

parents

Caring for you and your family

**Special
Mother's Day
Issue**
Celebrating
Generations

JOHN CW and REVEVA CW

Their Journey from the Ghetto to Glory

ALSO FEATURED:

- * Teresa Njoroge Helping Women Rebuild after Incarceration
- * A Guide to Help Women Take Care of Themselves
- * Block Your Fears and Start Investing Now

TEN DIAGNOSES, ONE LIFE

Wendy Gikono's
Miraculous Survival

Dr Serah Muchai
Turning Motherhood
into a Care Movement

Sex and Intimacy: Lasting Sexual Intimacy is grounded in Truth



Message from the Team Leader

There is a kind of morning many women know too well, the one where the day begins before they have fully caught up with themselves. A phone already lighting up with work messages, a child asking a question mid-thought, a to-do list that does not pause for emotion. In that moment between responsibility and readiness, she adjusts. Not once, but many times, as the day unfolds.

Happy Mother's Day to all the incredible women who continue to hold life together in its many forms at home, in leadership, in care, and in pursuit of purpose.

As we welcome you to this special edition of our e-paper, we are not just honouring motherhood in its traditional sense, but the evolving experience of

womanhood today. There are internal changes that come with this journey, subtle but constant recalibrations as women balance career, family, identity and legacy. These changes are rarely spoken about, yet they shape how women think, lead, and love.

In many ways, being a team leader mirrors this lived reality. It is not far removed from motherhood. Both roles require negotiation between love and discipline, between empathy and accountability. I have learnt that leadership is not simply about direction, but about discernment, knowing when to guide gently, when to be firm and when to simply allow space for growth.

Like motherhood, leadership sits in the space between holding people and holding standards. And for many women, navigating this becomes part of a larger

internal journey, one that asks them to constantly evolve without losing themselves in the process.

At ParentsAfrica, we recognise this unbroken chain of values; women who are building careers while shaping legacies, often consistently. Their strength is not only in what they achieve, but in how they continue to become.

As you read this edition, may you feel seen in your transitions, affirmed in your growth and celebrated in every role you hold.

*Njambi
Gaitho*
Team Leader.

Happy Mother's Day!

Rooted in Love: Celebrating Mothers

To celebrate is to remember, and this issue pauses to honour the women who have carried us, shaped us, and refused to let us forget where we've come from. Our theme, *Celebrating Generations*, is a love letter to mothers everywhere. They give us life, they choose us, and they lead with unshakeable conviction that the next generation deserves better.

The stories curated in this edition are not simply profiles. They are testaments. They are proof that when a woman stands firm, entire families, communities and nations find their footing.

We open with a story close to the heart of this issue. Our cover feature brings you John and Eva CW, a ministerial couple whose partnership is as much a calling as it is a marriage. You'll often hear the notion of ambition against intimacy, but John and Eva CW have a different vision.

Their journey together is a masterclass in what it means to build something that outlasts you. Their story reminds us that the strongest ministries are often built first

at the dining table, in moments before the world demands your attention.

In our Survivors column, we are humbled to bring you Wendy Gikono, a woman who has faced not one, not two, but ten illnesses and lived to tell every single story.

Wendy's account is raw, deeply personal, and triumphant. It challenges us to rethink resilience as the decision to keep going even when the body says otherwise. Her story is one of the most powerful we have published, and we trust it will stay with you long after you set this magazine down.

Our Heroes column in this issue shines a light on Teresa Njoroge, a woman who turned her own experience of incarceration into a lifelong mission. Through her work, Teresa is restoring dignity, rebuilding futures, and refusing to allow the justice system to have the final word on anyone's story. Her work is urgent and necessary.

In our Grooming section, style consultant Esther Muna invites you to stop chasing trends and start trusting yourself. Her philosophy is that every woman has a style



DNA, a signature that is entirely her own, and the most elegant thing you can do is to lean into it. Esther's guidance is practical, warm, and laced with the kind of wisdom that only comes from years of watching.

To every mother, grandmother, and woman who has poured herself into another person's becoming, this issue is for you. We see you. We celebrate you.

Happy Reading
Samuel Owino
Issue Editor

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Hot water bottle



This month, I am recommending something wonderfully unglamorous, but essential. A hot water bottle. I know. Bear with me.

As we celebrate generations of mothers, I keep coming back to the small acts of care that sustain us. A hot water bottle is one of the most underrated tools of self-care available to women. For menstrual cramps, it offers gentle, drug-free relief that has been trusted across generations.

For the mother on her feet all day, it is a warm embrace at the end of a long evening. For the grandmother whose joints ache in the cold, comfort costs almost nothing. For the woman who needs a moment to breathe, it is an invitation to rest without guilt.

When we celebrate the women who give so much of themselves, let us also celebrate the small, tender ways they can be cared for in return. A hot water bottle on a tired mother's lap is not a small thing. It is an act of love made warm.

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Meet the *Cover Models*

Special Thanks

Photography: Sini Studios
Makeup: Lumera
Wardrobe: Model's Own
Location : Sini Studios



WINNING LETTER

Before I understood the world, I understood my mother. She was my first home, not a place with walls, but a feeling of warmth, safety, and quiet reassurance that no matter what happened, I would be okay.

My mother is not just the woman who raised me; she is the one who shaped the way I see life. In her, I have seen strength that doesn't need to be loud to be powerful. She carries so

much with grace, often putting others before herself, yet never making it feel like a burden. It is in the little things she does, the way she checks on me, the way she listens even when she's tired, the way she gives without expecting anything in return, that I see the depth of her love.

There are moments I think about times when I felt uncertain or afraid and somehow, just her presence made things lighter. She has this quiet way of holding everything together.

If I become even half the person she is, I will consider my life well lived.
Happy Mother's Day, Mommy. I love you so much

Maiga Mungai



Ian and Petra Njenga (Bond of love)

1. I still remember my mom buying those Parents Magazine as a child. This one was fun, Parents interviewing a young couple youth like, is a change of branding, great couple indeed... [@makiya richard](#)

2. I absolutely enjoyed this episode... [@MukamiNjiru](#).

3. I love these people...He who finds a wife finds a good thing, waishi milele..
[@zidanemwaura3492](#)



Faith Odhiambo



1. Now we know why Faith has great confidence and Impact....stems from PARENTING. The voice of a father is incredibly powerful in a daughter's life; fathers affirm and instill confidence in their daughters; that is why she is in the Corporate/Law field. Kudos, Faith and More Kudos to dad and mum...

[@MaryMackori](#)

2. She's proof that you can do anything that you put your mind to. I loved the fact that she is not ashamed to declare her faith... continue shining and mentoring others [@ann_kamau](#)

3. Great lady who has done well in her role as LSK president. A successful woman who cares for family and has faith in God [@margaretmabae1928](#)

Being an only child...Derrick Mwangi x Mom (Roots and Branches)



1. I am in my 30s, but growing up without a sibling is really hard; sometimes you need to talk with someone, but you remember you are alone. [@Love in the Air](#)

2. I am an only child, and I hate it. In adulthood is where this haunts the most... loneliness is my best friend [@Ejidiah](#)

3. I'm the only child, but it's an experience I wouldn't wish even to my worst enemy. You only get the reality of it when you grow up. [@betty](#)

4. My grade 3 son had a school project on family tree; after submitting his project, he realised that he is the only one with no sibling in his class. We had a very tough

week; in our everyday prayers, we had to include the sibling part.. eiii. I'm not ready kuongezee. [@Mildred Abob](#)

5. Having siblings doesn't mean you won't be lonely. It's human nature to want what they don't have, but it doesn't mean it will fill the gap. Most people have many siblings but still go through life alone.

[@Its Monicah](#)

6. Being an only child and hitting differently now as I am adulting... let me tell you, Maina, there's nothing fancy about it... saa zingine ni ngumuuuu... I admire those who have siblings for sure. [@DuaP](#)





Assertiveness...

The Voice with Enduring Legacy

Assertiveness is the fire passed from mother to child across generations. This is the courage to stand in one's truth without apology. A mother or woman who speaks with clarity and conviction teaches every daughter and son watching that their voice has weight, that their boundaries are set, and that love and strength are never opposites.

Across generations, assertive mothers have shaped families, communities, and nations. They are the women who said no when it was dangerous, yes when it was radical, and I deserve better when the world insisted otherwise. Their assertiveness was the difference between enduring life and designing it.

This Mother's Day, we celebrate mothers and women who modelled dignified boldness. Those who taught us to speak even when our voices trembled, to hold firm when it cost something, and to raise children who know the difference between keeping peace and losing themselves. Their assertiveness is our inheritance. May we honour it by living it fully.

Reflections:

I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.

Angela Davis, American activist and academic

I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear.

Wangari Maathai, Kenyan environmental and political activist

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated.

Maya Angelou, American poet and civil rights icon

Speak up. Believe in yourself. Take risks.

*Sheryl Sandberg, American author of *Lean In* and tech executive*

I raise my voice. Not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard.

Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani Nobel Peace Prize laureate

My Thoughts:

Assertiveness in a woman once made me uncomfortable. Later I realised that it said everything about me and nothing about her. A woman who knows her worth actually reveals what strength looks like.

Israel Owino, Student Leader, UoN. P

WOMAN'S HERITAGE

1. Born to nurture others from birth
Delicately equipped with empathy
Care, preservation, curation and steadfast love
Cultural bonds and bondage intertwined
Create perpetual struggle between
Individual fulfilment and societal dictates
Woman empowered for humanity.

2. Community well-invested in mothers and girls
Faster gaining light to a better future
Dividends flow from the half appropriately gifted
For certain fundamental human roles
Mother's hunger to ranks after her child's
Nurture role, by extension leads to
Woman empowered for humanity.

3. From safe maternity through proper nourishment
Relevant adequate education
Care and character-giving nurture
Abandonment of retrogressive cultural practices
A self-sustaining female emerges
Ready for her role in society
Woman empowered for humanity.

4. Emboldened by role models dared by success
Enlightened by education to break barriers
The classroom is a playground Political podium a stage set
Boardroom a stomping ground
The former glass ceiling a mirage
Move on, Woman empowered for humanity.

5. Memories of yonder in timeless praise
Powerful matriarchs in their time
Liberally scattered in all ethnic communities
Hidden power for bubbling talent
Alas to even lead an army
Come again, Woman empowered for humanity.

6. Bubble future in free-flowing conduct
Restructuring social order from custom to untried norms
Condensing and extending at the same time
All talents welcome as barriers are alien
Technology causing blurred familiarity, prejudices and judgement
Woman empowered for humanity.

7. Aspirational mind declares the reality check
Women sparsely represented in some key fields
Don't raise a finger to challenge the status quo
Behold precipitate moral dilemma
Impose affirmative action to risk freedom of choice
Woman empowered for humanity.

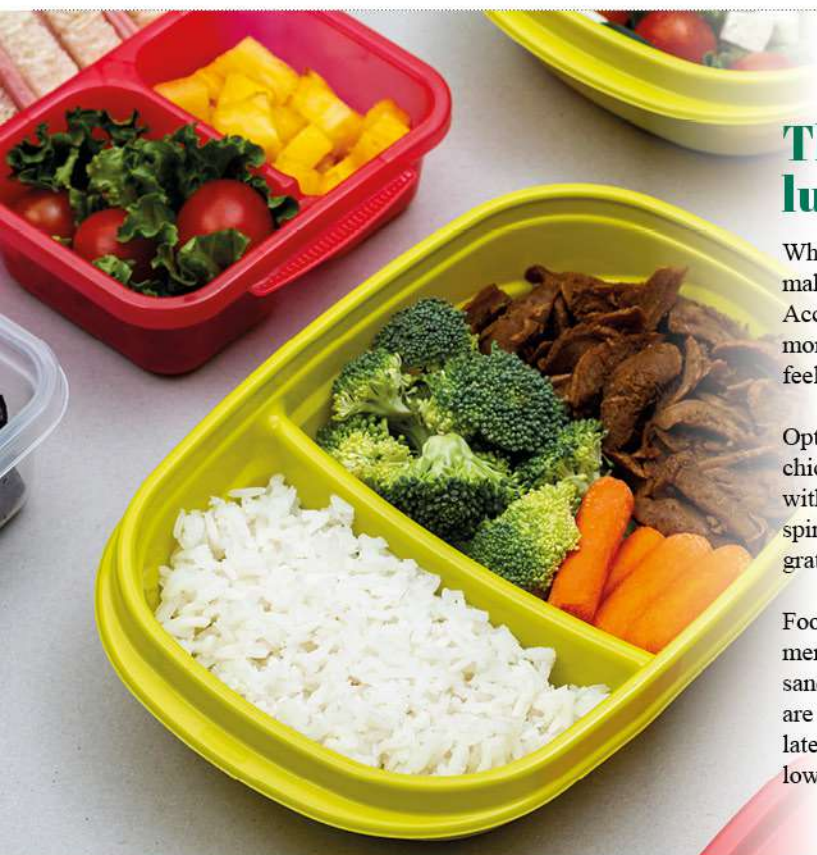
8. Vestiges of oppression clothed as cultural diversity
Ethnic values subjugate to national values as promise in basic human rights
Equality and equity as bastions of hope and progress
Women in leadership to fuel future growth
Happy to claim in unison a crucial target achieved
Woman empowered for humanity.

By Poet Squirrel

Five Good Reasons to Strength Train

The secret to burning fat is not pounding the treadmill, but resistance workouts using weights. So, if your goal is to lose weight, take to the gym and lift weights. In addition to losing weight, you have more reasons to engage in strength training exercises, as shown below:

1. Adults who don't strength train lose five to seven pounds of muscle and see a two to five per cent drop in metabolic rate every decade.
2. Improved glucose metabolism, thus reducing the risk of adult-onset diabetes. Glucose uptake has been shown to improve by 23 per cent after four months of strength training.
3. A significant increase in bone mineral density is noted after only four months of strength exercise.
4. Faster gastrointestinal transit time, thus reducing the risk of colon cancer. One study showed a 56 per cent increase in transit time after three months of strength training.
5. You will see improved posture and reduced joint and lower back pain.



The high-performance lunch box

When you have a high-stress job, eating a good lunch can really make a positive difference to your performance in the afternoon. According to nutritionists, you will likely feel more alert by eating more protein and going light on carbohydrates, which can make you feel sleepy and relaxed.

Opt for a power-packed protein salad. Try tuna or strips of lean chicken with low-fat yoghurt and a pinch of curry powder. Serve with a huge plate of salad made from whatever takes your fancy - spinach, chopped red and yellow peppers, spring onion, celery and grated carrot, for example.

Foods rich in the natural chemical acetylcholine can also boost memory and performance. Try a Spanish omelette, a peanut butter sandwich or a tuna salad. Make sure the foods you eat at lunchtime are low-GI to keep you at peak performance and help you avoid a late-afternoon slump. Opt for slow-release grains, pulses, nuts and low-sugar meals.



Feed your hair

If your hair is dull, dry and brittle, the solution could be on your plate. There are foods you can eat to make it look healthy. Hair is made up of the protein keratin, so be sure to include protein-rich foods.

Protein-rich foods include lean meats (chicken breast, turkey), fish (salmon, tuna), eggs, dairy (Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese), and plant-based sources like tofu, lentils and nuts. Experts suggest taking vitamins B, C, and E, selenium and zinc in addition to high protein foods, especially if you are a vegetarian. **P**

“
Monthly Mantra
Great things never come from comfort zones.
Neil Strauss, American author and journalist
”

argues, the single most effective vehicle for women who are on a journey to financial independence.

"It has been tried and tested, and it will be around for the longest time," she says.

Laying the foundation for generations

The theme of this issue is at the very heart of why Wahogo does what she does. She understands, deeply, that property is not merely a financial asset. It is security. It is the difference between a family that weathers a job loss or a health crisis and one that is crippled by it.

"No one on this planet does not require a roof over their head," she says, adding, "As a mother, as a parent, you need to ensure that your kids have a place to call home."

She is equally clear-eyed about barriers such as fear, misinformation on social media, and the damaging habit of borrowing to fund expenses rather than assets. Her advice to mothers is to start small, start now, and do not stop.

"You won't wake up one day in a high-rise apartment in Westlands," she says with a smile, "those people started small."

She points to her own journey as proof that consistency, not a windfall, is the engine of generational wealth.

Looking ahead, Wahogo is bullish on Kenya's property market and on the women shaping it. She envisions a Kenya where mothers own at least one asset in their name, a short-term goal that education and access can make real.

"When a woman is empowered in society, a lot of other people are empowered," she says.

Her final word to every mother reading this? "Block your fear and start." Three generations from now, a family will trace their security back to that decision. **P**

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Thought of the Month

We won't be distracted by comparison if we're captivated by purpose.

Bob Goff, American lawyer and author

”



BLOCK YOUR FEAR AND START

Sarah Wahogo's advice to mothers on property and Saccos

Sarah Wahogo didn't grow up in a home where wealth was discussed. By her own admission, money, property, and investments weren't part of the conversation in her household. "The only thing I saw my mum put a lot of interest in was education," she recalls.

And yet today, Wahogo is the CEO of Username Properties and Username Sacco, a brand built over 13 years into one of Kenya's most recognisable names in real estate investment, and one of the top ten women CEOs in Kenya's property sector.

Her story is a masterclass in what happens when lived experience replaces inherited wisdom. "I got to learn through experience," she says, adding, "Once I graduated and learned about the industry, that is when I understood that investments are critical."

What began with modest contributions of Ksh 500 into a Sacco has grown into a commitment to making property ownership accessible, particularly for women.

Power of a cooperative model

For Wahogo, the cooperative investment model is a lifeline. She describes her relationship with Saccos as nothing short of romantic.

"Everything I have accomplished today was through Saccos," she says, adding, "Were it not for them, I would not have any property today."

Her passion is rooted in a practical reality she sees play out daily. For example, a middle-class woman (a teacher, a nurse, a small business owner) faces competing financial priorities that make individual saving for property impossible. The Sacco model pools resources, giving members access to a larger capital base than they could ever accumulate alone. It is, she



FROM GHETTO TO GLORY

The Untold Story of John CW and Rev. Eva CW

John CW and Rev. Eva CW built a church, a foundation, a movement and a family. Here, for the first time, they talk to SAMUEL OWINO about what that looks like from the inside.

There is a red Mercedes in the story. There is gospel music playing from the speakers, a young woman walking to town with twenty shillings in her pocket, and a man behind the wheel who already knew, or says he knew, exactly what he was looking at.

The details, depending on who is telling them, change slightly. But the feeling at the centre of it does not. Two people, both confused by their own admission, both moving toward something they could not yet name, finding each other on an ordinary road in Nairobi. What came before a church in Kenol, a television station, a foundation, the women's movement, three children, this cover, was not, it seems, planned. It arrived slowly, then all at once.

John CW and Rev. Eva CW sit across from me on a beautiful evening. They laugh often, finish each other's sentences, and speak with the certainty of people who have survived enough to stop pretending to be composed. He is measured and deliberate. She talks as if she wants to make sure you feel it and not just hear it.

They are this month's cover couple, for our Celebrating Generations Mother's Day issue. But before we got to the legacy, faith, and the next generation, I wanted to know the small things. The private things. Who they are when the congregation has gone home.

The beginning...

Ask John about the Mercedes story, and he adjusts the record immediately, with a grin suggesting that he has been waiting for the chance.

"It wasn't the gospel music that made her accept the lift," he says. "It was my handsomeness," he adds.

He laughs. Eva does not correct him. Yet.

The fuller version, the one he tells with more texture, is that he was not actually supposed to be driving that day. He had been a matatu tout, then a driver, then at this time dog feeder for a city tycoon. He says without embarrassment. On the day in question, the regular driver was absent, so he stepped in. He dropped his boss, and on the return, somewhere between one errand and another, he saw her.

"I saw one confused girl," he says laughing, and continues, "And I was a more confused man. I thought we could help each other in that confusion."

Eva's version begins differently. She was living in the ghetto and on that particular day, as she usually did, was going to serve at a church in town. She was not yet born again. She had twenty shillings. Enough for transport one way.

"This man hooted at me from a nice red car," she says, adding, "And I thought, why would this person in such a car be interested in me? This was also the time when there were stories of girls being abducted through lifts."

She accepted the ride because of the gospel music. And because of the ten shillings she would save on fare. Practical, even then.

He did not ask for her contact that day. He did not even, she says, actually tell her she would be his wife, not then. That came later, at a funeral.

The story of their friend Juliana is told in a sombre mood. She had fallen ill. Eva had gone looking for John's contact, found his number, and reached out. They planned to visit together the next morning. That evening, Juliana's brother called. She was gone.

"At the funeral," Eva says, "my husband walked up to me as I was about to leave and told me that I am his wife. It shook me that he would declare that at a funeral."

He came back Saturday to Eva's home with a ring. Three weeks later, they were married.

"People thought I was pregnant," Eva says, laughing. "Because why else would you get married in three weeks?" she asks.

Neither family was entirely thrilled. John shrugs at this, saying, "The only condition that would have stopped it was if she were not comfortable." She was comfortable. They got married.

Family and parenting...

They have three children. The eldest is named Zion. John talks about fatherhood with precision, and then with feeling underneath it. He says parenthood taught him dependence.

"My children depend on me the same way I have learnt to depend on God. If God provides for the birds of the air, why should I worry?" he says.

Eva's lesson came from a harder place. She speaks about a season they spent in what she calls the wilderness (somewhere in Ukambani) when food was scarce and one meal a day was the norm. Young Zion would want bread, or a banana. Small things. Things that cost money they didn't have. And he would not complain.

"He wasn't complaining," she says, almost to herself, then adds, "That taught me something."

On the question of what they refuse to negotiate on as parents, the answers split. Eva is clear that the knowledge of Christ is non-negotiable. What their children watch, where they go, how it all connects. John agrees on that, but his personal non-negotiable is discipline, and he admits freely that this is where they do not always agree.

"Our kids find haven in their mother," he says, adding, "So we might not always agree on how to discipline them."



He also says, "I want them to know that they do not deserve the lifestyle they enjoy. Even a street kid does not deserve to be on the street. What they have is a privilege."

His own childhood informs this directly. His parents separated when he was young. Three siblings went with the mother, three with the father. He did not meet his father until he was ten, the same age he had his first slice of pizza, a detail he notes with a dry smile.

At fifteen, after a fight with his father over a curfew he had broken returning from a music video shoot, he was sent away. He moved in with his brother. He started as a matatu conductor and later became a driver.

"That has informed my parenting in a good way and a bad way," he says. "In a bad way, in that I am someone who can spend an entire day alone. In a good way, in that I will never fight my child. And I will never leave my child on the street at fifteen," he affirms.

The ministry and what it costs...

Share the Love Centre in Kenol has been running for over thirteen years. It has a television station. It has members across continents. It has a financial literacy programme whose reach surprises people who expect a Murang'a church to stay small.

Eva says she saw the vision before she could afford to believe it. In the early days, John wanted to hold the first discipleship sessions at an expensive hotel. They could not afford it. Regardless, she told him it was a great idea.

"I do not know where I got the courage to agree and support what I could not see," she says, adding, "But I supported it anyway. Imagine if I had not."

The church's stance on seed-sowing theology is one of the things that sets it apart. Eva argues, "We are living in a time where religion has been twisted. If you need this breakthrough, you must give this sum. But what about the poor? Does it mean they will never be blessed?"

She traces her conviction to scripture. She says, "There is nowhere I have heard the money aspect. Even the bleeding woman only needed to touch Jesus' cloak. She did not pay."

John's financial literacy classes come from the same place, but land differently. This is not prosperity gospel dressed differently. He is specific that "the Bible says the person who does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. I was recently handling a divorce case that was due to resources. Money is not evil. Being ignorant of it is the problem."

He has never told his congregation to sow into a basket. He does not intend to start.

Wolap, and the women nobody sees...

Eva did not plan to become the person women call when they cannot call anyone else. It happened through a door she walked through because she felt she had to.

Wolap (Women of Love and Prayer) was born, she says, to combat the religious mind that keeps women silent in spaces that should protect them. She had watched

women arrive at church week after week, carrying things no prayer alone could lift. Gender-based violence, miscarriages, they kept blaming on spiritual warfare while ignoring the physical causes, marriages held together by shame and theology misread.

"The church does not have programmes to fully address these problems," she says carefully. "There is a lack of civic education. Women are told to run to God, and they should, but they are also living in a society governed by laws that do not allow GBV. These two things can coexist," she explains.

Wolap was built on five pillars she identified as gaps: leadership, parenting, marriage, ministry, and the marketplace. It has become, in the years since, a community of women who had been holding their breath, finally exhaling.

On her mother, there is one thing she admits. A habit she swore she would never inherit. "My mother has a heart for people. She kept bringing people into our home, and some of them ended up hurting her. I told myself I would help people, but from a distance. Never into my home," she says, then pauses to add, "I ended up marrying a people person, and I spent years praying to God to make me more like him."

On marriage...

The couple has built something, together, that is larger than either of them. There are days, surely, when the weight of it is too much. When one person is carrying more than the other.

John thinks for a moment. "Our vision is in the same field. It is different when one

person is a doctor and the other a lawyer. Given that we are always around each other, doing more or less the same thing, it is hard to drift. I do not say it is easy. But it is easier than other dynamics," he explains.

Eva says, what John does that holds the family together is simpler than most people would expect. "Being there. In spite of whatever he does, he is still connected to this family. There is a way a person can be busy and still make sure there is no negligence. He might be away. But his presence is felt," she says of her husband.

She adds something else, "He is faithful. Faithful in the sense that he has faith that everything will be well. Even when he does not know how to get out of a situation, he has faith."

The most ordinary, private thing they treasure turns out to be this: "We have learned to embrace humility. We grew up in the ghetto, and that mindset has never left us. Some people see us somewhere and are surprised. It is tough on our protocol as well," she says with a smile and so does John.

On the next generation...

Neither of them speaks about legacy the way people in ministry sometimes do, as a monument, as a project, as something to be built and maintained. They speak about it with hope, a little uncertainty, and a lot of love as parents do.

If their children grew up and chose a path with nothing to do with church or ministry, would their lives still be a success? Eva wants her children to become whatever God calls them to be, an artist, if that's the calling, as long as they carry their faith with them into whatever life they build.

John is more candid about his own desires. He would want them in ministry, yes, though not necessarily behind a pulpit. But he holds that one should want loosely, knowing it isn't ultimately his to decide. The most he believes he can do is shape a home where God's will has room to move and then trust what grows there.

We close by asking John to finish, looking at his wife. "The mother she is has shown me..." he looks at her. He does not rush. "...that strong women exist. Committed women and mothers exist, and the relationship between a mother and a child can truly work. When I look at her, she has made me realise that motherhood is a blessing, because of the way she treats her children."

Eva looks at the table shyly. Then back at him. She does not say anything. She does not have to. **P**



TEN DIAGNOSES, ONE LIFE

Wendy Gikono's Unthinkable Survival



The first thing you notice about Wendy Gikono is her laughter. Loud, unguarded, and completely at odds with a medical file that follows her everywhere: ten diagnoses, seven of them autoimmune and three of them rare. Wendy has been living with this reality for nearly two decades, and she will be the first to tell you that it has not broken her, even though it is hard.

By Samuel Owino

Her story has resonated with thousands across the continent. Not because it is a story about suffering, though there has been plenty of that, but because it is a story about what it means to refuse to be defined by it.

A teenager losing her body...

Wendy grew up in Nairobi, a bright and driven young woman who attended Pangani Girls High School with ambitions of studying law. She was fourteen when her body began sending signals she could not explain: swollen joints, pains through her limbs, and heavy exhaustion. Doctors prescribed anti-inflammatory medication

and sent her home. Then her hair began falling out. Then came crutches.

For years, her medical records told the wrong story. She was treated for rheumatoid arthritis. She spent more months in the hospital than in classrooms, and still no one could say with certainty what was wrong. The uncertainty, she says, was its own particular cruelty, not just for her, but for her family, who watched, waited and drove her to appointments without answers.

The turning point came when her father's friend referred the family to a rheumatologist who, after taking a thorough medical history and running targeted tests, finally diagnosed her with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), more commonly known simply as lupus.

One diagnosis becomes ten...

Lupus, as many people living with it discover, rarely travels alone. It is a systemic autoimmune disease, meaning the immune system, instead of protecting the body, turns on it, and it frequently overlaps with other conditions. In Wendy's case, what started as a lupus diagnosis expanded into something her doctors call Mixed Connective Tissue Disease (MCTD): a complex cluster of autoimmune conditions that overlap and compound one another.

Today, Wendy's full diagnosis is like a medical textbook. She has been diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, antiphospholipid antibody syndrome, polymyositis, peripheral neuropathy, Raynaud's phenomenon, retinal vasculitis, chronic inflammatory demyelinating myelopathy, and hemiplegic migraines. Ten conditions. Each with its own symptoms, its own medications, its own bad days. She has been managing all of them simultaneously for the better part of her adult life.

She has also had to do much of this while managing the social dimensions of invisible illness. Fatigue that looks like laziness. Cognitive fog that made her fear a law career would be unsustainable. She opted to pivot to accounting at university, studying at both Strathmore University and KCA University. This symbolised a strategic awareness and a recalibration of plans.

No one warns you...

Chronic illness has a way of reaching into every corner of a life, and Wendy has not

shied away from naming those corners. The hair loss from lupus, visible weight changes from steroids, and the self-esteem that took a beating when her body became a stranger to her. She has spoken about all of it publicly, with remarkable candour. In a culture where illness is associated with shame or weakness, her honesty is its own form of courage.

The financial toll is equally real. Managing ten conditions requires consistent access to specialist care, a pharmacy's worth of medications, and the kind of stability that an unpredictable body doesn't provide.

People across the lupus community have lost jobs because of sudden flare-ups, been asked to leave workplaces, and found relationships strained or ended by the demands of illness. Wendy is aware of this, and although she is not looking to be in any romantic relationships, she has not fully closed that door.

One of the most personal decisions she has shared publicly is her choice not to have children. In an African context where motherhood is treated as an inevitability, Wendy's openness about this has been revolutionary.

She has spoken about weighing the realities of her health, the risks her conditions could pose to a pregnancy, and the fear of passing on autoimmune disease to a child. It is a decision she speaks about with the authority of someone who thought it through fully.

Turning a wound into a window...

What sets Wendy apart is what she has chosen to do with the survival. Through her *podcast Ajedaddy*, and her Instagram platform, she has built a steady, compassionate voice in the chronic illness advocacy space. She speaks about what these conditions actually feel like from the inside, correcting misconceptions, explaining what phrases like "I'm tired" really mean when they come from someone with fibromyalgia, and helping people who have recently received autoimmune diagnoses to feel less alone.

Her advocacy is particularly important in an African context, where autoimmune diseases remain significantly underdiagnosed and poorly understood. Lupus, for instance, disproportionately affects women of African descent, yet many patients wait years, as Wendy did, before receiving an accurate diagnosis.



Healthcare workers may not recognise the symptoms. Families may not know how to respond. Communities may not know the language.

Wendy is trying to change that, one post, one conversation, one public appearance at a time.

What her demeanour says about her...

Wendy's demeanour is worth examining. It is not the demeanour of someone who has made peace with pain by pretending it does not exist. It is not performed positivity. Those who have followed Wendy's journey know she is candid about the hard days, the hospital stays, and the moments when the body wins the argument.

It is, rather, the smile of someone who has decided that her life is worth more than her diagnoses. That she is a person first, and then a patient. The years she has lived with these conditions have also been years in which she studied, built friendships, fell in love, advocated, created, and mattered.

The illness is just a part of her story.

She has been a chronic illness warrior, by her own description, since 2007. That is nearly two decades of early mornings with pain, of pill organisers and specialist appointments, of explaining herself to people who cannot see what is wrong. Yet, here she is speaking, laughing, and gently insisting that those of us who are healthy enough to take a single uncomplicated morning for granted do not waste it.

For parents, partners, and family members walking alongside someone with chronic illness, Wendie's message is to show up, learn the language of their condition, and resist the urge to interpret their bad days as weakness. For those living with illness themselves, she is proof that survival and joy are not mutually exclusive. One can hold a diagnosis in one hand, and a life fully lived in the other. And that sometimes, the most radical thing a sick person can do is simply refuse to stop smiling. **P**



From a Tree to a Hope-Giving Home:

The Story of AIC Mutiini in Maai Mahiu

In the aftermath of the post-election violence in 2008, thousands of families were displaced across Kenya. Many found themselves in unfamiliar places, trying to rebuild lives interrupted by fear, loss and uncertainty. Among those who travelled to Maai Mahiu at the time was Rev John Karanja. He intended to briefly check on relatives believed to have been relocated there and return home in Kijabe. What he did not know was that the journey would change not only his life, but also the lives of an entire community as he narrated to
NJAMBI GAITHO.

He arrived expecting a brief visit. Instead, he encountered people carrying heavy stories, families separated, homes lost, livelihoods

disrupted. Conversations lingered. Faces stayed with him. And when he left, he realised he could not simply move on.

“I was a young man then. I wasn’t even a pastor,” he recalls. “But after speaking to a

few people, my heart became heavy. I felt I needed to come back,” he adds.

And so he did. The following day, after work, he walked from Kijabe to Maai Mahiu just to speak to more families. It was not a one-time decision. It became a habit. Every day, he returned, listening, praying and encouraging. Slowly, relationships formed. Trust grew. A community began to take shape, not around buildings or programmes, but around presence.

The morning ParentsAfrica team visited AIC Mutiini Church, the sun was already unforgiving, even though it was only 8 a.m. The church is located in an area known as Governor in Maai Mahiu, a settlement that formed as displaced families began piecing their lives together. The compound did not feel like a typical church setting. It felt alive, open, and deeply rooted in community.

At the entrance, elderly men and women sat in small circles, chatting comfortably. Some greeted us warmly. Others watched curiously as children played nearby, chasing one another and laughing freely. We were told that by midday, the children would return in larger numbers, it would be time for lunch. For many of them, this is where they get their most reliable meal of the day.

We were then led into a classroom. Inside, elderly learners sat quietly at desks, each absorbed in their work. Books lay open. Pencils moved slowly across exercise books. Dictionaries were placed carefully beside them. Some learners whispered as they attempted pronunciation. Others counted softly while solving math problems, most in their 70s and 80s.

There was something deeply moving about the determination in that room. Wrinkled hands carefully tracing letters. Eyes narrowing to read small print. Moments of quiet celebration when someone got an answer right. It was not just a classroom, it was a space where dignity was being restored, one lesson at a time.

From there, we moved to another room where women sat at sewing machines. Colourful fabrics were spread across tables. Some stitched dresses, others made bags. Conversations flowed easily as the machines hummed. Laughter filled the space. It was both a learning centre and an income-generating opportunity, a place where skills translated into empowerment.

A narrow staircase led us upstairs to a modest but well-organised library. Shelves lined with school textbooks, children's storybooks, revision materials and novels.

We were told the library is open to the community, allowing both children and adults to read freely. It was clear that this space had grown intentionally, responding to needs as they emerged.

But long before the classrooms, sewing machines and library, there was only a tree.

"When we started, we didn't have a building," Rev Karanja explains. "After visiting people door-to-door, it became difficult to keep meeting everyone separately. There was only one tree in the area, so we agreed to meet there. People would say, 'Let's meet at Mutini,' which means tree in Kikuyu," he recalls.

That tree became their gathering place. They met there to pray, encourage one another and share their struggles. The fellowship grew. People began to find comfort in coming together. In time, they started referring to Rev Karanja as pastor, a title he initially resisted.

"I kept telling them I wasn't a pastor," he says with a smile. "But eventually, I accepted the call and joined Bible school. It wasn't easy balancing work, school, ministry and family, but God made it possible," he adds.

The early days were not without challenges. At one point, the landowner decided to cut down the tree and sell it for charcoal. The news threatened to dismantle the only space the community had. Through interventions and support from well-wishers, the congregation managed to purchase the land. That moment secured not just their meeting point, but their future.

From that point, growth became inevitable. The fellowship evolved into a church. But even as the spiritual community strengthened, other needs became visible.

"Many elderly people were sleeping hungry," Rev Karanja recalls. "I felt in my heart that we should at least give them lunch. So we started feeding them," he adds.

What began as a small gesture quickly expanded. Children started joining the

elderly during lunchtime. The feeding programme grew into a daily routine, bringing together different generations. The compound became a place not only for prayer, but for nourishment and companionship.

Later, another need emerged. Many of the elderly had never attended school. Some could not read. Others could not write their names. Basic tasks such as using a phone or reading instructions were difficult.

"That is when we decided to start adult classes. We wanted them to gain basic knowledge and independence," he explains.

Inside the classroom, Alice, a learner in her 60s, shares her story with quiet pride.

"I have been studying for six months now, English, Kiswahili and Mathematics," she says. "I am still learning, but I can now help my children and grandchildren with homework. I can use my phone properly. I can withdraw money by myself," she adds.

Her words reflect more than academic progress. They speak of confidence regained, of barriers slowly breaking.

Nearby, Mzee Joseph Mwangi, in his 80s, offers to recite a Swahili memory verse they learned in class. He speaks carefully, but confidently. The room brightens with smiles. In that moment, it becomes clear that learning has no age limit. It restores dignity, voice and independence.

The adult learning programme is sustained largely through goodwill and dedication. Mwalimu Jotham Ng'ang'a, the volunteer teacher, has been teaching since the school opened in 2016. He admits teaching adults is not easy. Lessons must be repeated.

Patience is essential. Progress can be slow. Yet he shows up every day, unpaid.

"What keeps me going is their determination. They never give up and are eager to learn," he says.

Beyond the classroom, the sewing centre continues to empower women with practical skills. The library encourages a culture of reading. The feeding programme ensures no one leaves hungry. The church continues to serve as a spiritual anchor.

Together, these initiatives form a holistic support system, addressing emotional, educational and physical needs.

Walking through the compound, one senses a rhythm of care. Elderly learners reviewing their notes. Children arriving for lunch. Women measuring fabric. Books waiting to be borrowed. Conversations unfolding under the mutini shade. It is a space where everyone belongs.

What makes AIC Mutini remarkable is not just the programmes, but how organically they grew. Nothing was rushed. Each initiative emerged from observing a need, hunger, loneliness, illiteracy, unemployment and responding with compassion.

Rev Karanja did not arrive with a grand plan. He came to check on relatives. He stayed to listen. And in listening, he discovered purpose.

Today, the tree that once sheltered prayer meetings stands as a symbol of beginnings. Around it, a thriving community continues to grow. What started with a handful of displaced families has become a lifeline for many, elderly learners rediscovering education, women gaining skills, children receiving meals, and a community rebuilding together.

The story of AIC Mutini is a reminder that transformation often begins as a single ripple in a vast pond. One visit. One conversation. One act of care. From there, hope takes root, and when nurtured, it grows into something far bigger than anyone imagined. 



Monthly Blessing

*If the Son makes you free, you will be truly free.
John 8:36*

Trying to make it to heaven on our own goodness is like trying to get to the moon on a moon beam; nice idea, but try it and see what happens. Listen. Quit trying to quench your own guilt. You can't do it. There's no way. Not with a bottle of whiskey or perfect Sunday school attendance. Sorry, I don't care how bad you are. You can't be bad enough to forget it. And I don't care how good you are. You can't be good enough to overcome it. You need a Saviour.

Max Lucado





TERESA NJOROGE:

HELPING WOMEN REBUILD AFTER INCARCERATION

A conversation with Teresa Njoroge, Founder and CEO of Clean Start Africa, on dignity, second chances, and the generational work of helping women and families rebuild after incarceration, as reported by MUINDE BRIAN.

We often imagine prison as a place that holds one person, as though incarceration begins and ends with the body behind bars. But when the person imprisoned is a mother, especially one who held a family together, the sentence rarely belongs to her alone. It creeps into the lives of her children, into the uncertainty of her home, and into the silence of a family trying to survive around an absence they did not choose. This is one of the truths Teresa Njoroge has come to understand deeply.

Teresa is the Founder and CEO of *Clean Start Africa*, a social enterprise that works with women, youth, and children impacted by the criminal justice system. A former banker, she founded *Clean Start Africa* after her own experience of wrongful imprisonment, using her lived experience to advocate for dignity, reintegration, second chances, and justice reform.

Over the years, that work has grown beyond a personal story into a recognised movement. Teresa has been named among the Top 50 African Business Heroes by the Jack Ma Foundation, received the Ginetta

Sagan Award from Amnesty International USA, been honoured as a UN SDG WE Empower Awardee for Sub-Saharan Africa, and received Kenya's Head of State Commendation Gender Trailblazer Award. But to describe her through accolades alone would be to miss the deeper story.

Clean Start Africa did not begin as a neat idea on paper. It was born from disruption, injustice, and the difficult realisation that what happened to her was connected to a much wider wound.

Before prison, Teresa's life had been shaped by discipline, faith, family values, and a strong belief that doing the right thing would lead to the right outcome. Her father had been a career banker, and she followed that path with focus, building a career she loved and imagining a future defined by growth and possibility. In her twenties, life felt like evidence that hard work and integrity paid off.

Then everything changed. Her arrest, court process, public shame, and eventual imprisonment not only took away her freedom. They unsettled her understanding of the world. Her name, reputation, career, and trust in

institutions were all shaken. What made the experience even more painful was the contradiction at its heart: she had believed in systems meant to protect justice, only to find herself wounded by them.

She got into prison with her young daughter. And it is here, in that detail, that Teresa's story becomes something more than a story of injustice. To be a mother in that season, stripped of freedom, of name, of career, and to still find in motherhood a reason to look forward, is one of the most quietly heroic acts.

"My name was gone. My reputation was gone. What I believed about this country had been eroded. But becoming a mother made me think beyond myself," she says.

It made her begin asking what kind of world her child would inherit. That question slowly shifted her focus from personal survival to collective responsibility.

Teresa began to notice that her story was not the norm. She had education, family support, and a professional background. Many of the women around her did not. They were poor, marginalised, and often failed by other systems long before they reached the criminal justice system. Women's lives had been pushed to the margins: if justice is meant to be fair, why did poverty seem to determine who was punished most severely?

Clean Start Africa grew from that question.

The organisation's work is rooted in the belief that people deserve more than punishment. They deserve a real chance to rebuild. For Teresa, those who have served their time deserve exactly that: a clean start. A second chance that is not charity but justice.

That belief now carries measurable weight. Through its programmes, *Clean Start Africa* has touched more than 10,000 lives, helped unlock 771 futures through graduates stepping into their potential, created 4,000 pathways to economic self-sufficiency, supported more than 973 hearts through emotional well-being work, and built 100 chapters across the country. Behind those numbers are women trying to find their way back into life, and communities slowly learning that restoration is not a soft idea, but a practical one.

But for women leaving prison, that rebuilding is rarely simple. They return home carrying trauma, stigma, broken relationships, and the urgent burden of survival. Many do not have the luxury of healing first. They must immediately find food, shelter, school fees, clothing, and safety for children who may themselves have been neglected, abused, or displaced in their absence.

"When we incarcerate a woman," Teresa says, "we have also taken her children, her family, and her community to prison with her."

That line carries the weight of her work. For Teresa, incarceration's damage is generational. When a mother is imprisoned, the absence is felt by children who may lose protection, stability, education, and daily care. Families reorganise around the wound. Communities absorb the silence. And when she returns, she is often expected to rebuild what was broken while still carrying the trauma of what she has survived.

This is why rebuilding, in Teresa's world, cannot begin and end with release. Freedom from prison does not automatically mean freedom from stigma, poverty, trauma, or rejection. A woman may walk out and still have nowhere to sleep, no income to feed her children, no school fees to return them to class, and no community ready to receive her without suspicion.

So *Clean Start Africa's* work begins with the most immediate forms of restoration. A roof over one's head. Food on the table. Clothing and dignity items. A safe place for children. A way to begin earning again. These may sound like basic needs, but for a woman returning from prison, they are often the first signs that life has not completely closed its doors.

Then comes the slower work. Rebuilding also means helping a woman reconnect with her children, many of whom may have experienced their own hidden sentences in her absence. Some may have dropped out of school. Some may have been neglected, abused, or forced to mature too quickly. Some may carry confusion, anger, shame, or silence. Reintegration, then, is not simply about a woman going home. It is about repairing the relationships that incarceration strained, interrupted, or broke.

It is also about helping communities unlearn suspicion. Teresa describes *Clean Start Africa's* work as restorative and redemptive because, as it not only empowers the woman, it also prepares the people around her to see her differently. Her children need to know she is still their mother. Her family needs to understand that support is not indulgence. Her community needs to recognise that a second chance is not weakness, but wisdom.

"Second chances are one of the best investments we can make to reconcile and rebuild our communities," she says, adding, "These women are part of our families, part of our society, and part of us."

Through rehabilitation, re-entry support, economic empowerment, dignity restoration, advocacy, and policy reform, *Clean Start Africa* helps women return not just to society, but to themselves. Teresa speaks of dignity as something rebuilt through work, community, livelihood, belonging, and the simple but powerful assurance that one's life is not over.

Clean Start Africa's work is carried through three pillars: dignified rehabilitation, re-entry pathways, and systems change. In practice, that means programmes that support women while still incarcerated, pathways that help them return to society, and advocacy that asks the justice system to rethink the conditions that keep poverty and incarceration tied together.

"It is very unfair that we take the freedom of a person, and then we also go for their dignity and esteem, as if freedom was not enough," she says.

That rebuilding can be a woman learning tailoring, masonry, hair and beauty, or how to make eco-friendly briquettes. It can be joining a support group with other women who understand the weight of re-entry. It could be receiving counselling, reconnecting with faith, finding employment, starting a small business, or simply being met at the prison gate by people who do not see her as disposable.

And somewhere in that process, something begins to return. Not all at once. Not dramatically. But slowly, through routine, through skill, through the ability to provide, through being trusted again, through being called by one's name instead of one's past.

Her leadership is guided by integrity, a value she says has remained constant from childhood, through incarceration, and into the work she now leads. But her understanding of leadership has changed. In the corporate world, leadership once felt individual, tied to personal achievement and being at the front. In the social justice space, leadership has become service.

"Leadership is service," she says, adding, "You lead to serve your team, to build your team, and to support them to succeed."

That may be what makes Teresa's story heroic, in the quieter and more demanding sense. She not only survived what happened to her but turned towards the place of pain and began building a pathway for others to leave it with dignity.

Clean Start Africa is not simply helping women come home from prison. It is helping mothers, children, families, and communities recover from the hidden sentences they have also served.

Perhaps that is the truest definition of legacy: not what you build when the conditions are right, but what you refuse to stop building when they are not. Teresa Njoroge did not wait for the world to restore her dignity. She built an organisation to restore it for others, and in doing so, she has become exactly the kind of matriarch this column was made to honour. **P**



Science Explains Why Grandma Was Right

By Faith Adhiambo

In many African households, food advice often comes with a firm tone: “Eat your greens, and you’ll be strong.” For years, such statements were accepted without question and rooted in trust rather than explanation. Today’s parents, however, are raising children in a world filled with nutritional labels, diet trends and conflicting health advice. The question is no longer just what to eat, but why.

Eating your greens is more than just a saying

Leafy vegetables like *sukumawiki*, *managu* and *terere* have always been staples in Kenyan meals. Traditionally, they were valued for generating blood and keeping the body strong. Many children grew up being told that greens would help them avoid health issues and grow well.

Today, science confirms that these vegetables are rich in iron, folate, calcium and antioxidants; essential nutrients for preventing anaemia, boosting immunity and supporting brain development. For growing children and even breastfeeding mothers, these nutrients are critical.

What was once explained through cultural belief is now backed by science. The wisdom was always there.

Understand energy

Meals like *ugali*, *githeri*, arrow roots and sweet potatoes were often referred to as the heavy meals that keep you full and energised throughout the day.

While the term may sound outdated, the concept aligns perfectly with the modern understanding of complex carbohydrates.

These foods release energy slowly, helping children stay active, focused and satisfied for longer periods. Unlike sugary snacks and processed foods that cause quick energy spikes followed by crashes, traditional staples provide steady fuel.

For school-going children, this kind of sustained energy is essential not just for physical activity, but also for concentration and learning in class.

Food as medicine

Long before supplements and vitamins filled supermarket shelves, Kenyan homes relied on food as medicine. Ginger was used for colds and flu, garlic for immunity and fermented porridge for digestion and strength.

Modern science now supports many of these practices. Ginger has anti-inflammatory and anti-nausea properties, garlic supports heart health and immunity, and fermented foods improve gut health by introducing beneficial bacteria.

Gut health, in particular, is now a major focus in nutrition science, linked not only to digestion but also to immunity and mental well-being. This makes traditional foods like fermented *uji* incredibly valuable in today’s diets, especially for young children and recovering mothers.

Where parenting gets complicated

Despite this rich foundation, today’s parents are navigating a very different food environment. Fast foods, processed snacks and sugary drinks are more accessible than ever. At the same time, social media is filled with global diet trends; detox cleanses and clean eating that may not always be suitable for children or even practical for our households.

In trying to follow these trends, families are unknowingly moving away from simple, nourishing meals that have sustained generations.

There is also growing pressure to view traditional foods as basic or less desirable compared to Western diets, yet nutritionally, many traditional meals are more balanced and wholesome.

Wisdom with awareness

The solution is not to choose between tradition and science but to combine them.

Parents can continue preparing traditional meals while applying modern nutritional knowledge. This could mean using less oil, avoiding overcooking vegetables to preserve nutrients and adding more variety to meals. Including proteins such as eggs, milk, fish, or legumes can further strengthen a child’s diet.

It also means being intentional, understanding portion sizes, limiting processed foods and ensuring fruits are part of everyday meals.

Equally important is involving children in food preparation and teaching them to appreciate home-cooked meals. When children understand the value of what they eat, they are more likely to develop healthy habits that last a lifetime.

Reclaiming confidence in our food

Perhaps the biggest value parents need today is confidence. Confidence that traditional Kenyan foods are not outdated but deeply nourishing and relevant. Confidence that you do not need expensive or imported foods to raise healthy children.

Grandma may not have known the word antioxidants, but she understood nourishment. She understood balance. She understood care.

And now, science agrees with her. **P**

How She Honours Her Style DNA

By Esther Muna, Style Consultant

Beyond the fabric and fit, she understands that her presence is an echo of the women who shaped her. This matriarch is not defined by age, status, or title, but by her presence. She is grounded yet evolving, soft yet structured, ambitious yet deeply attuned to her wellbeing. Her style is a language that speaks of legacy, intention, and self-respect.

At the heart of her wardrobe is a concept I like to call style DNA. This is the thread connecting her to the women who came before her: mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, whose choices were shaped by culture and grace.

Perhaps a love for well-tailored garments, a preference for modest elegance, or a habit of always looking put-together even in simplicity. These inherited traits evolve because they can't just disappear. She refines them to suit her current world.

Professional and well

Today's woman requires a wardrobe that works as hard as she does, while still supporting her comfort and well-being. Pieces like tailored blazers, well-fitted trousers, and modest dresses remain essential. However, fabric choices such as cotton blends, soft knits, and lightweight wool allow ease of movement throughout the day.

Footwear follows the same philosophy. Rather than enduring discomfort, she opts for stylish low heels, elegant flats, or chic sneakers that suit her lifestyle. Confidence,

after all, is strongest when the body is supported.

Effortless grooming rituals

Grooming, in this context, is about consistency. A simple skincare routine, clean and styled hair, and minimal makeup create a polished everyday look.

She embraces a less-but-better approach, investing in quality staples over fleeting trends. A signature scent, a well-maintained handbag, and timeless accessories, like a classic watch.

Style as self-care

One of the most important things she does is viewing style as part of a wellness routine. Dressing well is not about impressing others; it is about feeling aligned and prepared. Taking time to groom and dress intentionally sets the tone for the day. It becomes an act of self-care; a reminder that she deserves the same attention she so often gives to others.

Essentially...

She is not chasing perfection nor trends. She is creating harmony. Harmony between responsibility and identity, tradition and modernity, style and ease. Her wardrobe tells a story of heritage, growth, and self-awareness.

While trends may come and go, her foundation remains rooted in timeless lessons passed down through generations. In embracing this balance, she honours where she comes from while confidently stepping into who she is becoming. **P**





Academic Writing Search to “I Do”: Muthoni & Njuguna’s Love Story

*Sometimes love begins in the most unexpected places. For Esther Muthoni, a 27-year-old teacher, and Manases Njuguna, 29, whose work spans several ventures, including academic writing, what started as a simple search for an opportunity in 2021 slowly unfolded into friendship, love, and ultimately marriage. Their journey, marked by patience, faith, and consistency, moved from online conversations to a heartfelt proposal, a traditional ruracio ceremony, and finally a beautiful wedding celebration. This is their love story as narrated to **NJAMBI GATHO**.*

Esther recalls that she was searching for an academic writing account on EssayPro when she first came across Manases.

At the time, she was focused on building her future and finding an opportunity that would help her grow financially and professionally.

"I was only looking for work and something meaningful to build for myself," she says. "I did not know that the same search would introduce me to the person I would eventually marry," she adds with a chuckle.

What began as a simple work-related interaction gradually evolved into regular conversations, then friendship, and later into something deeper.

Manases remembers noticing Esther's determination from the very beginning. "She was focused, hardworking, and intentional about her life. Our conversations were easy, and with time, I found myself looking forward to them," he says.

As they continued talking, they moved beyond work and began sharing about family, dreams, struggles, and personal goals. The more they spoke, the stronger their bond became. "It never felt rushed," Esther explains. "Friendship grew naturally, and love followed," she adds.

For Manases, the turning point came when he saw how Esther handled challenges. "She was resilient and never gave up, even when things were difficult. I admired her strength, loyalty, and kindness," he says.

Esther, on the other hand, was drawn to his consistency. "He was steady and dependable. He showed love through actions, not just words. I knew he was someone I could trust," she says.

The relationship reached a new milestone on 16th December 2024, when Manases proposed at Eagle Palace in Nakuru. The moment, Esther recalls, was emotional and deeply meaningful. "He reminded me of our journey and how far we had come. He then asked me to marry him. I felt peace and excitement at the same time," she says.

Manases admits he was nervous but certain. "It was a big moment, but I knew she was the one I wanted to spend my life with," he says.

A year later, their families came together for the traditional nuracio ceremony held

on 13th December 2025 in Karatina, Nyeri. The day marked an important cultural step, bringing both families together in celebration and unity.

"It was beautiful seeing our families connect and bless our union. It made everything feel even more real," Esther says.

Their love story culminated in a wedding held on 11th April 2026 in Nakuru, a day filled with joy, anticipation, and unforgettable memories. For Manases, the most memorable moment was seeing Esther walk down the aisle. "After all the planning and prayers, watching her walk towards me made everything real," he says.

Esther remembers feeling calm and overwhelmed with happiness. "Seeing him waiting there with love and pride in his eyes filled my heart with peace," she says.

Like many weddings, the day came with delays and last-minute changes, but the couple embraced every moment. "Instead of stressing, we laughed through it," Manases says. "It reminded us that perfection is not what matters, love does," Esther agrees, adding, "Those unexpected moments made the day more memorable."

Planning the wedding also strengthened their bond. They learned the importance of teamwork, communication, and protecting their peace. "We discovered that staying united mattered more than pleasing everyone else," Esther says, adding, "It prepared us for marriage."

Now married, they continue to discover new things about each other. "I have been surprised by how caring Esther is in the little everyday moments," Manases shares. Esther says she appreciates his calm and supportive nature. "He is patient, especially during challenging times. Marriage has shown us that love lives in small daily acts," she says.

Faith remains central to their union, alongside values of honesty, respect, loyalty, and communication. Looking ahead, they dream of building a stable home, growing spiritually, and raising a family rooted in strong values.

"We also want to travel, create memories, and remain best friends through every stage of life," Esther says.

Reflecting on their journey, both agree their love story began most unexpectedly. What started as a search for an academic writing opportunity turned into a

friendship, then love, and finally a lifelong commitment, proving that sometimes the most ordinary moments can lead to extraordinary beginnings. **P**



Lasting Sexual Intimacy is Grounded in Truth

By Adoyo Immaculate

For many couples, intimacy does not collapse overnight. It erodes. What begins as excitement gradually gives way to routine, then to obligation, and eventually, to coexistence. Somewhere along that path, the relationship stops being a place of rest and becomes something to manage.

In conversations around modern relationships, the idea of a wellness sanctuary has begun to surface, a relationship that offers peace, safety, and genuine connection beyond shared responsibilities. Yet, for many, that ideal remains distant.

According to Maurice Matheka, a sexologist with over two decades experience in human sexuality and relationships, the problem is not that couples lose connection, rather it is that many were never truly connected to begin with.

His work, which spans both in-person and virtual sessions, brings him into contact with individuals and couples navigating the complexities of intimacy, desire, and long-term partnership. Over time, certain patterns have become impossible to ignore.

Illusion of connection

A common assumption in relationships is that love naturally leads to compatibility, that once two people come together, connection will follow. In practice, this is not always the case. Compatibility is often assumed rather than examined, and over time, the gaps begin to show.

From Matheka's experience, many couples find themselves in relationships where alignment was never fully established. Being together, or even married, does not automatically translate into getting along.

In fact, he says, a significant number of long-term relationships are built on

mismatches that only become apparent with time.

In many instances, what holds couples together is not a genuine connection, but structure. Financial stability, social expectations, and the desire to build a family often take precedence in the early stages. While these factors can sustain a partnership in practical terms, they rarely nurture emotional or relational intimacy.

There is also a deeply ingrained tendency to romanticise relationships, creating an expectation that love alone is enough to sustain connection. In reality, many couples are bound more by duty than by genuine closeness. Friendship, which forms the basis of ease, understanding, and emotional safety, is often missing.

"A lot of what people believe about love is not real. Without that foundation, what remains is responsibility, a framework that can hold two people together, but cannot necessarily bring them closer," Matheka explains.

When duty replaces desire

Relationships shaped by obligation often lean toward the transactional. Partners slip into roles rather than expressing genuine connection. Parenting, finances, and daily responsibilities gradually take up more space, leaving little room for intimacy to breathe.

This gradual shift places responsibility at the centre of the relationship, where showing up for each other becomes routine rather than intentional. While these acts may sustain the structure of a partnership, they do not necessarily nurture connection.

"At some point, responsibility becomes the centre of how couples live," he says, noting that caring for children and meeting a partner's needs can easily become habitual, without translating into real emotional closeness.



It is within this space that the idea of a wellness sanctuary unravels. A relationship cannot serve as a place of restoration if it is built on pressure and performance. When actions are driven by obligation rather than desire, even the most meaningful gestures are like tasks.

This changes how partners speak to each other, how they show up, and how they experience intimacy itself.

For many couples, the instinct at this stage is to try to rekindle what once existed. Yet the assumption that connection can simply be restored overlooks a more complex reality. People evolve, and the version of a person one first connected with does not always remain the same over time.

Relationships often continue under the expectation that early compatibility will naturally endure, even as individuals grow in different directions. What feels like a loss of intimacy is, in some cases, the unmasking of a misalignment that was present from the beginning.

Resentment build-up

Sex is often treated as the centre of intimacy, yet from Matheka's perspective, the two are not interchangeable. Intimacy extends far beyond the physical. It is rooted in friendship, in the ability of partners to relate with ease, mutual respect, and a shared emotional understanding.

This foundation shapes how couples navigate everyday interactions, how they



open conversations about sexuality often leave this aspect of intimacy unexplored, particularly for women. As a result, what could be a space of connection and discovery is instead narrowed, misunderstood, or quietly neglected.

Where it all begins

At the core of many relational challenges lies an avoidance of truth. Conversations are softened, postponed, or replaced with half-answers that preserve comfort but erode clarity. This only creates relationships that function on assumptions rather than understanding.

This tendency is often reinforced by cultural and societal expectations that prioritise stability and appearance over honesty. In such spaces, authenticity becomes difficult to sustain, and connections thin out beneath the surface.

“If people simply told each other the truth, rather than half-truths, many of these issues would be clearer,” Matheka emphasises.

Honesty, however, is only part of the work. Building a wholesome relationship requires a change in how intimacy itself is understood. The idea of a wellness sanctuary is not rooted in perfection, but in presence, in creating a space where both individuals are seen, respected, and free to exist without performance.

For couples seeking to reconnect, the starting point is not always action, but reflection. This requires an honest look at what exists, rather than what is assumed to exist.

The more difficult question, as Matheka suggests, is whether that connection was ever truly there to begin with. It is a confronting thought, but an important one. Because intimacy cannot be rebuilt on illusion. It must be grounded in truth.

And perhaps that is where a wellness sanctuary begins, not in grand gestures or perfected routines, but in the deliberate work of understanding what exists between two people, and what never did. **P**

handle conflict, and how they remain connected even in moments of tension. Without it, intimacy feels hollow. What may appear as closeness on the surface often lacks the depth required to sustain a meaningful connection.

In such relationships, physical connection gradually goes from an expression of desire to an act of obligation. The sense of play and spontaneity fades, leaving behind a mechanical experience rather than a meaningful one.

From this point, resentment begins to take root, quietly and without immediate confrontation. Matheka notes that in many relationships, one partner consistently adjusts to maintain harmony, often at the expense of their own needs. What may appear as compromise slowly accumulates, forming an internal record of dissatisfaction.

Rather than erupting into conflict, this imbalance tends to surface in subtle ways. Emotional withdrawal, reduced effort, or detachment begins to define the relationship. When individuals feel unheard or unseen, they begin to seek fulfilment elsewhere, not necessarily as an act of betrayal, but as a response to unmet needs.

The absence of genuine intimacy, therefore, does not simply create distance, but lays the groundwork for an erosion of connection, one that unfolds gradually, often without being openly acknowledged.

Parenting and the complexity of desire

One of the most delicate times in long-term relationships is after children enter the picture. While parenting is often embraced as a shared purpose, it can reposition the relationship itself, placing the partnership in the background.

The focus moves toward caregiving, responsibility, and structure, sometimes at the expense of connection. In the process, partners begin to feel secondary within a dynamic that was once centred on the two of them. As that balance fades, so does the sense of intimacy that sustains the relationship.

“You cannot love your children and forget the person you had them with. The partnership came first,” Matheka points out.

At the same time, the role of sex within the relationship is often misunderstood. It is frequently treated as a measure of love, yet desire and emotional connection do not always operate in the same way. Physical intimacy exists on its own plane, shaped by attraction, curiosity, and engagement.

When this dimension is overlooked or minimised, the relationship loses an essential layer of connection. What remains may still function, but it lacks a certain depth, one that cannot be replaced by routine or responsibility alone.

Experiences of pleasure, too, are shaped by more than biology. Conditioning, limited awareness, and discomfort around

Share a Joke

Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere.

DR SERAH MUCHAI



Turning Motherhood into a Care Movement

Dr Serah Muchai is a counselling psychologist, academic, author and founder of Hope and Live Kenya. Once a university dean, her life's most defining work has unfolded beyond lecture halls, shaped by motherhood, resilience and a deliberate reclaiming of purpose, as she shares...

By Wanjiru Gathuo

When Dr Serah Muchai speaks of her life, she does not begin with her titles, though they are many. She is a teacher by profession, a PhD holder, a counselling psychologist, an author, and the founder of an organisation for caregivers. Yet beneath these achievements lies a more profound story, one shaped by transformation.

At first encounter, she is often perceived through the lens of her accomplishments: a polished academic, former university dean, preacher, and thought leader. But beneath that structured exterior is another identity that gradually reveals itself, one that anchors everything else she is. She is a mother.

In a world that often praises women for appearing to “have it all together,” Dr Muchai’s journey offers something more honest and far more human. Motherhood did not organise her life into neat symmetry. Instead, it stretched her, unsettled her, deepened her faith, and redefined her understanding of purpose. It became both her greatest challenge and her most profound teacher.

Central to her story is her firstborn daughter, Vivian Wanjiru, who has lived with cerebral palsy since birth and remains fully dependent at the age of 26. In a society that measures success through visible achievement, Dr Muchai’s life disrupts this narrative. Her most enduring legacy is the life she has intentionally built around her daughter, a child once described harshly as “a cabbage” and predicted not to live beyond 14. Yet she lives. And so does the story that redefined her mother.

The beginning...

Dr Muchai’s story begins in Githunguri, Kandara, in rural Kenya, a place she refers to with humour as being from “District Focus” a playful nod to growing up in what many back in the day would call “a village.”

She attended Githunguri Primary School, where her early environment offered few material comforts but rich relational grounding. Even as a young girl, something distinct was visible in her. She was deeply observant, emotionally aware, and instinctively drawn to people who were struggling. When others were overlooked or hurting, she did not turn

away. She leaned in. At the time, she did not have language for it; it was simply who she was.

By the time she reached class eight, standing at the threshold of her future, she made a prayer that would redirect her life. She asked for the possibility to pass her exams well despite being in a small village school. It was a simple prayer, but it marked a shift from passive acceptance to intentional expectation.

The answer came in a way she had not imagined. She gained admission to Kenya High School, one of the country’s most prestigious national schools. The transition was however disorienting.

She recalls not knowing how to use a modern flushing toilet and running to a prefect in panic, convinced she had broken it. She struggled with spoken English and often felt out of place in a polished, fast-paced, and unfamiliar environment.

The sense of not being enough quietly followed her.

Yet, within this discomfort, something foundational formed.

At Kenya High School, she encountered faith in a deeper way. Prayer and fasting became more than routine religious practice; they became relationship. She remembers a specific corner in the chapel where she would pray consistently. Over time, she began to experience answered prayers in ways that strengthened her

conviction that her life was being guided beyond what she could see.

"I would see God answer prayers," she reflects, adding, "It became too visible that God heard me."

This spiritual grounding became the thread that held her through uncertainty. It was also the beginning of a lifelong pattern of her faith in God.

From there, her academic journey unfolded with remarkable progression. She pursued a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, grounding herself in sustainable agriculture and environmental systems.

She later completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Education at Kenyatta University, followed by a Master's and PhD in Environmental Studies and Community Development. She later added a Postgraduate Diploma in Counselling Psychology at Mount Kenya University, expanding her commitment to understanding human behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

Each academic step was an expansion of perspective rather than accumulation of academic qualifications.

Leadership and motherhood...

Professionally, Dr Muchai's journey found strong footing at Mount Kenya University, where she served for over a decade. She rose steadily into leadership, eventually becoming Dean of the School of Social Sciences, overseeing multiple departments while also serving as Coordinator for persons enabled differently.

Within the university, she worked closely with students living with disabilities. She worked with them to provide academic support, and to cultivate dignity and belonging. What she built became a culture of care. She describes it as "a family within a family," where students were seen, valued and supported beyond their limitations.

Her approach was rooted in presence. She often says, "Whatever my hands find to do, I do it with all my heart." For her, work was taken seriously and embodied. But even as she excelled professionally, another question began to rise internally, persistent and unresolved. Through her interactions with students with disabilities who had made it into structured systems of education, she began to ask herself about those who never would.

What about the children outside the system? What about the parents raising them without guidance or support?

The question became deeply personal. It was no longer theoretical. It was mirrored in her own life with her daughter, Wanjiru.

She remembers searching for support in the early years of motherhood, travelling to Nairobi in hope of finding guidance from someone she had once seen on television. She never found her. There were no clear networks, no definitive pathways and very little understanding. Only isolation and uncertainty. This experience stayed with her.

It sharpened her awareness that while some caregivers had access to systems and professionals, many others were navigating invisible burdens alone. Behind closed doors were mothers and fathers carrying emotional, financial and psychological strain without support.

For a time, she wrestled with this awareness. But over time, it matured into conviction. This conviction eventually led her to make a bold transition. She stepped away from academic security, seeking a more direct space of service. When that path did not unfold as expected, she returned home and reflected deeply.

What emerged was clarity rather than confusion. She realised she was already carrying the beginnings of what was needed through her earlier awareness programmes on caregiving and disability. What was missing was a dedicated space. And so, she created the organisation, Hope and Live Kenya.

Hope and Live...

The organisation is a safe and structured space for caregivers. It offers group and individual therapy, psychoeducation on burnout, stigma, and self-care, and a caregiver manual to provide practical and emotional guidance. Beyond services, it lends a listening ear. Something many caregivers had never experienced.

She also began integrating socio-economic empowerment initiatives, equipping caregivers with skills such as beadwork, sewing, and small-scale production to help them generate income while continuing to care for their children.

Her work is grounded in realism. She speaks openly about the cost of caregiving: diapers, medication, specialised equipment and daily needs that often go unsupported. "It is not for my personal gain," she says, adding, "It is to

make caregivers' lives lighter, so they can continue giving care without breaking."

Yet in giving, she also receives. "It becomes therapeutic," she reflects, "when I realise I am able to offer solutions." The emotional weight of the stories she encounters is significant. Mothers abandoned by spouses after the birth of a child with disability. Families overwhelmed by stigma and silence. Lives reshaped by circumstances they did not choose.

She remains grounded in conviction. "I felt God has called me to a space where I can serve and give hope to people... and after hope, they can live," she says with great conviction.

Reclaiming her narrative of motherhood... Beyond physical programmes and institutional work, Dr Muchai has expanded her voice into digital spaces. Through YouTube and her social media platforms, she shares reflections on caregiving, burnout, self-care and emotional resilience. Her aim is to reach beyond geographical limitation and speak directly into lived experience.

Her openness about her daughter challenges cultural silence around disability. She reminds parents, "Don't hide your child. You did not go to the maternity ward to pick disability. This child is a gift."

Her writing includes *The Praying Student*, *The Passionate Learner: Overcoming All Odds*, and *Treasured and Loved: A Journey of Affirmation for Young Minds*; with another book on mental health forthcoming.

Reflections...

Her journey has been marked by sacrifice and invisible battles. Yet she has arrived at a settled truth that her life has meaning, and her daughter's life has purpose.

To caregivers walking similar paths, she acknowledges the weight of their reality but reframes it as assignment rather than accident. She honours them as resilient, often unseen heroes. "Rise up and bounce back," she says, adding, "You have no idea what God has in store for you."

She also reminds them that while approval may not come from people, purpose does not depend on applause. Within caregiving, moments like the first step, a spoken word are worth celebrating. A small breakthrough carries immeasurable meaning. **P**

HANDS THAT HEAL:

A Nurse's Journey Rooted in a Mother's Dream



In many homes, the lessons that shape a child's future are merely taught in classrooms but lived out in everyday acts of care, sacrifice and strength. For Lydia Wanjiku Muchoki, a nurse and Program Manager in charge of health at Furaha Community Foundation, her healthcare journey, as told to FAITH ADHIAMBO, is not just a career path. It is a legacy carried forward from the women who raised her.

Growing up, Lydia was surrounded by powerful examples of womanhood. Her mother, Pauline Muchoki, and grandmother were not only caregivers but also respected leaders within their community. Her grandmother, an herbalist, was known for her deep knowledge of traditional medicine, often venturing into the forest to gather herbs for treating various ailments. Alongside her, Lydia's mother offered care to the sick in their community, embodying patience, compassion and unwavering faith.

"I grew up watching them care for people," Lydia reflects. "They would go look for herbs, prepare medicine and help the sick recover. That shaped me and made me want to get into caregiving," she says.

For Lydia, these childhood memories were also formative experiences. Watching her mother and grandmother serve others instilled in her values that would later lead her on a path of kindness, empathy, leadership and a deep trust in God. She also embraced a belief her grandmother lived by that health is the greatest wealth.

Her mother's story, however, is deeply emotional. Despite her dream of becoming a nurse, she was unable to pursue an education due to societal limitations on girls at the time. That unfulfilled dream would quietly pass on to Lydia, but as a purpose.

Today, Lydia stands as the realisation of that dream.

Driven by a deep desire to help people recover and thrive, she pursued a career in nursing and has grown into a leader within community health. Her work goes beyond treating illness. It is rooted in restoring dignity, hope and well-being.

One moment that stands out in her journey is when she intervened to help Susan* (not her real name to protect her identity), a mother struggling with severe mental health challenges. Susan had reached a breaking point and was at risk of harming herself and her children. Through care, counselling and consistent follow-up, Lydia helped guide her toward recovery.

"She is now okay," Lydia shares, adding, "And I still follow up to make sure she is doing well."

It is in moments like these that Lydia's upbringing becomes most visible not just in what she does, but in how she does it. Her approach to care reflects what she calls servant leadership; a way of serving others with empathy, humility and purpose.

At Furaha Community Foundation, Lydia has played a key role in initiatives that directly impact families and vulnerable groups. She has helped establish a support group for people living with HIV & AIDS, offering medical support, emotional and social encouragement. In addition, she has been part of efforts to create a therapy Centre for children living with disabilities such as autism, as well as organising free medical and dental camps in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Through her roles as a nurse, mentor, counsellor and public health officer, Lydia continues to broaden perspectives, especially for women, on what is possible.

Her journey, however, is not without challenges. Like many working women, she faces the ongoing task of balancing family life and professional responsibilities. Yet, she draws strength from the values of prayer, compassion, and a desire to grow in knowledge. The same values that shaped her upbringing.

"I believe in being prayerful and always seeking to learn more to be vast in what you are doing," she says.

For Lydia, the influence of her mother and grandmother is well present in her leadership, her kindness and her dedication to the community; their legacy continues to thrive.

For parents, her story carries an important message. She emphasises the importance of being present in children's lives, noting that when parents are absent, the responsibility of raising children is on the community, which may not always have a positive influence.

She echoes the African proverb, "Mtoto umleavyo ndivyo akuavyo", which means that the way you raise a child is the way they will turn out.

"If we raise them well, they will become great men and women in the world," she says.

Today, Lydia walks a path that connects past, present and future. Her grandmother, now gone, would be proud to see her carrying forward the legacy of caregiving. Her mother, who once dreamed of becoming a nurse, now watches that dream fulfilled through her daughter.

In Lydia's story, we are reminded that the influence our mothers have does not fade. It lives on in the women they raise, in the lives they touch and in the communities they transform. **P**

adopted homeless street families, helping them transition into stable livelihoods.

In Kilifi, the organisation supports young mothers through partnerships with the Ministry of Health. Afrikea creates safe spaces where they can share experiences without stigma while gaining skills for economic independence. It also integrates antenatal care and solar farming to support both health and sustainability.

Tony does not frame his work as a solo pursuit. Impact, for him, is inherently collaborative.

“Progress is a team sport. It requires planning, commitment, and the support of people who are intentional and aligned with the vision of impact rather than personal gain. I mostly work with young people I have mentored over time,” he notes

Redefining success and staying the course

In a world often driven by wealth and status, Tony offers a different perspective on success grounded in impact, intention, and long-term value.

“To me, success is defined by sustainable impact that is driven by goodwill and intention,” he says.

This understanding also shapes how he challenges common misconceptions about his work.

“People often assume that I am well-off because of the work I do. What they do not see is the level of sacrifice and the challenges that come with it,” he explains.

Tony describes his journey through principles of optimism, vision, and resilience. These qualities, he believes, are essential, especially for young people navigating their own paths.

“There is absolutely no room for giving up. Many young people want quick results, but real impact requires patience and resilience,” he stresses, adding that “action without vision is merely passing time, and vision without action is just a dream. When you combine vision with action, you have the power to change the world.”

For Tony, the work goes beyond projects. It is about people, continuity, and the ripple effect of effort. At the centre of it is a commitment to young people, driven by a belief that real impact is created through consistency and selfless engagement. 

HE STOPPED WAITING FOR CHANGE AND BECAME IT

There is something quite powerful about people who choose to serve without waiting for recognition. They move with intention, often unseen, yet their work ripples across communities in ways statistics can barely capture. Tony Olela is one of those individuals. His story, as told to IMMACULATE ADOYO, is built on consistent, deliberate actions. From grassroots engagement to global advocacy spaces, he represents a generation that is choosing purpose over comfort and impact over applause.

At first glance, one might see titles, partnerships, and projects spread across counties and continents. But beneath that is a journey shaped by community, faith, and an unwavering belief that change begins with showing up.

Tony introduces himself humbly, but his work carries weight. A gender expert, child protection advocate, and founder of Afrikea, his professional identity is deeply anchored in social impact. Afrikea is a youth-led non-profit organisation working to advance inclusion and social protection across Africa.

On founding Afrikea...

Afrikea was built from the simple idea of caring for Africa in a meaningful way. It came from years of volunteering, observing, and asking how impact could be made more intentional and sustainable.

“I had spent years volunteering and working with different organisations, but I felt a strong need to create something structured. Something that would allow me to track impact and remain accountable to the communities I serve,” he explains.

“The name Afrikea comes from the idea that I care for Africa, and that I am taking responsibility for my own continent,” he adds.

Initially, he considered naming the organisation after himself, but the vision was bigger than one person.

Afrikea in action...

Exposure to working with international organisations such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) broadened Tony’s perspective. Still, it did not detach him from his roots. If anything, it strengthened his understanding of what meaningful development looks like.

“Everything I do is centred on creating impact that is both meaningful and sustainable,” he emphasises.

That perspective is reflected in the initiatives he leads through Afrikea. His efforts span gender-based violence, disability inclusion, reproductive health, and youth empowerment, addressing them as lived realities rather than as abstract concepts within the communities he serves.

One standout initiative is a medical camp in Siaya County that served over 3,000 people. In Nairobi, his team, in collaboration with the Bough Foundation and CTL Foundation, supported and

Creamy Coconut Fish Recipe

By Jackson Pinnock

There's nothing quite like a rich, coconut-infused fish dish that brings warmth and comfort to the table. This creamy coconut tilapia is inspired by coastal flavours, blending fragrant spices, fresh ingredients, and a smooth coconut base to create a dish that is both hearty and indulgent. It's the kind of meal that is homely, simple, flavourful, and deeply satisfying.

Ingredients:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Tilapia (whole or pieces) | • 2 tomatoes (chopped) |
| • Salt (to taste) | • 1 cup coconut cream |
| • Cooking oil (for frying) | • 1 lemon |
| • 1 large onion (sliced) | • Fish masala |
| • 4 cloves of garlic (crushed) | • Onion powder |
| • 1 green bell pepper (chopped) | • Black pepper |
| • A bunch of fresh coriander
(stems and leaves separated) | • Desiccated coconut
(for garnish) |



Method:

Begin by preparing your tilapia. Make light slices across the fish and season generously with salt, ensuring it gets into the cuts. Heat the oil over medium-high heat and fry the fish until it is cooked through and golden on the outside. Once ready, remove from the pan and set aside.

As the fish cooks, begin preparing the sauce. In a separate pan, heat some vegetable oil and sauté the sliced onions until soft and slightly translucent. Add the crushed garlic, coriander stems, and chopped green bell pepper, then let the mixture cook to release flavours.

Next, add the chopped tomatoes and let them cook down fully until soft and rich. This step is key in building depth of flavour. Once the mixture is well combined, transfer it into a blender and blend until smooth.

Return the blended mixture to the pan and place it over medium heat. Add the fish masala, onion powder, black pepper, and a pinch of salt, stirring well to combine the spices into the sauce. Pour in the coconut cream and let it simmer gently for a few minutes, until it thickens slightly and becomes rich and creamy.

Carefully place the fried fish back into the sauce, spooning the mixture over it to ensure it is fully coated. Allow it to simmer gently so the fish absorbs the flavours while maintaining its texture.

Finish by garnishing with desiccated coconut and freshly chopped coriander leaves, adding both texture and a fresh aromatic finish. • Cover the dough with a damp cloth or plastic wrap. Let it rest for 40–60 minutes. This relaxes the gluten and ensures softness.

Serving Suggestion:

This dish is best served hot with ugali and a fresh slice of lemon on the side to brighten the rich coconut flavours and bring balance to the dish. Serving it with rice is also an option.

Chef's Note:

This dish holds a special place in my kitchen. It is a recipe passed down from my mum, reimagined with my own twist. By adding a few ingredients to match my personal flavour profile, I've turned it into a rich, deeply flavourful meal that's both comforting and packed with protein.

Kitchen Tip:

Take your time with the tomato base. Letting it cook properly before blending is what gives the sauce its deep, authentic flavour. A slow simmer makes all the difference. **P**

Learn to Take Care of Yourself

A guide for the woman who gives everything and deserves to keep some for herself

For many women, preventive health sits at the bottom of a long list. Yet research shows that the women who live longest and strongest are those who learn early to treat their own wellbeing as non-negotiable. Prevention is the most powerful thing you can do for every role you hold.

By Dr Ogina Michele

Health by life stage

Women's bodies change profoundly across decades. What you need at 28 is not what you need at 45 or 62. Understanding these changes and acting on them is the foundation of preventive care.

Reproductive years

20s – 30s

Antenatal clinic visits & safe abortion.
Knowledge of mental health & diagnosis.
HIV & AIDS and cancer tests.

Perimenopause

40s

Breast screening.
Thyroid health.
Knowledge of menopause.

Menopause & beyond

50s – 60s+

Heart health checks.
Blood sugar checks.
Kidney checks.

Risks women overlook

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in women globally, yet women are still far less likely than men to receive a timely diagnosis.

Symptoms present differently as fatigue, jaw pain, nausea, or breathlessness rather than the dramatic chest-clutching of popular imagination. Knowing your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar numbers is extremely vital information.

STI screening should be destigmatised.

Women should request a full STI panel at the start of any new relationship, and as part of their annual check-up, regardless of relationship status. A comprehensive annual panel covering STIs and communicable disease markers gives you a complete picture of your health and protects you, your partners, and your family.

Bone health should also be prioritised. Women can lose up to 20 per cent of bone density in the first five to seven years after menopause. Weight-bearing exercise, adequate calcium, and vitamin D are protective across every decade, not just after 50.

Much of the conversation around women's mental health focuses on postnatal depression or menopausal anxiety, but the 20s are a decade of significant psychological vulnerability. This is the life stage when serious mood disorders, including bipolar disorder, major depression, and early-onset schizophrenia, most commonly emerge. Therefore, a mental health check should be part of every young woman's annual visit.

Five habits that protect you across decades

- Keep your appointments. Annual check-ups catch what you cannot feel. Make them recurring, not reactive.
- Prioritise sleep without guilt. Chronic sleep deprivation raises cortisol, disrupts metabolism, and accelerates hormonal decline. Seven to nine hours is medicine.
- Move your body daily. Thirty

minutes of moderate activity reduces breast cancer risk, supports mental health, and strengthens bone and heart simultaneously.

- Talk about the hard things. Depression and anxiety in women are frequently underdiagnosed. A conversation with a local MO (medical officer) or therapist might just save your life.
- Know your family history. Know the genetic risks for breast cancer, mental health issues, and pregnancy complications. And in this case, be informed of the contraceptive methods that have worked, i.e., one that has worked on your mum.

The modern woman carries much. But the women who carry it best are those who have learned that caring for themselves is the foundation of caring for others. Book the appointment. Ask questions. Take up the space you deserve in your own health life.

Tip: Carry a friend with you to act as a witness, or be a voice when the MO/you are dismissing symptoms. **P**

Health Tip

It is important to check your blood pressure regularly. Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is called the 'silent killer' because many people who have the condition may not be aware of it and may not have any symptoms. If left uncontrolled, hypertension can affect the heart, brain, and kidneys, leading to dangerous health conditions. Have your blood pressure checked regularly by a health worker so you know your numbers. This is vital in the prevention and control of hypertension. Home monitoring for those already diagnosed with the condition is recommended. Blood pressure monitors are available in pharmacies.

The Sanctuary a Mother Needs



We often prepare for the arrival of a child by arranging what can be seen. The clothes are folded, the sleeping space is cleaned, the hospital bag is packed, and the home begins to carry the small signs that a new life is on the way. There is something beautiful about this kind of preparation because it reminds us that love is often practical before it is poetic.

But the scripture invites us to look beyond what is arranged. A home is not made ready for a mother and newborn only by what is placed inside it, but by the spirit that fills it. The real question is not simply whether the child has a place to sleep, but whether the mother has a place to rest. Not only whether the house is prepared, but whether the people within it have prepared themselves.

In Luke 10:38–42, we meet Martha and Mary in a home that is full of activity. Martha is busy hosting, while Mary sits at the feet of Jesus. When Martha complains, Jesus does not dismiss service, but He gently points her towards what matters most.

“You are worried and upset about many things,” He says, “but few things are needed.”

It is a correction, and a necessary one. Many homes preparing for a baby can become like Martha’s house, full of movement, concern, and good intentions, yet still missing the peace that should hold everything together. We can be busy preparing for life and still forget to protect the person bringing that life into the world.

A mother needs covering.
She needs a home where her body

is allowed to recover without guilt, where her emotions are not treated as an inconvenience, where support does not have to be begged for or explained repeatedly. She needs people who understand that birth is not only the arrival of a child, but the beginning of a new vulnerability for the woman who has carried them.

The Bible is deeply attentive to this kind of care. In Isaiah 66:13, God says, “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.”

The image is tender and reminds us that comfort is holy work. If God uses the image of a mother’s comfort to describe His own care, then we must not ignore the mother herself when she needs comfort.

Sometimes, however, we praise mothers for giving comfort while forgetting that they also need to receive it. This is where the home must become a sanctuary.

A sanctuary is not a perfect house. It is not silence without interruption, or a family that has everything figured out. It is a space where care is intentional. It is a home where people are careful with their words, gentle with their expectations, and alert to the burdens a mother may not always name.

In Galatians 6:2, Paul writes, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ.”

Motherhood, especially in its earliest days, is one of those burdens that should never be left to one person simply because she is the one who gave birth. The feeding, the healing, the sleeplessness, the uncertainty, the visitors, the advice, the fear of doing things wrong; these may gather around her, but they are not hers alone to carry.

This is why preparing a home is also a spiritual responsibility for the family around her.

The husband, relatives, friends, and faith community must ask themselves what peace requires of them. Sometimes peace requires fewer visitors. Sometimes it requires cooked meals, protected rest, help with older children, or simply the humility to listen before giving advice. Sometimes it requires removing noise, comparison, criticism, and the kind of casual comments that wound women at their most tender point.

A newborn enters the world without language, but not without awareness. Before a child understands instruction, they begin to experience the atmosphere. They feel calm, tension, tenderness, hurry, warmth, absence, and presence. In that sense, a home becomes the first sermon a child ever receives.

And perhaps this is why preparing a sanctuary matters. Because the child is not only entering a house. They are entering a way of being. They are entering the emotional and spiritual climate created by the people who will raise them. They are learning, long before speech, whether care is rushed or gentle, whether love feels anxious or steady, whether home is a place of pressure or refuge.

To prepare for a newborn, then, is to prepare more than a room. It is to prepare our hearts to be less harsh. Our homes to be less noisy. Our expectations to be more humane, and our care to be less performative and more present.

And for the mother, it is to say, not only with words but with action: you do not have to hold everything together alone. Because a home becomes a sanctuary not when everything is perfect, but when the people inside it choose peace as an act of love. **P**



Where Fatherhood Really Begins

In conversation with Joan Kamere, Marriage and Family Therapist and founder of JK Therapy, this article draws on therapeutic insight into how men, women, and children experience care within the home. Written by MUINDE BRIAN.

We often think of preparation as something visible, almost tangible. The cot assembled in the corner, the hospital bag packed, and the savings account finally behaving the way it should. For many men, these things become proof that they are ready. They become the language of care because they are tangible, measurable, and easier to hold than uncertainty. But pregnancy and early motherhood rarely ask for certainty. They ask for something many men find unfamiliar.

What often gets missed is that fatherhood does not begin at birth. It begins with how a man positions himself while everything is still changing, while his partner is carrying not just a child, but an emotional and psychological transition that cannot be folded into a checklist.

Joan Kamere describes one of the most common misunderstandings men have during this period: equating support with provision. Financial stability matters, of course. A home needs structure. But material readiness can sometimes become a way of standing near the experience without stepping fully into it. From the mother's point of view, that distance is more like solitude and less like steadiness.

The transition to motherhood shifts mental load into constant vigilance. It's the exhausting work of interpreting cries and mourning one's former self; a quiet grief

often masked by irritability or the paradox of being constantly needed yet feeling entirely unseen.

True support is frequently misunderstood. It is not merely being present; it is providing emotional safety, so a woman doesn't carry the household's emotional weight alone. Kamere clarifies that partners must move beyond the role of a helper waiting for instructions to become a co-owner of this new life.

Shared responsibility means noticing needs without being directed. It involves paying attention to her energy and understanding that real care is often preventative. Sometimes, the most valuable support isn't what you add, but the pressure and tension you proactively remove.

Much of how men respond in this season is shaped long before they become partners. Kamere notes that many men enter fatherhood carrying internalised blueprints of care they never consciously examined. A man who grew up with an emotionally distant father may find provision easy but struggle with presence.

A child raised watching his mother carry everything alone may, without intending to, expect his partner to absorb more than she should. These are not always acts of neglect. Often, they are inherited habits. That is why this transition asks more of men than instinct. It asks for self-awareness.

Are you withdrawing because you are overwhelmed, or because distance is how you learned to cope? Are you minimising her emotions because you believe calm means silence? Are you framing your involvement as generosity when what is needed is accountability?

These are uncomfortable questions, but they are necessary ones. Because the early days of parenthood do more than reveal character. They set patterns.

Kamere explains that women tend to remember, very clearly, how supported or unsupported they felt during this phase, and those memories often become reference points in the relationship for years to come. When one partner becomes the default emotional and mental carrier, resentment settles quietly into the structure of the home.

But the opposite is also true. When a woman feels emotionally supported, when she feels she does not have to justify her exhaustion or ask repeatedly for what should already be shared, trust deepens. Intimacy changes. A sense of partnership takes root in a way that outlasts sleepless nights and the disorientation of the early months.

Men often imagine fatherhood beginning with action: holding the baby, changing the first diaper, making the school run years later. But in many ways, fatherhood begins earlier than that. It begins in emotional steadiness, in tune with the expectant partner. In choosing not to stand at the edge of the experience, simply because it is happening in someone else's body.

A child's first understanding of safety is not built in grand gestures. It is built into the atmosphere. In tone. In how their mother feels supported. And long before a child learns language, they begin learning what care feels like in the home they arrive in.

About the expert

Joan Kamere is a Nairobi-based Marriage and Family Therapist and founder of JK Therapy. Her work focuses on helping individuals, couples, children, and families build healthier emotional patterns through culturally relevant, evidence-based care. Before starting JK Therapy, she worked with a youth-focused NGO, helping train clinical supervisors and lay providers delivering mental health support to Kenyan students. [P](#)

Pious on Sunday, Poisonous on Monday



There is something deeply unsettling about watching the people entrusted with a nation's destiny reduce themselves to a street-level exchange of insults. It is not only demeaning but also raises questions about the kind of leadership we have. Publicly trading insults with language unbecoming of leaders, let alone those calling themselves Christians, and often seen in churches on Sundays, looking pious, has made me reflect on leadership in this column.

It is time to remind our leaders to be mindful of their language, particularly when speaking in public, and to behave honourably to earn the respect of those they lead.

The Bible that guides my life, and should guide the lives of those who call themselves Christians, emphasises that political leaders are called to a higher standard of speech. They must use a language that is truthful, gracious, wise, and constructive, avoiding harsh or deceitful speech.

In particular, the book of Proverbs gives solid advice to leaders on political speeches. They should speak in truth and integrity, as a "lying tongue" is an abomination to the Lord. They should choose humility over arrogance. Proverbs 11:2 says, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom."

In Psalm 72:4, leaders are advised to use speech that benefits others, always speaking in ways that promote justice and righteousness, and particularly defending the needy. A leader should avoid sowing discord among people, which we are told in Proverbs 6:19 is something the Lord hates.

Abusive language by our leaders does not exist in a vacuum. It undermines the

sanctity of the offices they hold and, with it, public trust. Leaders have a responsibility to set a good example to those they lead, particularly the youth, and political disagreements should never turn into enmity.

Abusive language by leaders fuels hatred and divisiveness among the citizens. It makes verbal violence acceptable, even entertaining, and we have seen how this has escalated in our country with goons taking over the streets.

I have asked myself where all this hatred by our leaders is coming from. Is this their way of trying to win next year's general elections? Have campaigns started this early? Am I missing it because I am not a politician?

In my own wisdom, I am left to conclude that these are the same monkeys but in different forests. They are egotistical, and political ambition has blinded them. They are angry at each other and are playing out their differences publicly. They have wronged each other in their political dealings but appear unable to forgive each other.

I want to give them a piece of advice on leadership and forgiveness. They have forgotten that leaders forgive quickly. Quoting American Southern Baptist Pastor, Tom Eliff, "He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass."

Our leaders are behaving like small people who carry grudges. Big people forgive and forget. Small people hold on to insults. Big people let them go and don't hurl them back. Small people nurture thoughts of revenge. Big people move on, focused on their mission to serve those they lead.

Leaders are big people. They are tolerant, indulgent and forgiving. Leaders are charitable with their language. They don't use abusive or demeaning language, no matter how wronged they feel.

Sticks and stones break bones, but the fact is, name-calling hurts too. While leaders may be able to dodge the stones and the mud thrown at them, they often can't avoid the insults hurled at them. The way a leader reacts makes the difference between leadership, greatness, and mediocrity.

Reacting with revenge is self-defeating. It only enhances the conflict and leaves the defender with inner turmoil. Reacting with charity is indulgent and is the hallmark of a great leader.

Great leaders refuse to don battle gear. Instead, they stay focused on the goal. Great leaders refuse to allow personal insults to distract them. They have abandoned themselves in pursuit of a greater good – the enrichment and welfare of others.

Ask any great leader why he or she is willing to forgive and forget, and you will hear, "I don't have time to be bitter. I only have time to be better."

I call upon our leaders to choose to be big people, not small people. I end with this quote by English Poet, Alexander Pope: "An honest man is the noblest work of God." **P**



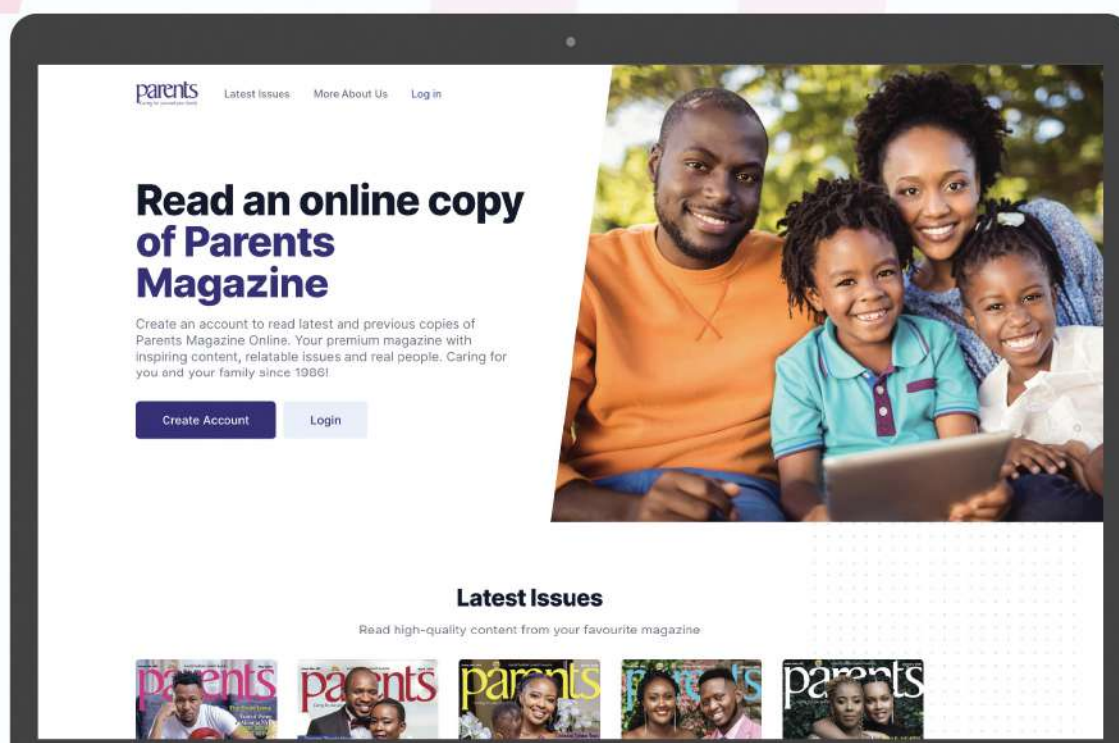
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