

2 MyNetWork



THE PAIN OF REJECTION

Life is about going for things. And when we do, rejection is always a possibility. Four young adults open up about their encounters with rejection, and how they navigated the challenges it presented **P.4&5**

Podcast review

The Mics Are Open is a breath of fresh air in the world of comedy podcasts, featuring a dynamic quartet of hosts: G-Money, Andy Young, Neville, and Ashley. This lively crew brings their infectious energy to the table every Friday, serving up a delightful blend of humour and insightful discussions. What sets this podcast apart is its relatability. Each episode feels like a candid conversation among friends, as the hosts delve into a wide array of topics that resonate with the lives of young people in Kenya. From pop culture

and current events to personal anecdotes and societal trends, no subject is off-limits.

One of the podcast's strengths lies in the chemistry between the hosts. G-Money, Andy Young, Neville, and Ashley each bring their unique perspectives and personalities to the table, creating a dynamic that keeps listeners engaged from start to finish. Whether they're cracking jokes or engaging in heartfelt discussions, their friendship shines through, making for an enjoyable listening experience.

Hotspot



Boomplay has announced BoomFest, a live music festival asset starting in Kenya on Saturday April 6 at the ASK Dome from 2pm till late. The event will highlight Kenya's music industry while celebrating Kenyan music and artists. BoomFest 2024 Kenya Edition will bring together 13 Kenyan artists to celebrate the beauty and unity that Kenyan music has to offer. The theme of the festival is, "Unite, Embrace and Celebrate." BoomFest will be an annual concert held in various African countries to rally key stakeholders towards the development, progress and unity of the music industries in various countries. This year's lineup includes Khaligraph Jones, Nadia Mukami, Arrow Bwoy, Femi One, Nameless, Bahati, Willy Paul, Ssar, Boutross, Fathermoh, Wakadinali, Buruklyn Boyz, and V-Be.

Actor Lenana Kariba: Why I don't like fame

BY ELIZABETH NGIGI

Renowned for his talent and romantic flair, Lenana Kariba has graced numerous film productions, pouring his heart and soul into each performance. Now, he's making a triumphant return to the forefront of the entertainment scene with the highly-awaited third season of *Single Kiasi*, where he plays Nick, a local celebrity who lands in Rebecca's (Faith Kibathi) life with an air of mystery and charm before everything goes to ruin.

In this interview, Lenana reflects on the hurdles he's encountered in the industry and reveals the secrets behind his enduring success as one of the country's top actors. He also discusses the backlash he faced in his direct messages (DMs) following his marriage to a Caucasian woman, which led to disappointment among some Kenyan women.

What career path do you think you would have pursued if you were not an actor? Do you enjoy being in the limelight?

I studied electronic media and marketing at Daystar University. I did a lot of production and camera work because art is what I wanted to pursue. When I was starting out in the industry, I was not trying to be an actor; I wanted to go behind the scenes and do the camera work and maybe become the director of photography. The acting thing happened by accident and I just fell in love with it.

I practiced production on my first show, *Auntie Boss*, and one day the director called me and said there was a role they thought I would be interested in. I auditioned for it and that is how I ended up in the show. I believe I still would have just ended up being an actor, one way or the other. In my next life, I wouldn't want to be an actor. I think I have done enough in the industry. It would be good to explore something different in another life.

I enjoy the support that I get from my fans but I really struggle

with the fame, I don't enjoy it. I enjoy doing the work, making a career and making money but if I could do that without the fame, I would be happier. I don't care about being famous or popular. There is a lot in my personal life I would want to preserve, like my wife getting pregnant or starting a family... these are private things. In the UK, I'm not famous and I like it that way.

How do you balance your acting career and spending time with your family in the UK?

My wife (Helen) is the most amazing person. She supports my career 100 per cent. If I was not acting, I think she would still be doing the same. Our daughter was born and after two months, I had to leave and come back to Kenya for two months for a shoot. My wife was super supportive even though I felt it was too early for me to leave her and our daughter. Although my wife had some help, she supported me by being there for our child.

Let's talk *Single Kiasi*. We last saw you in Season One, what are you bringing this time round?

It is very exciting that I am back on the show. I've had so much fun shooting Season Three and I feel like we've been able to develop the character and show more of Nick than what we got in Season One. It's something that we had talked about when we finished the first season, although after Season Two, I thought I was not going to return. When the directors called, we brainstormed about my character. When fans discovered I would be making a comeback, I received so much love.

This season, fans will experience more of Nick's character and you will find out why he is the way he is. There is a lot of energy and drama and it is something people can look out for.

You got some interesting feedback when you got married. Tell us about that...

Some people can be crazy. Sometimes I am left wondering if they are serious or if they are just showing love. I have gotten a lot of heat for not marrying a Kenyan woman. That was the biggest topic in my DM when I married. Some people did it so maliciously and even in the comment section, they were writing some funny comments but I took it as innocent fun and love. My wife expected people to react in a certain way but she was surprised that people were so concerned with her race and nationality. She read all the DMs and it was quite entertaining. She enjoys that side of our love.

Would you say acting in Kenya is a financially rewarding career?

Some people think that established actors like me are paid so well and it is all rosy, but it's not. When I was young in the industry, I managed to accumulate some savings. I have been fortunate to get a lot of great roles, but for those coming out right now, it is not easy. The industry has a way of taking so much away from you without giving as much back, and that is why some people use drugs and alcohol to deal with that.

Also, the rejection from this industry can put you down, and I have gone through that. People see all the good things that I have done but I have been rejected many times. Both the industry and fans have rejected me. Sometimes I have been rejected when I have had to replace someone in a show. Like when I replaced the late Kone Nouhoum in the TV series *Selina* to play Reagan. That was an unfortunate situation but the show had to go on. Some people were not kind to me during that period and something like that can take a toll on you as an actor. Luckily, I have a good support system.



People

Here's how to get girls and women to take STEM courses

BY WINNIE ONYANDO

Judith Nagery is the Head of Manufacturing at British American Tobacco Kenya (BAT). She has a passion for mentoring and a dedication to empowering women in their careers, and has worked in various countries in pursuit of her professional interests.

Share with us your journey through the field of manufacturing and supply chain management. How did you end up in this field?

I began my career at British American Tobacco Kenya (BAT), working as a Finance Business Partner in the tobacco leaf growing department. After a few years I transitioned to different supply chain roles, eventually becoming the Head of Supply Chain for BAT East African Markets. I left after 13 years to take up an opportunity with Unilever as Supply Chain Director, before rejoining BAT as a Project Manager based in Bangladesh. Recently, in October 2023, I returned to Kenya to take up my current role. It has been quite a journey, filled with growth, challenges, and opportunities to learn. But through it all, I have remained committed to doing my very best.

What inspired you to pursue a career in supply chain management, and how did you emerge as a successful leader in this field?

I studied Economics at The Nairobi University, where my fascination with supply chain management was ignited. Throughout my career, I have encountered supportive career coaches and mentors who have guided me every step of the way. After a few years in the industry I decided to enhance my skills by obtaining a Master's degree in Strategic Management. This experience not only broadened my horizons but also honed my leadership abilities, enabling me to navigate the complexities of the business world more effectively.

What are your main responsibilities and goals at your company?

I lead an exceptional team of over 200 individuals, each dedicated to ensure the cost-efficient manufacturing of top-quality products while upholding the highest safety standards. A significant aspect of my role revolves around



nurturing the next generation of leaders within our organisation. I invest a lot of time and effort in coaching and mentoring activities.

What do you believe are the key challenges and opportunities for women in leadership in science fields?

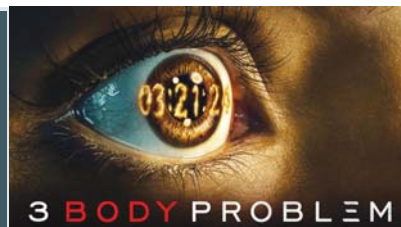
There is an inherent fear and misconception of Science, Tech-

nology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects by women. In my view, this fear can be overcome with the right career guidance, role modelling and strong support from all stakeholders. That said, the tide is turning, and we have women thriving in technical fields. Our Nairobi manufacturing factory has had at least three women in the role of Head of Manufactur-

ing and we are not relenting in our efforts to build a pipeline of future talent.

I believe women and girls should actively pursue STEM courses, take up opportunities in this field, and find appropriate mentors. This will go a long way in ensuring we have a solid pipeline of women scientists and engineers in industry and leadership.

Movie Review



3 BODY PROBLEM

Where: Netflix
Genre: Science Fiction

Netflix's adaptation of *3 Body Problem* is a triumph of science fiction storytelling. The series, based on Cixin Liu's Hugo Award-winning novels, is a masterclass in suspense and complexity, weaving a tale of alien contact that is as intellectually stimulating as it is visually stunning.

The show begins with a haunting backdrop of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, setting the stage for a story that spans decades and galaxies. The protagonist, a young physicist, becomes entangled in an interstellar conflict that challenges the very laws of physics. The narrative is rich and layered, with each episode adding depth to the enigmatic *3 Body Problem*.

The casting is impeccable, with standout performances that bring the intricate characters to life. Benedict Wong's portrayal of the gruff detective Da Shi is particularly noteworthy, providing a grounded perspective in a tale that often reaches cosmic scales.

What sets *3 Body Problem* apart is its fearless approach to complex scientific concepts. It doesn't shy away from challenging the viewer, yet it remains accessible and engrossing throughout its eight-hour run. A must-watch for any sci-fi enthusiast. It's a series that not only entertains but also provokes thought and discussion, long after the credits roll.

By Michael Ochieng

How did your stint in Bangladesh contribute to your leadership skills and general career growth?

Bangladesh was my second international assignment. I had previously spent two years in BAT in the United Kingdom. Living and working in Bangladesh transformed me professionally and personally, as I needed to adapt quickly and thrive in a new culture as well as be productive in the workplace. The highly developed nature of the industry there helped me build both technical and leadership capabilities and broaden my professional network.

What strategies do you employ to support environmental responsibility?

Environmental management is a key strategic pillar of our Sustainability Agenda. Some of our focus areas include the use of sustainably sourced materials in the production process, driving resource efficiency by using renewable energy and water recycling as well as effective waste management by ensuring minimal waste generation.

What advice would you give to young women aspiring to pursue careers in STEM fields?

They must be passionate, open minded and willing to learn.

How do you think organisations like BAT Kenya can support and promote women in leadership roles?

We provide equal opportunities and proactively support women in developing their technical and leadership skills. Giving women platforms to showcase their skills is extremely important. We have a strong focus on Diversity and Inclusion across the business and have various affinity groups such as Women in BAT and Women in Operations.

What are your aspirations and goals?

I strive to ensure that we meet our sustainability goals, to create shared value. I plan to do this by driving excellence in environmental management, bringing about positive social impact, and delivering on my roles and responsibilities with integrity.

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Caxton Ouma is a nutritionist. ALL PHOTOS/POOL

How we dealt with rejection

Sometimes, it is the environment that fosters feelings of rejection, leaving individuals feeling disconnected and undervalued

There is a spiritual dimension to rejection, rooted in our connection to a higher power

BY WINNIE ONYANDO

Rejection is a universal human experience that can manifest in various forms and contexts, leaving individuals wrestling with feelings of exclusion, disappointment, and insecurity. Whether it is rejection in romantic relationships, friendships, familial dynamics, or professional settings, the sting of being turned away or dismissed can be profound and deeply impactful. Each person's journey with rejection is unique, shaped by their background, experiences, and resilience. Caxton Ouma, Yvonne Wanjiru also known as Bomita, and Samuel Ouma open up to MyNetwork, sharing their journeys of grappling with rejection and how they navigated the challenges it presented.

Caxton Ouma, 29 Nutritionist

I encountered rejection after meeting a beautiful woman who happened to have had a difficult past relationship. When we met, I was her solace. She would open up to me and I would listen and console her. I found myself drawn to her openness and vulnerability. Our friendship blossomed, and I became her confidant, offering support and understanding.

However, when I finally expressed my romantic feelings to her after a while, she declined, leaving me bewildered and questioning the nature of our connection. In the aftermath, I distanced myself, grappling with the disappointment and confusion. Yet, amid the heartache, I recognised the importance of acceptance and moving forward.

Engaging in outdoor activities and fostering connections with others became essential in regaining perspective

and realising that rejection is just part of life. Reflecting on the experience, I acknowledged the need to learn from past mistakes and guard against repeating them.

While it is tempting to shield oneself from vulnerability, it is crucial to assess the stage of the relationship before opening up fully. Men, in particular, often find solace in compartmentalising emotions, but addressing them directly is vital for healing and growth.

Communicating openly, even when it is difficult, helps in navigating rejection and understanding its complexities. Building a strong support system proved invaluable in navigating through the aftermath of rejection. I recognised that not everyone is the same, and I embraced the possibility of finding acceptance and appreciation elsewhere, knowing that resilience and self-care are essential in the journey to healing and self-discovery.

Yvonne Wanjiru, 22 Online business woman and a student

It all happened back in high school in 2020. I had finished Form Four in 2019 and decided to repeat in 2020 to improve my grades. I was determined to excel, so I poured myself into my studies. During this time, I formed a tight-knit group of friends who became like family to me.

We did everything together – eating, studying, and supporting each other through thick and thin. I have always been one to face problems head-on and own up to my mistakes, so when I noticed an issue with one of my friends, I felt it was my duty to address it. Little did I know that pointing out this problem would lead to my isolation.

Instead of appreciating my honesty, my friends turned against me, leaving me feeling completely alone. They refused to talk to me, and I was left to grapple with the harsh reality of losing my closest companions. It was not easy, but I knew I had to come to terms with the situation and move forward.

I decided to form a new group of friends, determined not to dwell on the past. Despite my efforts to rebuild, the pain of the breakup lingered, and I found solace in tears and writing to release the pent-up stress and emotions. From this experience, I learned a valuable lesson – to never fully trust anybody, not even those closest to me.

I realised the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining my own space, guarding myself against the potential for future heartache. So, to anyone facing a similar situation, my advice is simple: Cherish your friendships but remember to prioritise your own well-being. Trust your instincts and never compromise your boundaries for the sake of fitting in. After all, it is better to be alone than to be surrounded by those who do not truly have your best interests at heart.



ABOVE:
Samuel Ouma, a communication specialist

Samuel Ouma, 28 Communication specialist

My family background has affected me so much and made me get rejected in various stages of my life. From as early as seven years old, feelings of exclusion and ridicule shadowed my attempts to join other children in play. As I grew older, the reasons for rejection became more apparent.

My humble background clashed with the materialistic expectations of my peers, perpetuating a cycle of isolation that extended into high school and beyond. Even the few friends I managed to make eventually distanced themselves, unable to cope with my honesty and outspoken nature.

Navigating this landscape of rejection took its toll on my mental well-being. Anger, worthlessness, and eventually depression became constant companions. Yet, amidst the darkness, I found solace and strength in my faith. Through prayer and fasting, I unearthed a peace that defied human understanding, guided by the unwavering support of the Holy Spirit. The road to healing was arduous. My self-esteem

lay shattered, and trust became a scarce commodity. But through introspection and faith, I began to rebuild. I learned to love and accept myself, acknowledging that not everyone would extend the same courtesy. Affirming my worth became a daily practice, bolstered by the conviction that God is love.

This journey bore both positive and negative fruits. I gained empathy for other people's struggles while grappling with a newfound skepticism towards their intentions. Yet, through it all, I refused to turn away those in need, because I knew firsthand the sting of rejection.

Rejection, ironically, became a catalyst for spiritual growth. It taught me a lot about resilience, patience, and the value of hard work. And although scars remain, they serve as reminders of the battles won and the person I have become. To anyone facing rejection's bitter sting, I offer this: Know that you are not alone. Embrace your worth, lean on your faith, and trust that brighter days lie ahead. Rejection may bruise, but it cannot break the spirit fortified by self-love and divine grace.

Nelson Aseri, Psychologist and a relationship expert

Rejection is often borne from a lack of connection or the denial of it, a sentiment deeply rooted in one's family or environment. Our surroundings, whether they be friends, workplace colleagues, or shared interests, can serve as fertile ground for rejection to take root. Sometimes, it is the environment itself that fosters feelings of rejection, leaving individuals feeling disconnected and undervalued.

Consider those who feel unappreciated within their own families. This sense of rejection can stem from a lack of affirmation or connection. Yet, embracing acceptance with an open mind can be a transformative journey. It is important to recognise that rejection does not define our worth or potential for connection.

Take, for instance, people who are dating. Repeated rejections might easily discourage them, leading them to withdraw from the dating scene altogether. However, it is crucial to approach rejection with openness and introspection.

Instead of viewing each rejection as a personal failure, see it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Stepping out of the shadow of rejection often involves seeking out community. By connecting with others who have faced similar challenges, individuals can find support and guidance to navigate through their rejection.

Therapy can also provide valuable tools for processing emotions and building resilience. Moreover, there is a spiritual dimension to rejection, rooted in our connection to a higher power. Seeking solace in faith or spirituality can offer comfort and guidance during times of rejection, providing a sense of purpose and hope.

For young people navigating the complexities of relationships, patience and mindfulness are essential. Building meaningful connections takes time and effort, and it is important to approach each interaction with care and understanding. By cultivating healthy relationship skills and seeking support when needed, individuals can navigate rejection with resilience and grace.



Nelson Aseri is a psychologist and a relationship expert.

MyNetWork Pitchside

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Eccentric Edwin learned about American football while in university

My bittersweet journey in American football

Q&A

BY GEOFFREY ANENE

Edwin Otieno Osumo, 30, is an architect who plays and coaches American football. He plays as a wide receiver, but also doubles as a quarterback and defensive back for both tackle and flag football.

American football is not so popular in Kenya, how did you come to play the sport?

I used to play rugby and when I joined the University of Nairobi (UoN), I found some students playing American football. I decided to try something new. In my first year, I sat in the stands just watching people play, but I started playing it properly in my second year in January 2015 after some encouragement by my friends.

We have had a few Kenyans in the professional American football league (NFL). Have they inspired you in any way?

Before I took up the sport, I had heard of Kenyan players like Daniel Adongo (Indianapolis Colts), Helva Matungulu (New York Jets) and Rees Odhiambo (Seattle Seahawks), and then I started watching the game during that time. I never met them, but I was greatly inspired by the fact that they are Kenyans.

How would you describe your journey as an American football player?

It has had many ups and downs. When I started, we only had three teams in the country – the University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and a team called Umoja Chiefs.

In 2015, we had a coach from the USA, Dan Eck. He noticed our team's potential, and specifically, he told me that with the talent I had if I had been born in the USA, I would have made it to the NFL. He tried to expose me to other avenues that could work. He suggested I go to

college for my Master's in the US to sharpen my skills.

Did the dream materialise?

Eck left in 2016. We kept in touch and I was to graduate in 2017, but the major strikes in our campus derailed the plan because I couldn't graduate until 2018. By then the eligibility age for playing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which is 24, was upon me, and I was locked out.

I decided to explore other alternatives. I had heard of a programme called NFL Undiscovered. I used to send my work out videos to them. I persisted in 2017 and at some point they noticed me and asked me to work

on my skills. I did, but that also didn't work out. I tried knocking on a few more doors, but I wasn't successful, so I shifted my focus to teaching. That is what I do now.

How else are you staying involved in the sport?

I was involved in a pilot coaching programme for training children at Mirema Primary School. I'm still a player, but I am transitioning to coaching. I think I can prolong playing if I get that professional opportunity. But now my focus is on playing less and doing more coaching. I'm also looking forward to the Los Angeles Olympics in

2028 because there is a new variant of American football called flag football. It is basically the no-contact version of American football and I'm learning how to coach this.

What challenges have you seen in American football?

Getting good training facilities was a challenge in campus. I had to make my own hurdles so that we could play. We also depended on donations of American football gear because they are expensive and not found easily here in Kenya. Recruiting and sustaining people in the team was also a challenge. Being a new sport, we only have small competitions organised locally. Most international matches we tried organising did not materialise. So, people join the sport, but drop midway and you have to start recruiting again. Sometimes you try to recruit people and they ask you how far they can go with this sport that is not popular in Kenya. My vision was to play professionally, but I have not given up. I may not get to play professionally, but I'd like to stay in the game, to develop others. This sport has the potential to grow, especially with flag football which is not expensive.

Taking you back to rugby, who was your role model in rugby? Do you regret leaving it?

Kenya Sevens star Collins Injera was my role model. I used to compare myself with him in terms of physique. He was not the biggest, but he had strong determination. After I cleared high school and stayed for a year without playing rugby, I felt like I was being left behind. I did not feel like I could recover the lost time. I thought I would play rugby when I joined the university, but fate had other plans. I found encouraging friends, discovered that I was good at American Football, and found a coach who believed in me and made me captain, so I decided to stick with the new sport. Some of my friends told me that I should have stuck with rugby. They told me that with American football I wouldn't go far. I don't regret my decision.

Tell us about your best and worst moments in both

In Brief

- Edwin attended Xavierian (Kisumu) and Talala Township (Machakos) primary schools and Maseno School where he played rugby
- He was part of Maseno School rugby team which lost to Kakamega High School in the national Sevens (semi-final) and 15s (final) in 2012
- He coached rugby at Otieno Oyoo High School in 2013 after finishing high school
- Edwin joined the University of Nairobi in 2014 to pursue a Bachelor's degree in architecture. It is here that he got to learn American football
- Edwin's father, George Ouma, coached hockey at Kisumu Day and his younger brother Paul Onyango played hockey

tackle and flag football...

In tackle football, I received one, and ran for two touchdowns in the second leg of Kenya vs Uganda (Utalii Grounds). We won 34-22. In flag football, I threw four touchdowns and scored a pick-six against JKUAT Sparrows, leading UoN Nyati to win 69-12. My worst moment in tackle was when we went goalless with UoN Nyati against JKUAT Sparrows in the first game of the first-ever tackle football tournament in 2018. JKUAT won. In flag football, I had a high ankle sprain during a training session that limited my activity for three months in October 2017.

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