We are Proud to Introduce The Timbuk-Vision African Market Listing; “Na-Buctoo Market Place”
MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE TIMBUK-VISION
We are proud to announce The Timbuk-Vision volume 1, number V: A magazine that brings you the story of Africa, by Africans.

It is our commitment at The Timbuk-Vision magazine to deliver relevant and cutting-edge analyses and perspectives on Africa politics, culture and tradition, on the continent and abroad, on a monthly basis. An essential part of this commitment is to ensure we deliver The Timbuk-Vision magazine to you consistently and in a timely fashion.

Until Africans do self-examination beyond skin color, the blacks, the Arabs, the Asians, the Europeans, the former slave masters and former colonialists, who have chosen Africanization and the natives as their targets, killing fields like the one in the Darfur region of Sudan will continue to be frequent occurrences in Africa.

The African survived the Arab and European slavery and colonialism onslaughts. To put the past behind us, Africans must now adopt Africanization, not negritude. Africanization should be to Africa what Americanization is to the United States. This is the only way the African people will be able to confront economic imperialism, and become partners with the World Bank and the IMF, and protect themselves against big corporations.

In this issue, we review Blood Diamond: We strongly believe that diamonds cannot be Blood Diamond, rather the corporate executives are the Blood Diamond Executive. Nonetheless, the Blood Diamond movie has highlighted major concerns that surround the diamond industry in Sierra Leone. ‘Diamond is, in Hans Biedermann’s Dictionary of Symbolism, ‘the most precious of precious stones that has the symbolic signature of perfection, purity, and imperviousness.’ It is the symbol of Christ in early Christian era. But not so fast in the Kono land and people of Sierra Leone amongst whom the phrase; Blood Diamond, was coined during the rebel war.”

The diamond trade fueled the decade-long atrocious war that broke out in Sierra Leone because of bad leadership. We hope African leaders have learned from Sierra Leoneans dreadful experience in the rebel war over diamonds that was characterized by hacking off of limbs second only to Congolese people of King Leopold’s Congo Free State over rubber.

The Timbuk-Vision will continue to provide the means for Africans to have their say on issues affecting Africa through letters and through demonstrating their talents in creative writing in the Literary Corner. We are committed to serving the business community by offering advertising space in a newsmagazine that is widely distributed to a large African community and beyond.

Please also send us story ideas and stories about Africa and Africans. We will surely appreciate your comments and contributions. We have laid down the ROAD MAP TO TIMBUKTU right into the cradle of African scholarship in the Sankore Mosque.

“Salt comes from the north, gold from the south, and silver from the country of the white men, but the word of God and the treasures of wisdom are only to be found in Timbuctoo” (Singleton, Brent D. (2004): “African Bibliophiles: Books and Libraries in Medieval Timbuktu,” in the journal of Libraries and Cultures Vol. 39 No1. p.1.) The Timbuk-Vision looks forward to serving you this month and many more months to come.

**Letters to the Editor:**
The Timbuk-Vision welcomes all letters to the editor. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please limit your comments to 750 words. Longer pieces may be considered. Your full name, address, telephone number and, if available, E-mail address must/may be included and E-mailed to karmohslylhorg@aol.com or yahya2nis@yahoo.com.

*Karamoh Kabba: Editor, The Timbuk-Vision*
Blood Diamond, despite its intended hyperbole for a thriller effect, at face value, is good cinematographic depiction of a real danse macabre that prevailed in a small West African nation of Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002 when the Revolutionary United Front (R.U.F.) rebels, led by Foday Sankoh and supported by Charles Taylor of Liberia, waged a senseless war that has been characterized by some of the most egregious war crimes against humanity in recent years. The rebel war in Sierra Leone was particularly unique in the sense that its third and fourth angles [foreign mercenaries and local Civil Defense Forces (CDF)] rendered it a woven web that was difficult to unravel. Evidently, not until the largest United Nations forces [17,000 men and women] assembled to keep the peace.

Diamond is, in Hans Biedermann’s Dictionary of Symbolism, “the most precious of precious stones that has the symbolic signature of perfection, purity, and imperviousness.” It is the symbol of Christ in early Christian era. But not so fast in the Kono land and people of Sierra Leone amongst whom the phrase; Blood Diamond, was coined during the rebel war.

“God left this land a long time ago”, says Leonardo DiCaprio (Danny Archer), the Soldier of Fortune (SOF) fictional character. In the prelude to Robert T. Parsons’ 1964 book, Religion in an African Society, on the Kono people, he writes; “To the Kono people among whom God has not left himself without a witness.” The Kono land is one of the homes to the most precious of precious stones including the world’s third and sixth largest ones [968.80 and 770.00 carats in their rough, found in 1972 and 1945 respectively]. Indeed not only in the person of Parsons did God live a witness, but also in the fictional work of Ian Fleming’s Diamonds are Forever, 1971, in which Roger Moore acted as James Bond and now, in the persons of Djimon Hounsou (Fisherman Solomon Vandi) and DiCaprio.

It suffices to agree that God left the Kono land a long time ago with the advent of foreign Manichaeism that conveniently combines religion and imperialism to which God gave way. Yes, God gave way: He gives humanity the two choices of good and evil and thus the “Wages of sin is death.” And, without doubt, we saw the death field crammed with the dead, between 1991 and 2002 when God looked the other way to humanity’s choice of evil over good against its own kind in Sierra Leone, especially in the Kono land.

Franz Fanon writes; “The look that the native [commoners] turns on the settler’s [aristocrats] town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of posses-
sion—all manner of possession: to sit in the settler’s aristocrat
table, to sleep in the settler’s aristocrat bed…” And in Sierra
Leone, the pool of idle youths that formed pockets of ponds,
crammed with fury across the country because of such Aristote-
lian logic surely exploded against the aristocrats that would be-
come not the cause of the rebel war that can only be compared
to King Leopold’s Congo Free State for hacking off of human
limbs, but the fuel that sets the killing fields of warlords ablaze.

But in telling the stories of the Kono land and Blood Diamond: Par-
sons states that the Kono people worship many Gods, contradict-
ing himself when in the introduction to the same work he writes;
“For example, in this study of Kono religion, relation of priest and
worshipers, the ancestors and the family, ‘Yataa’ (the Supreme
Being) and the common man cannot be observed except in the
religious activities in which these relations are functioning”. The
movie, Blood
Diamond,
did little jus-
tice in show-
ing that dia-
mond is the
most pre-
cious of pre-
cious stones,
that the large
corporations
behind the
d i a m o n d
trade in Si-
erra Leone
were the
Blood Ex-
cutives not
the diamond.
Parson be-
comes for-
getful that
he states that
the Kono
people have
a Supreme
Being called
‘ Y a t a a ’,
just as Blood Diamond has now pockmarked the source of liv-
ing for millions of African people who depend on it. In fact, no
African language or tribe we know has a plural word for God.

History shall bear witness that oftentimes products that en-
hance the economic life of people in Africa are met with west-
ern activism in the fiercest manner without offering other al-
ternatives. Whence there was a concern about the extinction of
elephants because of ivory trade in the past, no one thought of
embarking on domestication of elephants, rather, the interna-
tional organizations rendered the entire ivory trade unlawful.
Yet, animals are domesticated in large farms, for fur to cover
the back of people in sub temperate regions rendering the ani-
mals furless. Cows and chickens would never be at risk of ex-
tinction; instead, these animals are made ready for the frying pan
in weeks in billions for consumption without fear of extinction.

The good cinematography that we see in Blood Diamond that por-
trays gruesome acts of violence against humanity, especially against
women and children, cannot justify the labeling of Diamonds as
Blood Diamond. Diamonds were discovered in Sierra Leone in 1930
and whence attracted Blood Diamond Executives not in the magni-
tude we have witnessed in recent years. To this, Karamoh Kabba,
one of the authors of this work, who grew up close to the kimberlite
dikes in the Kono district during the Sierra Leone Diamond Mining
Company era writes in an article for World Press magazine; “The
constant blasting of granite for diamonds at two kimberlite dikes
not too far down the road is a constant menace. We will run for
our lives three miles, three times a day sometimes, as the dynamite
from the twin dikes are set off in open-air blasting. We cannot afford
to take chances any more since a rock killed our neighbor’s
daughter three years ago.” But what about Bo-
tswana, whose
Diamond in-
dustry is free of
rebel, merce
nary and CDF
activities—are
Botswana dia-
monds Blood
D i a m o n d s
?

“Once the Dia-
monds get to
India, the dirty
once get mixed
with the good
ones and they
all become the
same.” In fact,
diamonds need
not get that
far to become
unidentifiable. People are so fascinated by diamonds that only
the poor miners and the countries of origin suffer from devalua-
tion—and in the outside world; they are the most precious rocks.

If God has not really left Africa, He did leave the Kono land a long
time ago. But we know He surely did not leave without a witness.

It is unfortunate that the cultural—language and setting of the Sierra
Leoneans, their country and the Kono people are absurdly represent-
ed in Blood Diamond. Yet, we encourage you, especially Africans,
to see Blood Diamond—there is much to learn from it. And one
such lesson would be; diamonds are not Blood Diamond, and we
wish the producers had called it Blood Diamond Executives instead.

Picture by Theophilus Gbenda: Affected persons including casual workers of Koidu Holdings taking shelter
under trees during blasting time in Kono district kimberlite diamond mines
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I P L E D G E

I pledge my love and loyalty to my country Sierra Leone, I vow to serve her faithfully at all time, I promise to defend her honor and good name, always work for her unity, peace, freedom and prosperity and to put her interest above all else, so help me God.

The bar is the pledge of allegiance to our “so-called” beloved country, Sierra Leone. But I will challenge you; who amongst us knows how to recite the national allegiance or went through school reciting the national allegiance? But that is what children in great nations do--recite a pledge to their nations, without fail, every morning, in their schools, and their lawmakers debate whether to accept prayers or not to accept prayers in public schools. We grew up praying, and our youngsters have stepped into our shoes--pray every morning in our schools and never make a pledge of allegiance to our country.

But this is not without the oxymoron that almost every Diasporan Sierra Leonean business has one of the following words in its name: Sierra, Mountain, Leone or Lion. We profess to love our country, but I can tell you that it is a misguided love, in fact, it is not love; in stead, we have a compulsive infatuation with Sierra Leone. That was how we caused our women folk and children to run for their lives, gang raped, made into sex slaves or killed for eleven bloody years, actions that were akin to wiping out a whole generation of future leaders. What we have caused ourselves is a looming generation gap in leadership.

The story of our decade-long sustained violence against each other is yet to be told if we do not act now to turn around the mind-set of a whole generation of youth. Almost every young man or woman who was in Sierra Leone during the war has seen some kind of violence. Some are dead men and women walking upon seeing their mothers being raped in front of them before they were shot to death in close range. Many of our young men and women are shell-shocked; they are psychologically disturbed by these hideous crimes against humanity.

A generation is a period of thirty years and the next generation of leaders in Sierra Leone will be uncured shell-shocked and psychologically disturbed men and women who will be ruling our nation. Who will we blame if we hit the news spot-
light for violence in thirty years from now? When Chris Robertson of Save the Children Fund wrote: “How these children will act as adults depends much on the support they get from society,” that is exactly what Chris meant. Sierra Leone needs a leadership of men and women with unflagging allegiance to her to prevent such a reoccurrence, not corrupt politicians, who have extreme form of obsession allure for Sierra Leone and money. They have no plans for the women and children, the most marginalized sectors of our society, but their individual pockets. Their lawmakers only know to agitate over their share of government contracts, not the moving of life enhancing benchmark motions on behalf of the people. But it was not like that in the past before things fell apart: Chinua Achebe’s Okonkwo stood against the European, but his people abandoned him for wrongdoing when he killed the colonialist messenger; he knew he could fight the stranger, but not his people. He walked off and hung himself akin to Greco-Roman tragic heroes of the past. According to Achebe, “Okonkwo’s fame rested on solid personal achievement,” he could have mustered much support to rebel against his society, but he heeded and punished himself in silence. He had no knowledge of Socrates. In Greco-Roman civilization, Socrates dialogue with Crito in The Prison of Socrates, he brought us civilization, Socrates dialogue with Crito in their view of what is just:... peacefully.

Inasmuch as religion plays a vital role in our society, let us not forget to give Caesar what is Caesar’s--as government is between persons and public.

I would like to thank the good folks at the Youths for Sierra Leone Improvement (YSILI) for organizing successful political dialogues. As a youth myself, let me hasten to say that I am very proud to be part of this historic event and once again, I thank you for the opportunity. You are far ahead of the former APC regime whose actions gave way to the pool of idle youths on killing fields instead of soccer fields. You are far ahead of the SLPP government who has nary a vision for nation building nonetheless youth development. I pray that these political dialogues will open the eyes and minds of our fellow youths in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.

The APC and SLPP, that are responsible for everything that is wrong with our country are back to steal your votes so that they will continue to cause you pain by stealing your resources and running off with your money. Simply, when you ask for votes by making promises to run a good government and neglect your duty for selfish gains upon getting the votes is stealing. All I can warn you; the vote bandits are here again. That is bound to change if you choose your candidate carefully in 2007. The exigency to change the miserable status of the youth population of Sierra Leone cannot be overemphasized.

Recently, former Ambassador John Leigh referred to PMDC youth support base as “Low grade noisemakers - san san boys, honda drivers, ex-combatants, carwash boys, etc.” Before him, this sector of our country’s population was commonly known as “rah ray boys” by the APC, which became the factory that manufactured the “pool of idle youth” with AK-47s and machetes on a rampage to shoot and hack off limbs of our people. They went on to call our women folk, who were left with no choice, but prostitution for their livelihood “kolonkos”. The APC and SLPP have tossed us around for so long. They invariably ask for our votes, but what do they do when we give them? ---toss us in the corner. They blame us for their own failures in government. These acts have caused so much trauma and psychological problems for the youth and women folk to the extent that many have developed mental instability and extreme forms of low self-esteem. They have lost all hopes: thus we can find people, especially on the countryside, in front of their sheds, blank; gasping and gazing into the heavens, akin to the Almighty heavenly stories of paradise—but God will send them everything they need. An average Sierra Leonean can afford only one meal a day, which must be consumed at a certain time of the day to barely survive. We have been, constantly, at the very bottom of the UN human development index. But to all my brothers and sisters back home I say; don’t give up. Faith is for those optimists who pull themselves together in times of crisis, hardship and degradation. Those endowed upon you I ask that you keep the faith in the Almighty God and yourselves and believe that “hope is on the way.” Come 2007, let us match to the polls as proud “san san boys and Kolonkos,” and vote for the candidate of our choice. But, through it all, let us always remember, “THE PLEDGE.”
When it rains, it pours: and this year, it has been pouring on and off throughout the rainy season, in mid August, when it rains for seven days and seven nights on end. It has been six days since the seven-days rain began.

Food is in short supply, but not for the orchard in our backyard. Abounded by nutrients from the showers, it blooms with green-ish and glossy leaves beneath films of dew that shed decay-ing red, brown, and black leaves that drench in dripping drains and carpet the orchard floor along the path from my mother’s house.
Green fruits hang heavy on the trees on both sides of a narrow path. Seedless mangos and guavas with seeds as tough as tiny ball bearings. Beneath the belly of the hill 50 yards down the road, my mother’s rice meadow is chubby with milky fillings, struggling to blossom on swamp-land previously excavated for diamonds.

Yesterday’s rain was a combination of torrential downpour, showers, and drizzles. A pall of darkness from over-hanging clouds reigned over the orchard in a weather condition that was as gloomy as the prospect for the next meal. Yet we are imbued with anticipation for a prosperous upcoming dry season when the blooming orchard and rice meadow will swap their pale or green fruits for red or yellow produce.

Sefadu is a densely populated metropolis of Kono district, with over 100,000 residents. My family lives on its southern edge. Downtown is flamboyantly lively around the clock. Daytime traders move helter-skelter along its sidewalks in search of good deals. Like pollinating flowers, wealthy merchants hoist double steel gates that display merchandise-crammed supermarkets on both sides of its main road. Diamond dealers line up plush cars in driveways and drive rugged trucks on parkways. A mushroom of theaters and nightclubs aglow with neon lights in the evenings is a typical Sefadu nightlife scene.

Many residents here are diamond miners, but for some reason I do not know, my parents have little or no interest in diamond mining. This city suburb has become an attractive settlement for them, where even the previously excavated diamond fields are barely suitable for swamp-land rice cultivation. The constant blasting of granite for diamonds at two kimberlite dikes not too far down the road is a constant menace. We will run for our lives three miles, three times a day sometimes, as the dynamite from the twin dikes are set off in open-air blasting. We cannot afford to take chances any more since a rock killed our neighbor’s daughter three years ago.

For now, we depend on imported rice, which is also in short supply. We ate the only meal of the day late last night and I found it difficult to sleep because of a stomachache. It was one of those days that my mother barely makes it through — her daily struggle to provide us our daily bread. We often eat about two hours earlier, which gives me time for some activities before bedtime.

Tomorrow will be the seventh day of the seven-days rain. Last night’s rain was the heaviest. The sound of raindrops on the leaves of the orchard floor was soothing. It brought some succor that relieved my stomachache, which I got from sleeping too soon after eating too heavy, too late. The gentle muddle of all three types of rain on our corrugated zinc roof was comforting. It was like a ballad from smooth voices of traditional instruments: drums, ago-goes, kaylanes, and batas. I would barter my
gle to provide us our daily bread. We often eat about two hours earlier, which gives me time for some activities before bedtime. We often eat about two hours earlier, which gives me time for some activities before bedtime.

I felt a slap on my back from my mother’s bare hand that woke me up. Not only was I late for school, I had also urinated in my uniform shorts.

“Who says you could sleep in your uniform pants?” she asked.

I jumped down from my bunk bed, crossed my right hand over my shoulder blades down to my upper spine. I thrust my chest out, rubbed the spot, screamed with excruciating pain so loud that the rest of my eleven siblings lined up outside to look on in great fear. My mother’s anger often trickles down on the entire family. At times like this, she recalls everyone’s previous mischief and beats everyone at once in frustration, often leaving in her wake a pandemonium of crying children.

Her belligerence does not interfere with her knack to turn a penny into two pennies. She is always in a hurry to do something or to go somewhere and has very little time for us. She has no room for petulance. It has been a difficult situation for me, especially when I see other children having playtime with their parents during P.T.A. meetings, which my mother has no time for.

My father is just here; he comes in and goes out again. I do not quite understand his role in the family. If he contributes to our welfare, I do not know how. All that is visible is my mother’s actions: she haggles in the marketplace with wholesalers to make ends meet, hoes the garden, weeds the rice meadow,
cooks our meal, or simply cleans the house.

“I thought you had your prayday (Rama-dan) suit on yesterday when you left for the concert? How did you end up urinating in your uniform? Bane neh! Maobally.”

Whack! Whack! Her hands came down on my jaw right and left in quick succession. My jaw had been left vulnerable to her anger as I rubbed my back in pain from the first slap.

“You are going to school regardless, in these wet trousers. Hurry-up!” she said. When she turned around, my siblings galloped away in fear.

The prayday gown she took out for me to wear to the school concert yesterday was not appropriate for the occasion, but I had to go anyway because the concert was mandatory. She keeps the gown in her trunk for special days like yesterday. I actually have no other decent clothes. I have only one uniform that I wear Monday through Friday before she washes it on the weekend. It is always very shabby by the end of the school year. Though, it is the coolest set of clothes I have. I actually have no other decent clothes. I have only one uniform that I wear Monday through Friday before she washes it on the weekend. It is always very shabby by the end of the school year. Though, it is the coolest set of clothes I have. I have much more self-confidence when I wear my uniform, unlike the well-kept prayday gown that is not so cool. My mother had just bought me a new uniform at the beginning of this school year: a pair of brown khaki shorts and a blue cotton shirt, tailored to my size by a youthful tailor. I particularly like the shorts, which have a French cut, with straight pockets on the sides, two back pockets, and three splits on each side of the front. It is not very common for a little boy to have a uniform that is so stylish. The shorts fit me so well that I hardly take them off after school. Indeed my mother has beaten me several times for failing to take them off after school. But I am fed up with wearing a gown or a locally weaved set of clothes and a little white hat like a little imam on every special occasion that I go to.

“Here’s a banana. Food will be ready by the time you return,” she said and sent me off to the concert that evening. I had a banana for breakfast that morning before I left for school. These were green bananas she kept in a cupboard in her room, where they ripened slowly. On days that she does not have ripe bananas in the cupboard, she boils the green ones for us. She alternates bananas with mangoes or guavas. During harvest time in the dry season,
she cooks enough rice to save some for us to eat at breakfast before we go to school. She keeps the bananas in her room so that we will not eat them all at once. But it is good she does that, because our house has many mice burrows. It is a large, seven-room mud brick house with an unfurnished living room that is dusty because it has no paving. The strong smell of ripe bananas and the food crumbs from our late dinners make it vulnerable to mice burrowing. In fact, the mice will eat the food stuck to bottom of our feet while we sleep if we do not wash them properly before bedtime. My mother cooks outside on a makeshift fireplace, tree large rocks that hold the pot over a log fire. When it rains, she moves the rocks to the veranda where they have been since the seven-days rain began. As soon as she engaged my elder sister in a discussion that evening, I sneaked back into the house, changed into my school khaki shorts and my sister’s V-neck T-shirt, and left for the concert unnoticed. When I returned, I forgot to take the shorts off again. My mind was preoccupied with the conversation I had had with a female student who otherwise would have snubbed me in my little gown and hat. But my mother was too busy with dinnertime to notice who was wearing what. I ate my late dinner, washed it down with plenty of water, and went to bed watching the ceiling in a mix of great satisfaction about my concert night, pain from my stomachache, and soothing sound from the raindrops and the showers. In the morning, my mother escorted me halfway down the road in my wet pants, shouting and pushing the back of my head: “Hurry up before you are late.” It was very embarrassing for me to go to school in a uniform that was drenched in my own urine. As soon as she left me alone to complete the rest of the long walk to school, I had another idea. Instead of going to school, I attempted to hang out with some wayward boys in the township. But they did not want me around. They always hang out on the street corners because they do not like to go to school. They gamble, pick pockets, and steal money and food from local merchants. They call me a coward because I do not have the nerve to join in their activities. It was inconceivable to me to go to school in soiled and stinking pants owing to the provocation I would attract. I have been the butt of provocation for many things, from ragged and dirty uniforms to bare feet to lack of money or food to eat during lunchtime at school.

Continued on page 16
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Thus, many students do not want to be friends me, which always attracts provocation upon those who do so. On days that I did not go to school, I would be all alone. At about 2 p.m., I sat in my usual lookout post on a concrete slab by a building in the Maraka compound. At a corner, at the edge of a cluster of houses, I sat hunched against the wall, patiently looking straight ahead for the women to come out with food remnants. There is always plenty of food here in this overpopulated immigrant community of Gambian diamond traders. The population here is dense, the area congested. The roofs of the houses almost touch each other. The drainage system is shoddy. Overflowing rubbish runs down half-open gutters into a little river called Mwende. Mwende runs down adjacent to the Maraka compound. I can see the women as they come to empty garbage bins and return to their houses. The stench of food, flooded gutters, and human waste is very strong in the afternoon at the Maraka compound. I can also smell fresh food from households that were either eating or dining. At around this same time, every day, a waste truck pulls up to pump out human excrement from a latrine, or some broken pipes are oozing waste, especially those at the back of the buildings, forcefully emitting foul-smelling steam like mini volcanoes. Besides, the Maraka compound is entirely unlike everything in my own neighborhood, where our bodies feed on their own muscles during the rainy season. Basic human needs, from food to clothing, are plentiful here all year round. Even the food remnants that I am patiently waiting for is sufficient to feed several families a few miles south. As I pondered why these Maraka immigrants waste so much food while the locals go with empty stomachs, from where I was seated, I had brought Endimbaekena here once after that and he has since remembered to come back on time, on a daily basis. He was seated at a visible distance, but too focused to notice me. The acute concentration had overcome even his powerful olfactory sense. We were both looking in the same direction from different angles, in great expectation for the Maraka women to bring forth the food remnants to the trash bins. Many other dogs had also taken strategic positions. They too were waiting patiently for the women. But others growled, snarled, and barked at each other, making a brave dogs’ battle spectacle. From over the rooftops on the opposite side from my position, vultures stretched their wings and let go their crooked-clawed clutch on mango trees close by the garbage bins in this no man’s land, then landed on the bins in a single jump to scavenge on the carcasses. They scared away the agama lizards that were feeding there, and the lizards glided up the walls of the buildings in haste. Each time I cross Endimbaekena’s path here, we both walk back home together, bellies full, and my mother expresses great appreciation and love for him. Indeed, she does not know of my secret with Endimbaekena.

*Endimbaekena means “where there’s little for survival.”

As I pondered why these Maraka immigrants waste so much food while the locals go with empty stomachs, from where I was seated, I saw Endimbaekena, our family dog. I saw Endimbaekena, our family dog. Endimbaekena and Fidel were puppies when my brother and I found them at this same place just a few days after they were born. We snatched both puppies away before their mother returned from fending for food in the garbage bins and took them home. The other puppy was hot tempered and we named him Fidel because my brother and I had listened to a European evangelist who had mentioned in his sermon the name of a hot-tempered communist. A carpenter who needed a hot-tempered puppy took Fidel off our hands.
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“It is a city unsullied by worship of idols, where none has prostrated save to God the compassionate, a refuge of Scholarly and righteous folk, a haunt of saints and ascetics, and meeting place of caravans and boats.” (John Hunwick: Timbuktu & the Songhay Empire)
Charles Meheux of Darcars Mazda Says Car Sales is Not Just what you Think

by Sidie Yahya Tunis

Many negative articles have been written about car sales people, especially in the mainstream media, that express skepticism of the industry in some of the most demonic manner. With such skepticism based on media portrayal of the industry, Sidie came across Charles Meheux of Darcars Mazda and used cars, whose take on the industry is quite contrary to what many people have been thinking about cars sales people. He is a many times winner of the Best DarStars sales award and has a host of repeat customers under his belt, which certainly indicate that he has been doing something different. He gives us an insight of how he has been selling cars differently:

ST: Mr. Meheux, you are one of the most successful sales people at Darcars, what is the magic behind the success?

CM: Car sales is not just about what you think: The magic behind the success is professionalism. We treat the customers right here at Darcars all the time without fail; we care about the customers as persons first, then as prospects. As prospects, we follow up on appointments, call them regularly and remind them about service on their cars. The most important thing is continues service to the customer after sales. My experience in dealing with all types of cars at Darcars, be it new or used Toyota and Mazda gives me an edge in helping the customer with service issues. I have worked for the company for many years and have built good working relationship with my customers, which give me good referral opportunities.

ST: Most Africans, especially those that have concern about credit ratings, think it is difficult or impossible to own a car, do you have a particular message you want to send them?

CM: Regardless of credit problems, we at Darcars work hard to provide our customers and potential customers great services. We ensure that they get reliable cars of their choice even when they have not so good credit ratings. We have financing options that are suitable for those kinds of customers and try hard to work around their credits. My message to those people is come to Darcars Mazda and drive out with a car or truck of your choice. Over two thousand five hundred cars, trucks and SUVs new and pre-owned are available to choose from.

ST: Darcars supports African communities and sells cars to many African embassies in the United States. How strong is the relationship between Darcars and the African community and how do you intend to keep that relationship?

CM: We have been able to maintain our relationship with African embassies through the good services we provide them and we hope to continue doing that. We are also popular in African communities because we embrace and support cultural diversity. Our sales teams here and at Darcars Toyota are much diversified. You can see people from different parts of the world and from different countries in Africa. The world is well represented here at Darcars.

ST: Can you share your experience with your most challenging customer with us?

CM: My challenge with customers mostly has to do with financing. Many customers come in with fair or no credits and ask for terms that most banks do not accept and when you are faced with situation like that, you have to try hard to get the term the customer wants. I had a situation where in a customer wanted a longer-term offer with a lower interest rates and monthly payments. The bank, however, wanted a shorter term, to be exact, 48 months instead of 60 months. It was a difficult situation, but at the end, the owner of the vehicle intervened and accepted the customer’s terms and even offered to help with his down payment. That of course was a rare case.

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