An audio archive of radical and creative Kenyans disentangling the myth of development

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT
ABOUT THE PODCAST

50 years since the publication of Walter Rodney's critical work How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, African Digital Heritage together with Savvy Contemporary, bring you an audio archive of radical and creative Kenyans disentangling the myth of development.

The archive is rooted in discourse by African scholars from Africa and the diaspora who aim to show that contrary to popular belief, modernization and colonialism did not boost economic development in Africa but rather interrupted it. We highlight the specific complexities and knowledge systems of pre-colonial Africa that point to the fact that underdevelopment is indeed a myth, or rather, a lasting symptom of an exploitative global economic system.

CREDITS

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“Obviously, underdevelopment is not the absence of development, because every people have developed in one way or another and to a greater or lesser extent. Underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels of development... A second and even more indispensable component of modern underdevelopment is that it expresses a particular relationship of exploitation: namely, the exploitation of one country by another.”

- Walter Rodney
Maureen Kasuku offers episode one in this series as a homage to Walter Rodney’s theorization of underdevelopment as a concept to explain the relationship of exploitation and extraction between colonised and coloniser countries, the result being a Europe that is technologically advanced with higher standards of living, and an African continent that is heavily disenfranchised.

Written by: Maureen Kasuku.
Performed by: Maureen Kasuku, Mwatha & Philo.
Hi listeners, this is Maureen (Mo) Kasuku. I am a socialist feminist and a founding member of Feminist Conversations Kenya (FCK).

Mwatha: And this is Mwatha a lawyer, writer and socialist feminist.

Mo: We are inviting you to listen in on this podcast episode as we unpack the Myth & Reality of underdevelopment. For posterity’s sake, we started putting together this podcast episode as we observed the 42nd anniversary of Walter Rodney’s assassination.

Mwatha: He’s the great revolutionary behind the book How Europe Underdeveloped Africa which is now in its 50th year. How dope is that? Karibuni and let’s get right into it.

What do we understand by development and underdevelopment? Let’s take a deep dive into alternative understandings of these terms away from hellscapetwitter discourse on what ‘development’ is, (it’s not concrete jungles and expensive roads you have to pay to use….ahem, ), or what the western bourgeois media and academics refer to as ‘underdeveloped’ in Global South countries.

But what is underdevelopment really?

Mwatha: Cheki Mo, nimekuwa nikiresearch hizi vitu za development na underdevelopment na nimepatana na mambo! Unajua hawa scholars wa majuu wanadai nini? (Look Mo, I’ve been doing my research and I’ve come across what Western scholars are saying. Do you know that they’re saying?)

“Underdevelopment is an economic situation characterized by persistent low levels of living in conjunction with absolute poverty, low income per capita, low rates of economic growth, low consumption levels, poor health services, high death rates, high birth rates, dependence on foreign economies, and limited freedom to choose among activities that satisfy human wants.” (Todaro & Smith, 2008).

Mo: This definition presents a list of symptoms without explaining how “underdevelopment” came into being.

Mwatha: Bana weh! (Maaaan!) Prominent African thinkers have provided us with knowledge and critical insights on understanding the myth of underdevelopment in Africa. Pan-African Marxist revolutionary Dr. Walter Rodney breaks it down for us by providing insight on what underdevelopment means in two senses.

Kwanza wakilinigisha maendeleo ni nini wanatushow venye vikundi tofauti za raia wame endelea (First, by doing a comparative analysis of different levels
of development) (By analyzing how different groups of people developed at different rates throughout the course of history).

Alafu pia, wanatushow venye maendeleo inahusika na venye nchi za majuu zinanyanya nchi zetu huku Afrika na kwingine. *(In the second sense, underdevelopment is a relationship of exploitation of one country by another. This is quantified by the fact that all countries that are termed as “underdeveloped” in the global south are exploited by developed countries.)*

**Mo:** Kuna msomi flani anaitwa Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí ako na kitabu inaitwa The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses. Kwa hii book anatushow venye hawa walami walikuja kuchangayanya venye si huelewa jinsia na venye tulipoteza wetu utamaduni wetu. *(Gender scholar and sociology professor Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí in her book The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses, gives insights on how the imposition of western gender systems has erased indigenous culture and subsequently introducing retrogressive gender norms on the continent.)*

Anadai... *(Oyěwùmí explains)* that from a cross-cultural perspective, the implications of Western bio-logic are far-reaching when one considers the fact that gender constructs in feminist theory originated in the West, where men and women are conceived oppositionally and projected as embodied, genetically derived social categories.

**Mwatha:** Alafu pia kuna *(Also, there’s…)* revered Beninese philosopher, Paulin J Hountondji highlights in his most prominent publication African Philosophy: Myth and reality, the importance of the indigenous knowledge that was eroded during colonialism. He speaks on how most people still rely on indigenous knowledge systems that have never been forgotten.

Anadai, *(He explains)*,

“Most of our people still depend on indigenous knowledge - for instance, in the fields of health and agriculture, among many others. Only a few women today give birth in maternity hospitals. Most babies are delivered by traditional obstetricians, especially in the countryside. As a rule, people who live in areas where there are no medical doctors have to rely on traditional health care."

**Mo:** Kwa hii podcast, tunataka wase wa elewe kwamba... *(In this podcast episode, we want people to understand that)* underdevelopment is a relationship of exploitation between colonial countries and colonized nations. Tutazingatia *(We will emphasize on how…)* any definitions of development that were forced upon communities time ya ukoloni *(during the colonial period)* and were harmful and actively contributed to exploitation, and, we will explore what our definitions of progress have looked like & what they could look like. Most of our discussion will draw largely from Walter Rodney’s work in HUEA.
[Segue] - *I am African by dead Prez (1 minu - Let's listen in on Voices Mtaani (Voices from the grassroots) as we discuss development and underdevelopment with youth from the social justice centers in Nairobi.*

**Mo:** Unaelewa nini kuhusu development na underdevelopment? *(What do you understand by the terms development and underdevelopment?)*

**Philo:** Venye tulifunzwa shuleni, development ni maendeleo. Vitu kama SGR, Expressway, Ma keja fiti. Tuseme venye majuu iko. Alafu underdevelopment ni kukosa hizo maendeleo. Kuishi na umaskini venye si hucheki mtaani huku Kenya. Yaani mpaka wananchi wanakosa dema. *(We were taught in school that development is the advancement of a country in terms of infrastructural development such as the Standard Gauge Railway, The Express Highway and nice houses. Like how people abroad live. Underdevelopment is living in poverty. You can see it in places here in Kenya. People are so poor they can’t even afford to eat.)*

**Philo:** Mbona Majuu iko developed kuliko Afrika? *(Why do you think Europe/U.S. is much more developed than Africa?)*

**Philo:** Ni juu hao walianza kuinvent vitu mbele yetu na pia leaders wao si corrupt kama wetu. Wanatumia pesa za wananchi vizuri kuendelesha countries zao. *(It is because they started inventing things way before us and their leaders are not as corrupt as ours. They use their taxes and resources to advance their countries.)*

**Mo:** Unajua majuu iliendelea hivyo juu ni wakoloni na walituibia vitu hapa kwetu? Pia, Afrika ilikuwa inaendelea tu fiti kabla hawa watu wafike hapa. Pia sisi tulikuwa na maendeleo. *(Do you know that Europe/The West is developed and advanced because they colonized Africa and looted our resources? Africa was advancing in it’s own pace before Europeans got here.)*

**Philo:** Ndio, lakini mbona baada ya kupata Uhuru bado sisi ni maskini na leaders wetu wanaiba kuiba? *(Yes, but even after gaining independence, we are still poor and our leaders are the ones now looting.)*

**Mo:** Ni juu hawa wakoloni waliiba kuiba. Na bado wanelendea kupitia ukoloni mamboleo. Na tunafundishwa venye walifanya na Mwandishi alikuwa anaitwa Walter Rodney. Skiza chenye yeye na wengine wanadai kwa hii podcast. *(It is because these colonialists extracted resources from us and continue to do so today through neo-colonialism. We are taught in detail how they did it by a writer who passed away. His name was Walter Rodney. Together with other thinkers, they explain this to us. Listen to the podcast)*
Mo: What is Underdevelopment? What is Development?

For us to debunk the harmful, prevailing myth of underdevelopment in Africa, Nilaizima tuelewe it is crucial that we first understand the origins of development and what it meant for different parts of the world.

Often, the term “development” is used in an exclusive economic sense. (You’ll learn later from Rodney in this podcast that development is more than just expansionism and accumulating things).

In his Magnum Opus book, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Rodney anadai (Walter Rodney explains) that “A society develops economically as its members jointly increase their capacity for dealing with the world around them. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized”.

Thus, throughout history, there has always been constant economic development within human society as people have been able to devise ways to extract resources from the environment and increase tremendously their capacity to secure comforts from nature.

Using Karl Marx’s Stages of society, tunacheki humans have witnessed the evolution and development of the world around them. From primitive commun(ali)ism, slave society, feudalism, mercantilism, and now, capitalism. I hope we live long enough to see us transition to communism in the metaverse but that’s besides the point. What we’re trying to say here is that people have always interacted with nature and production in different ways.

People the world over have continuously shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature. Every continent independently participated in the early stages of the extension of human control over their environment — which means in effect that every continent can point to a period of economic development.

Africa, being the cradle of mankind, was obviously a major player in this process. I mean, look at all the amazing ancient civilizations on our continent that were thriving before Europeans got here. From Ancient Egypt, Timbuktu, Kush, Zimbabwe, Baganda Kingdoms...the whole shebang! Our evolution and development was interfered with and disrupted by the invasion of Europeans in the early 16th century when they got this strange idea to come and “civilize” us and thus began our gradual descent to underdevelopment.

What followed was them conquering our lands, extracting resources, kidnapping our people who they used as labour mules in lands they had conquered elsewhere outside their continent.
Mwatha: Rodney anasistiza jinsi (Rodney emphasizes that) underdevelopment is rooted in the relationship between colonial countries and colonized nations. The invasion of Africa by European colonial forces and the looting of the continent’s resources are directly connected to the advancement and development of Europe and the disenfranchisement and underdevelopment of Africa.

Alafu, (Also) Egyptian Marxist Samir Amin explained that Africa’s exploitation, even after gaining nominal independence from Europe, continues through international organizations that extract wealth from the continent through debt, military domination that ease western dominance - the exploitation and extraction that makes the wealth of western countries possible.

Remember when I mentioned that Walter Rodney’s idea of development differs from that of Europeans? From the African point of view, Walter saw development as centered around the persons and not simply targeted at increased economic growth and rapid industrialization. It’s about communities, ujamaa, looking out for each other and the environment around us.

That’s why Africans didn’t go around putting a price on everything around them. Lands were for the most part communally owned, Many forests were sacred and protected, animals were mostly hunted for food not as trophies. Europeans were SHOOK by this concept and had to “rectify” that real quick.

- Voices Mtaani -

Mo: Umeelewa venye kulienda sasa? (Do you now have a better understanding of how we got here?)

X: Ndio. Sielewi mbona hawakutufunza hizi vitu shule (Yes. I don’t understand why they didn’t teach us these things in school).

X: Si sadfa. Ilipangwa hivyo ndio waeze kuendelea kutunyanyasa na sisi tubaki tukijilaumu na ni matendo yao. (It is not a coincidence. It was designed and planned this way to continue our exploitation while we blame ourselves for problems caused by European exploitation of Africa)

X: Kwani kabla hawa wase wafike huku, tulikuwa tunafanya nini? Mbona tulisahau venye mababu wetu walikuwa wanaishi na maendeleo yao? (What were Africans doing before the Europeans got here? How did we forget our forefathers’ ways of living and how they developed?)

X: Hebu tuskie podcast inadai aje (Let’s listen in on the podcast to find out)

Rodney teaches us that one of the most difficult questions to answer is exactly why different peoples developed at different rates when left on their own. Part of the answer lies in the environment in which human groups evolved and part of it lies in the “superstructure” of human society.
That is to say, as human beings battled with the material environment, they created forms of social relations, forms of government, patterns of behavior, and systems of belief which together constituted the superstructure—which was never the same in any two societies. Each element in the superstructure interacted with other elements in the superstructure as well as with the material base. For instance, the political and religious patterns affected each other and were often intertwined.

The religious belief that a certain forest was sacred was the kind of element in the superstructure that affected economic activity, since that forest would not be cleared for cultivation. While in the final analysis the breakthrough to a new stage of human development is dependent upon man's technical capacity to deal with the environment, it is also to be borne in mind that peculiarities in the superstructure of any given society have a marked impact on the rate of development.

The erasure of indigineous systems of knowledge generates underdevelopment when people are denied self-determination and Western ideas of development imposed on them. Indigenous institutions, indigenous technology, and low-cost approaches have been shown to increase the efficiency of food, housing, health and social development programs because indigineous knowledge is a locally owned and a managed resource that has been tried and tested for centuries.

Boosting indigineous systems of knowledge is an effective way of supporting the most marginalized in African societies as this is the only asset they have full knowledge control of.

Africans continue to use indigenous knowledge to address contemporary challenges. At the height of the pandemic, South Africa employed indogenous practices to contain COVID-19. Listen in: (excerpt from 7:40-9:40 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0ffsMgXm3c)

You know what else Europeans interfered with? Africa’s notions of gender and sexuality. “The histories of both the colonized and the colonizer have been written from the male point of view — women (and other non-male natives) are peripheral if they appear at all”.

She further explains that one of the Victorian values imposed by the colonizers was the use of body-type to delineate social categories; and this was manifested in the separation of sexes and the presumed inferiority of females. The result was the reconceptualization of the history and customs of the natives to reflect this new race and gender bias of the Europeans.

Let's explore how the imposition of western gender systems enabled the state and the World Bank to perpetuate patriarchal dominance by instructing the men in Maragua to convince (more like coerce) the women who took care of the land to plant coffee in favor of food crops as a means of ‘development’.
Mo & Mwatha discuss how patriarchal domination generates underdevelopment using Maragua women’s coffee strike as an example

Mo: Mwatha unajua hiyo story ya Maragua women’s coffee strike? (Mwatha, do you know about the Maragua women’s coffee strike?)

Mo: Zii, Hebu nishow kulienda aje (No, I haven’t heard of it before. Tell me what happened)

Mo: Skiza podcast (Listen in on the podcast)

In the 1980s in Kenya, coffee farmers were suffering harsh economic conditions. This was due to state corruption, rising prices of agricultural inputs, and a drop in international coffee prices.

By 1986 women received virtually nothing from their husbands government-issued coffee payments. By 1987 they started planting vegetables among the coffee trees. It was against agricultural regulations to intercrop coffee but hunger forced these women to do it. These women went even further and uprooted the trees and used them for firewood although it was illegal to damage coffee trees. They instead planted food in the place of coffee.

This action became widespread as the women rejected World Bank “development” because it did not provide a livelihood.

The World Bank needed the government to repay the loans and hence insisted on coffee farming as a way to increase foreign exchange and use it to pay for the loans.

This was cruel to the coffee farmers who found it difficult to sustain a living under these guidelines. These women returned to subsistence to feed themselves.

The Maragua women’s coffee strike succeeded in: Removing their labour from global coffee supply chains, reducing the Kenyan government’s revenues by way of foreign exchange through coffee sales and turning their land and labour towards rebuilding indigenous relations of subsistence farming.

In Maragua, women went back to actually enjoying the fruit of their labour through food production. This was a big FUCK YOU to the World bank’s idea of “development” that only exacerbate economic harm through Structural Adjustment Programs.
This is one of the ways Africans have redefined what development means to them and this can offer us insights on what more can be done.

**Mwatha:** Limecheki venye hawa walami wa World Bank hawakuwa wanelewa wanawake wa Maragua wanaeza jiamulia kazi watafanya na ardhi yao. Ikabidii wamelazimisha bwana zao waanzishe hiyo mradi ya kahawa. Hiyo ni patraichy manze. Alafu ilikuwa tuu kuextract resources na 0kunyakua land. Hakuna development hapo. *(What I’ve learnt from this is that the World Bank imposed Western gender norms on the people of Maragua by putting the men as the custodians of the land and convincing them to coerce the women into planting coffee. It had nothing to do with development. Just land theft and extraction of resources.)*

**Mo:** Mwatha, tumejifunza nini leo? *(Philo, what have we learnt today?)*

**Philo:** Tumejifunza vitu mingi sana. Wacha niambie audience kwa mukhtasari *(We’ve learnt a lot. Let me give the audience a summary)*

- People the world over have continuously shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature. Every continent independently participated in the early stages of the extension of human control over their environment—which means in effect that every continent can point to a period of economic development. Africa was developing at its own pace and did not need European Interference.
- Underdevelopment is rooted in the relationship between colonial countries and colonized nations.
- Boosting indigenous systems of knowledge is an effective way of supporting the most marginalized in African societies as this is the only asset they have full knowledge control of.
- In *The African point of view*, development is centered around the persons and not simply targeted at increased economic growth and rapid industrialization.
- Africans continue to use indigenous knowledge in everyday life situations in spite of colonial erasure efforts.
EPISODE 1 LIST OF SOURCES

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa by Walter Rodney

“How Europe Underdeveloped Africa: The Legacy of Walter Rodney” by Lee Wengraf
https://roape.net/2021/12/16/europe-underdeveloped-africa-legacy-walter-rodney/


The Struggle For Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture and Democracy in Africa by Paulin J. Hountondji
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37709952_Struggle_For_Meaning_Reflections_on_Philosophy_Culture_and_Democracy_in_Africa

The Invention of Woman: Making sense of Western Gender Discourse by Oyèrónké Oyewùmí
https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt0vh

“Decolonisation of Development: Samir Amin and the Struggle for an Alternative Development Approach in Africa” by Emmanuel Ndhlovu
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339376940_Decolonisation_of_Development_Samir_Amin_and_the_Struggle_for_an_Alternative_Development_Approach_in_Africa


African Philosophy: Myth and Reality by Paulin J. Hountondji
https://books.google.co.ke/books/about/African_Philosophy.html?id=dtLyJuzASbgC
In this episode, educators and community organizers Felix Omondi and Stoneface Bombaa show us how European settlers used the argument that Africans were incapable of using the land effectively to facilitate development – an argument that privileges commercial agriculture, private land ownership and capitalist wage labor over African conceptions of land as a communal resource that has the capacity to sustain everyone's needs.


Around 200 Maasai youths and leaders from across Kenya have gathered in Uhuru Park.

But why are they gathered here?

Over the weekend, Kenyan police shot dead a 70yr old Maasai man after it was said that he had invaded a white settler farm to graze his cattle. Four other herdsmen were injured, while 71 others were arrested after the aftermath of the shooting which took place in Nanyuki.

But back at Uhuru Park, the police soon arrive and the atmosphere grows tense. They soon declare the gathering illegal. And true to their fashion, they fire tear gas canisters at the gathered protester before unleashing their violence. They club one protester on the head here, another on the joints there. Their boots step on another protester's rib here, while their hands rough up another protester there as they bundle him into their gathered vehicles.

But what is the real reason for this gathering?

The over 200 Maasai youths and their leaders were gathered in Uhuru Park to demand their land back.

They pressed the government to return nearly a million hectares of land, that is land the size of 1 million football fields put side by side. This was land the Maasai's were evicted from and then handed to British settlers over a century ago. The lease signed in 1904.

The said lease expired on August 15th.

You have probably heard this argument before, that before colonization, Africans underutilized their land and natural resources. That for the longest time, land was just left there, untilled with no activity happening on it. That minerals, gold and diamond were just there with no one to mine them. What a waste of natural resources that could be used to create wealth. You have probably heard that, were it not for European/colonizers, Africa would never have developed.

But the truth is that pre-colonial African societies heavily utilized their land and labour. This is evident in their relationship with labour and resources which was rooted in communalism and reverence of the Earth. The rituals and tenure systems in place show the central role of land in the organization of African societies. It is no wonder that the land and labour required to utilize land and natural resources were the main targets of European imperialist exploitation in the Underdevelopment of Africa.
I’m your host Stoneface Bomba and in this Episode, I together with my co-host Felix, will look into the underdevelopment complex – this is the belief that Africa was backward and underdeveloped before the coming of the Europeans and that we owe much of our development to colonization.

Felix: Have you heard about the 1904 Agreement?

Stoneface: No I haven’t.

Felix: This was the Agreement that the crowd had gathered at Uhuru Park to protest against in 2004, 100 years after it was signed with claims that the lease had expired.

Stoneface: Interesting. Tell me more.

Felix: The Agreement was signed on 15th August 1904 with Olonana representing the Maasai and Governor Sir Donald Stewart representing the Crown. It stated that the Maasai were to move from Ngong into specific reserves in Laikipia and Loita plains to create way for white settler settlements. Kinangop area was reserved for traditional rituals.

Stoneface: But I understand that this was only the first displacement and that a second one was yet to come?

Felix: Yes. In 1911, barely 7yrs after the first displacement, tragedy struck the Maasai again. The British wanted to take up more land for the settler in Laikipia where they had settled the Maasai. So they lied to the Maasai, saying that it was the death wish of Olonana that all the Maasai be united in one territory. To achieve this, it was suggested that they should move to the reserves southwards. This was captured in the 1911 treaty signed by Segi, the Maasai Paramount Chief at that time. This saw the displacement of about 11,200 Maasai’s and their 22 million herds of cattle as they were moved from Laikipia, across the rift valley southwards to two reserves – Kajiado and Narok. Many and their animals died walking away from their ancestral homes.

Stoneface: What is interesting is that after the displacement, the rift valley was owned by a handful of settlers who let tracts of pastures deteriorate while the Maasai were confined to reserves that were so small that, during droughts, they were forced to wander out to find more grazing land.

Felix: This is exactly how settlers got to establish their massive settler farms, like the Delamare Farm we see today.
Stoneface: These farms, established on stolen land, brought about the concept of capitalist agriculture characterized by the privatization of land, to produce cash crops, which are then sold to bring profit for an individual. This system of agriculture, which was very exploitative and environmentally unfriendly by the way it drained up the soil, in the end disrupted not only livelihoods but also the eco-systems in Africa.

Felix: But what is the alternative to this capitalist agricultural system?

Prior to colonial occupation, the Bukusu and Abagoli of Kimilili in Bungoma, like many other African communities had a highly specialized mixed economy practicing both agriculture and livestock rearing.

The concept of private ownership of land was nonexistent as land was communally owned. Although individual families could utilize the land, they did not own the land because the land would revert back to the clan after the harvest season. The clan itself did not own the land. It just held it in trusteeship for the community – meaning the clan just oversaw the use of the land but the land still belonged to the community.

They also had an elaborate system of division of labour, with the men in charge of clearing and farming the hard virgin lands, women and children tasked with sowing and harvesting while the young men were tasked with guarding the farms against birds during the sowing period.

This clearly points out that contrary to the colonial government’s beliefs; land and labour in pre-colonial African societies was not underutilized. It is in fact the establishment of colonial structures that led to the underutilization of labour as it rendered many people unemployed due to the breakdown of these elaborate systems of division of labour and the eradication of indigenous economies which forced many to start seeking wage employment. The doing away with these systems of organization were in line with contributing to the lasting underdevelopment of Africa.

- Archive Mau Mau Documentary (44:27 – 44:44)

Felix: Mau Mau. Where did this name come from? What does it even mean?

Stoneface: Isn’t Mau Mau not an acronym for Mzungu aende Ulaya, Mwafrika apate Uhuru.
Felix: Yeah that’s what we have been told and over time that is how we have come to know and refer to the movement. But there is a theory that the name was coined by the European colonial government. Do you know what the movement used to call itself before the colonial government branded it Mau Mau?

Stoneface: NO

Felix: They first called themselves Freedom Struggle Association. Then later they changed their name to the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (KLFA).

Stoneface: ooh ok. But why couldn’t the colonial government just call the movement by its name, Kenya Land and Freedom Army?

Felix: Kenya Land and Freedom Army, just listen to that name. What picture does it paint on your mind? Is it a picture of organized Africans fighting for a defined cause? Because this is what KLFA was, a mass of organized Africans fighting towards an end goal. Freedom and return of their land. The colonialists couldn’t refer to this movement by this name. No. They needed to create a counter narrative. One that could strike fear into the hearts of the other European settlers while at the same time discouraging the African population from joining the movement. A name that portrayed the movement as a group of rowdy violent Africans, ungrateful for the “civilization” and the “development” that the colonial government had brought to the Africans.

Stoneface: So you are saying that if the colonial government used “KLFA” it would legitimize their struggle? It would mean that Africans were fighting for their freedom and stolen land against a brutal colonial settler government and its exploitative system rather than just being some wild, evil terrorists.

Felix: Yes. You are right. But the most interesting part is that despite its muddy origins, the name Mau Mau has developed its own connotation in the context of resistance to colonialism and imperialism in Kenya and internationally. The name has gone to represent a movement that was anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.

Malcom X speech

“In Missississippi we need a Mau Mau, in Alabama we need a Mau Mau, in Georgia we need a Mau Mau, in Harlem we need a Mau Mau”

Felix: But even before the Mau Mau, Kenya had a long history of resistance against British imperialism. I usually joke that the Man Eater Lions of the Tsavo were part of the first bunch of resisters.

Stoneface: Haha yani you are saying that the lions were anti-colonial and anti-imperialist?
Felix: Sindio. Those lions saw people laying the tracks to the railway – which was the first sight of British colonialism and imperialism and said Not on our watch. And like any other revolutionary, the lions fought the fight the best way they could, till the very end. In fact they should be considered as martyrs of the struggle.


Felix: As the railway tracks were being laid force was the main means of labour recruitment so the people responded by communal revolt and desertion. Slowly the labour movement of this period began to be formed. Peasant led, these movements – like the Kikuyu Association and Kavirondo Association - were first ethnic based. Their main demands were for the colonial settler government to return stolen land and to get rid of the Kipande system. But overtime as capitalism spread its tentacles and a pool of working class Africans began to form, militant trade unions joined the struggle. These trade unions were guided by anti-capitalist and anti-imperialism ideologies. The entry of the unions changed the quality of the struggle such that it became not only about securing political power for Africans but also about economic liberation. A new phase of the independence struggle thus began when workers struggle and militant political struggle came together and this ushered a new struggle that can be summarized as the struggle for land and freedom.

Stoneface: Land and Freedom!! Like the Kenya Land and Freedom Army?

Felix: Yeah. Once workers who previously participated in strikes under the banner of unions realized that there was no peaceful way of getting freedom and dignity from the colonial government, they resorted to armed resistance.

Stoneface: Ok. We know about the armed struggle for independence through the Mau Mau. But how come we know so little about the role played by trade unions and workers in the struggle for independence?

Felix: The struggle for independence narrative has for a long time been framed as though Africans were only fighting for political reasons. That they were only fighting for self-rule and representation in the National Assembly that came with it. That they weren't fighting for economic reasons – better wages and living conditions. No. This erases the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation. The working class came from all parts of the country, all ethnic communities, therefore their struggle against capital was a national struggle. These workers understood that in order to secure freedom from capitalists exploitation, they needed to secure political freedom from colonial government. A classless narrative – one that erases the working class – suited the post colonial government as it allowed them to evade any form of accountability for betraying the struggle of the masses by upholding the same same capitalist and imperialist models that workers fought against. This intentional erasure of class struggle serves to portray and cheat the masses into believing that the goals
of the freedom fighters both those in the forest and in towns of liberation from capitalism have been realized.

**Stoneface:** Ok now I understand. The post colonial government erased the struggle of the workers and lied to the people that we had achieved independence with the leaving of the white man. But the truth of the matter is that it’s Not Yet Uhuru.

**Felix:** Yes. Not Yet Uhuru.

**Stoneface:** But what happened to the Trade Unions? Why haven’t they been able to come up and organize the masses to fight against this false freedom?

**Felix:** After independence, the newly elected government through a series of events was able to weaken the Trade Union movement. First they decided to give union leaders positions in government. Former Union leaders became like civil servants who couldn’t oppose the government despite the many economic difficulties that the masses faced during that period. This loss of seasoned militant leaders greatly discouraged union activities and the result was a significant decline in the number of strikes. There was also the issue of rivalry between the two labour unions – Kenya African Workers Congress and the Kenya Federation of Labour. To deal with this rivalry, Kenyatta the then president decided that the two unions be merged in what gave birth to COTU – Central Organization of Trade Unions. This meant that the government now had COTU in its pocket.

**Stoneface:** Yeah, this is evident with the COTU that we see today with Atwoli at its helm. It’s nothing but a lap dog for the government. In a period where more than 2 Million Kenyans lost their source of employment, the Central Organization of Trade Unions didn’t speak on their behalf, didn’t come to the aid of workers when prices of commodities continued to rise to astronomical levels yet salaries paid remained same. No. Atwoli spent most of the time campaigning for BBI.

**Felix:** Yeah that’s where we are now. The militancy of earlier years of the unions is completely gone. Its solidarity with the workers also gone.

**Stoneface:** Workers used to be in solidarity with the people. In solidarity with the communities they came from. Speaking about issues affecting the masses like poor housing, rising food prices, lack of water and poor sanitation.

**Felix:** They were truly the vanguard of the people. But now with that state of the unions, there is no one to speak up for the masses. Look at the Maasai displacement in Loliondo and how everyone is quiet on the issues.
Picture this, a Maasai moran is in full traditional dress. He is serving drinks to a group of white tourist. The backdrop is the silhouette of the famous Acacia tree right at the center of the golden yellow savannah sun as it sets. Around the tree are acres upon acres of what used to be the morans homeland from which his people and their livestock have been uprooted. It has now been transformed into a conservancy.

This is the picture of conservation today as painted by Mordecai Ogada, who is the Co-author of The Big Conservation Lie, a book that highlights the negative impact of conservation on indigenous communities and the environment.

Conservancies are just a continuation of the colonial legacy of the dispossession and displacement of indigenous communities from their land and resources.

In Tanzania, the government has made plans to demarcate 1,500 sq Kms to make way for a reserve that is to be operated by Otterlo Business Corporation. This would mean that 150,000 Maasais, 82,000 in Ngorongoro and 70,000 in Loliiondo would be exited from their land. Already, the Maasai community in Tanzania had lost over 70% of their land through forced eviction under the disguise of conservation.

These pastoralist communities are officially prevented from accessing parts of what used to be their dry season grazing areas or sacred sites for the benefits of Europeans who own and run these conservancies. Just like in the colonial period, this is usually enforced through laws that local people know nothing about and sometimes violently through the barrel of a gun.

Conservancy projects still view indigenous communities as either being too simple minded to appreciate the land or in constant conflict with wildlife and the environment. This warrants a steward to take care of the land. A steward who sees the true value of the land and understands how best to take care of it. Most often than not, this steward is always white.

Ian Craig, Chief of Conservation and Development at Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT) is one such steward. In 1983, Ian turned his family's 62,000 acre farm into a Rhino Sanctuary and named it the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.

How did Ian’s family get hold of 62,000 acres of land you ask? Well your guess to answer that question is as good as mine.

In 2004, the good steward Ian spearheaded the formation of the Northern Rangeland Trust, an umbrella body of about 33 conservancies. Today, NRT controls almost 11% of all the land in Kenya. Yes you heard that right, NRT controls 11% of the land in Kenya.

How did they get hold of this land you ask?

NRT targets community elder or a small group of people from the community
who they then transport to their meetings. At these meetings, the group is told about plans by an investor with an idea of building a lodge to provide accommodation for tourists who visit the area to see wildlife. The community is then asked to agree to a 30 yr lease giving up specific areas of their land to the investor. In return the community is promised low paying jobs in and around the lodge. The community therefore ends up exchanging a significant portion of their land for generations to come and only get a few jobs which hardly sustain them and their families. Once self sufficient nomads, they are now forced into servitude.

Land was and continues to be central to African communities. The current evictions of indigenous communities to make way for conservancies, trophy hunters and tourist is nothing but the continuation of the colonial evictions to make way for settlers.

It has never been about putting the land into better use or about protecting nature and wildlife. No. From Laikipia to Loliondo to Ngorongoro, we see only one thing. These dispossession are about separating communities from their land, their heritage and their culture. They are about who gets to control the land and its resources.
**EPISODE 2 LIST OF SOURCES:**

*Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure* by Lotte Hughes  
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/42793234_Moving_the_Maasai_A_Colonial_Misadventure

“Trade union movement leads the way in Kenya” by Shiraz Durrani  
https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/36771589.pdf

*The Struggle for Land and Justice in Kenya* by Ambreena Manji  


“The History of Labor Movement in East Africa: The Case of Kenya and Tanzania” by Salum Rashid Mohamed  

“Feminism in the Mau Mau Resurgence” by Leigh S. Brownhill and Terisa E Turner  

“White Settlers, Black Colonialists and the Landless Majority” by Eliud Kibii  
https://www.theelephant.info/features/2021/09/04/white-settlers-black-colonialists-and-the-landless-majority/

“The treaties that rendered the Maasai landless” by Rose Tolony Ruto  
http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/11669

“In the grip of the vampire state: Maasai Land Struggles in Kenyan Politics” by Parselelo Kantai  
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232963597_In_the_Grip_of_the_Vampire_State_Maasai_Land_Struggles_in_Kenyan_Politics

“Decolonising Conservation: It is about the land, stupid” by Mordecai Ogada  

“Bring Back the Herder Conservationist” by Hussein Wario Tadicha  
https://www.theelephant.info/long-reads/2021/06/07/bring-back-the-herder-conservationist/

“The Maasai and the British 1895-1905, the Origins of an Alliance” by Richard Waller  
https://www.jstor.org/stable/180738
In this episode, “Ornamental Flowers” written by Anne Moraa and narrated by Laura Ekumbo, the audience is treated to a soulful monologue that reframes colonial education systems as forms of miseducation that disinherit Africans of our heritages, languages, knowledge systems and our relationships with each other.

Written by: Anne Moraa of LAM Sisterhood.
Performed by: Laura Ekumbo of LAM Sisterhood.
Ornamental flowers

“Am I home
if I don’t know the way
to my grandmother’s
grave, only seventy three kilometers away?

if when I die,
Ũhoro waku?
will be the first words I hear
and I will be chased away
because I cannot answer back?

if we do not meet at all because she does
not need words like heaven?”

- The M in Distant Relatives.

This is what The M thinks of when she thinks of oral tradition.

1. That she cannot speak to her grandmother.
2. That this is what she should think of when she thinks of reclaiming oral tradition.

She should think of how strange it must be to believe knowledge only exists on a scroll in a locked room.

And to be clear, we had knowledge. A knowledge that was rendered, at best, invisible, and at worst, foolish by those civilisations up-river (they say they are Western, but surely to the west of what? Those civilisations down North? Down North). As Cheikh Anta Diop pointed out, the harsh environmental conditions of that brisk unforgiving continent down North led to cultures of war, nomadism and theft, which led to valuing conquest, materialism and individualism but those were their values so they were good values, right? Even if, like many things, those weren’t even their values to begin with. It’s true. They took values and philosophies and even gods from Egypt, and Ethiopia before that. Two thirds of Greek Scholars went to Egypt to study, to Alexandria at the height of the Hellenstic era but they didn’t have to say who they learned it from but only that they learned it,

no, discovered it,
no, created it.
And maybe it was an act of creation, to strip down Egyptian gods, crush them
into Greek molds, twist benevolence into conquest so

The M should think of how brutal it must be to believe knowledge only exists on
a scroll in a locked room.

The colonial government directed all resources to quote, “Bringing every
European child under education while he was still young” end quote - from the
Kenya education report, 1927. Every school tiered down from elite schools -
watu wa Alliance muko wengi from 1926 - to Mission Schools to Government
schools to reserve schools right the way down to Kikuyu independent schools
shared a mission; to civilize.

The M does think of how she used to write Insha with the same proficiency as
composition, that her first language was actually Gujarati, that she knew the
names of her great great grandmother's clan when she was four but now she
can't quite pronounce her own name - those two a-a's in Moraa reject an English
tongue.

She should think of how brutal it must be to believe knowledge only exists on
a scroll in a locked room.

I do.

I think of how brutal it must be, how brutal it is to believe knowledge only exists
on a scroll in a locked room.

"This is how I unlearn all my learning. My education was a lie. I know that may
seem dramatic. I promise you, it is not. My educational background is a co-
educational British curriculum primary, prep, o-level, and a-level school, and
an amalgamation of western (north american) higher learning. I used to think
that gave me an upperhand, made me privileged (in many ways it does) - but
I'm realizing that what it does best is fulfill its agenda to make it easier for
me to conform to, and understand, the western ideologies that inform the
mainstream modern world (oppressive systems included). I've been grappling
with what the process of unlearning these foundations looks like and, to be
honest, it is every time I encounter something new, realizing how everything
I've learned, at its core... does not consider me. does not acknowledge me: a
Black, African, Kenyan, girl."

I wrote that. Last year. And I am still grappling with it. How can you see yourself
when everything you are taught says that you, as you are, are a lie? That you are
best made an instrument, not a person? That your community, your world, your
history, your ancestry, your people are un-civilised? Are un-civil?
I am so glad that now we celebrate un-learning. I am so glad that now we celebrate un-learning because wow, there is so much to learn. How we did brain surgery and which tree bark reduces cancer. How the beads woven into a baby's anklet help it learn to walk and how you build a home that keeps perfect air-flow, both in the hot and cold seasons. How easy it is to see you, to see us because heh, aren't we glorious?

We see you, Sitawa the Third Namwalie, who chose the name that always belonged to her, who will make any room a stage, who instead of just thinking of oral tradition has taught everyone she has ever met which great uncle was poisoned by a snake generations ago, a memory not lost simply because she was told. We see you Hiistoriya, we see you Women's History Museum Zambia, we see you Museum of British Colonialism, we see you Too Early for Birds. We even kind of see ourselves. The LAM Sisterhood founded by the L, that's me, The A - hi Aleya, and the M -we were really just doing what we thought was dope and we hope it stuck, and in (re)telling stories of all these incredible women, we discovered ourselves. Each of us share a wonder that each of our names carry memory, our genes trauma, our guts resilience and our minds an itch that can only be scratched by telling stories over and over and over until they sound familiar, until they sound like a lullaby that none of us can remember.

But I digress, only because... well..

When the M thinks of reclaiming oral tradition, she should think of how terrible it was to believe that knowledge only exists on a scroll in a locked room or in a book or on a screen but, not in your body, not in a lullaby sang by your grandmother.

But, when the M was asked to write this script, asked to write about reclaiming oral tradition, what the M really thought was...

3. That this story was easiest voiced by me - she cannot speak it out loud herself.

4. Here is a delightful fact. The most surprising thing about potato flowers is just how beautiful they are. Paper thin, wafer leaves, delicate and small, sometimes white, sometimes purple, sometimes both, sun-yellow centers and careful leaves upturned. She thinks how tenderly you would need to teach potato flowers to a child. To spot a potato flower in a field, to see the precise moment when the leaves say, yes, we are ready to be uprooted, to push away the soil with firm but gentle hands, and pluck just enough food to feed you, and leave enough to keep the plant alive. To know not just this flower, but tens, but dozens, but hundreds. As. A. Child. And they knew it too because another delightful fact, indigenous education systems held quote “close links with social life, both in the material and spiritual sense; it’s collective nature; it’s many sided-ness; it’s progressive development in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child" as Walter Rodney put it. Simply said, it isn't just about the potato, it's about the flower.
5. *When the M thinks of reclaiming oral tradition, she remembers that she doesn’t know her grandmother’s favorite flower*

6. *That that flower may not even exist in this tongue.*

7. *That that is a knowledge that now impossible to know.*

The A wrote about her grandfather, “After your soul left your body, we sat together peeling back the memories, going back in time...We took turns, urgently reciting them, all of them we could summon, terrified that they may remain forever forgotten.”

When the M thinks of oral tradition, she doesn’t know that she thinks but what she knows what she feels. And what she feels is...

8. *Hunger.*
**EPISODE 3 LIST OF SOURCES:**

“Ethnographies from the Field: The state of Arts Education in Kenya and Czech Republic” by Teresa M. Tipton
https://www.academia.edu/41121342/Ethnographies_from_the_Field_The_state_of_Arts_Education_in_Kenya_and_Czech_Republic

*Precolonial Black Africa: A comparative study of the political and social systems of Europe and Black Africa, from Antiquity to the formation of Modern States* by Cheikh Anta Diop
https://books.google.co.ke/books/about/Precolonial_Black_Africa.html?id=D55DPgAACAAJ&redir_esc=y

*The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* by Cheikh Anta Diop
https://books.google.co.ke/books/about/The_African_Origin_of_Civilization.html?id=dHnDHm9UQYC&redir_esc=y

*Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology* by Cheikh Anta Diop
https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files3/cheikh_anta_diop_civilization_or_barbarism_an_abook4me.org_.pdf

African Digital Heritage: https://africandigitalheritage.org/

The LAM Sisterhood: https://www.lamsisterhood.com/
In the final episode of this series, "Community Is All We Have", Karwitha Kirimi writes and speaks a poem that rethinks community making and building as a pathway for making resources more accessible and shareable – as a counter to underdevelopment. The poem begins with a call for the audience to participate in a circle/a portal/a ceremony – a call to pray, think, recall, sing, and learn together.

Written by: Karwitha Kirimi. Performed by: Karwitha Kirimi, Chao Tayiana, Muthoni Mwangi, Mumbi Kanyogo, Abu Nuuman, Laura Ekumbo, Bryan Ngartia, Mwende Mukwanyaga, Muthoni Generali, Njeri, Tamara Kahai.
EPISODE 4 SCRIPT

(Faint drums beating in the distance, growing louder, growing louder...)

We gather here, in this particular time and place, to make a circle
To make a circle with our voices, & our attention & intention
Knowing as we do
That our people have gathered around fire & trees & water for thousands of years
Plotting freedom
Living out freedom

We are drumming a circle together, we are drummin a circle through & across time,
we are singing a very very long song so we must remember to breath

(speaker takes a breathe)

to check into our bodies & what they carry

(drumming rises and falls)

this circle, consecrated for freedom dreams & those who practise them - across time and space -. meeting in this sonic landscape..

( drum beats intensify, walter rodney speech here?...notes of walela playing..)

To this circle, we welcome the particular nows we straddle,
we welcome our ancestors' deep well of love and care,
as well as the unnameable benevolences that nourish each of us...

may this circle be a portal & a ceremony,
urging us deeper into freedom's belly,
urging us deeper into each other's keeping,
urging us deeper into principled community

(eeeeh oooo, a brief dirge sound)

Welcome loved one, welcome freedom dreamers across time and space
May your breath and body soften as we gather here
As we circle round each other's voices and pasts and futures and the sharp terrible present
May our memories & joys & griefs find a place of shelter in this circle
We have been gathering for a long long time, singing a long song
Our song is a dirge sometimes
a howl scream cutting through spacetime
a sorrowsong for those who’ve been murdered / trampled underneath years of suffering
Sometimes our song is a basket of ulululations, marking w joy what we have been able to build & nurture, despite despite despite
Sometimes it is a trembling whyyyy song
Sometimes the song is only a whisper

We sing this song taking comfort in seeing our comrade ancestors singing it too

Our hands do the singing sometimes, passing food to one another, redistributing resources, our bodies do the singing as we gather & share resources to keep each other alive despite despite despite
our spirits do the singing, we work knowing that any freedom we brew today will stink through eternity.
any freedom we ferment together, will quench both our ancestors and our descendants, just as their freedom brews nourish us

(more drums & song..)

In the face of the state, in the face of increasing privatisation, in the face of evictions & food hikes & fuel hikes, in the face of sleek policy speak used to cloak mass violations of people's wellbeing, in the face of ecological destruction, in the face of the ongoing colony, in the face of many freedom dreams betrayed / co opted ...

our ancestors' wisdom pins us alive, yaani, mtu ni mtu ju ya watu, yaani ubuntu, yaani, ujamaa, yaani community.

To this circle,

We call in the spirit of the maragua women farmers collective, peasant women, who were forced to grow coffee through the collusion of the state, the IMF and their husbands. Coffee that stripped the land of its nutrients because of the expensive and intensive agrochemicals used to tame the land into producing cash crops. Hear that? Cash crops. Food abstracted to money. The actual workers of this coffee, this cash crop, wavunjasho, could not share in its profits. The state and their husbands and the benevolent IGOs were robbing them. Imagine that. You're forced to grow crops so that white people can have hot coffee while your own children starve.
The women uprooted the coffee trees and burned them. Planting bananas and beans instead. Food they could feed their own families with, or choose to barter or trade the surplus.
Money in their own community's hands, privileging an arrangement that made sense to them rather than one that made sense to a bunch of consultants in Washington.
Community is all we have

To this circle we call in the spirit of the ekhenana occupation & the larger Abahlali baseMjondolo movement of South Africa. Communities of Shack dwellers, slum dwellers, people made homeless/pushed into unacceptable housing conditions by the greed and hoarding of land by private & state interests.

We honour this living freedom project made up of the hopes & everyday actions of poor people.

The abahlali movement joins our drum circle & tells us of their community gardens filled with food that's distributed to community members,
They tell us of their community theatre where the young & old sing & write together.
They tell us about their frantz fanon school of political education, where regular people gather to learn & question together, sharpening each others’ understanding of the world

We witness the potency of their practice thru their halting of slum evictions, thru communes with self organised water and electricity systems, and thru their decision making process that is in the true spirit of democracy, yaani, watu wanajichagulia, yaani, those who are affected by the decisions make the choices.

Our comrades remind us that land is not a commodity to be hoarded by Afrikan elites or their foreign counterparts,

Their drums remind us what our ancestors knew – land does not exist so that we build fences & evict our kin, naming them squatters / landless while we wall up their inheritance

We hold this lesson close as we grapple with cities that have no space for the poor, for the young, for the disabled: but endless space for prestige projects that serve only the elite and the state’s desire kufuata nyayo za wakoloni; whole futures squandered on neo colonial fantasies

They teach us that land reform is not a future dream to entrust to the bureaucracies & delays of court proceedings or state capture. It is a now thing.

As we drum, we are reminded that the kind of change we want cannot be outsourced to the state or former colonisers.

If we want to learn how to time travel from the terrible colonial now that shapes so much of our countries, we must act on people’s time, now.

Not tomorrow, not when the next report comes out, not next year, not the next
as we grapple with election cycles that only seem to nourish toxic political parties

as we grapple with election cycles that only seem to change the faces of tyranny

Abahlali join our circle and drum sense into us, they remind us of their 2004 rallying cry, “NO LAND, NO HOUSE, NO VOTE”.

they rouse us from the illusions cast by these neocolonial states that love their colonial masters more than they do their people

They teach that unless the people’s concerns are taken seriously, we do not have legitimise the farce that state electoral politics can be,
They teach us that people can direct their political energies to direct action, community care and political education.
Their drums teach us that people can & should direct their political energies to the political processes that make the most sense to them.

this living freedom project shows us that a peoples’ politics “must be conducted where poor people live or in places that they can easily access, at the times when they are free, in the languages that they speak”

The revolution cannot be professionalised, yaani si kazi ya kupewa salary, it is a lifetime of principled actions centering common people’s desires and realities, not the state’s and certainly not the World Bank or IMF or whatever acronym stands for imperial power these days.

Abahlali challenge us to build meaningful solidarity links with each other when they chant “DON’T TALK ABOUT US, TALK TO US”

Even as the colonial project breathes,
Even as the state attacks, assasinaates & imprisons their community members, their freedom project still lives.

By their survival, they affirm the power of direct action by self organised communities.

We call in their ungovernable spirit, and we let it change us...

Community is all we have.

To this circle, we call in the spirit of the chipko movement of India, peasant women living in the forests of the Himalayas.
When the state of India auctioned 2500 indigenous trees to loggers, these women knowing that their communities’ wellbeing and that of the trees was knotted together, used their very bodies to impede the loggers. Hugging the trees, clinging to them, refusing to let go, they protected their community.

Here, we say community knowing that it includes non-human kin; the trees, the mushrooms, the insects, the cows, the very earth is part of our community.

Tree huggers, wielded sometimes as an insult. Tree huggers. We honour them here, knowing they are powerful political actors.

We honour these rural women’s brilliance, we honour their teaching— that what we do to the earth, we do to ourselves. We are knitted together, regardless.

We are singing a long song, we return and pick up what our ancestors always knew — when we live in harmonious dance with the earth, we gain powerful allies.

To this circle, we call in the spirit of Walter Rodney’s groundings with his brothers, how he went to meet with brothers and sisters and freedom dreamers and rastas in the gulleys, classrooms, shacks & in people’s homes: learning & teaching,

We call in this revolutionary spirit so that we may learn to practice loving each other more than we fear the state.

We call in the freedom fighters and dreamers of decades past, those murdered, exiled, betrayed, forcibly forgotten, & slandered.

We call in the spirit of Amilcar Cabral who reminds us that while we may witness & support each other in our various struggles, liberation is not an exportable commodity. Each community must deal with its own historical realities, its own context and brew its own medicine. We struggle daily with the contradictions of our lives and let this struggle soak in love and compassion for one another.

We call in the spirit of Wakadinali, of artists & culture workers who make work that reflects these deadly times. We call in the spirit of ukoo flani mau mau, we call in makeba, we call in nina, we call in all those multitudes; who remind us that you have to roll up with your homies, roll up na rende, yaani rende naorganize pamoja, rende ni kugemeana na kujengana, yaani the charm for the path is community.

We call in our mothers and foremothers’ wisdom, they who have been in chamas all their lives, meeting their communities’ needs in the face of patriarchal violence and state neglect, we call in their spirit that they may remind us how to gather and care for each other.

We call in the spirit of the Burkinabe freedom movement, of Thomas Sankara, they circle us and remind us that development means clean drinking water for everyone, not champagne for the few.
We call in the spirit of pan African solidarity, of working people solidarity, of international solidarity. We call in the spirit of Assata Shakur to this circle, Assata who reminds us loudly that we must love each other and protect each other, that it is our duty to fight for our freedom, it is our duty to win.

As we gather, we honour the survival of all those who were not meant to survive. We honour the Palestinian movement, we honour indigenous people across time and space, we honour all those whose names we do not know.

We honour people’s grassroots collectives that mushroom time & time again.

We call in the spirit of the Kamirithu theatre group, We call in the farmers, the researchers, the workers, the unemployed, the artistes, the analysts, the jua kali artisans, market traders, bus drivers and conductors, freedom lovers across time and space who have weaved ways of speaking together and acting together.

*(drumming intensifies for 1:11 minutes interspersed with singing/ululation)*

Gathered here in this circle, so much is clear

It is clear that the sun will set on every empire and every tyranny.

It is clear that we cannot allow colonial relics be they philanthropists, benevolent dictators or experts from above - to adjudicate the wellbeing of our communities.

It is clear that our wellbeing will be assured by our own commitment to dealing with each other & with the people we work with, love with, learn with and hope with. The people we share values and resources with.

Our wellbeing will be decided by how we care for those dispossessed from the fruits of the land: the landless, stateless, poor, queer, trans, disabled, the othered.

We have inherited the trauma and logics of empire
We have also inherited the fire, beauty, wisdom, & ingenuity of freedom fighters
We have inherited our ancestors’ tools

There are colonial logics and there are also the logics of freedom, love, oneness with the earth.
It is clear, gathered here, that our ancestors, our comrades, through time and space have made charms, charms we can work with to summon these freer worlds sooner

We see from their example what the charms are;

We practise being in right relationship with reality, yaani see things as they are, refuse to be swayed by fancy language that cloaks the truth. We talk together, we study together, we learn to clearly name what we see.

Once we collectively practice naming our realities,

We use what we have to get what we want. Yaani the tools, the answers, the how to, will be determined by our communities’ contexts

The state is not our centre

We reject abuse in the name of community, we reject patriarchal violence in the name of community
We reject pedestals and golden leaders, we reject cults of personality, we reject cliques, we reject violation of the self in the name of community

We honour our inner knowing and care for the self even as we brew community

We reject policing ourselves and policing each other
We reject policing people’s bodies, in the name of community
We reject cultures of surveillance in the name of community

We need each other at a molecular level, our very bones and cells know that we need each other

We press these charms into our blood & bless each other

Community is all we have
EPISODE 4 LIST OF SOURCES:

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“Gender Relations and Sustainable Agriculture: Rural Women’s Resistance to Structural Adjustment in Kenya” by Leigh S. Brownhill, Wahu M. Kaara and Terisa E. Turner
https://www.academia.edu/20624551/Gender_Relations_and_Sustainable_Agriculture_Rural_Womens_Resistance_to_Structural_Adjustment_in_Kenya

Women Stand Their Ground Against Big Coal: A guide for women activists in Africa by The WoMin African Gender and Extractives Alliance
https://womin.africa/women-stand-their-ground-against-big-coal/

“The Mozambican Woman in the Revolution” by Central Committee, Frelimo

“Amilcar Cabral and The Development Paradigms in Africa: Revisiting the Earlier Strategies for the African Union” by Godwyns Ade’ Agbude, Ademola Lukman Lawal, Ebikaboere Ovia

“Amilcar Cabral's Notes on the Impasses to Africa's Development” by Godwyns Ade’ Agbude
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350819019_AMILCAR_CABRAL’S_NOTES_ON_THE_IMPASSES_TO_AFRICA’S_DEVELOPMENT

“eKhenana residents are tilling for freedom” by Nomfundo Xolo
https://www.newframe.com/ekhenana-residents-are-tilling-for-freedom/

Feminist Africa Journal: https://feministafrica.net/feminist-africa-archive/
CURATORS

Mumbi Kanyogo
Mumbi Kanyogo is a writer, educator and organizer; working, thinking and writing in solidarity with anyone and everyone working towards the end of capitalism, imperialism and cis-heteropatriarchy. She enjoys listening to her very carefully curated selection of podcasts, cooking and caring for loved ones and watching P-Valley. She holds dear the experience of learning to see familiar things through newly-encountered lenses, perspectives, realities.

Muthoni Mwangi
Muthoni Mwangi is a writer, poet and researcher who knows that culture work can be freedom work. Her work is guided by radical African feminist ethos that center community building. Her work has been featured on “Paza Sauti: Poems For The Start of the World Series” and “Woven With Brown Thread”, a poetry anthology collated by Upile Chisala. She enjoys pondering the great questions of existence and eating potatoes. She has a playlist for every season and is raising two plants.

Chao Tayiana
Chao Tayiana is a Kenyan historian and digital heritage specialist that works at the intersection of history, digitization and public education. She uses digital technologies to unearth previously hidden or suppressed historical narratives. She is the founder of African Digital Heritage, a co-founder of the Museum of British Colonialism and a co-founder of Open Restitution Africa.
SCRIPT WRITERS AND PERFORMERS

Maureen Kasuku
Maureen Kasuku is a Socialist Feminist and a founding member of Feminist Conversations Kenya (FCK). A collective of grassroots feminists advancing socialism one conversation at a time. When she's not organizing and politicking, she likes to curate her music playlist for different moods, read horoscopes on Capricorns, watch cat videos and go shawarma hunting.

The LAM sisterhood
The LAM sisterhood is an award-winning content studio that fills the world with stories for African women to feel seen, heard and beloved. From producing an original children's podcast KaBrazen – Our rich histories for our little ones, to teaching their unique collaborative creation methods at Stanford, Africa Leadership Centre, NYU and others, their multimedia works span multiple disciplines including film, stage, audio storytelling and experiential theater. You can subscribe to their monthly newsletter here.

Karwitha Kirimi
Karwitha Kirimi is a writer, artist and researcher based in East Africa. She's organized within the Kenyan student and feminist movements. She has been published at The Elephant, Down River Road and Mother Mercy. Her work is informed by African Feminist philosophies of care and freedom. Karwitha is currently researching embodied poetics within African Arts. She loves to loiter and look at the sky.

Stoneface Bombaa
Stoneface Bombaa is a community organizer at the Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC), where he runs the MSJC Kids Club and Art for Social Change. He is also a member of the Mathare Green Movement (MGM), a group of volunteers who, through planting trees throughout the informal settlement, practice collective imagination and action. His work at MSJC and MGM have given him a clear view of the “ecological injustice” that permeates life in Nairobi’s ghettos: exclusion from basic infrastructure like water, roads, electricity, exclusion from healthcare, exclusion from education, and so on. Stoneface has spent time helping young people in Mathare understand the systemic nature of the everyday violence that shapes their lives. Until Everyone Is Free is an extension of that work.

Felix Omondi
Felix Omondi is a poet, community journalist. Felix translated significant portions of the script from Until Everyone is Free and is a co-writer and performer on the project. He translated episode 2 on Land, labor and liberation from English to Sheng.
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