

4.

THE STORY OF DAVID RAS

I HAVE BEEN A PHOTOGRAPHER FOR 6 YEARS NOW.



I LIVE IN DANDORA, ALSO KNOWN AS CRIME CAPITAL...

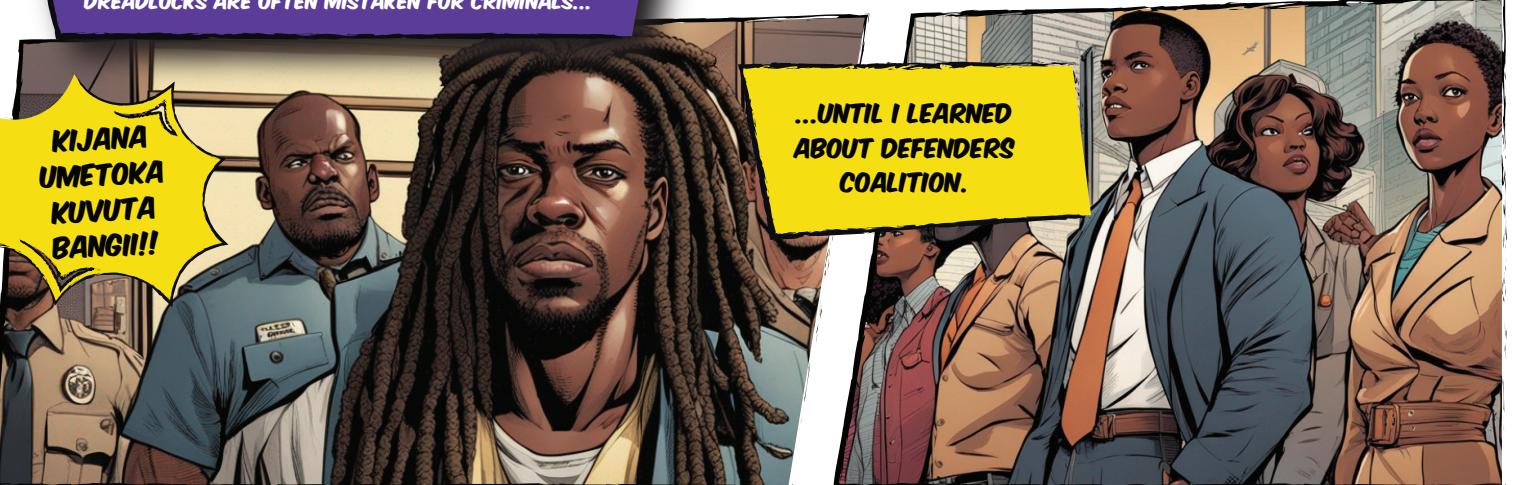


SHIKA HUYO MWIZI!!

...THE YOUTH HERE HAVE VERY FEW OPTIONS SO THEY TURN TO CRIME...

...WHICH MAKES EVERYONE HERE A SUSPECT TO THE POLICE AND SUBJECT TO HARRASMENT...

....I HAVE BEEN ARRESTED MULTIPLE TIMES DUE TO MY DREADLOCKS. IN MY HOMETOWN, PEOPLE WITH DREADLOCKS ARE OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR CRIMINALS...



KIJANA UMETOKA KUVUTA BANGII!!

...UNTIL I LEARNED ABOUT DEFENDERS COALITION.

ON MAY 1ST, WE HAD PLANNED A PROTEST IN THE CBD...



BUT WAS ARRESTED BEFORE WE EVEN GOT THERE



UPON ARRIVAL AT THE POLICE STATION, THEY LOCKED ME IN A CELL, AND THE POLICE CONTINUED TO THREATEN AND INTIMIDATE ME



THEY EVENTUALLY BOOKED ME. I WAS SUMMONED TO COURT AND PLEADED NOT GUILTY

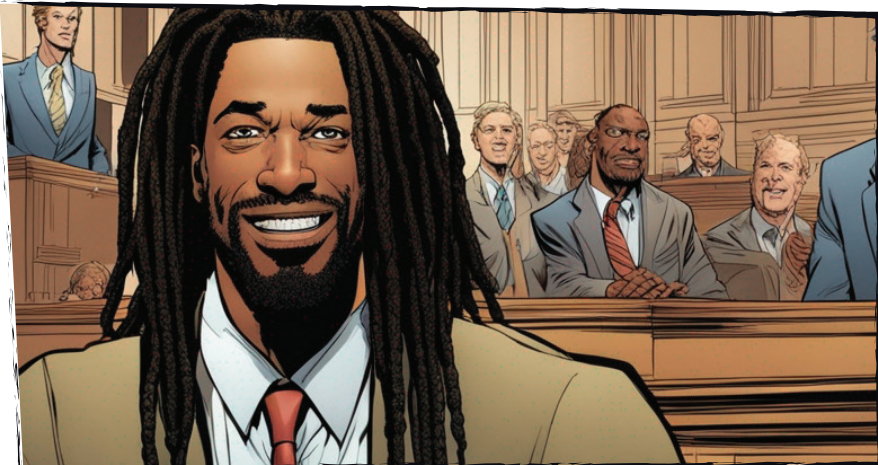
HOWEVER, THE COURT SEEMED TO JUDGE ME BASED ON MY APPEARANCE, PARTICULARLY MY EYES AND DREADLOCKS.



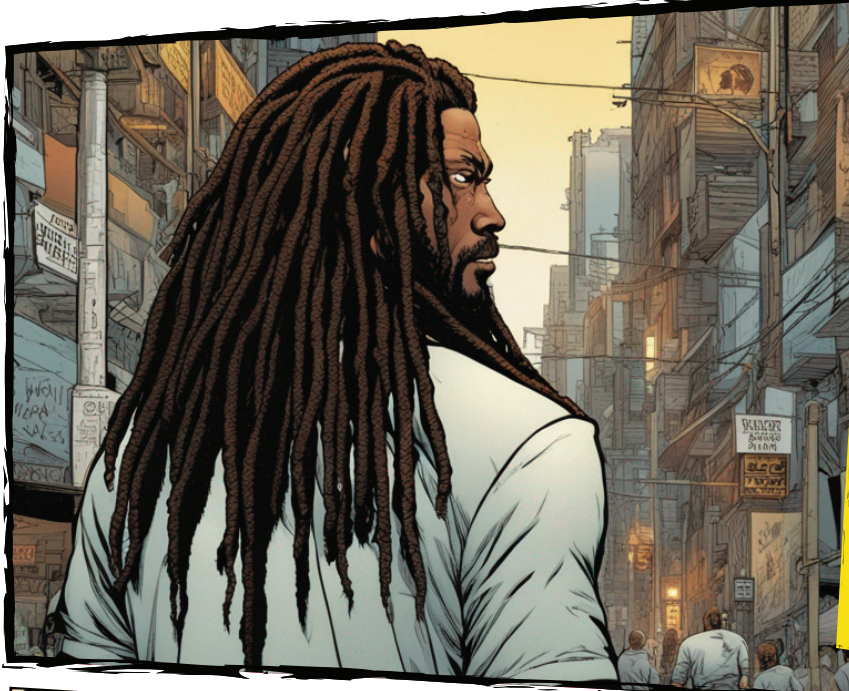
"ANGALIA MACHO NA NYWELE..."



THE LAWYER ASSIGNED TO ME BY THE DEFENDERS COALITION WAS HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT HOW THE LEGAL SYSTEM OPERATES.



I WAS RELEASED ON A CASH BAIL OF 5,000/-. I DID NOT HAVE THE MONEY, BUT THANKFULLY, DEFENDERS COALITION CAME TO MY RESCUE AND COVERED THE BAIL FOR MY RELEASE.



REGARDING MY APPEARANCE, THE POLICE HAVE EVEN ATTEMPTED TO SHAVE MY HAIR. EVERY TIME THEY DO SO, I REMIND THEM THAT I AM A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND REQUEST THEM TO CALL MY LAWYER. THIS TENDS TO MAKE THEM A BIT APPREHENSIVE. THIS IS WHY I ALWAYS CALL DEFENDERS COALITION BEFORE ANYONE ELSE, AS I KNOW THEY ALWAYS HAVE MY BACK.



DEFENDERS COALITION HAS NOT ONLY HELPED ME WITH BAIL AND RELEASE BUT HAS ALSO PROVIDED ME WITH MANY JOB CONTRACTS AS A PHOTOGRAPHER. WHENEVER THERE ARE EVENTS, SUCH AS CLIMB FOR JUSTICE, I HAVE BEEN THEIR OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPHER SINCE 2020. THEY ALSO CONTRACT ME FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES, AND THEY HAVE BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE ACROSS MY NEEDS.

I REMEMBER ONE TIME WHEN I WENT TO THE POLICE STATION TO SUPPORT MY FRIENDS, ONE OF THE POLICEMEN REMARKED, "UNAKAA DEDAN KIMATHI AMEFUFUKA" (YOU LOOK LIKE DEDAN KIMATHI RESURRECTED). ALTHOUGH INTENDED AS MOCKERY, I TOOK IT AS A COMPLIMENT, AND IT MADE ME FEEL GOOD. I JUST LAUGHED IT OFF.

THE STORY OF DAVID RAS IS NOT A UNIQUE ONE, IT IS A STORY SHARED BY THOUSAND OF YOUTH IN NAIROBI'S INFORMAL SETTLEMENT, WHICH ARE RIDDLED WITH POVERTY AND JOBLESSNESS LEADING TO RISE IN CRIME RATES, EVERY YOUTH IS A SUSPECT AND POLICE OFFICES DON'T WASTE TIME PROFILING AND ARRESTING THEM ON MALICIOUS GROUNDS.

THANKS TO DEFENDER'S COALITION A LOT OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE RESCUED BEFORE THEIR LIVES ARE RUINED, DAVID RAS, WE SALUTE YOU.



"INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE." THESE ARE NOT MY WORDS BUT THE WORDS OF THE GREAT MARTIN LUTHER KING JUNIOR, THE NEXT STORY WE ARE ABOUT SHOWS US HOW VERO FROM VIHIGA SUB COUNTY LIVES BY THESE WORDS.