

South African songstress, Lira to promote Namibia ...as negative social media blowback from locals simmers

Posted by [Observer](#) | Oct 21, 2020 | [Observer Lifestyle](#) | [0](#) |



Jackie Wilson Asheeke

Last week, online and print media exploded with public discontent over the selection by the Federation of Namibian Tourism Associations (Fenata) of Lira, a South African singer/celebrity, to be its first Travel Ambassador Initiative (TAI) personality. The songstress has been asked to remind South African and other markets that Namibia is great, nearby, easy, world-class tourism destination. The negative local reaction to her appointment shows that many have missed the point.

Fenata is the private sector tourism industry umbrella organization. One of its roles is to represent the interests of its members and support increased tourism to Namibia.

According to their newly appointed Board Chairperson, Netumbo Nashandi, “the TAI is a different tourism growth program for Fenata.”

Having a brand ambassador is a tried and true marketing strategy; it is not new in Namibia. In 2013, Namibia Breweries chose Ivorian footballer Didier Drogba to be the face of Windhoek Lager's Pan-African advertising campaign. He was a superb non-Namibian brand ambassador for an iconic local product. The nationality of those chosen is less important than the sales/increased demand expected within the market to which they appeal.

Nashandi emphasized that the struggling tourism industry must face the new normal due to the pandemic. "We cannot do the same things the same way. Towards that end, Fenata asked Lerato "Lira" Molapo (41) of Daveyton, South Africa, a talented South African songstress and influencer within her large community of followers, to encourage people to book leisure travel to Namibia."

Lira makes the point that "Regarding this ambassadorship: I'm a natural fit. I have had a magical six-month experience in the Land of the Brave that has positively impacted my life. There is nothing on earth like Namibia and for South Africans; it's just on our doorstep. That is the message I want to send to potential travellers in our region. I'm looking forward to sharing my experiences and encouraging people to come to experience this life-changing place."

Lira did not jet into and out of Namibia for a few hours as other foreign ambassadors for local brands have done. She has been to Namibia for long stays over the years and spent considerable time falling in love with the Land of the Brave.

Lira says, "I came to Namibia once again in March 2020. What was meant to be a 21-day stay, turned into six of the most glorious months of my life. I used the opportunity and the incredible pricing specials to explore Namibia to traverse most of this beautiful country and completely fell in love with it. I love the vast open spaces, the magical night skies and the abundance of wildlife. I went on my very first camping experience and absolutely loved it. I received a very warm welcome everywhere I went.

"I have come to feel very much at home in Namibia, I can't wait to tell everyone about this gem of a place. It's truly a unique and very special place on earth. I describe it as "pristine" because nature is largely left to thrive and there is minimal human interference", said the songstress.

Nashandi reiterated that “The impact of the COVID pandemic has been catastrophic for the tourism economy. Local guides have had no work, communal, rural, medical, leisure and business tourism at a standstill. Activity operators are at a standstill. Accommodation establishments are at low to zero capacity. Lodges are shutting down and staffs are being retrenched. The domino effect is devastating.

“People may not realize this but the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) Report of 2019 states that 79.1 percent of total arrivals to Namibia were from the African continent. This figure includes arrivals from Angola, South Africa and Zambia. These three SADC countries accounted for 36.1 percent, 16.9 percent and 15.4 percent of the arrivals, respectively.

“These huge numbers of arrivals from Africa are not necessarily for leisure purposes. SADC arrivals’ expenditures are lower than the higher spending overseas tourists. But, there are communities of viable SADC leisure travellers that now, due to the pandemic restrictions, cannot travel to their usual European, Asian or North American holiday destinations. How can we entice them to come here instead?

Marketing efforts therefore, to increase inbound leisure travel from nearby cannot be ignored. We need an inroad; a face and voice THEY know to talk about the wonders of nearby, accessible, easy to travel (currency the same and you can drive in), Namibia.”

Prior to COVID-19, in 2019, Namibia welcomed over 1.5 million arrivals. Tourism (direct and indirect) receipts accounted for almost 11 percent of the nation’s GDP. That number will drop significantly for 2020.

Eggplant Mixed Grill

Posted by [Observer](#) | Aug 28, 2020 | [Observer Lifestyle](#) | [0](#) |



Jackie Wilson Asheeke

Namibians love to Braai. It is getting a bit warmer these days and now is the time to dust of the grill and get some Saturday afternoon action underway. This recipe is about eggplant (aubergines) and other veggies, but you can as well add good 'ol Namibian meat to the grill and stuff your face with proteins provided in the Land of the Brave.

I haven't tried this recipe yet, but I will this weekend. I worry about grilling aubergines because they fall apart and make a mess on the grill that has to be scrubbed off later. But still, the idea of grilled veggies make my mouth water.

This recipe takes two hours and 30 minutes to prepare and then make. These proportions are for six servings and can easily be augmented for more.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 red onion, cut into thick wedges
18 spears fresh asparagus, trimmed (try to get the fat ones)
12 medium mushrooms, stems removed (portabellas are best)
1 (1 pound) eggplant, sliced into 1/4 inch rounds (cut them thick!)
1 red bell pepper, cut into thick wedges
1 yellow bell pepper, cut into thick wedges

Directions

Step 1

In a large re-sealable plastic bag, mix the olive oil, parsley, oregano, basil, vinegar, salt, pepper, and garlic. Place the onion, asparagus, mushrooms, eggplant, red bell pepper, and yellow bell pepper into the bag. Seal and marinate 2 hours in the refrigerator, turning occasionally. [I am not sure that two hours are needed. I think just an hour is probably just fine. However, I think that the longer you keep it in the herbs and spices and oils, the better it will taste. I wouldn't leave them overnight because the veggies can become saturated and fall apart on the grill.]

Step 2

Preheat the grill for high heat.

Step 3

Lightly oil the grill grate.

[Or lay out aluminium foil on the hot wood embers or charcoal. Lightly oil the foil. Grill the vegetables 6 minutes on each side, until tender. Do not leave them unattended! They cook fast if your embers are too hot.

You can choose to oil the grill itself (no aluminium foil) and lay the veggies right on the hot metal. I like those char marks on the green veggies, but the veggies can fall apart in the heat if they are on too long or if your embers are too hot.]

106.8 calories; protein 4.3g 9% DV; carbohydrates 13.3g 4% DV; fat 4.9g 8% DV; cholesterol mg; sodium 340.4mg 14% DV.

The recipe measurements, ingredients and directions are by kelcampbell at www.allrecipes.com/recipe/73297/eggplant-mixed-grill. If you give this a try, let me know jackie@observer.com.na.

St Joseph's: 113 years of education and still moving forward

JACKIE WILSON ASHEEKE

About 25 kilometers outside Windhoek, Namibia nestled on African bush filled Farm Döbra since 1905, is St Joseph's Secondary School.

This long-standing Catholic educational institution is rich with the echoes of Namibia's history over the last century. In the bad 'ol days of colonialism, that history was not particularly uplifting and affirming for indigenous people.¹ But, the education provided to students enlightened and empowered many future leaders of the liberation struggle and managers of nation building in a free Namibia.

Its current incarnation as a stalwart secondary school with high academic and disciplinary standards bodes well for its learners, parents, teachers and administrators, who are fully committed to the continued development of the school.

On the spacious campus at 'Döbra', as St Joseph's is colloquially called, there is an old-fashioned, mid-sized, European village-styled steepled church at the center. This building shows wear but is well patched-up. A review of the school's archive photos revealed shots spanning 80 years that included that steepled church in the background.

A tour of the campus showed newly painted dormitories, ample classroom areas, a library stocked with decades old reference books and reading material, reasonably up to date (but small – about 10 workstations only) computer lab, a huge cafeteria, ancient but restaurant-ready white tiled kitchen, and a chaplain's office that is double the size of the principal's office. While the buildings are not modern and look as if the bright, new paint covers the evidence of decades of usage, the campus is extremely clean, neat and well-kept.

The entire place hums with a desire to do something better tomorrow than what was done yesterday. There is school pride and determination in the air at St. Joseph's.

The principal of St Joseph's is the strict, but lively, intelligent and insightful, Elfrieda Mahua-Masule. She has come under fire recently for her tough discipline, blunt handling of parents and insistence upon academic excellence, integrity, honesty and student self-respect.

She is a qualified teacher and strong administrator as well as a former student at the school during the tumultuous anti-apartheid battles of the 1980s.

¹ Beris, Adrianus Petrus. 1996. "From Mission to Local Church: 100 years of Mission by the Catholic Church in Namibia." PhD diss., University of South Africa.

Brief background on St Joseph's Secondary School (Döbra)

While few records and photos from Döbra's history pre-1950 are available in the school's limited archives, the oral history², articles and books about times long past for Missionaries in South West Africa (Namibia) offer hints of the school's past.³

St Joseph's opened its doors for students in 1905; it is now 113 years old. The school was likely opened by Catholic German missionaries.⁴

Founding information about St Joseph's is sketchy, but namibianederland.net, a centenary celebration booklet,⁵ Wikipedia quick citations on missionaries in Africa or in Namibia or at Döbra, correspond with the stories recounted by Principal Mahua-Masule.

Available information indicates that initially the school catered for children of Herero cattle farm workers living in that area. It also educated and housed orphans left behind after the genocide and when the Germans drove the remaining Herero people off their own land. The 'archives' of St Joseph's are not organized. They are a vast collection of handwritten notes (in various languages), photos, program fliers, newspaper clippings and ledger insertions, most with no author's name. They are uncollated, uncatalogued (some are undated) and numerous. Reading a few of those items, provided some background information for this piece.

A century ago, the Fathers of the Oblates of St Francis de Sales could have been the order that founded and worked initially at St Joseph's on farm Döbra, which was (and is still) owned by the Catholic Church.

At that time, this order of priests and pastoral workers started primary schools and was involved in various development projects all over South-West Africa.

Later, after World War I, when the German missionary order was unable to staff the facility at St Joseph's reportedly because not enough new recruits could get visas or permission to leave war-defeated Germany and travel to the former African colony, the few ageing priests there asked Dutch missionaries that were already operating in South-West Africa to take over the mission. They did this circa 1924.

The available records indicate that there were about 30 Dutch Catholic missionaries living and working in Namibia around that time.

² Tate Petrus Namugongo and Tate Pius Linus, interview with author, October, 2017.

³ Gewalt, Jan-Bart. 2003. "Review: Missionaries and the State in German South West Africa. Windhoek." Review of: *Mission Colonialism and Liberation: The Lutheran Church in Namibia, 1840-1966* by Carl-J. Hellberg; *Mission, Church and State Relations in South West Africa under German Rule (1884-1915)* by Nils Ole Oermann. *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2003), pp. 533-536 (4 pages). Cambridge University Press <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4100812>.

⁴ Hendrix Huub, Editor. 1999. *Namibia and The Netherlands 350 Years of Relations*. Windhoek: The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

⁵ Centenary Organizing Group. 2005. *St. Joseph-Döbra High School: 100 Years*. Windhoek: St. Joseph-Döbra High School.

Sisters from the Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) and the Sisters of the Holy Cross were there as well, responsible for the teaching and upkeep of the teacher training college over the decades.

By the 1950s, the Brothers of the Congregation of the Movement of Mercy (CMM) had taken full control over St Joseph's and it emerged in the records as a Catholic secondary school, not just a "teacher training college". In Holland, the CMM were called 'Broeders van Tilburg'.

This congregation concentrated on education and was responsible for the establishment of several secondary schools in Namibia. The principal remembers that many of the "fraters from Holland" were still at Döbra during her school days there.

Mahua-Masule said, "...At first the school was founded to cater for the farmworkers' children, especially those kids who were in the orphanage whose parents were the victims of the national resistance war between the Germans and the Hereros and Namas. This school was mainly opened for them. Their parents were the ones who fled the country after the Herero war."

On June 2, 1988 there was an important student uprising against white supremacy at Dobra and other schools around Namibia. Just as students in the better-known Soweto riots in South Africa in 1976, students in Namibia had many uprisings against apartheid, colonialism and racist Bantu education.⁶

"There will be a booklet done in English that will capture this history of the school; we are currently working on this," says the Döbra principal.

All of the operations at St. Joseph's fall under the authority of the Most Reverend Liborius Ndumbukuti Nashenda, the Namibian Roman Catholic archbishop.

Surprisingly, the church does not subsidize the running of the school. They only pay the accident insurance for each learner. Given today's challenges in financing quality education in public or private schools, paying and retaining talented teachers and providing adequate infrastructure and learning tools, it is astonishing that the Catholic Church does not co-fund the successful educational programs at St Joseph's.

A school's main financial lifeline comes from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. In fact, the government 'rents' the school buildings at Döbra. The ministry provides N\$159,000 per term only for building maintenance.

The learners only pay N\$600 per year (15N\$ = 1USD\$ - 2018) for tuition, though the principal concedes that circumstances may require a slight increase next year. Currently, there are 357 learners and 18 teachers at the school.

However, when one compares the fee structure at St Joseph's to the annual tuition fees at St Paul's College in Windhoek, the premier Catholic school in the country, of N\$67,570 per year

⁶ Nunuhe, Magreth. 2018. "The Student Uprising that changed the course of history." *Southern Times*, July 9, 2018.

for each 12th grader, the astonishing achievements in academic excellence at the former shine even brighter.

St Joseph's graduates its entire 12th grade class with 70 percent going on to tertiary institutions. High-ranking government officials, ambassadors, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and successful businesspeople across Namibia are proud alumni of St Joseph's.

Daily activities and operations at Döbra

At St Joseph's the day starts with prayer, as the teaching staff and administrators meet to plan the new day and learners begin their classes. Mass is held for learners twice per week with the church at St Joseph's holding Sunday mass at 09h00.

The curriculum at Döbra is according to national standards but has a higher final passing average than the government schools maintain.

The principal recounts, "The curriculum is according to the government requirements in part. The GRN passing requirements are low at 35 percent. We think that this is too low. When you look at the requirements for entry into NUST or UNAM, these low passing rates aren't helping. Our minimum passing rate is 50 percent in each subject for one to be promoted to the next grade."

Döbra in good order

"We don't have hired cleaners; our learners do the cleaning themselves. This is part of the mature social development and self-discipline that we are trying to instill in them."

The school has a set renovation plan at the century-old facility that involves saving the GRN building maintenance funds and doing a single large-scale project each year.

So far, there have been no indications that the ministry, which has had its budget cut from N\$2.3 billion in 2016/17 to N\$1.9b in 2017/18, will reduce St Joseph's maintenance budget.

Changing attitudes in learners

Many articles on youth perspectives and education state that learners of today have different attitudes and work ethics than those of years gone by, not just at Döbra, but everywhere.

When asked how the learners have changed over the years, the principal reflected that, "There is a great change in the kids these days. Looking back over the years, as I was a student here years ago, and listening to other former students and current teachers talking, there are great changes in how learners today compare to those from years ago.

"When I was a student here, we spent the time we had with our books. We did not wait for a teacher to tell us, 'you should do this and you should do that'. We were self-motivated and that discipline was within us.

“Most of the time, it was our family’s expectations and the social background from where we came from that motivated us. We needed to finish school successfully to get back home and help out with the entire family. But, these days, things are different.

“The learners have to be dragged to go to study. We must drag them to do their homework and everything. The self-discipline and self-motivation is lacking in students today, and this is the case everywhere, not just at Döbra.

The Minister of Education, Arts and Culture Katrina Hanse-Himarwa in an interview said she believes that learner performance in school is directly related to parent participation (Asheeke interview with Minister Hanse-Himarwa, August, 2018).

“Once that parent has done his/her job before the child enters the school premises, we will have a better society and we will have a better school.

“That is why my focus is so much on pulling together as parents, teachers and children that each of these people must understand their roles,” according to Hanse-Himarwa.

St Joseph’s principal shares that belief in the importance of parental involvement in the school.

She recounted, “Our parents are involved. When we have a parents meeting or open day, the halls are full. They are there 100 percent. We have a monetary fine of N\$1,000 for parents who don’t turn up with no explanation and no valid reason.

“The parents always have to get the final decisions resulting from the meetings held at the school; and they are responsible for getting the information, even if they were not at the meeting. We created a WhatsApp group for the parents and this also helps to quickly share information with to the whole school community.”

Living at St Joseph’s

Principal Mahua-Masule described life at St Joseph’s for the learners.

“There is a dining hall for the kids and there are three meals a day. We have a full staff that work in the kitchen with cleaners and cooks.

Döbra’s boy’s hostel can accommodate 160 boys from Grade 8 to 12 with two hostel supervisors on duty.

For the girls, there are two hostels – one for the juniors only (Grade 8s) and another for seniors (Grade 9-12). There are three hostel supervisors on duty between the facilities. The junior girl’s hostel can accommodate up to 60; whereas the senior hostel can accommodate up to 215.

Hopes for the future at Döbra

There are challenges for St Joseph’s, but there are achievable goals as well.

“In five years, I would like to see the school increase its intake. Currently, we can only stretch our intake to about 400 students but can be more if we have more facilities.

“I want to see an increase in students taking higher level classes (A-Levels). A few students are able to take higher level courses due to limited laboratory space. We need more lab space as soon as possible.

“I also have concerns about the poor state of our sports field. I would like to upgrade the sports field so that we can accommodate national competitions and sporting events.”

“Our teacher/student ratio for the junior classes is about 45 learners to one teacher. For the senior classes it is 30-35 to one. I still would like to hire and accommodate more teachers to reduce class sizes.”

Principal Elfrieda Mahua-Masule: “I love teaching and I love this school.”

Managing St Joseph’s is not easy, but together with her teaching team that is a mix of experienced and novice teachers, and administrative and support staff, Principal Mahua-Masule maintains the spirit of excellence that has long been a part of Döbra.

Mahua-Masule is so passionate about teaching and confessed, “I was not made a teacher; I was born a teacher. Though my role as principal is very fulfilling, I love teaching more than anything else; I love this school.”

Look back at Jackson

Posted by [Observer](#) | Jan 23, 2021 | [Observer Lifestyle](#) | [0](#) |



Jackie Wilson Asheeke

I felt moved to see how Namibian musicians are situated on YouTube and other social media sites for no real reason or anniversary. I was surprised and pleased to find the great Namibian performer and musical artist's videos and music, the late Jackson Kaujeua (3 July 1953 – 27 May 2010).

We're all staying at home a lot more these days. Take some time and fill your mind with the sounds of Namibia through the talents of our musicians, artists and singers. Check out Jackson once again.

I listened and watched the video of Jackson singing Kalahari. I had seen it before a long time ago. Isn't it amazing how time flies and things we enjoyed years back, can come alive in our memories yet again?

I let my family here in the States enjoy the songs with me. They were rocking with Jackson even though they cannot pronounce his last name.

Kerstin van Wyk has a note beneath the video on YouTube. She says: "The video is made in Namibia in the untouched spectacular Kalahari desert. It screens the Namibian music Legend, Jackson Kaujeua together with two bushmen. It tells a story of surviving in the desert, the beauty of the desert and its animal kingdom. The song is in English and the amazing Klick language of the Bushmen! Get inspired by the world of Jackson!"

Find the music and get with his sound. Find recordings of Jackson singing Tombo, Kaondeka, !Nubu !Gubus, Wind of change, Aiye Kak', and many more.

He was born Jackson Muningandu Kaujeua in !Huns, a village near Keetmanshoop.

His version of Wind of Change was a Namibian anthem for the fight against oppression and domination. It was the first song I ever heard him perform before an international audience. Kaujeua became a musical freedom fighter for Namibian Independence. Go online to read the bits and pieces of his early life. I came to know his music during the anti-apartheid struggle back in the day. He gave great shows to audiences searching for an understanding of the Namibian struggle for independence that was often overwritten by the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

To me, he was a star. But he was a humble man. These days, some of those who want to gather money (by hook or by crook) and fly so high with material things, houses, cars, flashy clothes and bling need to look at Jackson for an example of how to do what you love for the love of it.

This is not to say that I did not join the sentiments of many who felt let down by the government and wealthy black Namibians for not embracing this man and his contributions to the struggle. Their consistent contributions to his basic needs would have allowed him to live a better quality of life, receive the medical care he needed and give honour to Namibian music during the struggle. I think of the N\$750 million SWAPO headquarters building under construction and think of how well Jackson could have lived his later days with a miniscule fraction of that kind of money. Those who think living poor is romantic or noble need a reality check. There is no contentment and virtue in living hand-to-mouth.

I am reminded of a quote by the then SWAPO party youth league (back in 2010), Dr Elijah Ngurare, who after the death of this soldier of music for liberation said it best: "As we mourn, we cannot escape from the mental guilt that an independent Namibia did not treat him kindly." Amen to that.

Rediscover Jackson's music and jam to his memory.

Book Review: The Icabog – JK Rowling

Posted by [Observer](#) | Nov 28, 2020 | [Observer Lifestyle](#) | [0](#) |



Jackie Wilson Asheeke

Having more time inside these days, I have been a readin' fool. One of the books I jumped on was *The Ickabog*, by JK Rowling. This soon to be classic for generations to come was originally published on November 10, 2020. For the billionaire author of the Harry Potter series of books, the writing skills of the great Ms Rowling are never better in this new book. It was released online in parts over the past year, but the complete text just came out. I couldn't stand the piecemeal thing, so I waited patiently for the real deal.

Is *The Ickabog* written for young adults and perky smart younger kids? Yes. Will adults who loved the Harry Potter series and who have a young heart enjoy it? Yes.

I enjoyed the audible version of the story, narrated by British actor and commentator, Stephen Fry. His voice brought the characters alive. Even his falsetto when doing the female characters was not annoying; I laughed.

Rowling's story is fantastic. As an adult reader and Harry Potter addict (I read it word for word with my son back in the day when each volume came onto the market), the story flowed in that same descriptive way. Her main 'hero' characters are young teens. Though many children will be reading the book, Rowling doesn't shy away from murder, corruption

on a nationwide scale, wrongful imprisonment, lies, and abuse. She weaves these negative of her 'bad guy' characters into a fairy tale. The story is very 'once upon a time' like. Nevertheless, I listened to it nonstop while preparing the turkey on Thanksgiving eve and during the early morning of the next day.

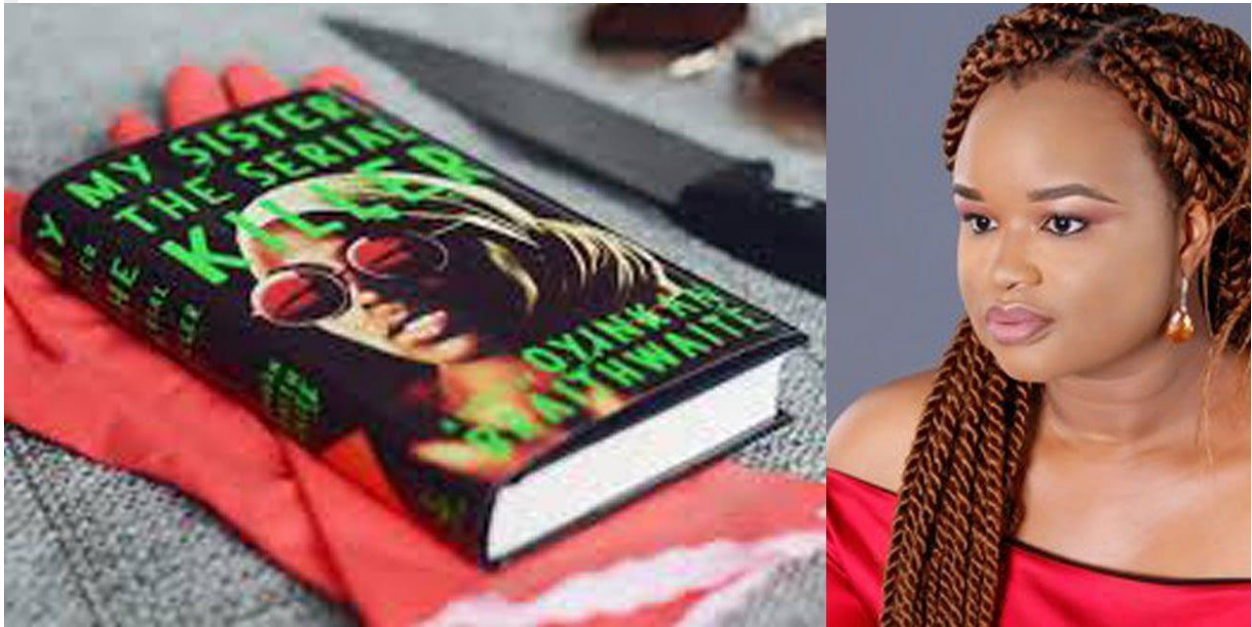
I chose to interpret this book like the Lewis Carroll classics of Alice in Wonderland (1865) or Through the Looking Glass (1871) that were ostensibly children's stories, but between the lines a treatise on the craziness in politics and politicians of that time.

I look at King 'Fred' and his evil councilors in The Icabog as an allegory for those in power who abdicate their duties to the people by being self-absorbed and/or corrupt. They choose to be blind to their responsibilities to the people and yet, they ARE responsible for the destruction of the country they are supposed to be leading.

To me, on a deeper level, this book says something about sheep people who have a crazed leader that scares them, and yet they are silent and watch him burn the world down around their ears. It speaks to the many who know crazy when they see it, and yet they remain silent for the sake of protecting their own hides. Or their silence in the wake of the suffering of others is because they are making obscene profits. I think Trump, his far-right-wing crazy crew, and the 74 million people who voted for him are echoed in The Icabog. But – that's just a 'me' thing. I remind myself that this is probably an innocent book with perhaps no current-day political underpinnings. JK Rowling may not have followed in the political innuendo footsteps of Lewis Carroll.

The Icabog captivated my imagination and gave me complete entertainment in storytelling. It will capture your fairytale side too! Get it for your kids but enjoy it yourself.

Book Review: My Sister, the Serial Killer



Jackie Wilson Asheeke

A novel by Oyinkan Braithwaite

Because I am a bona fide 2020 pandemic homebody, I am reading more books. I am on Amazon.com and [audible.com](#), so I swim in eBooks and audiobooks these days. I stumbled on this book My Sister, the Serial Killer some time ago; it came out two years ago.

I listened to the audiobook version because it was on sale and my book-buying budget is very challenged these days. It is of a plotline, setting and 'voice' that is rare in the books that I come across. The author is a black Nigerian woman, telling a dark, funny, poignant multi-faceted story that is engaging.

A Washington Post book critic wrote, "The title of Oyinkan Braithwaite's debut novel, "My Sister, the Serial Killer," is simultaneously accurate and misleading. The book is not at all the pulpy slasher story you might expect. Instead, it is a playful yet affecting examination of sibling rivalry, the legacy of abuse and the shallow sexism of Nigeria's patriarchal society."

At first, I was attracted by a serial murderer story by a black woman author, sexism in Nigerian society, real characters supporting the main two sisters, and a camera's view description of chaotic, corrupt Lagos...a very rare bird. There were personalities in the tale that were very real to me and I loved it!

I rejoice that a black female author can write a book that is not only about racism or black lives matter or slavery or a 'black' topic that pleases white publishers and readers because it can be pigeonholed. This is not to say that the powerful authors writing in those areas aren't slammin'! Not at all. I re-energize my fire for justice and readiness to fight each time I read those great stories and digest the facts to offer.

But, this story by Oyinkan Braithwaite is not a book decrying white supremacy. It is not a story about a black woman overcoming racism to make it in a white male dominated work field or a book about a racism, sexual abuse, apartheid or slavery. There is no deep historical, sociologically challenging or uplifting message in this book (at least from my viewpoint). This is a fictional sister's story about her engaging, funny, insane, murderous little sister. The meat of the story is the relationship between the older and younger sisters. This is a big sister/little sister story set with the sexist Nigerian cultural backdrop and the colourful, chaotic, corrupt atmosphere of Lagos.

I had the audiobook version. I LOVED the woman with a West African accent who was the reader. It lent itself to the authenticity of the story told. It would have been too weird to hear a sista' from the 'hood (like me) reading this Nigerian sister/sister tale or a white woman with a British accent reading it.

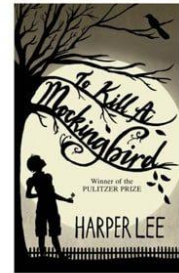
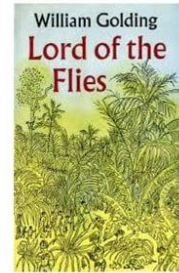
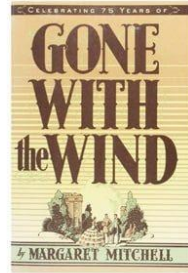
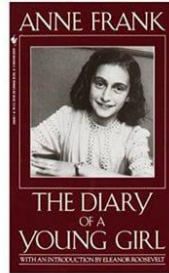
There were parts of the story where I shouldn't have been laughing because someone was being killed or a body was being disposed of, but it struck my funny bone!

So many books ask the reader to see the lead characters in 'what-if' plotlines. This is another one, BUT it is a very, very different one.

Get this book! It has been out for a while now and the price is lower. Embrace another approach to what is entertaining literature and break away from the classic white male or white female driven murder stories.

Titles every book fiend should read

Posted by [Observer](#) | Oct 28, 2020 | [Observer Lifestyle](#) | [0](#) |



Jackie Wilson Asheeke

I read Carmen Coetsee's list of five books that reading junkies need to read at least once. Check out www.msn.com/en-za for her choices. I beg to differ on a few points, but a couple of her ideas inspired me.

Of course, any book list is subjective. Most of the 'best books' lists reflect the white, male, European or USA-centred perspective. There are books from the Asian, Hispanic and African cultures or in non-English languages, which would be equally great if they had the attention given to the others. Nevertheless, the books I note below tell wonderful stories and teach amazing lessons about life and human nature.

Gone with the Wind – by Margaret Mitchell

Published in 1936, the book is set during the American Civil war, this classic work tells the coming-of-age story of the selfish and scheming, Scarlett O'Hara, the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner, who had to do all she can to cope with the ravages of war and the effects of it on her family and herself.

This controversial book is a story from the perspective of the American South during the brutal racism of slavery. It has remained a firm fixture in literary studies throughout the world.

1984 – by George Orwell

Published in 1949, this dystopian and political novel has remained one of the most discussed and widely debated works of all time.

This novel centres around the consequences of mass surveillance and totalitarianism on human beings. Orwell tackles the roles of truth, facts, and assumptions within politics as well as the many ways these can be manipulated.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Written in 1960, it is about the deep racism of the American South in 1930, where a black man (Tom Robinson), wrongly accused of the attempted rape of a white woman is convicted with no evidence (as usual). Atticus Finch is Tom's lawyer. He is a strong and just lead character in the story. Side stories by the children of Atticus are inspiring (the book is narrated by 'Scout' Atticus's daughter). If you haven't read this book, read it.

The Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Published in 1954, the book focuses on a group of British boys stranded on an uninhabited island and their disastrous attempt to govern themselves. Themes include the tension between groupthink and individuality, between rational and emotional reactions, and between morality and immorality.

Things Fall Apart – by Chinua Achebe

Published in 1958, this remarkable debut novel by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe tells the story of pre-colonial life in Nigeria and the arriving European presence.

Considered as the quintessential African novel, this book follows the life of Okonkwo, a local wrestling champion, and details his family life, personal history, and eventually the influence of European colonialism on his life and his country.

The Diary of Anne Frank by Anne Frank

The Diary of a Young Girl (1947), also known as The Diary of Anne Frank, is a book of the memories, feelings and stories of the author, a young Jewish girl, while she and her family and others were in hiding for two

years during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. The family was finally discovered by the genocidal Nazis in 1944, arrested and sent to death camps. (This is one of the most powerful stories I have ever read – Ed)

Of course, people must read the entire Lord of the Rings trilogy, and start with *The Hobbit* by JRR Tolkien. Any book by Toni Morrison would make my list of 'must reads.' One also has to consider *The Last of the Mohicans* (1862) by James Fenimore Cooper for a great books list.

Books by Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Sun Tzu, Arthur Conan Doyle, Ernest Hemingway, Richard Wright, Gabriel García Márquez, Ken Follet, and Alex Haley are on my 'greatest' list.

Let me know what your 'greatest' books are! jw.asheeke@gmail.com.

Cutting diplomats too deeply is a risk

Posted by [Observer](#) | Jan 23, 2021 | [Observer Editorial](#) | [0](#) |

The financial crisis faced by Namibia is severe. Budget cuts are required. The cuts recently announced will hit Namibian diplomats abroad too hard. There is a huge risk, and it should be done with extreme care.

Horror stories abound of financially challenged countries that cannot support their diplomats abroad. It is a disgrace to any country with its diplomats, embassies and missions with water and electricity disconnected. It is shameful to have local staff suing for unpaid salaries. National humiliation ensues when diplomats are evicted from their homes. The trauma and shame of children sent home from schools for non-payment fees or if bill collectors arrive at an Embassy door.

The media is full of stories about diplomats or their dependents crossing the line into illegal actions. They begin to hustle to try to earn money in unpalatable ways. In most of these foreign capitals, temptations of all kinds constantly swirl around diplomats.

The list of countries with diplomats that suffer these national humiliations is long. Will Namibia join this roll of shame?

If a diplomat has no money to pay for internet at home, cell phones or television, attend relevant programs, then what is their point?

The bean counters in the finance ministry see a hard currency cost translated to Namibia dollars, and their ignorance takes over. They have not lived abroad. They do not know the necessity of having local health insurance, attending host country events, or taking language courses in a non-English speaking country. They see only a figure next to a service rendered and react from a local Namibian context.

It is a researched fact that diplomats working abroad perform better when their families are with them. Funds to support families abroad are required. Single male diplomats cause the worse scandals when alone for years in foreign countries. Single female diplomats also can be compromised. But there are also security and safety issues if she is forced to use public transportation at late hours because she cannot afford a car.

There have been countless scandals when diplomats seek secret employment in other areas. Imagine the Ambassador's wife as a secretary for a local businessman. A diplomat's son working without a legal permit repairing houses for pocket money is scandalous. Diplomats have been caught 'selling' their diplomatic pouch space or diplomatic immunity status to earn extra money.

Having other countries pay your diplomats' bills, drive them in their cars, pay for the embassy's children's schools, or finance other needs, is dangerous.

It makes our diplomats vulnerable to manipulation, extortion, and temptation. After gifts have flowed to the under-financed Namibian diplomats', what happens when a price for those gifts comes due? Quietly a 'friendly nation' that has been financially supporting a diplomat or the embassy insists on Namibia's vote on an issue. With a smile, they demand Namibia's backing of their nationals for an international appointment. They insist on Namibia's silence on issues. They can demand use of their companies and products in Namibia. Cases like these are exposed regularly.

When the diplomat's representational allowance must be used for living expenses, how can that diplomat do his/her work? How can they promote Namibian products, positions on issues or investment possibilities?

Rather than cut below what is practicable to live in a hard currency country, why not cut the number of overseas missions? Namibia should have fewer embassies that are properly funded than more embassies that are half-funded.

For financial reasons, some small countries opt to have representation at the multilateral level only. A mission to the EU, AU, and the UN only might have to be considered as a viable option for Namibia. Offices within those missions can provide consular and visa services.

Trade representation can support embassies in the USA, South Africa, Germany, UK, or China.

Smaller countries in one region can join together and co-finance one facility with separate spaces. This cuts costs for all when they pool their limited resources.

It must be considered that all other embassies should be closed. Fixed assets in various countries should be rented for hard currency income flowing back to the Ministry.

Good Office treaties can be worked with appropriate countries to handle Namibian citizens' needs.

These are not ideal situations. But Namibia cannot afford to do the same things in the same way.

Too many cuts will make our diplomats abroad desperate by throwing them into untenable circumstances. They cannot do their duty without sufficient funds.