

**African journalism.** JUNE 19 2021

**SPECIAL  
50<sup>TH</sup>  
EDITION**

# The Continent

with **Mail & Guardian**



## The last of the philosopher kings

Zambia mourns Kenneth Kaunda

Photo: Vladimir Akimov/Sputnik via AFP



## WELCOME TO THE 50<sup>TH</sup> EDITION!

This is the 50th issue of *The Continent*. Join us on p14 as we celebrate our half century – and we'll introduce you to the team and tell you who we are, who pays our bills, and how we're able to bring you quality journalism without slapping a price on the cover. We also asked readers to nominate their favourite covers from the past 14 months, which, we won't lie, was an excellent excuse for us to reminisce (p23).

# Inside:

- **The decuplets that weren't:** South Africans woke up last week to the unbelievable news that a mother in Pretoria had given birth to 10 children – a world record. In a dark day for South African journalism, it turns out the news really was unbelievable. (p7)
- **The pen is mightier than the sword** – especially when Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wields it. Catch up on a very modern literary scandal. (p8)
- **Keep it on:** Julie Owono, a member of the Facebook Oversight Board, explains why internet shutdowns are a bad idea – even for autocrats. (p12)
- **The Quiz:** Can you name your liberation legends? (p24)

**Cover story:** Zambia's treasured elder statesman Kenneth Kaunda died in a Lusaka military hospital on Thursday. He was 97. Kaunda was among the last of the generation of leaders who ushered in Africa's independence. As they contemplate his legacy, Zambians will not be grieving just for KK, as he was affectionately known, but also for a lost era of hope, unity and national pride. The cover photograph was taken during a state visit to the USSR in 1987. Note the pristine, freshly-ironed white handkerchief:



Photo:  
Vladimir  
Akimov/  
Sputnik via  
AFP

KK was rarely seen in public without one – a symbol, he said, of love and pride. (p9)



**Home crowd: Gbagbo's supporters in the Yopougon neighbourhood in Abidjan.** Photo: John Wessels/AFP

## WEST AFRICA

### Gbagbo's back

On Thursday afternoon, a Brussels Airlines plane touched down in Cote d'Ivoire's commercial capital, Abidjan. On board was former president Laurent Gbagbo, returning home for the first time since 2011. Cheering crowds greeted him at the airport, while his loyalists clashed with police outside. Gbagbo has spent the past decade in involuntary exile in Europe, after being arrested and tried in the The Hague for crimes against humanity, in connection with the 2011 post-election violence in which thousands of people were killed. But Gbagbo was acquitted in 2019, and retains plenty of support. It is unclear so far whether his return will reignite tensions with his nemesis, President Alassane Ouattara, or allow the pair to reconcile.

## AFRICA

### The third wave is officially here

Africa is in the midst of its third wave of coronavirus infections, the World Health Organisation has confirmed, with cases crossing the five million mark and deaths on the continent rising by 15% last week. "The sobering trajectory of surging cases should rouse everyone into urgent action. We've seen ... just how quickly Covid-19 can rebound and overwhelm health systems," said Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's Africa director. Recognising the gravity of the situation, France organised for vaccines to be flown to Johannesburg – but made them available only to French citizens.

## WEST AFRICA

### Ready or not, here comes AFCON

The African Cup of Nations was due to be held in Cameroon in 2019. It wasn't: the country could not deliver the necessary infrastructure on time, and organisers were worried about insecurity. Egypt hosted instead. Now Cameroon is again due to host the event – scheduled for January 2022 – and once again there are doubts about its capacity to do so. But African soccer boss Véron Mosengo-Omba has now insisted the tournament will take place as planned. "There is no alternative," he said.

## EAST AFRICA

## AU to investigate Tigray atrocities

Alleged human rights violations committed during the war in Ethiopia's Tigray province will be investigated by the African Union. A commission of inquiry was launched this week by the continental body's human rights commission. The Ethiopian government, which has been repeatedly implicated in war crimes alongside its Eritrean allies, said the inquiry is "misguided". Expect tensions to rise at the African Union headquarters compound, which is based in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. "What we have started cannot be stopped," said the commission's vice-chair, Remy Ngoy Lumbu, who confirmed that its findings would be made public.

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

## Masisi's new rock is ready to roll

What's 73mm long, 52mm wide and 27mm thick? No, not a Kit-Kat. Or a deck of cards. Or a beer coaster. (Though it could be used as one if you're feeling extra.) It's the XXXL-sized diamond found in Botswana, reported to be the third largest in the world. It was officially presented to a delighted President Mokgweetsi Masisi on Wednesday. No wonder he was pleased: the diamond was found by Debswana, a joint venture between De Beers and the government, which means the state will make a tidy profit from the 1,098-carat stone. The second-largest diamond in the world, the 1,109-carat Lesedi La Rona, was also discovered in Botswana, in 2015. It sold for \$53-million.

## WEST AFRICA

## More trees, please

Five million trees were planted in Ghana on just a single day last week, according to President Nana Akufo-greenAddo, to coincide with the inaugural Green Ghana Day on June 11 – designed to combat high levels of deforestation in the country. The president appeared to be pleased with his country's effort, although it pales in comparison to the 350-million trees allegedly planted in Ethiopia on a single day in 2019.



**Green light:** Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo plants a *lignum vitae* seedling – one of five million planted in the country last Friday – at Jubilee House, the seat of the presidency.



Illustration:  
John McCann/  
Mail & Guardian

## CENTRAL AFRICA

# Hotel Rwanda hero awaits 'terror' judgment

The trial of Paul Rusesabagina in Kigali is nearing its conclusion, with prosecutors requesting a life sentence for the former hotel manager who inspired the film *Hotel Rwanda* (and is credited with saving hundreds of lives during the genocide). Rusesabagina was abducted last year by Rwanda's security services from Dubai and charged with terrorism, in relation to his alleged support for political opponents of President Paul Kagame. His family claim the charges are politically motivated and that he has not received a fair trial.

## WEST AFRICA

# Boko Haram boss killed in combat (for real this time)

This newspaper has lost count of the number of times the infamous Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has been declared dead – usually by an overzealous Nigerian army spokesman – only to reappear days later in a YouTube video looking stronger than ever. This time is different. Reports of his death earlier this month were followed up this week by a video released by Boko Haram, confirming their leader was dead and urging followers to remain loyal. He was allegedly killed in fighting with a rival militant group.

## AFRICA

# The new Cold War

Writing in *The Continent* last year, former Liberian public works minister W Gyude Moore warned that a new Cold War was coming. It has now arrived, if recent statements from the G7 and Nato are anything to go by. Both rooted in a US-centric worldview, each warned about the security threat posed by China. But that does not mean Africa must pick a side, as it is “best served by ... sitting out the coming Cold War, taking over the driver's seat of its development ... and determining which partners will bring the most value,” argued Moore.

# FIGHT FAKE NEWS WITH REAL NEWS.

Disinformation is often shared on closed networks like WhatsApp. That's why *The Continent* exists. Help us fight fake news by subscribing to high quality journalism, and share that instead.



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# South Africa

## Anyone seen 10 newborns lying about?

**S**outh Africans last week woke up to front-page news that a woman in the country had broken a world record, apparently having given birth to 10 babies.

The standing record had last been matched just one month before, by Halima Cissé, a young Malian woman who gave birth to nine babies.

The story landed in a country desperate for news that wasn't grim: other issues in the headlines were about a third Covid-19 wave, rolling electricity blackouts and record unemployment numbers.

And, so, people marvelled, and they celebrated. Donations poured in. The government – unlike that of Mali, which had flown Cissé to Morocco to give birth under specialist care – was taken unawares, and scrambled to find the hospital that had broken this record. If nothing else, the state needed a win after a corruption scandal toppled its popular health minister Zweli Mkhize.

But then came the twist. Authorities in Gauteng, where the 10 babies had supposedly been born, concluded that

there had been no such births, “unless they were born in the air”. And the family of the father said they had seen no proof of the babies’ actual existence.

Amid serious questions about the original reporting, the journalist responsible is now accusing the state and healthcare system of a “grand conspiracy” and a “cover up”.

Their media house, Independent Media, is claiming it “is not fake news but a cover-up of mammoth proportions”. Neither has provided proof.

**People celebrated.  
Donations poured in.  
But authorities concluded  
there were no births,  
'unless they were born  
in the air'.**

The story is now a proxy in a fight for truth in South Africa. Independent has been criticised for being used as a tool for a faction of the ruling ANC opposed to President Cyril Ramaphosa's anti-corruption reforms, and continues to champion former president Jacob Zuma.

It has also exited South African journalism's voluntary self-regulation system, so barring court action there is little prospect of holding it to account. ■



# World

## **‘It is obscene.’**

**Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has voiced very strong thoughts about how young people use social media. It’s causing a bit of a scene.**

**‘W**hen you are a public figure, people will write and say false things about you. It comes with the territory ... In this age of social media, where a story travels the world in minutes, silence sometimes means that other people can hijack your story and soon, their false version becomes the defining story about you.’

So begins the extraordinary three-part essay by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on her personal website. Since it was published late on Tuesday evening, Nigerian Twitter – those able and willing to bypass the country’s Twitter ban, anyway – has talked about little else.

In it, Adichie addresses, in considerable detail, the alleged falsehoods told about her by two younger Nigerian writers whom she had taken under her wing.

The dispute is rooted in comments Adichie made in 2017 about trans women, which were criticised by some writers and activists for being transphobic.

She argues that her views have been misrepresented. “I fully support the rights of trans people and all marginalised people,” she wrote.

But she reserves her harshest criticism – and her most devastatingly eloquent prose – for how the youth of today interact with social media.

**“In this age of social media ... people can hijack your story.”**

“In certain young people ... I notice what I find increasingly troubling: a cold-blooded grasping, a hunger to take and take and take, but never give; a massive sense of entitlement; an inability to show gratitude; an ease with dishonesty and pretension and selfishness that is couched in the language of self-care; an expectation always to be helped and rewarded no matter whether deserving or not; language that is slick and sleek but with little emotional intelligence; an astonishing level of self-absorption; an unrealistic expectation of puritanism from others; an over-inflated sense of ability, or of talent where there is any at all; an inability to apologise, truly and fully, without justifications; a passionate performance of virtue that is well executed in the public space of Twitter but not in the intimate space of friendship.

“I find it obscene.” ■



Statesman: On  
an official visit to  
Sweden in 1971.

Photo: Pressens  
Bild/AFP

## The last of Africa's philosopher kings

**Kenneth David Kaunda, 28 April 1924 – 17 June 2021**

**Nic Cheeseman and Sishuwa  
Sishuwa**

**K**enneth Kaunda, Zambia's "founding father" and first president, died on Thursday, in a military hospital in Lusaka where he was being treated for pneumonia.

Aged 97, he was the last of the generation of leaders who secured independence for their countries from colonial rule and went on to govern through their own distinctive political and economic philosophies.

Like the continent's other "philosopher kings" – Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah,

Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Senegal's Leopold Senghor – Kaunda's vision for Zambia's post-colonial future left a profound imprint on society that lasted well beyond his time in power.

He will be remembered as a freedom fighter who supported liberation struggles across Southern Africa, a nation-builder who avoided divide-and-rule politics, a bad economist who presided over decades of decline, a repressive leader who enforced an unpopular one-party state, and an elder statesman who peacefully accepted defeat in the 1991 elections.

He was all of these things, embodying – like all humans – both strengths and



**Liberators: Kenneth Kaunda with the late Nelson Mandela in Lusaka, shortly after Mandela's release from prison in 1990.** Photo: Walter Dhladhla/AFP

weaknesses, successes and failures.

Yet above all, he is likely to be remembered, against the backdrop of his often corrupt and repressive successors, as a man who was ultimately willing to put the national interest ahead of his own.

## The rise to power

Popularly known as KK, Kaunda was born in Chinsali to parents who were teachers; and, significantly, to a father from what is now Malawi. This gave Kaunda a distinctive position in Zambian politics.

On the one hand, he hailed from an area dominated by the Bemba community and spoke the Bemba language, and so could effectively mobilise one of the country's largest ethnic groups.

On the other hand, his mixed heritage encouraged him to stay above ethnic politics, and to balance the representation of different communities in his cabinet.

Having initially followed in his parents' footsteps as a teacher, Kaunda resigned in 1951 to pursue nationalist politics.

He was imprisoned for nine months in

1958. On his release, and with a reputation bolstered by the time spent in jail, Kaunda took up the leadership of the United National Independence Party – which had formed while he was in detention.

By pushing a more radical message than his rivals, and developing a strong structure in urban areas, Kaunda emerged as the country's first prime minister and then president after independence in 1964.

In power, Kaunda sought to strike a delicate balance between the country's major powerbrokers, including trade unions, religious leaders, ethnic communities and international donors.

The multiple compromises this resulted in are well demonstrated by his professed ideology: Zambian humanism. It was left-wing without being explicitly socialist; focused on the struggle for human progress without being "godless"; and was community-minded while rejecting the principle of tribalism.

This was not simply a political manoeuvre – Kaunda really did believe in these things – and was in many ways more of a moderate than his counterparts elsewhere on the continent.

Yet in consistently trying to balance these competing pressures Kaunda risked pleasing no one; and, as economic conditions worsened, he headed off any potential challenges to his rule by introducing a one party state in 1972.

## Consolidating power, and losing it

Kaunda officially justified restricting political freedoms on the basis that it was necessary because the country was at war. This was self-serving, because

the real motivation was domestic not international, but it contained an element of truth.

Kaunda had offered support to liberation movements in southern Africa, offering fierce criticism to foreign leaders who supported white minority rule, such as Margaret Thatcher, and so feared attacks from apartheid South Africa.

Zambia also suffered in other ways. When sanctions were placed on Ian Smith's Rhodesia, it cut off landlocked Zambia from important trading routes, making a challenging economic situation even more difficult.

As the economy continued to suffer, popular support ebbed away, and the government was increasingly forced to use repression instead of co-optation and persuasion. Some dissidents were beaten and locked up – others fled the country.

By the late 1980s, Kaunda had run out of ideas, his party's official structures were little more than a fiction, and the one-party state was on borrowed time.

This is the point at which most leaders agreed to reintroduce multiparty politics only to use violence, censorship, and intimidation to manipulate the polls and stay in power. But Kaunda took a different path, and in so doing revived his reputation.

His party tried to manipulate the elections, but without the repression seen in places such as Kenya and Togo. The result was a landslide defeat, after which Kaunda gracefully accepted defeat and congratulated his successor.

That act allows Zambians to remember KK as a leader who put the national



**Diplomat: Kenneth Kaunda side-eyes George Bush senior, US president at the time, at the White House in 1989.** Photo: Greg Gibson/AFP

interest before his own twice – both in the 1960s and in the 1990s.

The relatively poor performance of the leaders who succeeded him only served to boost his political rehabilitation. Kaunda's post-presidency, spent in an unpretentious house in Lusaka, only reinforced these perceptions.

As some on social media have noted, it was characteristic of Kaunda to have been treated and to have died in a Zambian hospital – unlike so many of Africa's elite who flaunt their status and wealth, and fly to the United States or India for medical treatment.

When Zambians observe 21 days of national mourning, they will not just be grieving for KK, but also for a lost era of hope, unity, and national pride. ■

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*Nic Cheeseman is the professor of democracy at the University of Birmingham. Sishuwa Sishuwa is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Institute of Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa at the University of Cape Town, and lecturer in African history at the University of Zambia. This obituary is published in partnership with Democracy in Africa.*

# The internet must stay on. Authoritarian governments will have to adapt.

**Despite their evident popularity across the continent, internet shutdowns are counterproductive.**

**Julie Owono**

**T**hat the presidential election which took place in the Republic of Congo on March 21 would re-elect Denis Sassou Nguesso was a given.

Less certain was whether access to the internet, in particular to social media, would be interrupted on election day and on the days that followed, as it was in 2016. It was. For three days – as voting, counting and the results were announced – the internet was off.

Last year, Burundi, Togo, Guinea and Tanzania cut off internet access during elections. The blocking of social media by the government is often justified on the grounds of “protecting national security”, or more recently, to “fight against the spread of fake news and hate speech”.

In its recent decision to suspend and ban Twitter in Nigeria, the government justified its actions by stating that the platform was enabling “misinformation and fake news to spread ... [with] real world violent consequences”.

But these sorts of justifications should not deceive anyone. Governments that

block access to the internet or social media are seeking to control the flow of information online.

But censorship is counterproductive. Not only are the economic implications important – according to the latest estimates available, internet shutdowns have cost the continent more than \$2-billion – but democratic participation and processes are disrupted.

## **Authorities and their enablers**

The process that enables internet shutdowns is opaque. Because of inadequate technical expertise, governments usually turn to internet service providers for help in disrupting telecommunications. But it is difficult to know precisely which authorities issue the order to shut down or throttle the internet.

Organisations fighting internet shutdowns must be resourceful to obtain this crucial information, which enables citizens to hold their government officials to account. In 2018, legal action brought by Internet Sans Frontières against mobile operators in Chad, obtained

written proof of the order sent by the ministry of the interior to all internet service providers.

Transparency from internet service providers can also help lift this veil of obscurity. Under pressure from civil society initiatives, such as the Ranking Digital Rights project, many of these companies publish more specific information about the connectivity disruption orders they receive from governments.

Understanding who orders and facilitates internet shutdowns is an important piece of the puzzle. But it is equally important to prevent the occurrence of these telecommunications outages.

### Enhancing transparency

According to the United Nations, cutting off access to the internet is a serious violation of the right to freedom of expression. This is even more so when this act of censorship takes place during an election period, a critical moment in democratic life.

Faced with media landscapes under the strict control of autocratic governments, citizens of many African countries have found space for free expression online.

For some, it is the first time that they can speak without filter about the governance of their country and question the government propaganda.

The internet and use of smartphones are also key tools for opposition parties and civil society groups to collect and centralise information about anomalies

observed during an electoral process.

But blocking the internet or social networks during an election prevents them from being able to do so and degrades the credibility and sincerity of the vote.

The #KeepItOn coalition, which was created to fight internet shutdowns, is campaigning for the inclusion of internet access in the assessment of elections by national and international observation missions.

### Keeping it on

The internet challenges our social and governance structures to adapt or reinvent themselves. For some of them, the challenge seems insurmountable, and censorship becomes a refuge.

But this refuge is only temporary. Governments that prefer to censor, for fear of a free flow of information online, would be better served by putting this energy into innovating in their relationships with citizens and voters.

In the decades to come, and as more and more Africans come online, the internet must stay on. ■



*Julie Owono is the executive director of Internet Sans Frontières and a member of the Facebook Oversight Board. This is part of a series of essays published in conjunction with the Abuja-based Centre for Democracy and Development*

# Welcome to Issue



Let's get to know each other.



# Introducing the team

Hi! We are the nine core people who bring you your weekly fix.



**Sipho Kings** is our editorial director and co-founder. He also writes on the environment, here and on other planets.



**Simon Allison** is *The Continent's* editor-in-chief and co-founder. He makes the final call on what – and how – we publish.



**Kiri Rupiah** is the head of digital and distribution. She came up with our distribution model, and handles all the socials.



**Refiloe Seiboko** is our production editor, managing the process of producing a paper each week – keeping us in line and on time.



**Dumi Sithole** handles our weekly distribution. If you talk to us on WhatsApp, you are probably talking to him – a real person!



**Aanu Adeoye** is our news editor. He makes sure that we're always not just on top of the news agenda but *setting* it where we need to.



**Ashleigh Swaile** is *The Continent's* chief designer. She figured out how to make a newspaper look good on a phone. We stan!



**Matthew du Plessis** handles finance and admin, and the late Friday night copy-editing. The puns are almost always his fault.



**Wynona Mutisi** is our design fellow. She helps with layout but is also a genius illustrator – her art makes us (and our editions) look good.



# Journalism that is made in Africa, and read around the world

African journalism. ISSUE 1. April 18 2020

## The Continent with Mail & Guardian



### Life inside the lockdown

Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Nigeria,  
Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zimbabwe

Photo: Dethyn/Veracity for M&G

**W**e sent the very first edition of *The Continent*, on 18 April 2020, just to our friends and family. What do you think, we asked them – should we keep going? Now 50 editions in, *The Continent* is Africa's most widely read newspaper (distributed in more than 105 countries), and has secured funding for at least the next year. This seems like a good time to stop, breathe, and tell you a bit about

ourselves. To tell you who puts the newspaper together each week, and who funds our journalism. And, importantly, to thank you – for reading each week, and for sharing *The Continent* far and wide.

The editorial note in the first-ever edition of *The Continent* went like this: “We are journalists from across the African continent. We cannot administer testing kits. We cannot operate life-saving ventilators. Nonetheless, we have a vitally important job to do: We keep you informed. And we hold our leaders to account.”

Fourteen months and 50 editions have passed since then. In that time, creating this weekly newspaper has at times been exhausting for our tiny team. But also incredibly rewarding, seeing tens of thousands of people not just picking up what we're putting down, but sharing it on.

Our newspaper took off in April 2020, out of necessity. The lockdowns prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic tore into the news media sector across the entire world. Here, like everywhere, newsrooms laid off reporters and closed their doors.

But here, like everywhere, people wanted information. Many didn't trust their leaders or their country's media.

Stressed and isolated, we turned to our phones for news; to friends and family; to social media; to strangers – anyone who might help us understand these bewildering times. All in spaces like WhatsApp, where the rigour of quality journalism was largely absent.

And so the small exaggerations, accidental untruths, deliberate lies and calculated “fake news” began to spread, cascade and compound. As the pandemic took root, so too did dangerous misinformation. People believed Covid-19 was a hoax, or not that serious. They refused to wear masks. They started injecting veterinary medicines. They railed against state restrictions on freedom of movement. While excellent fact-checking has happened after the fact, the reality is that once a falsehood has spread it is nearly impossible to correct.

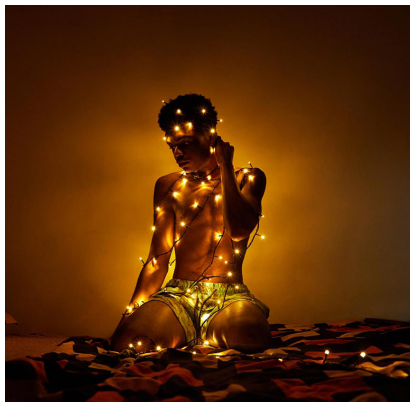
We knew that we needed to find a way of getting reliable, fact-checked, credibly-sourced information onto these platforms.

### A 21st-century newspaper

When we published our first Saturday edition on WhatsApp, our guiding principle was, and continues to be: Give journalists from our continent a platform to publish quality, rigorous and trustworthy journalism, in a format people will actually read, and make it available to as many people as possible.

Our one ask in return has been that you share our work. And you have.

By our count, *The Continent* has been shared a few million times and is now read in more than half of the world's countries (105 of them, to be precise).



**Bright & bold:** We were nervous when we put Stuart Tibaweswa's stunning image of a queer Ugandan on the cover (above), but received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Patrick Gathara's cartoons (below) never fail to hit home.



Our journalism has been produced not just by the core team in the newsroom, but by a cast of nearly 200 journalists, writers, analysts, illustrators and photographers across the continent.

As promised in our first issue, we've done our best to keep you informed and hold our leaders to account. We've



**Unlocked, unloaded: Did you know US commandos operate in 22 countries in Africa? We didn't, until we investigated.**

documented the progression of the pandemic in every corner of this continent, and highlighted the work of the African researchers and public health experts leading the fight against the virus.

We've published ground-breaking investigations into the role of United States Special Forces in Africa; the secret arms shipments flowing into Congo-Brazzaville just before an election; and the role of Rwanda's President Paul Kagame in atrocities committed in the months after the 1994 genocide.

Authors such as Maaza Mengiste and Elnathan John have written for us; as have leaders such as Raila Odinga and Hailemariam Desalegn. We've interviewed presidents, scientists and artists. With Democracy in Africa, we've published analysis from brilliant African intellectuals. And, to match our bark, the satirical bite of Continental Drift columnist Samira Sawlani.

We have also reported on other parts

of the world, gently but firmly turning the tables on overseas media who've had a monopoly on framing our narratives.

In a special edition last year, edited by Kenyan author Nanjala Nyabola, we looked at the US election – and published comment pieces in 10 different languages (Lingala, Yoruba, Somali, Kiswahili, Kirundi, Cameroonian Pidgin, Nigerian Pidgin, Arabic and Portuguese). We want to do more of this. The world is made a better place when there are more voices, with different perspectives, asking questions and sharing knowledge.

But at the heart of this publication is news. We've run first-hand reporting on everything from the coups (yes, plural!) in Mali to the insurgency in Mozambique; from the civil war in Ethiopia to the wave of abductions in Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Perhaps most impactful has been our reporting on Tanzania, in particular the Covid denialism of the late president John



**'What are they doing over there?' Nzilani Simu's illustration captured a continent's confusion as we watched last year's election in the United States.**



**The country where Covid doesn't exist: *The Continent's* reporting on the pandemic in Tanzania directly contradicted the government's position at the time. But because of how we print and distribute our newspaper, we could not be censored.**

Magufuli.

Even as he refused to acknowledge the presence of Covid-19 in his country, our reporting showed that hospitals were overflowing with “acute pneumonia” patients, and graveyards were filling up at a frightening rate.

We published our reporting in both English and Kiswahili, and then watched it spread like wildfire on Tanzanian social media. Because of WhatsApp’s encryption, *The Continent* is in effect uncensorable – unlike traditional media in Tanzania, which had been largely muzzled by Magufuli’s administration.

Our reporting helped change the narrative around Covid there, and was recognised by a nomination for the One World Media Award.

Zitto Kabwe, the Tanzanian opposition leader, has described *The Continent* as one of the most important instruments for democracy in Tanzania over the past year.

**Show me the money**

Right. So who pays for all of this? Our first editions were self-funded – this was just too important to not do, and we gambled that if we did it well, funding would follow to support this journalism.

Because we are housed within the Adamela Trust, a non-profit created in South Africa to support journalism, we could apply for grants. The first support came from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, a German foundation, followed by grants from the National Endowment for Democracy, Internews, the Mott Foundation and Africa No Filter.

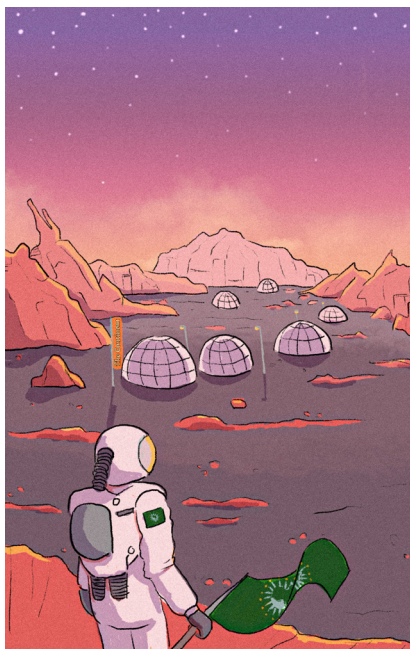
We are also grateful to the *Mail & Guardian*, South Africa’s leading independent newspaper, who joined us in an editorial partnership that allowed us to share each other’s content and helped us to keep our costs down.

We are very aware of the pitfalls of funded journalism (and that all our



**(Above) Beach, please:** Carlos Amato's cartoon touched on the hope we all felt as news emerged that Covid-19 vaccines really work. But we'd feel more hopeful if more of those vaccines were available to African countries.

**(Right) Life on Mars:** Despite our name, looking beyond borders is important to us. We've reported from the US, Europe, China and India – and on the prospect of existing on Mars, as depicted by illustrator Wynona Mutisi.



fundes are western – we must change this, and welcome your help in doing so). Mega donors drive the direction of so much reporting simply by who they choose to support – it's a problem.

*The Continent's* operating principle is that we only apply for funding if we think it will benefit our work, and be in service to the quality of the newspaper you get each week. No funder may tell us what to report. Happily, none has tried. They find out what we're working on at the same time you do: when it's published.

We're also looking at other ways to finance our journalism. Last year we had our first advert and we expect to win more. But not from fossil fuel companies. Not from arms dealers. Adverts must

match the quality of our work and the journalism we curate. We'll tell you when this happens, and be transparent about it.

In that spirit, though we've published journalists from across the continent, we know we need more of our core team to be based in the places we report on – to better reflect the people of this continent, and we are committed to having a leadership team that does just that in place by the end of our third year.

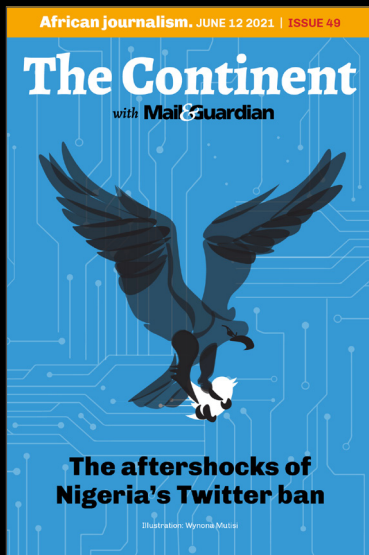
And we ask you to let us know when you think we should be doing something differently, or better; and, as ever, to keep sharing *The Continent* with your friends, family and colleagues – not indiscriminately, but only with people who might appreciate what we do. ■



SPECIAL FEATURE

# The cover story

We agonise over the lead story each week, the one that goes on the cover. Sometimes we go with hard news – the big investigation that needs to be trumpeted; at other times we pick the most interesting story, especially if there’s an opportunity for a great illustration. Often, this ends up being very different from the choice we made at the start of the week, an experience that prematurely ages the production team. We asked you what your favourite covers were. You responded, and then some.



“Number 1 for me,” said **Teldah Mawarire**. “Such a contrast of the kind of behavior of those soldiers versus how Africans experience encounters with the army.”

The most popular cover was also the most recent – Issue 49. “The eagle capturing the Twitter bird is quite poetic,” said one reader.

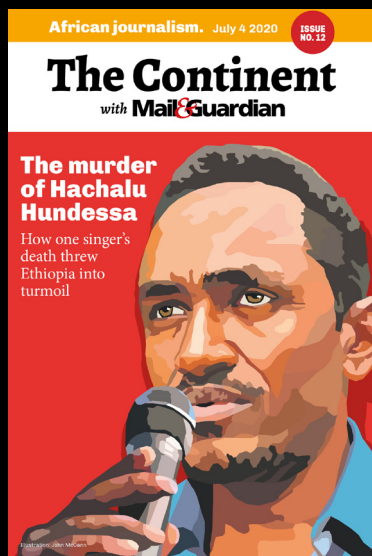
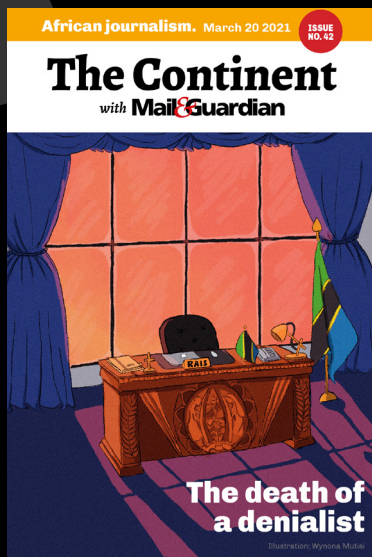
For **Roland Polman**, the cover of Issue 42 struck a chord. "First: It is illustrated and I love editorial illustration. Second: The story it tells. I love storytelling. Third: I was shocked by the death of the president."

**Simon Allison**, *The Continent's* editor-in-chief, agrees. "The illustration conveys so much emotion. The Tanzanian president's empty desk, coupled with the headline, tells the whole story."

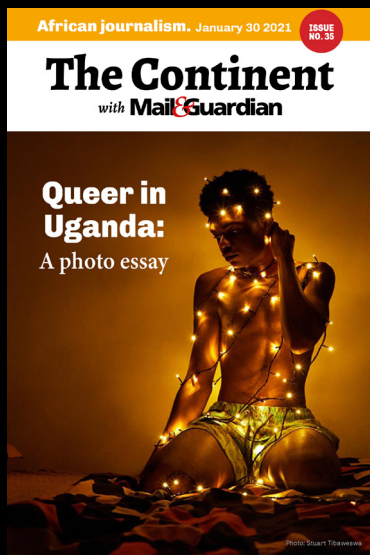
In terms of the sheer number of responses, Issue 12 – which featured the assassinated Ethiopian singer Hachalu Hundessa – was another of our most popular covers. The cover tapped into the strong emotional reaction to his death from within Ethiopia's Oromo community.

"He was an activist and lyrical genius who articulated Oromos' social, economic, and political grievances masterfully. We miss him dearly!" wrote **Getu Teressa**.

**Johnsay Feyisa** said "he was everything to Oromo nation. He was an artist, human rights advocate, hero, voice and fighter."

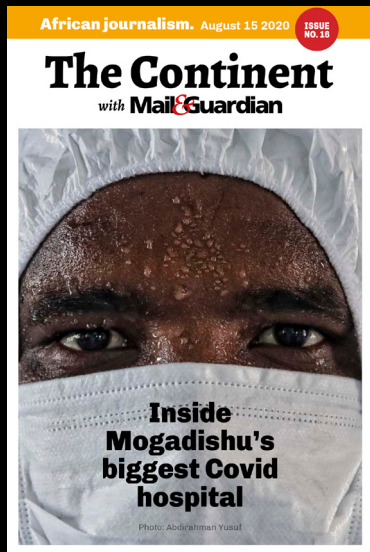






Sometimes we choose the cover based on the strength of an image alone. The photograph that led Issue 35 is a case in point. “It’s a striking image that displays queer Ugandans in a beautiful, tender, living, humanising light. Stuart Tibaweswa captures something ephemeral in the image, an ephemeral sense that is hauntingly often part of a queer life in this continent,” said **Lwando Scott**.

Another example of this is Abdirahman Yusuf’s powerful photo essay from Issue 16. “I loved number 16 – it is so evocative of the struggle of healthcare workers in the pandemic. I literally take a sharp breath whenever I think of what this brave man must have been living through,” said an anonymous reader.



“So much is communicated in the small window we’re given of the face. Determination, struggle, courage, exhaustion, selflessness and dedication to the work. It’s all there and it hits the viewer hard,” agrees **Ashleigh Swaile**, *The Continent*’s chief designer.

But perhaps our favourite responses of all came from the readers who did not want to choose. “I just hope you guys have framed them all. Beautiful,” said **Thierry Uwamahoro**. ■

# THE QUIZ

0-4

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

5-7

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

8-10

"By the time I turn 50, this quiz will be asking me if it got the answers right."

- 1\_ What is Africa's largest city by area?
  - 2\_ What is the name of the continent's oldest university?
  - 3\_ Name the Zulu king whose army crushed the 24th British Regiment at Isandlwana in January 1879?
  - 4\_ What did Kenneth Kaunda habitually carry with him in his left shirt pocket?
  - 5\_ What is the largest diamond ever discovered?
  - 6\_ Where in Africa would you be if you were in the town of Palma?
  - 7\_ Which former head of state wrote the poem *February*, to commemorate the beginning of the country's revolution against colonial rule?
  - 8\_ Who took the iconic photograph of Hector Pieterse when he was shot during the Soweto Uprising protests on June 16 1976?
  - 9\_ Africa is the second-largest continent, but is its coastline the world's shortest, or its longest?
  - 10\_ Portugal has fewer Portuguese speakers than which African country?
- BONUS** Can you name each person in the photo below? One point per correct answer.

## How did I do?

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



Would you like to send us some quiz questions or even curate your own quiz? Let us know at [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za)

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## THE BIG PICTURE

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**Locked up:** A prison officer steps out of Bulawayo prison on Tuesday, bearing news that detained journalist Jeffery Moyo could not be released due to an error on the warrant of liberty. A freelance reporter for the *New York Times*, Moyo was granted bail three weeks after he was arrested over claims he helped two foreign colleagues enter the country fraudulently. Rights groups have described Moyo's arrest as an attack on press freedom. Moyo was finally released the following day. Photo by Zinyange Auntony/AFP



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