

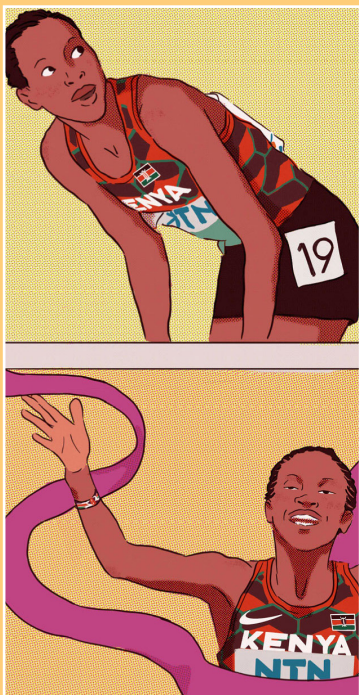
with Mail & Guardian

The Continent



Faith Kipyegon
– G.O.A.T.

Illustration:
Wynona Mutisi



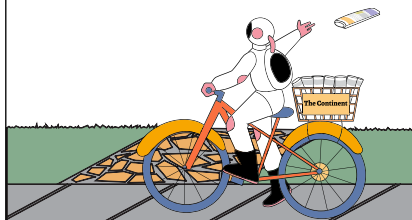
Cover: Enjoy the process and greatness will come. Faith Kipyegon has broken world records in the 1,500m, one mile and 5,000m track races – all very different running styles. She's also a two-time Olympic gold medallist. In an interview with *The Continent*, she talks about how running to and from school inadvertently helped make her one of the greatest of all time, and her pride at being a mom (p9)

Inside:

- **Nigeria:** Thousands are missing, and the military appears to be responsible (p7)
- **Space:** Two human ancestors were taken on a tone-deaf 'joy ride' (p13)
- **Soccer:** Fewer teams, less money but the inaugural African Football League is here (p15)
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LIBYA

Journalists booted out of Derna as survivors rise up

The authorities running eastern Libya arrested a number of local journalists and ordered all foreign correspondents to leave Derna, the coastal city where

a dam burst after intense rainfall, and flooding killed thousands. The arrests were carried out as hundreds of grieving and angry survivors took to the streets to demand accountability for the deaths. An angry crowd set fire to the local mayor's house. A contract to repair the dam was abandoned years ago amid the insecurity and chaos that followed the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.



Devastation: The Marrakesh quake destroyed tens of thousands of homes.
Photo: Fadel Senna/ AFP via Getty Images

MOROCCO

Reconstruction to cost billions after colossal quake

The Moroccan government this week unveiled an \$11.6-billion reconstruction programme for areas of the country that were devastated by a magnitude 6.8

earthquake that killed nearly 3,000 in early September. The quake completely or partially razed about 50,000 houses in central areas of the kingdom. The government has pledged to give 140,000 dirhams (\$14,000) to people whose houses completely collapsed, and 80,000 dirhams (\$8,000) for those that were damaged. The reconstruction will also include rebuilding infrastructure.

ZAMBIA

The world's oldest trade is carpentry

Before we were *homo sapiens*, we were woodworkers. Archaeologists writing in the journal *Nature* this week revealed that a wooden structure that was excavated near Zambia's border with Tanzania, is 476,000 years old. The structure is two logs connected via notches. Archaeologists previously associated such sophistication in working with wood only with our species. But the structure is 161,000 years older than the earliest known *homo sapien*, so it was probably made by our evolutionary ancestors.

DRC

UN peacekeepers told to leave

President Félix Tshisekedi told the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday that he has asked his government to accelerate the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from his country. The Monusco peacekeeping mission has been in eastern DRC since 2010, but civilian deaths, injuries and mass displacement in the region's multi-actor conflicts have continued, fomenting anger at its presence. In recent months, the city of Goma has been rocked by protests against the UN, in response to which Congolese security forces have killed 65 people since July.



Tramplers: Police patrol on horseback during the cost-of-living protests in Accra, Ghana. Photo: Ernest Ankomah/Getty Images

GHANA

Mass arrests as protests resume

#FixTheCountry protests resumed in Accra this week, and state security cracked down hard. Organisers say Ghanaian police had arrested at least 50 demonstrators by the end of Thursday – the first of three planned protest days. The protests first rocked Accra in August 2021. Thousands of people who had been mobilised via social media took to the streets to demonstrate against corruption, high taxes, a broken education system, the high cost of living – and President Nana Akufo-Addo's \$200-million project to build a national cathedral.



Grief: A woman mourns for a relative killed in a protest in Senegal. Photo: John Wessels/AFP via Getty Images

SENEGAL

The league table of democracy's demise

Civicus, a global alliance of civil society organisations, has added Senegal to a watchlist of countries where civil rights are declining rapidly. In recent months, authorities have used lethal force against protesters and dissolved the opposition party. Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko has been convicted of crimes he says are politically motivated. Civicus says journalists and critics have also been arrested ahead of the 2024 elections. Others on the list are Ecuador, Bangladesh, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and the United Arab Emirates.

CLIMATE

Sunak changes gears on the road to net zero

Surprising even members of his own party, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has postponed his country's impending ban on the sale of new diesel and petrol cars from 2030 to 2035. The planned phasing-out was meant to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. But Sunak also said UK consumers will be able to buy and sell fossil fuel cars secondhand after 2035. At least three UK car manufacturers released statements to reassure the global public that they still will switch completely to making only electric cars by 2030.

GEOPOLITICS

PAC your BRICS and GTFO, IYKWIM

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and leaders of coastal Atlantic countries have launched a 32-member bloc: the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation. The US says members, including countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, North America and South America, will work together on challenges like the climate crisis, illegal fishing, piracy and maritime governance. Pundits have characterised it as the US's answer to the expanding BRICS bloc, and a belated response to China's Belt and Road initiative.

RWANDA

Kagame will not be joining your local newsroom after all

In an interview with *Jeune Afrique*, President Paul Kagame confirmed that he will run for the presidency again next year, surprising no one, even though he said earlier this year that he would not mind retiring to take up journalism. Officially, he has been president since 2000 but as chairman of the Rwandan Patriot Front, which ended the 1994 genocide and ousted the government, he has been the defacto leader since then. He was declared



Off stone: Rwanda's Paul Kagame has other deadlines on his mind. Photo: Marco Longari/AFP via Getty Images

the winner of the most recent presidential election with 98.8% of the vote.

KENYA

Pro-choice activists rob women of choice

A Kenyan judge has ordered Médecins Sans Frontières – France, Marie Stopes International and Pumwani Maternity Hospital in Nairobi to pay damages to four women who were coerced into tubal ligations. This procedure stops women having children. In their testimonies, the women said MSF-France offered them food portions, including baby formula, on condition that they get the ligations. This was in the early 2000s, when HIV-positive mothers were strongly discouraged from breastfeeding so their newborns wouldn't get sick. The women were then sent to clinics for the procedures.

SAHEL

Juntas unite against ~~Eeowas~~ terrorism

Leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger signed a pact on Saturday to form the unfortunately acronymed Alliance of Sahel States. All these states are being run by juntas which overthrew civilian power. They are also strenuously opposed to plans by the larger west African regional bloc, Ecowas, to send troops to reverse the coup in Niger. Mali's defence minister, Abdoulaye Diop, said the new bloc's "priority is the fight against terrorism" but it would also "prevent, manage, and resolve any armed rebellion or threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty [of the three countries]".

Nigeria

'The state is disappearing its own people'

A new investigation says the military is involved in the disappearance of thousands of Nigerians.

Kiri Rupiah

By 2020, the International Committee of the Red Cross was handling 23,000 missing persons cases in Nigeria, its largest caseload in Africa. Nigeria alone accounts for more than half of the continent's missing people. A report this month by *HumAngle*, a Nigerian nonprofit media organisation covering humanitarian issues, has concluded that many of these missing people were victims of extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests by state security forces.

HumAngle created a database of nearly 3,650 missing people in the Chibok, Gwoza, Bama and Askira-Uba areas of northern Nigeria. Collaborating with Washington-based *New Lines* magazine, *HumAngle*'s investigations editor Kúnlé Adebajo tracked stories of missing

people by interviewing eyewitnesses, using geolocation data, reviewing leaked documents and visiting sites.

Adebajo told *The Continent* that at least 200 missing people "were arrested by security agents, mostly soldiers". *HumAngle* also obtained figures that show the military took more than 3,320 bodies to a morgue in Borno State between 2013 and 2022. "This doesn't include the estimated hundreds of bodies taken to mass burial/dumping sites," Adebajo said.

The investigation found evidence of the unlawful killing and mass burial of terrorism suspects in breach of international law. It concluded that through arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention and extrajudicial killings by security forces, the state is a major contributor to Nigeria's growing problem of missing persons.

Little wonder, then, that a database for missing persons that Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission promised to set up in 2015 is still not operational. Or that, as revealed on Monday by the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Nigeria was nine years late in submitting a report to the UN on its progress in legislating against and preventing enforced disappearances.

The Nigerian government has not officially responded to the *HumAngle* investigation. ■

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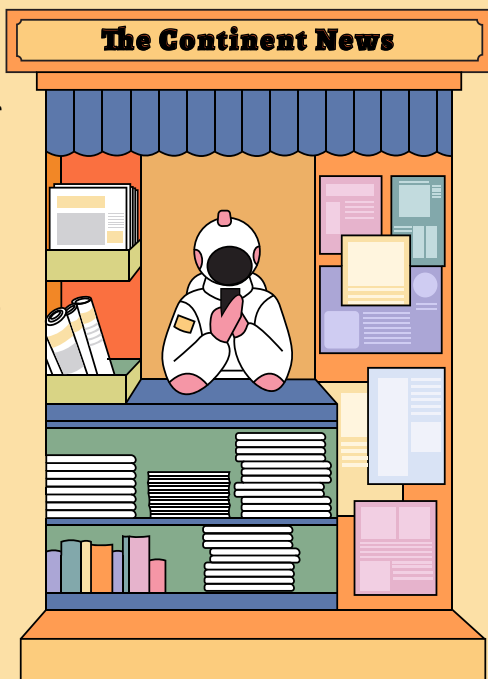
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On track with the GOAT

**This is Faith
Kipyegon's year,
and the rest of us
are just trying to
keep up.**

Photo: Mattia Ozbol/
Getty Images

Samira Sawlani in Nairobi

On a July morning, the warm-up tracks outside the Nyayo National Stadium in Nairobi are a hive of activity. Several legendary Kenyan athletes are present, including David Rudisha, Catherine Ndereba and Vivian Cheruiyot.

They all stop and speak with the star of the show: Faith Kipyegon. A GOAT – greatest of all time – by any standard, she is pulling a crowd even though she is there only for training.

Kipyegon runs around the track so many times I lose count. Yet she shows no sign of tiredness. She brings the same level of commitment to the warm up that you see when she is racing on the world stage.

And girl, can she race: Already a two-time Olympic gold medallist, she smashed the women's 1,500m world record in Florence on 2 June. A week later in Paris she broke the 5,000m world record (broken again on Sunday by Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay). When *The Continent* watches her train at Nyayo, she was preparing for the World Athletics Championship in Budapest, where she went on to win gold in the 1,500m and 5,000m. Days later, she broke the women's mile world record in Monaco.

When *The Continent* pulls Kipyegon off the Nyayo tracks for an interview, the walk through the stadium is halted every few steps by people asking for a photo, an autograph or just telling her how much they admire her. She graciously accommodates all the interruptions.

Her life could have been so different. “When I was a child, I wanted to be a



Photo: James Arthur Gekiere/Belga Mag/AFP via Getty Images

policewoman,” she says. “I just wanted to study, enjoy life, and join the police, being an athlete never crossed my mind.”

Asked about the celebrity treatment she receives now, she laughs. “I don’t see myself as a celebrity; I see myself as Faith. Athletes do need to be careful when we meet with people, particularly during flu season, but I never say no. It is such an honour for me to be celebrated by people, to be known here at home. In many ways it’s a motivating factor in itself.”

Running up that hill

Kipyegon’s life began 29 years ago in Bomet, southwestern Kenya, in the Rift Valley area from which most of Kenya’s long distance legends hail.

Today, nearly half of the people in Bomet are poor, and very few have access to electricity.



Breaking lanes: Faith Chepngetich Kipyegon is the current world record holder for the 1,500m and mile, both set in 2023. Photo: Tim Clayton/Corbis via Getty Images

Kipyegon's early life was just as humble. She ran barefoot to and from school.

"I have been doing this since I was a little girl. You would run to school, then back home for lunch. I enjoyed it but never thought I would one day become an Olympic champion," she says.

That all changed in Moscow in 2013.

Prior to that, Kipyegon had competed in international junior events, and done well. But Moscow was the big leagues: the World Athletic Championship, where Kipyegon would run on the same track as the world's fastest women. Aged just 19, she came fifth. The legend was born.

"That year I saw my potential in running. I thought this is something I could pursue. I could enjoy the process and see if I became an elite athlete."

Therein lies one of the secrets to

Kipyegon's success: rather than chase any particular accolade monomaniacally, she wants to "enjoy the process". Immersed in the process, she often reacts with surprise at her own greatest feats.

In Florence, she merely wanted to finish the race under 3:54:03, the fastest anyone had run it this year. "I didn't expect a world record," she told journalists.

Despite her success, her process hasn't changed. She continues to push herself, training every morning and evening. Words like "discipline" and "consistency" are like scripture to her. "Whether you're an athlete, a nurse or a teacher, you need consistency and discipline. The days you don't want to work, you still have to get up and go do the work."

We suggest that there might be days when even ace reporters from *The*

Continent struggle to get out of bed and drag themselves off to the gym.

“Absolutely yes! Some mornings I just want to sleep. It’s 5.30am, everyone is sleeping and you’re the only one awake!” she laughs. “But I push past. I tell myself it’s time to get to work and get going. Before you know it, the day is done, and you feel fresh and ready for tomorrow.”

But what if there is gym tomorrow too? She just smiles. We can’t all be the GOAT.

The race of life

Off the track, Kipyegon has been on another demanding journey: bringing a human into this world, and then keeping them alive. Her daughter is called Alyn, and she was born in 2018.

Kipyegon is unquestionably proud to be a parent, and she has had to work hard to reconcile her twin identities as athlete and mother.

Both are incredibly demanding, but in different ways: “Oh, losing weight [after pregnancy] was difficult! You’re used to

weighing 43kg and now you’re 63kg. It took a lot of mental strength but I just focused on one thing: I want to come back as Faith Kipyegon.”

On the track, she chooses not to hide the stretch marks pregnancy left her with, because “not covering them up shows pride in being a mom, in being a woman”.

But like working mothers everywhere, she is plagued by “mom guilt”. Her first meet after Alyn’s birth tore her in all directions.

“I travelled to the USA for the Prefontaine Diamond League meet [in 2019]. It was hard! I kept telling myself that ‘this is for my career’, but while I was there she was all I could think about.”

She still won. “Here is where mental strength is important. You remind yourself that the career path you’ve chosen is your right as a woman, as a girl. You tell yourself that ‘this is what I want to do with my life.’”

And then, if you are Faith Kipyegon, you do it. And keep doing it – faster than anyone else in the world. ■



Pushing past: Faith Kipyegon credits her success to determination, discipline and committing to the moment. Photo: Mattia Ozbót/Getty Images

Space

Bones of contention

The earthly remains of our most ancient ancestors have travelled to subspace – stuffed into the cargo pants of a rich astronaut. The stunt has divided South Africa's palaeoanthropological community, writes Kiri Rupiah.

Early on Friday 8 September, a Virgin Galactic spacecraft travelled to the Kármán Line, the boundary between Earth's atmosphere and outer space. Aboard the VSS Unity were two pilots, an astronaut instructor, three paying passengers, and a carbon-fibre tube emblazoned with the South African flag.

Inside the tube were two fossils. The first, a thumb bone from *Homo naledi*, a human ancestor from about 250,000 years ago. The second, a collarbone from *Australopithecus sediba*, a human ancestor from about two-million years ago. Both were in the care of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg.

This is not the first time that fossils have been to space, but it is the first time that ancient hominin remains have left the Earth, according to the journal *Nature*, and been exposed to the dangers of space travel and potential radiation.

The *Australopithecus sediba* fossil is particularly rare and significant. It is known as a typed specimen, which means that it is the first of the species



Thumb's up: The collarbone fragment of *Australopithecus sediba* and finger bone of *Homo naledi* that went to space.

ever described – and the yardstick by which other fossils are measured. It is irreplaceable until new technology emerges or another sample is found.

After launching from New Mexico, VSS Unity's crew – including “the oldest astronauts to travel to space”, as Wits described the fossils – spent an hour in suborbital space before returning.

“The journey of these fossils into space

represents humankind's appreciation of the contribution of all of humanity's ancestors and our ancient relatives," said Professor Lee Berger, the South African palaeoanthropologist who led the teams that discovered both *Australopithecus sediba* and *Homo naledi*. "Without their invention of technologies such as fire and tools, and their contribution to the evolution of the contemporary human mind, such extraordinary endeavours as spaceflight would not have happened."

Berger, who is the director of Wits University's Centre for the Exploration of the Deep Human Journey, successfully applied for the permit to send the fossils to space from the South African Heritage Resources Agency. Berger said the undertaking sought to promote science and bring "global recognition for our science of human origins research".

Bad publicity

Not everyone is convinced. Several professional bodies have condemned the event as a public relations stunt, including the Association of Southern African Professional Archaeologists, which said: "This venture was not intended to produce scientific outcomes, but instead, raises ethical concerns regarding the treatment of our heritage [ancestral human remains] while exposing the fossils to unnecessary risk for publicity purposes."

Dr Robyn Pickering, a geologist at the University of Cape Town, said the trip had failed to promote science. It received barely any media coverage in South Africa, and almost nothing internationally, with the exception of

outraged responses from scientists in Africa and the Global North.

These responses questioned the ethics and the regulatory processes which allowed the stunt to happen. For Pickering, this risks playing into the narrative that African states cannot be trusted to preserve their own heritage – a narrative often used as a justification not to return stolen artefacts to the continent.

Dr Dipuo Kgotleng, director of the University of Johannesburg's Palaeo-Research Institute, described the space voyage as a tone-deaf "joy-ride" that did not account for the ancestral connections revered in many African cultures.

Kgotleng said that all it proved was that South Africa's heritage – humanity's heritage, in this case – could be used by the rich and powerful for their own ends. As she puts it, as a South African palaeoanthropologist, she does not have access to these fossils; but those with money do not encounter such barriers.

Echoing this point, several researchers – who spoke to *The Continent* on condition of anonymity – said Berger's influence and status within the scientific community makes it hard to say no to him. Tim Nash, the astronaut who actually carried the bones in the pocket of his cargo pants, is a South African billionaire who owns 47% of the Cradle of Humankind, the palaeoanthropological site where the fossils were first discovered.

Dr Lee Berger did not respond to requests for comment from *The Continent*. Neither did Dr Bernhard Zipfel, Wits University's curator, who signed off on the release of the fossils. ■

The Africa Super League tried to fly – it will have to walk for now

Eight of our best football teams will play in the all-new, not-quite-super tournament next month.

Daniel Ekonde

When the idea of the Africa Super League was first mooted in August last year, the dream was big. Twenty-four men's football clubs would play in a continent-straddling competition with \$100-million in prize money at stake. The winning club would get \$11.6-million – more than twice what Egypt's Al Ahly received for winning this year's CAF Champions League.

But when the draw for the new competition took place earlier this month, one could not help but notice the distance between that dream and reality. Instead of 24 teams, we have eight. Matches begin at the quarterfinals, with no group stages, and the winner receives \$4-million.

Even the name indicates a reduced ambition: the adjective has been scrapped

entirely, leaving us with just the African Football League.

Knockout matches, played over two home-and-away legs, begin next month. Al Ahly, who have won the Champions League a record 11 times, will meet Simba Sports Club of Tanzania. Five-time African champions TP Mazembe of DR Congo will challenge Tunisian giants Espérance. Wydad Casablanca, winners of the 2022 Champions League, must deal with Nigeria's Enyimba FC. And Petro de Luanda of Angola (who are unsure of participating following a two-year match-fixing ban) are matched up with Mamelodi Sundowns from South Africa.

The competition is managed by a private company set up for the purpose, headquartered in Kigali, with board members drawn from the Confederation of African Football and Fifa, the global football association.

An expensive game

The reduced scale of the continental competition is likely a reflection of the parlous state of CAF's finances. After a disastrous few years, the confederation is running out of money.

It reported a \$15.7-million loss in the 2022/2023 financial year. This is largely thanks to the collapse of not one but two television deals.

The first, worth \$1-billion, was with the French company Lagardère Sports. It covered television and marketing rights for 20 years, but was awarded without an open tender. An Egyptian court and an



Red sea:
Fans cheer
for Egypt's
Al-Ahly at Cairo
International
Stadium. Photo:
Khaled Desouki/
AFP via Getty
Images

East African regional court separately found that this agreement breached competition rules, leaving CAF with no choice but to terminate it in 2018. The second, a 12-year deal with beIN Sports signed in 2017, was worth \$415-million. CAF ended the contract this month – five years early – claiming that beIN owed it \$80-million (the Qatari company disputes this, and is seeking legal action).

A potential lifeline, in the form of a reported \$200-million offer from Saudi Arabia to sponsor the Africa Super League, never materialised. This is, perhaps, because CAF was reluctant to support Saudi Arabia's bid to stage the 2030 World Cup. It is instead leaning towards Morocco, which is bidding to host the same tournament jointly with Portugal and Spain (Saudi Arabia has subsequently abandoned its bid, aiming for 2034 instead).

Despite its financial difficulties, CAF has not quite given up on its big dreams



Thumb in every pie: When Fifa president Gianni Infantino announced the league back in 2019, it was still super. Photo: Joosep Martinson/FIFA via Getty Images

yet. In a statement, it said: "The inaugural AFL is a precursor to the fully-fledged AFL competition which will feature the 24 highest ranked football clubs on the African continent and will commence during the 2024/2025 football season." ■



Keyed in: Amapiano
pioneer Kabza De
Small on the decks.

The home-grown music taking over the world

An introduction to amapiano, South Africa's world-storming alchemical transmutation of deep house and kwaito.

Chris Vick

Deep house was my introduction to amapiano, which is unsurprising since amapiano is widely regarded as the child of house music and kwaito.

In the mid-2010s, I started to hear more and more deep house music when my wife and I visited her family home in Soshanguve, outside Pretoria. As someone who loves exploring new music, I could sense that a richer, more jazzy sound was emerging from the doef-doef house we were used to.

The deep house track that primed me for amapiano was *Kosha* by Tumza D’Kota – seven minutes of deep beats and something that sounds like an electronic steelpan, creating a jazzy sound. Deep house, maybe, but you could hear the roots of amapiano pushing through the soil.

Soon after I got *Kosha*’d, three things happened that pushed deep house into the background and amapiano to the fore: Pretoria kids were adding more of a keyboard sound (the “piano” in amapiano), taking the speed down to 110 beats per minute and throwing in

a devastatingly deep bass sound from something called a log drum.

And so it was that Pretoria gave birth to amapiano.

Amapiano ticked along as niche music until around 2019, when it exploded. Bright young stars like Kabza De Small and DJ Maphorisa took it to a new level and pioneered its shift onto a global stage.

They also provided my “proper” baptism into this new genre. *Lorch* was scorching and typified the way amapiano builds in layers, with keyboards and the rhythm section gaining momentum as pulsating lyrics drive the sound even harder.

Since then I’ve discovered amazing South African sounds. I beg your body to defy the magnificent club sessions on YouTube by Major League DJz. DJ Stokie’s early work was particularly keyboard-rich; try his hypnotic 2019 hit *Piano Vibe* with De Mthuda.

But I generally come back to DJ Maphorisa and Kabza De Small, the pioneers of amapiano. *Asibe Happy* is a great example of their work. It builds up, layer after layer, like a funky jazz song. Ami Faku provides the perfect voice, gradually gathering steam for the singalong chorus and the log drum that Kabza lets rip.

There’s also what some call “private school amapiano”, a sub-genre closer to jazz than house that is best captured by Kelvin Momo. *Jazzeneo*, for example, has slinky licks from Xolani Guitar and some fine jazz-type scatting.

If I had to choose just one definitive amapiano track to convert a jazz cat,



Clubbing it: Major League DJz (above) DJ Maphorisa (below) command the crowd with amapiano’s driving pulse.

K-popper or classical music fan, it would be *Izolo* by DJ Maphorisa and Tyler ICU.

Here you’ll find the log drum at its driving best, hypnotic keyboards and some of the best South Africa rapping. And the music video features one of the coolest gushes – the 1990 BMW e30 325iS, an icon in black South African culture – on the road.

If you’re looking for the perfect introduction to a South African genre that’s taken over the world, this is it. ■

In praise of chapati

Charles Odimo

The chapati found its way from India into the diversity of Kenyan cuisine long ago. It has a special place in my heart, traversing generations, and communicating the universal language of love. Growing up in rural Kenya during the early 2000s, the flatbread made by my mother, Mama Bonke, stood out among all the happy reunions and adventures, especially over Christmas and New Year.

I'm taken back to those special times in my mother's kitchen every time I knead the dough, roll it out and hear it sizzle in the hot pan.

If chapati-making itself is an art form, then Mama Bonke is Picasso. She begins with the simplest of ingredients – flour, water, a pinch of salt and a touch of oil. But her mastery is in the way she kneads the dough, shapes it into flawless circles with her hands, rolling it into shape and then turning it on her hot, dry pan with precision timing.

The magic of chapati lies in its versatility. Whether enjoyed as a breakfast staple, an accompaniment to a hearty stew, the famous “Madondo” (a mixture of chapati and beans), or as a snack on its own, chapati is a canvas waiting to



Photo: Simon Wohlfahrt/AFP via Getty Images

be painted with flavour. And its aromas act like a siren's call, drawing family and friends to the dining table.

So, as you enjoy the warmth of a freshly cooked chapati, one delicious bite at a time, keep in mind that you are also taking part in an old tradition that unites families and cultures, in addition to enjoying an exceptional gastronomic experience.

Chapati is my heritage, my love language and my way of preserving the legacy of those who came before me. ■



Last time we sampled amala from West Africa, this week it is chapati from East Africa. We want to hear about your favourite food and what makes it so special. Let us know by sending an email to letters@thecontinent.org. \$100 for the winning letter.

Young Africans have room to grow

It might be a cliché to say “the youth are the future”, but that doesn’t make it any less true.

How, then, is that future looking?

Considering the three E’s – education, employment, and engagement – is enlightening. Afrobarometer surveys in 37 countries show progress on education: Young Africans have considerably more schooling than their elders.

Two thirds (65%) of 18- to 35-year-olds have secondary or post-secondary qualifications, compared to 49% and 34%, respectively, in the 36-55 and 56-and-above cohorts.

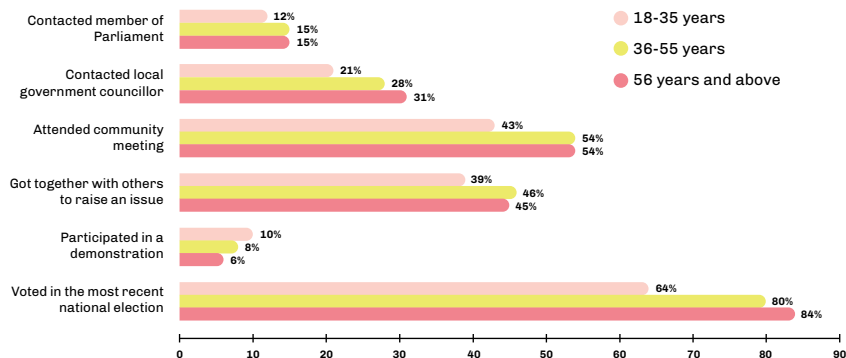
At the same time, young Africans are less employed than their elders. Four in 10 young adults (40%) say they don’t have a

job and are looking for one, versus 28% and 15% of the older age groups.

As for engagement, young people have room to expand their influence. They trail their elders in civic participation, whether it’s contacting elected officials, attending community meetings, or joining with others to raise an issue. Even excluding those who were too young to vote, they are 20 percentage points less likely than seniors to report having voted in the last national election. The exception is joining in demonstrations, where young citizens lead, though not by much.

Shaping a future free of climate catastrophe, food insecurity, and other looming threats may require more of all these types of engagement. ■

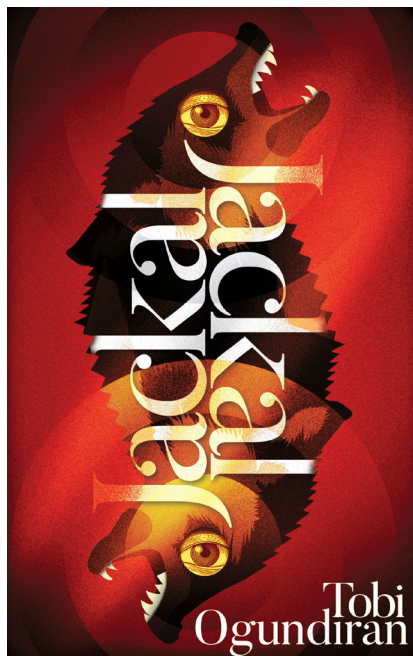
Engagement by age group | 37 African countries | 2021/2022



Source: Afrobarometer is a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.

The haunting and the haunted

A wonderful collection of fireside tales charts an exciting new course for fantasy on the continent



Jacqueline Nyathi

What a delight a collection can be when it shows off the range of an author. With the dark fantasy short stories of Tobi Ogundiran, *Jackal*, *Jackal* does that in spades.

One of his stories here, *The Goatkeeper's Harvest*, was included in *The Year's Best African Speculative Fiction 2021*, edited

by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki, one of our top five African books that year.

In addition to that story, about the most terrifying goats you'll never meet, there is an awful lot of haunting between the covers. A haunted pirate treasure; a haunted gothic manor; a haunted library with a lizard-eating librarian; an abiku spirit child from Nigerian lore who haunts her family; and even a haunted mall.

Some tales are merely haunting-adjacent, telling us of a *lág bájá*, a kind of Nigerian changeling, and a sentient forest, while another features an interstellar villain who would not be out of place fighting Marvel's Avengers.

Although one of the stories – *Here Sits His Ignominy* – is very clearly postcolonial, the collection is a tongue-in-cheek blending of Eurocentric fairytale and fantasy with West African myth and cosmology, charting a possible and exciting future for African fantasy.

It's also wonderful how Ogundiran accesses his experiences and memories in his writing, which he elaborates on in the story notes and in the author note at the back of the book.

Ogundiran's writing is so very strong, his imagination and world-building fantastic, and his stories a lot of fun. *Jackal Jackal* is highly recommended. ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"If you 'can, do. If you can-can, dance. But if you 'qan, don't."



- 1_** Unesco has added the island of Djerba (pictured) to its world heritage list. What country is Djerba in?
- 2_** In which year did the Rwandan genocide happen?
- 3_** Côte d'Ivoire got its name in 1986. What was it called before that?
- 4_** Name Africa's largest landlocked country.
- 5_** Which country is the only place where bonobos are found?
- 6_** Which country is considered Africa's oldest republic?
- 7_** How many island countries are in Africa?
- 8_** In which country was *Homo naledi* discovered?
- 9_** How many world records did Faith Kipyegon break within a week in June this year?
- 10_** True or false: the demonym for people from Mozambique is Mozambiqan.

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Salutations from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, where we are preparing to board a flight to the heart of a fallen empire. Or “London” as its indigenous population insists on calling it. Our hearts are heavy, not just because we detest flying almost as much as some of our favourite leaders despise democracy, but because we are leaving behind – temporarily! – the love of our life.

Some of our leaders have also been flying, bound for the United Nations General Assembly in New York. There, the world’s highest and mightiest will spend their time and money on protocol, paperwork – and per diems! Not sure about their hearts but their luggage will no doubt be heavier on the way back.

Reader, did you notice that when President Denis Sassou-Nguesso had left the Republic of the Congo for the UN shindig, some overly-excited sorts on the social swamp formerly known as Twitter decided that a coup must have taken place in Brazzaville?

The reports were swiftly slapped down by the country’s minister for communication, Thierry MOUNGALLA, who demonstrated some admirably teary

ennui as he dismissed them as “fanciful information” and “fake news”.

Interestingly, the misinformation was being pushed by blue-tick accounts, reminding us that being “verified” does not mean what it used to mean.

And let us not forget that coups are serious matters. Making things up about them is not clever and it’s not funny. Unlike our weekly episodes of *Keeping Up with the Coupdashians*, which you will agree is obviously both.

Alas, not all of our Cinderellas will get to go to the ball. Their dreams dashed by the aforementioned Coupdashians.

No 5th Avenue shopping montage for Ali Bongo. No brunch at Tiffany’s for Bah N’Daw. No Broadway musical for ... hmm... says

here “Lauren Boeert”? Not sure who that is, maybe they’re from Côte d’Ivoire.

Niger’s ousted president Mohamed Bazoum is definitely feeling the FOMO, stuck at home under house arrest. He’s even tried getting the ECOWAS Court of Justice to order the junta to reinstate him as president right away.

Maybe he skipped the previous season of *The Coupdashians*, but – spoiler alert

Some assembly required



CONTINENTAL DRIFT

Samira Sawlani

– listening to Ecowas is not really how the juntas du jour seem to roll?

While some leaders may be living their best lives at the UN, the *Coupdashians* themselves are BFFing like nobody's business in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. This week they even put a ring on it, signing a pact promising to tap in militarily if anyone dares to come for one of them.

And then there are those who are packing their bags, not for Manhattan but somewhere even worse: jail. In Gabon, the son of ousted president Ali Bongo, Nouredin Bongo Valentin, has been charged with corruption and high treason and has been sent to Libreville Central Prison, along with former presidential spokesperson Jessye Ella Ekogha.

Considering the lifestyle Bongo Junior is used to, we are not sure he's cut out for prison. If pater had only stepped down and not pushed for another term, life might still be pâté and parties, instead of porridge and pleas for clemency.

Bongo Junior is not the only one who has had his pocket money cut off. This week the European Union announced that it intends to suspend its \$5-million financial support to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

This is due to "concerns about ZEC's management of the electoral process" of last month's polls which saw President Emmerson Mnangagwa secure a second term. Before you judge the European Union, imagine what it must be like for them – giving their money to institutions which are responsible for ensuring



Still got it: President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's coming to dinner. Photo: Thierry Charlier/AFP via Getty Images

systems work, and then seeing them somehow not working at all.

Ha, psych! We don't have to imagine what that feels like when "lived experience" is trending in all of our lives.

We all know the government fills potholes with tax money that dissolves at the first sign of rain. And charges a premium for electricity that may or may not be there when you need it to file your latest column. Yep, EU. Hard relate.

Still, feels maybe too harsh to just cut someone off like they did when they suspended aid to the World Food Programme in Somalia, after the UN discovered it was being siphoned off or stolen. Okay that's a legitimate reason, but it's giving ... baby/bathwater? The people who will suffer most are those already suffering the most: the poor and hungry caught between callous thieves and the merely indignant. Care to try again? ■

What defines an African digital citizen?

The northern lens may need further adjustment

Tanja Bosch and Tony Roberts

Over the past 20 years we have learned a lot about how digital technology can expand and empower citizenship, and also about the limits of social media in an increasingly authoritarian world. What has been less clear is how participation in this space by people from the continent could be said to be distinctly African.

We set out to answer this important question in our book *Digital Citizenship in Africa*, with in-depth case studies of Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia, Namibia and Kenya. Based on this research, we argue in our book that such citizenship is distinctive in three important respects: the primacy of ethnic affiliations, the nature of the political system and the key players who regulate it.

Let's take these in turn.

Global North conceptions of citizenship imagine people committed to a nation-state in a relationship that involves both rights and duties. Here, colonial states denied indigenous Africans their rights, and so many people's primary affiliation remains to their ethnic group

rather than to the state. How this plays out online varies. The #EndSARs campaign against police violence in Nigeria forged a coalition across ethnic divisions, whereas the #PatnamimustGo campaign in the same country polemicised debate along ethno-religious fault lines.

Distribution of political power also matters. Centralised authority has limited the scope for participatory democracy and active citizenship. In many African countries, criticism of the president on social media is enough to land digital citizens in jail. In such environments, state security or military cyber-units police online speech, harassing government critics and creating a fragile form of digital citizenship.

Many people's primary affiliation remains to their ethnic group

African digital citizenship is clearly not homogenous. Distinct and specific ethnic, religious and political features are always in play, and any consideration of public engagement and activity in digital spaces must be understood in context. ■

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THE BIG PICTURE

Last rites: A coffin in Goma, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, awaits the burial of one of the 50 civilians killed in clashes with Congolese soldiers in August. Three weeks after the tragedy, the victims' families were finally able to bury their dead on Monday evening.

Photo: Alexis Huguet/AFP via Getty Images



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