Greetings from Canada

Let me state that we are very proud of what is happening today: the launch of *Mĩciĩ-inĩ iitũ*, an initiative of Marjory Kimani. We are even more elated considering that Marjory is one of our star authors at Nsemia Inc. Publishers. It underlines the fact that we were not wrong to have accepted the publication of her book and believe that better times are ahead of in terms of that relationship. We are privileged to be associated with Marjory and her sharp innovative mind, especially regarding our African culture and African languages.

There are many reasons one would publish a magazine, which include knowledge exchange and educating the reader. It is also a means of capturing, storing and transmitting knowledge to others, now and in the future. This is very much in line with our believe that, for the sake of today’s society and posterity, we need to *tell our own stories, in our words and perspective*.

... 

There is more!

*Kenya’s reading culture* is dismal. Yet development requires a vibrant society with an interplay of ideas, be they fiction or real; it requires imagination and development of the mind. Reading nourishes the mind, educates us about possibilities and, can generally be viewed as, the nourishment for the mind and spirit. With reading, we can better understand each other as a nation and people and can lay stronger foundations for our country, continent and the world. With reading, we can reduce the information barriers that misinform us to be prejudicial against others.

In its own way, *Mĩciĩ-inĩ iitũ* is likely to add to positive development in the reading culture. This will contribute to healthier, more vibrant and imaginative minds. Remember, that long before flight was possible, fiction writers had written about flying. The science always lags fiction!

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One can also ask why Marjory would launch a magazine in Gikuyu; wouldn’t be better to do a magazine in English or Kiswahili, one of our national languages? One may ask.

This is a valid question; and must be asked.

And my answer, which I believe is her answer as well; and an answer for many of you here today.

Our indigenous languages are threatened with extinction and if we don’t work hard enough to preserve them, these languages may not be around in the future.

The death of a language is more than the death of a language; with it goes the culture, a way of life and the trove of knowledge transmitted down generations via the language. Yet, as we say, *msahau kwa ni mtumwa*. We Kenyans, especially, stand to remain others’ slaves as we watch the erosion, decline and potential eventual death of our languages. The corruption, adulteration and distortion of these languages should be
sufficient; and we shouldn’t tolerate more damage than has been done already. Our solution: speak it more, record it more and share the associated culture more.

The threat to our languages is not only a concern for us Kenyans but also UNESCO. Here is one UNESCO official has said about languages and their danger of extinction:

"Languages like genetic diversity are essential to all of mankind. If we are to allow languages to become extinct then we are witnesses to cultural genocide. There is value in diversity; the economic health of these people and their communities are connected with how they feel about themselves which is tied to their language and culture. Flourishing communities are wealthy healthy communities ...” - Lindsay Robert Marshall talking about, Dozens of Aboriginal languages near death: UNESCO

And it is precisely the reason we published Marjory’s Micii ni Micii despite reservations by many of our supporters, readers and authors. And to them our retort is simple: msahau kwa ni mtumwa. Our deep cultural roots that define us as a people need a place for expression in the global milieu as language, song, dance, food, and ways of life. It is our heritage that we can restore to the world today and for generations to come. It is time that, we in Kenya brought legislation that would invest in the preservation of our more than 40 languages. The sooner we do this, the better of us all as individuals, Kenyans and the world at large. It is noteworthy that, according to some reports, UNESCO lists Kenya as one of the countries with the highest number of extinct languages.

And while the Gikuyu language, with large number of speakers, may not be in imminent danger, all steps should be taken today to forestall that eventuality. Marjory’s efforts in a way contributes to needed preservation. Here is another quote from UNESCO:

"... out of the approximately 6,000 existing languages in the world, more than 200 have become extinct during the last three generations, 538 are critically endangered, 502 severely endangered, 632 definitely endangered and 607 unsafe.” – UNESCO Language Atlas

Now that is very fast language death!

In our own small ways, as individuals and businesses, we can contribute to this preservation through support for efforts such as Marjory’s and, in our own, writing and publishing in these languages.

At Nsemia Inc. Publishers, we are keen to continue this trend. Indeed it is in this spirit that we have recently released Nemwel Atemba’s Abagusii Wisdom Revisited which has struck a chord with thousands of readers. It is in the same spirit that we plan to release more similar works.

I would like to conclude my remarks by congratulating Marjory for the successful of Micii-ini iiitũ. It is my hope that we would see this grow, and perhaps start off a national trend that would lead to revival of our diverse Kenyan cultures.

On our part, we commit to supporting the publication through publicity and advertising. I urge all of us to do the same through readership, writership and advertising. Only then can we realize the objectives that she had
ably set up forth. We would be supporting her succeed'; we would also become enriched with knowledge even as we contribute our knowledge for future generations.

Congratulations once again.

Yours truly

Dr Matunda Nyanchama

Nsemia Inc. Publishers

Matunda@nsemia.com; info@nsemia.com