

The Continent

with Mail & Guardian

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR

Illustrations: Nzilani Simu



Welcome to the end-of-the-year special!

All protocol observed.

Stop. Pause.

Take a deep breath.

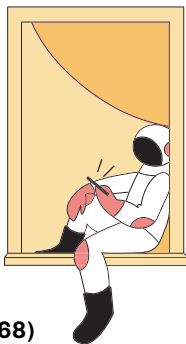
It's been a long year, but it's nearly over – and, despite everything, we made it (see our Year in Review on p3). So let's forget, for now, about our worries and our strife, and focus instead on all the things that are going right on this continent, and in this world. In this special edition of *The Continent*, we are celebrating the Africans who brought us joy, hope and inspiration in 2022. These are our Africans of the Year, as chosen by our editors and writers (begins on p9). Along the way, look out for a bumper edition of The Quiz (p34) and Continental Drift (p35), and see if you agree with our critics' picks for best movies, music and books of the year (begins p8). The newsroom is taking a break over the holiday season – so we'll see you again on 14 January 2023.

A VOTE OF THANKS

A big thank you to all the readers who have filled in our annual survey, and for all your kind and generous messages. "It's the most reliable source of news from the African continent," said one subscriber. "I think it's a great paper. And the writing – top tier witty," said another. Perhaps our favourite feedback was also the most concise: "It good." If you haven't already, please do complete the [survey](#). This will help us do better journalism. And if you'd like to [donate](#), then we'd like to spend it all on doing more.

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Editors' picks: 2022 in Review

If this year feels like it raced past, you're not alone. So much happened, so quickly, it all feels like a bit of a blur. But for *The Continent's* editorial team, there were certain stories that stood out from the rest.

Simon Allison, Editor-in-Chief
Lydia Namubiru, News Editor
Kiri Rupiah, Communities Editor
Cartoons by Gado

What was the biggest African story of the year?

SA: *The Continent* published hundreds of news stories this year. If there is one theme that links them all together – sometimes in surprising, unexpected ways – it is the cost of living crisis. Everything is getting more expensive. Yes, that does mean that it is going to cost more to fill up your petrol tank, and buying groceries – just the staples – feels like it might bankrupt you. But it also means that politics becomes more unstable, especially in countries where there is little to no social safety net (which is most African countries).

LN: The recent revelation that the Nigerian army forced at least 10,000 women and girls, some of whom had already been brutalised and raped by militants in the country's northeast, to undergo abortions, was truly shocking. And, sadly, it falls into a pattern of stories we see each year, such as the repeated

and credible accusations that Ethiopian government soldiers committed sexual violence in Tigray; or that at least 120 cases of rape by South African police are reported to the police watchdog each year. Across the continent, agents of the state are committing gendered violence with impunity.

KR: The racist treatment that black Africans in Ukraine received while trying to flee the country – in stark contrast to the open arms with which Europe welcomed white Ukrainian refugees – was a reminder of how insidious anti-black racism is. Even in wartime, there was an opportunity to be bigoted. It is a stark reminder of how difficult it is to be African in the world.



What story should have received more attention?

LN: Glencore's conviction for widespread corruption across several African countries did not get enough attention from African journalists or campaigners. That's such a shame, because we know it is only one example of the corrupt collusion between international capitalists and local elites. It's so widespread, it should be a beat that every newsroom covers routinely. And can we finally put to bed the myth that corruption is a uniquely African problem?

KR: Fortress Europe is getting more fortified. In June, a group of people, mostly displaced people from Sudan, tried to cross Africa's land border with Europe. What happened next has been described as a massacre as they were caught between Spanish and Moroccan forces who acted with total impunity,

killing 23 people. Don't forget the illegal pushbacks of boats in the Mediterranean; the network of "black sites" which exist to detain asylum seekers maintained by the EU; and increasingly militarised borders. The dehumanisation of African people starts at home, but seeking asylum is not a crime – and yet we are being punished.

SA: The last time there was a major international conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 5-million died. That war, known as the Second Congo War or the African World War, ended in 2003, with nine African countries joining the fray. Many of the same dynamics that caused that conflict remain unresolved, and the war drums are beating once again. The presidents of the DRC and Rwanda are trading insults, and Kenya has already sent soldiers in preparation of a "peace enforcement" operation, with Tanzania and Burundi set





to follow. Peace talks have gone nowhere. Meanwhile, a rebel group, M23, has seized swathes of territory in the northeast, and committed unconscionable massacres of civilians as it did so. Unless something changes, the stage is set for another major war.

What was the biggest international story of the year?

SA: The Russian invasion of Ukraine, and its implications for global geopolitics. A new international order is asserting itself, and no one yet knows what that looks like – which may explain why so many African governments have been reluctant to pick sides.

KR: A twit – an African twit, no less – bought Twitter and brought into sharp focus how dangerous it is for society to be at the mercy of one man and his whims. As Shoshana Zuboff rightly pointed out, the democratic rule of law needs to govern information spaces. Without limits power is poison.

LN: The global economic crisis that followed the pandemic, only to be made worse by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It looks very different in different

countries: political crisis in Sri Lanka, forex shortages in Malawi, much smaller aid budgets for South Sudan and Somalia, biting high energy prices in Europe or record-breaking inflation in the US. But 2022 certainly felt like the year of struggling to make ends meet.

What story gave you hope for next year?

KR: The Xolobeni community of the Eastern Cape, along with others, pushed back against Shell's attempts to trawl for gas off South Africa's Wild Coast – and they won. That kind of community engagement and organising is reflective of how people power still works.

LN: After years of futility, countries of the Global South finally got a loss and damage fund agreed to at this year's UN climate conference. That, if it doesn't turn into yet another abandoned pledge, has real potential to help communities that are already being seriously harmed by extreme climate.

SA: Everyone knew that the presidential election in Nigeria was a two-horse race, pitting the ruling party's Bola Tinubu against the main opposition's Atiku



Abubakar – both candidates with long and controversial political histories. But everyone was wrong. Fuelled by a slick modern campaign, and consciously targeting the younger demographic that makes up most of the electorate, Peter Obi has emerged as a third contender for the presidency – showing that politics retains the capacity to surprise, and old established elites cannot get too comfortable.

What was the funniest story of the year?

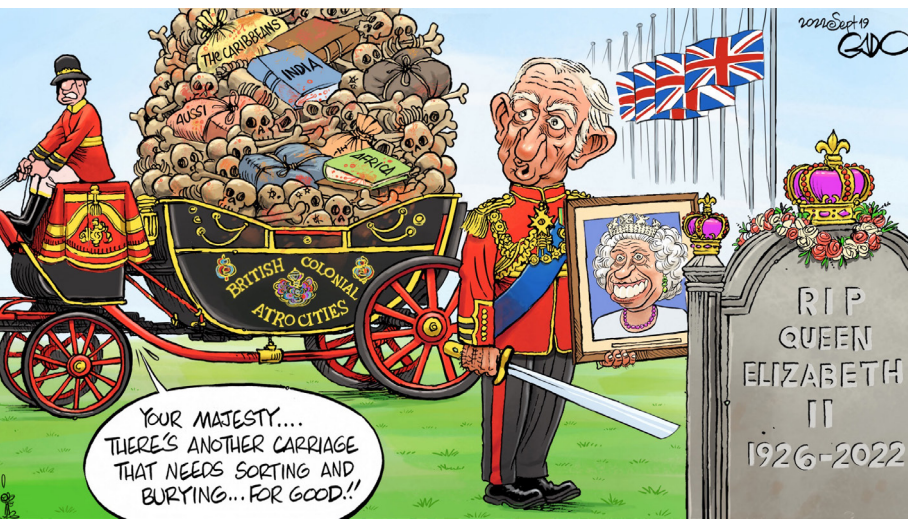
SA: A timeless lesson from South African president Cyril Ramaphosa, who is now fighting for his political life: when in doubt, underneath the couch is always a bad place to stash hundreds of thousands of dollars in undeclared cash.

LN: It's a lesson everyone learns on Twitter early: if you can help it, don't catch the attention of KOT – Kenyans on Twitter. It's



certainly one that Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the unfiltered tweet-storming son of Uganda's president learned this October when he tweeted that it would take his army just two weeks to capture Nairobi. KOT dragged him hilariously for days (and they haven't stopped).

KR: African leaders, so well versed in using public funds to buy the best in German engineering, tucked tail and sat in ordinary buses for the privilege of attending an old lady's funeral. ■



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THE COUNTDOWN

We danced. We laughed. We cried.
2022 has been another exceptional year
for African entertainment – these are
our writers' favourites.



MUSIC by Kevin Rugamba,
DJ and curator



MOVIES by Wilfred Okiche,
film critic and culture writer



BOOKS by Jacqueline Nyathi,
writer and reviewer



PHOTOS by Paul Botes, the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper's photo editor
and winner of the Contemporary
African Photography Prize in 2018

05



Tug of War

Tanzanian
director Amil

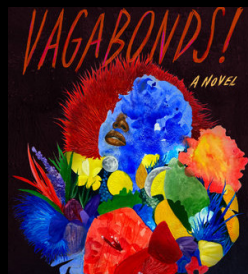
Shivji's dazzling feature is an epic period romance set in the last years of colonial-era Zanzibar. It is adapted from the award-winning Kiswahili novel by Shafi Adam Shafi and, like the novel, bursts with colour and music. A young Mswahili revolutionary falls in love with a rebellious woman fleeing an arranged marriage. Their doomed love affair plays out against the backdrop of a political uprising.



Dream Ya Kutoka Kwa Block by

Buruklyn Boyz

From Ghana to South Africa to Kenya, drill music has been making its way through the continent. It is the soundtrack for the youth in many African cities, capturing both their frustrations and their ambition. This track by the east Nairobi duo Buruklyn Boyz is a perfect example of this duality – and the guitar loop is catchy too.



Vagabonds! by Eloghosa Osunde

Weird and wonderful, and full of gods, ghosts, and demons, Osunde brings attention to issues that are not just Lagos-specific, while using that city as a vehicle to consider urbanism and the poor, African Christianity, violence against girls, and the painful experiences of queer people.



South Sudan's complicated peace

New members of the South Sudan Police Service attend a graduation ceremony in Malakal on 21 November. They are carrying handmade wooden rifles. About 9,000 former fighters have been incorporated into the country's security forces in the wake of a 2018 peace deal. Photo: Samir Bol/AFP

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



THUSO MBEDU

THUSO MBEDU

The leading lady

In *The Woman King*, Thuso Mbedu delivered a commanding performance that ranks as one of the finest film debuts in this year, or any other.

Wilfred Okiche

South African-born actress Thuso Mbedu, appearing in her first Hollywood film, *The Woman King*, a historical epic about the Dahomey Agojie warriors, managed the near impossible.

In a performance of striking physicality and emotional complexity, Mbedu – playing the wide-eyed would-be warrior, Nawi – steals the film from Viola Davis, one of Hollywood's true great icons.

It is the second time that the University of Witwatersrand-trained thespian has delivered a star-making performance on a global platform. In 2021, Mbedu scored her international breakthrough when she dazzled as Cora, the lead in *The Underground Railroad*, the miniseries adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Colson Whitehead. Director Barry Jenkins put his faith in and was rewarded by Mbedu's ability to embody an enslaved woman fleeing a Georgia plantation.

Hollywood might have needed some convincing but, back home, Mbedu was already a big deal. She had previously led the Mzansi Magic teen drama series *Is'thunzi*, for which she received an international Emmy nomination.



Photo: Tristar Pictures

Because of the politics and peculiarities of Hollywood's awards season, Thuso Mbedu is being campaigned in the supporting actress category for her work in *The Woman King*. This is to increase her chances of getting noticed in a system where the biggest names often vacuum up all of the attention. This decision does not change the inescapable fact, though, that the rest of the world is catching up. Thuso Mbedu is already a leading lady, and we can't wait to see what she does next. ■

Wilfred Okiche is a film critic, and writes movie reviews for The Continent

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



ELIUD KIPCHOGE

ELIUD KIPCHOGE



Photo: Nike

The fastest person in the world

**Eliud Kipchoge is redefining what it means to be
a long-distance runner**

Nanjala Nyabola

It's been a complicated year to be a Kenyan. Politics is murky. Famine

looms over much of the country after an unprecedented drought. The national balance sheet looks very imbalanced after years of profligate spending on

infrastructure projects that no one asked for and few are subsequently using. After many years of being mired in Somalia, the country's army has just entered a new site for engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Where does a nation go for hope or even joy when so much of its contemporary history is mired in uncertainty?

Athletics, and specifically long-distance running, has been the go-to place for Kenyans looking to recharge their hope batteries. In a stellar year for the country's marathoners, perhaps no star currently shines brighter than the world's fastest man, Eliud Kipchoge. In September 2019, Kipchoge stunned the world by running the first sub-two-hour marathon in Vienna in 01:59:40, an unofficial record because it was achieved under special conditions and not in an open race. In 2022, Kipchoge stamped his authority on the distance by achieving the world record in an open race in Berlin.

Kipchoge stands out from the crowded field of Kenyan athletes for his determination to sparkle both on and off the track. You don't need to be a runner to appreciate that running 42 kilometres in less than two hours is insanely fast. With both the formal and informal records under his belt Kipchoge reminds us of his singular discipline and determination.

But Kipchoge has shown that he is keen to be more than an athlete. Weeks before his Berlin win, he opened a 85-million shilling (\$690,000) library in Nandi County with money that had been given to him by former president Uhuru Kenyatta. His foundation focuses



Photo: Twitter/
EliudKipchoge

on education and the environment, but with a unique focus on helping athletes that are often abandoned once they are unable to perform. He builds libraries in high schools and plants trees in deforested areas. And does all this while avoiding the temptation to mire himself in electoral politics which many high-profile figures in the country gravitate towards as a short cut to notoriety.

Kipchoge is modelling a different way to be a Kenyan in the public eye and reorienting aspirations for many: to be the best, in Kenya and in the world, and always with an eye on lifting millions more as you climb. ■

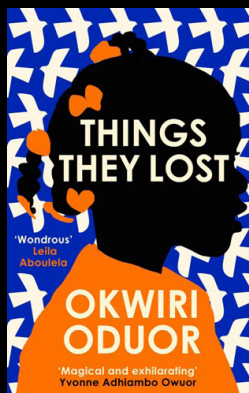
Nanjala Nyabola is a Nairobi-based writer and political analyst. Her latest book, Strange and Difficult Times: Notes on a Global Pandemic, was released in November

04



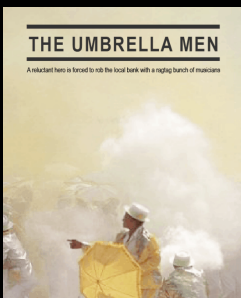
On the run in the DRC

People displaced by war are fleeing to Kanyarushinya, an informal camp of over 40,000 people on the outskirts of the regional capital Goma. In November, fighters from the rebel M23 Movement advanced to within 20 kilometres of the north of the city. Tensions remain high. Photo: Alexis Huguet/AFP



Things They Lost by Okwiri Oduor

This stunning debut novel, in which Oduor's prose soars, tells the story of "the loneliest girl in the world": 12-year-old Ayosa, whose photojournalist mother flits in and out of her life. A truly immersive and delightful story, and Oduor's style is breathtaking. Will leave your mind going over the ideas in it long after you close the pages of the book.



The Umbrella Men

To save their minstrel troupe from extinction, its members stage an elaborate bank heist. Set in Cape Town's Bo Kaap community, John Barker's delightful comedy steals tropes from classic heist movies – but thanks to charming actors, plus plenty of local flavour, it manages to feel unique.



Tanzania by Uncle Waffles (featuring Tony Duardo, Sino Msolo, BoiBizza)

The catchy calls and the buildup to a soulful climax made this track a hit on amapiano-loving dancefloors. It was the first single from the debut EP of Uncle Waffles, the South African DJ sensation who shot to fame late last year. On this evidence, she looks to be building a long and successful career.

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



NOVIOLET BULAWAYO

NOVIOLET BULAWAYO

Our names are good enough

NoViolet Bulawayo did what no black African woman has done – twice

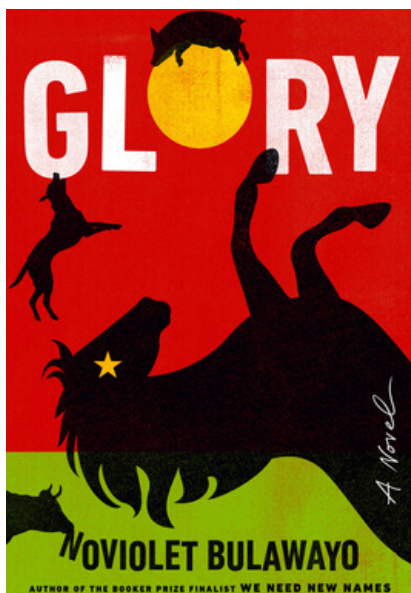
Jacqueline Nyathi

Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, better known as NoViolet Bulawayo, is no stranger to accolades. In 2013 she became the first black African woman and the first Zimbabwean to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize, for *We Need New Names*; in 2022 she became the first black African woman to be shortlisted a second time, for *Glory*.

Bulawayo did not come from privilege: born in the rural area of Tsholotsho, she went to Njube High School, and then to Mzikazi High School, an excellent public school in Bulawayo. She moved to the United States when she was 18 for her tertiary education, receiving a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from Cornell University in 2010.

She began using her pseudonym as a student: “No” meaning “with” in Ndebele; Violet for her mother, who died when she was very young; and Bulawayo, the place she considers home. She learned story and the power of language at the feet of her grandmother and her father, in the tradition of African oral storytelling.

Glory, an animal fable about the



2017 coup in Zimbabwe, has drawn comparisons with George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, a book Zimbabweans frequently reference in veiled (and fearful) criticism of the government. But animal mythology is an ancient theme in African storytelling, and Bulawayo is a product of that tradition.

Both slyly humorous and deadly serious, Bulawayo has made Zimbabwe’s troubles accessible to non-Zimbabwean readers, and cemented her place, and that of recognisably African writing, on the world stage. ■

Jacqueline Nyathi is a Harare-based writer. She reviews books for The Continent

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



Illustration: Nzilani Simu

KHABY LAME

KHABY LAME

Photo:
Getty/
WIBA



Silence is golden

Khaby Lame doesn't say much. These days, he doesn't need to

Refiloe Seiboko

Humans have a perplexing knack for over-complicating things. Even those so-called “life hacks”, which are supposed to make life easier, too often do the opposite. Enter the 22-year-old Senegalese-Italian you didn't know you needed in your life – Khabane “Khaby” Lame. He's expressive, hilarious and, famously, doesn't say very much at all.

He worked as a machine operator in a factory before his job was axed in a round of cost-cutting in March 2020, prompting him to embark on his extraordinary rise to social media stardom.

You have to see his videos to understand what makes them special but, essentially, Khaby reacts to videos of other people attempting various challenges or providing hacks. Only he hacks the hack, or simplifies the supposed simplification, making a mockery of whoever thought they were actually doing something cool. He punctuates his hack recreations with a signature exasperated shrug-point as if to say: “This is how you do it, duh!”

His short, wordless videos offered much needed levity during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and he hasn't stopped since. This year he became the most followed content creator on TikTok, and his follower count is currently just under 153-million.

Khaby is a great example of how the simplest things can bring laughter to people, and within that, reinforces the idea that we are more similar than different as people because what brings us joy is largely the same.

Sadly, and not uncommonly so, he is an example of how exceptional Africans and black people have to be to even achieve even approximate equality. He only received Italian citizenship this year after living most of his life in the country with his family.

European passport or not, though, he'll always be a son of the Senegalese soil who effortlessly leaves a smile on the face of anyone who sees him. ■

Refiloe Seiboko is The Continent's production editor



Sungba Remix by Asake (ft Burna Boy)

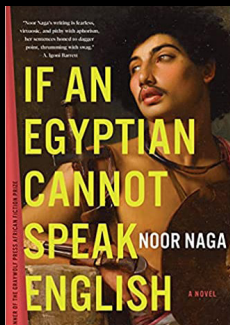
With his unique blend of fúji-inspired vocals, crowd chants and Amapiano-laced beats, Asake has arguably had one of the biggest impacts on African music in 2022. This song exemplifies these trends. With Burna Boy, the African giant himself, jumping on the remix, the song has become a cultural moment that fuses two of the continent's leading musical exports: Afrobeats and Amapiano.

03



The aftermath of a prison break

Hundreds of prisoners were freed from Abuja's Kuje Medium Prison when it was attacked by suspected Boko Haram gunmen in July. Some of the inmates, like these ones pictured inside a prison vehicle, were recaptured just hours or days later. Others remain on the loose. Photo: Kola Sulaimon/AFP



If An Egyptian Cannot Speak English by

Noor Naga

This is a novel about class, identity, naivety, violence, and men and women. Set in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, its reflections on the relationship between Egypt and its diaspora will resonate continent-wide.



Saloum

Blending real life events with wild fiction, Congolese filmmaker Jean Luc Herbulot envisions *Saloum* as a sweaty ride that starts with a bang and never lets up. A trio of mercenaries sent to extract a drug lord from a sticky situation crash their plane in the titular remote region and have to contend with all kinds of antagonists, both physical and supernatural.

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



ANITA SOINA

ANITA SOINA



The kids are all right

When it comes to confronting humanity's greatest challenge, 22-year-old Anita Soina is leading from the front

Sipho Kings

Anita Soina was born into the climate crisis. It was the year 2000, and the Kyoto Protocol had just been signed. It committed rich countries to do the work of reducing their deadly carbon emissions.

The hope it engendered didn't last long. The United States and others refused to do their part. Politicians listened to the corrupting whispers of lobbyists who wanted to burn more lucrative fossil fuels. They took the indifference of most voters as permission to not act.

The world got hotter. In Soina's Kenya,

it has meant extremes, with floods and droughts smashing lives and livelihoods. In its north, the rain has failed to fall for five consecutive years. Over four million people are starving. Yet Kenya is responsible for just 0.05% of the world's emissions.

At age 18, Soina helped found Green Warriors, a group that helps communities build their own gardens and even forests. She was inspired by her grandfather, who planted small groves and defended them from people looking for firewood. She then published *The Green War*, a book about how hard it is to fight for change.

This year, she decided to run for a seat in Kenya's Parliament, representing the Green Thinking Action Party. "I am compelled by the significant role that politics constantly plays in international environmental governance, and the economic and social prosperity of communities."

She was the youngest-ever candidate to stand. While issues of water, sewage and agriculture do feature in Kenyan elections, hers was a rare voice linking these issues to the climate crisis – all the more important given that 47% of Kenyans have never heard of climate change, according to Afrobarometer research.

Soina lost. But her voice is part of a growing chorus of women, particularly in East Africa, who are talking about the biggest challenge humanity faces – and demanding to be part of the solution. ■

Sipho Kings is The Continent's editorial director

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



Illustration: Nzilani Simu

DESIREE ELLIS

DESIREE ELLIS

Photo: David Harrison/M&G



Ahead of the game

Desiree Ellis is already South Africa's most successful football coach – and she is only just getting started

Luke Feltham

Desiree Ellis has said she reveres Sir Alex Ferguson. A lifelong Manchester United supporter, she was captivated by how the legendary coach weaved one generation into the next.

Young players were blooded, older ones phased out, but the team's quality never compromised. She read his book,

searching for lessons she could emulate as a technician.

Those teachings have guided Ellis's own path as a coach. One that this year took her straight to the Africa Women's Cup of Nations trophy – South Africa's first. In the final she decisively out-thought Morocco, outplaying them on enemy territory in Rabat.

She did so with a squad ostensibly



compromised by key personnel losses.

“I said we can only do it if the senior players are united, set the culture and be together, which we were,” Ellis said after landing at an adoring OR Tambo Airport in Johannesburg. “We lost players to injury, but we have individuals who stepped up ... there was encouragement and objective.”

South Africa are now remarkably only the second African nation, after Nigeria, to have both men and women's teams lift continental gold.

How easy it would have been for Bafana Banyana to crumble under

the pain of coming second in 2018. Instead, Ellis has embodied Ferguson-esque foresight. Her side has remained consistent but not stale. Fresh yet never impetuous. Experience in the squad has sharpened young talent, not kept it on the sidelines.

South Africa are now remarkably only the second African nation, after Nigeria, to have both men and women's teams lift continental gold. Bafana Bafana were never able to transition from their golden generation, gradually regressing after their 1996 win. Ellis, you have to imagine, has already begun working to silence the echoes of history. ■

Luke Feltham is a Johannesburg-based sports writer, and online editor at the Mail & Guardian

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



ALAA ABD EL-FATTAH

ALAA ABD EL-FATTAH

The spirit of the Arab Spring

Even from prison, Alaa Abd El-Fattah is the Egyptian government's most powerful critic

Lydia Namubiru

The body needs about 2,000 calories a day to function. From April until October this year, Alaa Abd El-Fattah lived on 100 calories, taking only saline water, in protest against his imprisonment. He is serving a second five-year sentence for self-expression.

In the first week of November, just before the United Nations climate change conference started in Egypt, he escalated his hunger strike, refusing water. With this he managed to draw attention back to his country's atrocious human rights record, at a time when the world was watching it, and as world leaders were jetting in.

The Egyptian government was embarrassed but unmoved.

In mid-November he ended the hunger strike.

Abd El-Fattah's journey captures both the promise and dashed hopes for social media in Africa. It could have liberated us. It did not. Instead it opened the bravest

among us to swift and harsh backlash.

A leader in the 2011 North African protest movement that came to be dubbed the "Arab Spring", Abd El-Fattah and his contemporaries showed us the power of our networked voices. Via Twitter and furious blogging, they organised a sea of humanity to occupy Tahrir Square, eventually forcing Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak to resign, ending his 30-year repressive and corrupt rule.

But the revolution was stolen. Mubarak's successor, Egypt's first elected president Mohamed Morsy, was overthrown by the generals in a coup just two years after the revolution. The revolutionaries were hunted down and jailed. Abd El-Fattah is the most prominent of an estimated 65,000 political prisoners in Egypt.

Social media did not liberate us and instead opened the bravest among us to swift and harsh backlash

So why should anyone keep on resisting? Alaa tells us from behind the prison walls, nearly every week in letters to his loved ones. "We go to the square to discover that we love life outside it. And we walk into prison because we love freedom," he wrote in a 2011 ode to the birth of his son. ■

Lydia Namubiru is The Continent's news editor

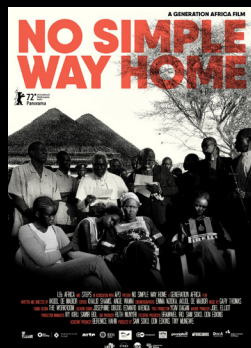


Last Last by Burna Boy
Burna Boy pours his heart out on this Chopstix-produced banger, sharing his piece on his high-profile breakup with British-Jamaican artist, Stefflon Don. With its infectious chant – “E don cast, last last, now everybody go chop breakfast” – the Grammy Award-winning artist reminds us of the universal experience of heartbreak.



In the Black Fantastic by Ekow Eshun, Kameelah L Martin and Michelle D Commander
Through essays and images, the theme of the *Black Fantastic* is defined and demonstrated across Africa and its diaspora. A journey, a revelation, a visual feast, and an everyday reference book.

02



No Simple Way Home
This personal

and political documentary from Akuol de Mabior, scion of two political icons, is a carefully considered reflection on home, legacy and the usefulness of belonging. When her mother Rebecca is called to serve as one of South Sudan's vice presidents, de Mabior – whose father is the late liberation hero John Garang – considers her own place and purpose.



The cowboys of Burkina Faso
A jockey negotiates with his horse in Ouagadougou on 1 February 2022, ahead of the Sunday races for which Burkina Faso's capital is famous. Winners can take home millions of West African francs. Photo: John Wessels/AFP

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



FADZAYI MAHERE

FADZAYI MAHERE

A brand new generation of leadership

Fadzayi Mahere is taking on Zimbabwe's ruling party, and she's doing it all her own way



Kiri Rupiah

For the grand crime of tweeting, Fadzayi Mahere, a Harare lawyer and politician, was arrested in January 2021. She was formally charged with “communicating false statements prejudicial to the state”. The state alleges that Mahere “intended to incite public disorder or public violence” or “undermine public confidence in a law enforcement agency”.

It wasn't her first jailhouse rodeo, but this arrest was most symbolic of how the 37-year-old has become a painful pebble in the ruling Zanu-PF's shoe.

Mahere, a constitutional lawyer and lecturer, serves as the national spokesperson for Zimbabwe's main opposition, the Citizens Coalition for Change. Since April 2016, she has called out government malfeasance and incompetence on social media – despite coming from privilege – and despite her father's links to Zanu-PF.

Zimbabwe's political landscape has always been dominated by “strong men”. Women politicians, often veterans of the liberation struggle of the 80s, tend to be older and inclined to muscle out rather than mentor young political aspirants.

Mahere is different. In a country used to gendered attacks against women who have the gall to stand for office, Mahere's cleverly insouciant responses and legal expertise make her difficult to bully into silence. She represents the kind of talent Zimbabwe has to offer in spite of itself.

In the six years since she first became prominent in Zimbabwe's politics, Mahere has helped to mobilise and reinvigorate people's resolve to fight for their democratic rights and hold the state accountable.

Whatever the outcome of this current momentum, her fostering of a strong active citizenry will not be forgotten. ■

Kiri Rupiah is The Continent's communities editor

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



DIÉBÉDO FRANCIS KÉRÉ

DIÉBÉDO FRANCIS KÉRÉ



Gando Primary School. Photo: Erik-Jan Owerkerk

A blueprint for the future

For Diébédó Francis Kéré, architecture is a way to make the world a better place

Simon Allison

Diébédó Francis Kéré, the eldest son of a village chief in Burkina Faso, was the first in his family to attend school. The conditions at his school in Gando in the 1970s were not ideal for learning. The classroom, a simple structure made of concrete blocks, was dark and poorly-ventilated. When overcrowded with students, as it usually was, it became unbearably hot and humid.

This didn't seem to hold Kéré back.

When he graduated, he was awarded a vocational scholarship to study carpentry in Berlin, and then another scholarship to study architecture.

In 2001, Kéré returned to Burkina Faso to build his first building – a new primary school in Gando, built with funds that he had raised himself.

Already the blueprint of his architectural style was clear. He used indigenous materials that are cheap and easy to source. He lifted the roof above the walls, to allow air to circulate. He



consulted widely with the people who were actually going to be using the school. He contracted local builders and carpenters, which created jobs and ensured that, when something goes wrong, there are people nearby who know how to fix it.

And he made it beautiful. As he explains: “Everyone deserves quality, everyone deserves luxury, and everyone deserves comfort.”

He didn’t just create a building; he created an environment for learning. Enrolment at the school has gone up by 700% since the new school was completed.

Slowly, the architectural world has caught up with Kéré’s vision. Glossy, air-conditioned skyscrapers are out; climate-friendly, sustainable spaces are in. This year, he was awarded architecture’s most prestigious prize, the Pritzker.

“His buildings, for and with communities, are directly of those communities – in their making, their

materials, their programmes and their unique characters,” the prize committee said. “They are tied to the ground on which they sit and to the people who sit within them. They have presence without pretence and an impact shaped by grace.”

It is this grace, and this sensitivity, that is redefining African architecture for the 21st century. The most compelling example of this is Kéré’s design for the new National Assembly in Benin, which is currently under construction. It elevates the ancient practice of meeting under ‘l’arbre à palabres’, the palaver tree, into a breathtakingly beautiful building that emerges from the surrounding landscape, rather than rising out of it.

And that, perhaps, is an accurate metaphor for Kéré himself: a world-leading architect whose foundations are embedded in the land that raised him. ■

Simon Allison is The Continent's editor-in-chief

01



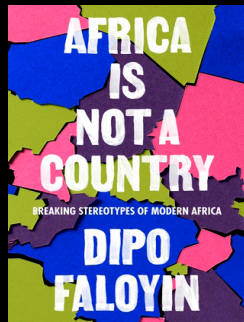
The Blue Caftan

A middle-aged tailor, nursing a secret life, and his loving wife find their seemingly indestructible union shaken to its core by the arrival of a handsome new apprentice. With this radiant second feature, director Maryam Touzani continues to poke at the hypocrisies of conservative societies while exploring the human capacity to love and coexist.



KU LO SA by Oxlade

If the dreamy chords did not make you fall in love within the first ten seconds, then Nigerian artist Oxlade's enchanting melodies surely must have. This upbeat, romantic earworm almost feels like it came out of nowhere. The iconic dance moves imitated Oxlade and soon trended on TikTok, bringing us all closer whenever the song dropped at a function.



Africa is Not a Country by Dipo Faloyin

On the perils of map-making when you "discover" a continent full of people who don't look like you. Read about theft, white saviours, African accents, dictatorship, and wars. The book you should get as a Christmas present for all of your Western besties. Funny, astute, and hopeful.



Building a future

A construction worker from Sierra Leone sits on his bed at a camp in Diamniadio, Senegal on 8 November 2022. Men from all over West Africa have made their way here in search of work. This new city, on the outskirts of Dakar, is designed to relieve the pressure on the overcrowded capital. Photo: John Wessels/AFP

THE QUIZ

0-7

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

8-14

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

15-20

Last Last?! More like First First.



- 1_ Who won Kenya's elections this year?
- 2_ Jomo Kenyatta was president before then. True or False?
- 3_ Which two countries will host the women's football World Cup next year?
- 4_ A team from which country won this year's men's CAF Champions League?
- 5_ A team from which country won this year's women's CAF Champions League?
- 6_ Who will be Brazil's new president on 1 January?
- 7_ Roch Kaboré was deposed as which country's president?
- 8_ Did Morocco gain independence from France in 1955 or 1956?
- 9_ Which South African former football star joined Manchester United's technical staff this year?
- 10_ In which country was COP27 held?
- 11_ Who released chart-topper *Last Last* this year?
- 12_ Senegal's men's team won the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations. How many other times have they won it?
- 13_ Which central African state this year joined the East African Community?
- 14_ Name the former president of Zambia who died this year.
- 15_ Mamady Doumbouya is the interim president of which country?
- 16_ Lamine Guèye was the first black African to compete in which international tournament?
- 17_ The blockbuster film *The Woman King* is loosely based on an army protecting which kingdom?
- 18_ Name the active stratovolcano located just north of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 19_ In what country did the Battle of Adwa take place?
- 20_ In billions, what major milestone did the human population reach this year?

HOW DID I DO?

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

The A-Z of 2022



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Activists: We pay special tribute to Alaa Abd El-Fattah, imprisoned in Egypt, and the many others across the continent fighting against oppression, gender-based violence, climate change and more. Too often their work goes unrecognised, and sometimes they put themselves at great risk. We see you. We applaud you. We thank you.

Broken bromances: In 2013 Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto joined forces to contest Kenya's elections. Two election victories later it all fell apart. When Uhuru's eye wandered to one-time rival Raila Odinga instead, Billy was left out in the cold. Still, we're sure the warm glow of his own victory in this year's election helped him feel better about it.

Coups x 2: The year began with Burkina Faso's President Roch Marc Kaboré being ousted from office in a coup led by military leader Paul-Henri Damiba. Joining the cast of our favourite show, *Keeping Up With The Coupdashions*, Damiba was sworn in as transitional president of Burkina Faso. Nine months

later he was removed from power in a coup led by Captain Ibrahim Traore. Ah, the circle of life!

Drought and devastation: Parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are experiencing its worst drought in over 40 years and face a fifth consecutive failed rainy season. Millions of people are food insecure with a huge number of children likely to be acutely malnourished by the end of the year. Once again climate change is affecting those that have done nothing to cause it.

Entertainment: Films like *Fathers Day* (Rwanda), *Lingui* (Chad) and *No Simple Way Home* (South Sudan). TV shows including *Blood & Water* (South Africa), *Country Queen* (Kenya) and *How To Ruin Christmas* (South Africa). Books by phenomenal writers including Okwiri Odour, Akwaeke Emezi, Warsan Shire, Nanjala Nyabola and Tsitsi Dangaremba. Most excellent.

Forty years in power: President Paul Biya of Cameroon celebrated 40 years in office this year and how he must have celebrated! We don't actually know because he was not seen at any of the events organised in his honour and has not been glimpsed in public since July. We did see photos of the 89-year-old next to a cake, looking rather dashing in a white



outfit with a matching hat. President *and* fashion icon? Is there anything this man can't do?

Ghana's economic crisis: Inflation hit 40%, the cedi became the world's worst performing currency and President Nana Akufo-Addo admitted that the country is "in a crisis". Some Ghanaians have taken to the streets demanding the president and his finance minister resign. The IMF have been in touch but its ordinary Ghanaians bearing the brunt of things.

Hypocrisy: This year saw the private jets of the rich and the shameless flock to Egypt for COP27 – including unelected United Kingdom leader Rishi Sunak, who announced to the world that that acting on climate change is "more important than ever". Then when he got home his government promptly approved the opening of a brand new coal mine!

Ibrahim Traore: The man who led Burkina Faso's second coup of the year

got fed up with Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba's inability to tackle insecurity in the country, so he reckoned he'd give presidenting a go himself. At 34, he's among the world's youngest heads of state. A millennial leading coups and overthrowing governments while we sit scoff chips while watching the football? Let's not mention this to our parents.

Jumping on a plane: When some of our faves headed to Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in London, we were just surprised they were invited at all, considering all the stolen artefacts and jewels were already there to represent Africa. And of course Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari headed to the UK for a doctor's visit – because why should he have to use the services he deems suitable for his people? But our traveller of the year was Liberian President George Weah, whose jet-setting since October included Egypt, France, Qatar to watch his son play for the USA in the World Cup, and then Washington, meaning he has been out of the country for almost two months – the Dora the Explorer of African leaders!

Keeping Up with The Coupdashions: Two coups in Burkina Faso, an attempted one in Guinea Bissau, and military governments still running the show in Guinea and Mali means drama than you can shake a stick at. There have been sanctions, mediators and ultimatums and perhaps a huge need for therapists at the African Union! As it stands Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali have agreed on roadmaps to civilian rule

with Ecowas, and will all hold polls in 2024. What happens next is anyone's guess, but our beret boy bands in their military chic sure know how to keep making headlines.

Love to see it: This year's Pritzker Architecture Prize was awarded to Burkinabè architect Diébédo Francis Kéré, making him the first Black person to win this award. Kéré's works are located in Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Kenya, Sudan and Mozambique alongside Europe and the USA. Pritzker described him as "pioneering architecture - sustainable to the earth and its inhabitants - in lands of extreme scarcity. He is equally architect and servant, improving upon the lives and experiences of countless citizens in a region of the world that is at times forgotten."

Music: Burna Boy, Tems, Blinky Bill, Nikita Kering, Maya Amolo, Asake, Davido, Wizkid, Hawa Dialo, Fally Ipupa, Sho Madjozi, Fatoumata Diawara, Eddy Kenzo, Rema, Octopizzo, Fireboy DML, Aya Nakamura. A reminder of just how much talent Africa has to offer and that no matter how bad things get this continent will never stop dancing.

New and not so new leaders: A bunch of elections swept through the continent this year, bringing in some new, some not so new and some "we've been seeing you for a long time" faces. In Kenya, William Ruto un-deputised himself into the hottest seat in town, Angolan president João Lourenço scraped an outright majority with a 51.17% share of the vote,

Somalia's former president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud boomeranged back into office. President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo may be sticking around for a sixth term in Equatorial Guinea, but in Lesotho a new face in the form of businessman Sam Matekane has taken over as the mountain kingdom's prime guy.

Ousted leaders: Guinea's former guy, Alpha Condé (couped out in September 2021) seems to have spent most of the year in Türkiye getting medical treatment. Possibly because the alternative is facing prison back home, where prosecutors have been preparing charges against him and 26 others, ranging from complicity in murder and assault and sexual violence to forced disappearances. That was May. Six months later more charges were added to his naughty list, and those of 180 of his former colleagues, including corruption, illicit enrichment, embezzlement of public funds and money laundering.

Political rivalries: This season of *Keeping Up With The Kenyans* was an eventful one. Veteran political leader Raila Odinga was vying for the presidency for the 5th time, he was up against Deputy President William Ruto who won with 50.5% of the vote. The Raila camp challenged the polls in court citing irregularities. The Supreme Court branded their claims "hot air" and upheld the Ruto win. The bickering continues.

Quarrelling neighbours: Strained relations between Rwanda and the



Exes: Former president Uhuru Kenyatta and his former bestie William Ruto, who took his job. Photo: Phil Moore/AFP

Democratic Republic of the Congo got strainier when the latter accused the former of supporting the M23 rebels, which the ever-more-formidable former refuted. So the latter expelled the former's ambassador leading, latterly, to lots of lassitude on the peacemaking front.

Regime change: The European Island of Great Britain was in turmoil this year following a political crisis. It all began when strongman Boris Johnson, who sports a mop of uncombed blonde hair as per the tradition of his tribal elders, agreed to resign his reign – a period of strife seemingly characterised by corruption, nepotism and political flatulence. His successor Liz Truss lasted precisely 44 days before she herself was forced to walk the plank, making way for the Fresh Prince of Bell End, Rishi Sunak who became the struggling island nation's fourth prime minister in six years. The whole thing's been a certified omnishambles, which is a quaint way of

saying “shitshow” in the local patois.

Sport: The Africa Cup of Nations ended with Senegal taking the trophy. Morocco's performance at the men's World Cup has been a treat, Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge won the Berlin Marathon breaking his own record, Beatrice Chebet won gold in the 5,000m at the Commonwealth Games while Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo won gold in the 10,000m. Meanwhile we've seen African women sports pundits and commentators like Usher Komugisha, Suo Chapele, Juliet Bawuah and Mimi Fawaz shine at the men's Football World Cup. Superb!

Taking to the streets: Throughout the year people in Sudan have held protests demanding a return to civilian rule. They've been met with crackdowns by security forces who have used tear gas and live bullets on demonstrators. The total number of people killed since the demonstrations began in October 2021 is 121, with thousands injured.

Unbreaking news: President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo was declared winner of Equatorial Guinea's election with a whopping 94.9% of the vote. Yes, we were shocked too! The 80-year-old has been in office 43 years and is set to begin his sixth term. The lead-up to the polls were marred by reports of a crackdown on opposition members and activists, surprising precisely no one.

Vitriolic exchanges: Tensions between France and Mali kicked off

after the 2020 coup, got worse after the 2021 coup-within-a-coup and boiled over this year when France's foreign minister referred to Mali's military government as "illegitimate". Mali expelled the French ambassador, so France announced withdrawal of its troops. Then Mali accused France of espionage, shut down French media in the country, complained to the UN and suspended all NGOs with links to France. And after Manny Macron then threw even more shade Mali-wards, the junta urged him to "abandon his neocolonial and patronising attitude". It's *Game of Francophones* out there, y'all.

War and elusive peace: Parts of the continent have been ravaged by conflict this year, and civilians have been caught in the crossfire. Attacks by armed militants in Burkina Faso and Mali have continued throughout the year. The security situation in Eastern DRC has also deteriorated, leading to a rising death toll as a result of rebel attacks, with thousands being displaced. Meanwhile the war in Tigray left thousands dead alongside a huge humanitarian crisis, though a peace deal was finally signed in November.

Xtra time in power: After the death of Chad's president Idriss Déby in April 2021, his son Mahamat was declared president in what was described as a "dynastic coup". Mahamat was to oversee an 18-month transition period which would lead to an election

that he would not contest. But in October it was announced that the transition would be extended by two years, Junior will be staying on as president for now and later have the opportunity to run for the presidency. Security forces then marked the occasion by killing dozens of protesters and arresting hundreds more who joined pro-democracy demonstrations.

You made your couch now sit on it: South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa – or "cupcake" as his frenemies call him on social media – saw his fortunes begin to unravel when it emerged he had stuffed wodge of cash into a sofa at his game farm and then when it was stolen, tried to cover it all up. Or reupholster it all up, maybe. He says it was \$580,000, the country's former spy chief claims it was \$4-million. Where was it from? Why was it not declared? Why cover it up? Seems Eskom, the state power utility, aren't the only ones leaving South Africans in the dark.

Zealous readers: No we didn't mean leaders! This last bit is dedicated to you dear reader, for supporting this publication and this column. Your passion, your commitment and kindness has not gone unnoticed. We love you more than our leaders love tear gas. For you we'd change a thousand constitutions. You are the coup leaders of our heart! See you in 2023. ■

To help us keep doing this, please consider filling out our [survey](#)

The Big Picture

Photo: Badru Katumba/AFP

Keeping the faith: A worshipper is framed by a truly magnificent couch at the Ggaba landing site on Lake Victoria in Uganda, after Eid Al-Fitr prayers. This religious holiday, celebrated by Muslims worldwide, marked the end of the holy month of Ramadan in May. Uganda is a mainly Christian country, but 13.7% of the population identify as Muslim according to the last national census in 2013.



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