

The Continent

The heir
apparent,
maybe



ILLUSTRATION: YEMSRACH YETNEBERK



COVER: For years, Muhoozi Kainerugaba has been treated as a curiosity: an impulsive general whose social media outbursts often seem too theatrical to take seriously. That's no longer enough to explain him. After nearly four decades in power, President Yoweri Museveni has outlived many of the constitutional guardrails meant to regulate the transfer of power. A succession contest is clearly under way, but Muhoozi is neither a shoo-in nor merely an eccentric heir apparent. He's the most visible contender in a struggle whose outcome is far from foregone. He combines the instincts of a political showman with access to the machinery of state violence – appearing absurd one moment and profoundly dangerous the next. The bigger question in Uganda is what happens when a liberation movement postpones the question of succession for so long that it can't be resolved through ordinary politics (p12).

Inside

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WE'RE BACK

It's been three weeks of broken hearts as our teams were knocked out of the Fifa World Cup. Two others remain. And we hate to break it to you, but our oracle has determined there's no team for an African to ethically support in the final (p29). Yes, we said it. We will spend the next 10 editions making bold declarations like this.

EDITORIAL



In the Year of Our Lady

CHRISTINE MUNGAI, INCOMING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LYDIA NAMUBIRU described my replacing her as editor-in-chief as a peaceful transition of power. That's accurate. But I couldn't resist behaving like every respectable African leader and immediately issuing an executive order.

Everything published before this issue is now officially BC: Before Chris. We have entered a new era. I titled my planning folder for this transition *In the Year of Our Lady*, and while *The Continent's* publisher Siphos Kings politely declined to recognise it as the newspaper's new calendar, I remain hopeful that history will vindicate me.

Nine years ago, Siphos and I arrived in Boston for our Nieman Fellowship. We were two African journalists trying to make sense of a profession that seemed beset by bewildering forces – Brexit, Trump, digital disruption, a world that no longer made sense.

It got worse. Six years ago, a pandemic hit, but also gave rise to *The Continent*: a gloriously improbable idea in African

journalism. A weekly PDF newspaper, sharp on wit, scepticism and intellectual rigour, passed from phone to phone, built not on algorithms but on generosity. One share at a time.

Our friend Dustin Dwyer, who was in our Nieman cohort, once said journalism is a prayer. We offer stories without any guarantee they will change the world, or even make an "impact". But prayer (like journalism) isn't a simple technology for unlocking blessings. The act itself matters. The hope and the discipline matters.

Our readers rarely tell us we've changed history – although we sometimes do. More often, they tell us that *The Continent* is delightful, a joy to receive every weekend, a conversation starter and a guide. That itself is an act of resistance in a world that is working overtime to fragment, brutalise, and enshittify.

In the words of Ta-Nehisi Coates, this work, to me, is the beautiful struggle. ■

THE WEEK IN BRIEF



PHOTO: ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP

Homeward? Former Sierra Leone president Ernest Bai Koroma's exile may be over soon.

SIERRA LEONE

Ex-president off the treason hook

Sierra Leone has dropped treason and other charges against former president Ernest Bai Koroma over a failed 2023 coup attempt. Koroma, president until 2018, denies any involvement, the *BBC* reports. He was allowed to go into exile in Nigeria last year. The coup bid came five months after a disputed election, which saw President Julius Maada Bio re-elected for a second term. The government has not said why the charges were withdrawn, but the decision clears the way for the 72-year-old to return.

NIGERIA

Well, actually...

Nigeria says the United States may have got its wires crossed, contradicting a senior White House official who claimed American forces seized a huge cache of electronic materials from insurgents during a joint operation. *Premium Times* reports Nigerian authorities saying the intelligence was not seized by US authorities but voluntarily handed over as part of routine counterterrorism cooperation. In other words, it wasn't a dramatic battlefield haul; it was a shared folder.

MOROCCO

I spy on my little ally

Moroccan intelligence allegedly selected senior Gabonese officials and opposition figures as potential targets for Pegasus spyware during Gabon's 2019 succession crisis. Despite the two countries' close ties, *Forbidden Stories* reports the list included then-president Ali Bongo's son, Nouredin Bongo, his chief of staff and two opposition leaders. The software, capable of remotely infecting and monitoring a cellphone without the user's knowledge, is sold to governments by the Israeli company NSO Group.



EBOLA

Live-testing begins for Bundibugyo drug

The World Health Organisation has launched the first clinical trial of an antiviral drug to prevent infection with the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola in people exposed to the virus. The experimental oral drug, obeldesivir, will be tested on nearly 1,000 high-risk contacts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, *France 24* reports. Described by the Africa Centres for Disease Control as the “fastest-growing” Ebola outbreak in history, the Bundibugyo strain currently has no approved vaccines or treatments.

TRAVEL

No papers, please: Chad relaxes its borders

Entry visas for Chad will no longer be required of African nationals from 1 January 2027, *Anadolu* reports. The move is intended to strengthen African integration and facilitate easier movement of people and goods across the continent in support of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 goal, President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno says. Chad will become the eighth African country to offer visa-free access to all African passport holders, joining Rwanda, Benin, Gambia, Seychelles, Ghana, Kenya, and the Republic of the Congo.

UNITED STATES

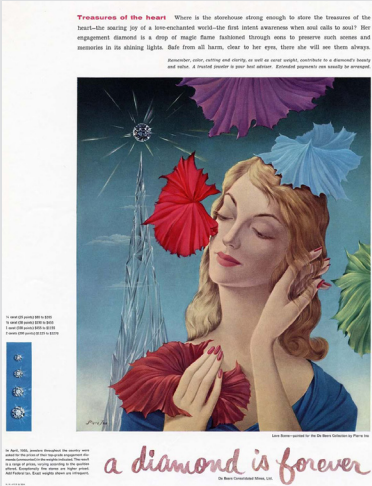
Law trumps tariffs

Donald Trump’s big tariff gamble has gone all squiffy. The United States government has repaid \$81-billion to companies after its Supreme Court ruled many of the US president’s import tariffs were illegal, *AFP* reports. The taxes on imported goods have been a key part of Trump’s economic plan since he took office again in 2025. The refunds have wiped out much of the revenue the tariffs were meant to raise, even as Trump pushes ahead with plans for new import taxes. It turns out tariffs may be easy to impose but keeping the money is another matter.

CLIMATE CHANGE

As bad as it gets is about to get worse

A rapidly strengthening El Niño weather pattern could bring severe flooding, disease, and food shortages to parts of East Africa and Asia later this year. The International Rescue Committee says Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are among the countries most at risk. Forecasters say there is an 81% chance the El Niño event will become one of the strongest on record, *Al Jazeera* reports. Flooding has already been reported in Somalia, while aid groups warn extreme weather, conflict, and shrinking humanitarian funding could worsen existing crises.



Guess again: A mid-20th century advert for diamonds, sponsored by De Beers.

SOUTH AFRICA

Jewel of denial hits rock bottom

De Beers launched the advertising tagline “A Diamond is Forever” in 1947. It couldn’t have been more wrong. The mining giant is closing South Africa’s Venetia mine – which produces over 40% of the country’s diamonds – for two years as demand for natural diamonds continues to wane, the *BBC* reports. Fewer shoppers are buying mined gems, while cheaper lab-grown diamonds continue to shine. The company says it will upgrade the mine before reopening when – or let’s be honest, if – the market recovers.

SAHEL

Estranged neighbours clear the air

Algeria and Mali have restored diplomatic ties after a 15-month dispute, *RFI* reports. Relations broke down in April 2025 after Algeria shot down a Malian drone near the border, saying it had entered Algerian airspace, a claim Mali denied. The two countries have now reopened their airspace to civilian and military flights and will return their ambassadors. The row reflected wider tensions as Mali's junta has moved it closer to Russia and further from regional partners, while battling multiple ongoing insurgencies.

SUDAN

We have a hard stop at gold

The European Union has imposed new sanctions on Sudan's gold sector, banning imports of Sudanese gold and the export of chemicals used in gold mining, *EUObserver* reports. The move is to stymie funding for the war between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. However, the sanctions do not include new measures against the RSF despite calls for it to be designated a terrorist organisation. The EU also condemned the United Arab Emirates, naming it as the main sponsor of the RSF.

KENYA

Judge dashes high hopes for holy herb

Kenya's high court has rejected a bid by the Rastafari Society to allow cannabis for religious use, ruling that the country's drug laws do not violate constitutional rights. The group argued that cannabis is a sacred part of its faith and sought a limited exemption for worship, the *BBC* reports. The judge said the case failed to prove cannabis was essential to Rastafarian practice but added that Kenya should have an open national conversation about its future. The society says it plans to appeal.



PHOTO: TONY KARUMBA/AFP

Up in smoke: Rastafarians gather at a court in Nairobi for a ruling on cannabis's legal status.

NEWS

DRC

Ebola crisis workers go on strike as 2,000 cases confirmed

As cases continue to climb, Ebola first-responders vow not to resume their work until they are paid.

PROSPER HERI NGORORA IN BUNIA

DOZENS OF workers responding to the Ebola outbreak in Ituri, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, are on strike, frustrated over delayed salaries.

Workers barricaded roads this week to protest remaining unpaid by the Congolese authorities since the outbreak began two months ago.

Wiza Bondele told *The Continent* he has been working at the infection prevention and control department at the Rwampara Ebola treatment centre on the outskirts of Bunia since May. “We travel about 10km to come and work here. We can’t even find anything to eat while we’re working,” he said.

On Monday, hygiene workers, drivers, investigators, epidemiologists, gravediggers and communications



PHOTO: CONSTANT SAME BAGAWA/AP

Torched earth: Striking healthworkers in Bunia, DRC, set rubble on fire at a protest on 15 July.

officers assigned to the Rwampara General Hospital’s Ebola treatment centre blocked the entrance to the facility. The strike action is also intensifying in Ituri’s provincial capital, Bunia. Workers assigned to an Ebola treatment centre there were on strike on Wednesday morning.

Congolese authorities say the outbreak has claimed over 700 lives out of about 2,000 confirmed cases. Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that this is the first outbreak ever to reach such figures in just two months.

Dr Roger Kamba, the Congolese Minister of Health, acknowledged the frustration of the Ebola first responders, but maintained that the problem was not about money but about ensuring payments reach “the right people”. ■

SOUTH AFRICA

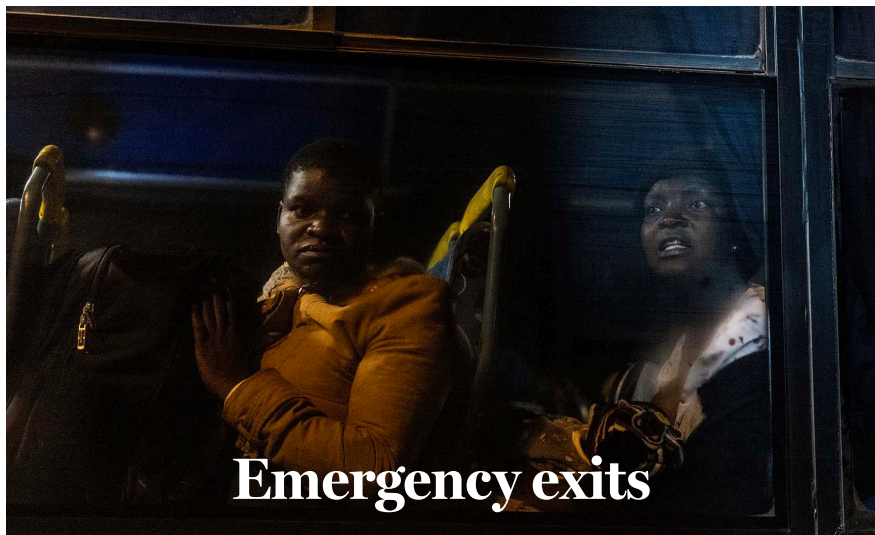


PHOTO: PAUL BOTES/THE CONTINENT

Emergency exits

SIMON ALLISON IN JOHANNESBURG

ALL ACROSS South Africa, black people seen as “foreign” are being forced to make an impossible choice: stay, amid growing threats and intimidation; or go, abandoning their lives in South Africa, – along with their possessions and, in many cases, even the food in their fridge.

This decision is being forced on them by a movement called March and March. It wants to rid South Africa of “illegal immigrants” – and imposed a deadline of 30 June for them to leave the country. That deadline has passed, but the pressure continues.

The Continent spent Wednesday

evening at the Malawian consulate in Johannesburg, where nearly a thousand people had gathered in search of refuge. More keep arriving.

The consulate, initially slow to react, is now providing buses to take them to a processing centre in Musina, over 500km from Johannesburg, from where they will be repatriated to an uncertain future.

At least 53,000 people have already been repatriated, according to official statistics. The number grows every day.

Watching the displaced people outside the consulate, a member of the ruling African National Congress party said: “We suffer in our country. They must suffer in theirs.” ■

NIGERIA

Stolen children rescued, but the threat endures

‘The rescue is a model to refine and replicate, but not a signal that the crisis is over’

PELUMI SALAKO IN YAWOTA

THE RESCUE of 46 schoolchildren sparked celebrations across Nigeria’s Oyo State last week. But security experts say the conditions that allowed them to be kidnapped remain unchanged.

“The parents are really happy; some of them were starting to think that they might never see their children again,” the king of Esinele, Oba Tajudeen Abioye, told *The Continent*.

On 15 May, 46 schoolchildren were abducted from three schools across the Oriire Local Government Area. They spent 56 days in captivity, where they were tortured. The abductors killed two teachers, Michael Oyedokun and John Olaleye, to pressure the government to provide them with money and weapons.

Nigerian security forces said they killed several kidnappers, and arrested eight others during the rescue.

Cheta Nwanze, the chief executive of SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based risk advisory firm, said this single victory does not change the broader trajectory, as armed groups are shifting tactics and locations rather than being eliminated.

“The structural drivers remain: economic hardship, the lucrative ransom economy, and a state that reacts rather than prevents. The rescue is a model to refine and replicate, but not a signal that the crisis is over,” he told *The Continent*.

Bandits and Islamist fighters continue to attack communities, abduct people, and pillage across Nigeria.

For the time being, King Abioye said, he is preoccupied with keeping his community secure.

“We are speaking to the government about improving our security. The soldiers are still with us and still combing the nearby forests,” he said. ■



PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAJUN/REUTERS

Home at last: Rescued children are taken to be reunited with their families in Oyo State on 13 July.

Reading is resistance



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PHOTO: BADRU KATUMBA/AFP

ANALYSIS

The wildcard who wants you to think succession is settled

Yoweri Museveni has ruled Uganda for four decades. The state exists to entrench his power, over the needs of its 50-million people. But M7 is 81. His wife is not in good health. Their allies are ageing. And his son is itching to take over, presenting his succession as inevitable. It might not be. So *The Continent* went and asked the questions in a country hostile to journalism.

**The journalist's name has been withheld for their safety.*

FOR YEARS, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba was easy to dismiss as Uganda's erratic "tweeting general". The first-born son of President Yoweri Museveni, his provocative threats, internet theatrics, and diplomatic freelancing seemed more performative than political. In recent months, however, his public pronouncements have had the weight of state action.

"Uganda's transition has already begun, but it functions as an active construction project rather than a finalised coronation." That's according to a political scientist at a public university in the country, who asked to remain anonymous. This means that "the post-Museveni state is being systematically

built while the president remains in office".

At the centre of this is a flexing of power by Muhoozi, who is being "strategically positioned as the most likely successor" to Museveni, says Timothy Chemonges, executive director of the policy thinktank Centre for Policy Analysis.

In April, a charity run was held in Kampala in honour of his 52nd birthday. On paper it was to raise funds for vulnerable children. While not the first of its kind, this year's was more a show of force around him. Framing the run as a charity event allowed Muhoozi's political vehicle – the Patriotic League of Uganda – to mobilise public support while bypassing constitutional restrictions that forbid serving military officers from participating in partisan politics. The League is not an official political



Muhoozi Kainerugaba ✓

@mkainerugaba



The only way I can re-pay my great mother is by being President of Uganda! And I shall definitely do it!!



Muhoozi Kainerugaba ✓

@mkainerugaba



I don't follow Premier League. They are too many short people there. They give me a headache. Basketball is my sport. Congratulations Arsenal.



Muhoozi Kainerugaba ✓

@mkainerugaba



I won't stand in an election with Kabobi! I will simply shoot him dead.

party, but acts like a political formation for Muhoozi's interests.

In some ways, the birthday run was also a loyalty test for key political figures within the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party. Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa acted as the chief runner – standing in for Muhoozi, who was absent – while other key NRM figures pledged financial support for the charity drive. Museveni's warm birthday messaging, praising his son as “born in the resistance” and highlighting his contribution to the military, also helped wrap the event in dynastic legitimacy.

In May, as Uganda's parliament was voting for House Speaker, Muhoozi publicly attacked the incumbent, Anita Among, a key ally of his father.

He ordered Among's homes raided in what was described as an anti-corruption blitz, and he pushed legislators to support his hand-picked candidate, Jacob Oboth-Oboth – a move widely read as him disciplining elite rivals and signalling who could advance politically.

The biggest signal came in June with the closure of the Nation Media Group-Uganda, the country's largest independent media house.

Muhoozi posted on X that he had the power to shut down any media house and that the power was “given” to him by his father. The outlets, including the *Daily Monitor* and *NTV*, remain closed.

Behind this flexing is an unpredictability and a willingness to invoke violence. Also in June, Muhoozi publicly celebrated the arrest of Erias Lukwago, former mayor of Kampala,



PHOTO: MWESIGYE FRANK

Wheel deal: Muhoozi fans ride through Kampala to promote a fun run celebrating his 52nd birthday.

posting that the opposition politician had been taken to “my basement”.

The reference is widely understood as alluding to illegal detention and torture. Over the years, Muhoozi has repeatedly threatened critics, journalists, and opposition figures with being taken to “the basement”, turning what began as an online catchphrase into shorthand for the coercive power of Uganda's security apparatus.

The combination of theatrical bravado and the state's capacity to act has made it increasingly difficult to dismiss his pronouncements as mere provocation.

Trying a bit too hard

Muhoozi has explicitly stated his divine right to rule after his father. And his



Left: Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni and his son Muhoozi Kainerugaba in Tanzania, in a photo likely taken in 1975.

Right: The pair attend a graduation event for military cadets in Kabamba on 4 October 2025.

PHOTO 1: MUSEVENI FAMILY COLLECTION
PHOTO 2: MUHOOZI KAINERUGABA

father is ageing. Despite tidily winning January's general election, Museveni is increasingly showing his 81 years. First Lady Janet Museveni has also been struggling with health issues, surviving what her husband described as a "serious illness" early this year that he blamed on "Sitaane" (Satan). The first lady is a key part in Uganda's power structure. Her prolonged absence from public life has inevitably fuelled questions about how the regime functions as it enters an uncertain succession period.

His parents' age and health issues may be giving Muhoozi more space to act with executive authority.

He has risen through the ranks and held high-level roles in elite security, including as head of presidential security. Now, he holds the highest role yet, as Chief of Defence Forces – to which his father appointed him in 2024.

Members of Parliament affiliated to his League have been "the most vocal, and have put forward the most consequential government business" in the House, according to political analyst Yusuf Serunkuma.

Yet Muhoozi's public behaviour contains its own contradiction. If his succession is as inevitable as many assume, the threats, the political rallies, the military posturing, and repeated interventions in national affairs point to someone still trying to establish authority rather than merely inherit it.

"Many think that Muhoozi's succession is already concluded, but my considered opinion is that it is premature to describe Muhoozi's rise as inevitable," says professor Juma Kakuba Sultan, a lecturer in political science at Kyambogo University in Kampala.

He adds: "Having the president's

support, military credentials, and public visibility give him significant advantages. But succession requires more than proximity to power; winning public support is vital unless he is going to establish a pure military dictatorial government.”

A retired army captain, who declined to be named in order to speak freely, says Muhoozi’s strongest supporters are likely those who see him as a continuation of the current political order and believe he offers stability. The key is how he deals with people with their own agendas. “In any succession, the question is not only who has supporters, but who can build a coalition strong enough to govern.”

Governance researcher Job Kijja describes Muhoozi’s support base as “broad but shallow” and far from an absolute inevitability. “His support is concentrated among a core group [of the military] command and beneficiaries of recent promotions. The wider [ruling party] old guard, technocrats, and business elites merely tolerate the militarisation out of a profound fear of sudden instability or state collapse.”

The lack of a real base of loyalty explains why his camp “is working so aggressively” to institutionalise his authority through formal state mechanisms before a handover occurs. Kijja says this is part of a “deliberate strategy to manufacture early elite consensus”, and that “signals to the political class that the succession is a settled matter and resistance is futile”.

Those signals include stepping back from X. Since the crackdown on the

Nation Media Group, Muhoozi has not tweeted, only retweeted.

A system built for one man

Perry Aritua, executive director of the Women’s Democracy Network, says Uganda’s current uncertainty stems from a deeper institutional failure. “The legal safeguards that were part of our Constitution were removed without being tested.”

In effect, Uganda has never resolved the question of presidential succession through its constitutional order. Instead, presidential term limits and, later, age limits – both intended to regulate the transfer of power – were removed before they could ever be tested. That leaves succession to be negotiated politically and dynastically rather than through institutions.

Uganda is hardly the first African state to confront succession through the prism of family. In Chad, the sudden death of Idris Déby in 2021 paved the way for his son, Mahamat, to inherit power with the backing of the military. In Togo, Faure Gnassingbé succeeded his father in 2005, more recently amending the Constitution to replace direct voting with a parliamentary system to consolidate his power. In Zimbabwe, the succession path went awry when the military decided to replace the Mugabe family with one of their own.

The question facing Uganda is not simply whether Muhoozi succeeds his father, but what that would reveal about the strength – or fragility – of the state Museveni leaves behind. ■

Coffee with The Continent



INTERVIEW

Welcome to Coffee with *The Continent*, where we chat to smart people with smart ideas. You're all invited. This week, our guest is **COLLEN MASIMIREMBWA** – the biomedical pharmacologist who wants drugs to be designed and tested with Africans in mind – and who has the evidence to prove why this matters.

VENUE* Café Nush in Avondale, Harare. “The ambience is great,” Masimirembwa says. “It’s very multinational: there are people there from all different countries, just doing their thing. Lots of doctors and researchers.”

DRINK “I would recommend our local tea called Tanganda. It’s a favourite in our household. I don’t drink coffee, it’s too bitter.”

MONUMENT** Great Zimbabwe, the ruins of a millennium-old ancient city near Masvingo. “It still stuns me that, at that time, people could build something of this magnitude ... I always look out for these things where human beings did something unusual in a certain time that makes it difficult to understand, with the technology of that time, with the social organisation of that time, how they achieved it.”

MUSIC “I always lose the competition in the car when I’m listening to people like Leonard Cohen... I tend to give space to those awkward musicians who are experimenting with voice and lyrics in a different way.”



PHOTO: COLLEN MASIMIREMBWA

**We interviewed Masimirembwa online. His dream venue was brought to life by illustrator Wynona Mutisi. **Last year, The Continent ran a series on iconic monuments across Africa. We're asking each guest to nominate a monument iconic to them.*

We need a taste of our own medicine

HUMAN physiology is the study of our physical organs and how they work together. Human biochemistry examines the molecules in our body: how they form, interact, break apart – and how they respond to new molecules.

This last statement has defined the professional life of Collen Masimirembwa, a Zimbabwean biochemist and professor at the University of the Witwatersrand. He founded the Harare-based African Institute of Biomedical Science and Technology. His research focuses on the fact that not all bodies respond in

the same way to the same combination of molecules – pharmaceutical drugs impact different groups of people in different ways.

“I was sequencing genes from different people of Africa and I [asked], what does it tell me about how they are likely to respond to medicines that were not developed and optimised for them?” he says. “Because most drugs were coming from the Global North and being used in our populations, but no one had done any studies for their safety and efficacy.”

Masimirembwa set out to make those studies happen – which meant



PHOTO: GLODY MURHABAZI/AFP

Let's move: Africa Centres for Disease Control workers arrange emergency transport for an Ebola patient.

convincing other researchers that they were even necessary. There was a time, he remembers, when his work was dismissed as crazy. But the evidence, painstakingly collected, eventually won the scientific establishment round.

One compelling case study had to do with an HIV treatment called Efavirenz, which was causing severe neuropsychiatric side effects in African patients. “I just went to one of the hospitals, collected samples, we did some sequence analysis, we measured the drug concentrations and [showed] that more than 50% of the people were having over-exposure to the drug. The drug was supposed to be between one to four units but some of the patients had up to 60 units of that drug. So they were literally being overdosed and the reason we could show was a certain genetic variation that was common in Africa and was not common in Europe.”

Even within Africa, Masimirembwa's work has shown there is enormous variation within our genomes – far more so than on other continents. “We have begun collecting genetic samples from Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, South Africa ... and we look at how different the people are, and we have really shown an amazing heterogeneity of population. You can't just point at Africa as if it is uniform.”

“That information should now be guiding the conduct of clinical trials,” says Masimirembwa. “So that when a new drug comes, before we say it can be used widely without fear, you should do clinical trials in the different clustering



PHOTO: GIANLUIGI GUERCIA/AFR

Helping hand: A farm worker in Eshowe gets tested as part of Collen Masimirembwa's efforts to investigate genetic sensitivity to HIV drugs.

populations and establish that it will be safe in West Africa, Central, East Africa.”

To make this happen, he and his team at the institute are working with the African Clinical Research Network to help identify where clinical trials should be done. He believes that, at a national level, African countries should be spending far more on research and development in the pharmaceutical space – especially because Africa's genetic variation means “we are in a novel space where we cannot easily use other people as [our] examples.”

At a continental level, African Union-led initiatives such as the Africa Centres for Disease Control and the African Medicines Agency – the latter launched in Kigali last year – signal a new maturity when it comes to co-ordinating approaches, and being able to leverage our collective bargaining power to force better access to better medications.

“I think Africa has realised it cannot subcontract solutions for itself to others: it has to do it from within.” ■

TECH

Resistance is fertile in the Cape of Bad Hype

Communities in Cape Town are challenging plans to build a ‘hyperscale’ data centre on their doorstep, saying SA is blithely approving AI infrastructure with little care for its rapacious toll on water, electricity and the public good.

KIRI RUPIAH

CAPE Town’s municipal planning tribunal has approved an application by United States tech company Equinix to develop a hyperscale data centre. Community groups had argued that the city should not approve the project until more information was provided about its likely impact. They said the development could place additional pressure on Cape Town’s already stretched water and electricity supplies.

The case is among the first in South Africa to challenge the physical infrastructure underpinning artificial intelligence.

As governments across Africa compete to attract AI and cloud computing investment, questions emerge over whether the demands these facilities place on public resources are receiving enough scrutiny.

Social movement Housing Assembly protested outside the city’s civic centre, saying residents have been asked to accept a project of enormous scale

without enough information about its environmental impact or who will ultimately benefit. Together with tech justice non-profit Foxglove, represented by the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), they made objections to Equinix’s planned facility during the tribunal hearing.

Social movement Housing Assembly says residents have been asked to accept a project of enormous scale without enough information about its environmental impact or who will ultimately benefit.

LRC’s attorney Kimal Harvey argued that Equinix had “provided no evidence” that the safety, health or well-being of surrounding communities would not be affected, relying instead on “unsupported assurances” that no harm would arise. The tribunal confirmed the decision but added it may be appealed.

The case comes as South Africa

rapidly expands infrastructure to support cloud computing and AI. President Cyril Ramaphosa says 55 data centres are already operating across the country, with more than \$3-billion in new investment expected over the next three years.

Unlike many existing facilities, the Cape Town project is designed as a hyperscale data centre campus to support AI and cloud services. Equinix has data centres in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Ghana and in Germiston, east of Johannesburg. The latter facility has a power capacity of 4MW; the proposed

Cape Town campus is expected to require up to 174MW, about 40 times more. Equinix does not publicly disclose site-specific water or electricity consumption.

"Our concern is with mega data centres that may use vast amounts of water and electricity while nearby communities still struggle to access basic services," said Housing Assembly's Kenneth Matlawe.

Equinix told *The Continent* that it would provide more detailed information should it proceed with the development. ■



Square one: The Equinix data centre in Johannesburg.

PHOTO: EQUINIX

We love to hear from you

UNLESS you're a 2026 subscriber (hi!), you'll remember our most recent Big Annual Survey™, in which 1,481 of you took part. In it, we asked you to tell us about your Happy Place™. We'll be sharing a few of those responses with you this season. Look out for our mascot Astro, who's hiding somewhere in each illustration.

“When I need to breathe, I pass by the Lagoa Azul in Guadalupe, São Tomé – a quiet coastal spot where turquoise waters lap against volcanic rocks, framed by sprawling baobabs and open savanna.”



ILLUSTRATION: MANZI JACKSON

PHOTO ESSAY



Polivalente da Ribeira Bote football academy's youth training pitch in São Vicente, Cape Verde.

PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAKUN/REUTERS

World Cup MVPs

CABO VERDE was the breakout star at this year's Fifa World Cup, but their great run was no fluke. In the capital city Praia, Bola Pra Frente, or the "Ball Forward" Academy, was founded in 2010 and quickly established itself as a top national development centre. The academy was an early training ground for several players on the 2026 men's World Cup team, including defender

João Paulo Fernandes and midfielder Kevin Pina, who notched Cabo Verde's first World Cup goal in a group-stage match against Uruguay.

Around 240 players aged between four and 17 train at Bola Pra Frente, all of whom were eagerly following the Blue Sharks' recent sterling showing in their World Cup campaign. The team bested African heavyweights Cameroon and

Angola in qualifying rounds, topping their group by four points.

Then, they were unbeaten in their group at the main tournament, drawing with behemoths Spain and Uruguay, and becoming the smallest country ever to advance to the knockout rounds. They gave defending champions Argentina an almighty scare in the knockout game, though Argentina eventually squeaked through in extra time.

There are more than 20 football academies in Praia itself, and more yet scattered across the 10 volcanic islands that make up the archipelago. Financial constraints mean that many top junior talents seek better development overseas, especially in Portugal. However, Silvéria Nédio, the academy's head coach, believes that exposing players to these opportunities abroad will ultimately benefit the country. ■



Silvéria Nédio, 60, head coach of Bola Pra Frente Academy and Cabo Verde national women's side.

PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAKUN/REUTERS



Youngsters prepare before a training session at Bola Pra Frente football academy.

PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAkun/REUTERS



Bola Pra Frente Academy, founded in 2010, quickly established itself as a top national development centre.

PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAkun/REUTERS



Trainees at the academy have high but not unrealistic ambitions – for the national side and abroad.

PHOTO: PATRICK MEINHARDT/AFP



The Bola Pra Frente academy has about 240 trainees aged between four and 17 years old.

PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAKUN/REUTERS



Trainees emulate academy grads João Paulo Fernandes and Kevin Pina, who played in the '26 World Cup.

PHOTO: PATRICK MEINHARDT/AFP



Thousands gathered in Praia to welcome the Cabo Verde men's team home after their World Cup debut.

PHOTO: SODIQ ADELAKE/REUTERS

COMMENT

Oh, Africa, who will we support in the final?

Neither World Cup finalist could beat Cabo Verde in 90 minutes. At least we'll always have that.

LEE NXUMALO

THE 2026 Fifa World Cup is almost over. With no African team remaining in the tournament, we're left with a final that could have only been conjured in the depths of hell: Spain vs Argentina.

Spain, the land of lisps, male-pattern baldness, and olés. They love their churros and chorizos as much as they love monkey chants, usually directed at Black footballers, and occasionally Muslim ones too (see: that friendly against Egypt). At the intersection of both identities is a curly-haired, blonde-tipped starboy named Lamine Yamal (thank you, Equatorial Guinea), whose fancy footwork can make a grown man fall over or weep, or both.

Their rivals in the final are their former colony, but don't cry for Argentina. In fact, no more songs for them. The last time the men's national team got on a bus singing, it sounded like a Ku Klux Klan karaoke night. On the pitch, they're every bit as nasty; a gang of short, shin-kicking terrorists cosplaying as Italians. The only team less worthy of support is the United States of Evil.

The bright spot should be Lionel



PHOTO: DAVID RAMOS / GETTY VIA AFP

Pick a side? Lamine Yamal's little brother is pretty adorable so that makes a strong case for Spain.

Messi. Operative word: "should".

Even though he should be closer to a retirement home than a penalty spot, he can still produce awe-inspiring moments on the pitch. He's already cemented GOAT-status. But then those photos with Benjamin Netanyahu resurfaced – a reminder that he's become more of an empty vessel that human rights violators can package for their own ends.

Plus, the Fifa shenanigans from the start of the tournament have put a sour taste in everyone's mouths.

If Argentina wins, the rapture will start and there's no telling what will happen next. If Spain wins, we're still in hell.

Africa, we have no good choices here. ■

DATA

You gotta learn to earn

AFRICA is home to more than 500-million young people, the world’s fastest-growing pool of young talent. But many young people still struggle to find work.

Across our data set of 38 African countries, 43% of youth report being unemployed and looking for work, far more than middle-aged respondents (30% of 36- to 55-year-olds).

The United Nations created World Youth Skills Day (15 July) to highlight the importance of equipping young people with skills for decent work and entrepreneurship.

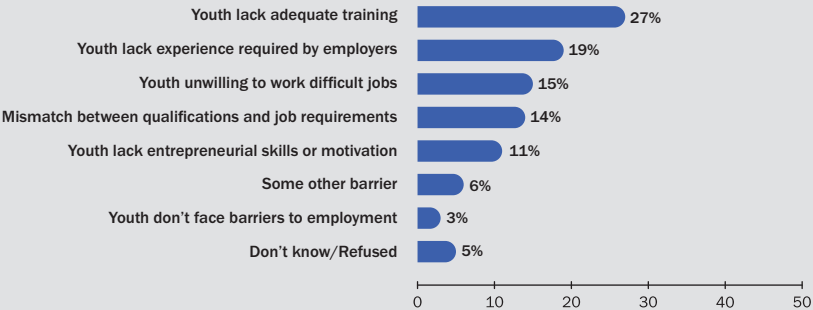
African youth themselves recognise the value of skills for work. When

asked what the main barrier to youth employment is, respondents aged 18-35 are most likely to say young people lack sufficient job training (27%).

Another 14% say there is a mismatch between educational qualifications and job requirements, while 11% think youth lack entrepreneurial know-how or motivation. But 15% suspect they don’t want to take on tough jobs.

If their government could invest more money in youth programmes, what would young people prioritise? Nearly half (48%) say job creation, while others favour spending on education (17%), job training (14%), and access to business loans (13%). ■

Barriers to youth employment | respondents aged 18-35 |
38 African countries | 2024/2025





TC BOOK REVIEW

BY JACQUELINE NYATHI



Heirs, and Grace's

When the past you've been running from comes knocking, how do you open the door?

CHIKA UNIGWE'S novel *Grace* opens with the eponymous protagonist seated at her kitchen table, eating a cake that she feels tastes like mud.

She engages in ritual penance: 26 years ago, a teenaged Grace abandoned her newborn by the side of the road at the instigation of her parents, who allowed her to secretly carry to term and then coerced her to "take care of it".

Every year since, Grace has marked

the child's birthday by forcing down more cake than she can eat.

Even though she's now reasonably happily married with a thriving set of twins, her current family remains oblivious of this history; she told them her parents were dead.

Grace now runs a clinic that operates as a "baby factory" – not for the maternity services it offers its clients, but because, on the side, Grace matches women who want to give up their babies with parents who will pay handsomely.

Despite the lingering memories of shame, heartbreak, and loss, Grace feels she's done the best she can with the hand she's been dealt. That is, until her mother shows up at her house.

In many African countries, pregnant teenage girls are still prevented from continuing with school. While there's been some patchy progress, generally, societal attitudes have yet to catch up.

In her highly engaging novel, Unigwe considers how such girls are failed by their families and by society while the boy or man involved gets away with essentially no consequences.

Unigwe imagines the fate of an outwardly successful woman carrying deep wounds decades later.

The exposure of Grace's secret leads to a great personal crisis that initially unbalances her – but in this story, at least, the "disgraced" girl finally finds her happy ending. ■

The Quiz

- 1 Which African country reached the quarterfinals of the 2026 Fifa World Cup?
- 2 Who is the president of Sierra Leone?
- 3 Which country's independence day is known as 'Jamhuri Day'?
- 4 Which country is the successor state to French Somaliland?
- 5 Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno is which country's president?
- 6 Which African country has a city named Franceville?
- 7 Brazil is the largest (population, area) Lusophone country. What is the second?
- 8 Which country is musician Thandiswa Mazwai from?
- 9 Which Nigerian writer published the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*?
- 10 In which city in Cameroon is *La Nouvelle Liberté* (pictured) found?



HOW DID I DO?

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

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

"When the A.I. revolution turns ugly, whose side will the giant robot statues of recycled liberty be on?"

Big Pic

Plotting a coop: Rodgers Oloo Magutha popularly known as Nairobi Birdman, gets ready to feed some of the wild birds under his care at his one-room flat in Kayole, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Nairobi.

PHOTO: LUIS TATO/AFP



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