

# “Courage is a Calling”

By Lucy Yinda

## A BOOK REVIEW

At a time when suffering and anguish has been normalized in our society; at a time when hope is such a rare and endangered necessity; this book *Courage is calling* comes in to arrest our conscience.

The compelling and intriguing story of how this transformative change-maker Lucy Yinda embarked on a scary and challenging journey of saving the street children of Mombasa makes this book exceptional and quite frankly a life-changing read.

*Courage is a Calling* takes the reader through the meticulous scary journey of a woman seeking her purpose, her depth in her faith for what she perceives is her purpose and her courage to take up the challenge once she finds it.

Everyone knows and detests the menace of street children and/or street families. All our cities and towns have them. They are to say the least, an eyesore and a nuisance, not to mention the drug abuse and criminal adventures pegged to these street children and families.

Even though Kenya is a perceived religious country with teachings on charity and kindness overemphasized, it is rare to see the practical aspect of these teaching articulated as powerfully and transformatively the way Lucy Yinda has achieved in her journey in *Courage is a Calling*.

This book pulls us in with its audacity to venture into areas that are disregarded and “uncomfortable”. Street children are not pleasant to look at, leave alone to know; however from the start, with a powerful foreword by the Mombasa Governor Ali Hassan Joho and an Affirmation Note by the First Lady Margaret Kenyatta, this book forces you to dive into this journey by Lucy Yinda and carries your yearning to the end of it.

This book is bold in that it lifts the lid on the reality of street-children’s’ lives, their pain and sufferings, their perceptions and fears and then most importantly it carries the day to celebrate their wins after rescue to the Wema Centers by Lucy Yinda and her team.

The formation and operationalization of the Wema Centers from Likoni, to Bamburi and the offshore Wema Center in Thika exemplifies the level of commitment and passion by Lucy and her team to reach out to the darkest dungeons of the streets and rescue children in need of safety. As the book unfolds, Lucy did not really have to dedicate her life to the “headaches” of street children. Born from an affluent family, she would have turned the other way and continued her life oblivious of the suffering of the children in the streets of Mombasa.

Her conscience however could not allow her. And this is why the thrust of all the happenings in this book is so critical. Human beings today go about life with a complete disregard of the nagging of their conscious to do the right thing; to help others.

*Courage is a Calling* reveals the challenges Lucy and her team went through to actualize her purpose. While she thought the children would initially literally run to her for help, she learns that the children of the streets, even though living through desperate situations do not trust just “any helping hand” and with good reason.

While those not in the streets believe the street- children or street families are a danger, the same street children are weary of other people because they have been misused, violated and badly scarred by those who purported to want to help them.

This reality of a shattered trust comes out strongly as the lived experiences of the children at Wema Center are narrated within *Courage is a Calling*. Whilst the assumption is that the family unit is largely considered the safety haven, most of the children rescued by Lucy and her team were violated and brutally hurt by their own family members; parents, uncles, siblings and neighbors who should otherwise have been supportive.

The personal narrations of those rescued by the Wema Center are heart-breaking. The reality of just how fickle human nature is towards children as explained in the book is such a huge assault to our human consciousness. Who takes care of the children when the whole world has turned against them?

*Courage is a Calling* brings out critical reflections on how the governments and relevant institutions tasked with the care and protection of children renege on this responsibility and thrust the children further into suffering and frustrations.

It is for example so disheartening to learn that street children cannot easily access their Identification Cards and /or birth certificates especially since situations that pushed them into the streets are equally dire. As clearly stated in the book and as espoused within the law, any child born within the borders of the country deserves identification documents. This however, as clearly indicated in *Courage is a Calling*, becomes a desperate undertaking as the children, some without any roots to their homes are denied an identity.

This book has also brought out the reality of just how far street children originally come from. Pushed into the streets because of abject poverty, the devastation of the HIV/Aids scourge and unfavorable family settings, the children flock into the country from as far as Uganda and make their way into big cities such as Mombasa hoping for a better life.

Whose responsibility is it to regulate the movement and well-being of children? Who watches out on the borders and/or in public transport traversing cities and towns to intervene unaccompanied children obviously exposed to unknown danger?

This hope is the rare commodity that the Wema Centers under Lucy Yinda’s stewardship, continue to provide to so many destitute children. It is the very same hope that warms

the heart as one delves deeper into *Courage is a calling* and encounters true successful endings of stories of children rescued and successfully rehabilitated.

The raw and heart-breaking testimonies of pain, violation and suffering by the rescued children of Wema center as narrated by themselves within the book makes its narrative even more compelling.

Even though a lot of the descriptions of the life at the Wema Centers are positively presented within the book, the reality as well-known is that the road to rehabilitation of street children especially hardened in the streets is hardly ever easy. It is therefore a lap of uttermost respect and appreciation to Lucy Yinda and her dedicated team at Wema Center to heave a sigh of relief within the book and declare their elation at the positive turn-out of many of the children at the Center.

*Courage is a Calling* is a book that pokes your conscience to ask oneself deeper questions as per what you have done to make the world a better place. In the life and service of Lucy Yinda, it sure does seem that she has succeeded because she has understood her assignment for her life's purpose and embarked on achieving it.

In this book, the reader finds herself celebrating the achievements of Lucy Yinda and affirming her unrelenting spirit as she pursues a goal that is noble and transformative for the less fortunate and the destitute.

As it is said, it takes great courage to love those considered "unlovable". This why the reality of her journey towards realizing her vision for the Wema Centers took so much courage – indeed *Courage is a Calling!*

This book is a must read for anyone seeking to sing and actualize Purpose for the sake of a better world.

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