

## Editorial Notice

### The Jua Kali can speak but will the egocentric elites ever listen?

We welcome you to read this special issue of the *Mwazozo Journal published by Makerere University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences Makerere University (CHUSS)*. The topic of this issue is “*The Ivory Tower Meets Jua Kali: Reflections on theorising the Profound from the Ordinary*”, which was the theme of the CHUSS Annual Conference of 2020. The voices of the “*Jua Kali*” are highlighted in the articles. According to Vincent Ogutu, the term “*Jua Kali*” has , two meanings: “*Jua* signifies ‘**the sun**’ but it also means ‘**to know**’. *Kali* denotes scorching and sharpness. *Jua Kali* therefore has the dual meaning of scorching sun or sharp knowledge” (Kinuthia, 2023).

The *Jua Kali* identity category is regarded as being of “inferior rank” because they toil under the scorching sun in non-blue/white collar spaces. The *Jua Kali* are viewed negatively by the political and intellectual elites as being naïve and simplistic. But through their ingenuity, they use their abilities to adapt, innovate, and be skilled as street vendors, farmers, and small business owners to contribute to countless meanings and values to their families

and society. All day long, they “hustle” in the sun in an effort to make a living. They pay taxes, feed and educate their children and make significant contributions to the development of the nation. Additionally, they serve as a route for import substitution through the creations of their hands in some way. Unfortunately, their voices hardly ever influence theoretical and policy debates.

As a result, the *Jua Kali* now has official agency thanks to this special edition. Their “sun-baked” voices and actions are conveyed in seven articles of this issue in a straightforward manner. It is emphasized how significant their practical efforts were to the social, economic, and political trajectories of their place and stay. As a subaltern [inferior rank] category, the *Jua Kali* is consequently given a Gramscian-inspired historiography in the articles. The emphasis is on their objective formation, their passivity in supporting the powerful political formations, the formations they create to further their agendas, and the channels by which they improve livelihoods (see Maltese, 2017).

The voices and actions of the *Jua Kali* are put to the forefront of the intellectual and policy spotlight as if

to respond to Spivak's query about whether the subaltern can speak (see Spivak, 2015). Eric Jemba's work, *Efficacy of Students' "Body Stories" on Novice Dance Students' Training at Makerere University*, describes his transition from "non-formal practice (of dance) to dance academia" in this regard. Additionally, Eric outlines the influence of the students' "lifelong body stories" and how such stories affect the formal training of dance. Eric emphasizes how the study of dance draws inspiration from the *Jua Kali's* performing arts world in this way.

Besides, dance is life to the *Jua Kali*. It is considered to be enjoyable. However, dance is labour in the eyes of the Ivory Tower's intellectuals. It is useful for analysis. Therefore, the benefits of dance are not uniform. Dance is entertainment to the communities, especially to the *Jua Kali* who go to entertainment venues to for relaxation. Dance is not complicated to them. Only the body's flexibility is necessary.

The intellectual dance is difficult, and understanding how it is and ought to be done demands analytical frameworks. The politician waits in the shadows waiting for the bureaucrat to provide the complex matrix necessary for the taxation of dance. However, while the *Jua Kali* simplifies dance, the elites do complicate it. Dance comes as naturally to them as work itself. Both tasks call for flexible limbs and a "obedient" body. The exception is that after a day or days of "hustle," the flexibility required by dance puts a sparkling, hot smile on the *Jua Kali's* cheeks. In summary, *Jua Kali*

believes that entertainment should be minimal and focused on the sensation of being. The ease with which the *Jua Kali* enjoy entertainment, according to John Baptist Imokola's explanation of the popularity of Video Jockeys (VJs, Veejays) in Uganda, is a major factor. In order to comprehend the subject matter of an entertaining episode, they do not need to work hard or listen attentively. The native voiceovers must be provided by the VJs. The voiceovers serve as a loose translation of the film's (videos') complicated meaning into the local language.

Additionally, Agatha Tumwine's rather nostalgic discussion of the need for the revitalisation of folklore among the Bakiga people relates to the *Jua Kali's* quest for entertainment as part of the formation of their minds. The *Jua Kali* seek amusement and instruction through entertainment. They are practically catapulted into calm by the amusement, which is therapeutic. But again, with guidance, they consider their daily lives. As a result, folklore as a medium imparts valuable knowledge in a condensed manner. It makes it possible to reflect without wearing out the body or mind and does it in a way that keeps both alive. Additionally, the notion of handwork is emphasised through folklore as the foundation of advancement. The young also receive cultural values from their parents. Folklore is open to anyone, and the stories it tells connect with the desires of the elderly who want to pass on social ideals to the young. It also inspires children who are drawn in by the calming effects of folklore.

Agatha's trajectory acts as a springboard to Priscilla Asiimire's analysis of Extra-Mural Studies and how they promoted a Eurocentric lifestyle. This elicits a feeling of loss that colonialism inflicted on the "African self". The loss was further deepened by the balkanisation of Africa into different several geographical spaces or countries. This particular order of things has translated into a somewhat symphony of violent conflicts. These conflicts negatively impact the livelihood of the *Jua Kali*. The *Jua Kali* abhor violent conflicts and look up to the political leaders to thwart them. Ignas Fedeo's discussion of the mythical recreation of Nyerere by the Banyakyusa is attributed to Nyerere's ingenuity which enabled him to thwart a violent conflict between Malawi and Tanzania over the Lake Nyasa border. For that matter, the *Jua Kali* pray for enduring tranquillity to enable them undertake their daily work.

The *Jua Kai* thus imagines two worlds, theirs and that of the political and intellectual elites. The political elites seek political power, sometimes through the barrel of a gun. Accordingly, power to the politicians is a matter inclined to the logic of "do or die". This is because of the privileges that power guarantees. The intellectual elites are often co-opted in the power-seeking schemes of the politicians. To this extent, the *Jua Kali* consider the elites as the epitome of the absurdity of those who reap where they sowed little or nothing at all. As the *Jua Kali* "hustle" in the sun, the politician imagines a feasible tax

regime to cover the range of what is produced. The political elites are also interested in the votes of the *Jua Kali* in order to legitimatise their control. The intellectual theorises about the nature of those imagination(s). In a way, the interaction between the elites and the *Jua Kali* is transactional and periodical. As a result, the *Jua Kali*, whom Basilio Kamya puts as the "common man", are cynical of the politicians. They imagine that whatever the politicians do, bears not "good faith" but rather anchored in the "political faith"—related to manipulation. For that matter, Kamya affords the reader a glimpse into the "common man(s)" perception of Universal Primary Education (UPE). The low quality of the UPE programme is blamed on corruption and inadequate budgetary allocations.

The lack of access to quality education complicates "youth empowerment". Hence, Lydna Nakalawa's article *Social-Cultural and Historical Milieu Surrounding Youth Empowerment in Buganda: Lessons from Community and Lay Perspectives* is welcome. It highlights that empowerment requires that the youths are equipped with the appropriate skills to enable their economic transformation through work. Her understanding of the *Jua Kali* as "the lay persons" whose perceptions need to be brought into the discussion of empowerment is instructive. Her message is that society can be better transformed if the actors of importance—the political and intellectual elites, "tap into the voices of the subaltern (those they consider

as lay, ordinary and common)". As such Deborah Nakalyowa-Luggya's explanation of the manifestations of Female-Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is pertinent. It brings to bear the extent to which the "ordinary" people—the *Jua Kali* are concerned with the rising cases of male victims of crimes of intimacy. This justifies the need to include the predicament of male in the fold of the gender theory and policy framework.

The *Jua Kali*, in a sense, have a firm understanding of their society—its history and the imaginary future. Thus, Robert Ssemulende's archeological attempt to understand the Sangoan Techno complex from the vantage point of the "local community" is welcome. His contribution is methodological—that reality is better understood if scholars take a warm interest in the "voices" of the communities as the knowers. The communities—the subaltern are not ignorant, they are aware of their predicament and context. For that awareness, they take a somewhat cover into their own renaissance in the markets, on the streets, in the shanty towns and slums. As the political and intellectual elites respectively struggle to be at the pinnacle of the "politics of the people" and the ivory tower of knowing things, the *Jua Kali* are content with their position as the "ruled"—the subjugated. They are aware that the elites lowly regard them and that the objective of the politician is to act on them through taxation and other facets of political manipulation. They

regard the political elites as corrupt and manipulative, and the scholar in the so-called Ivory Tower as full and fond of empty rhetoric.

The articles in short offer the reader a glimpse into the realities of the *Jua Kali*. The resounding message is that if the voices of the *Jua Kali* are intentionally listened to and seriously considered, they can transform scholarship and public policy. In the final analysis, the articles answer Spivak's question: "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The answers, though varied, are affirmative and forthright: Yes, the subaltern (in this case the *Jua Kali*) can speak. Yet for the arrogance and self-interestedness of the elites, the *Jua Kali* are often and intentionally not understood for they are despised. This begs the question: The subaltern can speak (for they have spoken through the seven articles), but can the egocentric elites hear the subaltern? We thank the authors for having submitted their articles to be part of this special issue. We thank them for their resilience and tenacity, for they painstakingly considered the feedback. We also appreciate the peer reviewers for the constructive feedback they provided on the articles. Lastly, and most importantly, we are grateful to the editors of the *Mawazo Journal* for inviting us to serve as "Guest Editors" to this special issue. We hope the readers will find the articles as instructive as the voices of the *Jua Kali* which they transmit. Have a great reading!

### **Special Issue Editors**

Patrick Mangeni

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## References

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