

Editor's notes by Karla Brundage

There is a great migration or repatriation occurring within the African Diaspora. Scrolling on any social media platform past images of *African weddings* (it's a thing) or posts featuring beautiful Black women in long red dresses standing atop cliffs overlooking the Serengeti, is a stunning contrast to images of Black men, women and children in chokeholds, handcuffed face down, batons on their backs.

For the first time in my lifetime, perhaps in modern Black history as we know it, students in Abidjan, Nairobi and Kisii are writing letters to students in the U.S. offering aid, condolences, support and even money. *Are you okay?* they want to know. If I am able to attend college in the US will I need a gun? Citizens of the U.S. are bleakly unaware of how far our news travels, how closely we are being watched, sometimes emulated, but always discussed.

This special issue of *Konch* is devoted to an investigation of modern pan African dialogue bringing in a new paradigm. Shifting once again the lens to the Kenyan gaze and connecting us in our shared humanity. White supremacy as it plays out here, still resonated in Kenya in the post-colonial mindset. The quest for social justice and equity is shared globally by we of African origin and descent. Kiplang'at Vitalis Chemining'wa writes:

*Welcome to our society  
The rotten era*

*Look at the preachers.  
Greedy for tithes, increasing their personal riches  
Who should I trust? Since there's no one to look up to  
Youth have already lost their ways of life.*

In 2022 and 2023, a group of poets traveled to Kisii, Kenya, to attend [Kistrech International Poetry Festival](#) to launch the anthology: [Black Rootedness: 54 Poets from Africa to America](#) which featured twelve Kenyan poets participating in the festival. This journey is chronicled in a photo essay by Kevin Dublin. I have been living and traveling to Africa for work for the past 20 years as an educator, organizer and poet. Increasingly I have witnessed a growing thirst for reconnection as evidenced by the resurgence of pan Africanism as well as the call for repatriation from African presidents such as Nana Addo Danquah Akufo Addo in 2019. Since the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter Movement, we have seen a large increase of African Americans reclaiming their citizenship. Short story writer Bonface Nyamwena's interview with San Francisco Poet Laureate, Tongo Eisen- Martin who recently traveled to says of the role poetry has in revolutionary movements:

*Poetry is a kind of a landmark or recreation of all of our sorrows where they express a molecule of meaning that is just as powerful as if you were to try to take all the entirety of struggle. It is almost like an access point for someone to really make themselves vulnerable to the entirety of what we are resisting.*

The poems in this issue reveal the common thread of corporate and political greed and the conglomeration of power which is global and disproportionately impacting the Black diaspora. Whether in the form of religious corruption in “Devil on the Pulpit” by Matano Nyundo, or In raising up women’s voices, Scholastica Morra fights patriarchal structures in “The men in Kalabaa have forgotten how to love their women and Ruth Koech celebrates “African Queens” from different countries on the continent.

Bonface Otieno’s full length play, *Cowards of the Republic* “is charged with an unprecedented coups d’état of at least two heads of state within an abnormal timeline. Betrayal of the people, leaders of questionable integrity, escalating inflation, public confinement are among the contemporary subjects addressed in the work.”

“Be civilized. Wow them with the Queen’s language,” says Nyorita, the protagonist of *The Weight of Black Tongues*, an Afro-futuristic critique on assimilation by Bonface Nyamweya. This centerpiece of the collection highlights the dilemma of the contemporary Black intellectual. Trapped in a liminal space between self-love and internalized oppression, Nyorita must spend “35, 000 Humuan shillings” on voice coaching in order to pass the linguistic interview needed to get the job she desires. “We are weak. Ng’amboile is a First World Country. Our Humu is a Third World Country. The two are incommensurable. Ng’amboile is like heaven and Humu is a sort of hell...” her mentor tells her. This riveting short story written in English, Swahili and a hybrid patois, explores the pressure faced by Kenya’s brightest to leave the country and the sacrifices made by their well-meaning parents.

The authors in this issue tell vibrant stories about Kenya that expand and resonate with the diaspora and the whole world. From COVID 19, to homelessness. In these voices we find hope for change through this common cry. Instrumental to the publication of this issue was co-Editor Bonface Nyamweya. His help connecting with contacting writers as especially working with KiSwahili pieces, short stories and emerging writers speaks volumes to the authenticity of this collection. Finally I want to thank visionary and founding editor Ishmael Reed for his dedication to lifting marginalized voices and to Konch Editor in Chief, Tennessee Reed for her support in producing this Konch Kenya issue.