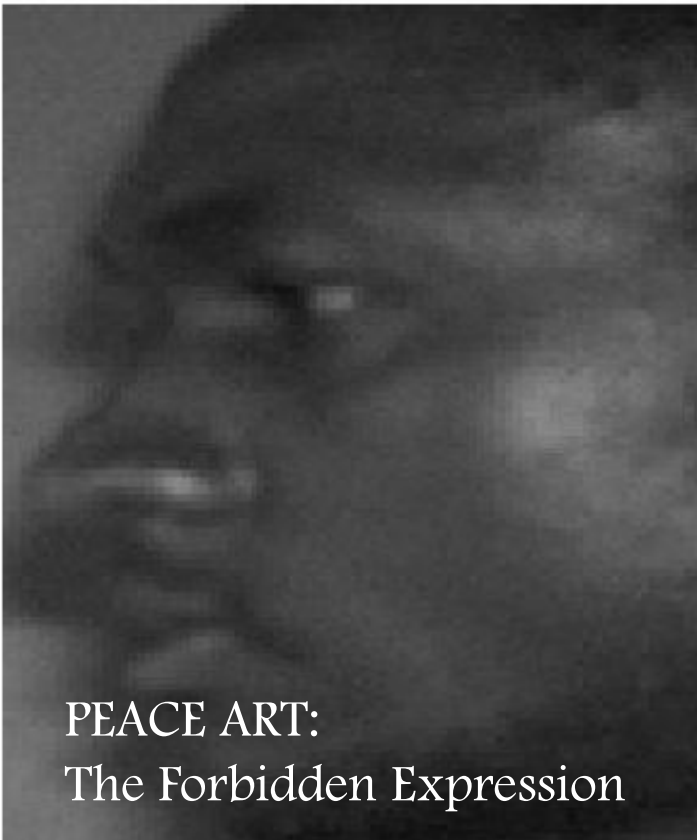




Authored by: Boaz Adhengo



PEACE ART:
The Forbidden Expression

©2010 by Boaz Adhengo



860 Aviation Parkway
Suite 300
Morrisville, NC 27560

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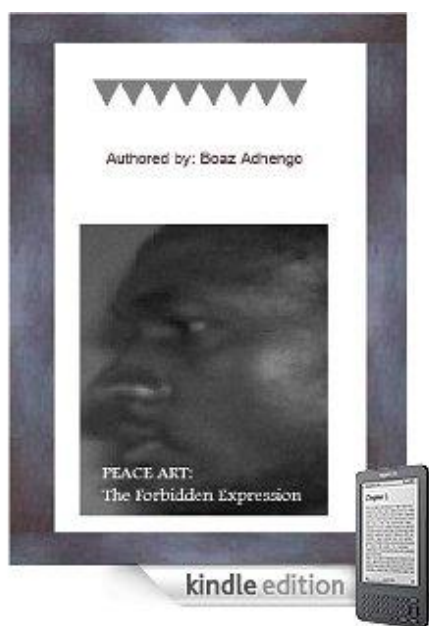
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Peace Art: The Forbidden Expression





Preface

The idea of this book has been with me for some while, mostly in my thoughts of engaging philosophy and politics in a more humble but effective way. I have noticed, over the years of academic publishing, that there is a thin line of divide between the *liberal-art* disciplines. All being freely applicable to whichever situation that concerns humanity and its world view, the only difference to be the angle of analytical engagement.

My past persistence onto book projects has failed to comprehend the efficacy in this timing; simply due to ever changing atmosphere and urge for deeper creativity. I keep focusing on *sagacical* issues, looking back into our traditions and reminding those to whom I write that even creativity is influenced politically. Nothing flows freely and notions originate through examples from whence we widely perceive them as ideas. Only when those whom we hold deeper trust are able to produce, is when we rightfully nourish our consumption.

In this time of exploitation, when creatives pirate their own products amidst steady clustered structures that could, if properly managed, alleviate many out of poverty; everyone tends to prefer going solo, alone into the production process, trying to imitate the successes of Jack not knowing that his trade was full of false starts. There is need for eventual collaboration, a necessity in hopeful integration of the divergent components of our creative or cultural industries. Simply put, a keen and scientific analysis into the *socio-economic* concerns of the intangible productions that exist within different communities.

Only when these concepts and concerns become a backbone to a function; only when some eloquence in representation is visible; only when a vision of progress is defined, is when Africa and its component statehood can fully be able to define peace.

I have chosen *Peace Art* as the title of this book owing to my passion for ‘*Culture-Conflict*’ studies. During my graduate studies, I never fully explored the African problem; the academic atmosphere was too clustered, limiting a comprehensive and sincere inquiry into the ground problems that are of essence in talking peace or conflict about Africa. I say a clustered environment due to the *incohesive* relation, the capitalistic behavior of the students as encouraged by some lecturers. Nothing was real with learning being experientially planned but executed in an opposite structure, the kind of knowing that promotes doctrinal principles where reflection and critical thought is never a core. To question is seen as an act of rebellion. Surprisingly enough, the University itself is

outstanding for its relation with the top notch of the society. All senior government officials would send their children to this privileged institution in preference of not letting them out of the country. Though preventing a brain-drain or capital flight, they were highly categorizing education. My getting to this academia was through merit, but only to realize that the quality of my know was not connective to the other institution from whence I emanated; my undergraduate studies seemed more intense, it was like learning concepts and theories already acquainted with. In attempt to escape this lazy feeling, I ended up writing for publication, first as a self published author, and later as a contracted writer for a newsletter. All adding up into a wonderful editorial formation, the *Balozi Journal*.

I had been practicing professional philosophy for over six years, facilitating UNESCO forums amongst other genres. The catholic theologians had their different version as to what philosophy really is, and its *toolful* use to the society; mostly so, I hated their modalities of indoctrination and induction. Philosophy should be understood as an avenue for critical thinking and not a moral bench to instill empathy and lack of imagination beyond what has been put in ink or categorized as black and white.

How could we understand potent concepts such as *God*, *Evil*, *Peace* or even *Religion* when we were not allowed to feel the opposite? This resulted to my humanist quest, my evolutionary fusion, my induction to Darwin and his schisms. The book that was to result from these doubts was *Atheistically* driven, philosophically debated and politically secured. I tried to

express dissatisfaction with the role of religion in Africa, the illusions of a secular state and the contest for republican practice. Not being surprised by the market response to this product, it was not to be appreciated and it branded me an enemy of the state other than a minister.

Discussing religion in Africa was an abomination, and I had done it; contesting God was blasphemy, and I had done this. What element of the society would benefit from my future? Who would want to identify with this public disgrace? Who would understand that a call into secularism was a peak into democracy... the book sold better in Britain than in Kenya, our African community abroad appreciated it better than the locals to whom it was intended. I guess the Unitarian community had a greater need for its truth than the confused superstitious crowd who wanted a chapter and topical review.

It is therefore difficult to sell a book on philosophy as not so many would be able to analyze the analogues and paradigms involved. One would not expect to freely sell a book on creative thinking as this will be seen as a deluded process of innovation. Not unless you are selling this idea to a multinational corporation or organizations who enjoy governmental impunity, only then can your thoughts be put into use as you remain exploited in non-benefit of the products you help put in space. This is the very reason that advocacy for patents and human rights need to be expounded into the illiterate arena. Creativity is equally a human rights issue.

Looking into the myriad of issue areas that use art as method to realize their various objectives, and to a better extent, create a transitional strategy that is visual and intentional, translating conflict into art is one of the products. The historical composition of the continent makes it understandable to be resourcefully rich and strategically poor. The hegemonic manipulation of divide and rule is quickly eroding our cultural ambitions. We are becoming deluded through unfocused peace, sustainable conflict and unmanageable ecosystems. Despite literature on *Ujamaa*, *Egalitarianism* and *Pan-Africanism*, the continent still stands anarchic. The proper ingredient for peace remains cultural recognition, a language of art and an expression of the traditional. Only then can Africa return to its steady roots while enjoying its significant purpose in contemporary time.

My purpose of writing this book is to describe the complex '*Peace Art*' as it occurs in Africa and specifically Kenya. My understanding of Peace Art is not universally accepted. Some researchers prefer less expressive, more cognitive behavior models to describe this concept. They focus on conflict and chaotic relation of art - a look into the opposite.

This book is more of a proposal into collective action, into resourceful organization of art into action. The approach into this writing is purely creative but informing, merging existing examples with experience into a digestible piece that will not warrant a meeting.

The book '*Creativity in Kenya*' steered reactions from scholars who at many a time demanded for a forum with me, being in confident dispute of the ideas I expressed. I would have termed them consulting investigators, *tabula rassa* agents with no planned course of action, or even age driven egoistic enthusiasts who tend to believe that the young must always be restless and not relaxed. The ideas in that publication must have given them hyperactive thoughts, if not driving them into sincere actions.

It is not a matter of age but professionalism, and with it, we express what we have. It is all a market impression where we consume or we reject whatsoever. Dependable on our own interests and nourishment.

This book would not have been possible without a refocused mind as experienced in duration of my employ to *Aga Khan University*, am therefore grateful to Ms. Yvonne Owuor for her guidance and motivation into the exploratory involvement she immersed me, and now am a consultant for creative economics. I would also like to highlight the invitation by Mrs. Mshai Githongo to join the Arterial Network, a forum where my thoughts on policy, culture and development were put in good use, a forum where I managed to ventilate clarifications of the ethical sentiments and morality, focusing on our Kenyan culture as we embrace it.

With no subversion, a comprehensive cover on issues would not be adequate, though the intent was information sharing. For this, I would love to thank all those who found my book on

Creativity enlightening, and those who encouraged me to embark into writing on Peace through Art.

Many thanks to David Kikaya, Philip Mwanzia, Edward Kabuye, Kenneth Omeje, Kio Bob-manuel, Wambui Mwangi, Michael Maina, Tom Olali, Kathleen Buren, Joy Mboya, Brian Keiley, Jacob Kwize, Aghan Odero, Norris McDonald, Irene Joseph and all those whose names I have not mentioned for their own liking, especially a dear friend of mine in Canada.

Lastly, I would wish to thank my wife Rukia Abubakar for the moral support and constructive input she has given me in the process of developing this book, sponsoring most of my expeditions through the Abubakar Weisheit Foundation. Am happy to have married you and regret the divorce we celebrated.

*To my son, Jahwar Amber, with continuing love and gratitude for all
you are and what you are becoming.*

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I

On Issues of Peace

In 2007, the flawed electoral results proved that the intellectual persistence of Kenyans could not be overstretched to measure ignorance; the need for peace was no longer a representational issue but a quest for honesty and sustainable ethics. The outcome, a thrilled piece of a people, with ethnicity looming large into divide and destroy, the Kikuyu tribe being waived away from the scattered occupancy they had inhabited. Justification being that the Agikuyu greed was being put into check with their history cultural explosion receiving a popular oppression. All this time the Mungiki were out of control, but on the verge of destruction, they were nowhere to be seen. Everyone was up for their heads and everyone was ready to sacrifice some time to express whatever dissatisfaction the governance had brought to his expectations.

At this time of occurrence, I had been busy preparing to enroll for my graduate program, not knowing how best to meet the expectations that were yet to be created from this systemic anarchy. The economy went stale and commoditization of intellect became the game, where everything was monetarily assessed. Nothing came for free and many vocabularies

originated from intended insults and complaints from the citizens who once lived a patriotic life. The basic sustainability of family life was no closer to two dollars a day as the World Bank had predicted, it was much worse, it was ten dollars. And this was no easy to come by. Ten dollars of worthless living; of severe wanting and potency towards anything that gave hope. Simply put, everyone wanted to be in peace with himself or the other.

The situation of conflict in African countries is no new discovery. These activities have been there, either in controlled magnitudes or amplified from exterior motives by the developed countries, who would will to remain authoritative in their relations with the host countries – *the thirdword*. They come in as peace keepers, donors or agents of humanitarian aid. A camouflage of activities, a delusion of what their intended input should be, amidst lots of expectations that they have strategized within their own departments. The best example remains the *Congo-Crisis* connecting to the *Rwanda Genocide* then ultimately, Darfur *begots* of Sudan.

David Livingstone was the first European explorer to enter the Zaire. His reports resulted in King Leopold II of Belgium establishing the *Congo Free State* (except for the sending of Christian missionaries to the area, little was done to prepare the country for independence).

Prior to the establishment of the First Republic in 1960, the native *Congan* elites had formed semi-political organizations

which gradually evolved into the main parties striving for independence. These organizations were formed on one of three foundations: ethnic kinship, connections formed in schools, and urban intellectualism. Thus, a number of leaders have been recorded as in control of Congo from Patrice Lumumba, Moise Tshombe, Col. Sese Seko Mubutu to Laurent Kabila. All of whom try to impose the concept of African peace; trying to reinvent the whole concept with no idea of how to go about it.

We must understand that the world is interdependent, *intradependent* and interconnected. Globalization is already here and must be accepted as the very reality of our time, that no state or individual is entirely self-sufficient. We all lack something that could be acquired from somewhere by someone else.

To launch and sustain a process of good governance in a post-conflict country is a herculean task, particularly, it's very absence has caused a violent conflict. Thus, due to inadequate comprehension of the African conflicts, the international community has been impatient with the lack of delivery of instant good governance, preferably modeled after the western representative system of governance and driven by donor conditionality's. This superficial understanding of both the uniqueness and complexity of African conflicts and of the tendency on the part of the donors to view Africa's problems through the purview of the western countries and societies accounts for their inappropriate policy perceptions about peace.

Part of the difficulty in addressing the problems of peace-building is that it requires a multi-level, multidimensional, multi-issue approach that tackles not only the cessation of war, but also the difficulties of rebuilding relationships, communities and institutions in contexts in which natural resources have been pillaged, looted, destroyed and are most likely in the hands of powerful exploiters not interested in the equitable use of resources.

When peace is defined in terms of healing, it draws attention to the kind of people, relationships and societies that are at peace. The notion emphasizes an ongoing holistic and transformational process of restoring relationships destroyed by violent conflicts. These are not only relationships between people, men and women but also people's relationship with natural resources and the environment. This idea leads one to consider the mechanisms of the kind of rituals that initiate and nurture the qualities and conditions that restore relationships and heal the person from trauma of war. Current demobilization and demilitarization processes are blind to indigenous ideas of how to transit from war to peace. In some African societies, ritual cleansing of combatants was and remains mandatory before being allowed to rejoin the rest of the community.

At the World Summit - New York 2005 - the world's leaders expressed a commitment to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world thereby committing them to promotion of education on peace and human development. Notably, for us to have a global peace there must be several elements: community

cohesion, nation-building, regional identity and global understanding. This is what Robert Stewart¹ sees as lacking or in absentia. That we, the whole population, need to understand ourselves in order to arrive at beneficial conclusions regarding war and all the related issues that lead us to wars. All of us need to know that we are driven by our inner emotions, and these emotions can be misleading and even destructive. We need to recognize that we have built-in, gene driven feelings and early-training feelings that to a large extent determine our personalities and our mental decisions on courses of action. He adds that man's loose interpretation on the meaning of "freedom" has contributed to his discontent; that people tend to think of freedom in an absolute sense. The ultimate freedom is living on a deserted island where one has no need to be concerned about neighbors or what neighbors think. This is of course an impossible ideal in a crowded world, and we need to define freedom as it applies to living in a democracy; the democracy of a globalised planet, where technology and art have evolved to provide meaningful coexistence. For instance, the United Nations was formed to have the authority to stop nations from doing things outside their sovereign rights and in a democratic etiquette. It ventures into countries to uphold the systemic developments and the global impact of freedom as understood. The U.N. does not take away sovereign rights because they were not responsible for the rights of nations in the first place.

¹ Peace Within Our Grasp By Crandall R. Kline Jr., August 1999

Almost 2000 years ago, the Roman philosopher, Seneca in 42 A.D concluded that world peace would be secured on a permanent basis when we start teaching our children to view the whole world as one: *Omnis Orbs terrarumpatria mea est*² even with our dire quest for patriotism and soulfulness as a nation. We need to convey to the public that sovereignty does not include the right to do bad things. It does not give a nation the right to kill all the whales or catch all the salmon in the oceans or to pollute the air or water that moves to neighboring nations. It does not give them the right to conquer another nation or to commit terrorism. These things are not sovereign rights. The Somali clansmen investing their wealth in the cities of Kenya override their innermost understanding of sovereign space; though they have increased in population, they are unregistered aliens and in tackle of controlling the growth, they retaliate through forming militia groupings, the Al Shabab investment core. It is for this reason that Kenya has suffered a huge blow of Somali refugees trapped in Kakuma Camp, that there is now an internal need to create a safe haven in Somali land. The price of peace comes with security, and protecting citizens is not only physical but concerns economics and sustainability issues as well. There is a need to create a refuge haven inside Somalia, and keep the lousy militia men out of reach. Only then will sovereignty of Kenya and other countries that have turned into refuge hubs be respected. Imagine if a portion of Somalia that borders Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya was to be put under IGAD watch, will this not be safe for Somali refugees in relocation?

² The whole world is my own native land

One of the fundamental reasons why no enduring peace exists in the world is that humanity at large does not know true inner peace. Notably, we can experience inner peace independently of our external environment and circumstance. We can experience inner peace even at a battle field; this is only true when we bring peace into the sphere of our awareness.

Inner peace exists in life as ecstatic silence and not in death as deadly silence; it can be sought and experienced only within a dynamic process of life. Therefore, the first condition of inner peace is to know that life is not a form or a thing as which it manifests but the dynamic formless process that informs the form or a thing -- desiring to help everyone in the world, believing that everyone should seek to be a "citizen of the world", is not widespread, and herein lies an impediment to creating support for a world system – the *Unitarian* quest that categorizes our wholeness as humanity. "Citizens of the world" is not a natural, built-in emotion; it is a decision of the logic of the upper brain. It is said that for there to be a world peace, the upper brain must be in control, and who knows when the entire planet will have their upper brains in action. I guess this is mythic, a delusion and a scientific quest that needs to be proven. The commonly known truth is that the brain has two sides, left and right; this makes us to move to our new topic.

Inventing Peace

There is around every one of us adults a web of convention and prejudice of our own making. Not only do we reflect the social

formalities of our environment, and therefore lose the distinguishing spontaneities of childhood, but each of us builds up his own little world of seclusion and formality with himself. We are subject, as Bacon said, not only to "idols of the forum," but also to "idols of the den."

The child, on the contrary, has not learned his own importance, his pedigree, his beauty, his social place, his religion; he has not observed himself through all these and countless other lenses of time, place, and circumstance. He has not yet turned himself into an idol nor the world into a temple; and we can study him apart from the complex accretions which are the later deposits of his self-consciousness.

Roger W. Sperry discovered the two hemispheres of the brain in the 1960s: the left brain responsible for convergent thinking (a single, correct solution to a problem) and the right brain for divergent thinking (multiple solutions, all of which could be correct and appropriate). It follows, however, from the principle of growth itself that the order of development of the main mental functions is constant, and normally free from great variations; consequently, the most fruitful observations of children are those which show that such an act was present *before another*. The complexity becomes finally so remarkable that there seems to be no before or after at all in mental things; but if the child's growth shows a stage in which any process is clearly absent, we have at once elevated beyond the laws of growth, in example: if a single case is conclusively established of a child's drawing an inference before it begins to use words or

significant vocal sounds, the one case is as good as a thousand to show that thought may develop in some degree independently of spoken language, and so is the creative abilities.

Nurturing and sustaining creativity is gaining public attention as economies shift their emphasis from productive industrial workers to creative knowledge workers. UNESCO has found that the instinctive capacity for creativity and imagination found in young people has often been suppressed if not denied in their education. The encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self esteem and mutual respect; the critical ingredient for building a culture of peace³. Blockage of creativity threatens civilization and this result's to intellectual conflict in a stalled growth. Cultivating freedom of thought is very essential.

Enabling the children and the young to invent their own ideas of peace warrants sensual involvement of the creative dialect, to the extent that the child could experiment on his own understanding towards his own actions as much as his place within the environment. James Baldwin⁴, in his book, the '*Story of the Mind*' argues that in endeavoring to bring such questions as the degree of memory, recognition, association, etc., present in an infant to a practical test, considerable embarrassment has always been experienced in understanding the child's vocal and other responses. Of course, the only way a child's mind can be

³ www.unesco.org

⁴ James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934) was an American philosopher and psychologist who was educated at Princeton under the supervision of Scottish philosopher James McCosh. He made important contributions to early psychology, psychiatry, and to the theory of evolution.

studied is through its expressions, facial, lingual, vocal, muscular; and the first question - i.e., What did the infant do? Must be followed by a second - i.e., What did his doing that mean?

The actual development of the child, as observations from many sources indicate it, may be sketched very briefly in its main outlines. It is probable that the earliest consciousness is simply a mass of touch and muscular sensations experienced in part before birth. Shortly after birth the child begins to connect his impressions with one another and to show memory. But both memory and association are very weak, and depend upon intense stimulations, such as bright lights, loud noises, etc.

The things which most affect him at these early stages are those which bring him into conditions of sharp physical pain or give him acute pleasure. Yet it is a remarkable fact that at birth the pain reflex is wanting. His whole life up to about the fourth month turns upon his organic and vegetative needs. At three months the young child will forget his mother or nurse after a very few days. Attention begins to arise about the end of the first quarter year, appearing first in response to bright lights and loud sounds, and being for a considerable time purely reflexive, drawn here and there by the successive impressions which the environment makes. This is the pattern of his discovery into creativity as he guides his action into corrected dilemma.

It is evident, on the surface, that the further away we get in the child's life from simple inherited or reflex responses, the more

complicated do the processes become, and the greater becomes the difficulty of analyzing them, and arriving at a true picture of the real mental condition which lies back of them, especially with feelings derived from observation. Empathy is the ability to understand and enter the feelings, thoughts and motives of another. It does not imply acceptance or agreement or losing oneself to become another, but rather identifying and understanding one's reasons and reactions. This process of developing empathy involves (a) emotional literacy, defined as the ability to identify and express one's own emotions; (b) emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to correctly and comprehensively read other persons' emotions. It is this empathy that fosters both creativity and critical thinking; the best to nurture it is within this humble process of growth in a child, reading the facial expressions and understanding the end actions from his own internal reflexes.

Creative Peace Building

The power of arts in promoting peace lies in their emotive; the arts can help people feel the pathos and waste of war thereby instilling a desire or commitment to end war and work for peace.

Historically, art has been dominated by society's rulers, whose patronage supported artistic creations to glorify war. We are familiar with heroic battle scenes with kings on horse backs and patriotic images of noble soldiers. One of the first artists to break away of that tradition was Jacques Callot, in his '*Miseries of War*' depicting the horrors of the thirty year of war in Europe

before the Westphalia treaty. Thus, the First World War generated a plethora of anti-war reactions in the visual arts as well as other arts such as literature and poetry. Artists, writers and poets conscripted into the war powerfully and graphically captured the senseless slaughter which took the lives of millions.

Notably, artists in the Dada movement⁵ used collage and photomontage to express chaos of the time. According Marcel Janco⁶, they had lost confidence in their culture. Everything had to be demolished. They would begin again from nothing. Dada continued into the inter-war years, spreading to other cities including New York, Berlin and finally Paris where it died in 1924 thereby giving birth to surrealism.

The most well know symbol of peace⁷ is the dove from the biblical story of the Noah's Ark. The dove, with an olive branch

⁵ Dada or Dadaism is a cultural movement that began in Zurich, Switzerland during the World War I and peaked from 1916 to 1922. The movement primarily involved visual arts, literature – poetry, art manifestoes, art theory – theater, and graphic design. It concentrated its anti-war politics through a rejection of the prevailing standards in art through anti – art cultural works. Its purpose was to ridicule what its participants considered to be meaningless of modern world. many Dadaists believed that 'reason and logic' of the bourgeois capitalist society had led people into war. They expressed their rejection of that ideology in artistic expression that appeared to reject logic and embrace chaos and irrationality. Dada was simply anti – art, it represented the complete opposite. Where art was concerned with traditional aesthetics, dada ignored aesthetics. If art was to appeal to sensibilities, Dada was intended to offend. They thus hoped to destroy the traditional capitalistic culture and aesthetics.

⁶ Member of Dada Movement

⁷ The internationally recognized symbol for peace was originally designed for the British Nuclear Disarmament Movement, on 21 February 1958 by Gerald Holtom. In Japan, the crane is a traditional peace symbol among other things. Paper cranes are often folded, especially around the time of New Year, a thousand origami cranes is a symbol of good luck and was popularized as a peace symbol by the story of Sadako Sasaki – the legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by a crane, such as a long life or recovery from illness or injury. The crane in Japan is one of the mystical or holy creatures (others include dragon and the tortoise) and is said to live for a thousand years.

symbolizes new life after destruction. Likewise, the rainbow symbolizes a new beginning (rebuilding society after conflict is more than the rebuilding of the infrastructure).

Peace building is a complex and lengthy process requiring the establishment of a climate of tolerance and respect for the truth. It encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programs and mechanisms. They include the reintegration of soldiers and refugees, demining and removal of other war debris, emergency relief, the repair of roads and infrastructure and economic and social rehabilitation. Thus; peace, development and democracy form an interactive triangle. They are mutually reinforcing. Without democracy, fair distribution of economic progress is unlikely, without sustainable development the disparities become marked and can be a cause for unrest and without peace, developmental gains are quickly destroyed. This is where Art comes into play.

Anti war imagery shows the destruction, horror and trauma of war. In peace studies, we talk about negative peace as that which is defined by the absence of war and positive peace as all conditions that contribute to a sustainable peace. *Peace Art* is simply the imagery and symbols of peace in a positive sense. It is generally agreed that the central task of peace-building is to create positive peace, a "stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war." Sustainable peace is characterized by the absence of physical and structural violence, the elimination of discrimination, and self-sustainability.

Moving towards this sort of environment goes beyond problem solving or conflict management. Peace-building initiatives try to fix the core problems that underlie the conflict and change the patterns of interaction of the involved parties. They aim to move a given population from a condition of extreme vulnerability and dependency to one of self-sufficiency and well being. Today, there is more anti-violence art than peace art, perhaps because peace art is illusive in definition. Peace art *is art that is sensitive and responsive to the human condition*, and born of a deep and abiding commitment to mankind and the planet we share⁸.

If it is any African country that could best initiate the Peace Art movement, it must have been Egypt, with all those decades of design and creativity, with all that historical summary of leadership and antique worship. Mathematics must have been within its invention, which intrigues logic and philosophy. Thus, could it be that only Egypt had critical thinkers? That only art from Egypt had a continental impact?

Many people regret the fact that besides Egypt, the rest of Africa has not invented an alphabetic system. They overlook the fact that Africans have been using both visual and oral picture words for a considerable time to express, transmit and store their thoughts, emotions and attitudes in a symbolic way. However, sound understanding of African patterns of thought and feelings requires an appreciation of the nature and function of symbolism as a medium of communication in African culture.

⁸ This is adopted from William Kelly's definition of Humanism

Notion of Peace in Traditional Africa

It is quite easy to assume that all human beings desire peace, however, the individual meanings of peace and how it can be attained and maintained remain illusory.

The practical aspect of African Traditional Religion is not only worship but also human conduct. Belief in God and other spiritual beings implies a certain type of conduct, which respects the order established by God and watched over by the divinities and ancestors. At the center of African traditional morality is human life⁹. They were supposed to live harmoniously within their communities as a moral obligation ordained by God for the promotion of human life. Thus, religion provided the basic infrastructure on which this life-centered, community-oriented morality is based. John Mbiti's¹⁰ famous phrase "*I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am,*" captures this ethical principle. In order to aid man in ethical living, God has put in him the Oracle of the heart – *his personal conscience of the law of God* – to guide him into his existence. Thus a person is at peace when he obeys his conscience.

In the traditional African societies, nothing is attributed to chance, thus they talk of unknown invisible causes, though the orderly argument of things is attributed to God: day and night, the seasons, the rhythms of life, the varieties and chains of dependence and so on. God is the ultimate source of harmony in

⁹ Africans have a sacred reverence to life for it is believed to be God's greatest gift to humans.

¹⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann, London, p.p. 105

creation. Humans for their part have a vocation to respect this universal cosmic order and any deviation is believed to be fatal. It is therefore immoral to upset this equilibrium, to breach the harmony, either in human society or in the larger universe. Peace was therefore a practical concept, conceived not in relation to conflict or war but in relation to order, harmony and equilibrium. It is a religious value such that its existence is divinely established and the obligation to maintain it is practically religious.

One of the great differences between the use of signs and symbols is the degree of qualitative information that is conveyed through them. While signs provide simple information, symbols are used to communicate complex knowledge, abstract truths and ideas about life and its meaning. The simplest example of a sign might be the use of a personal name in introducing someone. For example, if *Raila Odinga* were present and introduced, everyone present would stand up. In this case, the name is used as a sign and so calls forth an appropriate action. But if the name, *Odinga*, was used in a discourse it would make us think of what the person bearing the name represents in consciousness. The name in this case is a symbol, it will not call forth appropriate action to their objects, but make us think of objects in certain ways. A symbol is therefore a vehicle for the conception of an object, enabling us to conceive or form a view of an object, it calls forth mental images. What could be the symbols of peace without art?

The meaning of a symbol, like that of a sign, is determined by the subject using it, so sheep can be a symbol of humility in one culture and a symbol of stupidity in another. The serpent can be a symbol of evil in one culture but a symbol of life and continuity in another. The indigenous cultures of Africa are replete with symbols and symbolic expressions. In the indigenous Ghanaian culture, symbols are used in different life situations and on the basis of the types of context in which they are used; they may be classified into four major groups with unavoidable overlapping. The four groupings are stool symbols¹¹, religious symbols, ritual symbols and oral literary symbols¹². All connected with the prejudice of power and intellectual monopoly where we have capitalistic underpinnings.

Today, there is nostalgia for the good old days in Africa when things worked, a romanticism of traditional African societies. The realist and liberal traditions in international relations theory and practice largely inform the idea of negative peace or the absence of violence. This notion brings together conflicting ideas of peace that developed from different sources and over different historical contexts in the west. The military view of peace considers war necessary and legitimate when used to protect or expand the interests of the state. The indigenous knowledge systems have something to contribute to efforts of crafting new paradigms and approaches to peace in Africa, in other words, they form the basis of art for peace. The Ubuntu

¹¹ The stool as a symbol of the individuals' soul has become a highly valued personal property.

¹² These include myths, fables, maxims and proverbs as used in the traditional society to express belief, values and feelings.

principles, flexible gender systems and African fractal illustrate ways in which to conceptualize peace and war in Africa. They offer language with which to articulate these realities of conflict in ways that make visible what has remained hidden in decades of conflict analysis and peace process in contemporary Africa. They offer the resources, vocabulary, signs and symbols familiar to the ordinary person that can be creatively employed to envision the kind of societies that Africans would like to live in.

Apart from signs and symbols, we have traditions and pride. Language – *fundamental for conceptualizing possibilities for new and empowering ways of being* – is also a powerful tool for constraining possibilities and impoverishing people. One of languages strength is its ability to change as historical circumstances change. Africa’s traumatic colonial and turbulent postcolonial periods have left indelible marks on language and indigenous ideas of the social¹³.

On the contrary, to initiate and accelerate technological development today, policy makers typically focus on science and technology education and overlook the arts. Where everything must be done in clear cut precision, to the extent that living becomes a product of science and politics must also embrace the evidential. This is not bad, but collective action

¹³ One must therefore be cognizant of the dynamism of language when discussing events and ideas of these periods, including finding ways of reinterpreting the indigenous ideas of the social, so that African people have a liberating perspective within which to see themselves in relation to otherselves.

enhances convergent thinking on many diverse ideas. Porter¹⁴ argues that creativity thrives within teams and collaborative circles; that creative individuals feed off energy of others, thus laying foundations for industry clusters. It is from this that discussions of peace-building and peace art originate. The intellectual component must not be ignored but put into generative consideration for understanding that peace is a process.

We have covered traditional thought, the process of the child, the element of creativity, religion and the nut of creativity. In all these elements, we see the dynamic necessity of conflict that structures peace, the importance of art that keeps it a reminder as never again. Art is not to glorify destruction of one community by the other, but could serve as historical documentation of the same, a spear towards metaethical thinking. To this, we turn to many other ways of peace art.

¹⁴ Porter M. (1990) *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, Basic Books, New York



2

Folkloristical Healing

While trying to think on how best to represent the issues of Music and Health in traditional African society, lots of debate on the originality of such explanation does perplex the best avenues on submitting as an advocacy. More so, the recent book, '*Creativity in Kenya*' as published through the kindle program has steered deep reactions; with others proclaiming ideas within their possession. Things of which I wish not to make part of this subsequent publication.

Surprisingly, I had been taking guitar lessons with help of an old disabled veteran tutor. He seemed happy to have me around, and my patience benefited me lots through interrogation and engagement into how different the progress of composition and originality has transformed in the wee years. From the looks, he must have been on his early fifties. My curiosity was the healing component of music, (though he had incline to religion) how he delved into constructive thinking and hopeful discovery, knowing that he couldn't walk and neither was he a beggar. My

atheist orientation and the Unitarian religion I admired would enable me to tolerate his nuances. Besides, he was Agikuyu and in whatever case, business would always decide on how life was to be lived. The process of learning this new expressive art took me three weeks and a month for it to become part of my hobby list. As to whether I was getting into becoming a spiritualist was a matter of discovery, but music helps me meditate.

The fragmented discourse emanating from the nexus of music and health is speciously scattered in a range of study fields, including anthropology, ethnomusicology, religious studies, history, psychology and music therapy¹⁵. If you wish, you may also add philosophy, being the best representation of politics. Thus, we must assert whether we speak from heterodox, professionalism or historical viewpoints when we discuss experience of music as a healing practice. This is no doubt the case, given that most people who serve as information reference points are mainly urban dwellers, knowing nothing from experience as opposed to reported research, or related expeditious researches within the area.

A person who has grown within the set up and experienced this fusion of music and health within the African context stands a better chance of explaining the connection other than an immigrant into the zone. The problem becomes literacy and

¹⁵ Music therapy is usually defined as a professional practice, not as an area of study. It is the use of music and musical elements (sound, rhythm, melody and harmony) by a qualified music therapist with a client group, in a process designed to facilitate and promote communication, relationships, learning, mobilization, expression and other relevant therapeutic objectives in order to meet physidial, emotional, mental, social and cognitive needs.

expressive thinking as related to the African traditional thought, that which is understood through time. With difficulty of having specific past thoughts; and in such situations, a collective representation of events has been recorded making it less accurate but historically verifiable.

In Africa, music therapy as a profession currently exists in South Africa. Ethno-musicological and anthropological literature on this subject associates healing rituals with low technological advancements. This could be due to the issue that they struggle to remain traditional even within this age of technological provocation. Another reason could be the fact that dependence on ancestral linkages limits thoughts of science or technology per se. Simply because these healings depend on invoking spirits who died long ago, the methodologies of doing this never changes ;justifying that during the days of their existence, there were no sophisticated technologies. To them, healing is a way of travelling back in time.

Muriithi Kigunda defines healing as a lifelong process of eliminating, adjusting to, or preventing ill-health through culturally situated practices. It is greatly an inquiry into the paranormal phenomenon, with limitations that the African society is mosaic in structure, with many shared elements coming into play. This is why an attempt to investigate issues related to music and health calls for a specific identity of stylistics and values as engaged community by a particular community which inherently is different for many others.

Paranormal Coast of the East

Kenya is divided into eight provinces from the adjusted structure of colonial administration where classification resulted from detention, labour demands or settler priorities. The Rift valley could have boasted of the great civilization; it had the best weather and attracted the concept of cultural transformation, yet, ironically, the *Kalenjin* community stands unshaken with portrayal of rich primitivism as seen in their enterprise of heritage. They proclaim to be the true identity of East Africa and give little attention to the western systems of thought to the extent that *Maasai* is now regarded as a collective archive of tradition that is part of the national process of generating gross domestic products in revenue as earned from tourism. They are mostly nilotic and share in superstition traditions of the Cushitic's who due to expansive wars of the 1600 A.D. moved towards the coast from Turkana and Sinai.

The coast province of Kenya is an administrative unit of 82,500 square kilometers in area, with a background of Arab settlement and Portuguese occupation, a mix of religious interests and practices. It is divided into six districts (Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi-Malindi, Tana River, Lamu and Taita) which conjoin it to other related provinces of North Eastern and Eastern. Mombasa has been the provincial capital since 1920. Of most relevance is the Eastern province bordered to the north with Ethiopia; the North Eastern Province and Coast Province lie to the east and south; and the remainder of Kenya's provinces, including Central Province, run along its western border.

The rate of superstition within the country is found in regions 2,5,6 and 8 due to settled population in comparison with the nomadic zones of 3 and 7 (See below)



The provinces are: 1. Central 2. Coast 3. Eastern 4. Nairobi. 5. North Eastern 6. Nyanza 7. Rift valley 8. Western

A number of authors briefly mention music in connection with healing in specific cultures. They include Akombo¹⁶ who mentions *ngoma za pepo* of the Digo and *pepo* spirit dances of the *Taita*. He indicates that in *Taita* tradition, different disease-causing spirits demand different rhythms to heal the affected. This is almost the case along tribes of the Coast and Eastern provinces.

¹⁶ David Akombo, "Reporting on Music Therapy in Kenya", 2000

For purposes of explanation, I will use the *Akamba*¹⁷ ethnic as an example, with intention of showing the cultural correlation.

The traditional *Kamba*¹⁸ culture is deeply known for the magical stances and paranormal behavior within its sages. The group occupies a good portion of the Eastern province, lauded for their expertise in trade and long distance messaging. The traditional healer is referred to as *mganga* who works closely with *ngui*, the spirit possessed lead singer. There is little possibility, if any, for *Akamba* to experience the supernatural form of healing without performing music and dancing to it. And it's like the gap between the living and the dead in this tradition cannot be narrowed any further, as the only clear difference is that the dead have no physical body and are believed to exist in places where they lived before death¹⁹.

¹⁷ This Kenya tribe lives in the east-central areas of Kenya. The practice many trades, including cattle herding, farming and trade with other nearby tribes. Today, there are large populations of the Kamba living in the coastal cities, but many still live in the countryside. Artistic crafts made by the Kamba can be seen all through Kenya galleries and gift shops. They are particularly well-known for their wood carving and pottery. A bride price in cattle is paid before a marriage, and families live together in tight-knit extended groups.

¹⁸ The origins of the Kamba begin in western Tanzania, where they migrated from. Coming through the Usambara Mountains, they settled into eastern Kenya. Some of the tribe were forced to migrate closer to the coast due to 18th century droughts in their homelands. Many of the modern coastal cities have sizable populations of Kamba, though there are still large numbers living in rural areas. Their settlements along the coast, and trading ties with inland tribes made members of the Kamba tribe very valuable as guides to the first European settlers. From guides, many Kamba ended up then serving in the British military during both World Wars. As the colonization of Kenya continued, the Kamba did not lose as much of their land as some other tribes due to its dry and somewhat unproductive climate. Though they did not lose as much land as others, they did lose their unique trade routes with the coming of the British railway through the country.

¹⁹ The dead are so valued that their surviving relatives pour libations in honor of them, but for those who are *wanganga* and *ngui*, special all night feasts must be organized to enable the dead to dance in the bodies of the living in the famous kilumi dance.

Kilumi is a performance for appeasing possession spirits such as those of *wanganga* and *ngui*, which may cause illness if displeased, but on the contrary, may empower the healer into healing, *uganga*. This enables the *ngui* and some drummers to perform their valued musical tasks in *kilumi*²⁰. During the dance, a possessed person may demand things such as cigarettes, beer, water and food, to be consumed right at the dance arena. A person dances to a specific song, in a specified dance style and in a specific dress as required by a spirit.

One may reason that the *Akamba* are naïve on the grounds that their practices are exclusively informed by their traditional religious beliefs with little input from contemporary modern medicine or thinking. It is indeed tempting to assume that *uganga*, *kilumi* practitioners and their audience all act and react from lack of sheer knowledge or exposure.

One of the prominent sound features in all *Kilumi* music is that it interchanges sections for *ngui* and chorus, of calling and responding²¹. Possession music can be made either by the possessee or by *ngui* and other musicians. The context determines what form of music is made when calling upon

²⁰ *Kilumi* is what provides *wanganga* with the healing powers from spirits. Later in their homes or elsewhere, they are consulted by sick people. They then invoke the appeased spirits to be able to tell what the cause of a problem is, and suggest a solution.

²¹ The presentation of one phrase or melody section by a soloist and another by a chorus. This does not prevail when the *wanganga* sings while privately invoking spirits to treat patients.

spirits to possess an individual²². Notably, for a particular spirit to be appeased, a specific melody/tune is mandatory

The causes of disease in the *Kamba* beliefs can be categorized into two classes: those that are natural (biological) and those that are supernatural²³. A disease whose cause is perceived to be biological is dealt with mostly using herbal medicine, what is not obvious is how this herbal medicines were discovered although some herbs are now tested in laboratories and demonstrate scientific validity. On the contrary, a problem sourced from the supernatural would be irresponsive to herbal medicine. Thus, if one's illness fails to respond to medicine, one immediately suspects the involvement of spirits, witchcraft or curses. A work for a supernatural intervener, the *mganga*.

While possessed *ngui* failing to regularly sing in *kilumi* could also suffer sickness, some *ngui* who were not guided by a spirit may not get sick if they fail to sing or dance in the same. The purpose of such *ngui* and *wanganga* diseases is not to trouble a person, but to encourage them to incessantly appease spirits through music and dance. A *mganga* must therefore be consulted.

Music is therefore necessary in the whole life history of a traditional healer and the lead singer. It fashions a *mganga* through the initiatory dance, it refreshes the connection between

²² Occurrence of possession when spirits are invoked by singing possesses as well as when *ngui* invites them to dance at *kilumi* indicates that possession music does not need to have the call and response form, but in all cases, the music is repetitive.

²³ Benevolent spirits, Harmful spirits and curses.

the *mganga* and his spirits thereby sustaining strong link between the two, and it calls a spirit to address a problem presented when it facilitates spirit invocation.

Masking Art of Music

Perhaps the most prominent expression of art is the use of mask and disguise while communicating with the spirits. I mentioned earlier that the *Ngui* and *Mganga* would usually dress in certain ways that evoked and pleased the spirits. This is a common trend within many African cultures, though the songs might differ in meaning; perhaps the Caribbean countries would share in the same. This corresponds to the Halloween nights of evoking the spirits from the past into action and amnesty.

Within the dressing, there was the simplicity of the mask as a mode of dressing. During the healing ceremony, the dancer goes into a deep trance; in a state that he could communicate with the ancestors. A wise man or translator sometimes accompanies the wearer of the mask during the ritual. The dancer brings forth messages of wisdom from his ancestors. Often the messages are grunted utterances and the translator will accurately decipher the meaning of the message. We must remember that the dance was of a song played with traditional African instruments.

African culture is impossible to be discussed out of the context of religion, thus, the ritual ceremonies generally depict deities, spirit of ancestors, mythological beings, good or evil, the dead, animal spirits, and other beings believed to have power over humanity. Masks of human ancestors are often objects of family

pride. When they are regarded as the dwelling of the spirit they represent, the masks may be honored with ceremonies and gifts.

In tribes or African cultures where the masking ceremony was used, it was only done by a chosen or initiated dancer. It can be worn in three different ways: vertically covering the face; as elements, encasing the entire head and as crest, resting upon the head, which was commonly covered by material as part of disguise. It is usually believed that the spirit represented by the mask usually possesses the wearer.

It must be noted that for many years, rituals and ceremonies have been an integral part of African life. The gradual effects of parceled out territories to colonial governments, and the ensuing damage to traditional ceremonies through subjugated laws have resulted in economies and food production systems being wrecked.

African masks are considered amongst the finest creations in the art world, tracing their origin to the Paleolithic times. They were made from various materials i.e. leather, metal, fabric and wood. It is only through understanding of aesthetic principles and religious values, that insight into African art can greatly be put into appreciation.

The decorum of music ignites the spiritual representation of the past, and this brought healing to the ethnic communities where practiced. Our example with the Akamba is just one amongst many, but the gradient concept is same as explained collectively using the mask symbol. There is need for protecting our

traditional knowledge amidst the quest for global systemic integration. The concept of peace with ones self has a different reflection for Africa where the individual exists because of the community, the “I am because we are”, the collective thought process that embeds dependability and stretches the path to harmony.

Music and health where misunderstood would result into maiming and branding. In this world where pluralistic faith has been tested to be a possible way for peace, you will be surprised to find the entrenched vocabularies of sect or cult; words that must be loosened of meaning if systemic anarchy is to be reduced for the best of constructive creativity. We must allow the exuberance of our inner feeling, to celebrate our diversity while exposing this freedom of conscious. Many, including Jesus, have been persecuted for their beliefs; for instance, this Christian was crucified for holding firmly in his process of religion and many others have been persecuted for being heretics. In this day, the Unitarian quest still lives on and we enjoy a world where pluralism in faith is made possible.



Artistically Religious

Reflecting a concept often credited in its original form to the English political philosopher, John Locke; the phrase ‘*separation of church and state*’ is generally traced to the letter written by President Thomas Jefferson in 1802 to the Danbury Baptist, in which he refers First Amendment of the United States Constitution as creating a wall of separation between church and state. The concept has since been used in a number of countries, in varying degrees dependable on the legal structures and prevalent views toward the proper role of religion in society.

Separation of church and state (which means separating religious from political authority) is a critical foundation to the modern western state and society. It took a long time for this detachment to be achieved and it wasn’t easy.

Separating church and state doesn’t mean separating a person from their religion, but simply that religious leaders don’t hold any political authority in as much as politicians can’t gather religious influence over their masses.

It has been argued that this separation is not applicable in African societies; that the African human is deeply religious and

his morality depends on his ordained obligations from God. This is what gives life the essence of becoming.

Religion has always been central to people's lives in Africa. Although the majority of Africans are now Moslem or Christian; traditional religions have endured and still play a big role. Spirit mediums have led revolts against European and African rulers; ancestral spirits have commanded acts of destruction and called for the overthrow of rulers and chiefs. Elsewhere, people have sought the help of priests and medicine men to achieve power and wealth.

Religion and politics have always been interconnected. This is reflected in leaderships; for example, most kings and chiefs have traditionally ruled by divine right. Many are able to trace their ancestry back quite precisely, through oral histories, to some semi-divine personalities. The *Baganda* in Uganda trace their right to rule back to *Kintu*, the first *Kabaka* or king; the Yoruba in Nigeria trace it to *Odundwa*.

Religion serves as the structure around which all other activities such as cultural, economic, political and social organizations are built. One cannot understand the African without analysis of his religion. It is a core in his livelihood.

The belief and practices of African traditional religion and society are based upon the faith of the ancient indigenous people who are referred to as ancestors. This is why it is qualified as traditional, ancestors being the closest link between the physical and the spirit worlds. The living dead are bilingual, they speak

the language of men, with whom they lived until recently and they speak the language of the spirits and of God. They are the spirits with which African peoples are most concerned: it is through the living- dead that the spirit world becomes personal to men.

Denigration of Africans and their religious traditions was a common feature of colonialism. The Europeans felt that the people of Africa were primitive and backward. The chieftaincy system was destroyed, christianity introduced and the element of commercialization induced. The attitude of people to their ancestors and other beliefs were referred to as idolatry, fetish and superstitious. The issues of polygamy, drumming and dancing, puberty and nobility rites were said to be immoral, unchristened and obscene. Witchcraft was defined and classified as illegitimate; the African traditional religion eventually qualified to be a practice of witchcraft and the cultural amalgamation derailed into systemic poverty, a situation of wanting and cultural transformation.

Practical Separation of Church – State in Kenya

The applicability of the church state separation politics entered the Kenyan purview during the drafting of the new constitution, away from the inherited colonial document that emphasized greatly on Christianity as opposed to African traditional religions. Though, leadership of world's greatest empires has been dependable on religion, from the aspect of advice to public influence and the justification of atrocities conducted by the

state towards humanity. It is religion that has always been the prejudicial factor of understandable patriotism as united in faith. Karl Marx in his quoting emphasized that religion is the opium of the masses, that it is a unifying crux of a people who feel oppressed mainly through their societal politics.

The church leaders emphasized that the proposed constitution does not safeguard the sacredness of human life, the sound and moral education of Kenyan children nor even religious equality. It was therefore a tool for divide and the lay citizen must never accept it. To their shame, the Kenyans decided it was time for democracy and the church was only responsible for its congregation; science and religion were compatible but independent. In this day, we celebrate the possibility of gay relations in Kenya, the success of abortion and the advancement of surgery. All owing to the democratic perception that the art of living is held in expressive experiential activities, most of which require ethical interpretations and traditional support.

According to the CIA World Fact book, 78% of Kenya's 44 million population claims to be of Christian faith. More than half of this percentage is protestant²⁴; and from the 2009

²⁴ Protestantism is one of the four major divisions within Christianity (or five if Anglican is considered separately) together with the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The term is closely tied to the groups that separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. Protestant churches generally reject the Catholic and Orthodox doctrines of apostolic succession and the sacramental ministry of the clergy, thus their styles of worship are simple and liberal. The history of Protestantism began with the protestant reformation, an attempt to reform the Western Church. The reactions of the ecclesiastical and political leaders at the time of the reformers led to a schism between protestants and the Roman Catholicism Church. During the centuries leading up to the Protestant Reformation, many western Christians were troubled by what they saw as false doctrines and malpractices within the church, particularly the teaching and sale of indulgencies. Another major cause of contention was rampant simony, the sale of offices in the church and tremendous corruption .within the church's hierarchy.

Population Census, the ratio of Kenyans religiously oriented is far much greater than the records of the colonial administration. This implies that the population is highly superstitious and easily manipulated from their own weakness as believers. Let alone the number of popular religious institutions emanating as supported by individual political ideologies. It is all a business of forms.

More to this, there is an emerging trend that state leaders must have religious advisors in order to strategize options of public policy in addition to popular authenticity. Yet these advisors delude the entire nation into aid conditionality's; into dependence of existence and into neo-colonialism. The African is not free despite his expression of sovereign intellect. He is imprisoned in his own happenstance, in his own thoughtfulness. He must always consult with the other on how best to exist, and in the absence of a tangible deity, the technologically superior being becomes the most potent avenue. This is what realists have termed as the origin of humanism and the route to state separation from the church.

For those who have ever visited the Cathedral, their expression of romanticism is just erotic with semi nude pictures of angles and paradise bringing sensational arguments as to whether morality is ordained from God or determined from the acts of man. It remains entirely possible to understand all these once the

This protest received support from secular authorities, such as princes, magistrates or city councils (popularly known as magistracy). This is where the church – state interdependence began. That the magistrate had a right to authority within the church, just as the church could rely on the authority of the magistrate to enforce discipline, suppress heresy or maintain order.

congregation has been cultured into systemic appreciation, into thoughtful aesthetics based on the teachings of the Church. In this way, they resist less and strive to know little aside from what they are informed by the so called ‘*men of god*’. The element of freethought has been envisioned as impossible and abominable, for only God has this prejudice and in his ways must men be of thought.

Of Beauty and Form

The term aesthetics was coined in the German from *esthetic* (modern spelling of *Asthetik*) by Alexander Baumgarte in 1735, from the Greek word for ‘sense of perception’ and can be defined within particular cultural systems.

Western theories concerning the qualities of beauty in art and nature can be traced to early philosophers such as Socrates amongst others, notably:

- a. Plato (428 – 384 B.C) held to an imitation theory of art, believing art to be an imitation of some aspect of space-time world which for him was an imitation of an imitation. Beauty referred to function; that is, the symmetry, proportion and use of form. Plato, Socrates and Aristophanes explored the application of rhetoric and logic; and the art of deductive reasoning as a means of perceiving and defining the qualities of beauty and abstract ideas after which the material world is patterned.

- b. Aristotle (384 – 322) modified Plato’s imitation theory of art so that art became an imitation not of an actual, but of a possible thing. He produced a theory in which every part must be equal to whole.
- c. Plotinus (205 – 270) associated the beautiful with a radiance or splendor, resulting from the quality of unity in the object. Plotinus applied a monotheistic notion of beauty and aesthetics.
- d. Thomas Aquinas (1224 – 1274) combined principles from his predecessors, while developing a Christianized concept at the same time. He brought Aristotelian philosophy into the framework of the Christian faith. Beauty is that which gives pleasure on sight, and hence is related to the cognitive faculties.
- e. Empiricist David Hume (1711 – 1776) held that experience is composed of impressions and ideas. Habit or custom developed through experience leads people to connect two aesthetic events in a casual manner. The foundation of human sensibilities is the sense of necessity gained by experience. According to Hume’s *‘Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding’* (1748), ‘if it happen from a defect of the organ, that a man is not susceptible of any species of sensation, we always find that he is as little susceptible of correspondent ideas...a Laplander of Negro has no notion of the relish of wine’.

Here he makes a link between race and aesthetic judgment, an approach incomprehensible to African culture.

- f. Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) also directed his attention to the development of aesthetic judgment, finding beauty in whatever produced a sense of harmony in the relations between the faculties of the will and the understanding. Thus, different nations and races have different aesthetic and moral sensibilities.
- g. George Wilhelm Hegel (1770 – 1831) took the position that beauty is found in representation of truth in sensuous form. Reason is the guide to reality. The rational and the real are identified as one, thus Christianity represents the absolute truth.
- h. Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1940) added a psychological dimension to the aesthetic judgment theory. What is aesthetically compelling relates to the inner drama of man, rooted in the great drives of life and death, race, culture, sex and guilt. The artistic consciousness works through repression and sublimation of the material that represents the great drives. Thus, the viewer is captivated by the artist's transformed material that culminates in his artistic creativity.

Of all these philosophers, the element of understanding the importance of aesthetical appreciation drives their followers into religious orientation of values as held by them. The influence of truth as extracted from the peaceful process of mind has often developed into a practice of culture. And this is world over.

Cultural influences shape the artist in the practice of his or her craft in Africa; culture is the inescapable trim that affects everything from the artist sense of identity (national and artistic) to the political and spiritual purposes from which identity begins. The noun aesthetics provides the only meaning that can be useful in all societies: a definition which encompasses all of the factors – *art, religion, and politics* – which govern an audience's perception of and appreciation for an art object.

Yoruba Aesthetics of Faith

The Yoruba people constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Africa – twenty five million people – whose cultural history extends across a large area of West Africa; this makes it close to impossible in mapping the area of Yoruba cultural influence. However, Eric Morton argues that by using the broad criteria of common language, traditions, origins of the traditional ruling class, political institutions and organizational patterns, religion, morals and the geographical contiguity of the lands occupied by the different Yoruba groups, a presumption is possible.

The historical origins of the Yoruba people and their culture cannot be traced precisely. One oral narrative claims the Yoruba have inhabited their homeland since the creation of the world,

that in the beginning, the world was a mass of water. That *Olodumare*, the Yoruba high God, sent *Odundwa*²⁵ from heaven to create the earth and the human race. This origin was in Mecca after which they migrated to Africa after the rise of political Islam as led by *Odundwa* to Ile-Ife in Northwest Africa.

The Yoruba world has two dimensions that represent the whole: *Orun*, the metaphysical and invisible world; and the *Aye*, the visible world inhabited by all life forms. Their cosmos contains *Olodumare*, the supreme deity; the *Orisa*, or lesser divinities; ancestral spirits and a number of other categories of spiritual beings. Humans are composed of corporeal and spiritual elements²⁶ of both worlds. Humans fulfill their individual destinies through piety, divination and sacrifice; and by recognizing and paying homage to the power of the *Orisas*, thus soliciting their help and the help of ancestors.

Five ancient concepts are essential to an understanding of Yoruba aesthetics of faith. And this is the core of their religious practice.

- a) *Ase* means power or authority. It also refers to a divine energy manifest in the process of creation and procreation. *Ase* invests all things, exists everywhere and is a source of all creativity.

²⁵ All Yoruba traditions acknowledge *Odundwa* as the spiritual leader and founding father of mankind.

²⁶ The spiritual elements have a variety of functions related to Yoruba beliefs about destiny and reincarnation.

- b) *Ori* is the inner spiritual head in humans or personal destiny, not mind or soul as these terms are used in the developed world, the west.
- c) *Iwa* can mean character or essential nature.
- d) *Ewa* is an aesthetic term as well as an expression of *iwa*, a person's essential nature. *Ewa* means beauty, referring in some contexts to physical beauty of a person or object, but mostly to the qualities of beauty of a person or object.
- e) *Ona* means art or it can refer to artist's ability to create or design. In Yoruba, art cannot be defined outside the process of creation, the purpose of creation and the skill of the artist in capturing the first two contextualities in order to produce a physical object that embodies meaning.

The Yoruba language of aesthetics discourse has evolved within the context of religion and culture. As a result, the Yoruba have a sophisticated terminology and methodology for evaluating creativity and beauty. This categorizes them as different from the rest and is the largest tribe in Africa with records of greater sophistication in superstitious dialogues. The clan system of this tribe is tied up to traditional power of the religious faith, the beliefs that are bonded in objects of art, the idolatries of living and the mesmerizing hypocrisy of development. The highest

level of thinkers have often been seen as semi-divine, the genius of a global world but a myth to the living-dead.

African Genius

A genius is a person who is very intelligent and creative. The projections onto which the genius actually varies from the average man are evident as a matter of fact. He is a man of great power of thought, of great "*constructive imagination*," as the psychologists say. So let us believe, first, that a genius is a man who has occasionally greater thoughts than other men have. Is this a reason for excluding him from society? Certainly not; for by great thoughts we mean true thoughts, thoughts which will work, thoughts which will bring in a new area in the discovery of principles, or of their application. This is just what all development depends upon, this attainment of novelty, which is consistent with older knowledge and supplementary to it. But suppose a man has thoughts which are not true, which do not fit the topic of their application, which contradict established knowledge's, or which result in bizarre and fanciful combinations of them; to that man we deny the name genius; he is a crank, an agitator, an anarchist, or what not. The test, then, which we bring to bear upon the intellectual variations of men, is that of truth, practical workability - in short, to sum it up, "fitness." Any thought, to live and germinate, must be a fit thought. And the community's sense of the fitness of the thought is their rule of judgment.

African traditional leaders were presumed to be of genius category, they were special beings but mislead the public due to naivete on the inheritance of such qualities. Our aesthetics as Africa remains challenged and curtailed into fusion with the west. The bitterness of subjugation and the historical delusion of change makes the African a freethinker, not coherent with the western christened religion but a Unitarian, a pluralist. Judgments of aesthetic values rely on our ability to discriminate at sensory level. Aesthetics examines our effective domain in response to an object or phenomenon.

The philosophy of aesthetics has not only to speak about art and to produce judgments²⁷ about the art works, but has also to give a definition of what art is. This must have been a rare ability within the traditional African society, and the families who had essence into aesthetics gained privileges of acting as dual representatives of the people and the deity.

Religion of Peace

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy²⁸, something is a work of art if and only if it has a subject about which it projects some altitude or point of view by means of rhetorical ellipsis which engages audience participation in filling in what is missing and where the work in question and the interpretations thereof require an art historical context. It must

²⁷ There are two different conceptions of art in the aesthetics: art as knowledge or art as action.

²⁸ This is primarily based on the arguments of Arthur Coleman Danto (born in 1924) is an American art critic, and professor of philosophy.

have the ability to evoke empathy and if possible, sympathy. Tolstoy²⁹ defined art as a human activity consisting of a conscious transfer of feeling which affects others through experience. The value of art is one with the value of empathy: art can act as a means to special kind of knowledge; art may give insight into human condition; art relates science and religion; art serves as a tool of education, or indoctrination or enculturation. It makes us more moral and political by other means. He who had this understanding benefited from the monopoly of doubt, into his selfless practice that bore him decorum and diverse appreciation.

African art existed in many forms and styles, and with fairly little influence from outside Africa. The aesthetic norms were handed down orally as well as written. Sculpture and performance art are prominent, and abstract forms remain valued. The taboo systems of thought remain a pillar of what religious norms define our relations as a continent. There are however rising contraventions as to what aesthetics really means, and whether the western definitions have weight to African interpretations. Is our intellectual appreciation same?

Aesthetics³⁰ is scientifically defined as the study of sensory or ‘sensory-emotional’ values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste. It is a critical reflection on art, culture and

²⁹ Lyev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was a Russian writer widely regarded as the greatest novelist. He was born in Yasnaya Polyana, the family estate in the Tula region of Russia. The Tolstoy family were a well – known family of old Russian nobility; he was connected to the grandest of Russian aristocracy.

³⁰ Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art and taste and with the creation and appreciation of beauty.

nature; a sub-discipline of axiology. It could also be understood as a group of all functions whose objective is knowledge (sensation, association, memory, imagination, understanding, reason, and conscience).

To separate religion from state matters is entirely possible and not as conditioned as detachment of the African from his traditions. The delusion of having some superman in African political thought is a thing of the past; we are all agents of reality and our governance must bestow satisfaction to our traditional knowledge as we hold it; to insist of it as a guiding norm for patriotic *multiractions*, where citizens appreciate the diversity within their borders in peaceful symbolic representation as to what their ethical norms applaud. The community has the essence of defining a people, of giving the territory an identity. We must protect from the influence of globalised systems that erode the stigma of our art as known in culture. Our skin defines our mental and our process.



A Youthful Dialogue

To the memoirs of democratization processes in Kenya and the ultimate climax of greed in 2007, has left a great history for many who still suffer the dwindling levels of poverty. The youth bulge is endemic, unavoidable and out-of-focus within the purview of the traditionalist leaders, who often foresee that the elderly must have the final say, despite the documented levels of illiteracy as known.

The youth of today is educated but unemployed; pulled into bitterness by the unrecognized struggles of his experience in his time. He is not at peace with himself, his dynamism and his world. This youth discovers that his purview is widely shared and there he goes; getting ready for an explosive moment, that of truth and justice. Peace is that which is forcefully made, publicly denounced and violently won. This is the idea of peace to this young generation of men and women; whose education has brought equality in them, conjoining their genders as one, in single quest for progress. They are all leaders and crafters of their destiny; traditions have no role and morality is a philosophical issue.

To be able to understand the mind of a youth, we take a random selection from a suburb in Nairobi; the story is told from the persona point of view, and it is the delinquency involved that drives the urge to use it as an example, to showcase the idolatry involved amidst conservative thoughts of parenting.

The 2008 violence in Kenya was mainly celebrated by the youth, who were tiered of dictatorial policies; static regimes that never appreciated innovation nor creativity; the kind of leadership that was superstitiously motivated through the catholic principles of worship. This was the root cause of the violence; the political only ignited its being. Imagine a young man whose academic process has made expectations of better life, who understands justice as inducted by his academic mentors; and whose level of critical delusion has risen above the common African measures as categorized by the west. This kind of youthful cream is always considered as a bad element, and must forever be ignored in public service. So they say.

It was already five years since my joining the University, and ambitions for a steady career were slowly starting to show. The old lifestyle was soon to change and independence was no longer to an allegory of the colonial, but a move away from the family house. My dad would no longer offer me the small stipend or even bus fare to places; his suspicions had exceeded whatever religion taught, the most common phrase would be

about love for children and children's love to parents. To them, eighteen was the prime year to getting matured; and this was a process of traditionalism, involving cultural transfer en stuff. We would eventually differ.

The comfort zone was the neighbourhood; hanging around with them boys who were either older than me, or slightly younger. We would play basketball, the game of them *hommies* and the ticket to finding soul mates (so it was believed). This sport could give you attitude, posture and physis. It would make you feel like a refugee in them states³¹. Being eighteen was just fun.

The problem would be the seasonal pilgrimages to motherland – *gishagi* – meeting *shosh* and those other important persons in our generation. I couldn't speak proper *Jang'o*, and this was just impossible for the *gishagi* people to comprehend. The Nairobi children were growing up out of focus, adopting too much of the western culture and forgetting their own roots... at least this would have been the comment from this old women. To top it up, they would insist on talking the native language that hit me off like morning breeze, couldn't grasp a thing, but would always pretend to. My horrible thoughts of going back to this part of Kenya in a culture that made it mandatory to experience forced induction into principles of ethical living from a traditional eye. The results and expected outcome of being a

³¹ All that drama of Slave trade and Kunta – kinte and the notion that the blacks are considered the best basketball players. All reflected as the game of monkey, tree jumping etcetera.

proper man, full of respect and traditions. I was not going to be either of these.

‘Obamkube !’ dad called my name

“Yes...” I replied

“You have started smoking bang again. What is that reddening in your eyes and why are you behaving so chicly? It’s about that time you get some proper attitude, not that of lazing around...eat-sleep-toilet”

Those were pretty harsh words for me to bear, and to worsen, he said...

“Your mum tells me that you have been requesting for some money ... college. How will you manage to study computers with such stubbornness? Besides, these are subjects for bright students, and your grades have been below my target. The humiliation at school you’ve cost this family is just unbearable, all those meetings and calls on your delinquency; I think you should start with a tailoring course till you learn the spelling of discipline”.

The only fault I had back in high school was not being able to stay quiet in class. Could talk, talk and talk. It was fun. Besides, my dad had the rule that once inside the house, there was no going out. No television during the week, especially those erotic programs; of which to a great extent I still presume affected me in feeling and imagination; for not watching them programs, I

grew up into a shy-boy³². Being eighteen was all full of traumas. I remember those strange dreams, those erective moments that made me insane; couldn't make a difference on why they called some of my dreams wet whilst the dry was not talked about.

The priority, besides playing basketball with them boys was being membered to a *chama*. This was simply a liquor group. Each weekend, we would contribute some small amount and buy 1400ml of strong stuff - remember that the hood was made up of older boys who had cleared school long time before us, then there were those who had recently finished. The common term was '*village-mono*'. We were like college freshmen and the village was another institution altogether. This was where one learnt to be rude, to be sexy and to be creative. It was an avenue full of its own challenges.

“Come to my office at noon after you've packed your stuff. Just know that you're going to be there for a while ... take time and prepare your luggage”. And so we travelled.

I did not get tales about grandpa, may be because I hated him or saw him as a lover man. He had five wives, each with her own small house and a big number of children. The least count was seven, and his pride was that the family was almost a clan.

³² At this time, Diana King was famous for the song, Shy Guy

The homestead was not a bad place to be, it was organized and peaceful³³. Drat! I just finished my twelfth grade, senior four. The house rules have stiffened and it was that time when parents threaten you with being let out into them streets in failure to comply with the family contract. Gosh! I was being watched into not developing to become one of them criminals or those sexy habits of having more than one girl friend. What had the rural expedition to offer?

In this space, I was the village champion, the sane amongst the backward, and my time would be to tale-tale the stories of beautiful women, expressing it as if I was no virgin. It was the opposite of naïveté; instead of learning from the traditional village, the traditional village was learning from me. Perhaps this ordeal of travelling to *Agwara* was just inappropriate.

In this story, I have just tried to highlight the conservative mental, common with most new generation parents. They believe that ethics is best taught the traditional way, that innovation is a crime and societal stratification is the correct best way to live. Little emphasis is given to the amount of creativity or learning that children would benefit by being in part of a wider community; by engaging with those of their age or slightly older, the controlled peer influence.

³³ Simply put, everyone from Nairobi was different, in a better position to spare some coins

Speaking my mother tongue is a problem, I can barely utter the words fluently, but, the impossible reality is that am married to a *German-Maasai*, a tribe outside my own. A process that is devoid the cultural process of conserve. My spouse was supposed to be a Luo, a lady from *Agwara* village or somewhere close-by. This *Obamkube* character that depicts the common youth relates to similar experiences that many face; toughened by the process of gaining leverage and bargaining favours for their partners whichever side. It is widely recommended that marriage be a sacred involvement, a preservation of the ancestral traditions, a connection with the past. It is supposed to be a cultural relation, where the spouses are united within the same traditions. This is just not sincere.

Many have been termed a cultural failure for not marrying within their ethnic orientation, of contributing to cultural drain. Whether this is true, I wish to discuss it and query the concept herein.

As much as the house rules were so tough, I did not find it a problem to adhere. My room was properly pimped, with duo speakers, an amplifier and a boom box; what else would a youth need at eighteen other than freedom. These were my properties, bought from saved stipend. The room was my world; the radio was my connection to the contemporary. I remember the schooldays, when discipline was the greatest setback; no sagging trousers, no packed lunch and no freedom. I hated

waking up so early morn, feeling the five o'clock chill and getting to school on time, just to avoid them punishments³⁴.

Each evening, we would tune up to *Capital FM*, wait for *Eve D'sousa* on 'Kids not Homework'. She played real hip hop, and made liberal comments. As much as they gave you an attitude, they never made me rude. Besides, she had that accent, and she was sexually pretty. She could also talk Swahili. This was just a plus; each one had a date with her - through the radio of course, we couldn't miss. I think this is the reason I appeared many times on the noise makers' list.

I also remember my fine art classes; in moments when they brought young teachers to practice. They were still in *Uni*, almost thinking in our language, but trying to keep it professional - they were on another level, beyond. Instead of still drawing objects, we could all agree to draw her, and these gave many different faces. These would be taken as insults contrary to lack of artistic experience in class. What was to follow were strokes of the cane, for having them feelings to a teacher, an elder woman? Eventually, warnings against being caught up with a girl or listed as having one would stir the school. The common threat of suspension and expulsion trickled the drain of thoughts, and to console, a daily speech of control and avoidance. I think abstention.

³⁴ There was that culture of frog jumping from the gate to the class. And this made late comers sweaty that their perfume would pick up a new mix, making them restless and wary.

‘Those miniskirts will be there after school, and you will have enough time to know each other’ says *Mr. Kibe*, our principle.

If caught chatting with a girl, what would it be about, fornication? They never called it sex, I think because we were young and in the age of sin. The soothing reality was that older men rarely sin; they get married and could rightfully enjoy sex.

Talking sex would eventually be the disruptive prose, of communicating the urge through fake actions. Masturbation was an art not common; and some would have associated it with abnormality, not knowing how ethical such acts are regarded in this day and era. The literature lessons involved reading set books, some were erotic with vocabularies beyond our comprehension in those days; we would therefore be requested to bring them dictionaries and so the slogan was made... ‘I have a dick but no tionary’... I think it was adolescence psyche and the brainwashing structure of the school.

It was already seven months since joining the village, and my connection with the world was becoming blunt day by day. The most interesting part was a visit to communities close to the Lake; I enjoyed the view of naked women taking a wash behind huge stones or sometimes in the open. This was the only motivation. Nairobi was so different, in-city life with privacy and competition for civilization. To see a free edition like this, was really awesome for an eighteen year old.

Upon return to Nairobi, I joined college; at least I had paid the debt and could be trusted. My habits' never changed a bit; I was still shy and ready to join the *chama*.

Liquor day had shifted to mid-week, due to parental interference; boys were therefore drinking on Wednesdays and going to the gym on Saturdays. Interesting it was, and so exclusive it had become, with ladies being part of the crew. The *chama* was a club.

In my sporty ambitions, I wanted to go to the U.S. or even get scholarship for my undergraduate, but this never happened. My dad was too wary of westernizing systems and would often quote Franz Fanon's book, '*White Man Black Skin*', terming such quests to be neo-colonial, brain-drain processes amongst many other academic vocabularies he had acquired in his professional years. I ended up joining the University of Nairobi, the first away from home independent experience with no *sufuria* food.

The university is like a world on its own, you meet everybody from everywhere. You earn characters that you never had, you meet your first love and you even break the spirit of virgin. It all happens here. The public zone.

I remember the tough days of persistence and shame, trying to enjoy autonomy in curtailment of not wanting anything to do with my old man. In this rebellious attitude, I ended up raising

my fees through freelance jobs; computer graphics was the thing at this time. Few people had the skills and computers were expensive to own. I was lucky to earn the skills through college and passion. My products included websites, calendars, business cards and logo design. All in the name of autonomy.

Little did I know that I was a creative, not until recently that the term has been exposed through various debates on the intellectual property rights, the WIPO forums and the WTO papers. I bet many youths produce products of the intellect without knowing the exact worth of such innovation; they are exploited and put in tough situations of wishful thinking, where a better life becomes something to hope for with no clear route on getting there, for struggles on begets poverty.

At the university, I pursued political science, nothing related to the diploma in information technology that I had or the passion for computers that paid my bills. Most definitely, my societal class was different from most others. I saw fellow students financially troubled, others coming from even harsh backgrounds than the worries I had as me. Our sympathy was just beyond, but I had nothing tangible to offer. This is when I formed a student association, to act as an empowerment tool for those with whom we shared classes. This association was later embraced by UNESCO as a professional movement, and with it, my religion vanished. I became atheistically thoughtful. My discussions were not against God, but religion. I saw religion as dogmatic, backward, uncritical, western and non democratic.

The University had taught me how to accept my reality and to safeguard my rights. *Obamkube* was an icon, an experiential point of reference. I was famous.

The humanist movement was an association of those secular at heart. It had a membership of gays, lesbians, atheists, agnostics, freethinkers and even philosophers. This was to be the right space for my thoughts. The only problem was the in-depth ignorance of the older traditional population. They never understood our national constitution, in permission for freedom of expression and religion. Thus, anyone who claimed atheism was an enemy to the society, even the state, since those who protected the constitution had never understood its contents; they followed their own ego. Superstition brought them the norms and values that had to be imparted to the masses.

Most definitely, anyone who has excelled in the level of an artist or a creative has had something opposite with his or her own culture. To be an artist calls for liberal co-existence with nature and this comes with opportunity costs. Each and every tradition claims intangible rules that must be protected, and identified with. Thus, if you are a Luo artist, your creativity cannot be associated with your ethnicity, simply because it will steer a lot of unappreciated reactions. The *Kisii* soapstone sculpture has been in practice for decades, but no interpretation of the products relate to the tribe. It is all branded as of external

imagination, to a greater extent, the craft talks of the witches, homosexuality and other abominable practices. They say that the human mind is driven into action through influence of attraction to those that are categorized immoral.

It is this fear of owning our creativity due to cultural embarrassments that has made the western world take-over. To them, everything goes, everything changes. Conservatism is in the museums, not in the intellect; our dynamic world enjoys ethical changes and nothing should be static. Development depends on the interdependent tolerance that is only possible in a free world system.

I wonder how many youths can explore their creativity and innovations. How many have been forced into traditions? How many remain illiterate for lack of post secondary education? How many remain jobless for lack of their inner realization?

We can all create products, but can we all appreciate each other?

I think No!

We grow up under influence that the society is stratified, that there is a divide between the have and have-not. That the rich also cry, but melodiously. These are pathetic sentiments that must forever be discarded if Africa would be anywhere close to developed. The aesthetics of behavior must be natured from below, and the only remonstrant is this youth of many trades.

I came to realize that I was able to write articles and books in 2005, after an intellectual tension with one of the professors from a local university. I was simply disputing his school of thought, and he never appreciated such critical dimensions; his justifications came rigid on his title as a professor and I was not anywhere close, that my speculations and skepticism were misguided. I think I was just being free to enjoy the thought process.

My idea of academics was that we are all in the process of learning. The cosmos being metaphysical wouldn't ease a gather of exact accurate knowledge from our natural systems without specializations. Each intellectual must have a specific line of reasoning, and his own strand of thought. Thus, in as much as I was a graduate with one degree, I knew that my thoughts were valid and sound in challenging this traditional professor.

Today, my books form part of the course texts in overseas universities; they are also appreciated locally. All in the name of intellectual property and the global greed for knowledge which is abundantly available through the e-burst.

The purpose of this chapter been to showcase the wider space of ignorance that exists in our societies; to envisage the youthful line of thought that develops as a result of having non integrated visions, curtailed from inaction due to traditions and culture.

Those who engage in crime do so from forced conditions of poverty and their own ambitions for a better life. There is no Robinhood fairy, but the reverse; where the poor are being robbed to feed the rich. And this was my realization upon a similar encounter. I was robbed by a batch of youth in my neighbourhood who felt that I was ignoring them on ascent to my new living style; I was supposed to be their beacon into better life, a gateway into ethics. It was tough to please all of them, the community projects I initiated stalled. They were simply looking for avenues that were responsive and quick to their demands. Teaching them humanism, economics, ethics, tailoring etcetera was not significant. To them, car wash, mechanics and garbage collection were resourceful, for they provided immediate solutions to their daily income flow problems. They couldn't see beyond seven days.

With help from different donor organizations, we innovated ways in which garbage collection could become a comprehensive process. These youth could collect the waste and develop it into organic manure for organic farming. The other inorganic waste could be used to make plastic charcoal. And this was an innovative source of income, today adopted by the UNDP and replicated widely across the country and Africa at large.

It is very important that the youth of a country understand their national culture more than their ethnical vocations. The need for

nationalism and cohesion is an important ingredient for village economy. This is what has made the micro-finance industry of higher stake compared to banking systems that were inherited from the west. Simply put, these mechanisms respond to the situations as experienced and not as perceived.

Secondly, there must be policies that respond to the youth and their livelihoods. These could ease affinity for crime and enhance creativity. We need to cultivate the local peace by addressing the inner societal problems as exposed in our behavioral engagements. The generational gap must be lessened and conservative styles of futurist thoughts be damped as insignificant.

Perhaps the story of *Obamkuba* is just not the real experience of some youths, and in such cases worse off, better off. However, it depicts the levels of growth and delinquency that emerges from such uncultivated time. We need art at eighteen years, but it must be that type of art that brings peace of our very own realities in solutions to the problems of our time. This brings us to the last topic of the book.



Art of Expression

To complete the sequence of this information sharing, I would wish to compare the elitist and civilized methods of healing. I have attempted to venture into traditional healing expeditions as practiced by different ethnic communities in Kenya, using an example of the *Kamba*, who are classified as Bantu. We have seen the essence of art in paintings and music; the role of superstition and propaganda; the notion of peace-building and development. All within the context of Africa.

To the west, the vocabulary of thought is very different, very refined and cannot be phrased as folkloristic. In this part of the world, advancement of art is considered a crux to daily living and thinking; experiential empiricism is considered a link to many other processes, not only medicine but also education and entertainment. Expressive arts therapy – *dance, music and art* – has penetrated all areas and populations of healthcare system in western medicine and the development of its special components has been meted with affirmation. As a matter of identity, special expressive therapy units exist in the United States and United Kingdom, notably: art therapy, music therapy and dance therapy.

Art therapy developed from the theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. This led to understanding the personality and other perspectives about the genesis of illness. It emerged as a distinct profession in the 1940s when hospitals and rehabilitation facilities began to include art therapy alongside traditional talk therapies, underscoring the recognition that art making enhanced recovery, health and wellness³⁵. This was in the United States and United Kingdom. The process is completely different from the African setting of spiritual communication, the art of possessed dancing and dictated healing. Art therapy was recognized in the 1930s, and it involves the individual as himself.

At the beginning of the 20th century, psychiatrists studied the art works of patients to see how illness related to expression. At this same time, art educators were discovering that the free and spontaneous art expression of children represented both emotional and symbolic communication. Methodologies that could be applied into understanding the adult process of thought.

On its own, art therapy has been defined as a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to enhance the physical, mental and the emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. It is based on the belief that the creative process of artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflict and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, increase self -esteem, self-awareness

³⁵ Currently, the field of art therapy has gained attention in health care facilities world over and psychiatry, medicine, psychology, counseling, education and the arts.

and achieve insight. This definition is not different from the expressive arts definition, which attempts to include not only art therapy, but all three: music, dance and art.

Expressive arts therapy uses the expressive crafts – *movement, art, music, writing, sound and improvisation* - in a supportive setting to support growth and healing. It is a process of discovering ourselves through any art form that comes from emotional depth. We express inner feelings by creating outer forms. When using art as an expressive mode for self healing or therapeutic purposes, we are not concerned about aesthetics or craftsmanship of the visual art, the grammar and style of writing or the harmonic flow of the song. We use the arts to let go, to express and to release.

Involving the mind, the body and the emotions brings forth the clients intuitive, imaginative abilities as well as logical linear thought. This method incorporates the belief that each individual has worth, dignity and self-worth. Healing therefore occurs when a client feels accepted and understood. This is what enhances the creative potential, the ability to think freely and progressively innovative.

The seed of much of our creativity comes from the unconscious, our feelings and intuition. Feelings can thus be channeled into creative ventures:³⁶ into dance, music, art or writing. All people

³⁶ When our feelings are joyful, the art form uplifts. When our feelings are full of wrath and violence, we can transform them into powerful art other than letting them out onto the world. Such art helps us accept that aspect of ourselves.

have an ability to be creative – *the creative process is a healing process* – and the expressive product supplies messages to the individual. However, it is the process of creation that is profoundly transformative.

Expressive arts – *movement, art, writing, sounding, music, mediation and imagery* – lead us into the unconscious. This often allows us to express previous unknown facets of ourselves, bringing a state of information and awareness. When we journey inward to discover our essences, we get informed of our relatedness to the outer world, our reflections of the posture and position of our affairs. We remember and confide.

With the growing acceptance of complementary therapies and recent research findings on art therapy with medical populations, there is an increase to the application of art therapy to a variety of patient groups³⁷. Art therapy contributes significantly to the humanization and comfort of modern healthcare institutions by relieving stress, anxiety, pain of patients and caregivers. The art therapist must therefore be sensitive to a variety of human needs and possess emotional stability, patience, interpersonal skills and a capacity of insight into psychological processes. He must also be an attentive listener and a keen observer able to develop a rapport with people.

³⁷For example, art therapists' work with cancer, burn, pain, post-surgery, HIV - positive, asthma and substance abuse amongst others including pediatric and geriatric medical populations.

Chodorow explains how expressive arts engage the active imagination of clients in two stages³⁸ (a) the first stage releases the unconscious and comes to terms with it. Once this is done, and the thoughts are on the active imagination level, consciousness takes the lead depending on the emotions, impulses and images; (b) the second stage is exactly under consciousness where the emotions, impulses and images are brought forward as a result of expressive art process - as the effects and images of the unconscious flow to awareness, the ego enters actively into the experience and allows the person to process his experience at a conscious level.

This ability of innovative rebellion within the youth depicts the lack of peace with the inner-self, the quest for the subconscious reality that is never there. The gap of traditional and the urban has sporadically resulted to delinquent propagation of emerging processes for change. How a group of youth reacts to oppression would be different in comparison to their modernic exposure.

Findings have shown that inner-city youth experience elevated rate of delinquency, higher incidents of violent and aggressive behavior, greater degree of psychological problems, heightened behavioral problems; education and occupational expectations that are discouraging rather than hopeful. In fact, inner-city high school students have higher rates of academic failure and great school behavior problems. Their rebellion and artistic experientialism drives them into demonstratic actions that

³⁸ Chodorow, J (1995), *Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology: The Moving Imagination*, Rutledge Books, New York

involve movements, music or other soundings. This is the art therapy they know; it is a psychological vacuum. In example, the most recent experiences for Kenya has been *Machakos* county where arson and truancy are common in educational reports. However, that is beyond the scope of this book.

Consequently, art has a broader function in defining us and modifying our views about ourselves and society. According to cognitive neurobiologist, the acquisition of knowledge by registering the constant and essential characteristics of objects is the primordial function of the visual brain. It is also the primordial function of art. That is why many philosophers concerned with the problem of knowledge, from Plato onward, have devoted great time to discussing art; as it necessitates the aspect of memory and confidence.

Although scientific research on creativity is far from complete, researchers claim that a child who is exposed to the arts has a potential to become more creative, imaginative, expressive, confident, self-reliant and critically thinking individual. He is outstanding amongst the rest. Perhaps, these are the major differences between children brought up in Europe and those brought up in Africa; the delinquent author, Levi Bruhl compares the mature African adult to a 12 year old child in Europe; he gathers his conclusion from the critical level of reasoning and appeasement within this being called African. These writings of the 18th Century are what catalysed colonization of Africa, as the continent was not at peace with its

own self. This is discussed in my book, *‘Creative Thinking: An Introduction, Prona Press/Lulu Book’*

Through the arts, children can be introduced to the world while their perceptions are forming, behavior is restructuring and before generational grievances harden negative attitudes towards those who are different. The arts can then become a key component in for their moral-cognitive approach to education. With its extricable tie to imagination, it has unlimited capability to become a source of connecting the self to the other and for creating a disposition for sympathetic awareness. Such awareness promotes peer-to-peer learning and a spirit of cooperation³⁹.

An organization willing to empower the youth must provide emotional nurturing that consists of a safe environment, closeness, expression of emotions, conflict resolution and acceptance of diversity. This are nurtured through expressive arts components themselves, purely possible at primary levels of the academia where they are embedded to individual behaviors.

It is evident that the traditional African healing process is completely different from the expressive art therapy as common with the western communities, but one thing for sure, both processes present peace and advocate for the inner understanding of the self. They are compatible with each other, only when correct spacing and timing are put in priority.

³⁹ Zeki Semir (2001) *‘Essays in Science and Society: Artistic Creativity and the Brain’* in Science 293, 51 - 59



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