

## **TRIBUTES IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR MICERE MUGO (In Alphabetical Order)**

### **Tomi Adeaga:**

“Tribute: Professor Micere Githae Mugo”

It has been a great honor and privilege for me to get to know Prof. Micere Githae Mugo. She is one of those African women scholars who laid the literary foundation for the subsequent generations of female African scholars to build upon. While she has been described in different ways and manners, no one has really been able to give an exact picture of what she is. Some say she’s strong, courageous, daring and brave. Others say she’s intelligent and strong-willed. For me, she’s a role model whose giant shoes I hope my generation and the generations to come will be able to fill.

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### **Emmanuel Awuah:**

Please include my Solidarity Statement for Professor Micere Githae Mugo:

I first met Professor Micere Githae Mugo twenty years ago when I arrived in Syracuse. Before I was introduced to her by my good friends Kwame Otieku and Dany Sarkodie-Mensah, I had received raving comments about her ‘good-naturedness’ and intellectual prowess.

Over the course of time, I have had a chance to get to know Professor Mugo, and I can testify that I have been impressed by her humility, kindness, and gift of generosity in sharing her unique talents and gifts, time, and treasures with all people without respect to status in society.

Ghana Society of Central New York and PACCNY have been blessed many times over by the presence and influence of Professor Mugo. As a member of Ghana Society of Central New York, Professor has always been a ‘model’ member by paying her dues on time and getting involved in all Society activities. At meetings, while the brothers were arguing among themselves, Professor would come in at the appropriate time with words of wisdom and calm everyone. I have always enjoyed her keynote speeches at the annual Ghana Independence Anniversary celebrations. She is a gifted speaker who truly loves Africa and her children in the Diaspora. I have not come across any speaker like Professor who is able to speak straight to the ‘souls’ of Africa’s children at home and abroad, challenging them to lift Africa higher, protecting and preserving Africa’s glory.

Professor is also a transformational leader. I served under her as Vice President of PACCNY. She got a lot done for the community through her inclusive and decisive leadership style, and championed creative solutions to mobilizing, unifying, and challenging the Pan-African community to pursue service excellence.

Professor is a global phenomenon: outstanding teacher, scholar extraordinaire, tireless champion of human rights and social justice, a charismatic leader, and a selfless human being. Indeed, Professor has a special brand of personality which is in short supply in our time. Professor, thank you for everything. Best wishes from Ghana Society of Central New York and the Awuah Family!

Thank you

Emmanuel Awuah, PhD  
Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs  
College of DuPage  
Glen Ellen, IL 60137

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**Njeri Marekia-Cleaveland:**

**The Tireless Pursuit: Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Micere Mugo as Activist, Artist, and Architect of Alternative Sites of Knowledge.**

I first met Professor Micere Githae Mugo when I was just about to graduate from high school in Kenya, trying to figure out what I wanted to study at university and what my options were. My eldest brother had recently married Micere's sister, and during that first meeting Micere explained my options and what I needed to accomplish in terms of grades in such a way that left me feeling empowered and educated. This meeting started a long relationship with Micere as a mentor, and a great role model. It was through her facilitation that I enrolled at St. Lawrence University, where she had started teaching following the 1982 political crisis in Kenya. Indeed her facilitating my move to St. Lawrence built the foundation for my subsequent studies and career development.

While at St. Lawrence and in spite of having a full plate teaching, attending international conferences, and taking care of two young children, Micere found the time to educate and empower the less privileged and often forgotten members of society, including inmates at the Ogdensburg Correctional Facility. I remember her one time asking me to proof-read her lecture notes before she hurried off to teach at the prison, after teaching her classes at St. Lawrence University during the day. She spoke about the interest and pride the inmate students took in her lectures. Her work with the correctional facility introduced me to justice issues with regard to minority communities in the United States. She also made me aware of poverty issues in the local county.

One striking trait in Micere is her belief in the innate genius of every person from every background, be it a Kenyan rural woman, a struggling college student, or even a child. You cannot have a conversation with Micere and not feel empowered, knowledgeable, and appreciated. She truly takes education as a two-way, every day process: where the educator gives and receives knowledge through active and conscious listening.

To my dear sister-in-law, mentor and role model, congratulations on your retirement. I am a better, more educated, and conscious citizen of the world for being your mentee.

Njeri Marekia-Cleaveland (J.D.)

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**Jacques-MF Depelchin:**

For Professor Micere Githae Mugo  
Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith  
Professor for Teaching Excellence  
Syracuse University  
Department of African American Studies

Please forgive me for not having been able to join you on this occasion to celebrate a life lived for justice, for truth, for solidarity. In this brief contribution, I would like to show how Micere's way of living has deep roots that take us to the times when, prior to the invention of hieroglyphic writing in Ancient Egypt, these African ancestors of humanity forged the concept that came to be known as Mâât, meaning justice, truth, harmony, solidarity.

When we first met, it was not in Syracuse. I think it was in Zimbabwe, where you had found yourself, Njeri and Mumbi after leaving Kenya.

Back then, Pauline and I knew about your work, your ideas, your vision of the kind of world, of the kind of humanity you had committed yourself to. But now, since learning to read (May 2011) Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, I now realize how deep your commitment was, and where it came from, beyond, that is, your most recent ancestors.

In the process of learning to transliterate, translate Ancient Egyptian literature (from May 2011, in a collective taught by Yoporeka Somet) I became more aware of your invisible itinerary, the source of your constant search for justice, truth, solidarity, harmony, healing, fusion instead of fission.

But, please do remember that I am a novice at this.

Your life, like that of many known and unknown searchers for a humanity immersed in justice, thirsting for equality, truth, reminds me of *the Eloquent Peasant*. Briefly, this story is about a peasant who leaves his family to go and sell his products and buy things for the household. On the way to the market, he is attacked and robbed by a bandit. He loses his goods and his donkey.

Then, the peasant goes to complain to the district administrator, a magistrate named Rensi, (son of Meru). His plea to the latter so impresses the bureaucrat that he decides to take the peasant to

the Pharaoh. Bureaucrats do love to be loved by their superiors, and this one knows that the Pharaoh will be most pleased not only by the eloquence of this peasant, but also by how well he has mastered the understanding of Mâât (justice, truth, balance, solidarity).

The full story can be found in Myriam Lichtheim's *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1, pp. 169-184. University of California Press. 1973.

In Ancient Egypt, while everyone understood the meaning and practice of Mâât, everyone was supposed to defer to the Pharaoh as the ultimate guarantor of Mâât; but what one can see with this Eloquent Peasant is that it was up to every citizen to be as good, if not better than the Pharaoh at defending justice, especially if, as in this case, he has to overcome the bureaucrat who are, more often than not, tempted to side with injustice. It is a true lesson of speaking truth to power.

Through each petition, the peasant reminds the Administrator of his duty as one who has to defend justice, but seems to fail at this, like so many other magistrates, in those times. The fact that the peasant has to go through 9 petitions is an indication of how difficult it was to maintain justice. The story also illustrates that the bureaucrats responsible for that task were not always as good as they were expected to be.

Indeed, at the end of his 9<sup>th</sup> petition, the peasant seems to have no illusion anymore that justice will prevail and that he will get his goods back.

*A sluggard has no yesterday; one deaf to justice has no friend;  
The greedy has no holiday.*

*When the accuser is a wretch, and the wretch becomes a pleader, his opponent is a killer. Here I have been pleading with you, and you have not listened to it. I shall go and plead about you to Anubis (as quoted from Myriam Lichtheim. Ancient Egyptian Literature. Vol. 1 The Old and Middle Kingdom, p.182.)*

The peasant figures that if justice is not going to be carried out by the magistrate, then his last recourse will be the tribunal that meets every human being when they pass away, presided by Anubis.

Like the Eloquent Peasant through his nine petitions for justice, for truth to prevail, Micere has never tired of pleading for justice, for truth, for solidarity, harmony, healing. I saw that first hand, when, in 1993-4, I came to teach in the African American Studies Department. At that time Syracuse University had decided not to grant tenure to Professor Randolph Hawkins. Separately, after going through the documentation, Micere and I both agreed that an injustice had been committed and that the University should reverse its decision.

It could be argued that Professor Randolph Hawkins conducted himself more bravely than the Eloquent Peasant of Ancient Egyptian Literature. After all, Syracuse University authorities did not provide the space for nine petitions to reconsider the injustice they had inflicted.

But then, reading how the Eloquent Peasant introduced his 8<sup>th</sup> petition one can see how and why from thousands of years ago to today, people are willing to be brave for the sake of justice, truth:

When reading what the Eloquent Peasant is saying it is difficult not to think of him as a heavy-duty lawyer of our times, mixing harsh phrases with softer ones:

*Oh high steward, my lord! Men fall low through greed. The rapacious man lacks success; his success is loss. Though you are greedy it does nothing for you. Though you steal you do not profit. Let a man defend his rightful cause!*

*(...) Magistrates are appointed to suppress crime. Magistrates are shelters against the aggressor. Magistrates are appointed to fight falsehood!*

*No fear of you makes me petition you; you do not know my heart. A humble man who comes back to reproach you is not afraid of him with whom he pleads. (...)*

*(...) You have your plot of the ground in the country, your estate in the district, your income in the storehouse. Yet the magistrates give to you and you take! Are you then a robber? (...)*

No one has kept count of Micere's petitions for justice, truth, solidarity that Micere has fought for. Even if it were attempted, such calculation would not succeed because such petitions, more often than not cannot be physically counted. They belong, if I may say, beyond orality and orature, to the realm of quantum physics.

As I was about concluding this, I am reminded of the time I accompanied Micere to one of the State prisons where she had been teaching. In turn, this memory makes me wonder whether in recognition of such commitment, the powers that be, the Pharaoh of Syracuse university, might be moved to offer, even symbolically, a twin appointment for teaching excellence and justice.

Thank you Micere  
For living such a life  
For such fidelity to humanity  
In constant search for healing ways

Jacques-MF Depelchin  
Salvador-Bahia  
Brazil  
March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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**Dahkil Hausif**

Education is important and it matters. It can be the thing that makes a tremendous difference in a person's life and allows their dreams to grow wings and take flight. But education is just a concept...an idea that is subjective and it's true effectiveness is hard to measure. And this is why you need people, true and living people, to take these concepts and put them in a form and deliver them to those who are willing to go under the study and learn from these people. To this point, Micere Mugo is the embodiment of one of these people, the kind of person who you would entrust to educate others and know that her approach to education has landed on her students in an impactful way.

In the spring of 1996 I took Professor Mugo's "African Orature" class. I didn't know anything about the subject, but the description sounded interesting and she came highly recommended by other students. By this point in my education I had decided that I would become a documentary filmmaker (I was in the Newhouse school) and was taking my first single camera filmmaking class and a documentary writing class that semester. Professor Mugo reintroduced us to the concept of "orature", or oral literature. I say reintroduced because as an African woman educating a class of predominately Black students she took it upon herself to remind us that this is the part of our history that we have "forgotten". This was our birth rite. There were many aspects of our Black culture that we lived out and expressed innately without understanding where it came from and why we were drawn to doing so, and as a 20 year old who was born and bred in hip-hop culture I was beginning to understand why this was second nature. I still have my copy of the book "The Oral Artist" by Wanjiku Kabira and this book served as the missing link between where I felt I should be going and where I was actually headed as an artist. The griot being an agent of social justice. The griot not worrying about ownership of the beats of a story (paperwork, contracts, etc) and instead focusing on their own particular style of story telling...how they relate to an audience, how they find their own individual voice and how they speak for their communities. I would later hear one of my favorite emcees, Nas, say, "No idea's original, there's nothing new under the sun, it's never what you do, but how it's done..." and my first inclination was to believe that he knew Professor Mugo.

As the course progressed I slowly but surely began to release the notions and ideas that this society had imprinted in my mind about how stories are told in the media and silver screen and that unshackled where I began to believe I could go in my art. And then there was the day she screened for us the movie by Haile Gerima called "Sankofa". I had met Mr. Gerima the week prior and had no clue what his art was about. I just knew he was a director, and growing up a film buff I had known of plenty of directors, but it wasn't until I saw "Sankofa" did I see the work of someone who told a story that related directly to what I was experiencing during my growth in college. Here was this complex film that portrayed our people being both strong and vulnerable, exposed and outraged, victim and victimizers. I was blown away. I didn't know WE had permission to tell stories like that. Professor Mugo shared with us movies like "Sugar Cane Alley" and "Daughters of the Dust". I was no longer interested in doing documentary work and I was instead prepared to pursue my first love: writing. Writing my stories so that I could craft them for the silver screen. I have had much success in this goal and I still have goals to reach. I've written and directed 3 short films, the last of which aired on HBO for a two years. I edit TV commercials and do voice over work. I am a trustee and chair of advancement at a

progressive early education school in Manhattan where my job is to primary craft and tell our school's story. When people ask me what I do I tell them that I am a professional storyteller.

Professor Mugo's leadership and impact in my life that semester was long lasting. I immediately asked her to become my advisor and she spent a good amount of time listening to me and guiding me toward the goals I had set out for myself. There was no one on the campus I trusted more than her and I referred to her as my mother. Our relationship continued through the years and I had no greater honor than being able to assist her one random weekend when she and her daughters were in NY city and caught a flat tire and she called me to assist her. Oh man, to be able to arrange for the tire to be replaced while I entertained them at a restaurant in my home neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant was one of the honors of my life. In my culture there is a saying, "Thought, motivated by breath and sound will shape and mold matter." This is how I think of Micere Mugo and when you look at the students that she has guided in life and see the big things they are up to in life you begin to understand why she is so beloved.

Peace

Dahkil Hausif class of 1998

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**Philo Ikonya:**

### **Micere Githae Mugo**

Let me tell it from my heart, it is the only way possible.  
My heart is in my feet and in my mind

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Studying Literature at the University of Nairobi in the early 1980s, I heard about Micere Mugo officially. Before that, she was already a name in my heart. A fearless and clear woman. One whom it would be hard for one to place on any other level but a national one. She appealed to one's mind as a symbol of Kenya's potential. I felt a strong attraction to her mind and ways the more I heard of her officially. I connected without being close.

However, in many ways fear of not reaching people with a name, people mentioned in high places, so to speak, in the media, learned people, had always been inculcated in us in one way or another. People vested with the famed word 'degree'. In many ways and fields, those who have a name are so often not reachable, you can see them on a platform, read their books. You can sing their names, learn from them and sometimes when one gets close to them something collapses or melts like Nyandoro, a character I heard a little child speak about in her own story, on Kenyan radio while sitting in exile in Oslo, Norway.

Nyandoro, the child said and in Micere Mugo's mother tongue this name means the one made out of mud, would be fine in the sun but dissolve in the rain, like a snowman in spring I would add. I always knew that inspiration breaks walls or does not need telephones or letters to reach one so I loved Micere Mugo in the way one loves something good about someone. I did not need to shake her hand to know that she was brave and beautiful in mind and body. Her struggle for our country sat in me clear. Her exile to Zimbabwe touched me. A mother on the run with her children. Her stay away from Kenya did not bother me. She seemed to always be at home somehow. I least associated myself with the possibility of my own exile. That word I thought was more for Israelites and a past regime in Kenya.

Then one day Prof Wanjiku Kabira who was my teacher at University offered to give me a ride to the funeral of the late Wahome Mutahi also a Kenyan writer, novelist and journalist. On that day I found out that Micere Mugo would be in our car. I could not wait. I nearly melted myself like Nyandoro but now when being introduced to her, when I saw the calm with which she surveyed a land she deeply loved. When I heard how humbly she spoke in the car. When I saw what kind of things she remarked about and observed. I was silent most of the way knowing that I was in the presence of someone who was greater than my normal sense of space. I had a great story to tell of my own experience of Micere Mugo. Time passed, I went through many struggles and changes of work and whilst writing, I did not take myself seriously.

I loved without reservation the poem, *Daughter of My People Sing!* And I took *My Son by The Hand*. Both of these seemed to recreate something in me. It was so big what happened to me reading them in their simplicity that one day when I returned to the page I could not find what it was that had moved me so much in these poems. They were greater than the page. Greater than the writer.

I was very impressed by *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, a drama when we read it but Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's name loomed large over our minds and over the play. It was only with my second reading after meeting the finesse of Micere that I realised that the sensitivity of gender handling in this drama is the incarnation of her own self and spirit. A breeze went through my mind and body. This too was greater than the page. This was Micere for sure, a greater space. A fine creation. A person who can build bridges of class to class, cut them when necessary and remain both standing and flying. She surely is a daughter of the child whose name should sing further. And now I know this better than at my Nyandoro stage.

I next met Micere Mugo in a conference, ALA, 2013 in Charleston. I did not know she was going to be there. I had by the way by then once felt so strongly about her positive spirit that I found her e-mail and dropped her a message of love and support when I heard something about her not being well. The conference was busy and there were so many people, I only expected a greeting. In a very interesting way, Micere Mugo gathered us together as Kenyans and bought us lunch. She said we should just talk as children of one Mother. I was so moved. Food is expensive everywhere, I had by then lived in Norway, the most expensive city in the world then, for four years. I was going through times that were so traumatising, fighting with myself and my nation about why I could not live at home. I did not even understand what was happening to me. My son had helped me raise the fare to travel to America for this congress because one friend told me I needed things like this to keep me going.

I never expected anybody to care like that. We all felt at home with her regardless of our own opinions about politics. She stood tall and clean and yet sat so humble among us. She received the Flora Nwapa Award. Somehow she found out about my tribulations even in the congress about meals and a few other things that were not so easy for me to navigate. She told me to remember I could speak to her at any time and to ring her. I heard but I did not hear because the world is full of formalities. To my utter surprise, as I sat at the reception ready to leave Micere Mugo came walking fast with me with an envelope. She told me that she had seen we were to leave the hotel almost at the same time and that she had something for me. She begged me to understand so I wondered what it could be. When I opened the envelope she told me that she had thought to share some little money she had with me because she had received an award.

She had heard that I had expected help with accommodation but was never certain until the end and that one night I had been held up at the reception not able to enter my room again and that the people would not let me back into my room in nightclothes without a guard to whom I was immediately to surrender my credit card. I objected to being escorted into a room that I had just happened to step out of, in which I would otherwise have been sleeping and to being escorted as if I had tried to leave the hotel anyway without paying which was not the case. I sat at the reception in defiance and told them I would only agree to go back to my room alone. Someone else in our group heard this and said I acted strangely. Micere Mugo wanted to give me a hug for my courage and to depart.

Obviously I was moved. I sent her a thank you note. To my surprise, despite my little connection with her, she sent me long letters even in the midst of her sickness explaining exactly what she was suffering from, telling me how she was still mourning her daughter whose name I share and who is named after her mother and therefore she called me her daughter and mother. She shared too on my son's sudden illness and I clung to her poem. I took my son by my hand.

Micere Mugo if you have wondered why I have written so much is more than many of us can think or appreciate. She is Kenya's true symbol of love and unity. She is as I told her an African Isis, meaning mother and goddess and I cannot tell you less. Reward her with words she will share them. Reward her with money she will invest it in the growth of those in need. She has been the single most clearest and unwavering voice in my exile ever since she knew of my predicament. My thanks to her will never suffice. I wish I could have come to her celebration but exile fetters still remain no matter how much I want to fly.

Thank you so much. She is not Nyandoro, she is will not melt in the mud. She is a spirit and my guiding statue in my soul if I can put it that way for want of another way of saying she is immortalised in me, in us. And yes, we sing as her daughters of courage, sing I do. Be well Mother, be well!

From Philo Ikonya

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**Ketu H. Katrak:**

I am delighted to convey my heartfelt congratulations to Professor Micere Gitae Mugo on this Celebration of her Life and Legacy as an Artist and Activist. She is indeed one of the most important African writers of our lifetime and I feel personally blessed to know her as a generous human being and a spirited and committed artist in the cause of social justice, both in her native Kenya and in the US. Dr. Mugo is a passionate advocate for human rights that are denied historically to marginalized peoples.

I got to know Dr. Mugo on her invited visit to the University of California, Irvine when the Department of Drama produced the play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, co-authored by Dr. Mugo and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. In the few days that Micere spent at UCI, she entered my heart where she continues to hold a deeply treasured place. She also won over the hearts of the entire cast of the production by her gracious presence, her willingness to assist, and being a most positive force in our working environment. I also had the pleasure of interviewing her for a documentary film on "The Making of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* at UCI."

Dr. Mugo's path-breaking artistic and scholarly work engages us as scholars and as fellow comrades inspired by her courage and commitment to speak truth to power, and to fight against injustice wherever one may reside. The remarkable essays and speeches compiled in her book, *Writing and Speaking from the Heart of My Mind* demonstrate Dr. Mugo's critical acumen along with the wisdom of her lived experience illuminating significant issues of orality, gender, imperialism among others. Dr. Mugo's Distinguished Annual Mwalimu Nyerere Lecture (2012) stands in a class by itself in discussing how art and creativity enable oppressed people to create what she terms "liberated zones" from which to struggle for a just future.

Let me close with Dr. Mugo's passionate voice in one of her poems, "Mother Afrika's Matriots":

We shall recount

Our herstory

Dramatizing it

And illustrating it

With rainbow colors

We will pour lavish

libation

Honoring

Named

Un-namable

Yet to be named

Mother Afrika's patriots

Thank you very much for this opportunity to share my thoughts, and to be present with you all in spirit to shower honor, admiration, and love on Dr. Micere Githae Mugo for her courage, wisdom, and the rich legacy of her work.

Professor Ketu H. Katrak,  
Department of Drama,  
University of California, Irvine.

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**Women's Caucus of the African Literature Association:**

On behalf of the Women's Caucus of the African Literature Association (WOCALA), I would like to offer this tribute to Professor Micere Githae Mugo in honor of her long and distinguished career as a playwright, poet, scholar, activist, and educator:

WOCALA celebrates the enduring achievements of Professor Micere Mugo, whose life-long dedication to intellectual freedom is an example to all scholars everywhere. Her sharp intellect, her championing of women's rights, and her clear-sightedness have enabled so many of the "Daughter[s] of [the] People" to freely "Sing!" May she continue to inspire her daughters, from Nairobi to Harare, from Syracuse to Bayreuth and beyond!

Sincerely,

Catherine Kroll  
President, WOCALA

Institutional Affiliation:

Catherine Kroll

Professor of English  
346 Nichols Hall  
Sonoma State University

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**Dr. Keiko Kusunose:**

To Dr. Micere Githae Mugo

It is a great honor for me to say something about Dr. Micere Githae Mugo on behalf of the Research Association of African Literature (RAAL) in Japan as a secretary general of RAAL.

We have learned much more through her writings and activism as a woman, and an African. She gave us the direction and unceasing efforts how to look into the African Literature and African people in the society.

I myself met her in Nairobi, Harare, some cities in USA, and Japan. She has so beautiful voices and poetic words to talk to the audience in any places.

When she was invited as a keynote speaker for the 41th conference of African Studies at Chubu University in Japan, she talked about “African Women: Narratives of Assertion and Agency.” She started the difference between negative silence and positive silence and talked about herstories of real African women’s voices. For the first time in the African studies in Japan, her persuasive speech was listened to even among the male academics although our few feminist Africanist academics have repeated the same topics. As her conclusion, the human voices of languages against the oppressive systems or institutions brought about the new human beings. She is the exact person to create the new perspective to fight against the society to compel women to silence.

I like her beautiful voice to talk to us.

Keiko Kusunose (Prof. Kyoto Seika University)

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**Alamin Mazrui:**

**PROFESSOR MICERE GITHAE MUGO AND MY *KILIO CHA HAKI*:  
BEHIND THE OMITTED DEDICATION**

In 1981, I authored a Kiswahili play, *Kilio cha Haki* (Cry for Justice) which was performed at the Kenya National Theater in Nairobi soon after its release. *Kilio cha Haki* is a

political play centering on the trials and tribulations of a woman, Lanina, who is a trade union activist. In mobilizing fellow workers against the repressive and exploitative practices of their employer, Lanina attracts the combined wrath of capitalism and the state.

When I submitted the manuscript to the publishers, then Longman Publishers, I had the following words on the dedication page: “Kwa Micere Mugo, kwa ukarimu wake wa fikra na nguvu zake za moyo zisizo kifani” (To Micere Mugo, for her generosity of mind and her exemplary strength of heart). By then, Micere had become an important role-model for me, partly because of her Gandhian disposition to be the change she wanted to see in society, and partly due to her courage to speak truth to power (always with passion and eloquence), even as she was fully cognizant of the risks to her own life and security. She was definitely regarded nationally as one of the most influential voices of dissent against dictatorship and kleptocracy in Kenya. In a sense, then, she became the central inspirational figure in my characterization of Lanina; and that inspiration my reason for dedicating the play to her.

As it turned out *Kilio cha Haki* became an important focus of interrogation when I was arrested by the Special Branch Police in 1982 and subsequently “detained” – i.e. imprisoned without charge or trial – by the President. My interrogators were particularly keen to know why I made the main character of the play a woman and, more specifically, which particular woman in Kenya I was seeking to depict in the pages of *Kilio cha Haki*. Held incommunicado, I had formed the view that by then several other colleagues, including Micere and Ngugi, would also have been arrested, and perhaps were undergoing their own interrogation sessions in other nearby cells. Without mentioning names, I sensed as if the police was trying to push me towards implicating Micere in some way or other, or at least to confirm the state’s belief that Micere was a trouble-maker. So for the two weeks I was under police custody we danced around my woman character, always careful not to fall into the police trap.

Once I was transferred to Kamiti Maximum Prison I was able to get bits and pieces of news and have a couple of friendly prison wardens sneak messages in and out prison. It was to my very great relief that I came to learn from one of those messages from a friend that, in fact, Micere, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and some other comrades had successfully managed to escape and sneak out of the country before their arrest.

As destiny would have it, however, the publishers never included the dedication to Micere at all – something that initially left me upset and puzzled. As I was being interrogated by the police, however, I was somehow relieved that such an omission had in fact occurred. I was in a moment of great uncertainty of the implications of the dedication had it appeared in *Kilio cha Haki*. It was not until years later that I learnt from the then production manager of Longman that, in fact, the omission was an act of deliberate erasure. When I first submitted the manuscript, the publishers were very concerned that its politics had the potential of provoking a government reaction and censorship. So they engaged me in a series of discussions about possible revisions of the play that would minimize such a danger. Apparently, in their mind, they were also certain that a play dedicated to Micere would automatically become a liability, attracting hostile government reaction that would eliminate it from the market altogether. That belief of the publishers became the motivation for their deliberate if surreptitious omission of my dedication of *Kilio cha Haki* to Professor Micere Githae Mugo.

This incident ultimately demonstrated the kind of image that the nation had come to have of Micere – a formidable opponent of the dictatorship, a fearless advocate of a more just order. This image was totally in conformity with what I knew of Micere then, and what I have known of her over the years. And it is the person behind that image that inspired me to dedicate *Kilio cha Haki* to Professor Githae Mugo.

As you move to a future bright with possibility Micere, a future of new challenges to conquer and dreams to aspire, I send you my love and warmest wishes to accompany you in the journey. And knowing you, I am fully aware that retirement is just the beginning of a new career of scholarly-activism. I also hope you understand that I know the song in your heart. I'll do my best to keep singing in with you in your travels.

**Alamin Mazrui, Rutgers University**  
**February 26, 2015**

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**Dr. Jane Gathoni Marekia Njoora:**

I first met Professor Micere Githae Mugo as an undergraduate student at Kenyatta University in the mid-seventies. She had been invited to talk to students by the late Dr. Jane Nandwa. Surprisingly, I don't remember what her topic was! What I recall is the students' excitement as they waited for her to arrive. Being fairly new in college, I could not help but wonder and ponder who this woman was who elicited such exuberance among students!! Little did I know that in a few years, I would personally get to meet Professor Mugo! As the universe would have it, my eldest brother met and married this beautiful woman, who happened to be Professor Mugo's younger sister; yes we are family through marriage. With time I got to know why students were so excited to hear a "lecture" from Professor Mugo!!

I have always been awed by Professor Mugo's scholarship, which is laced with liberatory themes that teach and empower. Her voice speaks to silencing menaces; she speaks for the marginalized populace especially women and girls. Leaving one's home country involuntarily with young children is heart wrenching. But not even the pangs of exile and all that come with being new in her host countries could dampen Professor Mugo's spirit. She is our mother (MAITU) who has raised and grounded two strong young women, Mumbi and the late Njeri Mugo.

In my face-to-face and email conversations that I have had with Professor Mugo over the years, I have always felt heard.

Professor Mugo, you are one of a kind and indeed a daughter of the UNIVERSE. May the FORCE give back to you tenfold!! Peace and good will to you as you retire. Lots of Love!

Dr. Jane Gathoni Marekia Njoora

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**Anthony Nocella:**

Hello Professor Mugo!!

Congrats on the conference! I wish I could be there. I will try.

I would love to say that you are one of the most caring and truly radical professors out there. When I was struggling and had conflicts with other professors not valuing my disabilities, you were there to defend me and believe in me and know I was intelligent. I also remember you telling me how I needed to add poetry into my dissertation and locate myself in everything I do, which I did and do to this day. I also remember at one event you were not happy about, that you spoke at, you teaching me about tokenizing People of Color and artists. I as a community organizer always make sure to challenge that whenever that occurs. I finally thank you for believing in me since the moment we met and when you joined my dissertation committee. I love you so much and have the greatest respect for you. Thank you for helping shape my critical view on the world.

Anthony Nocella

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**Dan Thea wa Riri:**

**PROFESSOR MICERE GITHAE MUGO : AN APPRECIATION.**

**Micere:**

I address you directly;  
I speak to you as my sister;  
I salute you as a compatriot;  
I congratulate you as an internationalist;  
I cherish you as a model of humanity;  
I appreciate your career as a professor;  
I esteem you as a role model to women and men;  
I believe you have played your role and done your best;  
I accept that you now deserve your rest;  
And so I congratulate you on your deserved retirement.

**Micere:**

I greatly value the (too few) times we have been together;  
I value having known you;  
I fondly remember playing the uncle to your then teenage daughters:

Chatting, debating, play-fighting, wrestling and chasing in the garden;  
And both Monique and I recall with happiness your own visit with us.

**Micere:**

I suppose that your retirement is unlikely to prove total rest;  
In diaspora or not, you are bound to keep a watchful eye on developments in Kenya;  
I hope that the recent politico-socio-economic improvements will continue;  
I trust that the momentum for peace, security and nation-building will be sustained;  
And that you will be gratified to witness perceptible advancement in our country, Kenya,  
with your input implicit in it; which, in turn, should give you a degree of contentment.

Sister Micere:

I heartily send my sincere congratulations to you on the occasion of your retirement.

Dan Thea wa Riri.

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**Nigel Watt:**

My only encounter with Micere was when I became director of the Africa Centre in London in 1984. Our big project was the production of "The Trial of Dedan Kimathi" jointly written by Micere and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. She gave us tremendous support and the production was a great success. Otherwise I am of course aware of her great contribution to the intellectual life of Kenya and the diaspora and I wish her well in her retirement.

Nigel Watt MBE

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**Amrit Wilson:**

A Tribute to Professor Micere Githae Mugo:

In 1984, at the Africa Centre in London I saw a play which I can never forget – it was The Trial of Dedan Kimathi - a play both specifically Kenyan and anti-colonial in the broadest sense. It brought home to me not only the brutality of Kenya's settler colonialism, the stark courage of those who resisted it and the role of leaders but the unstoppable power of a people fighting to take their destiny into their own hands. The structure of the play, the courtroom scenes interspersed with episodes of colonial history from a resistance lasting over 200 years also suggested wider analogies and highlighted the unique, underlying connection of armed anti-colonial struggles across the world, evoking for me, for example, scenes from the first war of Indian independence in 1857. That was my introduction to the work and political significance of Micere Githae Mugo the playwright, poet, literary critic, human rights activist and feminist, who co-wrote the play with Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

At the time when I saw the play, she had already been stripped of her Kenyan citizenship and sentenced to exile from her beloved country by the Moi dictatorship. But based first in Zimbabwe and later in the US, she continued to write and uphold the principles she had fought for. Even in the harshest of times she spoke and has continued to speak fearlessly with the 'heart of her mind', calling, for example, at the University of Nairobi, in 2012, for an end to elitism and emphasising the urgent and essential need to overcome ethnic differences without which 'we can never build a nation'.

On a personal level, Michere is someone who in the midst of all her own trials, has been a source of sensitive care and strength to many mutual friends. In our neoliberal times she is someone who understands and celebrates the true meaning of friendship. I am honoured to be one of the many who write tributes to her today.

Amrit Wilson