992 and the New Government in 2002. After the Nyayo era, the struggle for a new Kenya intensified. In the year 2010 we had a new Constitution, which was seen as a New Dawn for Kenya. Sadly, a few years after the promulgation of the new Constitution, we see a Kenya that is still facing grave issues. Many are of the view that the dream for a new Kenya has been lost.

"However, I am still hopeful that a new Kenya is attainable if we all give it time and work hard. My hope is represented by the colour yellow."

Just as people shed blood and lives were lost to reach Independence, so there is now a second liberation movement. It too will take tears, sweat and blood. The growth of Kenya to 50 has been very slow due to forces opposed to meaningful change, even

though that is what Kenya as a whole desperately desires.

My personal strength has been derived from my strong faith, as represented by the cross on the heart. I believe doors can be shut for you but with faith, others will open for you. I painted my inner body green as green to me is a source of livelihood. We are not dying yet, so we need to sweat, and do so with hope for a better tomorrow. ◀



"Home is Where you are at Peace", Nairobi 2014

➤ *This body map was created by a mother of eleven children. She is a Borana and was born in Nakuru. She works and lives in Eastleigh, Nairobi.*

"To Somalis, HIV/AIDS wasn't for them. Some Muslims forgot it was a human immunological deficiency problem and not a religious one. A health issue has nothing to do with religion."

I was born and brought up in Nakuru in a family of twelve. I am the fourth-born and I am now a mother of eleven. I run a small community-based organization. It was formed in 2009 as a support group for women living with HIV/AIDS: then it was registered as an organization and now we are reaching out to orphans and vulnerable children. When we talk about HIV/AIDS, it is as though it never existed in my Somali community, so people with HIV/AIDS had no place to run to. To Somalis, HIV/AIDS wasn't for them. Some Muslims forgot it was a human immunological deficiency problem and not a religious one. A health issue has nothing to do with religion. I remember asking a woman in Mandera to come out and say she was HIV positive. She later died in Nairobi from the stigma of going against the community norms. She died a neglected woman in a private hospital.

I started with people from other communities - especially from villages where many were bedridden, malnourished and had no support

from anywhere. At that time, the Government - despite declaring it a National Disaster - was focusing on more affected areas. It forgot that in others areas such as slums, people were dying and missing out on Government intervention. For instance, it was very hard for many HIV women to go all the way to Mbagathi for medication without food or transport.

We still have challenges but we are moving on, never giving up on ensuring everyone is able to access help and medication. Everybody now knows HIV is not something to run away from. Assistance will only come when the structure you are running from is visible. Seeing a Somali girl admitting to be a commercial sex worker opened my eyes. Such women approached me and told me things they couldn't tell even to their relatives. Sometimes, this is how they survive in this place. One of them told me that she was sick and was found to be HIV positive. Her son was ten years old and she couldn't tell her family about her being a sex worker because her family would shun her. Therefore, I used to care for her boy as she went to hospital. She died in August 2010, and I reunited the boy with her family members. Many of the sex workers passed on due to societal stigma, having no one to run to and having to take drugs without food. During that time, I wasn't strong enough to do more. This made me feel bad as I felt alone. The community felt it had no place for those girls. They even accused me of encouraging their bad behavior by supporting them.

My Body Map - "Home is Where you are at Peace"

"I'm a Kenyan: I do not feel less. We should see and call ourselves Kenyans without additions. Tribal connotations are not healthy for us. It is a monster that eats into our economy, pulling our legs back. That monster is not in me."

During this exercise, I felt like a young flower, renewing and opening up to the world again! There were so many things in me that I could not put into words by talking but could do in writing and painting. I didn't know I could. I thought of how someone would look at it and be able to tell what I'm expressing. It was an important journey. Such

strong feelings: one need not write a word for the next person to read, but with paint and colour, I could touch someone.

"In 2014, during Usalama Watch, I was in Eastleigh and I locked myself in my house and looked out of the window to see if the police had gone. I spent my days watching the sky as it was the only thing I could see from my window."

Everything is included in my painting and I am feeling 'BOOM!' After three days of intense work, this is what I have. As a Kenyan, all these beautiful colours and burning emotions are in me. There are still many flames burning in me.

Before I started, I was panicking and wondering how I was going to do this. I didn't sleep well, but after doing this, last night I slept and I was so relaxed. I had already done it and it was what the instructor asked for. Was it what the instructor asked for or what I needed to do? My hand was moving so fast and I wanted to take all the colours and put them there on my body map.

My timeline talks about a woman who has undergone a lot as a Kenyan, and who has shared a part of our history. In 1978, that is when my President, Jomo Kenyatta, died. 1980 is the time of 'Maziwa ya Nyayo': Moi's era is when the milk flowed. 2010 was the dawn of another new era. In 2012 there was a bomb-blast in Eastleigh. 2013 was the year of the attack on Westgate and also the year of Kenya at 50. Wow! You can see how beautiful Kenya is at 50! In 2014, during Usalama Watch, I was in Eastleigh and I locked myself in my house and looked out the window to see if the police had gone. I spent my days watching the sky as it was the only thing I could see from my window.

Green represents the environment and the red is a burning flame representing the need to do something. In my painting there is part of me showing all the bloodshed since 1963 and that is what the red represents to me although I don't like red. Yellow is a calm reflection. Blue represents the sky which is the limit. I keep asking

myself if it will ever end. I wanted to draw a book, with the Constitution and devolution as part of it. I believe I am more Kenyan because of these things. The colours of the flag travel within me, burning in my eyes and within me. I wrote "ugly" because some people think I am ugly, short and black. Others call me 'Mum'. But I think I am kind, generous, beautiful, sociable and funny.

There's a feeling of a Somali woman wanting to be heard beyond the confines of her compound. As a Somali girl, you are brought up to become a respectable wife: nothing else. I dislike that mentality. It is good that Somali women are now coming out in various leadership roles. Things are changing from what my mother used to think: that a Somali woman is a housewife only. The pages are turning and I can see the light now.

In 2013, I tried running for office, I wanted to be a County Representative in this ward. Coming from a community-based organization and being a Somali-Kenyan who aspired to be a leader was a milestone for me. I went up to the ballot box but didn't make it.

I'm still the same Somali-Kenyan. The fire is still there. I just have to get a platform to represent the people of Kenya, whether politically or in some other way. I still want to represent someone. I'm a Kenyan, I do not feel less. For Kenyans, history went wrong somewhere and we need to learn to think larger when looking at ourselves, rather than narrowly

looking at ourselves ethnically. The younger generation should forge ahead with a different mentality. We should call ourselves Kenyans without additions or other limitations. Tribal connotations are not healthy for us. It is a monster that eats into our economy, pulling our legs back. That monster is not in me. ◀



"My Land is Kenya", Isiolo 2014

➤ *The artist is 32 years old and was born in Isiolo. He has two homes, one in Isiolo and one in Meru. He is a Red Cross volunteer.*

"Every tribe contributes towards the growth of Isiolo County but to some, that isn't a sufficient reason to include them in running the County. The majority hold the economy, but it is the minority that rules."

I come from a humble background. My parents both worked as civil servants. I'm married with two beautiful daughters. Currently I'm a businessman as well as a volunteer at the Red Cross Society. Isiolo is my birthplace, the place I call home. I was born in Isiolo and have invested in Isiolo but now my physical home is in Meru. My roots are with my parental home in Isiolo but I go to visit my grandparents in Meru once a year in Chogoria. The lifestyle between Isiolo and Meru is completely different. In Isiolo, everybody is for themselves: if you don't hustle then you wait for the Government to feed you. But in Meru, in Chogoria, people share burdens as a community. Isiolo is full of tribal cocoons fuelled by power-hungry individuals from each community. This has made developing the town difficult for those communities who feel left out. They shy away from participating. At a personal level, it doesn't disturb me because I do my own stuff. Change can only come through civil education through which people will be empowered with the knowledge of what these systems mean. Devolution for many people

is about tribal groupings which form the majority in the country even though that is not what the Constitution envisioned.

Every tribe contributes towards the growth of Isiolo County but to some, that isn't a good reason to include them in running the County. The majority hold the economy but it is the minority that rules. During elections, leaders come with threats telling people they know what will happen if they are removed from power. They are known for causing insecurity: people are afraid of change. Once elected, they are never seen in public until after five years they come back with handouts.

Those from outside do not feel a part of Isiolo. They came for work and during elections they return to where they came from to vote. They make money here but invest somewhere else thus developing other areas. Isiolo's centre is originally Meru as Isiolo itself is in the interior. The first Governor during the colonial era found it so hard to operate in the interior that he asked the then Governor of Meru to lease him a place where he could put up a centre. He was given a large area and with time it grew and people started shifting from their place to here for services. Now, that is the cause of the wrangles between the Borana and Meru. The former don't want to accept that they were given this area only for a period of time.

"There are those whose minds are filled with hatred and greed. A person may not want to work but still wants to come and take your goat. I hate it when people want what they haven't toiled for!"

The way I view how Kenyans should be and live is different from how other Kenyans view it. As long as I have good health, my family is well catered for, my business is okay and there is peace, to me I have the space to grow. But there are those whose minds are filled with hatred and greed. A person may not want to work but still wants to come and take your goat. I hate it when people want what they haven't toiled for! In our communities, we have a lot of laxity. Some people don't want to work but they want to be fed. Some of us are hardworking in an honest manner yet some are hardworking in a dishonest manner. The

greed I'm talking about is the greed to want everything for yourself at an individual level. There are people who are jealous.

Despite our differences in other areas, devolution is doing something. Services have been brought nearer to the people thus reducing the expenses incurred to access these services. We see roads being built and I can say that Isiolo for the first time is cleaner. Although I do not directly benefit from the Government, I'm reaping from them indirectly. If only leaders here could give each other peace for at least two more years then much would be achieved.

"On 23rd January 2011, I officially became married. I remember the date because the previous relationships weren't marriages. I have children out of relationships that did not work, but for this one I paid the dowry and got blessed by my wife's parents."

In five years, I see myself getting richer. The LAPSET Project, airport and reservoir are all avenues whereby I can become rich. I believe I can give back to the community without having an elective position. I would wish to expand my mother's project for rescuing and empowering girls and street children. I'm one of the founders of the Red Cross Society in Isiolo. In 1999, I had a passion for its good work. I joined, and it has become vibrant, growing from 27 to 1000 members at present. Together with employed staff, it is now second in size to the Thika Office.

Kenya can be defined as a country in Africa, most populous with diverse tribes. Kenya is a representation of the world. Kenya is a blessed land with a lot of resources. Kenyans are very loving and peaceful people.

My Body Map - "My Land is Kenya"

I'm a Kenyan and I am proudly so. I'm also happy to be in Kenya. This painting is my own reflection. When I drew it lying down, I was in my most comfortable position –

similar to the one used in applying First Aid. That is why while upright, you can hardly understand it: you have to be conversant with First Aid. My body is painted black meaning I'm black.

The blood that was shed during the independence struggles was the work of our hands. They are the hands that carried weapons and they are the hands that shed the blood. That is why I have painted my hands red. Yellow feet to me represent beauty. Those are the feet that step on my land, the beauty of my country, the land. Green in the background is for the country, which is a fertile country and has enough resources.

A keen observation of my painting will reveal two small maps of Kenya. The first is my origin in Kenya and within it is Isiolo County. Then there are our Kenyan flag colours. The next map is pure green meaning the land of my country, and a heart, meaning love. So the Kenya I want is the one where everyone loves each other, with a passion for whatever they do in nation building.

The blues are the water basins surrounding Kenya, such as Lake Victoria, Lake Turkana and the Indian Ocean. I have also used yellow to beautify my lifeline.

In 1963, we got Independence and in 1964, Kenya became a Republic. In 1991 multi-party politics were introduced. In 2007/8, we had post-election violence which we all remember. In 2010, there was

the promulgation of the new Constitution. I was born in 1981. I joined school in 1986. Being born into a Catholic family, I was baptized in 1988. I was baptized the day my mother was married. In 1999, I got my National Identity Card, reinforcing the fact that I am a Kenyan. On 23rd January 2011, I officially married. I remember the date because previous relationships weren't marriages. I have children out of relationships that did not work, but for this one I paid the dowry and got blessed by my wife's parents.

I have drawn myself with dreadlocks as those who fought for Independence didn't have the pleasure of shaving: they wore dreadlocks in the forests. ◀



"Me in Kenya", Nairobi 2014

➤ *The artist has dedicated her life to her work and has been very successful at it. She is at a transitional point now, and is taking life a bit more slowly.*

"I don't pay too much attention to politics: it has never been something that I enjoy or wanted to learn about - beyond how it affects me in my daily life. I feel the world would be a better place without it. But it is not going to happen like that. That is why I have not made a big deal about politics. But it is there, even if we pretend it is not. It is there to stay."

My Body Map - "Me in Kenya"

I drew myself in my favourite position, the one I sleep in, with both my hands to my chest, protecting myself in my sleep. The line down my right-hand side carries quite a story. It is in the shape of the shoreline of India. It shows where I came from. Unknowingly, I made a pattern showing twelve generations of my ancestry: I put a family tree into those waves down my right side! You remember your father and your grandfather; generally not many people would remember beyond that. Every wave represents three people I remember or have heard of.

When we were meditating - I guess it is a culmination of all the workshop activities - the colour that I saw was this very purplish brown. I painted the outline of my body in that. I like purple and I feel like that is the colour

of my inside. I left the center white and I am happy with that. My physical body, the hair, the feet and the hand have to do with the questions asked about ourselves and how we love ourselves and how we see our successes.

My feet play an important part in that I find them quite ugly. They bore the brunt of my childhood. I have painted them in black. My hand is in red because my hands are part of my success story, it tells you about my work.

My hair lies completely away from my neck, as it is when I am asleep. Until five years ago I had very short hair which was graying naturally. Throughout my childhood, I believed I had terrible hair. I never believed I would one day have long, curly hair. I have made my hair an important part of my body.

"The worst time for me was the violence of 2007-2008. After 2007-2008 and the events of 2013-2014, we had two ways the country could go. It could go towards prosperity or it could fall back very quickly to the black that is constrictive and refers to a way without freedom."

My family lineage underwent a transition when my grandparents moved to Kenya from India. I don't know anything about that except through stories.

I was born in 1960, and 1963 was a significant time in Kenya – although I don't remember it. I painted in Kenya's new freedom with greenery and trees; I believe that nature in the form of water, sun, air and plants is what we need to survive.

The worst time was the violence of 2007-2008. The bridge in black signifies the freedom we fought for: I am not sure if we really achieved it. It also signifies the deaths of prominent people. I have written their names in. Once those people are gone, they don't mean anything. Only the letters of their names and the movement that they stood for remain.

The black represents violence; it is a colour that stands for darkness and oppression. The grid of black lines

represents chains - insecurity, oppression, war and so on. After 2007-2008 and the events of 2013-2014, we had two ways the country could go. It could go towards prosperity or it could fall back very quickly to the black that is constrictive and refers to a way without freedom. I am hoping that by next year, 2015, we will be on the path to recovery, away from oppression and political problems.

I have put in the year 2050 because it is so far away. By 2050, I hope we are so integrated with nature that we have our act together and don't need to look at black anymore. It will be all green and red; bright and very happy. There is movement within the green, which is a happy movement. It is the way plants grow; the way we feel when we are singing and happy.

One of my hands extends into all the flowing green lines. This shows growing prosperity and success into the infinite, so that - beyond 2015 and 2050 - we cannot come back to the present time and place. We are just looking forward, all of us in an upward movement. I drew in the plant leaves. The symbol for infinity is also represented in my map.

I don't pay too much attention to politics. It has never been something that I enjoy or wanted to learn about, beyond how it affects me in my daily life. I feel the world would be a better place without it, but it is not going to happen like that. That is why I have not made a big deal about politics. But it is there, even if we pretend it is not. It is there to stay. ◀



"A New Dawn of Art in My Life", Kisumu 2014

› *This is the story of a Kisumu resident, a mother who is HIV+ and works to counsel people on their status.*

"Luos are a people who like the good things in life. If I am educated and yet I am seen working in the shamba, it is a big issue."

I am a Luo and I am 47. I was born in Gem and married in Kisumu. My husband passed away eleven years ago.

This project is giving us a space in which to express ourselves artistically; it gives us an opportunity to think. It has allowed me to think about why I am Kenyan beyond just being born here.

I am Kenyan by birth and also through my responsibility in nation building. The most challenging time is during election time. People fight and are abusive to each other. This mostly comes from politicians and our young people who are idle and can easily be convinced to participate in violence.

I am similar to other Kenyans through the Constitution. In nation building, we vote together; when there is drought, we come together; we face the same challenges together. I think something should be done about the inequity in standards of living. Everyone should be able to afford something to eat every day and people should not throw food away when others don't have food. We can solve this by being engaged in farming. We need to change the mentality that if we are educated we cannot farm. We should get involved in farming as a business so that it brings food to the table. We should be ready to do any kind of work and cease being choosy.

I am talking about this region, the Luo in Kisumu. Luos are a people who like the good things in life. If I am educated and yet I am seen working in the field, it is a big issue. It has always been this way. We have devolved funds and they are meant to be taken as loans to do business with and to be repaid. In this region when people take these loans, they buy material stuff. For instance, I will get my hair plaited or buy good clothes. I spend Ksh.5,000/- on vanity and then tomorrow I don't have food! We need to see how to get grants.

People can form groups and invest in business and get away from vanity. We spend on our bodies instead of investing the money in order to one day repay the loan. That is why we are afraid of loans: we can't maintain them.

I am proud of this country because we have a good Constitution that includes everything. I am also proud of the Kenyan reaction to the Westgate attack. Kenyans responded and contributed and donated blood across tribal lines. We are generous when things are out of hand.

The Constitution had given us a devolved Government and allowed citizen participation. If the Government wants to do something for me, I am now involved and can let the Government know whether it truly favours me.

Initially, the Government brought development that was not relevant. In spite of the new Constitution, I still don't feel represented by the people in power. Their titles have changed but they are still the same people. This devolved Government is a new thing and we need to educate them regarding their new roles.

As a Kenyan living with HIV, acceptance is the key. It is difficult. I was tested in 2001, immediately after the death of my husband. My in-laws told me that I had killed their son. My seven-year-old daughter was my "treatment buddy". She kept my secret and sympathized with me. My other children had said that they would not live with someone who

was HIV+. In the community, if I was seen with a man I would be abused. Once I was told: "You want to kill my husband? You already killed yours!"

I want to thank my country Kenya because it has given us ARV treatment. I discovered my status in the days when ARVs were expensive. In 2003 it was only available in a few hospitals and I went to one. They welcomed me and treated me. I am healthy because of the drugs. When I gained weight I started talking about my status, moving people forward from a position of denial. For instance, in August this year my sister died of HIV. People were saying it was witchcraft or a curse.

Being HIV+ is taboo in Luo culture. The information is there but the cultural aspect is left out. When I refused a second husband I said: "No, let me die alone; let me not kill someone else." I was told I was doing the wrong thing. I built a home myself which is taboo because you are supposed to build a home with a man and have sex in your new home. They said I would kill my children. Even now I am not really accepted.

My Body Map - "A New Dawn of Art in My Life"

"My brothers went to school and I was left behind because my parents thought there was no need to educate me further as I would be married off."

This project is a big step forward

in my life because I have never done this before. It is beautiful to me. I have drawn and painted something on canvas. My title is: "A New Dawn of Art in My Life." I didn't know I could do this.

Red represents the challenges facing us: our crops, schools, the Constitution, etc. That is why there are red spots everywhere.

In everything, we must remember that God comes first. That is why the church is drawn. Crops are important and that is why they are there. My most important moment was going to school and that is also drawn in, with the pupils and teachers, male and female. There is also the map of Kenya to remind us we are here. The Constitution of Kenya is also binding us together. The title of the Constitution is in red because the big question is whether we are really following it.

I am black in my body map because I am actually black and I don't use any oil except Vaseline, which cannot change my colour. My hands are yellow to represent love. If I love you, I do everything to make sure that you understand that. Green on my feet represents the environment; white is for peace. I accept that in myself there are some things that won't allow me to be peaceful. I painted in red bits in the form of stars because they can also be seen as opportunities.

1963 is important to me in the way it is important to everyone else, as the year of Kenya's Independence. I was born in 1967, and that is my New Dawn. In 1974 I started school. We didn't go to nursery school. When you could touch your ear, then you could join Class 1. In 1978, the first President of Kenya died. In 1982, the coup happened and I dropped out of school because of lack of school fees. My brothers continued with school but I was left behind because my parents thought there was no need to educate me further as I would be married off. In 1990, Ouko died. In 2002, Kibaki took power and in the same year, I lost my beloved husband.

People say that I am black, a mediator and advisor, hardworking and that I am cheeky too. I see myself as being determined, but I actually give up easily. I am funny and hardworking. I am also talkative. ◀



"Man of Many Colours", Nairobi 2015

➤ *The creator of this piece is a mixed-race Kenyan. He was born and grew up in Nairobi in the 1970s.*

My Body Map - "Man of Many Colours" (or where I feel I stand in Kenya, as a Kenyan of multicultural heritage)

"I am disappointed that even today, decades after Kenya had its first mixed-race citizens and after living here my whole life, I still find myself considered 'not quite one of us' regardless of the company I'm in. And, with a few exceptions, I'm generally treated with suspicion as to where my loyalties lie in what seems to be a racially and ethnically polarized society."

The colours inside my body are the colours of the Kenyan flag, my primary nationality, and as they go down to the legs they show me grounded in one black and one white leg, which symbolize my heritage.

Over the figure's heart, are some of the more common labels I've heard used to describe me, depending on which part of Kenya I am in ... 'Mzungu', 'Muhindi', 'Black': 'Pointee', 'Half-caste', 'Chotara' ... the list can get quite creative! Because such labeling always carries some baggage with it, I indicated that I much prefer just being a 'Kenyan'. "Who are you?" "Who are we?" "Who am I?" The answers change

depending on just how far you are prepared to dig into yourself.

It took some time to understand the multiple identities that were thrust upon me by society. The differences in many times in my differing heritages made me become a cultural chameleon, able to switch from one kind of person to another to suit the occasion.

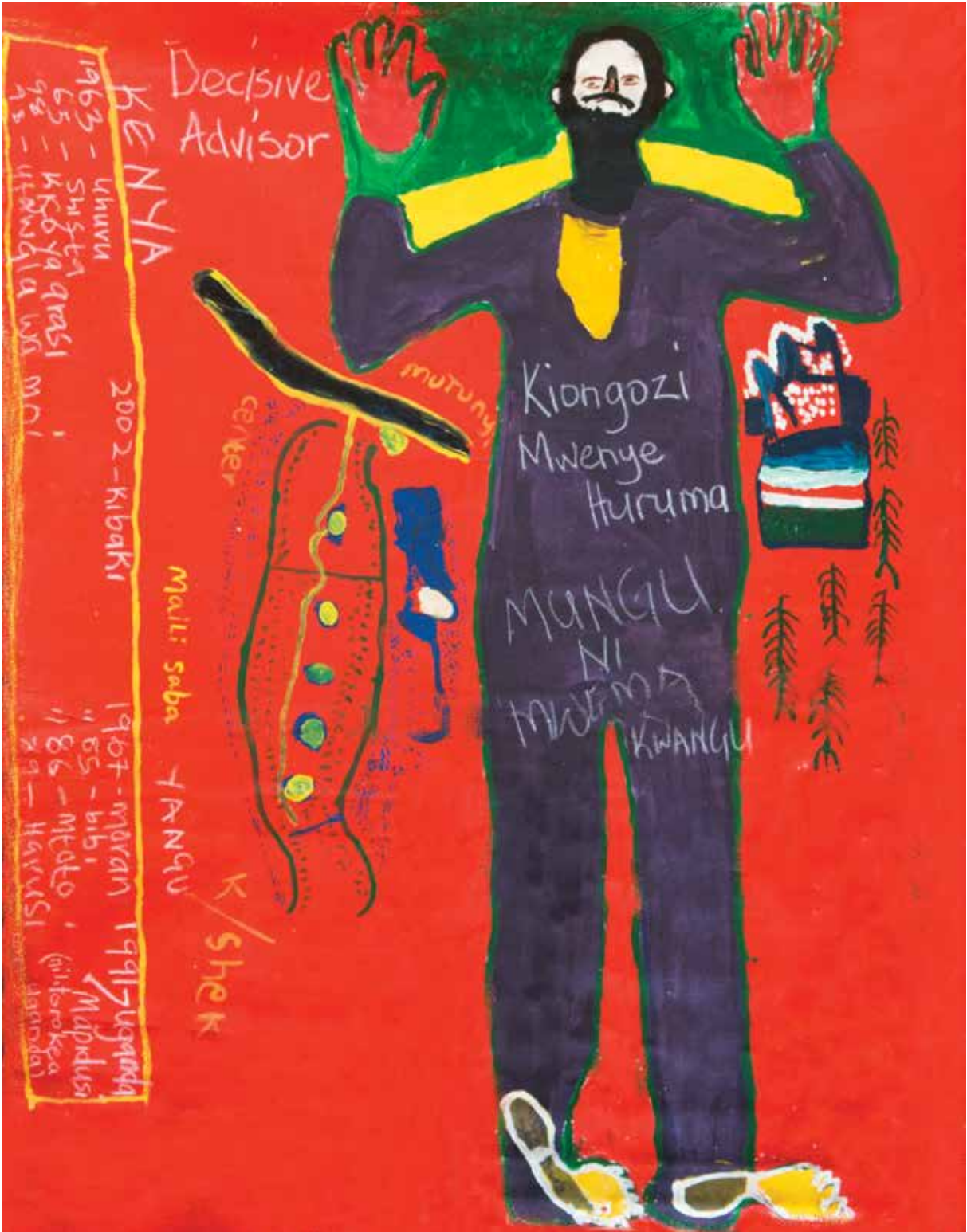
To my enormous chagrin, I have more than once been asked to 'urudi kwenu' (to go back home) by people I run into on the street as well as by those whom I would expect to be better educated – in one instance, when I was trying to get my National ID card. So some Kenyans don't want to see me as a Kenyan. To these people I ask: "Kwetu?" and: "Umoja je?" Why won't we see ourselves as one people?

The slightly frowning face I present to the world is my concern for the love for Kenya that I've been trying to nurture and help to grow out of its stunted, bonsai-like existence - symbolized by the potted plant in my hand.

My timeline shows some significant episodes in my life: my realization in primary school that I would never really be considered a peer amongst my peers; my personal 'Jamhuri Day' when my biological father's dark shadow left my life; my marriage to my lovely wife and the arrival of our beautiful daughter. My family made me begin investing more in accepting my differences and reviving my hope that we will transcend into a better society.

For over forty years, I have felt like I lived on the fringes of acceptable social society, hidden away like people who bring some sort of indefinable shame to their extended families. As a result I have decided to consider myself a member of a much larger grouping: 'a Nairobiian' - if you ask me where I come from in Kenya - or otherwise 'a citizen of the world'. It has always been more enjoyable to be a foreigner in other strange lands than to be one at home. The planetary system above my head makes it known that I'm much happier this way.

Finally, this project helped reinforce my hope for a better Kenya, and I'm grateful for having had the chance to participate in it. ◀



"Mungu Ni Mwema Kwangu", Isiolo 2014

➤ *The painter is a Samburu Elder and lives in Isiolo.*

"In 2002, we got Mzee Kibaki and we continued with him. He is the one who brought development to our country. We saw more development in Kibaki's Government than we did in past Governments."

My Body Map - "Mungu Ni Mwema Kwangu" (God is Good to Me)

I chose green to represent my country and my heart. Mount Kenya is also depicted and I have drawn the snow. I have also drawn maize and other crops that we should plant if we love our country. This is the murram road from Nanyuki to Isiolo. I have shown where we live: Maili Nane, Mutoni and Maili Saba which is the centre. I have also drawn Nakadeli and Maili Tano. I have drawn the Isiolo and Lewa River. I have drawn Mutonyi Hill. This hill is near the British Camp. Yellow represents the beauty of the sky from where I come. I am under my country's sky. My hands are red to differentiate between the palm of my hand and the rest of my arm. My feet are the colour of the soil I walk on. Purple represents the clothes I wear and green is for the country that I traverse.

In 1963, we got independence which we are proud of now. We started with Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and continued until Mzee Rais Moi. When we got to Rais Moi, we had an incident in 1982 - a revolution against the Government.

In 2002, we got Mzee Kibaki and we continued with him; he is the one who brought development to our country. We saw more development in Kibaki's government than we did in past Governments. We started seeing foreign things that we are now proud of.

In 1967, I became a Moran/warrior who liked herding cattle. I am the only one who knows how many cattle I captured. In 1986, my first child was born. In 1989, I paid bride price for my wife. In 1991, I ran away due to the unrest caused by 'multipartism.' I went into exile in Uganda and came back only when the situation in Kenya was settled.

I love people and even small children. I am a merciful and generous person. I am a leader in my area and an elder in Maili Saba.

I want people to see my painting. ◀



"I Pray for Peace", Lamu 2015

➤ *A mother of four created this piece. She was born in Nakuru but moved to Lamu where she now lives and works as an artist.*

"Everybody has a different thought about other people and about Kenya."

I have been painting in the past, but I didn't think I could have painted the answer to a question about your childhood: "Where do you see yourself in the future?" It is very hard to paint about a question! I went home and told my daughter what we were doing here. I tried to explain what body mapping was, lying down in any position and painting according to the questions you have been asked. She asked how someone can paint a question? I said that it is the hardest thing I have ever done because I have been painting in the past, but not to that level. It was a new experience; another feeling of seeing that any of us can be artists in our own way. Because art comes from inside and not outside, it is not what you are painting, it is what you paint from your heart. I think it taught me something, expressing myself about where I see myself today and about my childhood which I haven't thought about for years. I thought it was something that had passed.

I came to Lamu twenty years ago from Nakuru. Nakuru is a very a green place because there's a lot of rain: unlike here. Lamu was peaceful then. I was sad about what happened recently in Mpeketoni. It made Lamu a different place, quite different from what it has been - peaceful and with

happy people. I want Lamu to be as peaceful as it was before. People used to welcome me then. As if I were a friend, like a sister and I was made not to fear anybody. I didn't think ill of anybody. Unlike now, when it has changed a little bit.

People aren't happy the way they used to be. We don't walk about as freely as we used to. I had never heard of a curfew here in Lamu before. This is my first time. Lamu is a peaceful place and I think the Government did well in lifting the curfew. The curfew made people fear each other and I think that what we need is to raise awareness. We need not fear one another because what happened didn't happen because of all of us. It was a few people who wanted enmity or radicalization; not everybody wanted what happened to happen. I think if you are in Kenya, regardless of your colour, you are still a Kenyan.

I have realized one thing that exists not only in Lamu but all over Kenya. There is not only one tribe which has been affected by land. So I came to know that land is a very sensitive issue to people. When we are speaking about it now, we can be open because we are here, we are different. I'm the only one from up-country and the others are from different islands also. So we are not all the same: we come from different places - but from one Kenya. I came to know that all of us love Kenya and what we need is love and unity. We said many things which came to one thing that touched me. We have to have awareness: not just awareness to be taught, but also in action. We need to be shown, and then show the way. We have to raise our voices and not fear to raise them. I think our forefathers also died because they spoke up. We got Independence. They had to fight for it. So we have to fight for this. Whatever we need, we have to fight for.

Awareness is needed to stop Kenyans hating each other on a tribal basis. We should learn to treat each other not according to our faiths but according to being Kenyans.

I'm similar to other Kenyans as I can have an ID like other Kenyans, stay anywhere in Kenya like any Kenyan and go to the same schools like any other Kenyan. And again, we speak the same languages, Kiswahili and English, just like most Kenyans. We are similar in all rights because I have a

right to access any Government office just like any other Kenyan here.

My Body Map - "I Pray for Peace"

"Someone in power at the top may be from your tribe but you will sleep hungry unless you work hard."

Speaking of body mapping, it is something I have never experienced before. I'm an artist but have never done this. I thought there was going to be a model that was going to stand before us. But it was quite different. When we came here it was explained to us that we were to lie down in our chosen position, so I chose this posture. I didn't know we were going to be asked to hang them up like this. It appears like I'm running. It was okay when I painted with my eyes open, but the exercise with closed eyes was also something I had never tried before. It was a good experience to know how blind people work and think.

What I am praying for is peace. I have shown here the colour red, signifying the blood that has been poured in Kenya. Not only in Lamu but other places as well through terrorism and the like. It is not only the Somali terrorists who have the wrong teaching: it may also be the teachings we have here in Kenya that contribute. Radicalization is not tribal but cuts across all tribes whether Kikuyu, Mluhya or from Western. As long as youngsters are given money, they will do the same. So we need to preach peace, not just to pray and sit. This is why I have painted my entire body on fire like it is burning inside. I think in most people, there's a fire burning in them. Everybody wants peace but they have to have a voice to speak it out aloud.

On my body map, there is my happy moment which was when we went to vote for Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta as a young person. We thought Kenya could be a nice place and that things would work very well. But that didn't happen.

It doesn't matter if you are a Kikuyu, rich or poor. We are all still Kenyans and that is what we should still have and keep in our minds. During my childhood, we used to be

happy and if given a choice, I would go back to my childhood. I would turn the years to go back but this is not possible. We used to play outside under the moon. I doubt if people can still play outside: it was only in Lamu that people could stay outside at night. Yesterday I came to a realization that there's something I'm missing that I wish I could go back to, because life is different today. We used to stay outside till midnight, playing and making fire outside. Nowadays you can't and children can't play outside, we used to go to the neighbours to eat there. We told our Mum we had eaten. But nowadays if children come to you, they are told to go back home when it is time to eat. No one shares food with a neighbour's children like before. Upcountry, people only stay near the fire because they are cold.

What I would like for Kenya is the peace that we had before and the unity, the togetherness. We should also vote truly, not waiting for people to give us money to go and vote for them. Anyone who gives money shouldn't be voted for. We should instead vote for a person who we know will help us go beyond what we have gone through.

I think the power or devolution that was brought here to the County brings even more corruption than in the past. Something small can be built and then the Governor or whoever is in control of the money can inflate the cost - say from two million to thirty million. So corruption is even greater than we expected.

This is what I would like to see in 2017: a country that will vote without money inducements, without tribal bias. A country that will vote for a person because he is capable of doing what you want and who can bring back the security that we had and not just vote for money. That is what I would like to see.

One thing I wish people to know is that politics is a dirty game. In Kenyatta's time, I was in school and then Moi came without elections, He just took over and everybody had to follow. But there was peace. When Kibaki came and with him, the new Constitution, we expected that this time the Constitution would be followed. But the Constitution is there just as a book: it is not being followed. I was happy for Uhuru to be chosen because he is a young person. We thought the others had to give way because of their old age.

What makes me different from other Kenyans is firstly I'm a Kikuyu. As we have different tribes in Kenya, that might make me feel a bit different. Sometimes you might feel discriminated against or feared. So that makes me a little bit different. I'm different also because where I come from we have got schools which are better taken care of - more schools than in Lodwar and other places like Lamu. There is a big difference between upcountry and here.

Another thing is that I'm aware that there is more security in other places than where I come from, and not enough security in a place like here, or like Mandera or Garissa and other places.

Another difference is that some people do not have the knowledge or confidence to go to Government offices, because they haven't been educated and don't have the awareness. I can go to any office and speak out. Some are afraid because they cannot speak for themselves. If you have confidence, you know that you can speak and your voice will be heard. But when you are fearful, you wouldn't have any confidence to go to any office for help, unless you do so through another person. I have that awareness and confidence that others do not have here.

My suggestion is that we should stop the 'blame game' on a tribal basis. We need to fight for one thing, all of us together: then we shall win! But if we are divided, all of us will lose - just like Somalia. There are just two clans there. They could easily come together but they are fighting for power.

Lastly, someone in power at the top may be from your tribe but you will still sleep hungry unless you work hard. We should have this mentality and take it out to people. We should tell them we don't have to choose the leadership on a tribal basis: instead, we have to look for a person who is better for that position and if a person is not performing, change him. We need a person who can lead us to peace, jobs, security, education and equality for all.

I have learned a lot of things from all of you here. I have listened to all of you, we sat and ate together in love and I wish that love would go even beyond that. ◀



"Untitled", Nairobi 2014

➤ *This self-portrait was painted by a young, enterprising businessman, living in Mukuru Lungu Lungu, a slum area of Nairobi. He is a devout Muslim from the Borana community.*

"If a horse competes with a donkey, it too will get used to farting. In the same way, the good members of Parliament who were elected will be affected by the bad ones who will teach them bad habits."

I am proud of the love and unity that Kenyans have for each other during times of disaster, for example with Westgate. However, the Sinai disaster was one in which Kenyans did not unite: maybe it was because the people affected were poor and from the slum areas.

We have a discriminatory Government. I am made unhappy by the members of Parliament and the police. The MPs increase their salaries whenever they want to, and I have no way of stopping them. There is a saying: "If a horse competes with a donkey, it too will get used to farting". In the same way, the good members of Parliament who were elected, will be affected by the bad ones who will teach them bad habits. Change in Parliament is difficult to make because the same bad MPs get voted back in.

I was born in the slum and later I moved to a rural area. We have a water shortage at home and when it rains we have to harvest the water.

When I was younger, my in-laws took care of me. The most important memory I have of living in the rural area was when cattle rustlers stole our cattle and one young boy from our area was killed. Without understanding the danger we were putting ourselves in, we chased after the rustlers who shot at us. I survived and we rescued the cattle.

This picture shows how I am now. It depicts my disappointment in the current Government. They are keeping us hungry. I don't want to talk too much about politics in case I am misunderstood. However, in the future, I would like a good life for my children. I have a one-year-old right now. I would like to be able to educate my children even without being extremely wealthy.

My Body Map - "Untitled"

"I have warned people that they should stop being corrupt, because this is what is killing Kenya."

The most important thing I have learned through this body mapping process is how to use colour. Now I know that every colour has its meaning and that I can express myself with colour. I would like to keep my body map as well as to share it. In my childhood, I did not have any challenges. That is why I used dull colours. Where challenges begin, I bring in the colour black. I am in a place in my life right now that is not great, but not too bad. I am heading for a brighter future.

In my life timeline, I have marked the beginning of multi-partyism in 1992; post-electoral violence in 2007/2008; when we got our new Constitution in 2012, and 2013 when Devolution and the County system was implemented. The County system is good but people just don't know how it functions yet.

I have warned people that they should stop being corrupt because this is what is killing Kenya. I drew an eye in my head to show that I am watching people. ◀



"Her Excellency Sharifa", Lamu 2015

➤ *This lady comes from Lamu and is a Lamu County Councillor. She hopes to become Madam President.*

"And if an incident like Mpeketoni (God forbid!) happens again, you can come to my place and hide yourself: and vice versa."

I'm from Lamu, an island off the Kenya coast. Our main industry is fishing using a dhow. We also have mangrove trees. This is what Lamu looks like. I was reminded of my childhood experiences with my friends, using firewood to cook rice. I also tried to remember the games we played outside, like skipping rope with my friends. We ensured that we played near our homes, as we were not allowed to go far away because we were girls.

As a Councillor, I'm here with both my arms up, speaking and listening to the voice of both the weak people and the strong ones in my community, and seeing where there is real need.

The things I hate or am not proud of in Kenya are the inequitable sharing of jobs. Also, there is a lot of corruption in documentation of ID cards or passports. It is a big problem for Bajunis living in Kenya. Another thing that makes me hate Kenya is tribalism. There's a lot of tribalism. We Bajunis, we have our own culture and when we meet other people, they have a feeling that we don't like them. They feel that we are trying to sideline them. That is very wrong. We Bajunis have been marginalized for

so long in terms of education, lifestyle, and in job creation that we are not considered part of Kenya.

Another big issue is land grabbing, especially by those people coming from upcountry who grab our land here in Lelana, Manda and Sasi. I hate anybody who comes from outside to grab my land! They have their own home: why do they come here? We are not going to their places! That place called home is the person's homeland, the place of origin. What about my children, where are they going to live? Do we have to do the same in Nyeri? In Isiolo? It would be the same thing. Personally, I'm clean and often speak out against grabbers.

I want us to understand that we are all Kenyans, all Africans, living in one country, and that we have been here for a long time. So the recent differences brought about by people from other counties should not be the reason for the divisions and animosity between us. Let us live as we always have. This will enable us to go into offices or to visit each other without fear, for we are sisters, Kenyans and friends. And if an incident like Mpeketoni (God forbid) happens again, you can come to my place and hide yourself: and vice-versa.

My Body Map - "Her Excellency Sharifa"

"I remember very well that at school there were two types of drawing. You drew through observation or imagination: but I have now come to understand that there's also an inner way of drawing using an inner eye."

I remember very well that at school there were two types of drawing. You drew through observation or imagination: but I have now come to understand that there's an inner way of drawing using an inner eye. You can also draw while closing your eyes.

What pleased me most in this workshop was the section on my aspirations. I drew the Lamu County logo showing my aspiration to become Madam President in 2017. Body mapping has interested me so much. I didn't know we were to use canvas to draw; I thought we were to be

drawn standing. The canvas was plain and white, I lay down here in the position I wanted and my partner drew my body outline. I lay down wearing a buibui.

I have shown what we use for fishing. I said I want to be the voice of the weak people because in 1997, I was the first Lady Councillor to be elected here. Right now, I'm aiming higher: to be "Her Excellency." To stand up and speak, that is why you see me in this position in my body map. My hand is showing my aiming higher to touch the sky. Two fingers symbolize peace following historical injustices witnessed in Lamu and other places. I also show my tears. This is how our earth looks. We need peace to reduce deaths. So we need peace on earth.

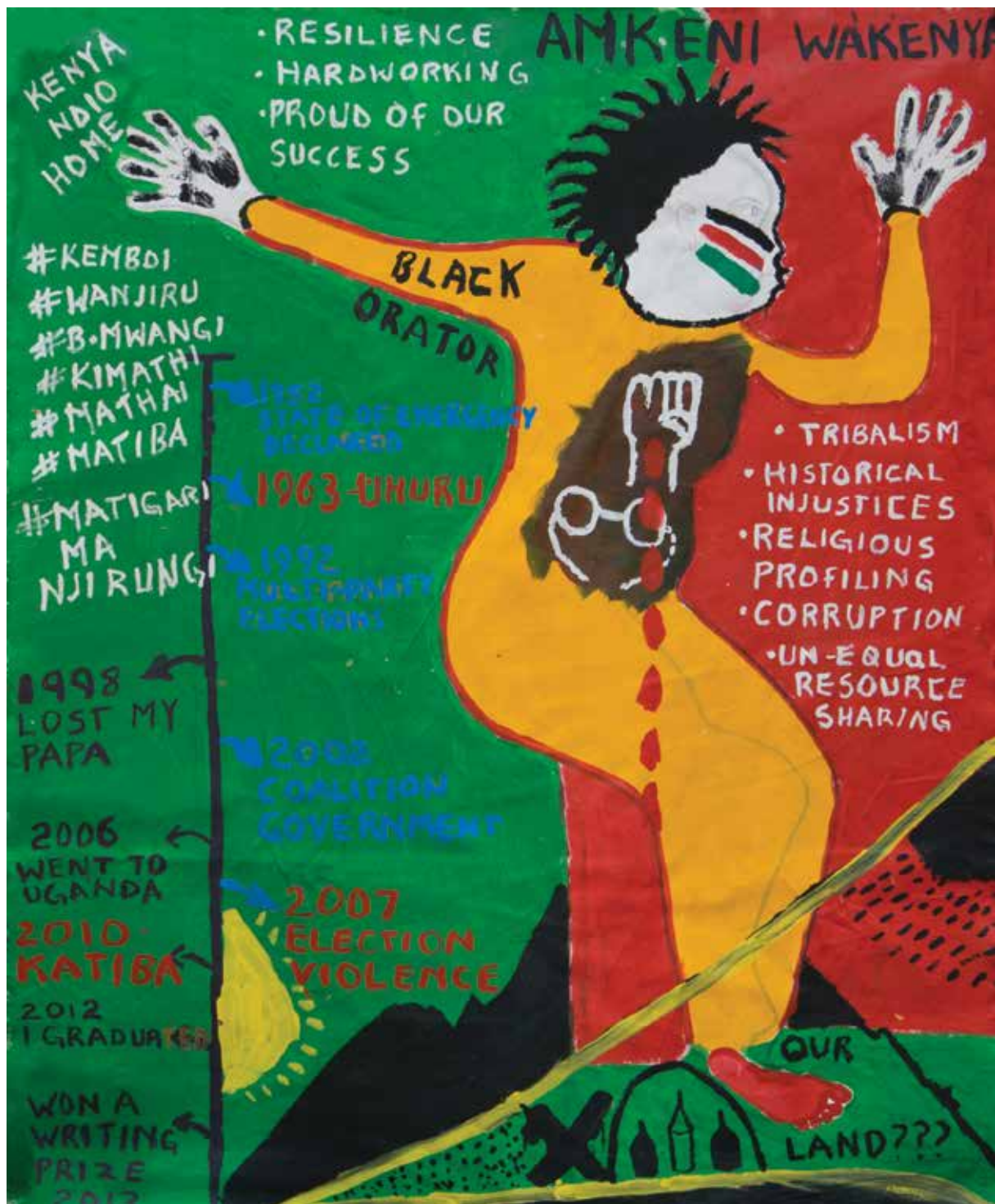
I thank God that I'm blessed, that when I stand up to speak, people listen to me and respond. Whenever I knock on office doors, they listen to me and assist. I have got so many ways of speaking to people, whether through platforms, through composing poems, at wedding ceremonies, or when people are mourning. Those are the chances where we meet and speak.

I am not a painter. I knew I was an artist but practically never drew anything. I'm used to pencils and crayons but not water colours, which have proved to be the best. It is a hard exercise but very good. In this room, I had a lot of practice and have been helped by my friends here to paint and use colours and symbols to come up with a very beautiful piece. We have mixed black, red and yellow to come up with this brown colour here.

I just want to comment again on the issue of peace. Nowadays, all over Kenya's coastal regions as well as up-country, there's no peace at all. You will hear that in Nairobi there was a bomb blast. A month later you hear of another one in Nakuru. The same applies to other places in the country, like Mombasa, Lamu and Garissa. So let us unite and find the ways and means of creating peace.

I'm proud of being Kenyan because it is my homeland, my country, and I love it. There's also freedom of life, you can live any life you feel like living. There's peace

in Kenya because of the young and energetic President we have. The people in Kenya are my people, from my community, we speak the same language; we have the same culture, the same lifestyle. There's justice in Kenya and patriotism, so I feel I belong to Kenya. ◀



"Amkeni Wakenya", Nyeri 2015

➤ *The artist is a young woman who studied in Uganda. She lives and works as a lawyer in Nyeri.*

"I felt safer in Kisumu than I did in Nakuru because of my skin colour. I thought having a skin colour associated with the Luo would make me feel much safer in Nyanza as compared to Nakuru."

The saddest moment came in 2008, specifically on the 16th of January 2008. That is the day I wish I could forget - but I cannot forget. I keep on telling this story to everyone who cares to listen because I believe it makes a difference. I was a student in Uganda and my mother could not afford to pay the air ticket for me to travel to Kampala. She said: "I'm going to put you in a bus, an Akamba bus, and I hope you get to Kampala safely." Most of my friends had the luxury of flying to Kampala. I was seated next to the driver on the bus. I remember traveling to Nakuru. There was a convoy with very heavy security and many vehicles so that we would be safe on the road.

The vehicle in front us was an army vehicle and it had children in it. I don't know why those children were in that truck, but they did not have their parents with them and they were crying. Inside were army men with guns, with the crying children. The truck was half covered, and I kept wondering why the kids were in an army truck without their parents, and why they were crying. The army men were so cold. There was no mother's touch, like cuddling a baby. They just sat there and the children continued crying.

I felt safer in Kisumu than I did in Nakuru because of my skin colour. I thought having a skin colour associated with the Luo would make me feel much safer in Nyanza as compared to Nakuru. My mother asked me to call her when I had made it past Nakuru, to let her know I had got through safely.

I don't know what we can do about the ethnic differences, but we have to start somewhere. Isn't it possible to look at my friend and think that even though you are Luo, even though you are from another part of the country,

I respect you, I appreciate who you are; I celebrate who you are and forge ahead? That to me would help. It won't solve everything but it would go a long way to addressing the negative impact of what ethnicity has done to this country.

My Body Map - "Amkeni Wakenya"

"Yellow symbolizes the hope that I have for my country; hope that is rooted deep within my heart as part of my belief in the community."

I used rich earth colours to show how I feel and relate to my country. The rich green colour symbolizes the green environment that is the identity of my village. Red shows the struggles that we as the Kenyan people have gone through since before Independence. It signifies the blood that was shed for our freedom and the blood that continues to spill in the face of modern day injustices such as the post-election violence of 1997, 2002 and 2007, and the injustices of the unequal distribution of our collective wealth as a country. Yellow symbolizes the hope that I have for my country, a hope that is rooted deep within my heart as part of my belief in the community. The bloody spot inside the body map (near the heart) is a reminder that even though I remain hopeful and optimistic that better things will happen for Kenya, I cannot forget the bitter struggles of tribalism, ethnic hate and violence that have rocked my country.

The jagged-edge hair is similar to that of Dedan Kimathi's when he was in the forest fighting in the Mau Mau war. It means that we will wait for our freedom before we comb or cut off our hair. The fist denotes the courage that soldiers have to have in order to make my country better. Down at the foot of my body, the mountain denotes where I come from: Central Kenya, where my roots are grounded. The small house shows the continued poverty levels of my people despite having been liberated more than 50 years ago. The fenced lands express the unequal distribution of land and wealth where the rich have taken everything for themselves and the poor have been left with nothing.

"Amkeni Wakenya" is a rallying call to all the Kenyans to wake up and boldly go forth to demand more for their country. The phrase is derived from the words of the Kenya National Anthem, which calls for all Kenyans to arise boldly and work hard in building the nation. My interpretation, however, means rising up to continue with the struggles that we face as a society, to point out the evils of society and demand justice where need be. ◀



"The Wisdom of the Past", Lamu 2015

➤ This body map was created by a young man in Lamu who is an acrobat and a fisherman.

"The thought that the Government does everything for us has been changed. A feeling of being oppressed has also been lifted. Now, I am more realistic."

Yesterday, I experienced self-discovery through various activities here. The thought that the Government does everything for us has been changed. A feeling of being oppressed has also been lifted. Now, I am more realistic.

We were asked if we were proud of being Kenyan, to which I affirm, yes, I'm proud of having been born here and of having a National ID. When I lay down to be drawn, I chose the colours of the Kenyan flag, the red, black, white and green. All these have a meaning.

I have the freedom to go wherever I want as long as I can afford it. Comparing Kenya with our neighbors, I feel we have Independence. Although there are still a few issues, we feel safer than people in Somalia. For example if I choose to perform my acrobatics in a public place here, no one will interfere with me.

I'm not proud of our tribalism. Tanzania is very un-tribal; Tanzanians are nationalistic and patriotic. We should emulate them. I also dislike religious strife, and political oppression between the ruling party and the opposition.

My Body Map - "The Wisdom of the Past"

"There is a difference between me and the rich in my locality in terms of means and abilities. In the eyes of the Government we are similar, but in other ways we are very different."

I like karate, acrobatics and crafts and art; those are my hobbies now. I was so pleased with the chance to come and draw. When I got here, things were not as I expected. I realized the exercise was about drawing wisdom - and how do you draw wisdom? By remembering the past, thinking about the future and thinking about the present.

Before I went to school, I learned that the more you know the more you grow. In those days, people valued each other. Children were educated by the community and not by the parents alone. People used to tell each other stories that were very important in human development. It was through stories that people were encouraged to remember the good rather than the bad. There is no more communal storytelling as a means of teaching each other. You either go to school for education, or, if you are unlucky with education, then you are condemned to a bad situation forever. Some of those stories (which I had almost forgotten) came back to me during this body mapping. That is why my body map is called "The Wisdom of the Past."

I have drawn both a mosque and a church. In the past, people integrated, intermarried and bore children. Religions came through cultural exchanges with travelers. Every African was a brother to the other. If I leave today for Europe and on reaching there, I see you - a black person - I will see you as my fellow-African. On introduction, I might find that you are Kenyan regardless of which part of Kenya you are from. You will feel you have found a brother in a foreign land. I have used natural vegetation and structures to signify such a lack of racial problems.

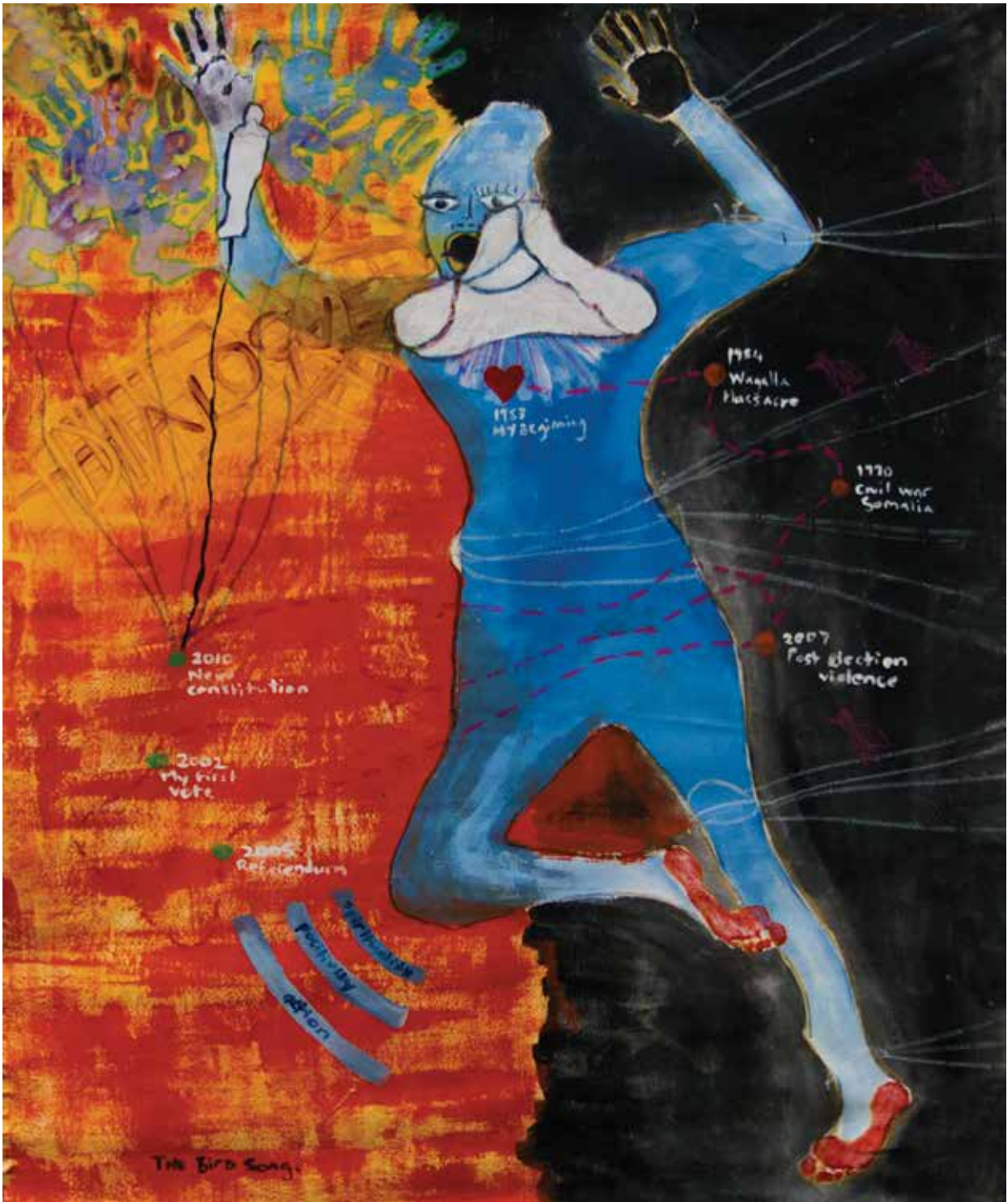
Although some evils were done by Governments, very few paid for those evils. I think the problem came with multi-party politics when people started weighing up

and expecting much from each other politically. This competitiveness bred hatred amongst us. One result is that commodities become expensive. In former times, people used to buy from each other or give each other whatever they wanted with or without money. For example, if you could not travel for lack of money, someone would offer to pay for you. But nowadays even if you own a vehicle, you still need money.

Governments used to be stable and lasted longer. Governments used to do good things, like giving children milk. Today Government changes so fast that it brings nothing good. Today people are looking for money and are becoming money-people. Everyone is rushing around and competing for political office. It has become a business. If you want evil, money is available for you to do evil. That is why you see people doing great harm. People are individualistic, focusing on who they want to be instead of which business they should be doing. Budgets used to be done to check uniformity in commodity prices. No more! Now we purchase the same commodities at different prices in the same country. There is a difference between me and the rich in my locality in terms of means and abilities. In the eyes of the Government we are similar, but in other ways, we are very different.

Money is against humanity. Money makes the system. Humanity has devolved and no one seems to care. Change can only be brought about by the spread of these messages. Exercises like this body mapping should be used to remind people of certain issues, and it should reach more places. Thinking about good produces continuing good, but evil thinking kills the good.

In my body map, I have represented the passing on of information by a speaker. I wish body mapping could be done every year, not just once in a lifetime. My desire is for peace to increase. We need to reach the point of celebrating our African identity, not just our Kenyan nationality. In my body map, this aspiration is represented by an airplane. ◀



"Birdsong", Nairobi 2013

➤ *The creator of this body map is a Kenyan woman of Somali origin.*

"I come from this safe grounded space."

I come from this blue shape in the middle; it is a shape that has come out in my mind many times in the last six months. I kept drawing it over and over again and painting it. I really didn't have a place; I really didn't have a home: but I definitely associated the shape with air and a sense of freedom. This was the first image that came to my mind when asked the question: "Where is your place of origin?" I identify strongly with it: and then I added a nice pink cushion which represents the cushioning and the protection and shelter I got from my family and cultural upbringing. I come from this safe grounded space.

The important moment in my life, and how it could relate to Kenyan history, occurred when I was seven. A civil war broke out in Somalia and all my extended family came to stay with us here, in Nairobi. A total of 29 people moved into our house. Until then, I had absolutely no concept of nationality. As a kid, there wasn't a dialogue around who I was and where I came from. I had never known fear but when all these people moved into our house, I remember being afraid for the first time.

"The question: 'Am I Kenyan?' stuck with me all evening and what I came up with at night was that

we are whatever is convenient; to make life work, we are whatever we want to be in a particular moment."

We - all the participants of this workshop - agreed to be here. We agreed that there's a lack of humanity; we agreed there are a lot of things that need to change, and after a day-and-a-half of contemplation, I felt hopeless. Where are the stumbling blocks for dialogue? So many things are wrong! I was wondering what to do.

This painting process was really therapeutic. It was a solution. Instead of being bombarded with all the frustrations we shared, I ended up feeling very good. I started by feeling that Kenya was going downhill: but now, three days later, I'm going home with a lighter feeling. We are each taking a baby step forward, one step at a time, on the issues that plague us.

The question: "Am I Kenyan?" stuck with me all evening and what I came up with at night was that we are whatever is convenient; in order to make life work, we are whatever we want to be in a particular moment. If I need to feel Kenyan in a particular situation, then I am a Kenyan. If I feel I need to be from north-eastern Kenya, then that is my identity. I think all Kenyans have to decide in the moment whether to align themselves tribally, or nationally: or whether to remove themselves from the issue. We have to be chameleons in order to survive.

My Body Map - "Birdsong"

"It is a bird coming out of darkness with specific words in its mouth and trying to make a difference."

I painted my outline blue. It looks like a figure in flight and blue is symbolic of movement as I'm always on the go; always in the air. I painted what started as a necklace under my face. It is a shape that I imagined when asked about my origin. It is a bird coming out of darkness with specific words in its mouth and trying to make a difference.

I painted black which represents all the negative things we highlighted earlier – such as corruption, the injustices of our political system - and I made the other side into the light, into where we want to go. Then, I painted in thin lines like wires which initially represented me being held back in a dark place. Now, I see the wires as being all the numerous telephone wires we have in Nairobi (especially in more densely populated areas) with birds on them as observers.

People talking and chatting - as in this workshop - is the next step for me; moving off this holding line; moving forward into the future we need. I came up with the word 'dialogue' painted in yellow, as one of the words that I thought was really important in defining this process. Another word that came into my mind the day before yesterday is: 'togetherness'. That is how I want Kenya to be; a place of togetherness. That is what all these hands represent.

When I started my timeline, I began with when I was born. When I heard of the Wagalla Massacre, I remember it reinforced the fear I had; the intolerance and the feeling of being different. The civil war in Somalia in 1990 enhanced my fear. In 2002, I voted for the first time for a President and in 2005, I voted for the referendum. Then, with the new Constitution, came the post-election violence of 2007/2008. In my painting, I kept all the negative things on this side and the positive ones on the other side. I included the balloons that marked those days. I feel I am

holding onto them, flying away into a better and more hopeful space.

I picked out some words I had thought of before, like 'spirituality' and 'positivity': and then I added 'action.' All these words are guiding me forward: but nothing is possible without action. ◀



"Bobo at 50", Nairobi 2014

➤ *The artist is 29 years and was raised by a single parent, his father. In his childhood, he lived in an orphanage. Today, he is unemployed and hustles to make ends meet.*

"I see myself as an artist, a role model and a Christian. Other people see me as a Mrasta, a hard-knock and a weed smoker."

I am proud to be a Kenyan. Especially because every Kenyan eats ugali and it is from my home area that we plant the maize and sell it to you to make your ugali. Another thing is the national anthem which calls us to unite. About Kenya, I don't like the fact that we have two groups, the rich and the poor. Those few rich people control everything.

I am different from other Kenyans in that we are from different ethnic groups. We are the same in that we speak the same national language, Kiswahili. I see myself as an artist, a role model and a Christian. Other people see me as a Mrasta, a hard-knock and a weed smoker.

This exercise in Body Mapping has really challenged me. I have been able to look at my past in order to look at myself anew and what my future plans need to be. I have taught myself a new way to live with people, in harmony, and this has come about from our discussions. I have never sat down to think about the things that we discussed in this process.

My body map - 'Bobo at 50'

"These pangas (machetes) are the ones that killed people. It was not bullets that killed. I have drawn a skull in the head to represent the times I have felt sad - when people have fought. It means that people died. When I see Kenyans turn against each other, it makes me feel sad."

I will remember forever the last three days that we have been here. I would like my words and my body map to reach all Kenyans and to inspire them. This process has helped me grow in my thoughts and feelings. Everything I have drawn and the colours I have chosen, all represent how I feel. One part of my body map shows light and the other part darkness. It represents the way I am. 80% of me is open hearted. A large part of me is pure even though there are some dark things about me. I am rooted in a place called Emuhaya, a place where people "aim higher." I have used the colour green to represent the fertility of Emuhaya where we plant maize and other crops. As I continue to grow, I face new challenges. Sometimes I feel those challenges are more than I can handle. In this painting, my challenges are this big character that overshadows me, the smaller character.

I am proud to be a Kenyan because of our wildlife and natural resources. I am a person who loves harmony. Despite the 'ethnicism', we are all Kenyans, there is no difference between myself and them. What makes us different is poverty and wealth, but before God, there are no poor or rich people, we are all equal. We should live that way.

Looking back, I was born into multi-party system, it existed before me. I found it here. I was in Nairobi when I experienced the post-election violence. I saw people being carried by ambulances, some of them dying. These pangas (machetes) are the ones that killed people. It was not bullets that killed. I have drawn a skull in the head to represent the times I have felt sad - when people have fought. It means that people died. When I see Kenyans turn against each other, it makes me sad. In 2011, there was a fire that broke out in Mukuru-Sinai and we lost

people. I lost people I knew and people who were friends of mine and I still feel this loss. In 2013, with this Jubilee government, I have seen a difference. There is development and they continue to inspire me. The Government works. In those other regimes, the taxes on key items went up, and from time to time, Mungiki erupted, there were many scandals. Since Jubilee took over, I have not heard about any scandals.

I have not talked about my future in this body map as it remains unfinished. My future will be in my hands. It is a good place to be. I will accept this and accept to live in Mukuru despite its dangers because I have nowhere else to go. I positioned my body this way because I was wondering what to do with my body on this artwork. ◀



"Together We Can", Nairobi 2014

➤ *This body map was created by a teacher who lives and works in the Eastleigh area of Nairobi. He is in his twenties.*

"Kenyan nationalism is a feeling of love and attachment to a particular grouping of people who are Kenyan. I am similar to other Kenyans because I identify myself as a Kenyan."

When we hear the national anthem, we feel an emotion that reminds us that you we are Kenyan. Our values also make us similar. We value marriage, respect for other people's property and morality. Even a thief is a fellow Kenyan and he himself will still expect others to respect his property.

There is no single food dish that represents all Kenyans. Grains are staple foods for the Kikuyu and Meru; the Luo and people from the Coast have fish as the staple, while people from Turkana have sorghum. In the cities, working families prefer rice and stew. It is only in food preference that I notice a difference between myself and other Kenyans.

For the last few days, I have learned that I can draw. My work has summarized what has happened in my life and Kenya. I have had an opportunity to think about how I see myself and how others see me.

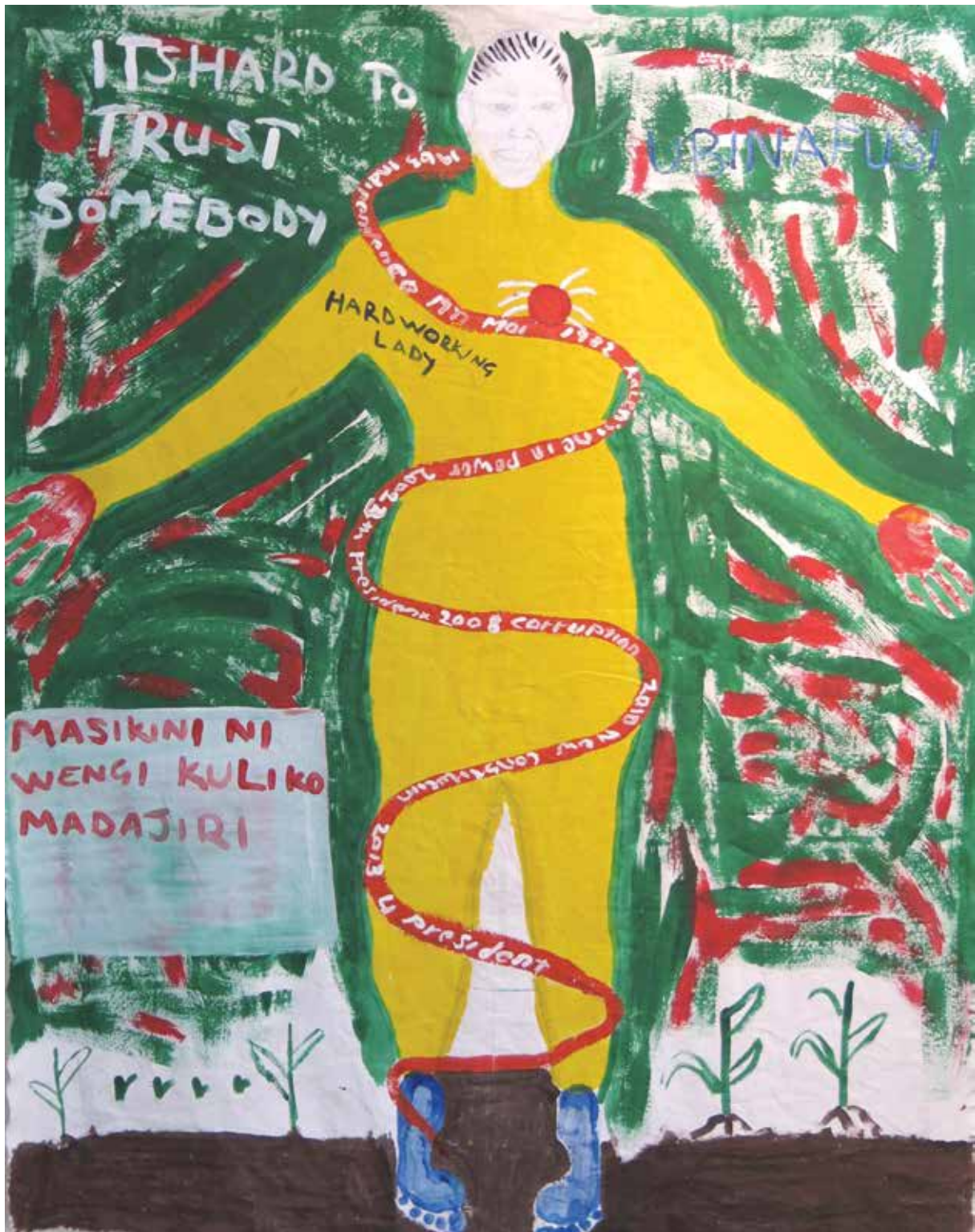
My Body Map - "Together We Can"

"My hands are yellow to show good things. They are raised to show that I am clean. I am open to anyone who wants to approach me."

This picture shows my life since childhood. There is a traditional house, with an old man with a cane and a woman carrying a basket on her head. There are animals, rivers and trees. There is a transition period that shows me sitting reading a newspaper; it shows a modern house, not a thatch-roofed hut. I see myself as tall, black and hardworking. I am strong. I am slim, kind, polite and generous.

There is a flag of Kenya with people with different religions holding hands to show togetherness. The people are also listening keenly to leaders and showing interest in what the leader is saying. They support him. From 2007, I started voting and in 2010 we got the new Constitution. It was important to all Kenyans. In 2011 'Operation Linda Nchi' began. In 2012, there was the Baragoi massacre where over 40 policemen were killed. In 2013, Kenya underwent Devolution. Currently in 2014, we are facing the referendum – Okoa Kenya. These dates are important to me.

I have a shirt with orange spots which I like. I also like checked shirts. My background is blue to represent our blue skies and the future of Kenya. My hands are yellow to show good things. They are raised to show that I am clean. I am open to anyone who wants to approach me. ◀



"Hardworking Lady", Nairobi 2013

► *"Hardworking Lady" was created by a domestic worker who is in her thirties, born and raised in Western Kenya. She migrated to Nairobi. She has two children.*

"Me, I love everyone - but I hate the way some of us treat others."

I was born in Kakamega in Western Kenya. I grew up and was schooled there till primary level when my parents moved to Kitale where they are still today. When I came to Nairobi I stayed at my cousin's place till I decided to have my own house.

My dream for Kenyans is that they should learn to love each other and break tribal hatred. We need to be united. People need to repent and return to God. There are a lot of bad deeds committed by Kenyans. Me, I love everyone - but I hate the way some of us treat others.

"Speaking about laws won't do the trick."

Here in Kenya there are so many things happening: but then everyone is involved in his/her own thing. Speaking about laws won't do the trick. I think in order for us to be one, we must follow the laws. We need to encourage discipline in people. I believe following the laws can eradicate even corruption and unite us as a people.

My Body Map - "Hardworking Lady"

"The ordinary people who never had any political leadership roles in their bloodline will never be leaders."

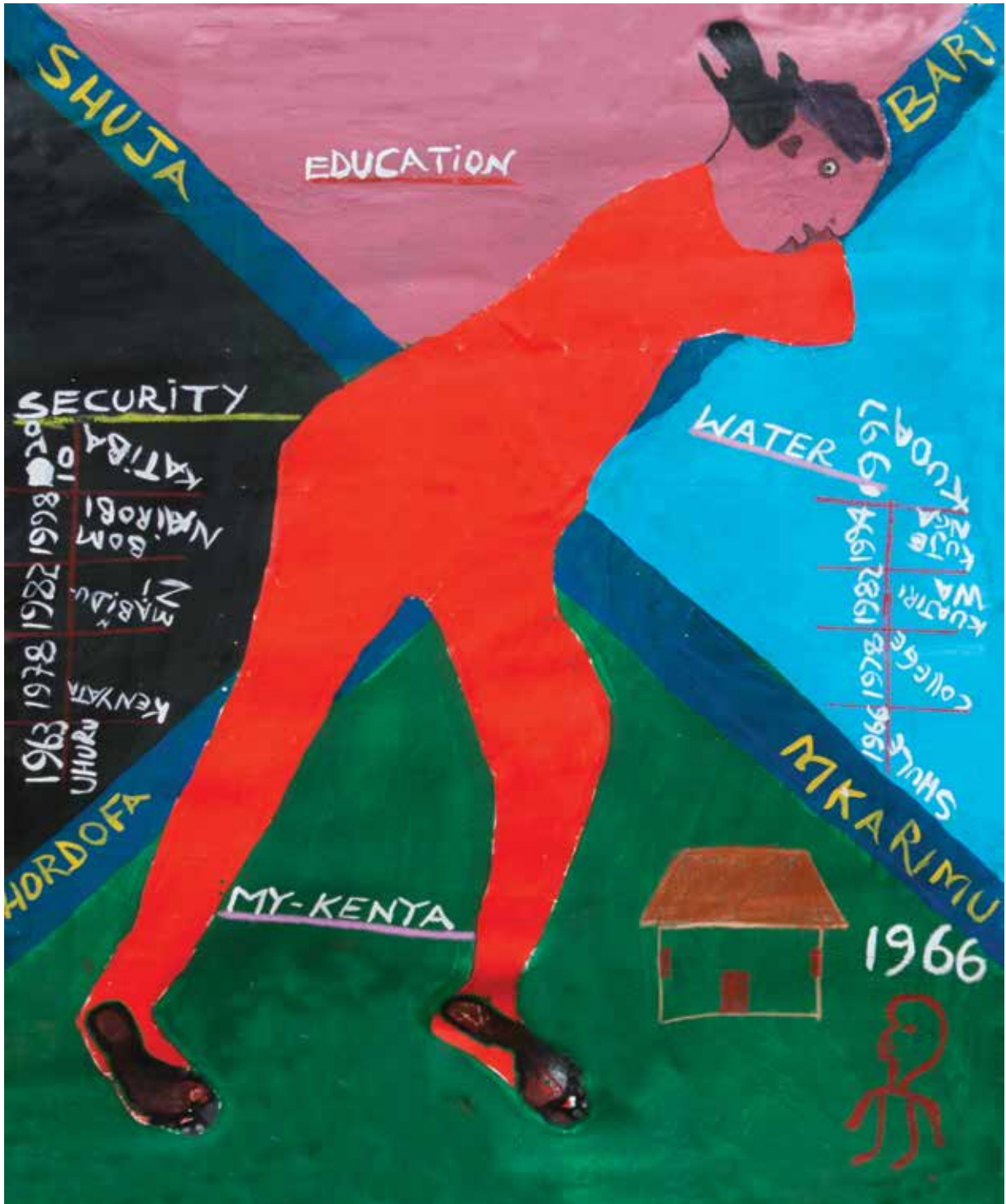
I have mixed green and white paints, because I met many of the different kinds of people we have in our country. We have both good and bad people. You can be with someone and discuss or agree on certain things but later that person dishonours your agreement. You can't really know someone's real intent. That is why it is difficult to trust anybody.

These colours mean a lot of things: in Kenya, we have more poor people than rich ones. The poor seem to

remain so forever without hope of change. It is because the rich continue accumulating wealth. This happens through nepotism at places of work so the wealth rotates within given family lines while the poor remain outside the system. That is why there is such a high poverty rate. This also happens with political leadership, it tends to rotate in particular families. The ordinary people who never had any political leadership roles in their bloodline will never be leaders.

Another problem is individualism: everyone is self-reliant, independent of each other. People are always concerned with personal welfare but not with that of the next person. In 1963, Kenya got Independence. It is a long time ago but until today, I do not see any difference. We are still the same, yet we speak of Independence.

In 1977, Moi took over power till 2002. In 1992, people in Uasin Gishu suffered greatly during those elections. There were thefts and tribal displacements. In 2002, we got our third President, Mwai Kibaki, and in 2008, some people behaved as if Kenya was a one-tribe country. They felt their tribe was superior to others. In 2010, we got a new Constitution, but we are yet to follow it. In 2013, we are still here and still going onwards. The journey continues. We don't know what the future holds but I wish for positive changes. ◀



"Hodofa", Isiolo 2014

➤ *A resident of Isiolo, this man was forced to go to school in 1966 by the Government of Kenya. Today, he is a community elder.*

"The truth has to be said: people have bought guns and fighting will escalate if we keep burying our faces in the sand. The Government is the inciter: our Government cannot say it doesn't know the truth about our boundaries."

My similarity to other Kenyans is that Kenya is me. I determine Kenya's history! I feel I'm not different from other Kenyans because everything depends on our own efforts - wealth, education and health, all depend on one's efforts. There are existing differences in Isiolo which arise from ignorance, especially with regard to boundaries and land.

We have cattle rustling, driven by greed – even to the extent of killing someone. Poor leadership causes all this. The leaders can stop it if they want. All tribal tension or in-fighting in Kenya is supported or sponsored by the leaders. This can be stopped if we sit down to dialogue and are truthful about it, and if our leaders stop being selfish. Today every leader uses his or her community to propagate evil. They need to be mindful of their people's welfare to bring about any change.

In Isiolo, cattle thieves are few and the leaders could stop them if they were willing. On boundaries, the

Government knows where the truth lies and they should come and reveal the true boundaries so people stop fighting. Things are going from bad to worse. Truth to tell, people have bought guns and fighting will escalate if we keep burying our faces in the sand.

"For the past 50 years, we saw no Government here, but we have seen it in the last year through the process of devolution. Within this year, Isiolo now has roads, hospitals and many other changes."

The Government is the inciter of violence because our Government cannot say it doesn't know the truth about our boundaries. Every county in Kenya has tensions with another county: even Nairobi may have issues with Machakos. Imagine if all the 47 counties decided to fight each other, would there still be a Kenya? Kenya is ours and we are brothers. I would suggest that the Government takes those issues that tend to divide us seriously. They should avoid the in-fighting within Kenyan communities. They should not leave the country to the dogs. We are paying them and they should work to save our country. Why should a boundary make people kill each other while there's freedom in Kenya to live and work wherever one desires? For the sake of cheap publicity, leaders fan the tensions. Just look at Lamu, Pokot, Baringo, Mandera, Moyale. Now Isiolo comes next in the trend. Why isn't the top leadership waking up to reality? Your child grows in the way you raise him. The County Governments are taking after the National Government, with similar traits of favouritism, tribalism, nepotism, corruption etc. It is education and goodwill that will effect change - but very gradually.

For the short period the devolved Government has been in existence, there are great changes in terms of development. There are a few officials with the old habits of stealing from public coffers but some officials are working hard. For the past 50 years, we saw no Government here, but we have seen it in the last year through the process of devolution. Within this year, Isiolo now has roads, hospitals and many other changes. This helps me with employment for myself and others.

I see that money or wealth rotate. I have three graduates unemployed. This is despite all I went through to educate them. In future, they may be employed and through that I will benefit. I'm an elder in the community and personally unemployed and without any business. At present, life is very difficult. Five years from now, I believe there will be progress.

We may call ourselves Kenyans without understanding how. What makes me Kenyan? I have realized what makes me Kenyan and secondly, I have understood my fellow Kenyans. I have also learnt my contribution towards nation building. I have realized I am the Nation and the Government and no one else can run this country but me. My efforts and determination create the Government.

My Body Map - "Hodofa"

"I have called my work 'Hodofa', which in my mother tongue means our efforts to build the nation. At every sunrise (bari), we should focus on our needs and thus help to build our nation."

My drawing represents four things. The green color is my country, Kenya. Blue represents my desire for Kenya to have water, education and enough security.

I was first taken to school in 1966 in Garba Tula. Thereafter I went to college and in 1982, I got a job. In

1994, I started building my house and I got married in 1997.

I remember Independence Day in 1963. In 1978, Mzee Kenyatta died and there was an attempted coup in 1982. There was a bomb blast in Nairobi in 1998 where we Kenyans experienced massive deaths; something we still wonder about to this day. In 2010, the new Constitution was proclaimed. In my map, I have included words like 'courage', 'confidence' and 'kindness'. I have also included the word 'bari', which in my mother tongue means 'sunrise'.

I'm grateful for the workshop. I didn't know I could draw this well, I was surprised to see the final product of my drawing for this is my first time to draw. I have called it 'Hodofa'. In my mother tongue, that means our efforts to build the nation. At every sunrise, we should focus on our needs and thus help to build the nation. ◀



"Masks and Idols", Nairobi 2014

➤ *The creator of this body map is an artist by profession. He was born and raised in Kenya, as were his parents. He grew up in the Parklands area of Nairobi.*

"I get offended if I am called a Muhindi. My newspaper vendor for many years used to call me 'Muhindi'. So I started calling him 'Mkikuyu'."

This is a really urgent time to make some changes in my life. My hands are instrumental in a lot of work that I do. They have seen it all! When I was five or six years old, I used to make baskets, pottery and batik. My two aunts, who attended Highridge Teacher Training College, were taught everything from using plaster of Paris to working with banana fibre. They made things at home and I felt very attracted to doing all of those things. This was the first part of my art training. I come from a colourful mess: Parklands – down the road.

I get offended if I am called a Muhindi. My newspaper vendor for many years used to call me 'Muhindi'. So I started calling him 'Mkikuyu'. People would ask why and I would say it is a reciprocal way of calling each other. For categorization, I guess I am a Muhindi. I am born of parents who have Indian lineage; they were born here. My grandparents had settled here as a married couple in Mombasa, at the ages of fourteen and fifteen respectively.

Bollywood has an amazing influence on me. The culture plays a role in my

being Muhindi. I assume that everybody is different and in those differences we could find similarities. I accept that people must have the same weirdness I have. I often wonder when people are driving cars and their heads are filled with the problems in their own worlds, how they still manage to steer a course along the road.

The difference between me and other Kenyans is not for me to figure out.

My Body Map - "Masks and Idols"

"I have family dispersed beyond Kenya. They still see themselves as Kenyans who have gone away to live in England."

I was ten years old when we gained Independence. I drew my impressions of Mau Mau. We heard about it and were terrified of anyone who had dreadlocks, even though we had Hindu gods and goddesses who had dreadlocks as well.

There are multitudes of people in my body map; ordinary people who are anonymous. Hopefully, they receive some sort of benefit from Independence. It is not clear if they have benefited or not: there seems to be a clamour all the time. There were words like 'Uhuru' and 'Harambee' which were powerful words, even at that time. What has always fascinated me about Kiswahili words is that they are exotic-sounding. I had two business enterprises with Kiswahili names, one named Kichaka and the other Ikweta. I have dealt with crafts and handicrafts. I have collections of masks and crafts. The idea of masks fascinates me almost as much as idols do. We were forced to recognize them in our childhood and religious education.

The bunting in my map represents how the city was decorated on Biashara Street at the time of Independence. My father had a business there and Nairobi was really well decorated. I think there should be some sort of revival of that to create a sense of nostalgia.

The beard represents me.

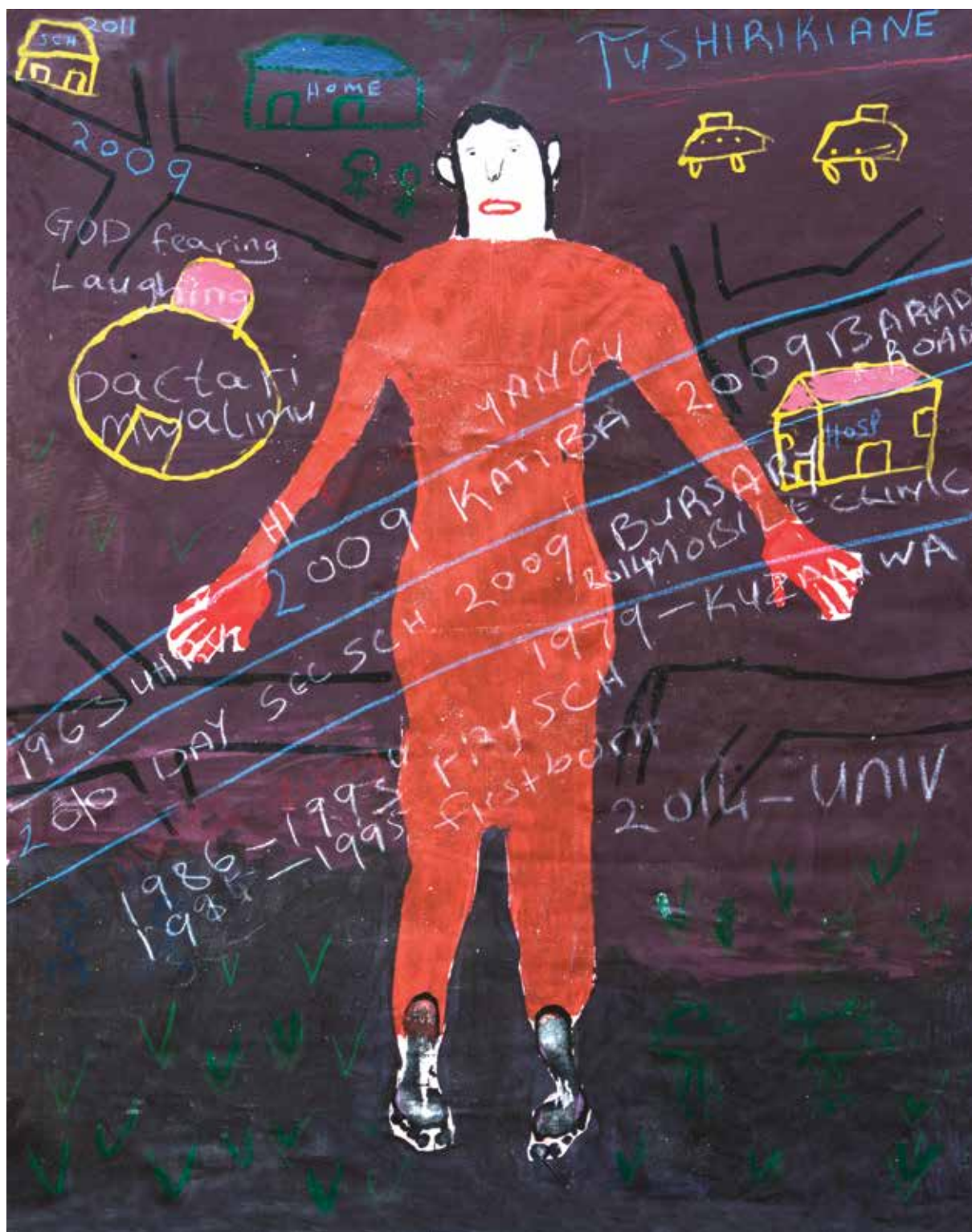
People perceive me to be like the 'Laughing Buddha,' because of my scale and demeanor. The Buddha-head for me is a mask/idol combination: inscrutable.

There are seven energy centres on my body map called 'chakras.' Seven was a favourite number of mine. My initial position was like a sloth under the influence of yoga. As a child I was tortured with yoga. I came from a family with bad eyesight and my grandfather was blind. I was sent to this woman who would stand me on my head in a corner, without my glasses, for an hour, so that my blood would rush to my eyes. It was not a hard exercise but it was the fact that I was propped in a corner of her living room while she went about her work that made it difficult for me.

I have put the lotus over my head, and a chakra. If you are very enlightened, you can see it. If you are not you can't. It represents the Third Eye. I also put in the Hindi red dot. The yellow outline is just as an artistic choice and it came out better than I expected.

I also tried to represent all the talk of Independence. I was aware of it but it was conducted in very worried terms. There was talk about Asians leaving Kenya to go to England. A lot of families made those decisions at that time. I have family dispersed beyond Kenya. They still see themselves as Kenyans who have gone away to live in England.

I loved the process of creating my body map; it took me out of my comfort zone. ◀



"Tushirikiane", Isiolo 2014

➤ *This body map was created by a 35- year-old community worker who works in Meru. She is a single mother.*

In primary school, I did art and craft and I am happy with this work. The questions asked are mentally challenging. The questions as to what makes me different or similar to other Kenyans looked like the same question. I was unable to come up with answers.

My Body Map - "Tushirikiane" (Let Us Work Together)

"When people used to talk about how to find Isiolo they used to say: 'Go to the end of the murram road. Where it ends is where Isiolo is.'"

This is my picture and it tells my story. Green means the colour of the land; red represents the blood spilled for peace. Brown and black represent the Africans. I am an African. I am God-fearing and I am a happy person. People think I am a teacher or doctor because of my work with the community. I am neither.

I won't ever forget that in 1963 we got independence. Then, in 2009, we got the Constitution. Also in 2009, a bursary was provided to help with development. It enabled children to go to secondary school and even university. In August 2009, we got mobile clinics and women can now deliver their babies safely. In 2010, Kibaki came into power and brought day schools to Isiolo. Before that, there were none.

I was born in 1979. Between 1986 and 1993, I went to primary and secondary school. I didn't finish school because I became pregnant with my first child. She is a girl and this year, I took her to university so she will never go through what I went through.

I have drawn a road because the roads were bad in the olden days. When people used to talk about how to find Isiolo, they used to say: "Go to the end of the murram road. Where it ends is where Isiolo is." Today, the road goes all the way to Merille. I have also drawn a hospital and a day school. I have put in houses that belong to the Borana and the Turkana. I want all the people to unite.

I want people to see my picture in order to understand what it means to be Kenyan. ◀



"Otieno in Kenya", Kisumu 2014

➤ *The artist is a young man in his thirties who lives in Kisumu. He was involved in the post-election violence of 2007/2008 in Kenya. He is now a peace activist.*

"I want to use this body map to pick on the negative aspects of my life so that I can see how to change them."

My Body Map - "Otieno in Kenya"

My experience in this workshop was excellent. I was told that we would be involved in drawing. I did not know that we would touch on issues affecting my life and my country. The line separates my personal life from the reflections on my country.

In 1985, the sun set on my birth, and in 2003, you can see a sad face. That is when I lost my Mum. In 2011, I got the opportunity to represent some youths in my sub-location. In 2007-2008, I experienced the post-election violence. The two hands in my painting are not together; they are pulling apart. It means that during that time, our country underwent a very negative experience. In 1991, there was clamour for the repeal of Section 2A, that guaranteed freedom of speech in Kenya. In 2010 there was the promulgation of the new Constitution. In 2008, I found the love of my life and then my first daughter. I was able to have a family! In 2011, I went back home to construct a house for them.

I decided to draw this picture to represent my country, Kenya. There is our flag. The green represents my relationship with nature. As the background, I used light blue to mean the sky. I used dark blue to represent justice. I chose white to mean that we need peace. Overall, in order to achieve this peace we need a clear justice system.

I am patient, non-violent, understanding, simple and God-fearing. I am discriminative and I can be aggressive. I have to find a way to deal with this. The outline is black to represent that I am an African. I chose yellow on the inner side to mean that I am not very dark even though I am an African. The white on my wrists means that I would like to be a peace champion.

I want to use this body map to pick on the negative aspects of my life so that I can see how to change them. Then, in the future, instead of me carrying the negative aspects, I can change them to be positive so that they can strengthen me. I didn't know I could do such a picture and I am surprised that I can hold a brush. ◀



"Wind of Change", Nairobi 2015

► *The artist is a member of one of the newest political parties in Kenya. Her grandfather was instrumental in Kenya attaining Independence. She believes in a better Kenya for all.*

"I never thought of having a black boyfriend, not because of any racism or thoughts against anyone black: it was just that despite having many black and mixed-race friends at school, I wasn't brought up sharing in the culture of black families."

In my preparatory boarding school, from the age of six to eleven, I didn't feel any difference between anyone in my year or class. We had Indians, Seychellois, Ugandans, Kenyans, Ethiopians and Whites. The first boy I ever held hands with was a Kenyan boy by the name of Stephen: I remember we had the same birthday. However, there is a colonial leftover, a cultural distinction, and it's something that I feel is still in my life. For much of my life I never thought of having a black boyfriend, not because of any racism or thoughts against anyone black: it was just that despite having many black and mixed-race friends at school I wasn't brought up sharing in the culture of black families.

In my home life, I had just four friends growing up; three were white and one was mixed-race. When I turned eleven and I was sent to boarding school in the UK, I found only two of the girls at school were black, from Zambia. I couldn't understand why there were so many white people. I

wasn't used to this at all!

My teenage years were made up very much of white people, and I didn't have many mixed cultural experiences during that time. My life was very much what my parents understood and who they mixed with. My father is white so I grew up with a role model of only white men. Not being deeply familiar with black Kenyan culture, I naturally wasn't attracted to having an intimate relationship with anyone whom I didn't completely understand. It wasn't until I began working as a photographer, where I mixed with both slum and high-class Kenyan cultures, that I really began to feel a part of Kenya.

My Body Map - "Wind of Change"

"My family came to Kenya in 1925 and in my timeline I picked just five very important strategic moments in my family history. If my family hadn't come here, I wouldn't have what I have now, so I'm extraordinarily grateful to them for having made that decision to come."

Yellow signifies my bright personality and outlook on life, in my reading I have learned that the colour signifies wisdom and this is the colour I felt I wanted to embody in order to continue the process of learning in life.

There had to be different chunks of colours for my hands and my feet; they needed to be complementary and not opposing. I needed at least two colours in there, so I chose an earthy orange for grounding and a deep calming blue. From then on the background was something I did quite early on in the workshop. The blue sky signifies freedom, space, expansion. The way I was lying and the way my hair flies in the wind represents the wind of freedom, the wind of creativity. Hopefully, the wind will send me in the right direction. The butterfly is symbolic of freedom, lightness, positive change and happiness. The flowers connect to our earth and the symbol of our new political party, the Democratic Congress, of which I'm a founding member.

The colour green and the earth colours signify the ground.

They keep me grounded as I fly through my life. The sparkly things all over the place are the many people whom I have met, of different colours, all around the world. The drawing of "Where do you come from?" is at the bottom of my map because it is the foundation from which I have grown. The whole picture symbolizes space, freedom and connectivity to different kinds of people. It also embodies the environment, open space, landscape and our beautiful country - Kenya.

The most important moment of my childhood was my being cut off from Africa and being sent off to my boarding school in England. It was cold and very foreboding and I was alone.



How do I see myself today? I have got my camera as a symbol of my being a photojournalist and photographer who shows the truth and also tells stories. I am a bridge between cultures, a beacon of light, intent on change, symbolized by the butterfly. Inside the light, however, there is still insecurity and there are difficulties. There are still a lot of questions, but there is a crack in the darkness here.

My aspiration as a citizen of Kenya is to create Utopia. I believe we should all have a little peace in our hearts because this is where hope comes from and you can't live this life without hope. I put in drums beating, people holding hands, forests, rainbows, peace at heart, and lots of space for wildlife because this is our heritage.

My timeline is in the middle of my body; this is who I am, so it is inside of me and it goes right through my heart. It starts at the bottom of my body. In 1925, my family came to Kenya and I picked just five very important moments from my family history. If my family hadn't come here then, I wouldn't have what I have now, so I'm extraordinarily grateful to them for having made that decision to come. It has been the backbone and structure of who I am today.

I'm not sure of the exact date, but somewhere between 1962 and 1963, my grandfather was instrumental in helping Kenya attain Independence. I'm very proud of that; it creates a structure for me and my future. Who I am, and all my strengths are largely drawn from my grandfather's positioning in the history of this country.

I was born in 1978, and that is an obviously important date in my life.

In 2007/2008, I was working as a photo journalist and I documented and witnessed the post-election violence. It was the first time that I watched my country cry, and I wept and wept with it. That pain will stay with me forever. It represents a symbolic and significant moment in my career as a photojournalist. I really grew up then; my style changed; my ability to process information changed and the way I carry myself now was very much shaped by that time.

The blue colour shows what I think of myself; I'm intense, deep, spiritual and a perfectionist. The deep earthy red is what other people say about me; they are incredibly positive characteristics and I hope that I can hold onto them, because they help me stay positive about myself and my future.

We are now in 2015 and I want to see nothing more than the future I hold in my heart for my country, for Africa and the world. I say all of those three together because I'm so in love with all of them, and all three are important to me. ◀



Several themes arose from the **Who I Am, Who We Are** Project. Some of them related to local issues while a large number of them related to national issues. In guiding the conversations, the project only sought to dig deeper into what was of interest to each particular site and set of participants.

The following text refers to three of the key themes that arose in Kisumu, Nairobi, Isiolo, Nyeri and Lamu. These themes, Democracy, Belonging and Affiliation, and Values, Similarity and Oneness are not fully exhausted in the following text. However, by touching on them, it is hoped that they will be starting points for conversation within different homes, schools and places where people should be discussing and defining what it means to be Kenyan.

The opinions in the following pages are contentious and are intended to be so. There is no one truth and the project is not a scientific project. Rather, it is an art project that seeks to extract a public voice. It is not peer reviewed and while it may use research terminology, it is not a research project. The text is simply an attempt at putting a cohesive thought to the multitude of material collected from the various sites across Kenya.

These materials are available for further scholarship.



Silent Room, Eastleigh Nairobi. September 2014



Democratic process, Elections, and Personal Threat

In 2011, the Kenya Government spokesman, Dr. Alfred Mutua, led a campaign to promote patriotism titled “Najivunia Kuwa Mkenya” (I Am Proud to be Kenyan). This was an attempt by Government to recover a sense of ownership over the Government of the day and over Kenya as a nation. This campaign was part of the much-needed recovery from the post-election violence of 2007/2008 that had divided Kenyans along ethnic lines. What began as anger over a faulty electoral process, disintegrated into anger over unequal distribution of resources as evidenced by marginalization along ethnic lines and concentrations of power drawn from ethnic affiliation.

Estimates vary, but by January 28th 2008, at least 1300 people had been killed and an additional 600,000 people displaced both internally and as refugees in neighboring countries. It is interesting that the post-election violence didn't really change some fundamental perspectives held by Kenyans. A majority of Kenyans interviewed, agree that elections are important. They are a way in which space is created for people's needs to be served. There's also an agreement by the participants of this project that the new Constitution could be a unifying force in Kenya and a mechanism through which social change could be pursued. Understandably, given the history of electoral violence in Kenya, there are questions about whether violence threatens the entire approach to democracy in Kenya.

Furthermore, there is recognition that the 2010 Constitution offers an opportunity for positive change and equality for all Kenyans. In line with this, the participants seemed to agree on one thing: the Constitution is a rulebook that creates a structure through which the people of Kenya can belong to Kenya.

Elections and Violence

The 2007 elections were a constitutional obligation that was meant to allow Kenyans to voice their choice on leaders. However the 2007 elections were not the first to trigger violence. It happened in 1992 and in 1997. These cycles of electoral violence, growing in geographical reach after each election, make it difficult for some Kenyans to delink the process of elections and electoral violence.

In 95% of the body maps produced in this project, when participants were asked to draw the Kenya timeline, the post-election violence of 2007/2008 featured prominently as a key moment in Kenyan history that they remember:

“The important moment in my life is during political campaigns which raise tension in people uncertain of the future happenings. Many are those who want to be leaders thus causing more deaths due to competition and animosity generated among their supporters. People even in villages end up fighting leaving many of us wondering of what the end result will be. There are widespread disagreements among even friends, which end in fights and deaths over petty issues. There are self-imposed curfews for fear of victimization. During 2007/8 I suffered very much in the village with my child. People were moving from house to house forcing every male child to go and take part in the fighting. We were running without knowing where to. Even in 2013 commotions were seen during the elections. During those times thefts rise.” – Hardworking Lady (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

Elections and Opportunity

Despite the fear that elections in Kenya may lead to violence, Kenyans continue to participate in the electoral process because it offers hope that things will change for the better if the right people comes into power. Among the things identified as needed for positive change is a conducive environment for business. From the participants' point of view, politicians scored highly when they allowed businesses to operate, thrive and provided important infrastructure like roads, telecommunications masts, electricity, schools and hospitals.

A number of participants felt that the election of President Uhuru Kenyatta, a relatively young man  would lead to more opportunities to do business and that development would be felt closer home:

"In 2013, was my happiest moment because Uhuru Kenyatta became president for our Republic of Kenya, giving me hope that at least he was going to transform our country and make it a better place for us as youths, as a young Kenyan." – Concerned Citizen (Nyeri)

"There's peace in Kenya, because of the young and energetic President we have, Uhuru." – Her Excellency Shariffa (Lamu)

There is however, a noted sense of disappointment in his Government because of his administration's inefficiency. Coupled with the rising prices of basic commodities, this often leads to nostalgia for past presidents:

"[...] My happy moment, when we went voting for Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, as a young person and we thought Kenya could be a nice place and things work very well. But that didn't happen." – I Pray for Peace (Lamu)

"Budgets used to be done to check uniformity in commodity prices, no more. Change can only be brought about by the spread of these messages, humanity has decreased and no one seems to care. We purchase the same commodities at different prices in the same country." – The Wisdom of the Past (Lamu)

Interestingly a number of participants said that administration of the former President Mwai Kibaki saw the most development with specific references to free primary education:

"In 2002, we got Mzee Kibaki and we continued with him and he is the one who brought development to our country. We saw more development in Kibaki's government than we did in past Governments. We started seeing foreign things, which we are now proud of." – Mungu ni Mwema (Isiolo)

"I like the Former President, Kibaki for many things. Although I hold him responsible for dividing the country along tribal lines, he did improve the economy of the growing middle class. I grew up in the Moi era and in a region that was an opposition stronghold. Because of this, there was no development because we were not on the right side of the government. When Kibaki came I believe that the economic situation of the country improved. I believe he is part of the many

reasons I can make money and he created the sense of entrepreneurship through his economic ability. It somehow filtered through to the regular Kenyan and for the first time, when I came to Nairobi as an adult there were lights in town and you could walk in the streets even after 7 o'clock. When I was a teenager walking around in town even after 9pm was adventurous and it was like a thrill. It gave a wonderful blood rush to be on Moi Avenue and Tom Mboya Street at 9pm and see 10 policemen coming on one end and 10 thugs robbing pedestrians on the other. This changed after Moi. Kibaki made a difference." – 2030 Vision (Diamond Plaza - Parklands)

The Promise of the 2010 Kenya Constitution

In 2010, a new Constitution of Kenya was enacted, replacing the 1969 Constitution. It was subjected to referendum on August 4th 2010 and approved by 67% of Kenyan voters. It outlines the structure for the devolution of power, the promise of equitable redistribution of resources and in turn, the reconciliation of historical grievances that have led to the marginalization of some groups of Kenyans. The 2010 Constitution is in part a result of years of negotiation for change. Its completion and the referendum to adopt it were accelerated by the events of the post-election violence. The lack of implementation in some areas is sometimes cited as the reason why divisions, mainly socio-economic and ethnic, still exist. It belongs to all Kenyans and dictates, as a Government tool, what it means to be Kenyan and what rights one possesses as a Kenyan. In this way, the Constitution is seen as the tool that could unite Kenyans.

The commitment to stay engaged with the new Constitution is evident in the body maps, conversations in the Silent Room and in the Body Mapping Workshops. In fact, the Constitution featured prominently on the timeline that body mapping participants were asked to draw and use to discuss key moments that they recognized in Kenyan history. Over 90% of the participants emphasized the importance of the Constitution; that it held promise for the future that they felt entitled to.

The participants in both the Body Mapping and the Silent Room could be representative of the number of Kenyans who are aware of the Kenya Constitution and the fact that it is supposed to work for them. Although Kenyans believe in the promise of the Constitution, the participants show that Kenyans are aware that owning a constitution is not the same things as implementing one. There however still remains great expectation of what the system of devolution promises and how fast it is delivering on providing key services to Kenyans.

Devolution has brought development in some areas and left others riddled with corruption scandals. In Isiolo, which is 285 km north of Nairobi, devolution brought relevant infrastructure like roads and hospitals. In fact Isiolo is slated to undergo immense development based on a number of planned infrastructure projects. For example, the Isiolo airport will be upgraded to serve tourism and trade, opening the Kenyan interior and particularly this area to Marsabit, Moyale and beyond. Already the residents there see these changes:

"Despite our differences in others areas, devolution is doing something. Services have been brought nearer to the people, thus reducing the expenses incurred to access these services. That savings however little, is development. We see roads being built, and I can say Isiolo for the first time is cleaner. Although I do not directly benefit from the government, I'm reaping

from them indirectly. If only leaders here could give each other peace for at least two more years, then much would be achieved.” – My Land is Kenya (Isiolo)

“For the short period the devolved government has been in existence, there are great changes in terms of development. There are a few officials with the old habits of stealing from public coffers, but some officials are working. In Isiolo now, we have roads, hospital and many other changes in this one year the county government been in existence. For the last 50 years we saw no government, but we have seen it in the last one year through devolution. This helps me through employment to me and others, and that money or wealth rotates.”– Hodofa (Isiolo)

In other places, devolution is seen as a failed project as it has made it easier for more people to loot from the public coffers. Corruption is recognized as being the key cause for the failure in implementing effective devolution, and it is repeatedly highlighted by media with varied reports of incidences of misuse of public funds. For example, in September 2015, the Bungoma County government was under the spotlight for the purchase of wheelbarrows that cost Ksh.109,000 (\$1018) each whereas wheelbarrows on the open market cost about Ksh. 4,000 (\$40). Faulty tendering processes have meant that money is leeched from the system and does not adequately serve the needs of individuals within the county. Yet, the structure of devolution was meant to serve these needs and resolves the effects of marginalization by bringing the center of power closer to the people and away from the distant Nairobi City.

“In 2010 it has expanded! There are 47 counties there are 1000s of fingers in the pie now. It has spread, it has become worse. Look at the CDF funds, look at the allocations. It has got worse. This is getting worse and it is not getting any better, the anti-corruption committee has resigned continually. When they find something, they get the sack. The corruption is not stopping, it just means more people need a piece of the cake.” – Life is a Bed of Roses (Spring Valley)

It is important to note that corruption is viewed in terms of “corruption as displayed by the government” but not as corruption enabled by individuals within the society. Bribing is sometimes confused with gifting, as a form of reward for a service, even when this service is a right in the first place. During a discussion in Nyeri over the case of Chris Murungaru, a Minister in Kenya’s Government who was fired for taking kickbacks from a tender, the conversation sought to define “cheating” with no clear boundary on the unacceptable nature of “gifting”  This may be connected to the culture of appreciation of one’s efforts through tokens and gifts: a practice that is common in many cultures in Kenya. The extent to which the gifting may influence tendering processes and other important Government operations is not fully understood. The practice of gifting is often not aligned to global practices of declaration of tokens of appreciation and is also usually against the declaration of gifts as outlined in the Kenyan Law Public Officer Ethics Act.

It’s worth noting that Murungaru is linked to the Anglo Leasing scandal in which Kenyans lost \$770M. Money that one participant said could have gone to hospitals or schools. Through this conversation as with others around the country, it became clear that there is a failure to understand that Government money mainly comes from taxes: taxes paid by Kenyans. Therefore a Kenyan citizen is entitled rather than “honoured” to receive service from the Government. This lack of a sense of entitlement makes it

difficult to demand accountability. **One can only claim or feel entitled when they feel ownership and the resulting desire to protect that, which belongs to them.**

"Politics are just an organ connected to all we do whether economic or social. We are part of the politics. If something is wrong with politics then there's something wrong with our thinking."
– Lost in Transition (Kenya Cultural Centre - Nairobi City Centre).

"I should stop complaining about what Government of Kenya can do for me and instead ask what I can do for Kenya. I should try make things happen even in a small way."  (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

Overall, the participants in the project agreed that corruption is also practiced on an individual level and that Kenya's future depends on positive individual action and responsibility. It is no longer enough to say that politicians are misleading Kenyans. Individual action is needed to make sure that the rules in the Constitution are upheld.



Silent Room, Isiolo town. December 2014



Belonging and Self-Identification

"This country does everything it can to make sure that people who honestly want to belong cannot belong." (Spring Valley, Kenyans of European Origin)

"[There is] ...that feeling of not belonging due to many forces which are trying to make sure that you don't belong. Yet deep down within you, you want to belong but there's no opportunity to belong." - Gloom at 50 (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

An underlying issue that many of our respondents grappled with centered on whether they felt part of Kenya; if they were included in Kenya. An inclusive society can be defined as one where all are accepted and treated equally regardless of race, class, educational background, gender, ability, religion or sexual orientation. It also means that basic services such as security are rendered, not on the basis of one's ability to pay the premium, but by virtue of the fact that it is a right. By exploring whether one feels that they belong to a country, we are attempting to understand if Kenya is indeed inclusive.

Most of the respondents believed that identity was key to understanding inclusivity in Kenya. Even so, identity in Kenya is fluid and optional, depending on what aspects of identity are relevant and when those aspects make one fit in more. Respondents further noted that religion plays a key role in the idea of identity. They felt similarly about race and ethnicity which can seem to make some people feel more entitled to be Kenyan than others of different religions, ethnicity etc. Significantly, the material collected showed that those who belong to a numerically large community (whether ethnic or socio-political) are more likely to identify as part of that community than to identify with the Kenyan nation.  In contrast, those who come from a numerically small community are more likely to identify with being Kenyan than belonging to their community.

Given this, there is a sense of urgency to discover what it means to be Kenyan so that individuals can perform their civic duties and responsibilities toward nation building. To bring people together to  participate in Government strategies, people must first have a sense of ownership over Kenya, before determining what is best for individual, community and then nation. This is the essence of belonging to Kenya.

Belonging

"I have never had a free conversation with an Indian Kenyan like I did here. It opened my mind to a realization that we are all longing to be one." – Lost in Transition (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

In the Kenyan landscape, different groups have been marginalized at different times in history. Therefore, when one group emerges from marginalization it is logical that they will do whatever it takes so that they and their group, by extension, will never go back to being on the fringes. This is dependent on political power and in turn, access to resources. The politician who can secure the empowerment of a particular community is the one who gets the vote.  Such a politician is essentially promising a sense of ownership over Kenya.

Of course  it is important for humans to belong to a larger group. We are social animals. This group may be the very basic unit of a family or on a larger scale, a nation. It is human to want to belong and this is understood. Therefore, being Kenyan also means to seek to belong. This is particularly the case for groups that might be considered a minority group due to population size.

A large number of Kenyans want to feel like they belong to Kenya but that need is often taken for granted. For some, belonging to Kenya is a luxury rather than a right. This is especially the case when despite having been born and raised in Kenya, one cannot obtain a Kenya National Identification Card, as is the case with some Kenyans of European origin and Kenyans of Somali origin. In another extreme situation, one may have the Kenyan National ID but still be treated like a foreigner due to ethnic or racial profiling. This is currently happening to Kenyans of Somali origin as a result of profiling due to increased security concerns over terrorism. Yet there is no single description for what being Kenyan is. The drive for oneness can be viewed as being a superficial pursuit. Homogeneity does not exist.

"My definition of being a Kenyan does not revolve about my origin, I don't really identify with it. It is not about a local  it is beyond that. It is just getting into a space you are comfortable with." – Kenya Needs You (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

This project found that Kenyans express different aspects of their identity at different times in order to gain affiliation. Within this diversity is the capacity to navigate all the different identities associated with being Kenyan. One of the participants, a young Kenyan Somali, who recently took up a Kenyan passport, making her the only member of her large family to choose to be Kenyan, talked about the diversity of being Kenyan:

"The question, "Am I Kenyan?" stuck with me all evening and what I came up with at night was; we are what is convenient, we are what we want to be in a particular moment for it to work. If at a particular moment being Somali suits that moment, then I'll be Somali. If being Kenyan suits that moment, then I am Kenyan. If being an artist suits that moment, then I'll be an artist. If being from Northeastern Kenya suits that moment, then I'll be from Northeastern Kenya. This broken system has forced us to be part of that Kenya we suit in at that particular moment. To be chameleons. Does that make me Kenyan? I think every Kenyan does that. A situation whether you are going to align yourself tribally to suit the situation nationally or remove yourself completely as a need to survive." – Birdsong (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

Similarly, this is echoed by this response from another participant:

Basically  my place of origin depends on who is asking the question. At one point I'll answer I'm an African if someone outside Kenya or the continent is asking me the question. I'm also Kenyan at another point. But I have other identities; I'm equally of the Somali ethnic group, one of the 42 tribes of Kenya. Whether the 42+ tribes of Kenya feel fully Kenyan – that is a question that is very contentious and different people will answer it differently. A Somali may not feel more of a Kenyan than say a Luo, a Kamba, which are Kenyan tribes, yet again we identify to regions.

Other than being a resident of Eastleigh, every Kenyan has a place they call home from the 47 counties. Personally I'm from Garissa. If I say I'm from Garissa, someone can easily tell which Somali clan I belong to. It is the same way you easily tell when someone tells you that he is from Nyeri that he is Kikuyu. Similarly, you say this person is a Kamba because he comes from Machakos. So my place of origin is Garissa; but when asked that question in Garissa, I'll then be forced to identify with a certain clan and further, a sub-clan. I have many identities but I'm first Kenyan. I'm African, Kenyan, from Garissa etc. - Shackles of Identity (Eastleigh)

It is within this framework that we had the conversation around the fact that, **"Kenya belongs to all of us. Because it does, I am responsible for what Kenya becomes and what it does for me."**

Belonging to the larger group also means there is safety in numbers and through it the protection and accumulation of resources. Being a communal society originally, these resources are then supposed to be shared out to the family, be it religious, ethnic, clan based etc. Belonging could also make the difference between life or death. One Kikuyu participant felt safer in Kisumu than in Nakuru during the 2007/ 2008 Post Election Violence. Her dark skin meant that she would more likely have been targeted in Nakuru because she looked Luo, while she would have been safe in Kisumu for precisely the same reason:

"The saddest moment would be 2008; it culminated in the 16th of January 2008. That is the day I wish I would forget but I cannot forget. I keep on telling this story to everyone cares to listen because I believe it makes a difference. I was a student in Uganda and my mother could not afford to pay the air ticket for me to travel to Kampala. She told me, "I'm going to put you in a bus, an Akamba bus and I hope you get to get to Kampala safely." Most of my friends had the luxury of flying to Kampala; I was seated next to the driver on the bus. I remember traveling to Nakuru and there was a convoy, with very heavy security and many vehicles, as we were to be kept safe on the road. The vehicle before us was an army vehicle and it had children. I don't know why those children were in that truck, but they did not have their parents because they were crying. Inside were army men with guns, with the crying children. The truck was half covered, so in my bus I kept wondering why the kids were in army truck without parents. Why they were crying. The army men were so cold, unlike a mother's touch that would cuddle the baby, they just sat there and the children continued crying. ... I felt safer in Kisumu that I did in Nakuru. Because of my skin color, I thought having a skin color associated with the Luo, I would feel much safer in Nyanza as compared to Nakuru. My mother asked that I call her when I had made it past Nakuru, to let her know that I got through safely. ... I don't know what we can do about it but we have to start somewhere. Isn't it possible to look at my friend and say, even though you are Luo, even though you are from another part of the country, I respect you? I appreciate who you are, I celebrate who you are and forge ahead? That to me would help. It won't solve everything but it would go a long way in addressing the negative impact of what the negative ethnicity has done to this country." – Amkeni Wakenya (Nyeri)

Belonging and otherness are deeply intertwined. If one does not belong to a group, then they could easily be made an outsider. This means that they would have their humanity questioned, be unable to fully draw from the benefits of belonging. They would be excluded by members of the dominant

group on the basis of perceived differences. Among the Kenyan Asian participants, the differentiation between themselves and other Kenyans based on race creates a sense of "otherness."; a clear differentiation between a perceived "them" and "us." Usually the "them" means Kenyans with black skin. This sense of being "othered" was also expressed among the participants from the Kenyan of European origin and Kenyans of Somali origin:

"I get offended if I get called a Muhindi. Like my newspaper vendor, for many years used to call me "Muhindi." So I started calling him "Mkikuyu." People would ask why and I would say it is a reciprocal way of calling each other. For categorisation, I guess I am a Muhindi, I am born of parents who have Indian lineage – they were born here and grandparents settled here at age 14 and 15 as a married couple in Mombasa." – Mau Mau (Diamond Plaza - Parklands)

This quote speaks to the need to be recognized without qualifiers of race or ethnic group e.g. Kenyan White, Kenyan Indians, etc., terms that are used to further categorise and identify people racially. "Othering" sometimes leads to a sense of disengagement and this eventually leads to a degradation of a sense of ownership over Kenya. For one participant whose parents were Eastern European refugees from the Second World War, they were ostracized as "foreigners" by the Kenyan British settlers in the 1940s. After independence she then experienced racism from the Black Kenyan community, the perception being that she was British despite having been born and raised in Athi River by parents of Eastern European origin.

Even so, a sense of belonging can be created by those for whom the need to belong outweighs efforts to exclude them:

"I'm in the middle. I like to be here but there are reasons that make me want not to be Kenyan anymore e.g. politics, failure to appreciate cultural diversity, make me look beyond borders and start planning to appreciate other places and other people. I went to Uganda to find peace and studying there enabled me to rebuild myself. I never disclosed to anyone that I was gay given my experiences in Kenya. My intention was not to come back, I wanted to remain in Kampala and join university. But by the time I finished the A-levels, I just couldn't wait to board a bus and get back here. I missed Kenya so much and during those two years the gaps between me and my family was slowly closing. Time heals wounds indeed, and it did. I'm in my final year at the university and I have learned to be content. What made me better was to know that in Kenya there was a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersexed Movement working towards the realization of equal rights. I joined the movement in 2011." – Kenya Needs You (Nairobi City Centre – Nairobi).

Segregation within the Ethnic Group

It is important to note that while Kenyan society may appear cohesive within communities of ethnic or racial groups there are fractures within those groups. These fractures are usually within socio-economic background and in some cases, along place of origin. For example, a poor Kikuyu is treated differently from a rich Kikuyu. This is replicated among other ethnic and racial groups.

Despite having the structures of support, the Kenyans of European origin experience a sense of classism. One participant in the Spring Valley group talked about socio-economic segregation within the community of Kenyans of European origin:

"I know of a lady who got divorced quite early. She lived in Karen Hardy. She had two boys who were mzungu but they could only afford to go to Karen C Primary, which is a Government run common school. They had no friends in the whole area. None. When they finally grew up and married they moved out. They maintained no ties in Karen because of social discrimination. Because those guys cannot do well and actually the two boys were in the government school they were bringing the other mzungus down. ... They went to school walking like everybody else. They are lowering the standard of wazungus in Karen. And that was the feeling they were given. And so they just broke off. Poor White people are hidden." – (Spring Valley, Kenyans of European origin)

Another participant, from the group that consisted of Kenyans of European origin, mentioned that her Jewish father grew up feeling like an outsider in Kenya. When he went to the UK to go to boarding school he was bullied so much that he quit school. As a consequence he raised his family and children in a secular home in Kenya. When his daughter asked him why they had not been raised with any knowledge of Judaism, he responded that he felt there was no place for him and other Jews in this world.

A sense that one is not Kenyan because they have been made to believe that they are not, can lead to sensitivity at the animosity directed toward them. If one feels foreign where they feel they should belong, then they will feel threatened that anytime they may be asked to give up everything that they feel they own. This animosity can take the form of economic exploitation. This is evident when services provided by the police and generally those served with the duty to protect are provided based on premiums and reciprocation, possibly emphasizing the divide between economic classes. If one pays extra then they will receive the service that should be due to them as a Kenyan. The same applies to other basic services such as access to health. This means that parallel systems are set up and privately managed to provide what Government should be providing to everyone. These systems include private hospitals and the provision of security by private security firms.

This is also apparent when Kenyans of European origin have to prove eligibility for citizenship to a Government authority. This difficulty is also experienced by some Kenyans of Asian origin and Kenyans of Somali origin.  The same situation also applies among the poor, particularly in slum areas. Within the idea of premiums and reciprocation, when one can't pay, then they can't get the documents that prove their citizenship.

Even so, while race may provide discrimination, in some situations, this discrimination affords privilege, particularly for Kenyans of European origin.

Identification

"There is no collective Kenyan identity." (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

There is likely no singular description of what being Kenyan is. Rather, to be Kenyan is to embody all the diversity that the country contains. During one discussion the topic was defining and conceptualising a Kenya identity as per the individual. Implicitly the group discussed the possibility that there is no collective identity. Further, the group suggested that if there existed one, it was self-serving. Interestingly, empathy is a trait that is described as being Kenyan, especially during times of adversity.

In another group, the discussion on a common identity led to the idea that Kenyan identity is optional. One participant, who is in her 40s, has recently begun to look at India as an option for resettlement because of the growing level of insecurity in Kenya (carjackings, robberies etc.). Until this participant was 25 years old, she admits that India was the last place she ever wanted to go because she felt no affiliation to the country, having grown up on a coffee farm in rural Kenya. It was only upon the invitation of a friend that she first visited India at 25 years of age, and is now considering permanent relocation:

"I am the only one in my family who has never wanted a second passport. This is the first time that I want to go back to India." (Diamond Plaza - Parklands)

For some Kenyans however, being Kenyan cannot be an option. There is a generalization that all Kenyans of European origin have the option to take up a second passport. The fact is that for some, Kenya is the only place they have a right to a passport/ ID and therefore for them, it is paramount to feel ownership of the country in the same way that Black Kenyans do.

"I am White and have been told I can never truly belong. I often feel like a second-class citizen. I think quite a few of us feel that way. We belong, yet we are not really accepted. I don't like that! But maybe I would rather be a second-class citizen here than first-class somewhere else, because I don't belong anywhere else? I think this is the best I can do for myself. This is it. But, yes, I do feel second-class." – Second Class (Spring Valley, Kenyans of European origin)

Perhaps being Kenyan is in the diversity of the population of Kenya, which creates the colorful fabric of society. This tapestry includes religion, social class, ethnic group, race etc. For some participants, they found they were Kenyan through the similarity in the different religions followed within the country. Some participants could not describe their identity without tying it to religion and religious influence. One respondent, whose family moved back to India upon independence because of the uncertainty felt in the country over security and opportunity, grew up speaking Hindi before her family moved back to Kenya, where she had to learn English to adjust. While in India, she attended a Catholic convent school even though she was Hindu. This Hindu participant later married a Kenyan Ismaili man. She refused to convert to Islam and instead has held on to her religion:

"Coming from a Hindu family and going to a Catholic convent school, it brought a lot of turmoil. I ended up with no fear of religion but an expansive mind of different religions. No fear of conversions but people unified under religion." (Diamond Plaza - Parklands)

Ethnic identities

"Nationality gives you pride, ethnicity; identity and religion; virtues. All these are things an individual needs. Muslims have of late been tagged as terrorists; my fellow Muslim would kill innocent people, but the mistake is done in collectively stereotyping the whole religion. To me the person who kills should be called a criminal and not be identified with religion." – Shackles of Identity (Eastleigh)

Respondents affirmed that Kenyans are often selective about which identity takes stands out over another. Sometimes the ethnic identity takes priority over the national identity, depending on the demands of the situation:

"I think tribalism won't go away. It is not easy and we pray it will end. People talk to you in Luo, whether you understand it or not. Or people call you according to the place that you come from rather than by your name, it makes me feel like I don't belong because I am not from here. Day to day life, people talk about my community." – Kenya at 50 and Who I Am (Kisumu)

"I identify myself as a Kikuyu and we live with other Kikuyus in Tetu Constituency. I am from Tetu where almost 90% are Kikuyus." – Brave (Nyeri)

"I am Kenyan and a Samburu, and I'm proud to be both. Despite negative aspects of Samburu culture which have led to atrocities, I am proud of my identity as a Samburu." – Kuijitambua (Isiolo)

In a country that is working to overcome terrorism from Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda, Kenyans of Somali origin are targeted because of their Somali ancestry. The ethnic diversity across North Eastern Kenya and in scattered parts across the country including Eastleigh in Nairobi, means that Kenyans of Somali origin cannot be differentiated from Somali nationals, usually refugees and in some cases Somali terrorists. Even within what the general population chooses to call "Kenyan Somali" there is diversity. The group is by no means homogenous and this term is often applied to people who may have Gabra, Borana etc. heritage. While today terrorists are recruited from across the country, there is still a prevailing misconception that only Somalis are terrorists. Distressingly, this has been erroneously extended to include all Muslims. This is despite the fact that many Kenyans of Somali origin "feel Kenyan" and define themselves as such. This exclusion means that some individuals have to fight harder to be recognized as such.

"Most Kenyans do not recognize me fully as a Kenyan. They call me a Kenyan Somali. At times they take my ID card and then take me to Kasarani where I have to purchase my freedom there." – My Land (Eastleigh)

"When an incident of terrorism occurs in Nairobi, what comes to most Kenyan minds is Eastleigh, a Somali. For example in the Westgate incident they said it is Eastleigh. If a matatu is bombed they say it is the Somalis. That thinking comes from the fact that KDF are in Somalia. What happens in Kenya is what Al Shabaab has planned and not Kenyan Somalis. The fight is between Kenya and Al Shabaab, not Kenya and Kenyan Somalis." – My Land (Eastleigh)

In one response, a young Kenyan man of Somali origin, sees himself as being more Somali than Kenyan because of the ethnic profiling that has arisen out of the global war on terror, a war that is mainly focused in the East African region on the Somali ethnic group. His disillusionment over his place in Kenya has created a lack of ownership over his space in the society. He is from Mandera and he sees the secession of Mandera from Kenya as necessary in order for Mandera to develop.

"Mandera today is my place of origin, where I belong, my land and my ancestors land. When I go there my father takes me around showing me my ancestors' graves. It is a historical place for me where I feel at home. I don't feel very much at home here in Nairobi. Mandera is in Kenya. I feel like I am a different Kenyan because we don't get the same opportunities and services like other Kenyans." – My Land (Eastleigh)

Ethnicity under Political Influence

"Ethnicity is something, which is quite valuable during election time; people really like to use it and in this we find a lot of injustices from our political history. It is never as our strength or national heritage but rather as a political power. It is often used as a political tool to divide and rule. A beautiful forest has a variety of trees and flowers likewise our diversity should be celebrated and unite us rather than the opposite." – Lost in Transition (Kenya Cultural Centre - Nairobi City Centre)

Kenya has experienced decades of division along ethnic lines, largely entrenched through politics. Ethnic divisions allow politicians to create power bases. Political clout is measured by who can bring the most numbers to the table and often, this is based on affiliation, with the greatest common denominator for affiliation being ethnicity. As long as people are divided along ethnic lines, there can be no room for nationally focused manifestos that promise change through development for all. Rather, manifestos promise benefits through patronage.

Within this framework, politicians often re-interpret history to emphasize division. Kenyan education system has failed to emphasize the importance of knowledge of one's history. History is left to the politicians to tell, often to their own benefit. The public expects politicians to know more than the average Kenyan and thus the politician's word is held as truth. Over time however, more and more Kenyans are coming to the realization that the politician may not necessarily have their best interest at heart. Still, Kenyan politicians are powerful but rather than use this power to celebrate diversity, some politicians use it to divide Kenyans.

In some of the responses from the Silent Room and during the Body Mapping exercises, participants suggested that Kenyan politicians have over time widened the fissures of society. These fissures are brought about by ethnic difference, specifically based on negative stereotypes about each other. National elections exacerbate these differences:

"In Kenya, we are lacking genuine love for others. We have the resources, manpower and institutions but that genuine love for others is missing. Politicians are capitalizing on this by sowing divisive seeds to divide us more. We swallow that poison, we talk, we relate but half-heartedly playing games of deception without commitment." – Tom Mboya (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

During election periods, a person's vote is taken to belong to their ethnic group. If one is Kikuyu, it is expected that they will have voted for Mwai Kibaki in the 2002 and 2007 elections and Uhuru Kenyatta in the 2013 elections. Accordingly, it is also expected that if one is Luo then they voted for Raila Odinga in both the 2007 and 2013 elections. This is often the case, as evidenced by statistics on voting patterns in the various ethnic strongholds.  It is rarely conceived that one would vote according to political promise or manifesto.

This presumption creates space for marginalization, discrimination, and sometimes violence against those perceived to have voted against the prevailing ethnic block. One of the participants, a Kalenjin woman who lives in Kisumu, a predominantly occupied Luo area, talks about a fear of aggression against her perceived political leaning based on her ethnic background:

"I live in fear. I can't walk freely in Kisumu because I am Kalenjin. I can't express myself. I will be told to go to my place of origin to talk about my support for my Ruto. I can't talk ill of a Luo politician, I can be stoned. We need to live as one and not in this divided way." – Kenya at 50 and Who I Am (Kisumu)

A majority of Kenyans who participated in the project know that reliance on political opinion and direction has caused division within the nation. Shortly after the 2007 national elections, what started off as dissent over what some called compromised results spiraled into ethnic based violence, fuelled by grievance over years of inequitable resource distribution:

"The people who were killed in the election violence taught us; about our morality and humanity and how far we go with destroying ourselves. All this red is the blood of very important people everyday people like teachers, farmers, shopkeepers. They all shed blood and we all learnt that it was not right that blood was to be shed for whatever reason, especially a political one." – 2030 Vision (Diamond Plaza - Parklands)

The project raises questions about "othering" and whether in building a more inclusive society, we should focus on incorporating, accepting and strengthening diversity, rather than striving for a homogenous society by classifying all as one.

Amongst a large number of participants from different ethnic groups and races, there is a great sense of recognizing oneself as Kenyan especially in spite of exclusion. It becomes a personal choice to be and remain Kenyan, regardless. It is at this point that one becomes Kenyan. It is a personal choice and responsibility to identify oneself as Kenyan from that action through commanding space in the society, in playing a role in demanding accountability from oneself and the Government. Perhaps it is in this way that Kenya can overcome some of the challenges, colorful as they may be. It could be that by recognizing ones' Kenyaness within the diversity and as part of the diversity of Kenya, one can find the ideal of oneness under one nation.

"I am Kenyan by birth and also through my responsibility in nation building. The most challenging time is during election time. People fight and are abusive to each other. It mostly comes from politicians and our youths who are idle can easily be convinced to participate in violence." – A New Dawn of Art in My Life (Kisumu)

Patriotism and Politics

"I'm proud being Kenyan whether I'm in Lamu which is part of Kenya and I feel patriotic about it. Without patriotism one should not be called a citizen of that country. Because of that I am Kenyan, similar to other Kenyans." – My Life Line (Lamu)

Patriotism is the underscoring ideal that individuals will accept civic responsibility and duty for their countries. One can be said to be patriotic when one recognizes oneself as Kenyan and therefore inextricably linked to the country and its destiny.

Patriotism also triggers the notion of active citizenship. The 2007/08 violence revealed that patriotism had been marginalized as a key component of being Kenyan. In particular, peace in Kenya has been taken for granted, leading many of the participants to tackle the topic of 'ethnicism.' It was the realization that one could lose everything that triggered a sense of duty to Kenya.

One participant who was a victim of the violence - raped, displaced but now recovering - felt that what she went through and the triumph over it proved that her patriotism could not be taken from her:

"I'm a Kenyan and proudly so. I was born here, will die and be buried here. My ancestors were buried here. I'm a Kenyan by nature. What I am proud of as a Kenyan, is in it being my origin, the country's shape; on the other hand what I don't like about Kenya are the politicians and politics." – Palace (Kenya Cultural Centre – Nairobi City Centre)

Individual patriotism can be hindered by the lack of reciprocity to that patriotism by the Kenyan Government or where one should but cannot access the same rights as every other Kenyan:

"We are given a chance to vote, choose leaders who represent my voice in parliament. I don't feel well represented; the people we choose do what they like." – My Land (Eastleigh)

Patriotism also contains notions of political tolerance and acceptance of the decisions made by the broader electorate.

"We have one leader, whether I voted for him or not, he is my leader." (Eastleigh)

"Kenyaness" and the associated feeling of patriotism is also linked to the idea that an individual can play a part in nation building, where for instance, an individual may elect a representative whom they feel they can identify with. Kenyaness is thus linked to democratic rights.

"There is a Borana saying that goes 'If a horse competes with a donkey, it will get used to farting as well; it is in the same way that the good members of parliament who were elected, will be affected by the bad ones who will teach them bad habits.' Change is parliament is difficult to make, because the same bad MPs are the same ones voted back in." – (Untitled) (Mukuru Lunga Lunga)

This does not however change the importance of remaining active in the role of a citizen of Kenya.

“Othering” can create a sense of disillusionment where it creates a sense that things are becoming worse and can only continue to get worse. It makes citizens unlikely to participate in changing things and this can also affect one’s commitment and loyalty to the nation.

If citizen agency is weakened then ownership and loyalty is also weakened. It is both human to want to belong and to want to find division. A united Kenya must protect its internal cohesion by fighting exclusion, a learned habit with a long history in Kenya. The question has to be how Kenyans can still be part of a smaller defined community while still belonging to one nation.



Silent Room, Lamu town. April 2015



Values, Similarities and Unity

"In nation building, we vote together, when there is drought we come together. As Kenyans, we face the same challenges together." – A New Dawn of Art in My Life. (Kisumu)

"When Westgate happened, Kenyans responded and contributed and donated blood across tribal lines. We are generous when things are out of hand." – A New Dawn of Art in My Life. (Kisumu)

To create a sense of nationhood, we must understand what brings people together to make a nation. These may be values or similarities, things that make people proud, or that they find familiarity in.

When asked, "What makes one Kenyan?" a majority of participants highlighted similar foods, various languages and homogeneity through Kiswahili. There is also unanimous pride in Kenyan athletes who top the world in the sport. Wildlife and a green environment are also mentioned as points at which one recognizes being Kenyan. Pride in these things however, does not necessarily translate into their celebration or protection.

For some participants, to be Kenyan means to share challenges faced by a developing country. Despite having different identities for each situation there are times when one feels "more" Kenyan than at other times.

Despite this diversity in opinion, overall, respondents agreed that symbols of national unity are important to make one feel Kenyan. These symbols include but are not limited to the National Flag and the National Anthem as well as cultural items like food and language (Kiswahili mainly). As such, documents like the National ID Card are necessary in creating value for being Kenyan, because they allow one to access Government services and resources, even though access to them can be restricted arbitrarily for people of certain backgrounds.

Furthermore, Kenyan unity is primarily evident during extremes: in times of extreme desperation (e.g. Westgate) or times of extreme success (e.g. sporting events). Many of the participants emphasized their pride in Kenya's fame from success in athletics.

*"We as Kenyans have the longest run at number one position in any sport and Kipchoge Keino started that run in history in 1966. We have been 3000m steeplechase champions for 40years - that is 4 decades. Nobody has dominated a particular sport for such a long time like we have."
- 2030 Vision (Diamond Plaza)*

Circumstances such as these bring about a sense of a "we" over a sense of an "I." When the National Anthem is played in moments like this, it increases a feeling of pride in being Kenyan and by extension in the individual.

Similarly, in the process of overcoming major challenges like drought or terrorist attacks, behavior patterns change to become more inclusive. A number of the participants point to the *Kenyans 4 Kenya*

Campaign which led to a massively successful feeding programme in July 2011 in Turkana, financed through crowd-sourcing. 3.7 million people in the area were under threat but the campaign raised Ksh. 1 billion within four weeks from corporations and individuals over Safaricom's M-Pesa platform.

In fact, the Westgate terror attack was a running theme in the works of a number of participants. This may partly be due to the fact that it played out on all media and that it occurred in the year that Kenya was celebrating its 50th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule. The attack brought Kenyans together to discuss the way towards unity versus ethnic division.

Conversely, desperation is also seen as an opportunity for class divisions to show. One respondent contrasted the mobilization of efforts around the 2013 Westgate terror attack versus the mobilization around the 2011 Sinai fire. Over 100 people died in the Sinai Fire caused by combustion of fuel leaking from a pipeline running through the Mukuru slums in Nairobi. The scale of the Westgate response was unprecedented: the Sinai fire was largely ignored.

"Ninajivunia umoja na upendo wakenya huwa nayo wakati wa janga. Kwa mfano janga la Westgate. Janga la Sinai ndio wakenya hawakujiunga pamoja labda ni kwa sababu wathiriwa ni wakaazi wa vijiji duni na ni maskini." – Bobo@50 (Mukuru Lunga Lungu)

"I am proud of the unity and love that Kenyans have during periods of disaster. For example the Westgate Terror Attack. During the Sinai Fire, people did not come together. Maybe it was because the people affected were from the slums and were poor." – Bobo@50 (Mukuru Lunga Lungu)

Symbols of National Identity and the feeling of being Kenyan

 *I know people who fight tooth and nail to fit in, they pay taxes and they are just being denied passport. How hard do you have to fight to be a Kenyan? – Man of Many Colours (Mixed Race Kenyan of Kenyan and European origin)*

To prove one's belonging to a particular nation, one needs particular government issued documentation e.g. a passport, a National Identity Card etc. Obtaining a Kenya National ID can be extremely difficult even though it facilitates relatively free passage across the country. Like a passport, these documents have not always been accessible to all especially where discrimination is common due to race or ethnic factors, but all Kenyans have a constitutional right to have them. The process of obtaining them is further complicated by the need to identify oneself as belonging to a particular community. Without an ID, one cannot access Government services e.g. getting a Kenya Revenue Authority PIN Certificate so that one can seek formal employment. Without an ID one's movements are restricted e.g. one is unable to access a majority of commercial buildings.

Despite being born in Kenya, to a Kenyan-born mother who took up a British passport, one participant cannot take up a Kenyan passport and this restricts her place in Kenya, even though the new Constitution permits dual citizenship:

 *I am always struggling with, "Am I not Kenyan?" Why is it that other countries can dish out passports and it is fine? Why do I need the Kenyan passport to feel Kenyan? Why do they make*

people have to make that decision? I pay the equivalent of £2000 every two years to work here and I have done that for nine years and that is an insane amount out of my salary. And it takes me 4 months just to get it and it is so on the edge -whether I am going to get it. It makes me question myself. – (Untitled) (Kenyan of European origin)

One may want to be Kenyan. One may be obligated to be Kenyan. One may be committed to Kenya. However in the current framework, that does not mean that one is recognized as Kenyan, even by the Government. For some, although one may have a Kenya National ID or a passport, it may not be enough to prove one's Kenyan identity. For example, some Kenyans of Somali origin, face arrest due to ethnic profiling arising from the wrongful association of their involvement in terrorism:

"In 2008, there was a KDF operation to disarm the people involved in the tribal clashes in Mandera Central. The approach they used was cruel, beating everybody including women and children and burying others halfway. They indiscriminately tortured us in search of guns. In 2014, there was the Usalama Watch Operation in Nairobi where we were told to purchase our freedom whether we have a Kenyan ID or not." – My Land (Eastleigh)

In Isiolo one of the participants, a young woman of Meru origin talked about how hard it was to get her daughter's ID registered in Isiolo. The Government official asked her to go register her daughter in Meru despite the fact that her daughter was born and raised in Isiolo. Being Kenyan and navigating multiple identities means that an outsider may define one as they see fit. If they are an authority this definition may be final. If it is the Government, it means one may or may not receive certain services, which are their right by virtue of being Kenyan.

Even so, there are elements of identity that cannot be limited only to documentation. In one of the groups, a political prisoner described his experience of being arrested and tortured in 1986. The denial of his rights did not change his sense of being Kenyan. At that moment his ID and passport did matter. Such moments are important and powerful, even if these moments are only experienced temporarily:

"When the flag is coming up, all of us feel Kenyan, we feel like one thing. The feeling gets inside our hearts and we know that something special is up there. So we all respect the flag and feel all as one. And when we hear the National Anthem, everyone is respectful and everyone is happy. We stand still, maybe sometimes people are even shaking hands. But my friend when the flag is coming down in the evening, when there's no National Anthem, everything ends." – Dear Kenya (Lamu)

ID cards and passports are simply tools of identification; they allow access to services and rights. But the feeling of being Kenyan goes beyond these tools as it is something that cannot be taken away from a person by another person or entity. For some participants, this feeling is embodied by the commitments made through the Kenya National Anthem or through the Kenya National Flag.

"I am immensely proud of our national flag. It is so symbolic of the history, the struggle for independence and the new nation. I am so proud of it, that when I had a house in the Casba in Tangier for seven years, whenever I was in residence I brought the biggest Kenyan flag

I could find and I hung it out of my window so that everyone could see a little bit of Kenya on the Casba. I was immensely proud of somehow representing Kenya in this tiny little dot on the map called Tangier. I was proud of the fact that I was doing that. I was somehow an unofficial ambassador.” – Second Class (Kenyans of European origin, Spring Valley)

Many of the participants insisted that they were proud of Kenyans’ reputation for friendliness. In the same breath, some of the participants pointed to the Kenyan sense of humor.

These notions suggest that there is an idea of being Kenyan that exists beyond documents and symbols. This idea is attached to a value, appreciation or love for something defined. It would be in the nation’s interest to examine what this value might be as the first step toward building a united Kenya.



13th century Arabs arriving in Lamu

1893-1963 colonial period

1939-45 2nd World War

1952-1960 British detention camps

1952-1960 Mau Mau uprising

1954 State of Emergency

1963 Kenya's Independence from Britain

1963 - 1967 Northern Frontier District War, Shifta War

1965 Pio Gama Pinto assassination

1969 Tom Mboya assassination and funeral

1975 JM Kariuki assassination

1978 Jomo Kenyatta dies

1978-2002 Nyayo era

1982 Attempted coup to overthrow Moi government

1982-92 Corruption during Moi era

1983 Wagalla massacre

1986 Moi torture chambers

1990 Ouko assassination

1991 Multi political parties system introduced

1991 Somali Civil War

1992 Uasin Gishu ethnic clashes

1993 Goldenberg scandal



History of Kenya

1998 United States Embassy bombing in Nairobi

2002 Mwai Kibaki elected as President

2002 Rainbow Alliance formed

2003 Free primary school education

2003 Treatment for HIV made available, free of charge

2005 Vote for the Kenyan Constitutional Referendum vote

2007 Post Election Violence

2007 Raila Odinga not President

2010 Devolution of Government

2010 New Constitution

2011 Operation Linda Nchi – Kenya Defense Forces in Somalia

2011 Sinai fire tragedy in Mukuru

2011 International Criminal Court tries Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto

2013 Pangani bomb

2013 Baragoi massacre

2013 50 Years of Independence

2013 The Uhuruto political campaign

2013 Uhuru Kenyatta elected as President

2014 Mpeketoni

2014 The Lamu Port Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor project

2017 Next Elections

The Internally Displaced

The memory of you has become that 'pastness' in our present; we've learned to move on without you, because living in the past would be too costly for a developing country. And we forgave our leaders at the last National Prayer Breakfast, because they were sincerely seeking the Lord.

So this poem is for the internally displaced in this country.

This poem is for every child who can't sleep listening to daddy telling mama that she made him beat her, because society teaches men that women can never be people and that love is best expressed in small doses of violent acts.

This poem is for every lesbian woman drowning in nightmares every night, because the head of the gang that raped her said she needed a real dick and everyone turned a blind eye because she brought it to herself.

This poem is for every elderly man and woman in Mosochi and Keroka awaiting a possible lynching, because we've learnt to blame others for our misfortunes and being suspected of anything in this country should get you killed—and that includes witchcraft.

This poem is for every single person in Turkana to whom news of oil on their grazing land speaks more of a threat than the success story that the Government wants them to believe in, because capitalism teaches us that development and business matter more than people.

This poem is for every Maasai soul sleeping in a tent over their grandfather's graves—still wondering about how the police could oversee their violent eviction—because we are a country where only certain ethnicities can hold title deeds.

This poem is for every Kenyan Christian who is fundamentalist about women's submissiveness and everything else in the benefit of domination, because "love your neighbor" is too much a threat to abide by.

This poem is for every woman opening her legs to make way for a manhood she hates, because society teaches us that forceful sex in marriage is not rape, (And Kiraitu can get away with "raping a woman who is already too willing").

This poem is for the spirits of the five suspected gangsters gunned down in cold blood, because Loresho is too safe a place for young Black males to look unsafe in and - scaring Kenya's middle class is too bad for the economy.

This poem is for the young boy in rural Nyahururu tying a rope over his hand-me-down shirt, because he wishes it were a dress (so that he could tuck it into his Y-front's elastic hemming), wishing to stop all the noise about men being men and women being women as though she weren't trans.

This poem is for every Kenyan queer living in secret because coming out is too risky an act in a country where the only way anyone can be is 'straight' —which means being a self-appointed vice-God — because in the last 2000 years White Jesus has not spoken a word, and we can only imagine what he wants.

This poem is for my friend Kathy who died in an accident, because the police in this country have become too reluctant to curb road carnage and it has become okay to drink and drive if you can bribe the cops.

This poem is for every street family sitting behind Wakulima Market not sure if the stench is theirs or the city's, with their rags packed in sacks because City Council askaris have deemed them unfit for a space that needs gentrification for the sake of revenue coming from poverty tourism.

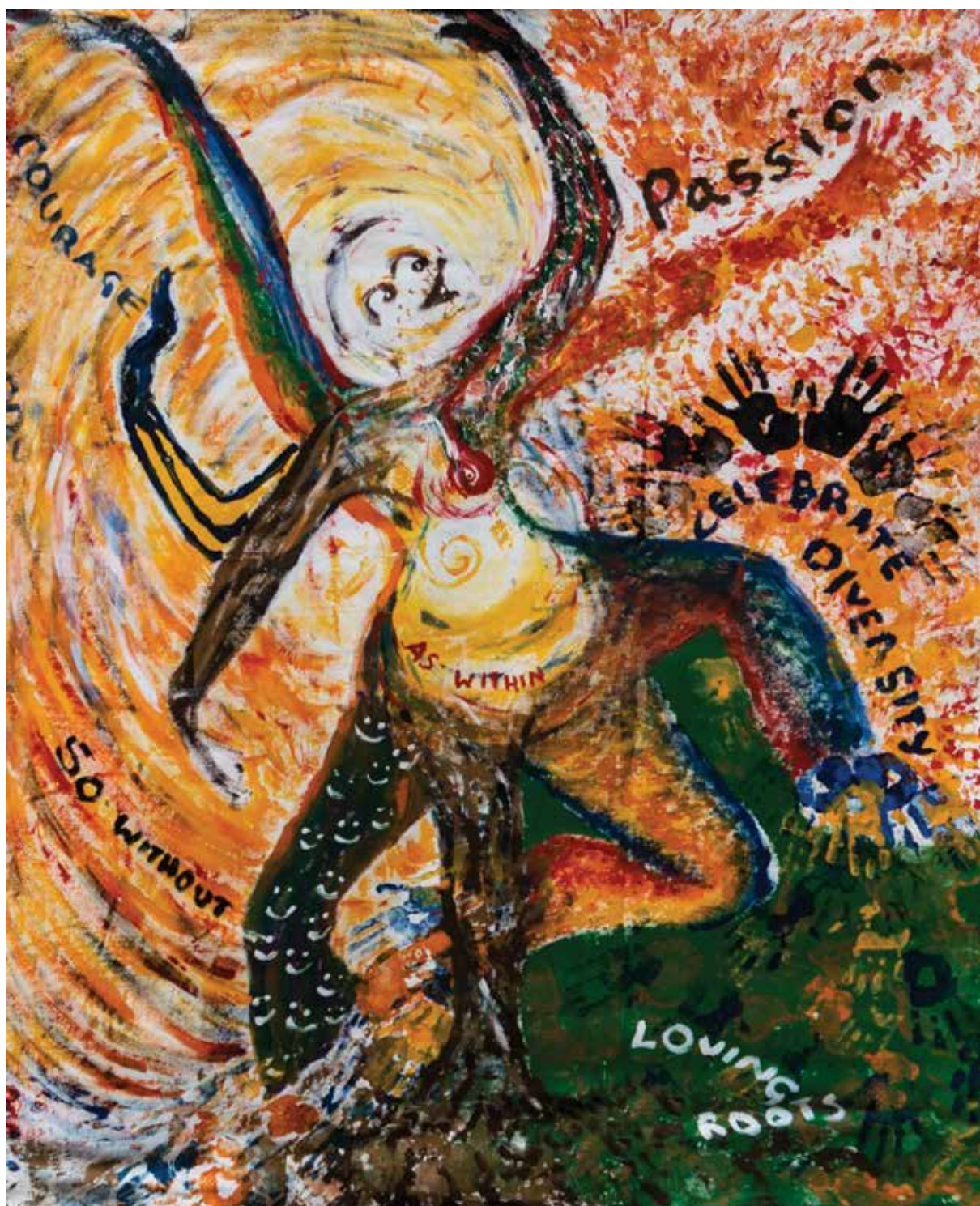
This poem is for every third generation Somali refugee locked up in Dadaab; stripped of any dignity by the Kenyan Government —with the much needed help of the UN — as though their integration into society would dilute any sense of Kenyaness, because we don't even have enough raids in Eastleigh to curb the Somali menace.

This poem is for every Kenyan transman breaking his back with a binder, because going into town with a beard and boobs makes you a freak, and you never know when you might be asked to strip for public interest.

This poem is for the innocent child who still calls mama in the midst of society's murmurs of how she died, because this big secret has slowly become dangerous, and we do not have enough poems about poems yet.

This poem is for the internally displaced Kenyan.
This poem is for you, for me.
For all of us.

Neo Musangi is an internally displaced Kenyan passport holder who writes bad poetry to stay alive because they can no longer afford to see a psychiatrist. Posted on August 7, 2013



"I am", Nairobi 2013

Reflections of “The Body My Home”

Dear Body

I’m writing this letter to you because even though I am with you every day, I don’t really know you. When I go inside you, I can only imagine. You are a world within a world, as one may see a puzzle in an enigma... the ultimate technology. Wow!!!... what that really means, I honestly can’t say, but I can envision it is something amazing. When I picture the heart setting the rhythm of the dancing blood cells, and how they sway, move and twirl through the channels of life, so fluid, so effortlessly, I wonder. And then I compare that to the architecture of the skeleton, a firm, strong, rigid, structure, yet working as a team with your musculature, in unison they become something so graceful, a piece of art in motion. I can’t even begin to envisage the circuitry of the amazing mass between the skull with lights flashing, reflecting aurora in the flesh.

Body, do I really know you? When I look through your windows, the eyes, I see forms and images that through the door of the mouth, can only be articulated as flowers and trees, birds and bees, but not even these sounds as words, can capture the delight and joy these images bring. Other times I see life in kinesis, as cats and dogs, lions and elephants, (only to mention a few), and of course humans, move across my screen as reflections of your essence. One only has to stop and listen through the core of your being to get a glimpse and unravel the miracle of life. But do I?

Body, sometimes I feel you frame yourself and your features into things made by your hands, chairs and cars, computers and mobile phones. Other times you gleefully respond to harnessed features such as water altered into electricity and light, or earth as shelter and houses. All basic elements of Mother Earth transformed to support and comfort you at

the end of the day. You are of the earth and you celebrate it in all ways, hopefully with gratitude. If not, it is not you at fault but I. For sometime these creations you helped me innovate do not really reduce your discomfort. Sometimes I push you till you ache and pain from sitting and driving all day, as well as the long lit nights and sounds I make you bear which overwork your boughs. Yet you are so patient and supportive. Body, when I do this, forgive me please. Forgive me when I do not hear your gentle whispers, your firm nudges or your calls reaching out to your friend e-motion, to move stagnant energy using frustration and anger. Even then I sometimes still don't listen. In desperation from within as the life force slows, dis-ease sets in, and then, only then I realize your presence and all that you have done to enable me to be ALIVE!!!

Body, forgive me if sometimes I seem slow, lost, and unaware. It's not on purpose. I tend to get seduced by the mirrors you helped me make to imitate the world, the Earth that you are a part of. Now it's a journey to remembering how priceless you are within that environ. I wonder what it was like with that first breath, if only I could reminisce that moment NOW!! Maybe I would learn to love you again.

Even as I sleep I really don't know what you do. Do you stop and stay in a limbo when I exit that door into no time or space? What do you do? A maintenance job on my home, the pipes, structures and joints? If so, it seems a thankless job, no presence there to appreciate your devotion and selflessness.

Body, do I really appreciate you? When I rhythmically walk, repetitively through hills and valleys, smooth and rough paths, feeling the breeze on the skin, smelling the cycle of

life, seeing a glimpse of the world's wonders, in a blade of grass or in a sunset. When I allow the silence and do "hear" the experience, I find I am able to indulge into the effective functional design of the world around me and appreciate the sound patterns, all beautifully orchestrated. And I smile, and as I smile I also picture the times you manifest art as you play and explore your limbs, responding to inner and outer vibrations, in a dance of ecstasy... connecting, with. ...EVERYTHING... and in a special moment share it with another.

Body, I am with you everyday, and you are there for me. Why is it so hard to make you a friend and so easy to take you for granted? Do I not trust you that you would guide me towards what is best for me? Or is it the world I have tried to make in your image, through your hands and senses, that looks back at me and I judge it for not nearly having achieved your perfection... your inner technology? And so... maybe I come to fear the whispers that I myself concoct, that have nothing to do with the energy in motion of being alive... But are to do with resisting to be stretched beyond where I am willing to go ... to realize my true beauty and not having to try... to find my true home. Oh Body, be patient with me for I have a lot to re-member? By the way who am I?

Professor Suki Mwendwa is an Associate Professor in Design at the Technical University of Kenya. She is also the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships at the same University.

She took part in the Body Mapping Who I Am, Who We Are Project in November 2013.

"Being is one thing; becoming aware of it is a point of arrival by an awakened consciousness and this involves a journey."

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, in The Name of The Mother: Reflections on Writers and Empire

Are you Kenyan?

How are you similar to other Kenyans?

How are you different from other Kenyans?

What makes you proud about Kenya?

What does not make you proud about Kenya?

What does it mean to be Kenyan?

How do you see yourself in 5 years, in Kenya?

Are you Kenyan?

swarm, **WHAT FOUR WORDS DO YOU USE TO DESCRIBE**
tribal, dependent, spiritual, driven, adaptable, positive, creative, resourceful,
unpredictable, strict, reliable, supportive, easy, manipulator, hardworking, re
capitalist, humanist, impatient, temperamental, compassionate, trustworthy,
sensitive, open minded, egocentric, arrogant, angry, minority, frustrated, inse
redictable, aloof, oppositionist, erratic, optimistic, social, interactive, free, c
rong, dreamer, optimist, honest leader, dreamer, lost sheep, leader, silen
dividualistic, agreement breaker, brave, active, funny, truthful ,social, playf
soft, introverted, bitchy, feeler, giving, insider, hard, thinker, stingy, outsider,
emotional, respectful, resilient, proud, hardworking, tribal, corrupted, religio
political, not happy, IDP, leader, social, political, Kikuyu, money driven , unen
corrupted, tribal(istic) ,destructive, forgetful, forgiving, one day yes-one d
dependent minded, active, insecure, dark , we always vote for the same
ack, mother, wife, caring, strict, hardworking, outgoing, patient, hardwor
ithful, kind, Christian, mainlander, thief, hard worker, God fearing, believ
activist, hopeful, fighting for justice, gloomy, injustice, fearful, political ,pure
happy, supportive, compassionate, happy, prayerful, joyful, principled, simpl
etermined ,brown, not white, not black, not Indian, just Kenyan, slender, hyp
aring, discriminative, simple, aggressive, Kikuyu, social, political, proud, le
inded ,observant, ambitious, concerned citizen, nepotist, tribal, unemploy
wareness, fighter, religious profiling, corrupted, tribal, wise, leader, not triba
eeper ,dishonest, tribal, bad leadership, hopeful, social, insecure, leader, div
oy, generous, social, terrorist, Muslim, Somali, lawless, decisive, advisor, fat
eakest, complacent, scared of leadership, oppressed, shy, tall, beautiful ,s
appy, sad, hopeful, Kenyan, intelligent, Christian, outsider, Kikuyu, religious,
terrorist, excluded, proud, multiracial, understanding, impolite, direct, loving,
oor, tribal, selfish, no trust between us, artist, role model, Christian, proud
hnicity ,pure, dark, open hearted, poor, rooted, voice of the voiceless, frus
spired, talented, white, gorgeous, socializing, always about money, appre
ware, unique, different, mixed married, beautiful, scared, direct, citizen, d
hopeful, blue ship, mediocre, full of virtues, independent mind, open, exig
tivist, kind, lover of nature, spiritual, white, different, exigent, caring, ex
lack, a mediator, advisor, intense, peaceful, under pressure, hardworking, p
alogue, responsible, leader, attentive, expectant, Turkana, lost in transla
spectful, quiet, ambitious, caring, understanding, artistic, emotional, ha
educated, free, democrat, social classes, values erosion, gorgeous, socializ
lented, white, kind, confident, African, god fearing, educated, woman, Ba
ardworking , mother, happy ,teacher, doctor, Kenyan, respected, inspired,
wareness, fearful, discriminated, critical, clever, **WHAT FOUR WORDS**

LIBE YOURSELF? Rooted, ignorant, poor, shattered dreams, tolerant, helpful, kind, talkative, loyal, sensitive, warm, cautious, flexible, consistent, resilient, forgiving, accepting, affected, corrupt, dishonest leader, patriot, and reliable, able, creative, curious, capricious, creative, strategic, perfectionist, secure, part of an unjust system, calm, impatient, passionate, focused, Kenyan, confidential, political risk taker, adamant, abhor corruption, tall, black, male, weak, hardworking, loving, peacemaker, impatient, unloving, pretending, full, inventive, urban, passionate, nonconformist, Kenyan, loyal, kind hearted, complacent, greedy, generous, caring, friendly, Bantu, loving open, fragile, selfish, homely, leader, incorruptible, follower of Jesus, leader, activist, unemployed, not wealthy, voice of the voiceless, proud, unemployed, unsecured, day no, thief, passionate, roots lover, courageous, diverse, culturally rich, people, not Muhindi, woman, generous, worried, mother, kind, short, ugly, working, strict, socializing, quick tempered, peaceful, believer, not respected, over, sincere, listener, class, Borana, not wealthy, dishonest, caring, listener, peaceful, caring, educated, hopeful, gay, loving, playful, different, fragile, stubborn, cheerful, good organizer, strong willed, brown, loving, focused, uncritical, curious, polite, patient, non-violent, understanding, respectful, good leader, favoring devolution, proud, creative, funny, unique, not independent, lied, corrupted, resilient, proud of success, hardworking, unequal resources, al, generous, friendly, scared, similar, open, looking for self-respect, promise, diverse, understanding, curious, open, curious, helpful, engaged, comical, love, mother, a reader, merciful, wise, brave, social, frustrated, peaceful, voice of the short, brown, beautiful, loving, honest, able, respectful, hardworking, loving, African, proud, scared, imbalanced, Cushit, resourceful, stereotyped, Islamic, mindful, trustworthy, sincere, simple, hardworking, religious, strong, mother, weed smoker, brilliant, not reliable, different, rasta, hard knocker, different, strated, scared of the police, content, curious, equal, opened, shy, beautiful, eciative of diversity, unique, Borana, powerless, spiritual, thief, responsible, different, out of place, religious, peaceful, will vote ethnically, disappointed, gent, hard, outspoken, Luo, different, courageous, Muslim, female, warrior, excluded, discriminated, violent, still strong, rooted, mediocre, independence, pessimist, cheeky, determined, I give up easily, funny, hardworking, talkative, tion, strong, gypsy soul, creative, silent, helpful, like security, committed, happy, wishful, mwalimu, smiling, good looking, male, slim, joyful, dreamer, ing, brown, corrupted, clean, quiet, musical, lovely, shy, beautiful, inspired, jun, confident, educated, believer, tall, black, strong, male, unequal society, talented, white, gorgeous, spiritual, deep, reliable, deep, writer, , hopeful

WORDS DO PEOPLE USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF? dan



WHO I AM, WHO WE ARE is an art project which examines the idea of Kenyan nationhood and how this is embodied through a sense of identity and everyday interactions.

The project uses art and self-expression to create spaces and conversations for personal reflection on the themes of citizenry, civic responsibility, race, belonging, ethnicity and nationalism. This is against the backdrop of the events surrounding the 2007 Post-Election Violence, the new Constitution and the 2013 Presidential Elections.

The aim of WHO I AM, WHO WE ARE is to reflect people's views and perhaps indicate a future for Kenya that will see people understand their role in what Kenya can become. The conversations are based on past and present individual experience.

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