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**Inside
Mogadishu's
biggest Covid
hospital**

Photo: Abdirahman Yusuf

Olusegun Obasanjo

Agbe L'oba House, Quarry Road, Ibara
P.O. Box 2286, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

August 8, 2020.

His Excellency,
Prince Dapo Abiodun,
Executive Governor of Ogun State,
Governor's Office,
Oke Mosan, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

Your Excellency,

LETTER OF CONDOLENCE

I received the sad news of the demise of Senator Esho Jinadu (Buruji Kashmu) a significant citizen of Ogun State. Please accept my condolence and that of my family on this irreparable loss.

The life and history of the departed have lessons for those of all us on this side of the veil. Senator Esho Jinadu (Buruji Kashmu) in his lifetime used the maneuver of law and politics to escape from facing justice on alleged criminal offence in Nigeria and outside Nigeria. But no legal, political, cultural, social or even medical maneuver could stop the cold hand of death when the Creator of all of us decides that the time is up.

May Allah forgive his sin and accept his soul into Aljanah, and may God grant his family and friends fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

Yours sincerely

Olusegun Obasanjo
OLUSEGUN OBASANJO

Speaking ill of the dead: Not even death could spare the late senator Buruji Kashamu from the infamously sharp tongue of former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo. Kashamu was a controversial figure: he was accused by US prosecutors of running an international heroin smuggling ring, and spent many years fighting extradition. He was also rumoured to be the inspiration for 'Alaji', the fictional drug kingpin from the TV series *Orange is the New Black*.

Inside:

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In the headlines this week

Samira Sawlani

Chad and Mali

Usually a bottle of shampoo is just shampoo. But held aloft as you stand in front of the mirror thanking your agent and your mother's friend's neighbour, it can become a Golden Globe or a Grammy! It's good to practice your acceptance speech – you never know when the Academy will award you an Oscar for best performance in a Zoom meeting, after all.

President Idriss Déby Itno of Chad was *so* ready for his influencer-worthy photoshoot when he accepted the title of “field marshal” at an independence day ceremony this week – which, seeing as he

gave it to himself, is about as meaningful as a bottle of shampoo.

General, field marshal, president – it's taken him five terms to collect these titles. The only one the president doesn't seem to want to add is “former”.

President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita isn't keen on it either. But many in Mali believe he truly deserves the aforementioned “f” word. They've even taken to the streets of Bamako, demanding he accept the award.

He declined the honour, but graciously treated those urging him to step down to a lavish high-security reception featuring some sparkling tear gas and vintage crowd-suppression tactics.



Idriss for success: Chad's President Déby anointed himself Field Marshal this week (Photo: supplied)

Burundi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe

If Keita is gunning for the award for “Greatest Crackdown of the Week”, he has some stiff competition.

In Burundi three petrol station employees were sentenced to 30 years in jail for throwing stones at President Ndayishimiye’s convoy. Seems they weren’t given access to lawyers, just brought to court on a Sunday and summarily sentenced.

Meanwhile, authorities in Tanzania are cracking down on the media. Broadcasters must now get permission before airing foreign content – an edict coincidentally issued *just* after Radio Free Africa aired a BBC interview with opposition leader Tundu Lissu.

But the frontrunner must surely be Zimbabwe. This week a 22-year-old woman was arrested for “insulting the president” after supposedly criticising President Emerson Mnangagwa’s “lack of patriotism”. Meanwhile, journalist Hopewell Chin’ono arrived at his bail hearing in leg irons. Since moving to a maximum security prison he has not been able to see his lawyer and has been living on nothing but biscuits and water.

El Presidente must want that trophy real bad. Just as well it’s for crackdowns, because we doubt his shampoo bottle is ever going to be replaced by an award for human rights.

Namibia, Somalia and Malawi

Namibia won’t be awarding any accolades to Germany after President Hage Geingob rejected the European country’s offer of compensation for the killing of thousands

of Herero and Nama people during a colonial-era uprising.

One of the issues is with the Germans’ vocabulary. It seems the words “genocide” and “reparations” don’t yet feature in their official lexicon on the matter. (Don’t worry, we can help: try “*Völkermord*” and “*Wiedergutmachung*”.)

Far more worthy of awards are those in Somalia who have risen up against a proposed law that would legitimise child marriage and make securing a conviction for sexual violence even harder for survivors.

In Malawi this week, however, the high court ordered police to compensate women and girls who were raped by officers at Msundwe last year. Justice was served largely due to the work of the Women Lawyers Association of Malawi, and the survivors themselves – they deserve all the accolades we can think of.

And finally, not worthy of any awards whatsoever are those broadcasters whose definition of “entertainment” includes gawking at desperate and destitute refugees adrift in tiny boats in the middle of the English channel, as if their plight was some kind of dehumanised reality show.

They aren’t chasing fame or celebrity or awards. They’re fleeing tyranny, war and devastation. As British-Somali poet Warsan Shire once said: “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.”

These are people who have lost their homes, their livelihoods and their freedom. Shame on all those trying to steal their dignity, too. ■

The Week in Numbers

\$205-million

The annual value of peanut exports from Sudan. It is the fifth-largest peanut producer in the world. This week, the country's trade minister abruptly banned all peanut exports, saying that peanuts should instead be processed inside the country. "It is as if France banned the export of wine overnight, or if Italy stopped selling its spaghetti abroad," said one trader.

6.0

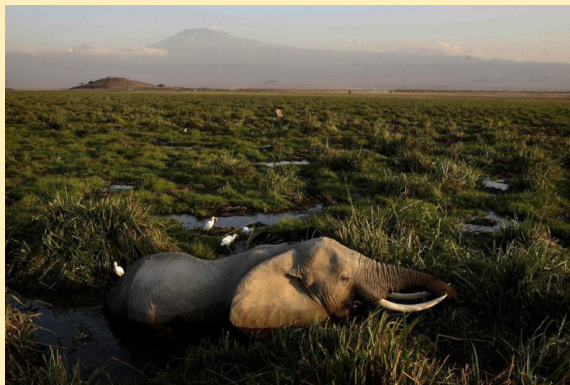
The magnitude of the earthquake that hit Tanzania's capital Dar es Salaam on Wednesday evening. No damage or injuries were reported, but the tremors were felt as far away as Nairobi.

10%

The additional tax, per trip, to be paid by Uber and Bolt drivers in Lagos. This is according to new regulations being introduced by the Lagos State Government, which will come into effect on August 20. This new tax is likely to be passed on to passengers, making rideshares significantly more expensive.

5-billion

The number of trees that the Ethiopian government plans to plant during this rainy season. This is part of the country's ambitious Green Legacy campaign. Critics, however, have questioned the effectiveness of such indiscriminate tree-planting.



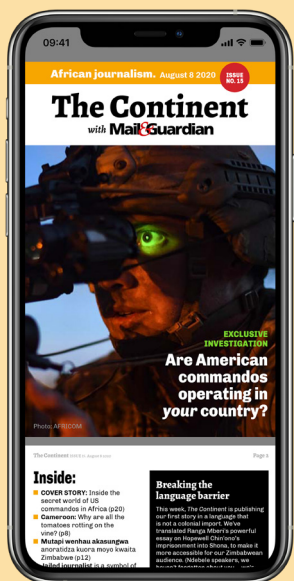
7

The number of elephants poached in Kenya so far this year. This is down from 34 in all of 2019, and 80 in 2018. "In the last couple of years, we have managed to tame poaching in this country," said tourism minister Najib Balala.

(Photo: Goran Tomasevic)

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The waves sound different now. Heavy. Sticky. Suffocating.

After a massive oil spill, Mauritius has declared a state of environmental emergency

(Photo: AFP)

**Deeya Jahajeeah
and Jess Auerbach**

As soon as you head south, you start smelling the oil. Before long you have a headache and, if you are near the coast, you quickly become ill. The south of Mauritius is already the poorer part of the complex island's socioeconomic system, and now the effects of the Wakashio disaster may linger for generations.

On July 25, the MV Wakashio, a Panama-flagged, Japanese-owned freighter ran aground within swimming distance of two international marine heritage sites.

For 13 days, the government did not act to remove it, negotiating instead with the boat's insurers to determine who

would carry the associated cost.

The public was not informed of the 4 000 tonnes of oil inside until it started leaking. Even then the situation was largely ignored until photographs shared on social media began to circulate.

Now the disaster has been flagged by Greenpeace as possibly the worst ecological crisis in Mauritius' history; the government itself has declared a state of environmental emergency.

As of Wednesday afternoon, most of the oil left on the tanker had been pumped off, according to shipowner Nagashiki shipping. But an estimated 1 000 tonnes of oil had already leaked into the ocean.

Having overcome Covid-19, tourism was due to reopen and Mauritius had carefully strategised to open the skies.

But in the face of contaminated oceans, it is unlikely that planes full of tourists will come.

Nothing could have prepared the country for the challenge it now faces. Food security, already fragile, will be made much worse as fish, aquaculture and the entire ecosystem slowly become poisoned.

Yet in the face of such tragedy, the best of Mauritius is also emerging. Around the island, hairdressers are offering free haircuts so that the trimmings can be used to soak up oil. Sugarcane remnants are being turned into massive barriers to contain the spread. Volunteers are being fed and cared for. Animals are being carefully washed and housed, endemic species are being rescued by hand from the famous Île aux Aigrettes to be protected on the mainland.

Partnerships between public and private sector organisations are being forged. An international fundraiser

supported by Greta Thunberg is bringing in resources the tiny government could not otherwise afford.

At this point, it is unclear whether the spread of oil is under control or not. Japan is “sorry” and has sent a relief team. France is also supporting. On Mauritian streets and along its coastline, there is disillusionment and despair with government directives. While politicians wade through insurance paperwork, the oil is slowly spreading up the coast.

The waves sound different now: Heavy. Sticky. Suffocating. Even for those above the surface, breathing air.

But one thing is apparent: Mauritians will not allow their home to be sacrificed so lightly. For now, there is urgent work that must be done. Later, there will be time for rage and grief. ■

Deeya Jahajeeh is a Mauritian marine biologist and PhD student at the University of Mauritius. Jess Auerbach is a senior lecturer in Anthropology at North West University



Clean up crew:
People scoop oil
from the beach
near Blue Bay
Marine Park
in south-east
Mauritius
 (Photo: Daren
 Mauree/L'Express
 Maurice/AFP)

Mozambique

Insurgents occupy Mocímboa da Praia – again

Luis Nhachote

Insurgents in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado on Tuesday occupied the town of Mocímboa da Praia on Tuesday, a strategic port. Five days of fighting between the well-armed insurgents and government forces resulted in the deaths of dozens of Mozambican soldiers, and the sinking of a navy patrol boat. The army claims to have killed 60 insurgents.

"The Mocímboa da Praia you knew is totally destroyed," Remane Dalsuco, a resident, told the *Mail & Guardian*. "Soldiers from the defence and security forces were killed and the port was taken. All the markets, shops, the hospital, and the secondary school were vandalised. There are no minimum security conditions to continue in Mocimboa." Like many other civilians, Dalsuco and his family have fled the town, and are moving north to Pemba, the provincial capital.

Insurgents have attacked and briefly

occupied the town on several previous occasions. This time was notable because of the sophisticated weaponry they used, including heavy artillery and drones, a military source told the *M&G*.

A helicopter belonging to the Dyck Advisory Group – a mercenary outfit assisting the Mozambican government – was reportedly unable to influence the outcome of the battle.

The motivations and identity of the insurgents remains opaque, although the Islamic State did post images on its social media channels of what it claimed were dead Mozambican soldiers.

The fighting resulted in the deaths of Mozambican soldiers and the sinking of a navy patrol boat

Mocímboa da Praia is not far from natural gas deposits worth around \$60 billion. On Monday – the day before the attack – President Felipe Nyusi confidently assured David Malpass, the president of the World Bank, that "the insurgency does not threaten gas exploration". This Monday, Nyusi is due to host the 40th summit of the Southern African Development Community. He may not be as confident by then. ■



Photo: Bill Clark/
CQ-Roll Call, Inc./
Getty Images

Kampala, Osama, Boatman and Boom

PHOTO STORY

On Tuesday evening, in the minutes after Kamala Harris was confirmed as Joe Biden's running mate in the upcoming US election, 'Kampala' started to trend on Twitter. This had nothing to do with the undoubted charms of Uganda's capital city, unfortunately; and everything to do with the inability of autocorrect to handle non-Western names.

As Slate reported: "This isn't the first time that spelling technologies have

mangled a politician of colour's name... spellcheck in earlier versions of Microsoft Word and Outlook had a hard time with Barack Obama's name during his rise to prominence. The 2003 version of Word encouraged typists to change Obama to Osama or Bema, while Outlook 2003 suggested Boatman, Agama, and Boom."

Harris does have one African connection worth mentioning. At the age of five, she moved with her mother Shyamala and her grandfather PV Gopalan – an Indian diplomat – to Lusaka. According to the *Lusaka Times*: "The young Kamala was oblivious to the intrigue swirling around her, with Gopalan's government-issued car whisking him to meetings with Zambian officials and diplomats dropping by for visits. What she remembers is the soil of Lusaka, rich with copper, which glowed a fiery red." ■

How to report on humanitarian crises: A guide for Western journalists

The world has become a more complicated place – that doesn't mean your reporting has to be

SATIRE

Patrick Gathara

As the world has changed in fundamental ways, so journalists have been left in a quandary; struggling to understand and explain dangerous new landscapes to their audiences. But why change what's been working so well for so long? That's why I've put together this handy guide to remind a new generation of Western reporters of the hallowed traditions that must be maintained when reporting on humanitarian crises.

The most important thing to remember is that humanitarian crises happen only in the areas of the world considered to be in the Global South, or the Third World. The terms should not be used to refer to any occurrences in Western Europe or North America (or the West — always capitalised) or else you may end up confusing your audience, whom you should always assume lives there.

Keep in mind that mislabelling problems in the West as “humanitarian crises” can result in the diversion of

humanitarian aid, as well as global attention, depriving you of an audience and endangering hundreds of thousands of much-needed expatriate jobs in the aid sector. As much as possible, problems like chronic child malnutrition in “developed” countries such as the United States should be referred to as policy failures and never as global emergencies.

Another mistake rookie writers on humanitarian affairs are likely to make is in their use of the term “food aid”. As with “humanitarian crisis”, the term “food aid” conjures up images of starving kids in poor African villages, not poor neighbourhoods in Detroit, and so must be used accordingly.

Maintaining this mental distinction ensures that help can be delivered where it is really needed: to humanitarian workers in the developing world. Keep in mind that the Third World is utterly dependent on Western charity and that any interruption of this in favour of the less well-off people in the West would have catastrophic consequences for the hapless natives in the Global South.



Them, not us

Be careful about language that may be construed to indicate that Western countries may be less than democratic. This is most crucial when reporting on elections.

When the person with the most votes doesn't actually win, this is only a problem when it happens in the Third World. There it can be legitimately described as a subversion of the people's democratic will. If it occurs in the West, it is easily explained away, or seen as a quirk. Don't forget that elections are only stolen in places where humanitarian crises occur and, as we have already established, these occur only in the Third World.

Other distinctions are just as important. For example, the West has

governments and administrations, never regimes. When people in Africa provide labour in return for money, this is an innovative cash-for-work programme; in the West it is just work. No western countries have "tribal" or "ethnic" tensions.

The world has clearly become a more complicated place, but that does not mean that your reporting has to be. Continuing to observe the guidelines indicated here will ensure that audiences are able to unambiguously identify and respond to humanitarian crises in a manner that preserves their moral superiority and does not endanger jobs in the aid sector. ■

Patrick Gathara is a writer and award-winning political cartoonist based in Nairobi

Burna Boy bends Afrobeats to his will



Kwanele Sosibo

With *Twice As Tall*, his follow up to the breakthrough *African Giant*, Afrobeats star Burna Boy does some battling with his famed ego.

His new album – released on Friday – is his fifth studio recording, and brings with it the top billing guaranteed by financial and strategic backing from Diddy, with the record industry mogul being one of the executive producers on the project.

One of the things Diddy's pedigree brings the artist are big-name American

producers, such as Anderson .Paak and Timbaland, with the latter contributing his own take on Afrobeats on the compelling *Wettin Dey Sup*. But there is a sense that these are nice-to-haves as opposed to being vital to the trajectory of Burna Boy's already sure-footed career.

Diddy's congratulatory hype aside, there is a vulnerability to *Twice As Tall*, even as it fires shots directed at haters and naysayers, and timely (if obligatory) reflections on equal rights and police brutality.

With the ubiquity of *African Giant*

being capped off by *JA ARA E*, the laidback, solo feature on the Beyoncé-helmed *The Lion King: The Gift*, Burna is also eager to party. But that collected, contemplative demeanour suggested by *JA ARA E* works its way into *Twice As Tall*'s life-of-the-party instincts, toning the volume down a little bit, as indicated by the vocally lush, and delicately percussive *Time Flies* (featuring Sauti Sol). The dancefloor awaits, it seems, but there is also the gravity and temporality of the moment to contend with.

At this juncture, Burna Boy should be feeling 10 feet tall. He had to swallow humble pie in 2019 after a Twitter beef with South African artist AKA – one that got caught up in the fake news storm that was the late-year xenophobic attacks in South Africa – led to some cancelled performances and, perhaps more damagingly, a questioning of his political astuteness.

But that's in the past, and songs like *Level Up*, employing the reliable vocal services of Youssou N'Dour to help craft a luxurious, unhurried dancehall-esque testament to his mettle, can be read as a settling of a score.

There is lots of sheen and polish on the album, with each song, it seems, staking its own fresh claim on the sonic palette that constitutes Afrobeats. The formula, if it exists, is putty in Burna's hands. There are overtures to hip-hop (such as *Naughty By Nature*, featuring Naughty by Nature) and even Michael Jackson, with the Chris Martin-featuring *Monsters You Made* seeming to take melodic cues from The Gloved One's *Dirty Diana*. These



Sonic statement: The album boasts polished Afrobeats (Photo: supplied)

stadium jams, although not predominant, are not jarringly at odds with the sparse polyrhythms more commonplace in Afrobeats, found in songs such as *Comma*.

In this sense, *Twice As Tall* is not unchecked expansionism. There is still a sense that Burna Boy has a core constituency with whom common ground is still important. The sentiment is strong on songs such as *No Fit Vex*, with its ruminations fitting for the album's lockdown recording environment.

Ultimately, Burna Boy's politics, though, remain difficult to pinpoint. What the lockdown reflections (at least as evinced by the album) reveal is a man whose reflections stem from an earnest place. Whether he has figured out a formula to infuse these organically into his music and persona, beyond his efforts up to now, is up for debate. As long as he can serve up those understated, kaleidoscopic melodies and effortless phrases, world domination is his. ■



On the front line in Mogadishu

“I was determined to document the pandemic, so I took my camera to the place that scared me most: the only public hospital in Somalia that is treating Covid-19 patients.”

PHOTO ESSAY
Abdirahman Yusuf

“We want to inform the Somali people that today, March 16 2020, we can confirm the first case of coronavirus in the country,” said Health Minister Fawziya Abikar in a televised statement.

Suddenly, panic set in. All of a sudden the virus was real and on our shores.

For years, Somalia has struggled with conflict, and one of its many repercussions has been a fragile healthcare system. How would it manage a virus that had brought the world to a standstill?

As of August 14, the country’s cases stand at over 3,220 and at least 93 people have died, according to the World Health Organisation. Authorities have instructed people to stay home and follow restrictions.

Uncertainty has taken over.

But not everybody can stay at home. The people at the forefront of fighting the pandemic barely get to go home and I was determined to document the challenges they face and, in turn, tell their stories as well.

I set out for the place that scared me most: De Martini Hospital in Mogadishu – the only public hospital in Somalia treating Covid-19 patients.

My camera in tow, I was ready to show the world Somalia’s Covid-19 stories and what goes into the headlines and statistics.

Kitted out in full personal protective equipment (PPE), I felt as though I was wearing anxiety itself. It weighed on my body and made me uncomfortable. As I struggled to adjust, I observed, in awe, medics treating patients and giving instructions while wearing the PPE, in





Mogadishu's humid heat, unflinching in their commitment to the jobs they had given their lives to.

“I am not only a doctor here. I also have to be a paramedic, porter, carpenter, nurse and lab technician. You have to be a jack-of-all-trades, no time to relax or sleep. We sweat to save lives.” – Doctor

Although it felt like an eternity, I only spent a couple of hours in the hospital because of the restrictions extended to the media. When I left, I felt a newfound respect and empathy for the health workers who spend most of their days there, working around the clock.

They have made incredible personal sacrifices for the benefit of others. Many of them were called in to help just before the holy month of Ramadan, having to forgo returning to their homes and families outside of the city.

With little time to eat or sleep, they work under pressures most of us cannot imagine, away from their homes, with barely a moment to call their loved ones. Watching them, I wondered how much consideration was being given to their mental health and wellbeing.

And, on the physical side, levels of Covid-19 transmission among health workers have also rung alarm bells, according to the medics I spoke to at the hospital. Lack of PPE and other supplies are contributing to the ongoing spread of the virus.

To put it into perspective, Mogadishu has a population of around 2.5-million people, not including the displaced communities living in camps on the

outskirts of the city. De Martini Hospital has 266 isolation beds, 20 intensive care unit beds and, on average, 70% of daily Covid-19 tests come back positive.

Despite these challenges, the medical staff are doing much more than they are paid to do and I was touched by their dedication. I saw nurses ensuring that patients hooked to oxygen tanks were treated with the utmost care and dignity, and prioritising their comfort.

As has been the case globally, widespread misconceptions about the virus, fake news and rumours have contributed to its spread in many areas of my country. Many Somalis still question

“Our medical team had arrived at the most difficult time and the most intense period of the battle against the virus. It’s really hard and the conditions are poor, but we’re trying our best.” – Nurse

if the virus is real.

I hope this photo series depicts the truth – that Covid-19 is very real and





that it is affecting people across the board, from those who've contracted the virus to their families, to the medical staff that are making sacrifice upon sacrifice to save those lives.

I hope it reminds us to never undervalue or underestimate the importance of doctors, nurses, cleaners, admin staff and the countless others who help us when we fall sick.

I would like people to see these photos and decide for themselves what's right, what's wrong, what's real and what's not. And the only way for that to happen is to tell stories from the front line of the disease, where the real work is being done. It's important for people to see the photos of Covid-19 on the front lines. And they were not easy to capture. The fact that De Martini is a government institution made it difficult to take photos of the

actual hospital. Often, getting access to any government building is risky in the country. After I finished shooting, hospital authorities went so far as to go through my memory card.

The common theme in most of the images is the PPE suit and the mask on the nameless medical staff. Because of security concerns, the hospital would not even share with me the names of the medical staff I spoke to.

I long for a day when these things will be nothing more than a memory, a thing of the past.

Since sharing some images of this series on my instagram (@cyprints) I have had many people from various places reach out to me and share their experiences of how they have been affected by Covid-19.

It doesn't seem to matter where I look – it's everywhere. ■



SO, YOU THINK YOU'RE A REAL PAN-AFRICAN?

Take this quiz to find out how well you really know our continent

1. What is the highest peak in Africa?
2. Which country used to be known as Abyssinia?
3. Idi Amin was the dictator of which country?
4. Which country was Kofi Annan from?
5. Where would one visit the Serengeti National Park?
6. 'The Gold Coast' refers to which country?
7. The demonym for Kenya is Kenyans. What is the demonym for Togo?
8. True or false: Penguins can be found on the continent.
9. Which country has three capitals – administrative, judicial and legislative?
10. Who is the president of Rwanda?
11. Which Kenyan writer wrote the novel *A Grain of Wheat*?
12. A 19-year-old from which country joined his country's presidential race this week?

How did I do?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we will send you the answers immediately.

0-4

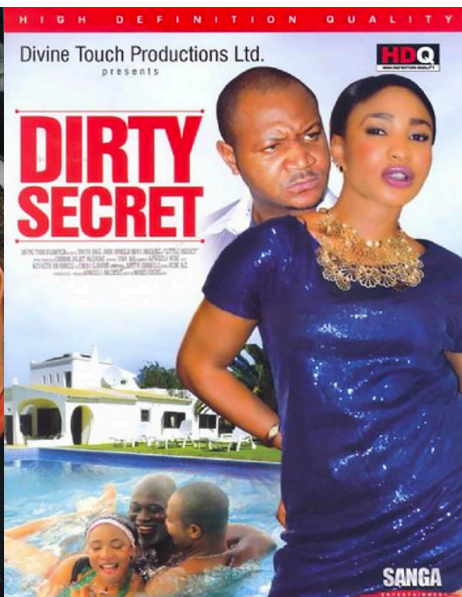
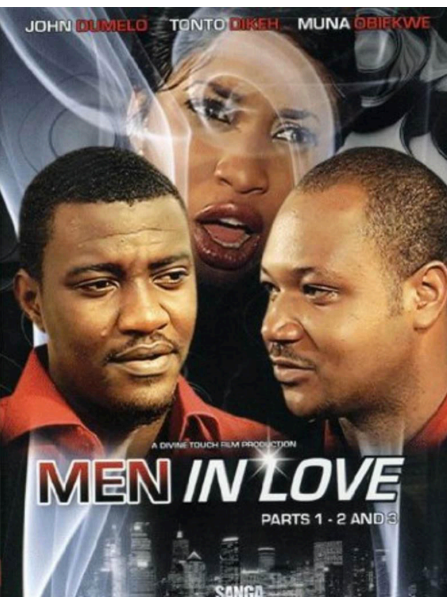
"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

5-8

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

9-12

"Decolonisation starts in the mind."



How Nollywood entrenched homophobia in Nigeria

Mainstream movies have perpetuated ugly stereotypes about queer people – with even uglier real world consequences

Vincent Desmond

Nigeria is not an easy place to be queer. In 2014, the former president of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan passed into law a Bill that became the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act.

The passage of the law gave way to heightened attacks on lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people by mobs who said they were working for the president.

Over the past six years, the law has led to varying levels of state-sanctioned violence, such as the arrest of 47 gay men and their subsequent trials, not to mention the continued harassment and arrests of queer people.

Despite being stifled under this homophobic legislation, queer people's effect on popular culture is still evident.

Examples include Bobrisky, a media personality and openly trans woman; and singer Odunsi (The Engine), of the alté-music subgenre, who has drawn inspiration from queer culture for their music videos. Fashion brands, including Orange Culture and Maxivive, have challenged gender and sexuality norms in their designs, echoing the spirit of global queer activism and resistance.

But being visible is not always a good thing. The art that features queerness, especially in the Nigerian movie industry, has tended to perpetuate stereotypes

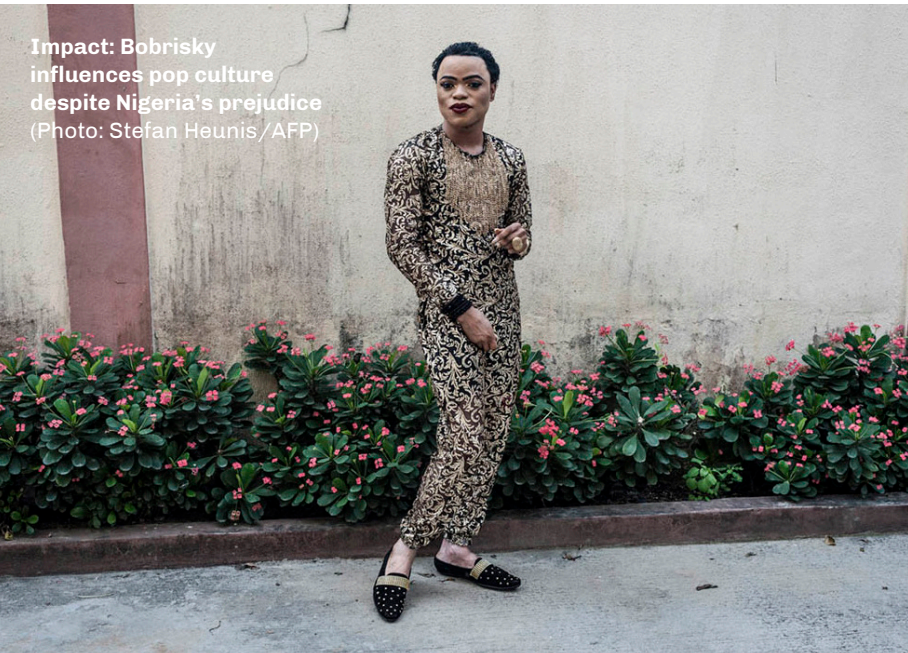
But being visible is not always a good thing. Art that features queerness, especially in the mainstream movie industry of Nigeria, has tended to perpetuate homophobic stereotypes – the same ones that arguably informed Act.

In 2010, before the Bill was signed into law, Moses Ebere released *Men In Love*, a film about a young married couple whose rocky marriage is shattered when they meet an enigmatic gay man who attempts to seduce and eventually rapes the husband. Over the course of the film we are introduced to several gay men, each a similar stereotypical character with little depth beyond an overdone drawl, a flair for the dramatic, a love for wanton debauchery and, perhaps the most damaging of all, the reduction of a romantic homosexual relationship to sex and money.

The characters are hollow. Their humanity, and anything beyond being sex-driven maniacs creating chaos, is removed. They are empty shells performing what some cis-heterosexual people believe is homosexuality.

Another film, *Emotional Crack*, depicts a loving couple whose lives are ruined by a lesbian who seduces the wife and sets out to destroy the marriage. Both films – and most Nigerian films that feature queer characters – tell a story of how queer people plan to destroy the sanctity of marriage; how they are beautiful people you can not trust, because they want to turn you into a queer person and destroy your life.

Impact: Bobrisky influences pop culture despite Nigeria's prejudice
(Photo: Stefan Heunis/AFP)



The subtext of these films is a warning to parents that this is what your child will become if they “choose” to be homosexual. The view that gay men seek out straight men to force their way on them has led to many straight people avoiding people they suspect or know to be queer and, in extreme cases, pre-emptively attacking them.

The 2010 film *Dirty Secrets*, featuring a bisexual gigolo, repeats these tropes. It plays to a particular idea that government officials often use to justify the Act and garner support for it: that same-sex attraction is a “gateway sin” that leads almost directly to other deviant sexual relations such as paedophilia and bisexuality.

The argument goes like this: if lawmakers legalise homosexuality, then they have to legalise every other form of “deviant” sexual relationships. In *Dirty Secrets*, the message is clear: this is the world we will live in if homosexuality is legalised. Cue an angry mob fighting what they believe is a righteous fight against an immoral world.

Most of these films were released at a time when the country did not yet have laws that criminalised queerness, and they shaped the way many Nigerians view queer people – as cursed or possessed, deliberately

trying to destroy heterosexual relationships, dead set on converting straight people.

What then is the future of queer cinema in a country like Nigeria? Will more accurate and sensitive queer stories be told in mainstream movies? The answer is not as straightforward as one might hope.

Producer and director Mildred Okwo believes the younger, bolder generation of Nigerians makes possible the positive representation of queer people. “A lot of young people who are gay and lesbian are living their lives and I think if that continues to happen, writers will write about what is happening around them,” she says. “That being the case there will be a more positive representation.”

But Okwo also points out that the current state of the industry is a result of veterans in Nollywood who care more about portraying society as they think it is, rather than how it should or could be.

“Nollywood is rarely forward-thinking,” she says. “People rarely realise they can create worlds with movies and create them as they want them to be. So when we have people who are more creative, who are forward-thinking, who look into the future and depict what they see there in films today, then we’ll have more positive LGBTQ+ representation.”

In recent years, several short and feature films with queer leads telling more rounded and humane stories have come out of Nollywood. But many of these movies do not enjoy the mainstream spotlight.

Filmmaker Asurf Oluseyi, who has worked on several of these films, says: “No one can represent you and tell your story better than you can. Chances are, you will help others and yourself in the process.”

But it isn’t that easy. Securing funding for these movies is a hassle and when that is done, the movies may be banned – as happened in Kenya with Wanuri Kahiu’s *Rafiki*. The Kenyan Film Classification Board asked *Rafiki*’s director to change the movie’s ending, stating it was too hopeful and positive for a film with homosexual leads.

It is not hard to imagine this being the story in Nigeria. But as streaming becomes the go-to and with Netflix setting up camp in Nigeria, there is hope that Nigerians will have access to more movies in which the queer characters are more than just stereotypes. ■

In recent years, several short and feature films with queer leads telling more rounded and humane stories have come out of Nollywood. But many do not enjoy the mainstream spotlight

Can Bobi Wine be more than a one hit wonder?

For all Bobi Wine's evident popularity, it remains to be seen if he can build a political machine capable of posing a serious threat to Uganda's president

ANALYSIS

**Su Muhereza and
Eshban Kwesiga**

Uganda's next general election is less than a year away. The 37-year-old musician and opposition member of parliament Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu – better known by his stage name Bobi Wine – will run against President Museveni for the top job.

Bobi will struggle to win the election in 2021, for many of the same reasons that veteran opposition leader Kizza Besigye has failed to unseat the incumbent, despite many attempts.

In Uganda, the police, the military, intelligence agencies, resident district commissioners, the Uganda Communications Commission and the Electoral Commission all work to ensure that the electoral process is a mere feature of Museveni and the ruling party's hold on power, not the basis for it.

Museveni has been in power since 1986 and has won every election since.

Despite this history, Bobi does not seem to be daunted. Over the past months, he

has run a campaign encouraging young people to register for their national identity documents so that they can vote in 2021. He is rumoured to be in multiple conversations with select opposition political parties to form an alliance or announce a joint candidacy.

His emergence as an energetic political alternative to Museveni has created understandable excitement in certain circles. But for all his evident popularity, Bobi's success will depend on his ability to build the political machinery necessary to compete with Museveni's ruling party. So far, his capacity for this is untested.

Bobi the Messiah?

Bobi is a relatively inexperienced politician. He ran for office for the first time in 2017 – and won. Ironically, he started out as a moderate critic who wanted President Museveni to reform. He even admitted in an April 2019 interview that he had no real policy disagreements with Museveni.

However, in the Museveni administration there is no room for moderate critics who also attract big crowds, and



New challenger, old challenges: Bobi Wine needs more than just popularity to beat Uganda's president (Photo: Sumy Sadurni/AFP)

fellow opposition leaders have been wary of his popularity, worrying that he would consign them to political oblivion.

Yet Bobi initially resisted transforming his People Power campaign into a political party, preferring to attack the status quo of the Ugandan political landscape through the power of a movement – people power in its literal sense.

Eventually, Bobi realised that he cannot change a game from the outside. In a move that surprised many and annoyed his opponents, Bobi announced in July 2020 that his People Power movement had “acquired” a registered but dormant political party: the National Unity Platform (NUP). He displayed a level of political astuteness by realising that it would be futile to run as an independent candidate, and that the Electoral Commission could very well thwart his efforts should he try to register a new political party.

Yet despite this shrewdness, with only seven months left until the election in February 2021, the NUP does not have the time required to build up a nationwide membership and vote protection infrastructure, and is unlikely to win an election. How could he beat the ruling party machine whose web spans from State House to village-level leadership?

Bobi's celebrity is an advantage that he has long needed to lock down with solid infrastructure. Beyond working to resurrect a defunct political party, Bobi needs to cultivate deep contacts and representatives in the different districts across the country who can brief him on local politics – influencers and opinion leaders – so that when he arrives in a specific area, he is speaking to local and community issues.

Considering the strict guidelines on in-person public campaigns created by the Covid-19 pandemic, these representatives would also be able to speak on Bobi's behalf in the scenario that he is unable to meet citizens.

While Bobi wants to make history, he is unlikely to make it as President of Uganda. This time, at least. However, he may well find himself in a position to recast the opposition and political landscape in Uganda by rebuilding the NUP, attracting a new breed of politician to his cause, galvanising the party membership with his fans and supporters, and building on his influence and kingmaker status.

If Bobi Wine can play the long game, he might prove to be more than just an idea that burns brightly, but briefly. ■

Su Muhereza works on governance and political transitions in East and Southern Africa. Eshban Kwesiga works on contemporary issues on rights, governance and human development in the Great Lakes region.

Lies, damn lies and WhatsApp

Why it pays to listen to Zimbabwe's rumour mill

Nicole Beardsworth
and Nic Cheeseman

The rumours were unequivocal: It was crucial that we stay at our desks. Under no circumstances should we turn off our phones. The president was about to be deposed.

He wasn't, of course.

Six days later, another message on WhatsApp: the military was about to step in to remove Emmerson Mnangagwa from power.

But as we write, President Mnangagwa is still in office – despite at least five times that the end of his tenure has been confidently predicted by supposedly well-connected sources within his administration.

This is the work of Zimbabwe's energetic rumour mill, and it will be immediately familiar to all Zimbabweans who follow the country's politics. It will also be recognisable, no doubt, to Kenyans and Nigerians, whose respective rumour mills are no less rapacious.

Rumours and fake news shape each other but are not the same thing. Fake news tends to involve circulating a message that claims that something has happened when it has not. Spreading a rumour involves claiming to have insider

knowledge about something that is about to happen. The most effective rumours – the ones that make you stay at your desk – are therefore those from someone who really could have access to that kind of information. A former politician, a well-placed journalist, a senior civil servant – even an academic known to have contacts in high places.

It is not just any old story that grabs your attention, but the one that is shared only with you, by someone you know, and fits with what you already suspect. “The Malawian government is planning to rig the 2020 election by mobilising underage people to register to vote”. “President Kenyatta will later today sack Deputy President William Ruto in a bid to ensure that the Kenyan presidency remains in the hands of his Kikuyu community”. “Museveni is so scared of opposition leader Bobi Wine that he will postpone the 2021 elections early next week, using Covid as an excuse.”

Each country's rumour mill is different, of course, reflecting its own history and sense of who has privileged access to information. The Zimbabwean version, for example, is often preoccupied with the circumstances surrounding the real or alleged deaths of politicians.

So robust and commonplace is Zimbabwe's rumour mill that there are even rumours about rumours. A novel, *The Death of Rex Nhongo*, was published in 2011, just before the controversial real-life death of General Solomon Mujuru – whose nickname was Rex Nhongo.

The novel is about elite intrigue, political murder and how rumours ripple



**Zimbabwean
whispers: Even
false rumours
can influence
real-world actions**

(Photo: Jekesai
Njikizana/AFP)

through Harare. When it was released, the book – written under the pseudonym CB George – triggered its own set of rumours, as people speculated about who might have written it.

Office gossip

One reason that rumours are important is that they tell us what a lot of people are thinking. That the Zimbabwean rumour mill is currently preoccupied with stories of coups and backroom deals speaks to an important truth about the country's politics: President Mnangagwa is widely seen to be in trouble.

The rumours also reveal a more subtle point about the changing nature of power in the country: Mnangagwa appears to not be fully in charge. The constant discussion of a coup is rooted in an assumption that it is the military, not the – nominally – civilian president that determines the most important aspects of government policy.

Rumours also matter because when they are believed they can change what people think and do. Paranoid leaders hearing a rumour of a coup attempt to purge those they suspect of being disloyal – Mnangagwa's recent brutal crackdown being a case in point. Opposition leaders used to being harassed and intimidated may flee into exile if they hear that the security forces are about to detain them.

In this way, rumours can both have a profound impact on real world events, and provide important insights into changing political dynamics. So, while it would be unwise to stay at your desk for days on end waiting for a coup that may never come, it is always worth listening to rumours. ■

Nicole Beardsworth is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Warwick. Nic Cheeseman is professor of democracy at the University of Birmingham and co-author of How to Rig an Election.

Kenya's vice-president is down, but far from out

Ken Opalo

On August 11 2020, Kenya's Deputy President William Ruto suggested that a "Deep State" within government is out to prevent him from winning the 2022 presidential election. President Uhuru Kenyatta is serving his second and final term, and had previously publicly declared his intention to support Ruto as his successor.

However, that changed in March 2018, when he and his arch-rival Raila Odinga announced a surprise "handshake" agreement in the wake of protracted mass protests following the disputed 2017 election (after the Supreme Court annulled Kenyatta's initial victory, Odinga boycotted the rerun).

The "handshake" agreement resulted in the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) – ostensibly intended to address Kenya's historical injustices, poor governance, and cycles of deadly ethnic conflicts around elections. It is widely expected that the BBI report will recommend constitutional amendments, including the re-introduction of a parliamentary

system of government and the position of prime minister. An expanded executive branch, some argue, will better facilitate cross-ethnic power sharing.

Ruto opposed the "handshake" and is skeptical of the BBI. Until early this year, he was banking on his strong following within Parliament and several county-level assemblies to thwart any unfavorable constitutional amendments.

However, over the past three months Kenyatta has exploited the cessation of mass rallies due to the Covid-19 pandemic to dethrone Ruto's allies from key leadership positions in both the National Assembly and Senate. These moves have had a chilling effect on the rank and file, some of whom have been forced to ditch Ruto.

That said, it would be foolish to rule out Ruto ahead of 2022. Corruption and a sagging economy have dented Kenyatta's favorability ratings – including in his own political backyard in Central Region (where Ruto remains popular). Ruto's framing of the 2022 election as a battle between "hustlers" and "dynasties" (Kenyattas, Odingas, and Moisis) is resonating among a section of voters. As the political uncertainty rises, so do the stakes of the next election campaign. ■

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In plane sight: Last year the US mission at Camp Simba, Kenya, changed from 'tactical' to 'enduring operations' (Photo: US Air Force)

The civilians in America's 'Kill Chain'

It's not just US military personnel making life-and-death decisions on the African continent. A new investigation reveals that, in at least one secretive base in Kenya, private US contractors are involved in lethal drone strikes in Somalia

Kira Zalan and Emmanuel Freudenthal for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project

It was early on a Sunday morning when Al-Shabab militants attacked the small airstrip next to a military base on Kenya's north coast. Plumes of black smoke billowed into the sky as the militants destroyed six aircraft and killed three Americans, including two civilian

contractors and one US soldier.

In the wake of the January 5 attack, Fahim Twaha, the governor of Lamu County where Camp Simba is located, described the incident as "a foreign force attacking a foreign force on our soil".

The US military had been using the

**Pole position:
US airmen hold
a flag-raising
ceremony at
Camp Simba,
Kenya, in 2019**
(Photo: US Air
Force)



base, nestled in the normally sleepy Manda Bay, for East African operations for over a decade.

The American presence, as well as the base, has expanded over the years, including with the recent addition of new aircraft hangars, likely to protect sensitive technology installed on surveillance aircraft. In 2019, the US mission at Camp Simba officially changed from “tactical” to “enduring operations”.

Now an investigation by OCCRP reveals that the US military has been using the Kenyan base as a launchpad for surveillance aircraft supporting airstrikes in neighboring Somalia, with civilian contractors playing a pivotal role by providing intelligence on targets.

Flight data indicates a contractor-owned plane that was seen regularly in Manda Bay scouted sites for several drone strikes against Al-Shabab that may have killed civilians in Somalia.

Data collected by an antenna installed by OCCRP confirmed multiple privately-owned surveillance planes operated from the base, often hidden behind a chain of limited liability companies that do not list their true owners.

Sean McFate, a former private military contractor now working with Washington-based think-tank Atlantic Council, said that in the past companies were brought in to help analyse US military data, but not collect it.

“The ethical standard of who can pull the trigger has been slowly eroding over the last 30 years,” he said, explaining that even if private contractors are not involved in combat, they become “part of the kill chain” by providing intelligence for airstrikes.

“If they’re doing lethal operations, then I think we’ve crossed a threshold,” McFate said.

US Africa Command (AFRICOM)



Sky support: A US Air Force C-130J Super Hercules prepares to land at Camp Simba (Photo: US Air Force)

said the use of contractor pilots for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions is legal under domestic and international law.

The public affairs office declined to confirm details or comment on specific aircraft and companies identified by OCCRP, citing operational security.

“Contractors may operate an armed drone but they cannot make the decision to deploy the weapon system,” a public affairs officer for AFRICOM said in an emailed statement, citing US regulations and policy.

The US military ramped up airstrikes in Somalia following the attack at Manda Bay, carrying out 42 by mid-2020, compared to 63 recorded in all of 2019.

The US first launched airstrikes against Al-Shabab in Somalia in 2007 and increased them significantly in 2016, according to data collected and analysed by UK-based non-profit Airwars. They have ramped up again substantially since President Donald Trump loosened the rules of engagement three years ago.

Thousands of people have been killed by US airstrikes in Somalia since 2007,

including as many as 145 civilians, according to Airwars. The US military only acknowledges five accidental civilian deaths since 2017. It’s unclear if there was a review of alleged civilian deaths over the previous decade.

The situation at Camp Simba in Manda Bay is a microcosm of conflicts around the world in which the US has come to increasingly rely on contracting military and intelligence operations to private companies.

Experts say a lack of publicly available information makes it hard to count the number of contractors involved in military operations, but their roles have dramatically increased since the 1990s when such duties fell almost exclusively to military personnel.

“The US government has become addicted to contractors, whether they are Republicans or Democrats in the White House, because contractors give you some degree of plausible deniability,” said McFate. ■

This is an edited version of an investigation first published by OCCRP.



It's hard to send money home in a pandemic

Remittances from South Africa plummet

Tshegofatso Mathe

Bryan Kelmus is a freelance sports physiotherapist. He works in Johannesburg, South Africa, and sends money to his family in Harare, Zimbabwe. Usually, he sends R5,000 (\$287) home each month.

When South Africa introduced one of the world's strictest lockdowns to combat Covid-19, all the gyms were closed by law. Kelmus had no more business. He was able to send R1,000 (\$58) for the first few months of lockdown, but now he can't send anything at all.

Things have got so bad that Kelmus and his friends have developed a kind of shorthand to determine when they can afford to eat on a particular day: a "101" means skipping lunch; an "011" means skipping breakfast.

"Even back in Zim, things are really

tough," Kelmus said. "We have been in this constant battle of not having enough. So my family understands. They cannot even blame anyone. We are Christians, we have faith, we know that this is a phase and it will pass."

His plight is not unique. Esther Costa, from Mozambique, has worked in South Africa for 22 years. She is a hairdresser, and usually makes enough to support her two kids and send some money back to Mozambique for her mother, a pensioner. But the hair salons were shut down for several months, and even though they are now open customers are nervous about coming back, because of Covid-19.

This week, she has been standing at the intersection of two main roads in Johannesburg's CBD, hoping that someone will pay R70 (\$4) for her to do their cornrows.

"When we have money, I send it. But

now it's difficult to send money because people are not coming to do their hair. Even the little I get, I have to use it to ensure that there is food at home for the kids," Costa told the *Mail & Guardian*.

In April, the World Bank estimated that global remittances would "sharply" decline by about 20% in 2020 due to the economic crisis induced by the pandemic. The bank said the decline, which would be the "sharpest in recent history, is largely due to a fall in the wages and employment of migrant workers, who tend to be more vulnerable to loss of employment and wages during an economic crisis in a host country".

But figures from South Africa suggest the decline in remittances may be even more severe – at least in this part of the world. According to local money transfer companies Mama Money and

Hello Paisa, remittances from the country dropped by about 80% just a month after South Africa's lockdown was introduced in March.

Numbers from FinMark Trust, a non-profit organisation, tell a similar story. Its latest report shows that between December and April this year monthly remittances declined from R955.5-million to R390.8 million – a drop of 40.9%.

An estimated 3.7-million migrants living in South Africa, of whom 80% work in informal jobs. Many of these

migrant workers come from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, eSwatini and Malawi.

Gerhardus van Zyl, a labour economist at the University of Johannesburg, said that the decrease in remittances will have serious consequences for the countries that rely on them, because many people in these countries rely on them for basic necessities.

Remittances are big business across Africa, and vital to the economic stability of many countries. Nigeria, for example, received \$25-billion in remittances

in 2018 – almost four times more than foreign direct investment and official development assistance combined. In Lesotho, remittances amount to 16% of the country's gross domestic product. According to the World Bank, any

decline in remittances is likely to have a devastating impact on economies that rely on them, especially in rural areas.

It's not just remittances from South Africa that are being hit hard. Western Union, one of the world's largest money transfer networks, has seen its revenue decline by 17% in the second quarter of this year, to \$1.1-billion. The company said there had been fewer transactions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. ■

Tshegofatso Mathe is an Adamele Trust business reporter at the Mail & Guardian

In April, the World Bank estimated that global remittances would "sharply" decline by about 20% due to Covid-19. But figures from South Africa suggest the decline may be even more severe

Meet the first African coach to win a European league title



Leading the way: Ndubuisi Egbó has turned the club around
(Photo: KF Tirana)

Tolu Olasoji

When Albania's KF Tirana found themselves battling adversity again, they set out to hire a coach who could rescue them from eighth place in the league. They were facing a second potential relegation in just three years.

The club is no stranger to success – it is one of the country's biggest clubs, after all – but it has been a barren, difficult decade. Enter Ndubuisi Egbó, a former goalkeeper for both KF Tirana and the Nigerian national team.

When the 47-year-old was given the job, he was given just three games in which to make an impression. He ended up making history.

Egbó's first game in charge was against the club's bitter rivals, KF Partizani. It's the biggest derby in Albania, but Tirana had not won for six years.

Thanks to an injury-time winner, Egbó ended this drought. By July, he had led Tirana to its 25th league title and qualified for the prestigious UEFA Champions League competition; both firsts for an African man. "It was the situation that chose me; I wasn't the one. It was the perfect time for God," Egbó said.

His success has been praised, but he has experienced unjust criticism of his work, prejudices and racist behaviour from seemingly envious local coaches in Albania. Black footballers and managers in Europe often face similar resistance and racism, which means that black coaches are vastly under-represented in top-level football.

But like Michael Emenalo, a former Nigerian player who went on to be a technical director at Chelsea, Ndubuisi Egbó remains a beacon of hope and African excellence. ■



The Big Picture

Never forget: This memorial in Windhoek, Namibia is dedicated to the memory of the Herero and Nama people who were massacred by German colonial soldiers between 1904 and 1907. The transcription translates as “Your blood nourishes our freedom.” Tens of thousands of people were killed in what some historians describe as the first genocide of the 20th century. This week, Namibia's government rejected a German offer of compensation, saying that it was not acceptable and needed to be revised. Photo: Jurgen Baetz/DPA/Getty

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