



'You Should Have Died at Birth, Oh Dirty Delinquent Dictator': A Poet's Rage Against Museveni in the Bobi Wine Age

By Mary Serumaga



One of President Museveni's biggest mistakes was to nominate a day as his official birthday and presumably also an age, his actual particulars being unknown even to him. The day, September 15th in 2018 became the occasion for his nemesis, Dr Stella Nyanzi to dedicate a poem to him.

The long piece of six stanzas is a sustained torrent of invective that encompasses not only the head of state but also his unfortunate mother Esteri Kokundeka who she calls by name, an affront in itself. "*Omwana omubi avumisa nnyina*" - a bad offspring causes his mother to be abused, the Baganda say.

Nyanzi submits her work with an invitation to Museveni to arrest and beat her, complete with directions to her house. If it was thought that Stella Nyanzi had reached her vituperative peak when in 2017 she likened the President to a part of the human anatomy (a matter for which she has spent a month on remand and is now on trial), this poem surpasses anything she has done in the past in her war of attrition with Yoweri Museveni.

The long piece of six stanzas is a sustained torrent of invective that encompasses not

only the head of state but also his unfortunate mother Esteri Kokundeka who she calls by name, an affront in itself.

The crimes for which Museveni is indicted in the poem centre around poor governance; the 'seeds of corruption sown and watered' by the National Resistance Movement (NRM)'s 32 year occupation of the country - issues most Ugandans are discussing with increasing openness and which have radicalized a generation of activists prepared to protest despite the repression that Dr Nyanzi mentions in the first stanza.

She speaks of the corrosive effect the regime has had on the morality and professionalism of public institutions. It will be remembered that only one out of five Constitutional Court judges (presidential appointments) ruled that the invasion of Parliament by the USA-funded Special Forces Command (SFC) during the debate to remove presidential age limits rendered the Age Limit Act (2018) null and void. The rest refused to condemn the beating of MPs. This was followed a month later by the abduction and torture of five MPs by the SFC. One, Francis Zaake, is fighting for his life.

Nyanzi laments the aspirations of millions, drowned in a sea of unemployment and lastly the abortion of democracy. None of those issues is being mentioned for the first time. What is new, is the manner of delivery; the verse and the insults.

At the first stanza, one might think Stella is simply being undisciplined, that there are ways to communicate without being rude. There are. As the poem progresses the persistence of the verbal assault on both Yoweri Museveni amplified by involving his mother and the obvious effort that went in to making each stanza unashamedly more repulsive than the last cause one to contemplate on what could possibly enrage a doctoral fellow, a mother and intellectual to the point of triggering such a public attack on the head of state.

Nyanzi laments the aspirations of millions, drowned in a sea of unemployment and lastly the abortion of democracy. None of those issues is being mentioned for the first time. What is new, is the manner of delivery; the verse and the insults.

One possibility is Arua which came fresh on the heels of the Women's March against unsolved serial killings and mutilation of women and #ThisTaxMustGo campaigns, both of which Dr Nyanzi took part in. After the Arua attack on August 13 2018, Dr Nyanzi organized a walk to Makindye Barracks on 18 August while Bobi was held there. It was foiled by the police. She travelled to Arua a town 353 kilometres away. Going via Bugiri, a constituency in which Asuman Basalirwa won with R. Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine)'s support she organized a demonstration against the continued incarceration of people arrested following the Arua by-election.

There were also deaths that began with Yasin Kawuma and continued to take in S. Ssekiyizivu and one Jingo, travellers to a football match in Mityana shot by jittery soldiers; a new Kyambogo graduate was hit by what the government has called a 'stray bullet.' Others were shot and killed on the streets of Kampala.

Many were beaten mercilessly, struggling to free themselves when encircled by cane-wielding uniformed officers and being recaptured and pushed back into the blows by plainclothes security operatives.

In Arua, Dr Nyanzi visited [Night Asara](#), the Woman Councillor for Arua Hill and other women brutally kicked repeatedly in the abdomen to the point that they are unable to walk independently

weeks later. [Saudha Madada](#) who was sitting behind the late Kawuma when he was shot was still periodically vomiting blood. Whether [Atiku Shaban](#) will be able to walk again remains to be seen. Their only crime was being supporters and employees (Kawuma and Atiku) of MP K. Wadri who went on to win the by-election, and for whom Bobi Wine campaigned, along with three other young MPs.

The persistence of the physical onslaught on the MPs and their supporters reveals much about Museveni, his NRM and his praetorian guard, the SFC and those donors who continue to enable him. Francis Zaake had the skin and flesh of his hands and ears peeled away in what must have been hours of torture. A fellow arrestee gave a graphic account of the beating Zaake sustained in the back of a van, before, fearing he was about to die, security operatives off-loaded him at the entrance to Lubaga Hospital and abandoned him there. There is photographic evidence of uniformed officers [using pliers on other arrestees](#) piled in the back of police pick-up trucks. They are not pliers one could ordinarily buy in town.

Bobi Wine too had an injured ear that needed stitching and, from the time he was grabbed, wrapped in a blanket and thrown into a vehicle, the SFC applied pressure to his testicles using a device he was unable to see. His entire body was beaten to the extent that the government could not present him in court until the swellings and wounds had begun to heal. The public can only imagine (or perhaps they cannot) the other features of the attack that Bobi Wine describes as 'unspeakable things'.

The persistence of the physical onslaught on the MPs and their supporters reveals much about Museveni, his NRM and his praetorian guard, the SFC, and those donors who continue to enable him. Francis Zaake had the skin and flesh of his hands and ears peeled away in what must have been hours of torture.

To add insult to injury, all of the above were denied. The President denied the criminality of beating members of the public saying it was [justified by their resisting arrest](#). He was supported by the court jesters employed to humour the supreme ruler. Like [Feste](#) the jester in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Uganda's Ambassador to the United States, political appointee Mull S. Katende was "wise enough to play the fool" when he said in a debate with Bobi Wine on VOA's Straight Talk on 15th September that he saw no evidence of torture and seemed to question Bobi Wine's use of crutches.

It is unfortunate that although the British High Commission and EU Commission, professional election observers, visited Bobi Wine on 22 September in Makindye Barracks, they did not make their findings public. This omission allowed the government of Uganda to develop a narrative denying the victims were tortured. Yet their lawyers and colleagues were reduced to tears by their condition.

Museveni went on to complain as did so many NRM supporters and bots, that the People Power movement aims to tarnish the good image of Uganda abroad. Ugandans are being asked to believe People Power supporters are being funded by foreign governments to be violent and disruptive and that the victims were malingering. The American embassy has responded by tweeting bulletins about the amounts of money in grants that they have given the NRM, even as they are accused of undermining it.

Unfortunately but predictably, there are those who draw a moral equivalence between the military attack on the people and Constitution of Uganda and the retaliatory attack on President Museveni rendered more poignant by referencing his mother; between a physical assault and a verbal retaliation.

It is expected that even though Ugandans have had their skin and flesh peeled away with pliers, the response to the government's impunity should be one of politesse, not rage and certainly not bad language. Not all those expressing shock at Stella's poem have protested routine state brutality. For them verbal assaults 'cross the line' but state brutality does not.

Like court jesters, the bots came out in force on social media to mock the afflicted. The President's Principal Private Secretary Molly Komukama posted a [two-year old photo of a smiling Bobi Wine](#) and his wife on board a plane as 'evidence' that his departure from Entebbe airport in a wheelchair was playacting. Another old photo followed of the [MP walking in Times Square](#).

Fortunately, the victims remain resolute and have not lost their capacity to resist. Night Asara and Jane Abola, two of the female Arua 33 able to speak, gave confident and articulate interviews at the end of August. After his release on bail, Kyagulanyi has commanded a media blitz such as Uganda has never known. All major international channels, Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN, have featured Bobi Wine. He has honed his media skills and addressed the Diaspora at town halls and other gatherings.

Like court jesters, the bots came out in force on social media to mock the afflicted. The Presidents Principal Private Secretary Molly Komukama posted a two-year old photo of a smiling Bobi Wine and his wife on board a plane as 'evidence' that his departure from Entebbe airport in a wheelchair was playacting.

In response to Ambassador Katende's callous and insulting denial of his ordeal, (despite observing at a distance of one metre his broken nose and other injuries), Bobi Wine quoted Norbert Mao, Democratic Party president: "If you are paid to be a fool, your intelligence ceases to matter."

Then Dr Nyanzi wrote her Ode ending with the line, "You should have died at birth, you dirty delinquent dictator." The poem's chief purpose seems to be to communicate rage. The question is is it a justifiable rage?

In response to Ambassador Katende's callous and insulting denial of his ordeal...Bobi Wine quoted Norbert Mao, Democratic Party president: "If you are paid to be a fool, your intelligence ceases to matter."

If as a citizen of Uganda I must live with murder, torture, sexual assault and arbitrary detention by the armed forces; if I am required to accept land-grabbing and looting by senior public officials, asset stripping of public property, loss of sovereignty to the IMF and other lenders, I can live with Stella's rejection of refinement.

Published by the good folks at [The Elephant](#).

The Elephant is a platform for engaging citizens to reflect, re-member and re-envision their society by interrogating the past, the present, to fashion a future.

Follow us on [Twitter](#).