

parents

Caring for you and your family

PERIS SIAMANTA MEMUSI

Love for Adventure and
Building Libraries

DEBORAH AUKO

Author of *Rough
Silk* whose life
reads like a novel

KEITH AG'ANA

A Gen Z Building
a Platform for
Writers

JOAN THATIAH

Bold and
Unapologetic
Celebrated Author

PLUS:

- * Tips to Monetize Your Writing
- * Benefits of Reading to Your Unborn Baby
- * Nurturing a Strong Reading Culture in Children

SPECIAL ISSUE:
Reviving the
Reading Culture
in Kenya

Sex and Intimacy: Romance Novels as Visualization Tools

WANT SOMETHING

Fresh!?

VISIT



@VibeYetuKe

<http://www.vibeyetu.com>



Let's join hands to nurture a reading culture



The first lessons taught in schools are reading and writing. They are the foundation of knowledge. They work hand in hand to keep our brains well-nourished, informed, and enlightened and benefit people of all ages. The knowledge and information acquired through reading guide us through life and its challenges.

The notion that our youth are always on their gadgets and have no time for serious reading outside academic work was negated by Gen Zs when they hit the streets to protest the approval by parliament of the Finance Bill 2024 in June this year. They were not demonstrating for the sake of it. They had read the contents of the bill, understood and analysed them, and were therefore condemning the offending parts from an informed position.

They highlighted clauses that were detrimental to the well-being of Kenyans and went further to translate them into local languages to ensure that as many Kenyans as possible understood why they were opposed to the Bill. One was left with admiration for this generation for their ability to read, understand, and say NO to what does not favour the country.

There is a need to enhance the reading culture in this country by making reading materials available and widely circulated in all parts of the country and to everyone, not just the privileged. The greatest challenge faced by many Kenyans is access to reading materials such as books and quiet spaces to read them. This is where public libraries come in handy.

We devote this issue to encouraging Kenyans of all ages to adopt and promote a reading culture within themselves, their families, and the communities where they live. We bring you examples of people who are already doing it and making remarkable transformations, hoping you too can find a space in this important area of our lives.

One of the champions of reviving a reading culture in this country is Peris Siamanta, featured in this month's cover story. She is a fearless woman with a mission to build libraries in marginalised areas of the country by pulling resources together. In addition, she has created a platform that brings authors and book lovers together. She does her advocacy work with grace and humility; touching many lives and impacting communities.

Her remarkable story is a must-read. Kenya's reading culture would be nothing without its main glue - Kenyan authors. Deborah Auko, featured in the *Real-Life Experience* column, is the author of *Rough Silk*, an account of her difficult childhood. She beat all the odds and rose to become a celebrated author whose story is a true inspiration.

Another celebrated Kenyan author, Joan Thatiah, the beautiful brains behind *Confessions of Nairobi Women and Men* masterpiece is featured in the Heroes column. Not to be left out are Gen Z authors represented in this issue by Keith Ang'ana, the young man behind *Qwani* anthologies. He is featured in the *Young Achievers* column.

One of the biggest challenges faced by authors is monetising their work. Florence Bett, a finance expert, and a writer, offers practical tips on how you can monetise your creative work in the *Finance* column.

To the lovers of fictional romance, the *Sex and Intimacy* column delves into romance novels to bring out ways reading them can enhance intimacy.

Outside books and authors, you will be delighted to read the encouraging account of the life of a reformed street criminal who is now rehabilitating street children, offering them a future away from the rough and unforgiving streets of Nairobi. Peter Ndiboe, featured in the *Survivor* column, goes to show that given a second chance, many people can mend their lives.

These and many more are found in the following pages of this issue, my first one as your editor. Excite your soul and feed your mind as you flip through the pages. I welcome your feedback!

Happy Reading *Veronica*

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Enhance your reading experience with a cup of Hibiscus tea

Reading becomes a real pleasure when accompanied by your favourite drink. What better accompaniment than a delicious cup of Hibiscus tea?

Hibiscus is a flowery plant with large trumpet-shaped flowers whose colour ranges from white, pink, and purple to peach, depending on the species. Due to their beautifying element, they are mainly used to bring life to a backyard or a garden.

Other than being a decorative plant, different parts of the hibiscus plant can be consumed. Its roots, leaves, stem and flowers have been used as traditional medicine. In modern days, it has been grounded and packaged into tea bags, making its consumption easy although one can also eat the flower straight from the plant.

Adding a hibiscus teabag in boiled water gives a red concoction that is sweet and tangy. To reduce the tart flavour, you can sweeten it with honey or a squeeze of lime or lemon. The tea can be consumed hot or cold.

Beyond the taste, it has numerous health benefits. Hibiscus tea has antioxidants such as Vitamin C and anthocyanin which help destroy harmful free radicals that cause damage to the cells. It also helps fight inflammation, and lower blood pressure and cholesterol. In addition, it supports liver health, fights bacteria, and promotes weight loss.

Hibiscus tea is available in supermarkets and grocery stores. **P**

The Team

Publisher:
Stellan Consult Ltd

Managing Director:
Eunice Mathu

Chief Operating Officer:
Karanja Grace

PA to MD:
Patience Pendo

Editor:
Ann Veronicah

Staff Writer:
Neema Odhiambo

Contributor:
Murugi Gichovi

VibeYetu Operations Manager:
Brian Muinde

Magazine Layout:
Okaka Consultancy

Creative & Videography:
Ndegwa Brian

Digital Executive:
Njambi Gaitho

Business Development:
Geoffrey Omeke
Diana Muchai

I.T Specialists:
Levy Wesonga
Weston Kamau

Accounts:
Josephine Kariuki

Interns:
Jackson Ngari
Gladys Njamiu
Sophie Kinya
Immaculate Adoyo
Wangari Njoroge
Suzanne Omino

Printed By:
English Press Limited

CONTACTS:

St Michael's Rd. off Church Rd.
Waiyaki way, Westlands | P.O. Box
50795-00200, Tel: 020 2519283
Mobile: 0713 286 015
e-mail: info@parents.co.ke

All rights are reserved.
Reproduction in whole or in part
of any articles without written
permission is prohibited. The
Editor welcomes contributions
which, if accepted will be paid for
at our normal rates and all rights,
unless initially specified otherwise
remain with the publisher. Other
materials accompanied by a
stamped envelope will be returned
if rejected. Unsolicited materials
will not be acknowledged.

CONTENTS



REGULARS

- 01. Editorial
- 03. Mailbox
- 04. Meet the cover models
- 06. Living Vaule

EXPERIENCES & MAIN STORIES

- 08. Cover Story
- 16. Celebrating our Heroes
- 18. Survivor
- 20. Real Life Experience
- 31. Phenomenal Woman



FINANCE

- 17. How To Monetize Your Writing

RELATIONSHIPS

- 24. Bond of love: SAMMY AND MICHELLE MAANGI: 'She Photobombed Her Way To Love'
- 26. Sex & Intimacy: Bridging the gap between book sex fantasy and the real world



YOUTH

- 30. Young Achiever: Building a platform for writers

MOTHER AND BABY

- 32. Pregnancy and Birth: Benefits of reading to your unborn baby
- 34. Child Clinic: How Children Consume Content

OPINION

- 38. From the Pulpit: Finding Solace in Faith-Based Literature
- 39. Men Only: The Gentleman's Library: Must-Read Books for Men
- 40. Share My World: Success to Significance: Lessons from Dr. Manu Chandaria

WE'VE GOT MAIL



“

Thought of the Month

As a rule, he or she who has the most information will have the greatest success in life.

Benjamin Disraeli, Former UK Prime Minister

”

WINNING LETTER

As a young girl navigating the complexities of life, your articles have been a beacon of guidance and inspiration for me.

Your coverage of relationships, self-development as a woman, and motherhood has been invaluable. Every issue seems to speak directly to my heart, offering wisdom and practical advice that have helped me grow, learn, and unlearn many things.

I often find myself eagerly waiting for the next edition, knowing it will provide the insights I need at that moment.

In a world where there is so much noise, your magazine stands out as a trusted source of knowledge, empowerment, and encouragement. The stories, tips, and experiences you share not only resonate with me but also make me feel part of a larger community of women who are all striving to become the best versions of themselves.

Thank you for all the hard work, dedication, and passion you pour into each issue. Please keep doing what you do, as it makes a world of difference to readers like me.

Esther Nyambura
Via mail.

Join the conversation online.

FEEDBACK FROM THE CONVERSATION AROUND TOXIC PARENTING

Parenting has no manual, how somebody raises their child is different from how someone else will raise theirs.

Ivana

Parents magazine discusses all matters around parenting and family addressing all issues. They report and help mold society

Nene Gift Shop

A majority of Gen Zs were born after the government banned corporal punishment in schools, so they haven't experienced what millennials went through

Nonature

Being a parent isn't easy and it has no manual. The stages differ but teenhood is the most difficult one. It's only grace and wisdom from God that will keep you sane

Deedee

In the same spirit that parenting has no manual, also being a child has no manual...let everyone treat others right despite their position

Miss Gatimu

I remember my mum was beating me from standard five to form four. I used to say that my mum loved me the least in the family, but despite everything I came to understand her. I appreciate her wherever she is.

Fee Njera

Never judge any parent. Parenting a teenager is very difficult for parents, I have an 11-year-old girl, and believe me, it's not easy. Just pray about it though.

Irene

If you're under your parents' roof listen to them until you get your own home and live the way you want. Let's respect our parents. I am a Gen Z with toxic parents but the best thing I did was move out

Queen B

FEEDBACK FROM FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL FEATURES

Anyone can be a father, but it takes courage to be a dad

Nelly Jane

Fathers are so underrated. I wish mine was still around

Jerop

Knowing what I now know about fatherhood, I would have taken my time. It's not easy to be a father

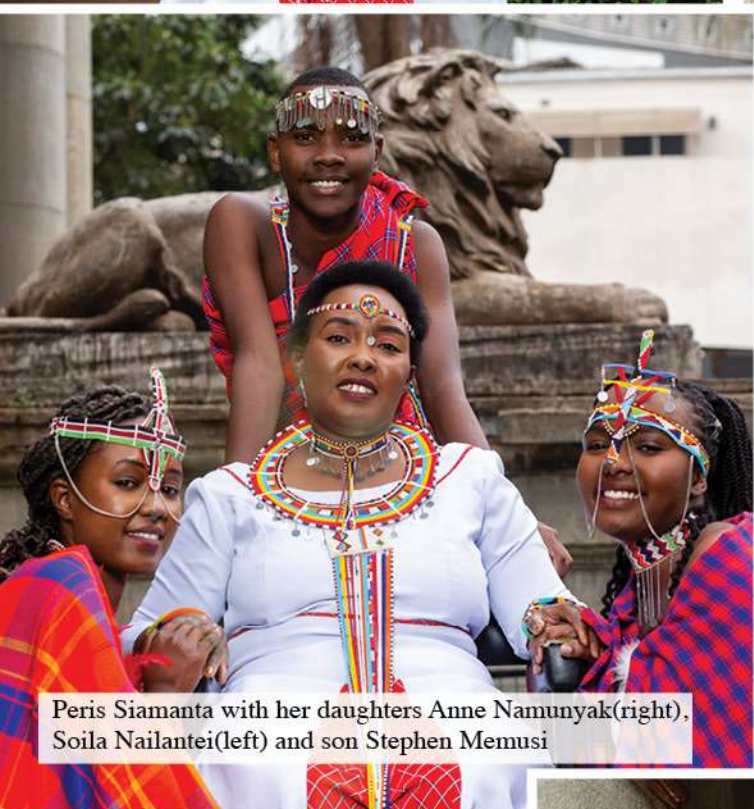
King Perez

At Least there's a day to celebrate men. They deserve it

Njoro wa Naks

Subscribe to Parents Magazine Youtube channel and get content with is
Bold. Authentic. Impacting lives

ParentsMagazineAfrica



Peris Siamanta with her daughters Anne Namunyak(right), Soila Nailantei(left) and son Stephen Memusi



Meet the Cover Model

Meet our cover model, Peris Memusi Siamanta, a mother of three beautiful children, an author, nutritionist, and an avid reader who has dedicated her life to reviving the reading culture in Kenya. Peris shares how reading and writing level down the mountains and valleys she faces in life, and how the two led her to take a different path.

Special Thanks

Photography: Ndegwa Brian

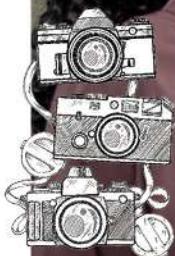
Stylist: Ian Ombok - @ianthesketch

Makeup: Lilian Mwende - @nvluxuryspa

Wardrobe: Ian Ombok@ianthesketch



Peris Siamanta with her daughters Anne Namunyak(left), Soila Nailantei (right) and son Stephen Memusi



Know the calories in your alcohol



So, you are trying to lose weight and still indulging in your favourite alcoholic drink? Did you know that beer, wine, and spirits can really add up calories to frustrate your weight loss journey? Here is a calorie breakdown of your favourite alcoholic beverage.

Beer: It can range from light to dark stouts depending on the proportions of malt and barley. As a rule of thumb, the darker the colour of the brew, the higher the calorie count. One regular 12-ounce beer has 13 grams of carbohydrates and 150 calories; a 12-ounce light beer has 5 carb grams and 100 calories.

Wine: Red wine is made from red grapes; white from green; and rose or blush from red (not a mixture of red and white as some people believe).

Research (though now being disputed) has found that red wine helps with blood circulation and, in moderation (one 4 to 6-ounce glass daily) is good for the heart. One 6-ounce glass of white wine has 1.4 carb grams and 120 calories; 6 ounces of red wine has 3 carb grams and 128 calories; 6 ounces of rose has 2.5 carb grams and 128 calories. A 6-ounce glass of sweet dessert wine, such as Riesling has 21 carb grams and 270 calories.

Champagne: This is a sparkling white wine from the France region of Champagne, but many other wine-producing regions in the world produce sparkling wines. The bubbly gets its taste, allure, and carbonation from slightly acidic grapes; fermented and distinctly cultivated. A sugar

mixture is added to most sparkling wines before bottling. One 6.5-ounce flute has 6.5 carb grams and 163 calories.

Straight up and mixed spirits:

A 1.5-ounce shot of any 80-proof liquor such as vodka, rum, tequila, gin, etc. - has 100 calories; if your straight shot is 100-proof, it's 124 calories. The proof number is twice the alcohol content of the beverage i.e. 80 proof means the liquor is 40 percent alcohol. But when a shot is combined with a prepared mix, juice, or soda, the calorie count can go a lot higher. For example, 1.5 ounces vodka mixed with 3.5 ounces club soda, or 3 ounces sweet and sour mix is 17 carb grams and 175 calories.

Walk barefoot for health

Go barefoot to boost your health and get a better night's sleep. A study published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complimentary Medicine* found that earthing, when your body is in contact with the ground, helps regulate the body's endocrine and nervous systems. The earth's electrons neutralise free radicals in the body, removing negative ions and therefore improving health.



Drink Goji tea for heart health

Goji berries have long been praised for their life-enhancing benefits. Various studies have shown that they halt the accumulation of fat cells, help protect against Alzheimer's, and are great for heart health. According to legend, China's oldest man lived to the grand age of 256. His secret? Goji berry tea. This antioxidant-rich brew is an easy way to deliver nutrients to your body every day.

“

Monthly Mantra

He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass.

Tom Elliff, Baptist Church Minister, USA

”



Reading...

Expanding Knowledge and Vocabulary

Some moments, best described as 'me time', should be spent alone, in the comfort of a cosy home, listening to music, or watching TV, as most people prefer. But have you ever tried reading alone in the quiet of your home?

It does not have to be at your place, imagine treating yourself to a solo date or picnic just to read your new novel. It would be an unforgettable peaceful heaven!

Reading is not all about increasing your knowledge and vocabulary, it is also about the imagination and the bond you create with the fictional characters of a good fictional novel. The same imagination creates a new world for you and takes you there, leaving all your troubles behind.

It is about how words from a motivational book wake the lion in you, making it roar with all its might. The self-worth that had crippled away from you finds you again and runs into your arms with a warm embrace.

The historical books paint a picture of how the world was like back then, making you live in a past that existed way before you. Each genre, as long as it is artistically crafted, has its magic.

If you have never experienced this, you have missed a lot. If you still experience this, never stop craving that tranquility and if you stopped, please find your way back.

Many people seem to have forgotten this feeling. Well, they are not to be blamed entirely. The feeling is a good addiction and the moment one stops attending to their addiction, it gets hard to get it back.

Additionally, we all have seasons. Sometimes we have little on our plates while other times we barely have time for ourselves. The latter makes it difficult to create time to bond with your newest Joanne Thatiah's novel. Slowly by slowly, responsibilities swallow up your free time, and the love for reading fades away.

However, it does not always have to be like this. A workable schedule that

integrates your responsibilities and hobbies would come in handy. Even with all the irregularities of being a busy adult, strive to create time for yourself. Use this time to feed your brain and create a whole new world with your books.

Let's move away from the adults and pay attention to the young angels. How do we introduce the art of reading to them? First, let the child understand that there are different modes of entertainment other than playtime with friends, Cocomelon, and PlayStations.

Let them learn that 'The Diary of a Wimpy Kid' by Jeff Kinney and 'The Man in Green Dungarees' by Ng'ang'a Mbugua exist. Teach the young ones how to read and you will see an improvement in their schoolwork. If they are too young, buy them pictorial books.

The new curriculum system, Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), pays attention to practicality. Instilling a consistent reading culture in your child cultivates practicality hence better understanding of what they learn in school.

Reading to your child strengthens your bond with them. Make it a trend. As you tuck them to bed, let your soothing voice sail them to a flowery dreamland before giving them a forehead kiss, turning off their lights, and closing the door behind you.

Reflections

"I have always felt that literature, or reading, is a mirror of life."

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kenyan author

"Books are the way we record and share the thoughts of people who lived before us."

Chinua Achebe, Nigerian author

Your Thoughts

Reading is a lifelong skill, especially for a journalist like me. It improves my memory and helps me build a robust vocabulary, knowledge, and concentration besides adding a rich and deep meaning to my life. Did I say it's a cure for stress, besides increasing my imagination and creativity?

Jayne Rose Gacheri, Senior Reporter, The Standard

ODE TO REVIVING THE READING CULTURE

1. As innate to social man as food to man
Primordial societies danced it out
Others drew it out on ceremonial surfaces
Still, some hewed it out of stone as a perpetual narrative

To perceive, see, and know that
Today, better know you're what you read.

2. Written language for the chosen few
Religious in origin and divinely ordained for all
Designed to create mirth for a common bond

Books for the masses are only a recent phenomenon
Alas, reading culture is beyond school

Today, better know you're what you read.

3. Written words hit Indigenous land slowly
Against ingrained bulwark of ethnic awe
Bright stars to lead the way to obvious benefits

Education tied to the hip with short tribal horizon

Mass education to pass exams does remove the joy of reading

Today, better know you're what you read.

4. Reading culture nurtures curiosity
Curiosity grows the mind into thinking
Thinking expands the brain, leading to more reading

Never too young to read, habit to start early

A reading individual commands respect on sight

Today, better know you're what you read.

5. Hail, the new dawn fueled by a ubiquitous device
Conquering to declare the smartphone

The biggest reading catalyst of all

The paper will disappear slowly but surely

As digital reading takes root and gathers

unstoppable momentum

Today, better know you're what you read.

6. You may read traditionally or digitally
Awed at first before fawning over the new addiction
True the habit sometimes numbs the brain

But reading is a must because any reading is good
Alas, remember, a reading habit is better than no word

Today, better know you're what you read.

7. It all starts young, make 'em read early

A page a day out loud and about

Storybooks, memoirs and formal narratives

Read, re-learn to read fast, read for tomorrow

Revive lost curiosity and read again

Today, better know you're what you read.

By Poet Squirrel

Kenya National Library Service: Preserving the reading culture

For over 50 years, Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) has been at the heart of Kenya's literal and cultural industry as a beacon of knowledge and a literacy champion.

Since its establishment in 1965, KNLS has shown immense development from being a simple book inventory to a corporation that upholds the Kenyan heritage and adjusts to the growing digital world.

According to Dr Charles Nzivo, the Director General of the KNLS, the corporation plays a pivotal role in promoting and sustaining literacy in Kenya by creating libraries nationwide, ensuring that Kenyan readers, writers, and publishers all over the country have access to literal resources. KNLS services are inclusive of all segments of society, including children, senior citizens, and the visually impaired.

"KNLS libraries have designated children's sections with age-appropriate books and educational materials in a welcoming environment. The libraries also cater to the visually impaired by providing accessible formats, such as Braille books and audio versions, ensuring equal access to literature and information.

Facilities such as ramps, elevators, and comfortable seating areas are available for use by senior citizens and staff members are available to offer assistance," says Dr Charles.

Authors and publishers are particularly supported through the issuance of International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) and International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN) which are essential for distribution and cataloging. KNLS also facilitates resource sharing among libraries, which can help authors and publishers reach a wider audience through various library

networks. In addition, KNLS organises national and international exhibitions, book fairs, and book launches where publishers and authors can promote their works and network with other industry players.

In response to the rapidly evolving technology, KNLS has launched v.tabu, a virtual library, and a state-of-the-art digitisation lab that transforms hardcopy materials into quality softcopy documents. The digitisation of resources such as maps, artworks, books, records, documents (loose leaf or bound), newspapers, charts, and photos has enabled KNLS to achieve its mandate of providing the public with access to information.

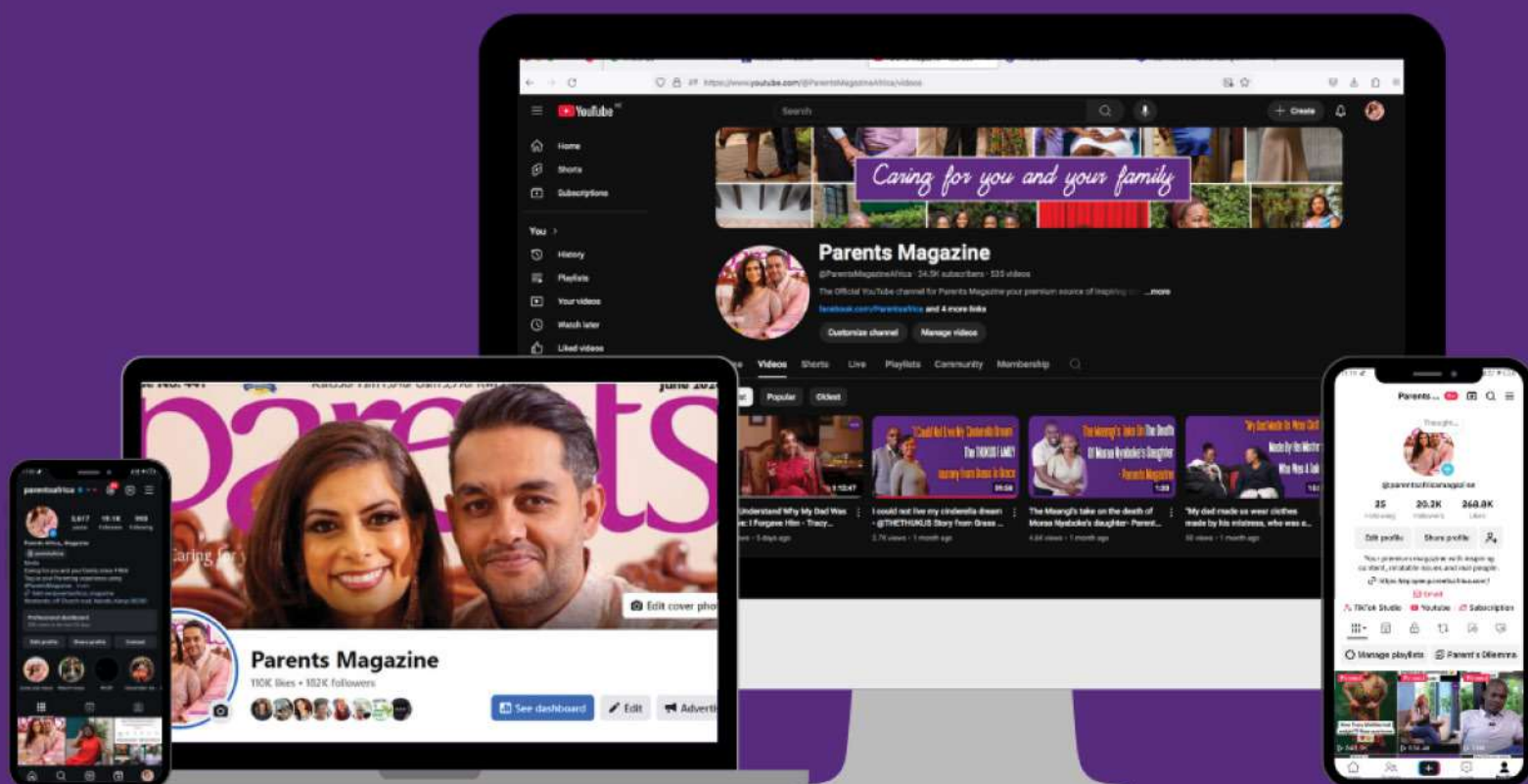
To begin using the virtual library, register at <https://vtabu.knls.ac.ke/registration>. The v.tabu is accessible online at www.vtabu.knls.ac.ke or by scanning the QR code below.



Subscribe and enjoy your virtual library membership.

Connect with us:

- [knlsmedia](#)
- [Kenya National Library Service - KNLS](#)
- [@knlsmedia](#)



Be part of the conversation. Follow us!

@parentsmagazineafrica



Peris Siamanta with her daughters Anne Namunyak (right), Soila Nailantei (Left) and son Stephen Memusi

PERIS SIAMANTA MEMUSI

A life crafted by adventure and love of the written word

From a little Maasai girl growing up on the slopes of Chyulu hills, to escaping FGM, to becoming a teenage mother, to a failed attempt at marriage, to working in Dubai and Covid-19 putting an end to her source of income, to reviving a reading culture in Kenya, the story of Peris Siamanta Memusi reads like an adventure novel ready for the big screen. Telling her story on this issue is such an inspiration. Read on...

Jovial, beautiful, and informed - words that accurately describe Peris Siamanta Memusi. The words spoken by her are unforgettable and those written by her are powerful. It is exciting to say this about a Maasai girl who grew up in a remote area surrounded by nothing but a thick forest, animals, and cultural beliefs.

Kimana, her home, was a marginalized area located in Kajiado South, just at the fine slopes of Chyulu hills but above all, this is where Siamanta grew up. A place so deep in the forest with no water, and no phone network service, and many of the inhabitants still survive on relief food from the government.

Children failing to show up at school because of wild animals was no news to the residents. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Nguruna, were schoolteachers - specifically no-nonsense teachers. They are currently retirees.

"Other than being teachers, my parents were readers. In addition to newspapers, I remember my dad would have a copy of the *Parents magazine*, and that is how I learnt about this iconic magazine. The cover pages were illuminated by lovely models depicting families, and I couldn't help but wonder how they achieved that. I often dreamt of growing up and one day being on the cover of this magazine," recalls Siamanta who can't believe that her dream just came true!

She was the firstborn in a family of two boys and two girls, meaning that the role of assistant parent was hers by default. During those days, the firstborns did most

of the household chores and took care of their younger siblings.

Discipline to her was key because she had to be a role model to her siblings but also because her parents were teachers. Parents who are teachers have a reputation for disciplining their children. Siamanta vividly remembers how she would receive punishments in double portions, one as a child and the second as a student.

"If you did something wrong at school, you would be punished by the teacher involved and when you got back home, inquiries would be made on why you were punished. This conversation ended with another punishment from our parents. We ended up being overly disciplined, and today I appreciate that type of parenting as it made me the woman I am today," she says.

Her home was in the school compound due to her parents' profession. This was a good thing because she was among the first people to receive goodies that the white settlers who used to play football at her school brought. The goodies included books, magazines, and footballs.

"I used to be very curious about these settlers. I wondered where they lived and how they got back to their homes using airplanes. The magazines they brought had photos of good food and a luxurious life. It dawned on me that there was a better life other than the one I was living. My mind got tuned to working towards achieving that life someday," she recalls.

Siamanta made new foreign friends and this relationship was maintained even after their departure. She used to communicate

>>



with them through the post office. They exchanged information that introduced Siamanta to a whole new world. One that had winter!

That is how she developed an intrinsic curious personality that had to be fed with knowledge constantly. Reading got into her head to the point that a novel was a weapon fashioned against the house chores. Her mother often warned her to finish the chores first before attending to her reading addiction.

Fortunately, Siamanta was an agile child. Through her speedy hands that did the chores to perfection, she learnt how to finish her work early so she could get enough time to interact with Danielle Steel's novels. The time created still felt too little for her reading, so it used to extend up to nighttime.

"My parents stopped fueling my lantern so I could at least get some sleep and not spend most of the nights reading," she recalls, adding that her parents just wanted

to take care of their child's health and not stop her from reading.

Her books were her world. She treated them as her best friends. Charlotte Brontë was her favorite author. Her books floored her down and lifted her. Her emotions would be turned upside down by the words in the books. Most of the things she read during that time are still fresh in her memory as books were the only companion she had.

Her rich reading culture brought so many benefits to her table - excellence in schoolwork being the most important. Her classmates knew that the 'best in English and Kiswahili' titles belonged to her. Compositions and *inshas* (Swahili version of compositions) became a walk in the park for the renowned reading champion.

Siamanta recalled an *insha* she once wrote that brought the school to a standstill. As the teacher marked her paper, he could not believe that she had come up with the story on her own. He told Siamanta to redo the paper while seated alone in

a staffroom's corner. She cleared her teacher's doubts by creating an even better story.

This might look like a mere *insha* to you but to Siamanta, it marked the day she discovered her authorship talent. A talent that sadly had to be treated as a hobby and not a money maker because back in the day, the community idolised no other careers apart from those related to STEM courses.

"My words just flow. I never struggle to get the right word for a scenario and my brain is overwhelmed with storylines anytime I hold a pen. I cannot say the same about my liking for numbers. I struggle with numbers," she says.

Escaping FGM and early marriage...

Siamanta's passion runs too deep. She fights for her dreams even if it means going against cultural practices like FGM and early marriages, in other words, the two biggest enemies of any Maasai girl with a dream.

"There came a time when every Maasai girl was taken to the elders for genital mutilation. My sister and I were scared when our turn came but our mum, being an educated lady, found a way to hide us until the mutilation season passed.

Even with her strictness as a teacher, she allowed her two baby girls to skip school," she recalls how serious FGM was in her community.

Siamanta felt safe and so did her sister. They wished that every girl in their community who was their age would join them in their safe space so they would not go through the trauma of FGM. "If wishes were horses..." she adds.

According to their culture, not going through FGM was viewed as skipping a vital rite of passage. The girls who did not go through FGM were stigmatised because culturally, they ruined their only chance of getting a good husband among other traditional 'luxuries'.

Being a teacher's child, Siamanta was brought up to be a good example to other children. Her parents wanted a bright future for their children and early marriages would ruin that if they allowed it to happen. This did not stop the prospects from making 'marriage bookings' but her parents would not let them be the downfall of their girls.



Peris Siamanta with her daughters Anne Namunyak (left), Soila Nailantei (Left) and son Stephen Memusi

Early pregnancy...

The plan was to go to college, a plan that took a little longer to achieve due to unforeseen circumstances. Siamanta explained that she was 16 years old and had just finished high school when she learned she was pregnant. She described this as a consequence of her spirit of adventure.

"In my ignorance, I did not know of my pregnancy until I was seven months pregnant. I never had morning sickness or any other signs that I might be pregnant until it got to seven months. I went for a pregnancy test, and it came out positive. The doctor informed my mother. I knew I wasn't ready to face her. I cycled from home to the bus stop and caught a bus to Nairobi, without any idea of where I was going," Siamanta recalls that traumatising moment.

As much as the pregnancy was a blessing, it was taboo to engage in sexual activities before marriage. It was viewed as immorality and an immoral person was an embarrassment to her family. She felt like she had failed her parents. She managed to track her grandfather in Nairobi who took care of her and her unborn baby.

When the time came for her to deliver the baby, she packed her bag and went to the hospital just like any other mum-to-be would do, only for her to be denied services because she was a minor.

After a series of back and forth with several hospitals, Siamanta ended up delivering at Pumwani Hospital where she checked in under the National Youth

Service (NYS), through a connection from one of her aunts. She delivered a bouncy baby girl, Anne Namunyak, who is now 22 years old and a student of Nutrition at Mount Kenya University.

Her sister also got pregnant around the same time as Siamanta and after delivery went back to school to finish her studies, so Siamanta played the role of mother to her niece, Soila Nailantei. This role continued after her sister passed on in 2006. She took in her niece as one of her children.

Family...

Siamanta is the head of a family of four who treat each other as best friends. "My children know everything about me, and I know everything about them. People out here think that I'm Anne's sister when we walk together," she quips.

She has a strong bond with her firstborn not only because of the small age difference but also because she is making up for the many days the child spent without her mother.

Her daughters are Gen Zs, a group that has been vocal about their needs and wants as far as governing this country is concerned. They managed to bring the country to a standstill with the Tuesday and Thursday protests. As a mother to two of them, Siamanta is worried about her children's future.

"If we are struggling this much to get an attachment for Anne right now, what will happen when we start looking for a job?" She asks.

Marriage...

They say that marriage is a beautiful thing, but it is not for everybody. Various aspects of Siamanta's world made her believe that marriage was not for her. She says any relationship between a man and her seems to cause chaos in her life.

"I was not properly introduced to sex. I got pregnant after having my first-ever sexual intercourse. I failed my parents because of my relationship with a man and I did not want to see it happen again. I abstained from romantic relationships for a very long time," she explains.

After ten years of living with the trauma, she decided to give love a second chance. "When I was about 28 years old, I got into a 'come we stay' relationship with a man I loved, and we lived together in Mombasa. The relationship was not a happy one. His conduct became questionable. I got pregnant with my lastborn son, Stephen Memusi, who I delivered through a C-Section," she narrates.

On top of his toxic behaviour, he did not care enough to be by her side when going through the operation. Instead, he brought different girls in and out of their house when she was in hospital. The disrespect was too much. Siamanta packed her belongings and caught a bus back to her parents' home. She called it quits.

Despite all these difficulties, Siamanta was still writing her books but had not published them because she was strained financially and mentally, and taking care of her newborn did not make it any easier.



Education and work...

Siamanta is one ambitious lady. She transfers this same character to her entrepreneurship. While living in Mombasa, she used to hawk fruits on the streets, and through this business, she landed a job at USAID as an office assistant, on the recommendation of one of her customers.

She did her job to perfection and was named 'Best Employee of the Year' during her second year of working. The award was a fully paid sponsorship to any course she wanted. That is how she got to do community development training. Later the USAID contract ended when the project came to an end. As much as the employees were compensated, Siamanta needed a job because her firstborn, Anne, was starting secondary school at Bahari Girls in Kilifi. All Siamanta knew was that her child must go to school and learn comfortably but she had no idea how this would happen.

She always praises God for the miracles He works in her life. One day, when on her way to visit her daughter at school, she came across a good Samaritan who offered to drive a few passengers to Mombasa.

Siamanta started having a conversation with the driver, who, later connected her with an opportunity to work in Dubai.

It is not like the driver gave her a job; he connected her with someone who could host her in Dubai while searching for a job. She took the opportunity, something many people would not dare do out of fear of the unknown.

She recalls it was not easy. "We walked in a group of seven women knocking from door to door in search of employment in a foreign land. Our weapons were our papers and the word of God. You'd think we were crazy, but we did it. At the end of it, we all managed to bag worthy employment contracts," she recalls.

For seven years, Dubai was Siamanta's home as a nutritionist at the Saudi German Hospital in Al Barsha. She worked hard and gained her employer's trust. The contract would have continued were it not for the Covid-19 pandemic. She was enjoying her break in Kenya before all the flights were grounded.

Her other education milestones include a Diploma in Hotel Management, which she did in 2003.

Kenya Reading Culture...

When Siamanta lived in Dubai, she would visit a well-maintained and fully stocked public library during her off days. The sessions were calming and educative. Her passion for books was reignited. On coming back to Kenya, she realised that it was not easy to access a public library.

"Of all the people I asked where I could get a library, only one knew the answer. I followed the directions and on getting to the library, I was devastated. My eyes were heavy with tears and my chest was aching for all those nice books that lay on the floor. They looked like they had not been touched in ages. It hurt my feelings," she recalls.

This was the moment Siamanta decided to promote the reading culture countrywide.

She did her research and found that there were many Kenyans who loved reading. The problem is they don't know where to find the books and a convenient place to read from.

To connect book lovers, she came up with a charity organisation known as Kenya Reading Culture which has a huge following. It is comprised of authors and readers. In this group, Kenyan books are appreciated, and authors are promoted.

Why libraries?

Kenya has 64 public libraries and only one national library, the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS). The state of some of the public libraries is terrible and the books are tattered.

"This is wrong in so many ways. We have educated people out there who want a library to read from during their free time," she says.

Siamanta advocates for community libraries because they are easily accessible to all members of the community.

These libraries can be easily monetized, hence bringing revenue to the County governments and the communities. In addition, Siamanta says libraries are the solution to ending crime, drug abuse, and immorality by educating people as well as giving them something better to do.

Due to a lack of funds, she encourages the concept of green libraries, that is, building libraries from recycled materials like plastics.

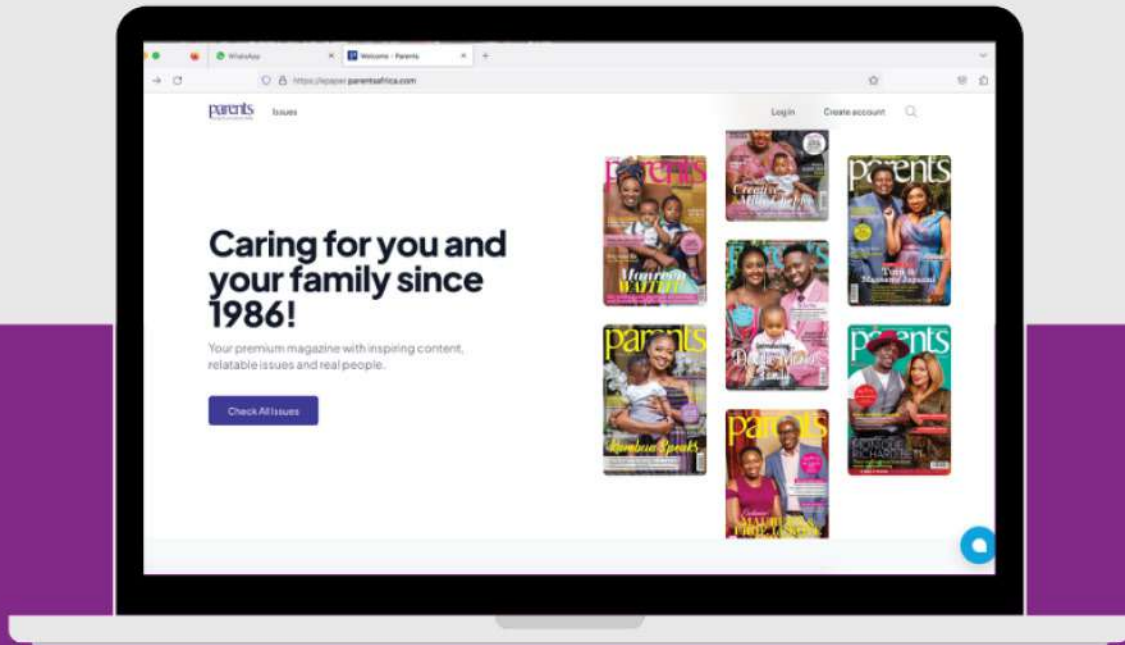
"I have built one using a spoilt plastic water tank," she says.

Due to her consistent good work, well-wishers have been helping her out with the resources needed to establish better libraries.

"Finance is my major problem. I use money from my pocket to travel to all the schools and places I go to preach the gospel of reading. If there is a library that needs books, I use my own money to buy the books and promote other authors at the same time," she says.

Siamanta's life story is characterised by numerous rough moments. "I look back and wonder how I overcame all that," she reminisces while appreciating the hardships she went through, as they molded the person you see on the cover of this magazine. **P**

subscribe to our e-paper



epaper.parentsafrica.com

Beyond the Screen: The Future in Gaming

For many of us parents, gaming often feels like a mere hobby or even a potential distraction from more "serious" activities we'd prefer our children to engage in.

However, the global gaming industry has been rapidly growing, offering a wealth of career opportunities within and far beyond just playing the games. On September 7th, the Gaming Impact Grand Series aimed to demystify the world of esports and gaming, showcasing the vast potential this industry holds, particularly for local gamers.

Kenya has been making significant strides on the international gaming scene. Our country has seen remarkable achievements, with gamers like Bilal Mohammed, who secured Kenya's first African esports championship, and Shantel Wanjiru, known by her gamer tag 'Starlight,' who won at the SkillUp Africa Tournament.

Shantel also participated in the Gaming Impact Grand Series, proving that local talent can compete on the world stage. In an interview with VibeYetu, Nick Kibeh, the founder of AlphaClan Esports and the event's organiser, emphasised that locally instituted tournaments and gamer interactions will be vital in growing esports and gaming in Kenya. Ray Frank, a Kenyan Game Developer and a four-time GameDevJam

winner, attributed his success in the gaming industry to the unwavering support of his parents. "Their encouragement was fundamental in my journey," he shared.

The Gaming Impact Grand Series, which not only provided a platform for gamers and game developers to compete and connect but also gave parents an opportunity to learn about the diverse career paths available within the industry. For children already enjoying gaming at home, whether they dream of becoming professional gamers, game developers, or pursuing other roles within the industry, parental support could be the key to unlocking their future in gaming. The Gaming Impact Grand Series was a chance to witness the incredible opportunities that gaming can offer.

The Gaming Impact Grand Series is a yearly esports tournament organised by AlphaClan Esports in partnership with EsportsAfrica, SmartVR, Jiwe Esports, PaydHQ, Barbah Games, the Kenya Film Classification Board, and VibeYetu. The event has left a lasting impact, with hopes that it will continue to inspire and grow the gaming industry in Kenya. Looking forward to the next! Check out alphaclanesports.com to learn more

brian.muinde@parents.co.ke

GAMING IMPACT GRAND SERIES

THIKA ROAD MALL, SMART VR

**MONTHLY PRIZE
KSH 50,000**

Gear up for the ultimate gaming competition and witness Kenyan Gamers go head to head in electrifying tournaments featuring your favorite gamers

REGISTER AT WWW.ALPHACLANESPORTS.COM



Inside Corazon Kisilu's World of Books

Corazon Kisilu, known to many as Corrie, is a seasoned Communications Specialist with 14 years of experience spanning various industries across Africa. She finds her balance in her busy life by reading books. She talks to MURUGI GICHOVI about the reading culture and her favourite books.

Corazon Kisilu's career has been marked by a strong commitment to impactful communication, with a track record of consulting on and leading diverse projects. Despite her busy schedule, she remains an ardent lover of books and never fails to get time for a good read.

Currently, Corrie is at the forefront of climate communication, where she drives political, diplomatic, and communication efforts in Kenya, focusing on climate and energy. Outside of her professional life, she prioritizes work-life balance. Whether she's engrossed in a good book, writing, or enjoying a basketball game, Corrie finds joy in the simple pleasures of life such as reading.

1. Talk about your earliest memories of reading and how it shaped your love for books?

Ladybird books, Peter and Jane. These books shaped my liking for reading, but what really got me deep into loving words on paper were the books I read as a teenager. The Sweet Valley High/University series got me hooked, and I was lucky to have an English teacher back in primary school who read Chinua Achebe's literature; that was my earliest introduction to African literature. Additionally, my parents, who are teachers, invested much in books for us; reading to us, and encouraging a reading culture around the home.

2. How do you balance your demanding career with your passion for reading?

Reading books is my balance. It's not only my escape from the realities of this world but also my comfort and sweet spot. I am very intentional with my reading because books are my center. A while back, I would propose to read at least 3-4 books a month, but lately, I pace myself. It's not about the number of books one reads, but the fulfillment of

consuming literature. I also pick books depending on my mood. If I'm in a busy work season, I will read quick and easy books, maybe short fiction, just to keep my reading momentum going, but if my mind feels like cracking history, and understanding different concepts, I opt for non-fiction.

3. What genres or authors do you gravitate to most, and why?

Memoirs and historical fiction. I love to read people's stories. I have no favorite author, but I do have favorite books. I also enjoy investigative non-fiction books written by journalists, some of my favorites are *Bad Blood* by John Carreyrou and *When McKinsey Comes to Town* by Walt Bogdanich and Michael Forsythe.

4. How has reading influenced your approach to your work, especially in communication and advocacy?

Books, fiction, and non-fiction are written from a point of research. Each time I pick a book, despite the genre, there is always something to learn. I recently read *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* by Kathrine Boo, which builds a narrative on the integrity of why our systems, be it NGOs, hospitals, governance, justice, etc., operate the way they do. Annawadi, the town the book is based on, shows how abject misery is a common predicament in most countries. As a communications expert in the development space, such books open my eyes on what impact for communities is all about and the role we as communications folks play in ensuring that our work is not just to make things look good, but to ensure that they are good for those we serve. Same applies for *Unbowed*, a memoir by Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, a book that has shaped my ideology on environment and climate work. Understanding Kenya's history in the cause of climate action, where we were when Wangari fought for so much and the role we must play in building up on the impactful work she started.

5. Do you have a favorite book that you revisit often, and what draws you back to it?

Funny enough, I have never reread a book, mostly because I'm always on a chase to get a high from the next book I pick up.

6. How do you incorporate reading into your daily routine, especially with your busy schedule?

I set time aside in the evenings and early mornings to read a chapter, however, sometimes work and life can be a lot, but whenever I can, I'm intentional about it.

7. What are your thoughts on the current reading culture in Kenya? Do you think it's growing or declining?

The reading culture in Kenya is growing. From bookstores to book fairs, it is a beautiful scene to watch and be a part of.

8. How do you choose what to read next, given the vast array of books available?

I pick books based on my mood. I don't give myself pressure to read. If I'm in the mood for something light, I will read that; if I want a heavy thematic book, I will create time for it. But really, it's all about the state of mind I'm in and sometimes what my book club is reading. I like to read genres beyond my liking, just to expand my knowledge on different subject matter.

9. What role do you think reading plays in personal and professional development?

Books are my comfort; I read both for enjoyment and knowledge. Over my many years of living, I have adjusted lifestyles based on things I have read.

10. How do you encourage others, particularly younger generations, to develop a love for reading?

Just the same way I don't give myself pressure to read is the same grace I extend to people. Folks consume knowledge in different ways, some through visuals (TV, online, etc.), while others through words. The most important thing is to be a student of life, learning from different platforms. Specifically on books, I say, read what you enjoy; it's the only way to nurture a reading habit culture.

11. Have you ever been part of a book club or reading group? If so, how did it impact your reading experience?

I am part of an amazing book club called Books and Beyond. We came together a couple of years ago, and we have been consistent even throughout the COVID period. It has definitely impacted my reading culture by reading books that could be out of my comfort zone.

12. Finally, could you share what you're currently reading and what's next on your reading list?

I'm reading *Yellow Face* by R. F. Kuang, which was recommended by a colleague, and so far, I love it. My next read would be to complete *Blood and Oil* by Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck and later pick up *Kintu* by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi. [P](#)

BOOKS & FILM

The Waiting Room: A satirical play by Igiza Arts.

Whenever someone mentions theatre plays, my mind rushes back to my embarrassing situation. In form 3, void of hobbies and...

ROOM

PRODUCED BY WREINER MANDU

CAST: Kennedy Kithia, Lisa Odhiambo, Jeff Obonyo, Venesa Gichio, Edna Kariuki, Muthoni Njoki, Harold Kerry, Lydia Mamati, Prince Kamsesele, Linda Kamuri, Sammy Waweru, Annan Obwocha

STAGE MANAGERS:
Edna Kariuki & Lydia Mamati

MUSIC DIRECTOR:
Ruth Milha

VIBEYETU WEBSITE BOOKS AND FILMS:

Your Ultimate Guide to the Best of Literature and Cinema

Vibeyetu.com, the youth-centred website by ParentsAfrica Integrated Media, understands that stories shape cultures and inspire personal growth. The website's Books and Film tab is your go-to destination for discovering the best of African literature, as well as keeping up with the latest in the global film industry.

Whether you're a dedicated reader, a cinephile, or just someone looking for a great recommendation, this section offers rich insights and compelling reviews that cater to all tastes.

The website's love for literature is evident in the comprehensive weekly book reviews. The reviewers dive deep into stories that matter, offering thoughtful commentary and critique to help you choose your next read. Whether you're into contemporary African writers or classic literature, the reviews aim to highlight the diverse and vibrant voices making waves in the literary world.

One of the recent features is that of Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's *"Dust"*, where the tab explores how this novel intricately weaves personal grief with Kenya's political unrest, creating a powerful reflection on the nation's identity crisis. Through the violent death of Odidi Oganda, the story delves into Kenya's chaotic past and present, touching on themes of corruption, colonial legacy, and the struggle for national unity.

Owuor's vivid descriptions of Kenya's landscapes mirror the emotional journey of her characters as they confront painful memories. This novel is essential reading for anyone seeking a deeper understanding

of Kenya's soul and the complexities of its national narrative.

The tab also takes pride in shedding light on emerging Kenyan writers, providing a platform for local talent to gain the recognition they deserve from features of local publications like the Qwani anthology series. From gripping thrillers to poetic memoirs, the reviews serve as a guide to the latest and greatest reads from the continent and beyond.

Weekly film recommendations based on what you love...

Not just limited to books, the Books and Film tab is also your destination for curated movie recommendations. Every week, the website sifts through the latest releases and timeless classics to bring you the best in cinema and streamers, personalised based on your preferences.

Whether you are drawn to action-packed blockbusters, poignant dramas, or animated films that tug at the heartstrings, the recommendations are tailored to your tastes.

The website is buzzing with excitement over *Family Vacation*, a film released on Netflix, starring beloved Kenyan actresses Jackie Matubia and Sarah Hassan. With local films gaining traction on the international stage, it's an exciting time to explore what Kenyan filmmakers have to offer.

The film reviews are not just limited to the latest blockbusters; the website also analyses the finer details such as genre, actor performances, cinematography, and the cultural significance of these films, helping you appreciate movies on a deeper level. Each week, the website

features a different theme, whether it's spotlighting African cinema, focusing on a specific actor, or diving into a particular genre like thrillers, comedies, or animated films. Whatever your preference, there is something for everyone.

Keeping you updated on the latest news...

VibeYetu understands the ever-evolving nature of the entertainment industry. That is why they also offer the latest news surrounding the literature and film industries. Whether it's updates on award ceremonies, new releases, or shifts in the cultural landscape, the news section keeps you informed.

Your home of entertainment and lifestyle fix...

VibeYetu is more than just a platform; it's a community that celebrates African stories and talent, keeping you entertained and inspired. Whether you're looking for your next great read or a film that will keep you hooked, the Books and Film tab is the perfect starting point. You are encouraged to explore this vibrant section of the website, dive into the weekly reviews, and stay up to date with the latest news.

For the best in books, films, and lifestyle content, make vibeyetu.com your go-to platform. Head over to the site today and let it guide you on your entertainment journey. And don't forget to check out *The Gentleman's Library* in Parents magazine's Men Only column for a hand-picked selection of books every man should read.

Click on vibeyetu.com, your home of entertainment and lifestyle fix. 



JOAN THATIAH

The Voice of Empowerment

In the world of literature, few names resonate as powerfully as Joan Thatiah's. Starting her writing journey at the age of fifteen years, Joan has grown into a formidable voice in empowering women through her bold and unapologetic writing. She talks to MUINDE BRIAN about her journey from a young writer to a celebrated author, highlighting the societal changes her work aims to inspire. Joan's passion for writing and her commitment to challenging the status quo make her a true hero in the literary world.

Joan Thatiah has become synonymous with bold, unapologetic literature aimed at empowering women. Joan's journey into writing wasn't a straightforward path. Her days as a journalist, listening to countless stories of women from all walks of life, became the backbone of her writing.

"My literary voice has been shaped by everything I have read so far and everything I have written. I always knew I wanted to write books. Journalism was what I did to get here," she says.

Joan's literary career took off in 2016 with the publication of *Things I Will Tell My Daughter*, a book that immediately struck a chord with readers for its raw, honest, and practical wisdom.

"I used it as a platform to write all these lessons I was picking up interviewing women which I couldn't put in the newspaper," she says, adding "It's everything I wished someone had told me when I was growing up."

Joan's writing style is both engaging and confrontational. Her books are pleasant reads, often just a few hundred pages, but oh do they pack a punch. *I'm Too Pretty to Be Broke and Other Lies You've Been Telling Yourself* is a perfect example.

This book deconstructs the myths and misconceptions that women have been led to believe about themselves. She tackles

21 lies, ranging from the idea that beauty equates to worth, to the misconception that financial independence isn't attainable for women.

"The one in the title - that a woman can be so beautiful that it's enough for her not to try to be something more is a misconception that beauty is all a woman needs to be successful or fulfilled. It persists in our lives today because we are a visual society. We judge people and things by how they appear," she explains, adding that it's about society waking up to the reality that we have been selling ourselves short.

Joan's candid approach has earned her a loyal following, but it has also invited some pushback. She understands that not everyone will agree with her viewpoints. She acknowledges that her goal is to provoke thought and initiate conversations. The diversity of opinions signifies that her work is impactful and fulfills its purpose of challenging conventional beliefs.

Her transition to fiction with her book *'Guilty'* was another significant milestone. This novel, which earned her the 1st runner-up award at the Quramo Writers' Prize in 2019, explores themes of guilt and redemption, wrapped in a gripping narrative.

"Fiction takes you to where it wants to go," Joan enjoys writing fiction most as oftentimes, her characters surprise her too.

Despite her success, Joan remains grounded and deeply connected to her roots. Growing up as the only daughter in a family of six brothers, she was exposed to different perspectives on gender and society.

"Being an only girl of seven siblings I became aware of gender disparity at quite a young age. My most memorable incident was at about the age of nine. One of my brothers was miffed that I couldn't perform a household task perfectly and snapped, '*Sasa wewe nani atakuoa?* (Who is going to marry you?)" she recalls.

"Even then I knew that this was not the expectation that society had of my brothers," she adds.

There's a powerful wave of female voices emerging; vocal, unapologetic, and without fear. Joan believes that literature is a mirror to society, a recording of our history, and writers have both a duty and the right to be part of public discourse. A role she takes seriously, amplifying voices.

She defines empowerment as "women having as many options in life as possible, being aware of those choices, and picking the choice that best suits her with this knowledge."

Her advice for aspiring writers is simple yet profound: "The only way to get your own voice in writing is to keep reading and to keep writing. There is nothing under the sun which hasn't been written about before. But the more you grow your skills the more you sharpen your eye for new angles and new ways to say things."

Joan's warmth and authenticity shine through, making it clear why she has become such a beloved figure in the literary world. Her dedication to empowering women through her writing is not just commendable; it's necessary.

In a world that often tries to silence women's voices, Joan Thatiah's fearless storytelling is a beacon of hope and strength. Her books remind us that we all have the power to change our narratives and live life on our own terms. That we should never sell ourselves short, we are so much more than society wants us to be.

Joan hopes to be remembered as the woman who went for it even when she couldn't see the whole way. And I think she will be remembered exactly as that. A voice for empowerment, a writer whose words reached out and changed the world of women.

Stay tuned as she finishes up on her *Confessions of Nairobi Men and Women* series. One we surely look forward to and wish her speedy writing. 

How To Monetize Your Writing

*It is not a surprise to find writers doing authorship as a hobby. When you inquire why, they will speak of low profits and zero returns on writing. They resort to engaging in other work to make a sensible income. **Florence Bett-Kinyatti** is an author who has mastered the art of converting her words into money. From her experience, she advises on how authors can make their writing pay off.*

Right off the bat, you should know that I turn 40 in October, Inshallah. (I've given this turning-40 agenda more gravity than is necessary.) You should also know that as I write this, I am five months pregnant with our third baby.

I'm a creative writer living and working in Nairobi. Married. Two kids thus far (she's eight, he's three). I make my money from writing weekly columns in the Daily Nation and from my two books about money, 'Should I?' (2021) and 'How Much?' (2022). I also have three volumes of affirmations for wealth: 'Cultivate', 'Receive', and 'Invite' (2023).

I came into creative writing from financial audit at PwC Kenya. I joined the firm before I'd even graduated with my computer science degree. I'm so lucky, so blessed to have never tarmacked the dusty streets of this town, knocking on doors with my tail between my legs, to ask for an opportunity to show what I'm made of.

So, it was quite off-script, quite horrifying when five years into my audit career, I acknowledged that I wasn't thriving professionally or personally as I'd initially foreseen. I needed to go find where I belonged.

In 2013, I got the urge to quit. I planned to write while I figured out how to make my way back into audit and accounting, but I discovered quickly that I wasn't

too shabby a writer. Plus, it gave me contentment and fulfillment.

I started my writing career in newspapers, as a contributor to the Daily Nation. I earned a paltry entry-level wage that was paid monthly, and this made my early years rough. At some point, all my savings ran out and I started flogging off my assets to get money to survive.

Such were the seasons when regret and fear would find me. I'd think, "Did I make a huge mistake? Can I still go back to audit?" Yet I also wanted this to work so badly, my goodness! It took me several more years of struggle, regret, and fear of hitting and missing, to master three important lessons about earning a decent income from my writing.

Lesson one:

Creative writers are not employed on a salary, they are freelancers on precarious wages, paid for published work only. When you don't work you don't earn. To make a sustainable income from your writing, you must write for different publications (print and digital), which pay you at different rates and publish you at different frequencies (weekly, monthly, or on-demand).

Lesson two:

You must come up with other ingenious ways to trade your skills for money. My business partner and I started our creative writing masterclass in early 2015. It's a three-day in-person workshop where we

teach budding writers about the art and craft of creative writing.

The masterclass puts money into our pockets every quarter. We held them consistently until 2020, when Covid put the kibosh on everything. We resumed them last year.

Lesson three:

You must create for yourself a source of passive income. For me, it was through becoming a self-published author who writes about personal finance.

Personal finance is where I combine the colour of my creative writing with the humourlessness of accounting and audit. It's how I stand out as a writer.

I've been busy self-publishing my books since releasing my first title in 2021. I'm humbled that readers connected with it and loved it. This positive response has fueled me to keep going. There was a noticeable – and significant – financial shift when I became a published author. My income has become more stable. I can afford to take a pregnancy and maternity break without hurting my income.

Books sell day and night. As I write this, there is a Kenyan in a bookshop somewhere buying one of my books. The more books I have on these bookshops' shelves, the more money I earn.

I'm also invited to speak at seminars about personal finance, these gigs are paid for. If I won't get paid for speaking, then I'll get paid for selling my books and affirmation calendars. Rarely do I leave an event with no money in my pocket.

You can buy my books and affirmations from www.market.craftit.co.ke. We will deliver them to your front door. **P**



PETER NDIBOE

From a street criminal to a humanitarian

The streets of Nairobi were Peter Ndiboe's empire, and he ran them with an iron fist especially when high on drugs. However, that past is now behind him as he reformed and now works to create a better future for street children. He shares his experience as a street kid involved in crime and becoming a humanitarian who rescues street kids with ANN VERONICAH.

At the outcasts of Mathare slums, somewhere along Juja Road and next to Kiboro Primary, there is a community building that houses offices. Most Community-Based Organisations (CBO) have offices here.

There is one beautiful office branded in red and white with writings visible from afar that read: 'Zero Streets Child Foundation.' This is an organisation started by Peter Ndiboe to educate, reform, rehabilitate and reintegrate street kids.

Ndiboe says the organisation is a calling and a blessing for him. He understands the struggles of street children because he was one for 14 years.

While many people recall a glorious childhood, 'those who grew up as street children tell a different story.' Ndiboe grew up with only his mother and one sibling - a sister. Life was difficult for this small family. Their mother's only source of income was brewing the illicit brew, chang'aa, (a potent alcoholic drink with high amounts of methanol added).

"My mum did not treat us well. She beat us for no reason and also insulted us. When it became too much, my sister left home at the age of 10 in search of a better life. I was left with my mother. One day she came home drunk, hang me with a rope on the rafters, and left me to die," recalls Ndiboe.

On the brink of death, his neighbour heard his cries and saved him. He lived with this neighbour for about a week before peer pressure from his group of friends called him to the streets. At the beginning of his life in the streets, all that mattered was money for food and movies. This was before drugs came into the picture. Twenty shillings was enough for lunch and a movie.

Then drugs became part of his life as he looked for solace. "The feeling was good. I remember there was a time we were high on khat and my friend and I started looking for my hand as I could not feel it," he recalls, adding that once you get hooked on drugs, you need more money to buy them.

To finance their drug habit, Ndiboe and his peers started a group called T9, whose job was to steal from people. They used different methods such as pickpocketing, harassment to the point of getting the victim to part with everything, and in the worst-case scenario, violence. When

T9 robbed, they left the victim(s) with nothing but their underwear.

“There was this robbery that changed my life. My friends and I spotted a guy wearing a silver chain and we immediately knew that we had hit a jackpot. We followed him not knowing that he had plainclothes police security around him. As soon as I grabbed the chain, the police started shooting and hit two of us,” narrates Ndiboe.

Ndiboe was lucky to survive. He was hit on the forehead where the gunshot left him bruised, but the greater damage was on his thigh which had a deep gunshot wound.

Despite these injuries, he held onto the precious chain which he had managed to grab before mayhem broke.

He went back to his street corner to treat his wounds with disposed medicines collected from dumpsites, as he was afraid of being arrested if he went to a hospital.

The wound on the thigh became infected and had pus and maggots breeding there. He gained the courage to go to a hospital and was treated and slowly the wound started to heal.

You would think this incident would pull him out of the crime life, but he got deeper into it. After recovery, the group went for blood, or as Ndiboe calls it, ‘operation fagia’ (clean-up operation). They declared a war between T9 and the police officers, which was specifically aimed at killing officers who shot Ndiboe and his friends.

Many of the T9 group members lost their lives but Ndiboe survived. He was revered in the streets and viewed as a leader.

Anytime one group was eradicated by the police, he always found a way to create an even much bigger and fierce crime group.

It got to a point where the crime group was almost entirely disseminated and Ndiboe tried drug trafficking. After a few months, this business failed and desperate, he turned to a church they used to steal from for help. The church’s pastor, Dr. Peter Nuthu, knew about Ndiboe and the terror he caused to the community and his church.

At first, Ndiboe was hesitant to approach Dr. Nuthu fearing that he might retaliate because of the harm he had caused. On the contrary, the pastor was welcoming and ready to help him turn over a new leaf in his life. The pastor took Ndiboe and a



group of street kids who were willing to change their lives and started them on the journey to rehabilitation.

“The pastor gave our recovery his full support. He even built us a house far from the city in Kitengela. We stayed there for approximately one year and that’s where I found my recovery from drugs, alcohol, and a life of crime,” he says.

“It wasn’t until after I left rehab that I realised how much I had been hurting people. How you perceive life is different when you are on drugs. Our mantra then was ‘I have nothing to lose, but you have everything to lose’. This was our thought process when terrorising people,” Ndiboe says.

After recovery, Ndiboe connected with his mother and introduced her to the same pastor who helped her also recover from chang’aa addiction.

Ndiboe has remained clean and views life now from a different perspective – it has meaning. He fell in love with a girl from a well-off family, and they had two children together. However, things did not work out and the couple separated, just after he adopted another child from the streets.

Even as Ndiboe sat for this interview, street children kept knocking at his door – some just to say hello, others to report they had been clean for months, and others requesting assistance to go to school.

Education is a big part of his advocacy work as he would not wish other children to go through their childhood without an education like he did. “It hurts me a lot

when I see a street child who is not going to school. So far, we have sponsored several girls and boys through this programme and rehabilitated over 112 kids,” he says, adding that he hopes to double this number soon.

The Zero Street Child Foundation is also involved in other activities for street families. They organise parties for them and distribute clothes and other goodies donated by well-wishers. These activities are full of joy and laughter, something rare in the lives of street families.

Even though finances are a challenge, Ndiboe still finds a way to mobilise donations and that is how the foundation has survived since 2020.

He acknowledges that he could not have made it without the help of his team of five led by the Administrator who is his firstborn daughter, Lucy Ndiboe; Treasurer, Steven Karanja; Project Manager, Saida Adhuman; Secretary, Florence Wambui; and Social Worker, David Mwari.

Seeing street children get out of the hard life in the streets because of the Foundation’s work inspires Ndiboe and his life’s goal is to do more. Many of the kids they have rehabilitated are involved in community work and also helping others who are in difficult situations.

The now 41-year-old father of three is grateful that he has lived to tell his story. He refers to himself as ‘chokora msafi’ – reformed street child – and his wish is to see more street kids carry that tag.^P



DEBORAH AUKO

Overcoming her past and embracing the future

Deborah Achieng Auko Tendo Alexandria is a woman with a story as colourful as her personality that starts with countless names. Her story is nothing short of inspirational. She did not let her tough childhood define her but instead used it as fuel to make a better life for herself. She talked to MURUGI GICHOVI about her past, present, and the power of writing.

Deborah Auko Tendo is a career woman with expertise in sales and marketing, a mother of three, and wife to one Walter S. Odhiambo.

Her life story reads like a novel that begins with a broken childhood, facing adversities, rising above the pain, and finally finding a happy ending.

Deborah's dramatic life story began when she was born in the eighties to a teenage

mother who rejected her, so she never got to experience a mother's love. "My mom was the victim of the stigma of 'teen pregnancy' and the condemning eyes of society," she says.

Any form of teenage pregnancy in those days was associated with loose morals and that cast a negative shadow not only on the young mother but also on her family.

Her mother was tempted to abort her several times because of societal pressure and threats of social rejection. It was her grandmother who intervened and spared the unborn baby – today's grown-up Deborah who is narrating her story.

"The only thing that saved me was my grandmother promising to keep me, and so I was given to her at birth and named after her. My father did not reject me and took care of me," Deborah recounts.

Even with the love she was getting from her grandmother, Deborah's early days were characterised by rejection and suffering. Her mother's departure from her life left her to be solely raised by her father.

"It was awesome being brought up by a single father. Dad cooked for me; bathed me and since I was a bed-wetter for a long time, would ensure he took my mattress out every day to dry in the sun," she recalls.

Her maternal aunties were not happy with this arrangement of her father having custody of their niece. It was always a tug of war between them and her father with Deborah being shuttled from one home to another. This seriously disrupted her childhood and her education. To minimize the disruptions and tension that came with it, she was enrolled in boarding school at the age of nine.

On her first day of school at St. Anne's Boarding Primary School, Jogoo Road, Nairobi, the headmistress was shocked to find out that young Deborah had not had any formal early education. By sheer determination, the young girl had taught herself the alphabet and could count. The experience of having to fend for herself from a very tender age cultivated in her a survival instinct and an independent mentality.

"When a child goes to a boarding school at the age of nine, it means they are being raised by an institution. This brings about a certain independence and knack for survival," she explains.

At about the time she joined boarding school, her father lost his job and the family began to face a financial crisis.

"It was so bad that nobody visited me in boarding school. Nobody picked me up on closing days and I would, therefore, move to the convent where I stayed with the nuns throughout the holidays," she recalls.

These experiences of neglect and isolation were formative and put an indelible stamp of resilience and independence on Deborah. She describes her childhood as "a very wide spectrum" of emotions: fun, painful, confusingly traumatising, and hurtful.

"I remember the trauma of my mum leaving and never coming back and the love I got from dad raising me by himself. Then the fun from my aunts whenever they snatched me from dad, but also the loneliness of being hidden away," explains Deborah.

Despite her resilience and ability to weather the storm, the memories remain. She believes that children remember everything, and those memories make the child into what they become when they grow up.

"I am very mindful as a person on what I do and say, but most importantly what my children do and say," she notes.

Her love for books came through the free book distribution programme coordinated by the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) when she was still a child. The books were her escape, fueling her desire to learn and make something of herself.

Years later, the ardent autobiography reader decided to pen her story in a memoir titled 'Rough Silk' which is a tribute to her now late dad. Published in 2023, the book starts in pre-colonial Kenya in the 50s when her father was born and is a story of a life marred by pain and joy.

"It's the story of being raised by my father, but at the core of it, I explore the story of the ordinary man my father was - a poor man, an imperfect man," she says, adding that some of the themes the book brings out are the wounds a mother can inflict on her children; broken families; and the ever-linking trauma associated with teen pregnancies.

The urge to write *Rough Silk* was from a deeply personal persuasion. "When my father died of cancer, I was assigned the job of writing his eulogy. I realised

that I could not do that in a single page," Deborah says, adding that this made her promise her family that she would one day write a book in her father's memory.

Writing the book was therapeutic and at the same time agonising. It made her relive her past and that brought back buried memories and emotions.

"I had to stop writing the book several times and seek therapy. It took more than a year to write it because of these breaks," she says, calling the experience cathartic and at the same time painful.

Rough Silk is more than a memoir. It is a book that can help those who have gone through trauma in their lives. "I especially encourage young adults to read the book as it will make them realise their life is in their hands," says Deborah.

Saying that she self-published the book, she explains what this means: "I wrote the book, paid the editors, designers, and the printer. I also marketed the book and delivered it to the distributors."

The success of the book has been phenomenal. It has attracted offers from publishers and seen her embark on international tours sponsored by Kenyans abroad.

Her writing has significantly impacted her life. It has given her a platform to narrate her life experiences in different forums, and an opportunity to network with eminent people. She was the only East

African author featured at the prestigious Cheltenham Literature Festival in 2023.

"The book has exposed me to forums I ordinarily would not be in and met people I would have never dreamt of being in the same room with," she notes.

When asked about her future writing projects, Deborah laughs it off saying her readers should be content with *Rough Silk*.

Deborah describes herself as a survivor, saying her commitment to healing led her to seek therapy. It has also given her a deep need to avoid toxicity in her personal and professional relationships.

"I try to avoid toxicity by not getting myself into such spaces but most importantly not being the toxic person," she explains.

Deborah has gone through her life's journey with grace, human resilience, and the ability to rise above adversity.

"I have learnt that I am in charge of the outcomes in my life and that what is happening to me is also happening for me," she explains the philosophy that has seen her through the roughest of times and continues to shape her view of life. 

Words of Encouragement

Motivation is like the tide. It raises everyone up when it comes in.

Bill Burch, US politician



SANDRA OCHOLA

A Love for Teen Advocacy and Writing

Sandra Ochola is a millennial woman who is passionate about teen advocacy. With her background in law and love for writing, she has brought together these facets of her life and found success as a two-time author as well as the founder of Teendom Africa. She narrates to MURUGI GICHOVI the harmonious collaboration between her career and life.

Sandra Ochola wears many hats. She is a millennial mother, a lawyer, an author, and the founder of *Teendom Africa*. Mixtures of legal expertise, public service, and a strong tie with youth development and leadership have characterised her career.

She was born and brought up in Kisumu County in a loving and nurturing home created by her wonderful parents, Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Lilian Ochola. Her family made Christmas and Easter holidays her happiest memories as they would travel, shop, and spend time with family and friends.

Her family has played a huge role in influencing her life. Sandra's career path into law was not something that she chose but one that was suggested to her by her mother. She had previously excelled in Biology in high school, and she imagined that she would pursue a career related to the same. Despite this, she followed her mother's advice and took her Bachelor of Laws Degree at Moi University.

Becoming a lawyer...

During her second or third year in university, she had her first contact with issues of the constitution not knowing it would form a big part of her life. She

reveals, "I had a good constitutional law lecturer, Prof. Kithure Kindiki, who is now CS for Interior in the government. I enjoyed the classes and did quite well in my exams, unaware that I would be writing a book on the Kenyan Constitution years later."

Sandra went on to take a Post Graduate Diploma in Law from Kenya School of Law after which she was admitted to the bar and became an Advocate at the High Court of Kenya. She later did a master's in international studies at the University of Nairobi before undertaking various fellowships including Obama Foundation Leaders-Africa 2022/2023 and The Duke of Edinburgh's Commonwealth Study Conference 2023.

Career path....

Sandra's milestones and experiences have been diverse as she has moved along the path of her career. "I have worked across multiple sectors at different levels within the civil society, political and public service," she says.

The roles include presidential speechwriter, Chief of Staff-Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Heritage, and currently carving an identity for herself in the private sector as an independent consultant on youth, law, strategic communication, and government relations. Each assignment has contributed to her comprehensive knowledge of governance and communication.

Although writing piqued her interest when in school, it was also honed through professional engagements. She wrote her first story when she was in high school but did not pay much attention. Her mother saw the piece of work one day when organising her drawers and she could not get over the fact that her daughter had such great talent.

Becoming an author...

When she got into employment, her writing took a distinct direction. "My first job required a lot of research, writing, and messaging. This encouraged me to write even more, and I took a deep dive into article writing in 2013," she says, adding that her most notable achievement is a seven-year stint as a columnist for the *People Daily newspaper*.

One of the books that most influenced her was *Africa's Moment* by Pete Ondeng, which she found in their family library during her high school days. This book opened her eyes to many African issues that she did not know existed at the time.

In 2016, Sandra's love for the Constitution from her law school days and the need to introduce youths to the Constitution led her to write and publish her first book, *The Teens Guide to the Constitution of Kenya*. It can be called a labour of love because it was written with the assistance of her then-employers at Katiba Institute. They helped her develop the manuscript and source funding for its publishing.

The guide breaks down the complex language of the Constitution into simpler, more accessible terms, making it easier to understand. It is presented in a vibrant and age-appropriate format, allowing readers to engage with the content effectively. Additionally, the activities at the end of each chapter offer an opportunity for readers to assess their understanding after each section.

This guide is an invaluable resource for the public, particularly teenagers, future law students, and young activists who are passionate about making a difference in their communities. It empowers them to recognise their rights and responsibilities and understand their roles as Kenyan citizens and emerging leaders. The second edition of the highly acclaimed book was published in 2022.

Her second book is titled *She Leads - Lessons from Women Leaders*. It came out in 2023 and consists of insights from women leaders across Africa. Another co-author of the book, Sandra wrote about visionary leadership by drawing from her own experience and advocating for more visionary women leaders.

"The book shows how valuable female leadership is and furnishes young females with curated examples of diversified lady leadership," she says.

Sandra shared three main observations from her experience as an author. Firstly, even after repeated revisions and editing, many readers are likely to spot one or more errors in any published book. Indeed, in some sense, this factor of human error appears inseparable even from the most laboriously written works.

Additionally, she feels that many authors born in Africa including Kenya suffer from financial constraints. She notes, "Very few can live off the proceeds from their writing. Our literary sector isn't developed enough to pay the authors fully, nor reward their efforts."

According to her, the price of books in terms of development and marketing mostly outweighs the amount received by

the author, thus putting a realistic picture of economic challenges in the literary field.

Teendom Africa...

Her organisation, Teendom Africa, has also played a part in the deployment of the manuscript. It has helped unpack the book to provide young people with the tools and platforms they need to address the issues affecting their generation and communities.

"We are helping teenagers come into their own during adolescence. We're giving them unparalleled products and programs that will inform, educate, and inspire them to be aware and ultra-confident," she says, adding that she also mentors young graduates through the Governance Internship Program (GIPRO), whose purpose is to nurture values-driven leaders for the Kenyan Public Sector.

Describing herself as "intuitive; visionary; resilient," Sandra's career has not been without hitches. One of the major challenges in her professional life was trying to balance different interests and skills. For her entire working life, she has had to choose between specialising or generalizing. Her lecturers lambast her for taking many career paths.

"I spent a long-time agonising over the decision on the career path to take. I began the turnabout by falling back on my faith, especially the parable of the many talents, which assured me that it was possible and okay to be different and diverse," says Sandra.

Nevertheless, she has come to accept and celebrate who she is because of her faith and personal experiences. This acceptance has allowed her to pursue opportunities

that align with her diverse skill set and interests.

Sandra says she has gained invaluable knowledge as a two-time author. "It is not easy to write this kind of material due to its complexity that demands a lot of time, energy, and resources," she admits.

She finds writing extremely rewarding despite these challenges. For her, the joy and fulfillment come in knowing that her material is in the public domain and that readers derive satisfaction from her work.

When asked what she does when her schedule is not packed with meetings, media appearances, and school tours, Sandra reveals a whole new side to her life. "I am passionate about my relationship with God, my family, and about life," she shares.

Her love for animals, in particular cats, is also a big part of her life. "In my free time, I do animal rescues. Cats are especially beautiful, and I have all intentions of retiring as an old cat lady," she quips.

In light of the Gen Z-led protests in the country over the last couple of months, Sandra's take on our leaders is, "The true mark of leadership is not a title; it's about the number of lives which you touched and transformed."

In her parting shot to the teens that she is keen to mentor, she leaves a message of wisdom and encouragement: "You matter, your voice matters, and your existence counts for something bigger than you perceive; strive for a fulfilling relationship with God and let Him guide you on the right paths towards your purpose and destiny." 📖





SAMMY AND MICHELLE MAANGI

'She Photobombed Her Way To Love'

At Kenya's celebrated Nakuru Girls High School, a love story unfolded. It all began when Sammy Maangi, a charismatic preacher and media personality, was leading a panel discussion not knowing that this ordinary Saturday would change his life forever. Sammy, a communication consultant and Dr. Michelle Batsheba Maangi, a veterinary surgeon share their intriguing love story with NJAMBI GAITHO.

As Sammy scanned the crowd, his attention was caught by the looks of a very beautiful, bright, and vivacious student, Michelle Batsheba. In addition to her aphroditic features, Michelle's intelligent contributions to the discussion left Sammy saying, "Thank God, I've seen her. That's my future."

Fate, however, had other plans that day. Sammy did not get an opportunity to approach Michelle because the huge group of students who were equally impressed with his words made it impossible. But Michelle, feeling an inexplicable pull

towards the handsome speaker, took matters into her own hands.

"I photobombed," she admits and laughs mischievously, adding "I forced myself into his picture."

Unknowingly, that seemingly insignificant moment ignited their love story.

Two years passed, and the world found itself in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was during this time of isolation and reflection that Sammy stumbled upon Michelle's photo on Facebook.

He stalked her profile. What he saw reminded him of how he felt on that specific Saturday when he first set his eyes on true beauty that is Michelle. Sammy gathered his courage and sent a message as simple as, "So, we are friends."

Michelle, who had secretly admired Sammy from afar, was thrilled to receive his message. "I knew him. I had seen him on TV. I found him very attractive, and I wouldn't have minded if he was my boyfriend," she confesses, a blush creeping into her cheeks.

As if fate planned it all, Michelle's mother had been a fan of Sammy's youth show on Hope Channel Kenya, unknowingly cultivating their future relationship.

Their first date was nothing short of magical. "The first meeting has got to be a banger," Sammy explains with a grin. Despite the pandemic restrictions, he was determined to make it special, and it turned out as so. It was an unforgettable picnic date that left them bonding for hours. A connection that transcended their digital interactions.

As their relationship blossomed, both Sammy and Michelle knew they were in it for the long haul. Their courtship wasn't without challenges. Sammy remembers a particularly difficult period.

"We had a string of arguments for close to five months," he says adding that their commitment to each other and their shared faith saw them through these rough patches.

Michelle shares one of the things that drew her to Sammy: "He would pray over everything. Even after we argue, he will say, 'Let's pray about it so that we don't end up in a similar situation.'"

Sammy was equally impressed by Michelle's character and intellect. "I wanted to be with someone who is learned," he explains, "so that we are going to have intellectual discourse, not just emotional."

Their shared values and ability to resolve conflicts strengthened their bond.

After two years and seven months of dating, Sammy decided it was time to propose. He planned an elaborate surprise with the help of Michelle's friends and family. Under the guise of a choir event in Nakuru, Sammy orchestrated a beautiful proposal that caught Michelle completely off guard.

"I didn't suspect anything," Michelle laughs, as she recounts the day. "They opened the door, and surprise! It's my proposal! My whole choir was there, my brother, my nephew, his brother, and all our close friends had traveled from Nairobi to Nakuru. It was a huge surprise!" she recalls.

The Maangis' wedding was a joyous celebration of their love and shared heritage. They began with the traditional Kisii *ruracio* (dowry negotiation) ceremony, bringing both families together. Sammy recalls with a smile, "We embraced our Kisii heritage during our wedding."

The ceremony itself was a vibrant affair that blended modern elegance with traditional customs. Held at a scenic tea estate in Kisii County, the event featured local choirs singing in Ekegusii, their mother tongue. Michelle stunned everyone in a gown that incorporated *kitenge* fabric, while Sammy beamed in a suit accented with the same pattern.

"I wanted our wedding to reflect who we are," Michelle shares adding, "It was important to honor our roots while celebrating our future together."

The reception was a feast for the senses, showcasing the best of Kisii cuisine with a health-conscious twist – a nod to Michelle's background in nutrition. As they exchanged vows, surrounded by loved ones and the lush green hills of their homeland, Sammy and Michelle knew they were embarking on the greatest adventure of their lives together.

Today, Sammy and Michelle Maangi are happily married, creating content together and inspiring others with their love story. They focus on family, lifestyle, and marriage in their work, drawing from their own experiences to help others navigate relationships.

"We are doing this together," Sammy says, looking lovingly at his wife. Michelle nods in agreement, adding, "If I am not helping you with your spiritual goal, why are we dating?"

Their journey from a chance meeting at a high school event to a lifelong commitment proves that sometimes, the best love stories start with a simple hello – or in their case, a photobomb. The Maangis' story is a testament to the power of faith, perseverance, and the courage to seize opportunities when they present themselves, even if it means forcing yourself into someone's picture. 





Bridging the gap between book sex fantasy and the real world

We often claim that characters from books exist in a utopian world. The men know exactly what to say, how to say it, and when to say it. The women have glowing skin, their clothes fit perfectly, their make-up matches their skin to the T, and they never have lipstick stains on their pearly whites. We also admire the steamy sessions.

When *Bridgerton* (a book series adapted to screen) aired we were all head over heels for the love match. They were perfect together and the sex scenes... brilliantly written.

Daphne and the Duke had some chemistry, even before the ruse. Perhaps to match the lovemaking in books, we need chemistry. I mean, authors do a perfect job teasing us. They spend hours together, they enjoy each other's company and you can feel the tension rising. Maybe your sex life is not as steamy as you wish for it to be, because you do not know your partner.

Books often depict the most endowed men to be promiscuous. They might give you the best sex of your life but will not stay long enough to love you. The characters are often shown to wait or pray for this promiscuous partner. In real life, waiting for someone is hard. It leaves you questioning your worth resulting in bruised self-esteem.

Fantasy implies imagining it. It does not exist in real life only in your thoughts. When

we read Colleen Hoover, *It Starts With Us* and envy such love stories, we are often ridiculed, reminded that those are fantasy novels and that people like those do not exist in this world.

Books open a new world, allowing us to live in different places and experience multiple emotions. However, they do not change the world we live in. How do we remedy this? Being better people, not to match the characters, but common decency, goes a long way. For example, asking for consent should not exist in novels alone. We should not have to live in a world so cruel that we look for books to escape to.

I think by now we understand that we cannot reciprocate every position in *50 Shades Of Grey* by E.L. James or the popular sex manual, *Kama Sutra*. We can only explore these fantasies by tailoring them to our needs. Some women have a shorter cervical canal which limits their ability to have sex in positions that allow for deep penetration. People with disabilities may also need assistance getting into some of these positions.

Some books have been called out for not educating people on the importance of trust and hygiene. Rarely do you see characters washing their hands before sex. To prevent ailments such as fungal infections, you must wash your hands before touching your partner's private parts. When you are longing to reciprocate a make-out session you read

about, please remember characters exist in a perfect world. In this world, we have germs and STIs.

In this world, slut-shaming exists. It is hard to embrace your wild desires when the things you like most are shunned. With the rise of femininity content, women are reminded that they are meant to be seen and not heard. This advice also implies that they should only do what their significant other approves. Placing anyone in a position where they are not able to open up and freely express themselves blocks their ability to feel deserving of the things they want. Perhaps if we stopped slut shaming and kink-shaming we would all enjoy the sex we so badly wish to have.

In chapter 4 (The Power of Naked) of, *Things I Will Tell My Daughter*, Joan Thatiah, encourages us to fall in love with our naked form. To fall in love with our bodies without the guises of clothing or fashion accessories. Maybe if we all fell in love with ourselves, we would come close to achieving our fantasies. **P**

Share a Joke

A politician is a person who approaches every subject with an open mouth.

Achieving the Oxford Fashion Style

Oxford Fashion is an eclectic style characterized by a blend of traditional British elegance and contemporary sophistication. It's a look achieved by combining tailored clothing with quality fabrics and minimal accessories.

Fashion's history

The idea of tailored clothing and refined dressing stretches back centuries and has evolved throughout time. It originated in medieval and Renaissance tailoring. In the 17th and 18th centuries, ornate Baroque and Rococo forms gave way to simpler enlightenment fashions. During the Regency and Victorian eras of the nineteenth century, the modern suit gained popularity, with Savile Row emerging as a hub for bespoke tailoring.

The early twentieth century saw the introduction of softer, more flexible suits, while post-World War fashion returned to conventional tailoring. The Oxford design evolved, introducing modern aspects while remaining focused on high-quality textiles and timeless elegance.

Donning the fit

To wear this fashion style, combine classic, fitted clothes with refined accessories. Here's how to obtain the look:

Ladies...

- Make sure you have a well-fitting suit, such as a blazer and skirt or pants, in neutral tones. The material used should be of excellent quality, such as tweed.
- Wear crisp blouses or shirts with white, light blue, or modest designs.
- Layer sweaters, cardigans, or vests made of wool, cashmere, or cotton over blouses.
- Select knee-length dresses or tailored skirts. A-line or pencil skirts are perfect for a sophisticated look.
- For footwear, opt for traditional loafers or ankle boots in polished leather.
- Scarves, berets, and gloves would be taken into account as accessories.
- You can finish off your ensemble with a classic handbag and minimal jewelry.

Gentlemen...

To attain this classic look, our dapper gents should:

- Choose a well-fitted three-piece suit in neutral colors such as navy, black, or gray that fits snugly over the shoulders.
- High-quality cotton dress shirts in crisp whites or light blues. For a more formal look, opt for button-down collars with French cuffs.
- Pair blazers with dress shirts or turtlenecks for a sophisticated style.
- Oxford shoes, loafers, or brogues made of polished leather, usually black or brown.

- Choose neutral-toned trench coats, pea coats, or wool overcoats as outerwear to offer warmth and flair. Neutral-toned wool overcoats, trench coats, and pea coats complete the Oxford style perfectly. These should not be too tight or too loose to fit over your suit jacket.
- Additionally, consider coats with traditional embellishments like high collars, belts, and epaulets.
- Leather belts, old timepieces, and minimalist jewelry are ideal accessories. Fedoras, flat caps, and berets can provide a vintage vibe to your clothing. Choose hats that suit your overall appearance without overpowering it.
- Ties, pocket squares, and cufflinks complete the look. To keep the elegant style, stick to traditional patterns and hues.

To bring the Oxford fashion style to life, explore through photographs and fashion publications that feature this trend. Pay close attention to the details in fitting, fabric selection, and accessory placement to enhance the overall style.

Visual ideas can be quite helpful in selecting how to merge components and create a cohesive design.

General Styling Tips

- Fit is crucial. Make sure all of your apparel is customized to fit your physique precisely. Clothing that does not fit properly can detract from the polished appearance.
- Master the art of layering to add depth and interest to your look
- Stick to a palette of neutral and muted colors for a timeless and sophisticated appearance. These colors are versatile and can be easily mixed and matched.
- Invest in fabrics of exceptional quality that are durable and comfortable. This not only improves your appearance but also makes your clothes stay longer.

By following these tips and embracing elements of the Oxford fashion style, you can create a look that is both timeless and contemporary, oozing sophistication and elegance in any circumstance.

Whether you're dressing for a formal occasion, or a business meeting, or are simply looking to upgrade your everyday look, the Oxford aesthetic provides an adaptable and polished approach to fashion.

P



By Suzanne Omindo

Foods that boost concentration

Concentration is a vital skill for success in all aspects of life, and what we fuel our bodies with can significantly impact our ability to focus. To achieve a well-balanced diet and promote concentration, nutritionists recommend prioritizing fruits and vegetables, along with legumes and whole grains. Below is a list of foods you can incorporate into your diet to boost concentration and increase output:

1. Leafy Green vegetables

Studies have consistently shown the positive impact of vegetables on overall health. This extends to brain function as well, with leafy greens specifically demonstrating the ability to enhance memory and reduce risks of age-related cognitive decline.

Leafy greens, like spinach, kale, broccoli, and arugula are rich in nutrients such as vitamins E, K, and folate. They contain antioxidants which provide the body with fatty acids that can strengthen and stimulate the brain. By incorporating at least one serving of leafy greens daily, you can promote mental clarity and long-term brain health.

2. Healthy fats

The human brain is about 60 percent fat with a large portion being omega-3 fatty acids. Healthy fats, specifically unsaturated fats, can help you concentrate by providing long-term energy to your brain.

Studies have shown that consuming omega-3 regularly can improve cognitive function, memory, and concentration. Fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, and tuna are all good sources of omega-3 fats. Healthy fats can also be found in walnuts, almonds, olive oil, chia seeds, avocados, and flaxseeds.

So, the next time you reach for a snack, choose a handful of almonds, drizzle some olive oil on your salad, or whip up a delicious salmon dish. Your brain will thank you for the focus boost.

3. Nuts and seeds

Our brains thrive on a steady supply of nutrients, and nuts and seeds deliver a powerful combination that supports cognitive function. Nuts are a natural source of brain-boosting nutrients like antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats. They help keep your brain sharp and functioning at its best.

Cashews, almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and hazelnuts are excellent sources of folate. Try adding these healthy snacks to your favourite salads, desserts, or smoothies. They'll give you an extra dose of flavour and healthy nutrients.

4. Berries

Blueberries, blackberries, and strawberries contain antioxidants called flavonoids, which increase blood flow and oxygen to the brain, help with focus and support memory. Research suggests that berries can also help improve reaction time and accuracy during tasks requiring focus.

Regular consumption of berries can improve learning and overall cognitive function. Try adding berries to your yogurt, oatmeal, or smoothie for a delicious and nutritious way to start your day.

5. Whole grain

Whole grains are packed with complex carbohydrates. Unlike simple carbs that offer a quick but short-lived energy boost, complex carbs break down slowly, providing a steady stream of glucose - the brain's primary fuel source.

This enables you to sustain focus and helps prevent dips that can impair concentration. Go for brown rice instead of white, whole-wheat bread over white bread, and choose whole-grain cereals like oatmeal over sugary options.

6. Dark chocolate

Cocoa, the main ingredient in dark chocolate is rich in flavonoids. These flavonoids improve blood flow to the brain, which can enhance cognitive function, memory, and learning. Dark chocolate also increases levels of dopamine, a

neurotransmitter that is important for focus, motivation, and reward.

Go for dark chocolate with at least 70 percent cocoa. It is packed with natural fibre, minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants, and has fewer artificial ingredients. Remember, dark chocolate contains sugar and fat, so enjoy it in moderation.

7. Eggs

Egg yolks are rich in choline, a nutrient linked to improved brain function. Choline supports good memory and communication between brain cells, while also potentially reducing inflammation. Vitamin B12 found in eggs is also involved in synthesizing brain chemicals and regulating sugar levels in the brain.

However, consider focusing on mostly egg whites or consuming whole eggs less frequently because egg yolks contain cholesterol.

Self-care tips that boost concentration

- Remember, a well-balanced diet is key to overall brain health.
- Exercising before work boosts your productivity as it helps manage stress hormones such as cortisol, leaving you feeling sharper and more focused during the day.
- Give yourself multiple breaks throughout the day to put less stress on your body and be more productive. Get seven to nine hours of sleep each night to help you stay focused the next day.
- Make sure you stay hydrated throughout the day by carrying a reusable water bottle and sipping regularly. With the right fuel, your mind can stay sharp and focused, ready to tackle any challenge! **P**



BABY OF THE MONTH



Adrian Nganga



Ishara Mbura



Maya Sky



Sabastian Samuel

To Participate

- Send good quality, clear coloured photographs, taken in interesting poses.
- The babies should be less than two-and-a-half years old to be eligible
- You can send as many photographs as you wish. Remember to include both your names.

Send your entries to:

**Parents Baby of the Month Competition,
Parents Magazine.**

P.O. Box 50795-00200

Nairobi, Kenya or email

babyofthemonth@parents.co.ke

editorial@parents.co.ke



KEITH ANG'ANA

Building a platform for writers

Keith Angana's penchant for the written word started when he was young. He looked up to his father, a passionate and voracious reader who could always be counted on to have a newspaper at hand. In this article, Keith walks ODHIAMBO NEEMA through his evolution from an avid newspaper reader to publishing an anthology titled 'Qwani' at the tender age of 20.

Keith Ang'ana is not your everyday young man. A self-proclaimed "old soul" with hobbies to match, he is a flaneur, French for a man who saunters around observing society. Rather than binge a series like young men his age would do, he enjoys playing the piano in his free time.

He also has a deep love of books and words and will occasionally throw very sophisticated vocabulary into conversation; the kind that make you sit up straighter and listen harder.

His love of words is neither accidental nor coincidental; it's a carefully nurtured love that began when he was young. His earliest memory as a reader goes as far back as the age of 10 when he watched his father plough through newspapers and ask him to allow him read after him. The habit stuck, and his dad would pass his newspapers to Keith when he was done reading them. Eventually, it became a routine reward system. Once Keith finished his assignments, his parents would gather around for a game of crossword and sudoku.

This endearing routine kicked off a love affair that has stood the test of time.

Keith, a Quantity Surveyor by profession, didn't plan on becoming a writer or publisher of not one but two anthologies. He was, after all, quite content with a quiet life going for walks, learning Kenyan history, and reading the Sunday Nation and Albert Camus.

However, life rarely goes as planned, and so, certain events occurred that set Keith on his unprecedented path to the world of writing. One day in August 2022, after an afternoon of piano classes, a friend asked him to check out her blog. She was curious about writing and wanted to know how she could become a successful writer. Keith was challenged by her request. Even though he had an affinity for reading, he had never contemplated becoming a writer, let alone one who would critique other people's work.

Fate was still at play when on another day after a stroll to the supermarket, Keith found an article in the Standard newspaper dated April 11, 2021. It was an insider's story on the rise and fall of Kwani? The article was written by Kenyan journalist, poet, and writer Tony Mochama. It delved into the inner workings of Kwani? a prominent African literary magazine.

The magazine was birthed in 2001 by a collective of Kenyan creatives, helmed by the esteemed Binyavanga Wainaina as founding editor. Reading this article was the straw that broke Keith's back.

In a light bulb moment, Keith reached out to the Ford Foundation which used to sponsor the writers of this magazine. Unfortunately, they were not supporting writers at that time, which spurred him to reach out to Tony Mochama.

Tony was receptive to Keith's questions and even went further to share nuggets on publishing an anthology. With his blessing, Keith went ahead to reach out to writer friends, sharing his vision for the anthology.

The group held numerous meetings in November 2022 where they shared ideas and wrote their articles. Later, they made a public call for articles on Twitter and through word-of-mouth. They garnered 65 stories from 37 writers covering a diverse range of topics and themes. The next four months were dedicated to compiling, sorting, and editing the stories.

Finally, with the help of their parents, *Qwani* was published in March 2023. *Qwani's* first book launch was held at the Alliance Francaise in April 2023. It was a resounding success with 400 attendees and 250 copies of the 500 printed sold that night.

Qwani is a platform for writers to get their stories published. It is also a youth initiative that aims to promote literature among young readers and writers. However, just like its founder, it has grown beyond expectations.

Borrowing a leaf from Kwani? its predecessor, *Qwani* now holds monthly community events ranging from hikes and musicals to plays and open mics.

The journey is not without challenges, the main one being the exorbitant costs of printing. It has also been difficult to get donors or sponsorships to alleviate the burden. Even so, Keith forges on and believes that one day, *Qwani* will be a Publishing House. They published their second anthology this year.

Keith is most grateful to his friends and family for their support, and Tony Mochama who held his hand and showed him the ropes right from the beginning.

The parting words of this 22-year-old are his favourite quote from Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare: "Men at some time are masters of their fates. The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." **P**

"It is also the story of my family, especially my grandparents and great-grandparents. Hearing these stories growing up, then seeing them chronicled so vividly in the book... I had a very visceral reaction to the deep understanding of the pain and suffering they went through, and I can never be the same," she explains.

Kui's passion for books led her to create Nairobi Book Love, a vibrant book club that evolved into an internationally recognized podcast. The book club consists of about 15-30 members, and they love to dig into all genres of books, from thrillers to romance to science fiction.

"I was looking for structure and accountability when it came to reading, as well as a social aspect of it," she says.

The club, which started with a call to members on Instagram has thrived for five years, fostering a community of avid readers.

Kui who reads a book or two a week depending on her schedule believes that improving society's reading culture starts with accessibility.

"Libraries or book donations and growing the publishing industry to reduce the cost of buying books, especially our local reads," she suggests.

Book festivals and fairs, which are becoming more prevalent, also play a crucial role in fostering a love for reading. She also lauds how social media has evolved into a space where books are also celebrated with the onset of platforms like TikTok where many book lovers are part of the BookTok community, reviewing and recommending books with users from all around the globe.

Now as a mother, Kui instills her love for reading in her children as her mother did by reading and discussing books together with her little ones.

"We read together, have library memberships together, and discuss the books that we're reading. Passing on a love of books to my kids will be the ultimate gift," she shares.

For those new to reading, Kui's advice is simple: "There is no right or wrong way to read. Read what makes your soul sing. Listen to audiobooks and explore different genres and authors until you find what you love. And follow Nairobi Book Love for recommendations!"

Looking ahead, she dreams of someday writing her book. Anything from a murder mystery to an anthology of essays reflecting her lived experiences might be something to expect from Kui. **B**

KUI KABALA

Creating a community for book lovers

Kui Kabala has been a staple in the Kenyan media industry for the last two decades. From TV to radio, she has done it all. The 38-year-old mother of two and wife brings out infectious energy around her as she juggles life as a communications expert, radio presenter, actress, and certified book lover. She talked to MURUGI GICHOVI about her life, career, and love for literary works.

You may know Kui Kabala's voice and face for her years-long contribution to the Kenyan entertainment scene. She is a multi-talented television and radio personality, voice-over artist, actress, and passionate book lover.

Her voice resonates with Kenyan audiences through Capital FM's weekly radio show, The World Groove, where she celebrates the fusion of modern and traditional culture. Additionally, she stars in the popular sitcom *Njoro wa Uba* and the Showmax series *Big Girl Small World*.

What you may not know is that in 2019, she decided to turn her passion for reading into something more by creating the Nairobi Book Love, a community of those with a love for books.

Growing up as the eldest of five siblings in the 90s, Kui's childhood was filled with joy and exploration. "My fondest memories are traveling with my family, the joy of new books, and holidays upcountry with my grandparents," she recalls.

Her mother played a pivotal role in nurturing her love for reading. "Books were an adventure and an escape and helped spark my

creative self. My Mum cultivated that love by constantly buying me books, and I became a voracious reader," she says.

Kui's literary journey began early, with her essays often read aloud in class. This early love for storytelling and reading gave her confidence not just to write but also to perform public speaking. That foundation nurtured the communicator that she is today and greatly influenced her career path.

Discussing her favorite books, Kui finds it impossible to narrow down to just one. "Different books speak to you in different spaces in your life," she explains.

Some of her cherished reads include *I Know This Much is True* by Wally Lamb, *Hum if You Don't Know the Words* by Bianca Marais, *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi, *Britain's Gulag* by Caroline Elkins, and *A State of Affairs* by Esther Perel. Each book has left an indelible mark on her, offering insights into the human condition, historical events, and personal growth.

The book that impacted Kui the most is *Britain's Gulag*, which chronicles the British Empire's atrocities in pre-independence Kenya.



Benefits of reading to your unborn baby

You've probably come across countless articles encouraging you to turn your bundle of joy into a little genius by reading to them from a young age. But did you know that reading to your unborn baby could make them even smarter? Read on to learn the numerous benefits of reading to your kid in utero.

Talking, singing, touching, and massaging your belly are some of the most well-known ways to bond with your baby during pregnancy. These activities have been tried, tested, and proven true when it comes to strengthening and cementing the bond between a baby and parents, making them brim with the anticipation of meeting their little one. Though not as common, reading to your baby in utero is another effective bonding method. Below are the benefits of prenatal reading:

Early bonding: Research shows that by the third trimester, babies not only hear but also recognize the sound of their mother's voice. A mother's soothing tones lower a baby's fetal heart rate and can help create auditory bonds that carry on beyond birth.

Brain development: Listening to stories stimulates cognitive development, which fosters imagination and memory. Hearing words frequently and repeatedly makes the brain start recognising speech patterns and sounds. This early stimulation can impact a child's intellectual development.

Language acquisition: According to Fadilya Dopwell, M.D., an American developmental-behavioral paediatrician, reading to an unborn baby provides an additional form of language stimulation that is more structured.

Studies also highlight that the more familiar your baby gets with your voice, the more they grow in the words they are processing, even in utero. This builds their word recognition and speech pattern skills.

A study conducted by Oregon University in the USA found that when pregnant mothers were given a recording that included a made-up word to play near the end of pregnancy, the babies were able to recognize the word and its variations post-birth.

Increased attention span: Reading to your baby gets them used to paying attention and listening to your voice for a while each day. This inevitably increases their attention span, setting them up for future academic success.

You can start with a daily reading session of 10 minutes then add more time as they grow, and their hearing gets better and clearer.

Reducing maternal stress: While reading is beneficial for babies because of your soothing voice, it is also a time of relaxation for you. Away from the day's stresses, grab a book, some tea, a warm, fuzzy blanket, and a comfortable seat, and get lost in the joy of a good book.

TIPS FOR PRENATAL READING

1. Get everyone involved

While reading to your baby is a fun and wholesome experience, you may be exhausted or simply not in the mood to read. So, get your partner, friends, or family members involved! This also helps the baby bond with other loved ones, which makes it easy to build a connection once the baby is born. You can even pick days and alternate.

2. Read what you love

You don't have to force yourself to cultivate entirely new interests that you'll struggle getting into; pick a book from your 'favourites' list and get reading. Whether you're into Fantasy, Historical, Fiction, or Non-Fiction, it's all up to you. This is a fantastic opportunity to introduce your baby to what you love and build shared interests that you can bond over as they grow.

3. Go with the flow

Don't stress about the reading. You don't have to stick to a schedule or follow a specific reading pattern. Whenever you feel like it, pick up a book, even multiple times a day. Your child will be happy to hear from you regardless.

Reading to your unborn baby should be a fun and relaxing time for both of you. Fortunately, it comes with numerous benefits for both. So, grab a book and get reading! 📖

Words on Parenthood

Being a parent can be tough. But just remember that in your child's eyes, nobody does it better than you.

Jean Marzollo, American author



good eye health by ensuring the eyes are at a comfortable distance from the text, therefore, reducing strain. It also prevents musculoskeletal issues that can lead to headaches and additional eye discomfort.

Aligning the head and neck properly minimizes glare and reflections, enhancing visual comfort and preventing eye strain. Additionally, slouching or hunching over books can cause neck and back pain which not only affects the eyes but the body in general. Proper posture promotes better blood circulation, reducing fatigue and supporting overall eye function.

Maintaining Good Eye Health When Reading

A good book draws your attention. It leaves you craving for the next chapter. It may also get you addicted to the storyline. Your eyes will be glued to the pages as you immerse yourself fully in the story.

While reading a book can be a source of joy, knowledge, and relaxation, it can also strain your eyes and potentially damage your eyesight if you are not careful. Bad reading habits can cause eye strain, dry eyes, headaches, myopia, blurry vision, and musculoskeletal issues.

But by observing the following tips, you can maintain good eyesight while still satisfying your thirst for reading:

Ensure proper lighting: Good lighting is crucial when reading to prevent eye strain. Natural light is the best, so position yourself near a window if you can. However, you can use a well-placed lamp when natural light is unavailable. You should try to avoid reading in dimly lit areas or under harsh, glaring lights. The light should be bright enough to illuminate the text but not so bright that it causes a glare on the page or screen.

Maintain a comfortable distance: The distance between your eyes and the reading material matters. For printed materials, keep the book or magazine about 15-20 inches away from your eyes. For digital screens, maintain a distance of about 20-24 inches as

this helps reduce the risk of eye strain and also maintain a comfortable focus.

Adjust text size and contrast: When reading on digital devices, adjust the text size and contrast to a comfortable level. Larger text and high contrast can reduce the strain on your eyes, making it easier to read for extended periods. Most e-readers, smartphones, and tablets have settings that allow you to customize these parameters.

Blink more often: Insufficient blinking is a problem that is rarely thought of. For healthy eye function, a person should blink approximately 15-20 times per minute to keep the eyes lubricated and prevent dryness. However, when we read, especially on screens, we tend to blink less frequently. Blinking is essential as it moistens our eyes and prevents dryness commonly referred to as dry eye syndrome or dry eye disease.

Take regular breaks: Extended screen time can lead to digital eye strain, whose symptoms include eye discomfort, blurred vision, and neck pain. Regular breaks and proper ergonomics can help prevent these issues by following the 20-20-20 rule - every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and look at something 20 feet away. This gives your eyes a chance to relax and reduces the risk of eye strain and fatigue.

Maintain the correct posture: Correct posture when reading books helps maintain

Use blue light filters: Blue light filters are tools designed to reduce exposure to blue light emitted by digital screens like smartphones, tablets, and computers. Blue light filters help alleviate eye strain, improve sleep quality by minimizing disruption to circadian rhythms, and reduce the risk of potential long-term eye damage. Many devices have in-built blue light filters or night modes that reduce the amount of blue light emitted. Additionally, you can also use screen protectors or wear glasses with blue light-blocking lenses.

Regular eye exams: Routine eye check-ups are vital for maintaining good eye health. An eye care professional can detect any issues early and provide you with the right prescription lenses if needed. They can also offer advice tailored to your specific needs for reading, computer use, or other activities. Prioritizing your eye health is important for a lifetime of reading pleasure.

While some eye problems from poor reading habits, like eye strain, dry eyes, and headaches, are reversible with proper care, some like myopia require ongoing management. It is, therefore, important to maintain good reading habits to ensure long-term eye health. **E**

“ Health Tip Get a good night's sleep

Research points to a connection between sleep quality and quantity and your immune system. Getting seven to eight hours of sleep a night keeps your immune system functioning properly.



How Children Consume Content

In today's digital age, how does your child spend their story time – watching animated movies, flipping through colourful pages, or listening to you narrate bedtime stories? Children have many options for consuming content, from movies and video games to digital books and educational apps. We tell you what they are....

While digital media offers diverse avenues for children's entertainment and learning, reading remains crucial for children's development, fostering imagination, language development, and cognitive skills. Recent trends show a resurgence in interest in classic literature among young readers. Titles such as *Moby Dick* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are making a comeback, demonstrating children's curiosity for timeless stories that transcend generations.

According to Brian Onyango, a book vendor from Harambee Bookstore in Nairobi, some of the most sought-after children's books include classics like *Wimpy Kid*, *Dork Diaries*, *Harry Potter*, *Hardy Boys*, and *Nancy Drew*. These timeless tales continue to captivate young minds and ignite their imagination.

Despite the rise of e-books, Brian observes that children still overwhelmingly prefer physical books. The tactile experience of flipping through pages and holding a physical book remains unmatched in fostering a deep connection with reading.

When selecting books, Brian explains that parents and children have specific preferences. Some families look for books by particular authors or genres, while others rely on recommendations. This blend ensures that children discover books tailored to their interests and reading levels.

Parents consistently highlight the transformative impact of reading on their children. Brian notes that reading enhances language skills, improves grammar, and

boosts confidence in composition writing. Beyond academic benefits, reading also nurtures creativity and expands children's perspectives through storytelling.

"Reading bedtime stories helps calm my daughter and provides an opportunity for meaningful interaction and bonding," recounts Vionna Omiti, a mother to an avid reading daughter.

As children rediscover classics and explore contemporary favourites, the role of reading in shaping young minds remains indispensable in the digital age.

Reading independently

When children read books independently, they develop essential literacy skills and foster their imagination. Independent reading encourages cognitive development and critical thinking. It expands their vocabulary as they explore topics of interest at their own pace.

Being read to

Parents reading to their children offers both cognitive and emotional benefits. This practice helps with language acquisition and strengthens the parent-child bond. Additionally, being read to can introduce children to complex narratives and new vocabulary that they might find challenging to read independently. Being read to can also enhance a child's listening skills and patience.

Attention span and focus

The impact on attention span varies. Watching videos can sometimes lead to shorter attention spans due to rapid scene changes and stimulating visuals. Independent reading, however, requires sustained focus and concentration. Experts

recommend limiting screen time and encouraging a mix of independent reading and being read to as this fosters better attention and focus.

Emotional and social development

Stories help children understand emotions and social situations. Reading books allows children to delve into the characters' thoughts and feelings, fostering empathy. Being read to creates an intimate setting where children can discuss emotions and scenarios with their parents. According to child psychologists, engaging with stories helps children navigate their own emotions and develop empathy towards others.

Opinions and recommendations

Interviews with child development experts suggest that a balanced approach to content consumption is optimal. Parents are advised to monitor and limit screen time while encouraging both independent reading and shared reading sessions. Experts agree that quality content, whether digital or print, is key.

As author Roald Dahl aptly noted, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." Whether you're a parent, educator, or mentor, your dedication to introducing children to books is a gift that ignites their imagination and empowers their future.

Each page turned opens doors to new worlds, sparks curiosity, and builds a foundation of knowledge that lasts a lifetime. Keep nurturing minds and celebrating the transformative power of reading- it's a journey worth every moment.





Making reading enjoyable and educational

To make reading fun and informative, Siri Kids uses different strategies one of them being having a consistent reading routine. When this routine is accompanied by a variety of engaging books, reading time becomes an anticipated part of the day.

Kwamboka advises parents to provide a variety of books, including picture books, chapter books, non-fiction, and fiction, to cater to different interests. Adding, "select books that are age-appropriate to keep children challenged but not frustrated."

Reading aloud together is another great strategy. Using different voices for characters and varying tones can make the story more engaging.

"Pause to ask questions, make predictions, and discuss the story to keep your child involved," she recommends.

Connecting stories to real-life

Engaging the children in real-life activities that connect to a book they just read brings the story to life. For instance, visiting a museum after reading about extinct animals can provide practical applications of what they've read.

Encouraging creativity is another way to deepen the reading experience. Parents can encourage their children to tell their own stories or change the ending of a book they've read. She also notes that drawing pictures of scenes or characters from the book can help children engage deeply with the story.

Conclusively, building a reading culture in children is not just about getting them to read; it's about making reading a meaningful and enriching part of their lives.

"Discussing the moral lessons and values embedded in these stories can show children how these lessons apply to everyday life and encourage critical thinking," Kwamboka notes.

By incorporating diverse stories, creating engaging reading routines, and connecting stories to real life, parents can help their children develop a lifelong love of reading and a deep appreciation for their cultural heritage.

As Kwamboka aptly puts it: "Books are a bridge to understanding and celebrating the rich fabric of our world and our place within it." **P**

Nurturing a Strong Reading Culture in Children

Building a reading culture in children seems like an uphill task, but is very enjoyable, beneficial, and easy. Our little ones like to hear us speak to them, especially when we read them stories. This is a task that Hadelite Kwamboka Isaac, Author and Director of Siri Kids, finds joy in performing, by ensuring that children develop a reading culture.

Siri Kids is an organisation based in Nairobi that focuses on teaching and encouraging children to embrace the reading culture. When speaking to *Parents Magazine*, Kwamboka gave invaluable insights to any parent looking to foster a love of reading in their children.

The power of African stories

According to Kwamboka, African stories enrich children with information on different cultures present on the continent. She recommends using different genres including folktales, myths, legends, and contemporary stories that cover a wide range of cultural aspects and traditions.

Having family storytelling sessions where parents read or tell African stories is not only fun but also very insightful to the children.

"Make these sessions interactive by asking children questions about the story, encouraging them to predict what might happen next, or having them act out parts of the story," says Kwamboka.

Storytelling sessions can also include stories about family members, ancestors, and personal experiences to create a direct and personal connection with history and heritage.

"This helps children better understand and relate to historical events and cultural traditions," explains Kwamboka.

Representation matters

During the storytelling sessions, the parents can use the children as the characters of the stories instead of the actual fictional characters.

"Seeing themselves in the characters they read about helps children with self-acceptance and validation of their identity," explains Kwamboka.

Kwamboka added that representation affirms that their experiences, cultures, and identities are important and worthy of being depicted in literature. This representation boosts self-esteem and confidence, providing role models that children can look up to and learn from.

Furthermore, representation helps children develop a sense of pride in their unique cultural identity and encourages them to celebrate their heritage.

"Books that reflect a child's heritage and traditions can deepen their understanding and appreciation of their own culture," says Kwamboka.

By Murugi Gichovi



BOOKISH BLISS

Secrets to decorating your home with literary treasures

One often tends to view books as mere vessels for stories; something confined to the action of reading. However, their aesthetic appeal is undeniable and transcends their textual content. Be it in the hands of a seasoned decorator or a homeowner, books can turn into captivating elements that help raise the ambiance of a space.

According to Maureen Ojung'a, a Nairobi-based interior stylist and home stager with a soft spot for books, styling with books is an art. "Instead of just piling them on a shelf, use them to create a visually appealing and functional space in terms of the reflection of your personality," she advises.

Speaking about her love for home décor and books, Maureen, popularly known as Forever Moe, advises that experimenting is the key to effectively using books to decorate your space.

The atmosphere of a room changes dramatically based on how things are arranged - these can include horizontal and vertical stacks of books or lining them up by colour for dramatic effects. Be it your favourite reads, dazzling coffee table books, or collections that merge with hobbies, these literary pieces also bring an air of authenticity into the space.

"Balance is key. Big books provide a focal point; smaller ones create depth when bunched together. It is about finding a balance between the books and how they fit in with the rest of the décor," Maureen says.

Other display décor like vases, candles, and artwork help avoid the bleakness of the books. They complement the books by giving depth to a space while maintaining interest.

Lighting is an integral supplement to enhance the effect of book displays. Lamps with soft light, fairy lights, or even candles cast a warm glow, turning books into irresistible eyepoint material.

Additionally, refreshing your book displays quarterly makes things stay new and gives you the chance to feature different parts of your collection.

On specific placement ideas, Maureen throws out a few options. Shelves are a versatile canvas for both vertical and horizontal displays. Bookends or a small decorative object can anchor the display to prevent a cluttered appearance. And then there is the coffee table: an opportunity to make a statement with a stack of big, beautifully designed books, topped with a small decorative accent.

Maureen says people should not shy away from decorating with books and making use of the most unlikely places, like the kitchen or bathroom. A couple of cookbooks on a kitchen counter or some decorative volumes on a bathroom shelf can add a sense of coziness and character to usually forgotten house corners.

This bubbly home décor enthusiast advises minimalists who feel that décor books are too busy to try and use the rainbow system, that is, arranging books by colour and placing the books with the page side showing instead of the more colourful spine side.

The art of decorating with books essentially lies in striking the perfect balance, it is part personal taste and part well-intentioned placement. Follow these simple tips and add flair to your home.

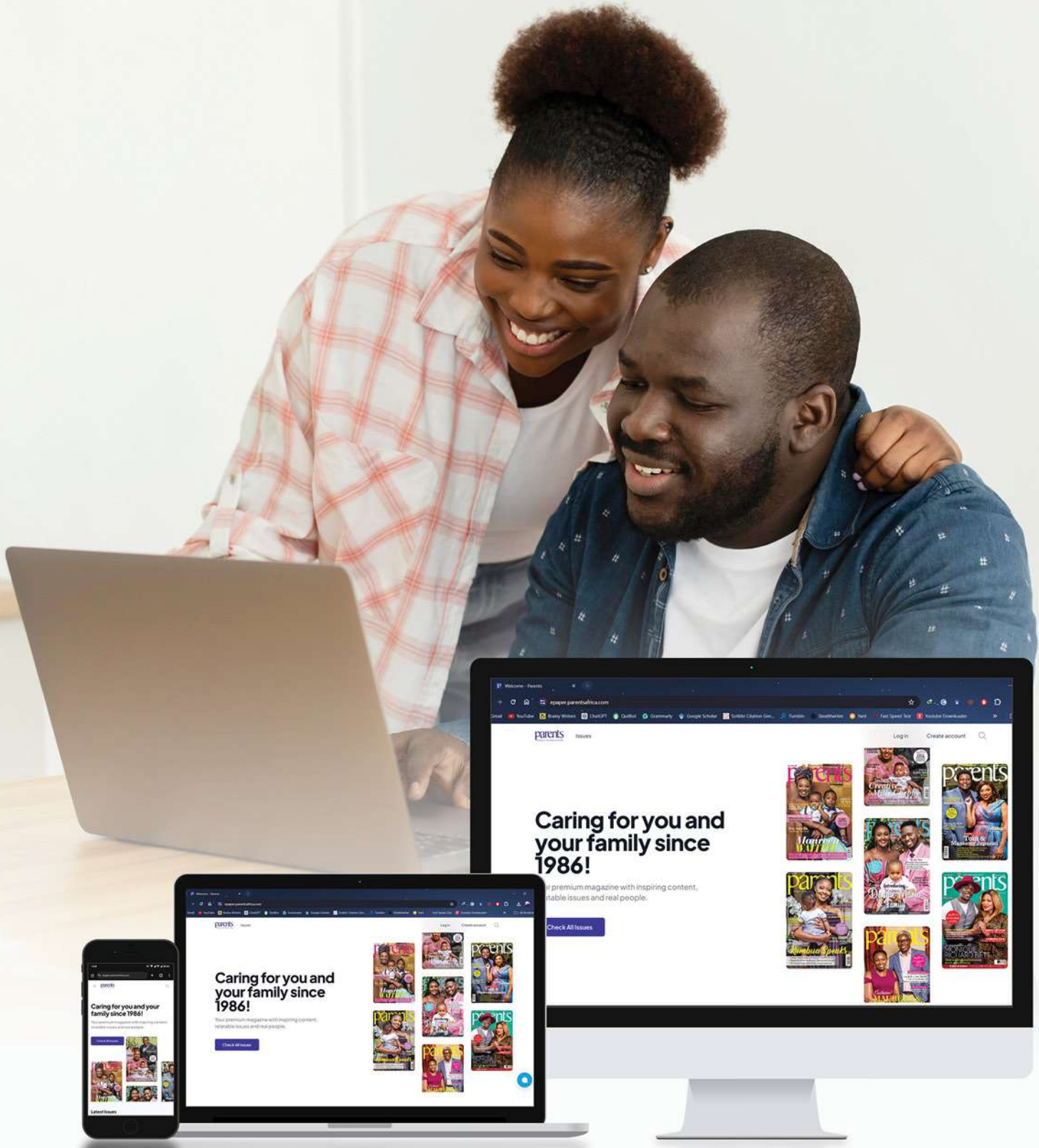
You will be surprised that you can pull off a collection that can dazzle one's senses. **P**

“

Happy and Inspiring

It is a privilege to be in the presence of someone who has positive energy. Let that person be you.

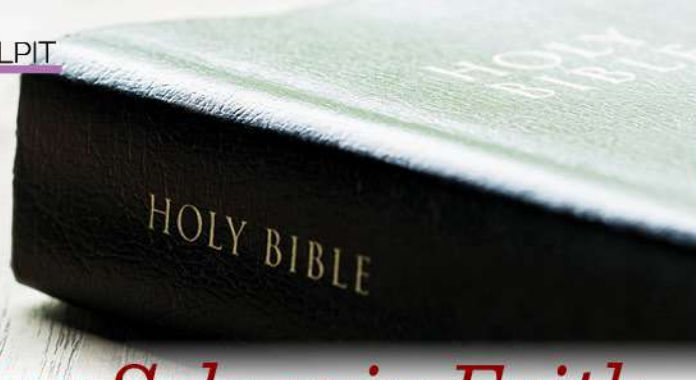
”



"Unlock exclusive content with our magazine! Subscribe now for the latest trends, insights, and more. Don't miss out!"

- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Semi-Annually
- Annually

epaper.parentsafrica.com



Finding Solace in Faith-Based Literature

Reverend Sam Mwangangi, a prominent spiritual leader and writer, opines that faith-based literature offers a profound source of solace and inspiration. In an exclusive interview with *Parents* magazine, Reverend Mwangangi shares with **MUINDE BRIAN** his insights on the transformative power of faith-based books and their role in fostering spiritual growth and resilience and offering a sanctuary of wisdom and inspiration.

In a world filled with uncertainty and challenges, many people turn to various sources for comfort and guidance. Reverend Samson Mwangangi, the Senior Pastor at The World Community Chapel and Assistant Sales and Marketing Manager at Safari Park Hotel believes faith-based literature offers a profound source of solace and inspiration. Reverend Mwangangi, who began his deep interaction with faith-based books in 2012 during his theological studies at Pan Africa Christian University, shares his insights on the transformative power of these writings.

The role of faith-based literature...

Faith-based literature is more than just reading material. It serves as a means of connecting with the divine, finding answers to life's deepest questions, and cultivating a sense of peace and purpose.

Reverend Mwangangi defines faith-based literature as writings whose base of authority is the Bible. Such literature can offer solace and guidance to the world because it draws from God's 'special revelation' - the Bible. He emphasizes that our challenges are not unique and that sharing testimonies through literature can help others see that God has resolved similar issues before.

Personal journey and literary favorites...

Reverend Mwangangi's journey with faith-based literature began in earnest in 2012 when he joined Pan Africa Christian University for his theological undergraduate studies. With a background in hospitality, his pursuit of a BA in Bible and Theology marked the beginning of his deep interaction with faith-based books.

His mantra, inspired by Charles Haddon Spurgeon, has always been, "Visit many books but live in the Bible."

Books like *"How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth"* by Douglas Stuart and Mark Strauss have been particularly influential in his understanding of faith and life. This book provided him with the tools for correctly interpreting the Bible.

Among African authors, he finds the works of Bishop Oginde Stanley Mwalili and Mensa Otabil compelling due to their profound spiritual insights.

During challenging periods, faith-based literature has provided Reverend Mwangangi with comfort and clarity. For instance, reading *"Christianity on Trial"* by W. Mark Lanier offered him solace during a difficult legal issue. Lanier's examination of the plausibility of the Christian faith through the eyes of a top trial lawyer resonated deeply with him.

The connectivity of spiritual leaders outside the scripture with the scripture itself goes a long way. Because then it's a lawyer talking to you but at the same time, it's a spiritual leader. With an understanding of both the scripture and the professional world, the perspectives resonate a little bit more.

The book of Psalms has also been a source of strength, reminding him that it is okay to feel pain and confusion, but that it is important to trust in God's plan.

As Proverbs 3:5-6 advises, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

For those new to faith-based literature, Reverend Mwangangi recommends starting with classics like *"The Pilgrim's Progress"* by John Bunyan and *"The Confessions"* by St. Augustine. These books have stood the test of time and continue to inspire readers with their

timeless truths. Contemporary authors like William P. Young, author of *"The Shack"* and Francis Chan, author of *"Crazy Love"* also provide fresh perspectives on God's love and grace, addressing relevant issues with practical insights.

Reverend Mwangangi is optimistic about the future of faith-based literature, particularly among the younger generation. He notes a growing interest in spiritual writings as people search for meaning and purpose. To ensure that faith-based literature remains relevant, he emphasizes the importance of supporting local authors and publishers. African authors bring a unique perspective that reflects cultural heritage and addresses specific community challenges.

In his ministry, Reverend Mwangangi integrates faith-based literature through his sermons and online platforms like WordPress and social media. He believes that relevant content will always find its audience, even among younger readers as long as it listens to and understands them.

Reverend Mwangangi sees the digital space as a crucial avenue for spreading faith-based literature. He actively engages with modern media platforms through his blog and social media handles, reaching a wider audience with the message of faith.

His writings...

As a writer, Reverend Mwangangi seeks to draw people to God through his writings. His inspiration comes from a desire to echo God's message and witness for Christ. Through his articles, he hopes to convey themes of faith, redemption, and God's unwavering love.

In a world where uncertainty often reigns, faith-based literature provides a sanctuary of wisdom, comfort, and inspiration. Reverend Sam Mwangangi's insights remind us of the profound impact these books can have on our spiritual journey.

As he aptly puts it, "Faith-based literature is a gift that nourishes the soul and guides us towards a deeper understanding of God's love and purpose for our lives."

Visit his blog to interact more: <https://therightperceptions.wordpress.com> 

“Bible Guide to Happiness

Pay attention to what your father and mother tell you. Their teaching will improve your character as a handsome turban or necklace improves your appearance.

Proverbs 1: 8-9

The Gentleman's Library: Must-Read Books for Men

In today's fast-paced world, taking time to sit down with a good book can feel like a luxury. While it's becoming more socially acceptable that some of us are not readers, reading is an essential part of personal growth and intellectual enrichment for the modern gentleman. Whether you are looking to dive into captivating narratives or gain new insights through non-fiction, our curated list of must-read books offers something for everyone. From poignant fiction to practical finance advice, these books will not only entertain but also provide valuable lessons and inspiration. Here are some titles every man should consider adding to his library.

NON-FICTION

Personal Finance 101 by Peter Kamau

Every gentleman should have a solid understanding of personal finance, and "Personal Finance 101" by Peter Kamau is an excellent resource. This book offers practical advice on budgeting, saving, investing, and achieving financial independence. Kamau's straightforward approach makes complex financial concepts accessible and actionable, ensuring that you can apply the lessons to your own life. It's an indispensable guide for anyone looking to improve their financial literacy and secure their financial future. Don't you?

Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood by Trevor Noah

In "Born a Crime," Trevor Noah shares his remarkable journey from growing up in apartheid South Africa to becoming a renowned comedian and television host. His memoir is filled with humorous anecdotes and poignant reflections on race, identity, and resilience. This book offers valuable insights into overcoming adversity and embracing one's unique path, making it an inspiring read for men of all ages. And it's in reads like this that we relate and internalize the most because we are all striving towards that dream; the dream to be who we always dreamed

The Upstarts: How Uber, Airbnb, and the Killer Companies of the New Silicon Valley Are Changing the World by Brad Stone

"The Upstarts" by Brad Stone explores the rise of Uber and Airbnb, two companies that have significantly disrupted traditional industries and reshaped the way we live and work. This book offers valuable



insights into entrepreneurship, innovation, and the challenges of scaling a business in the modern world. It's an essential read for men interested in technology, business, and the dynamics of the startup ecosystem.

FICTION

And yes, gentlemen read fiction too.

Fiction plays a crucial role in shaping and influencing the perspectives and emotional depth of men. Through the exploration of diverse narratives and complex characters, fiction allows men to experience a wide range of emotions and situations beyond their everyday lives. It opens up a whole world of creativity and world perception.

Small World by Caleb Azumah Nelson

"Small World" by Caleb Azumah Nelson is a moving exploration of identity, love, and self-discovery. The story revolves around two young black British men navigating their relationship amidst the backdrop of a bustling, vibrant city. Nelson's lyrical prose captures the intensity of their emotions and the complexities of their experiences. This book is a must-read for men as it delves into themes of vulnerability, connection, and the search for meaning in a world that often feels overwhelming.

The Havoc of Choice by Wanjiru Koinange

Set against the backdrop of Kenya's 2007 elections, "The Havoc of Choice" by Wanjiru Koinange is a compelling read that delves into the impact of political unrest on a family. This novel provides

a gripping narrative while highlighting themes of loyalty, family bonds, and the pursuit of justice. It's a significant read for men interested in understanding the socio-political dynamics of Kenya and the broader implications on personal lives.

Open Water by Caleb Azumah Nelson

In "Open Water," Nelson once again showcases his talent for weaving powerful narratives. This novel tells the story of two young artists who fall in love while grappling with their personal and professional struggles. The book beautifully addresses themes of intimacy, race, and mental health. Men will find this story particularly resonant as it explores the emotional depth and the courage it takes to be truly open and honest in relationships.

Building a gentleman's library is more than just collecting books; it is about curating a selection of works that inspire, challenge, and enrich your life. From the soulful narratives of Caleb Azumah Nelson to practical financial advice and compelling memoirs, these books offer diverse perspectives and insights.

As you embark on your reading journey, remember that each book is an opportunity to grow, learn, and connect with the world in new and meaningful ways. So, grab a cup of coffee, find a comfortable spot, and dive into these must-read books that every man should have on his shelf, whether you're an avid reader or not. **P**

Success to Significance: Lessons from Dr. Manu Chandaria



Success to Significance. This is the title of Dr. Manu Chandaria's biography, which was launched on August 7, 2024, at a ceremony held in Nairobi. At the age of 96, Manu, as he is better known, delivered an unscripted powerful speech surrounded by his family. Speaking from his heart, he said that the most rewarding part of his life, apart from family, is not the success of his businesses but giving and caring for others. He demonstrated that those who keep their fists closed don't receive.

His words touched everyone present, even those who have known him for a long time. "A blessed man because of his works," is all I could murmur, overcome with emotion. Many his age have toiled and are now bedridden, perhaps living with regrets of a life lived and nothing to show for it. Not Manu.

I have worked with Manu since we started Starehe Girls Centre in 2004. He has been instrumental in the success of this school, always there to offer help and advice. If it were not for him, the 55-acre piece of land where the school stands today would have never been transferred to Starehe Girls Centre from the Limuru Girls Centre.

I have found Manu an inspiration and role model who makes everyone around him comfortable, especially when he starts telling his numerous jokes. Meetings with Manu are so relaxed because he focuses on the positive. That he loves people and gives generously, I can testify. The love he has shown to the needy girls at the Starehe Girls Centre is an example of who Manu is, and what he believes in.

But who is Manilal Premchand Chandaria? You must read his book to know this 5' 4" man who owns only five suits and lives a very simple life. Nothing in his demeanor portrays him as a billionaire.

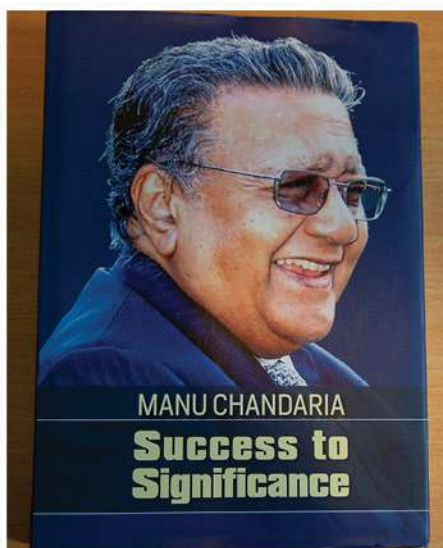
I have devoted this column to the Manu I know, a man I long admired even before I met him, and a man I am now privileged to interact with closely at Starehe Girls Centre because I believe in saying good things about people when they can hear or read

those words.. I have learnt the meaning of service with humility from Manu.

Let's start with the choice of his book's title – *Success to Significance*. Many people think being successful is enough, but Manu says that it is not the end.

What does success look like to you? Lots of money? Owning tracks and tracks of land, high-end motor vehicles, and other material things? Amassing a lot of wealth to secure your family's future? A successful career?

All these, and more, are definitions of success, but pause for a moment and ask yourself – is this all there is to success? Remember, you are only on this earth for a while, and you will never take material things with you when you die. How will people remember you when you are gone? The guy who was always dressed elegantly? The woman who had 1,000 pairs of shoes? The man who built a huge empire? The most corrupt individual? The greatest dictator? Are these legacies worth your success?



Manu's answer to the meaning of success is not how much you are worth, how educated you are, or how influential you are - it is the impact your success has on others.

Quoting from his speech at the Wharton/Global Alumni Forum held in Cape Town in June 2008:

"We cannot make any change unless we can create wealth. Create wealth not for a few, but create wealth, which is equitable."

"To me is it a challenge; challenge of becoming successful. But it is more than that. To live in ivory towers is one thing and to be part of a solution is another..."

"This is my challenge to all of you. You are successful, but that is not enough. How can you become significant? You have an opportunity to make a difference in Africa. Think Africa. Put Africa on your radar: think

about what you can do to improve, to create, to sustain, to transform Africa. I am sure this can be done."

When you read Manu's book, you will start to think differently about your measure of success. You will see how Manu has lived his life not just to be successful but to also become significant. So significant that he was honoured by Queen Elizabeth and the former Prime Minister of India Atal Vajpayee; was the first African recipient of the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, and has been feted by world leaders and universities – indeed, Manu is a global icon

Manu, who emulates Mahatma Gandhi's simplicity of life lives a life of sacrifice for others, says: "The singular lesson of sacrifice is to possess as little as possible and use the rest for the good of others."

Wealthy he is, but there are more wealthier people in this country. Working hard he has, but innate values have guided him in making money honestly and not just to benefit himself and his family but also the society. To Manu, corruption which many people use to make money, is anathema. He engages in honest businesses guided by the principles of Jainism, his faith.

Manu describes Gandhi as his hero and inspiration from when he was a student in India and goes on to say his family was inspired by Gandhi's way of life in setting up the Chandaria Foundation.

The Chandaria Foundation which he founded as a vehicle for his family's philanthropy work has a footprint in many parts of this country – universities, hospitals, schools, correctional centres, street children, the disabled, and many others.

I invite you to visit the magnificent Starehe Girls Centre Chandaria Dormitory built by Chandaria Foundation. This is in addition to the many girls he pays school fees for, provisions of computers, and participation in all fundraising activities. When we are in need, a call to Manu provides a solution. He just loves to see girls from disadvantaged backgrounds transformed and enabled to contribute positively to society.

I am not here to tell Manu's story. He has documented it in his biography. Mine is to celebrate Manu, wish him every blessing, and thank him from the bottom of my heart for the work he continues to do for mankind and the difference this has made to society, especially the girls at Starehe. God bless you Manu and may your example inspire others to emulate you; to wake up after reading this article and ask – when I die, what will be my legacy? **P**



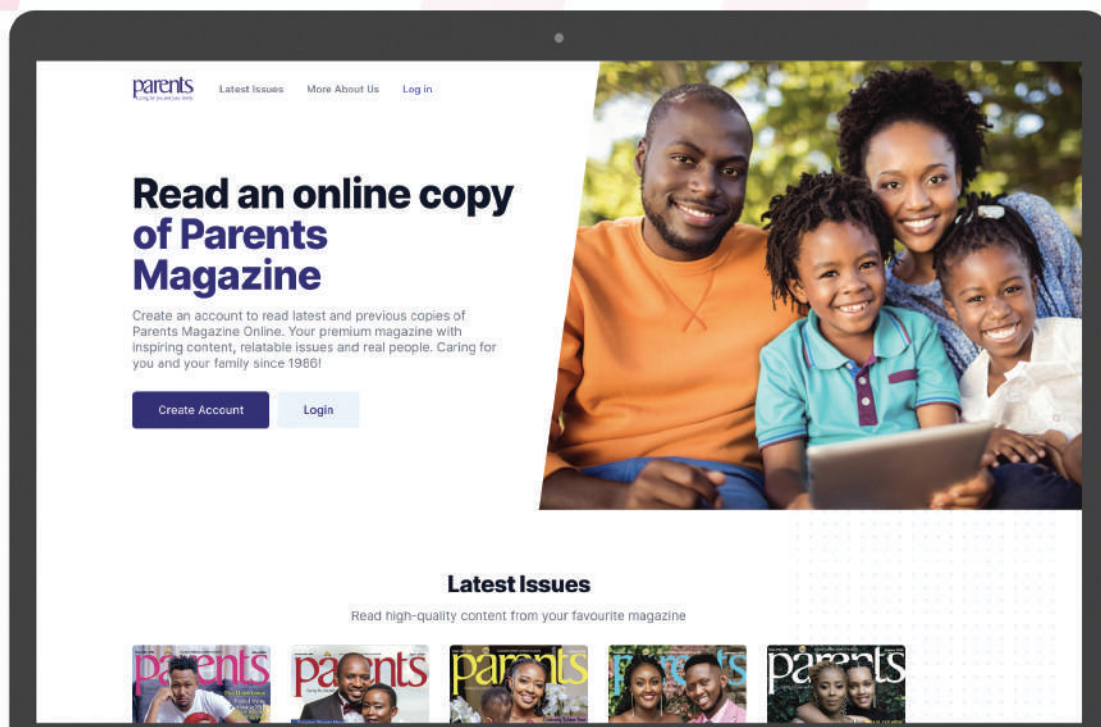
To Advertise with us
Call: 0740638680 | 0724695304

parents
Caring for you and your family





Parenting Anywhere Anytime



To get your Free E-Copy

epaper.parentsafrica.com 🔍

