

LEARNING BY EAR 2012

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

EPISODE 10: "A new dawn"

AUTHOR: Chrispin Mwakideu

EDITORS: Ludger Schadomsky, Friederike Müller

PROOFREADER: Sabina Casagrande

List of characters by scene:

SCENE ONE: KAPAKA AT HOME WITH HIS FAMILY

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

SCENE TWO: TRIZA , MALEMBA AND CHUMBA AT AUTISM CLUB

- **Malemba (f, 35)**
- **Triza (f, 30)**
- **Narrator**

SCENE THREE: IRENE VISITS VALERIE AT MENTAL INSTITUTION

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

SCENE FOUR: V.P READS OUT BUDGET IN PARLIAMENT

- **Vice-President (f, 55)**
- **Crowd (about 5 people, age and gender mixed)**

INTRO:

Hello and welcome to Learning By Ear. This is the tenth and final episode of our radio drama, "**I am still human**", a story focusing on mental illness in Africa, and attitudes towards those affected. In the previous episode, Chumba, the teenage boy who suffers from autism, was warmly introduced to a group of young people who suffer from the same condition. The nursing student Valerie was referred to a mental institution for proper treatment and care, whereas Kapaka who had previously been depressed after losing his job, came home happy with the good news of finding a new job. But how did this happen, considering the fact that his former boss, Mr. Patel, refused to re-hire him because of his mental illness? Let's find out in this episode entitled "**A new dawn**". We begin where we left off with Kapaka at home with his family.

SCENE ONE: KAPAKA AT HOME WITH HIS FAMILY

1. **SFX:** **BABY MAKING HAPPY GIGGLES**

2. **CHEUPE:** Even our baby is excited about you finding a job. Tell me, how did it happen? Where are you going to work? Are you still going to be a cashier? How much money will you earn? When do you...

3. **KAPAKA:** Hey, cool down, mama, let me have some water, let's sit down, then I will tell you the story. You will not believe it!

4. **SFX:** **WATER BEING POURED INTO A GLASS**

5. **KAPAKA:** Right after my bad experience with Patel, I almost gave up, but something told me to keep going. And after thinking about it a lot, I decided to go to the supermarket opposite Patel's. You know, the two have been competing for customers.
6. **CHEUPE:** Oh yes! And I only went to Patel because you worked there, but the other one is cheaper.
7. **KAPAKA:** Okay, let me finish. So I go there, and guess what, they know me! I tell the owner I am looking for a job, and he tells me: okay, you have it. I ask him, just like that? He says just like that. I am a bit confused, and I tell myself, it can't be that easy. So I tell him, well, you know what, I am being treated for depression. Can I still work here?
8. **CHEUPE:** **(excited)** Aha, and what does he say?
9. **KAPAKA:** So am I.
10. **CHEUPE:** **(shocked)** No way! That man is one of the richest in the country!

- 11. KAPAKA:** That's exactly what I thought. But then he goes on to tell me his story. First he told me he sort of inherited the tendency for depression from his parents. So that's the genetic part. But now he is going through a very difficult divorce, which according to his doctor, is another contributing factor. Add to this the daily stress of running such a big chain of supermarkets...
- 12. CHEUPE:** Wow! I would never have imagined! He seems to have everything that anyone can possibly dream of.
- 13. KAPAKA:** Apart from that he told me that men are less likely to suffer from depression than women due to hormonal differences between the two. But apparently men are more likely to commit suicide than women when they suffer from clinical depression.
- 14. CHEUPE:** Did you tell him that you attempted suicide?
- 15. KAPAKA:** Yes, I couldn't hold back. He told me everything about his battle with depression. Apart from giving me a new job, my interview with him was the best therapy session I have ever had!
- 16. CHEUPE:** That's great! So you will be working as a cashier there as well?

- 17. KAPAKA:** Yes, I will be the new cashier at “Choice Supermarket”. But my new boss already told me that there might be a chance I get promoted to head cashier in a year.
- 18. CHEUPE:** **(overjoyed)** This is unbelievable! I can't begin to say how happy I am for you, and for us as a family. And to imagine we almost lost you not so long ago.
- 19. KAPAKA:** Cheupe... my lovely wife. This is our new dawn!
- 20. NARRATOR:** Obviously not everyone who has suffered from depression is as lucky as Kapaka. A study has shown that men actually find it hard to admit that they are depressed, making it even more difficult for them to seek treatment. As we leave the young family still catching up with all the good news, we now head to the autistic club, which Chumba has been attending for several weeks now. Triza, the volunteer who helps at the club, has some information to share with Chumba's mother, Malemba.

SCENE TWO: TRIZA , MALEMBA AND CHUMBA AT AUTISM CLUB

21. **MALEMBA:** Yes, Triza, you said you had some news for me. What is it?
22. **TRIZA:** As a matter of fact I do. As you might guess, it actually involves Chumba.
23. **MALEMBA:** Did something happen? Is he getting worse?
24. **TRIZA:** Worse? No, Chumba has impressed everyone with his ability to draw and paint.
25. **MALEMBA:** What do you mean? How did you find that out?
26. **TRIZA:** As I explained to you earlier on, when autistic patients first come here, we try to improve their social skills and self confidence so that they can achieve some level of independence. We do this by introducing them to recreational activities such as music, dance, drama, arts and crafts, sports, games and many others. I needed only a few days to discover that your son has a natural born talent to draw figures and paint. Look here at what he has been doing.
27. **SFX:** **PAPERS BEING SHUFFLED SLOWLY... ONE AFTER ANOTHER**

- 28. MALEMBA:** (almost in tears) And did he draw and colour all these by himself?
- 29. TRIZA:** In the beginning, I helped him a bit, since he had no clue what to do with pencil and paper. But soon afterwards, he simply took over. Aren't the pictures beautiful?
- 30. MALEMBA:** (still emotional) They are not just beautiful, they are precious! Chumba, my son, is painting by himself. I now believe that anything is possible.
- 31. TRIZA:** We still have a long way to go, but it's a good start! One of the best I have seen as a volunteer here. I would recommend that you encourage him to keep drawing at home as well, especially when he gets aggressive or loses his concentration. But again, don't overdo it. When he says no, then don't push it.
- 32. MALEMBA:** Of course, of course, Triza. I am so touched by what you are doing with him. He is much calmer since he started coming here, and to see all these drawings he has made simply blows me away. I lost my home and everything, but I do believe I have a chance now with my son. Chumba, go on with Triza, I will come get you later.

33. NARRATOR: Children with autism can have exceptional talents, which so far scientists and researchers have not fully understood. Chumba is an example of this. As we leave the young boy, we move our attention to the mental hospital where Valerie is being treated. Irene has finally been allowed to visit her friend after two weeks of therapy.

SCENE THREE: IRENE VISITS VALERIE AT MENTAL INSTITUTION

34. SFX: **BIG METAL DOOR BEING OPENED**

35. IRENE: **(takes deep breath)** Phew... at long last, I have managed to enter through the big gates. So now I only have to find Valerie.

36. SFX: **MUMBLINGS AND MURMURINGS FROM MENTALLY ILL PERSONS**

37. IRENE: Oh goodness! I never expected to see so many patients. Where are all these people coming from? And what are they suffering from? Oh, okay ward number 11, this must be where Valerie is staying.

38. SFX: **DOOR GENTLY KNOCKED**

39. IRENE: Valerie, it's me, Irene! Can I come in?

SILENCE

40. IRENE: Okay, I'm coming in. They told me it's fine if I do.

41. SFX: **SMALL METAL DOOR OPENED WITH SHRIEKING SOUND**

42. VALERIE/MAHIRO: Surprise!!

43. IRENE: **(screams in fear)** Wooooooi...

44. MAHIRO: **(Laughs uncontrollably)** Hahaha Irene, we got you on that one. Hey, relax it's alright.

45. VALERIE: Sorry my friend, I didn't really want to do this, but the doctor insisted. **(laughs a little bit)** He is also the one who made it impossible for you to see me. He says it was necessary for my recovery.

46. MAHIRO: It made a difference. Valerie still hears those voices, but she is becoming more and more able to control herself. That's how she will finally overcome the illness. The drugs she is taking are strong and so she still needs someone to keep watch over her constantly.

47. IRENE: Valerie, since this whole mental breakdown thing started, I have never seen you so relaxed.

- 48. MAHIRO:** The drugs she is taking are also responsible for that. That's why it is important to closely monitor her, because any drug overdose can create a new problem. As I said, I will do my best to see to it that Valerie fully recovers. There are no guarantees here, but only hope, determination and consistency.
- 49. VALERIE:** I have hope, I am more than determined and will do whatever it takes to regain my proper mental abilities.
- 50. IRENE:** That's good, Val, that's very good. But doctor, I have a question, what about all the rest of the people I saw out in the corridor? Do they have the same chance as Valerie?
- 51. MAHIRO:** Every patient is different. But one thing is for sure: until our society changes its attitudes towards the mentally ill, they are better off inside these iron gates, than out in the streets where they face all forms of abuse, neglect, and mistreatment.
- 52. NARRATOR:** Dr. Mahiro is probably right. He has for a long time lived with that frustration of seeing mentally ill people not being treated as human beings. But things are about to change. Just a few days later the Vice-President, who is also the minister for Finance, is announcing the country's budget. Let's join him in the country's parliament.

SCENE FOUR: V.P READS OUT BUDGET IN PARLIAMENT

53. SFX: **FEET THUMPING AS WHEN LEGISLATORS
APPLAUD**

54. V.P: Thank you, comrades. Now before I read the next item
in the budget, please allow me to say something.
(clears throat) My son is currently being treated for
mental illness – he is suffering from autism.

55. SFX: **UPROAR AND VARIED REACTIONS**

56. V.P: Now, I don't need your mercy, all I am asking for is
support and understanding. We have all been guilty for
neglecting the mentally ill, and it's time to change that.
Now don't get me wrong: We are not doing this
because it is my son that is affected. We are doing this
because it is the right thing to do.

57. SFX: **LOUD THUNDEROUS FEET APPLAUSE**

58. V.P: In that regard, we have decided to increase the health
budget, particularly for mental illnesses and disabilities
by raising the amount spent last year by 50%. The new
funds will be used to educate and sensitize the
population on dealing with the mentally ill, and to
employ more doctors and nurses. We need to change
the way we have treated these people.

59. SFX: APPLAUSE

OUTRO:

That announcement brings us to the end of our series on mental illness in Africa. The story was written by Chrispin Mwakideu. We hope you have enjoyed it. Remember that you can listen to the entire series again, and other LBE stories, by visiting our website at dw.de/lbe. Please do send us your comments on what you think of the mental health situation in Africa. You can also follow us on Facebook and leave your comments there. Until we meet again, stay healthy. Goodbye from Bonn!