

LEARNING BY EAR 2012

"I am still human - A story of Africa's mentally ill"

EPISODE 9: "Changing mentality"

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List of characters by scene:

SCENE ONE: MALEMBA AND CHUMBA VISIT AN AUTISM CLUB

- **Malemba (f, 35)**
- **Triza (f, 30)**
- **Chumba (m, 16)**
- **Mixed voices of teenagers with autism (3-4 teenagers, gender mixed)**
- **Narrator**

SCENE TWO: VALERIE AND IRENE AT DR. MAHIRO'S CLINIC

- **Valerie (f, 19)**
- **Irene (f, 19)**
- **Mahiro (m, 50)**
- **Vice-President (f, 55)**
- **Narrator**

SCENE THREE: KAPAKA ARRIVES HOME WITH GOOD NEWS

- **Kapaka (m, 25)**
- **Cheupe (f, 25)**

INTRO:

Hello and thanks for joining us here at Learning By Ear. This is the ninth episode of our continuing radio novella, **“I am still human”**, a story focusing on the challenges Africa faces regarding mental illness. In our last episode, Kalama organized a prayer meeting to cast out what he believed to be demons troubling his nephew Chumba. But Malemba, Chumba’s mother, was not so thrilled by the idea, especially after Chumba started to show signs of aggression. And Kapaka visited his one-time boss Mr. Patel at the supermarket to try to prove to him that he can resume work as a cashier. But the meeting didn't go well. Then Irene took her friend Valerie to Dr. Mahiro after Valerie had come to her drenched to the skin, hungry and vulnerable after some rough days and nights on the streets. Stay tuned for today's episode entitled, **“Changing mentality”**. We begin with Malemba and her son Chumba visiting an autistic club after prayers failed to restore the teenage boy. There to meet them is Triza, a volunteer.

SCENE ONE: MALEMBA AND CHUMBA VISIT AN AUTISM CLUB

1. ATMO: MIXED VOICES OF TEENAGERS WITH AUTISM

2. MALEMBA: You see, Chumba, I was wrong. I thought you were alone, but look! There are so many others like you.

3. TRIZA: Hi there, welcome to the autism club. My name is

Triza and I am a volunteer here.

4. **MALEMBA:** Thank you, Triza. This is my son Chumba. How long has this club existed?
5. **TRIZA:** As you can see, everything is still new. The autism club is not even a year old. Many people had no clue what to do with their autistic children, and since more and more children are being born with this condition, a generous person, who wishes to remain anonymous, gave money to build this facility. I hear he or she also has an autistic son.
6. **MALEMBA:** Hmm... and what exactly do the children do here? Is this some kind of school for them?
7. **TRIZA:** It's many things at the same time, but our goal is to help them develop their social skills and also improve their self confidence.
8. **MALEMBA:** And just how do you go about achieving that? I have tried that for 16 years with Chumba with no success. What's your secret?
9. **TRIZA:** Actually, there is no secret. What we try to do is to focus on each child differently, but at the same time encourage them to interact with each other and with us.

- 10. MALEMBA:** How do they react? The kids that is? Do they like it?
- 11. TRIZA:** Look for yourself! (**calls out**) Okay, everyone... we have new guests! Let's welcome them, come on everyone. One two three! Go!
- 12. SFX:** **APPLAUSE AND CLAPS FROM TEENS**
- 13. MALEMBA:** (**almost in tears**) Chumba! They are clapping for you. They are welcoming you! At last some place where people see you as a human being, worthy of appreciation.
- 14. CHUMBA:** Mamaa... Mamaa...
- 15. TRIZA:** Chumba... please, come let me introduce you to the rest.
- 16. NARRATOR:** Tears of joy flow from Malemba's eyes as she sees Triza leading Chumba through the room to introduce him to the other children suffering from the same illness he has. As we leave an emotional mother, let's head to Dr. Mahiro's examination room where Valerie and Irene are sitting put, waiting to hear what the doctor would have to say, after Irene told him everything that happened. Keep listening.

**SCENE TWO: VALERIE AND IRENE AT DR.MAHIRO'S
EXAMINATION ROOM**

17. ATMO: AT DR. MAHIRO'S EXAMINATION ROOM

18. MAHIRO: Valerie, your condition needs constant care and immediate medication. Therefore, I recommend you are admitted to a mental institution.

19. IRENE: **(objecting)** What!?! No way! Valerie is not going there. She is not that bad, I mean she knows me, she knows who she is. It's just those voices. If you can stop those voices from talking to her, she would be fine.

KW begin

20. MAHIRO: Listen, young lady, I have been a mental doctor for many years, and I have seen a lot of cases. So when I say she needs to be taken to the mental hospital, I know what I am talking about . This is simply for her own safety, and as soon as she shows signs of recovery she will be out.

21. VALERIE: Can I say something?

22. MAHIRO: Of course, you are the patient and you have every right

to say what you want.

KW end

23. VALERIE: I want to go to this hospital. If it will make me better, then I want to go.

24. IRENE: But, Val! You know all the stories we heard in class about nurses giving too many drugs to the mentally ill patients, so that all they ever do is sit and stare into space. Do you want to end up like that?

25. MAHIRO: **(concerned)** Now, now, let's not scare our patient with such horrific stories. She is already going through a lot. I know many people do not trust mental hospitals, but trust me: what we do is try to help. The medication used to treat brain disorders has strong side effects, but normally they are absolutely safe. What we need to do is trust those who are taking care of mentally ill patients. Only then can we begin to view mental clinics just like any other clinic.

26. VALERIE: I just want to get better, I want to resume my life, my studies and...

27. SFX: **DOOR BEING KNOCKED DESPERATELY**

28. MAHIRO: Wait for your turn! I am not done yet.

- 29. SFX:** **DOOR BEING KNOCKED AGAIN**
- 30. MAHIRO:** **(furious)** Ah, some people don't understand **(shouting)**
Just a minute, I said wait for...
- 31. SFX:** **DOOR OPENED**
- 32. V.P:** Dr. Mahiro?
- 33. MAHIRO:** **(utterly confused)** Your Excellency... I had no idea
it was you. What can I do for you? Please do come
in... come in.
- 34. IRENE:** Excuse me, but are you not the Vice-President?
- 35. V.P:** Indeed, I am. But I'm here on private business, so I
will ask that you keep this private. I wouldn't want
anyone, especially not the media knowing that I
came to see a psychiatrist.
- 36. MAHIRO:** Of course. Ladies, please excuse us. Think about
what I said. Valerie needs to be admitted to a mental
hospital, the sooner, the better. I personally will be
responsible for her there. So don't worry. All will be
well. Thank you and have a good day.
- 37. SFX:** **DOOR CLOSED**

- 38. V.P:** Thank you for seeing me on such short notice. I know you are the only mental doctor in the country and you have a lot to do...
- 39. MAHIRO:** Yes, that's right. I have tried many times to push the health ministry to finance more mental health practitioners, but my efforts have so far come to nothing. But I don't think you are here to find out about the country's mental health situation?
- 40. V.P:** I don't need to do that. I have experienced it first hand, as you now. I'm here because of my son. He is getting worse and I don't know what to do anymore.
- 41. MAHIRO:** OK, I see. I will have to see him. I will come with you immediately.
- 42. V.P:** I thought he was doing better, he has even stopped making those noises no one can understand. But all of a sudden, he is back to the state he was in before we first came to see you.
- 43. MAHIRO:** Treating an autistic young man can be difficult, and it may take a long time...
- 44. V.P:** **(interrupts)** Okay, I don't need you to explain all that to me again. What I want to know is if you can help him right now and if you can still keep this a

secret.

45. MAHIRO: I have a better idea: Why don't you go public?

46. V.P: **(shocked)** What? Are you out of your mind? I think treating all these crazy people has made you crazy, too.

47. MAHIRO: People need to see such examples. They need to understand that mental illness can happen to anyone, even to the relatives of those leading our country.

48. V.P: No! That's out of the question. I can't do that. Number one, it would be the end of my political life, and two, my son and my family don't need to go through this. I have wasted my time. I will have to send him abroad.

- 49. MAHIRO:** We all have to change our attitudes, your Excellency. Mental illnesses need to become part and parcel of our families, of our society, of our country. We can't afford to keep burying our heads in the sand any longer. People are suffering, your son is one of thousands, if not millions in Africa. Besides, you have only spoken about the negative aspects. But what if instead by going public, the people sympathize with you, others with the same problem identify themselves with you? You see how positive this could be? And maybe finally the government will do something about the deplorable conditions of our mental institutions.
- 50. V.P:** **(thoughtful)** Hmm... I never saw it that way. I must admit, that could actually work in my favour. Who knows, maybe by doing this I will end up becoming President in the coming elections. **(claps)** Okay! Let's do this! You will continue to take care of his treatment. Don't worry, I will talk to the President about improving our health budget for mental care.
- 51. NARRATOR:** Dr. Mahiro has managed to change the mind of the country's second most powerful person. As he and the Vice-President leave the clinic to look after Her

Excellency's son, Kapaka is at his doorstep,
overjoyed and excited by what has just happened.

Listen on.

SCENE THREE: KAPAKA ARRIVES HOME WITH GOOD NEWS

52. SFX: **BUNCH OF KEYS FUMBLING... DOOR OPENED**

53. KAPAKA: **(singing melodiously)**

54. CHEUPE: Kapaka! Please keep quiet, the baby is sleeping.
(shocked) Oh my goodness! Oh...my...Goodness!

55. KAPAKA: **(shocked too)** What is it!? What happened? Is
everything alright?

56. CHEUPE: You are singing! That is soooo wonderful! I can't
remember the last time I heard you singing. I think it
was before you lost your job.

57. KAPAKA: **(proudly)** Well, now I have been hired again. Kapaka
is back!

58. CHEUPE: **(almost in tears)** My husband, I am so happy for you.
This is the greatest day of my life. Tell me more:
Where are you going to work?

OUTRO:

With that we wind up the ninth episode of our story focusing on mental illness in Africa. Join us in the coming tenth and final episode to find out how the story ends. Will Valerie get better? How about Chumba? And now that Kapaka seems to have gotten a job, does that mean his depression is gone?

For this and more, don't miss the next episode. If you wish to listen to this episode again, or other series of Learning By Ear, visit our website at www.dw.de/lbe. Until we meet again, bye and take care.