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Africans Rising

For Unity, Justice, Peace & Dignity



Africans Rising
Stories from the Movement

December 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The signs are clear on the wall. That the experiences of many Africans sojourning their own continent have been one of agony and trauma. The continent is still being 'haunted' by the artificial borders created out of colonialism, and that the 'Borderless Africa Campaign' spearheaded by Africans Rising (AR), is the way to go, if the continent should foster the free movement of people.

The stories as told by a few travellers from across the continent, tell the harrowing difficulties the Africans face trying to sojourn neighbouring countries. Sometimes, it is easier for an African traveller to get to an European country than doing so in a country on the continent, irrespective of the geographical proximity. The extortion of money from unsuspecting victims, harassment, cumbersome visa applications and the unprofessionalism of some African immigration officials, particularly at the borders, have been the order of the day. It should not be lost on anyone that the success of some initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) hinged on the free movement of people and goods.

Borderless Africa is a decentralised, people-owned campaign with an aim to push for the free movement of African people and goods in Africa. The overall goal of this campaign is to achieve an Africa where Africans can move around our own continent without the current border restrictions in place, for better trade, job creation, solidarity and economic development. The campaign pushes for the ratification and implementation of the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in all African countries.

Activities such as the People's Petition, marches, concerts, football matches among others are some of the activities that have been organised as part of the campaign.

More than 20,000 signatures have been collected through collaborative efforts by members of Africans Rising in 30 African countries and the diaspora.

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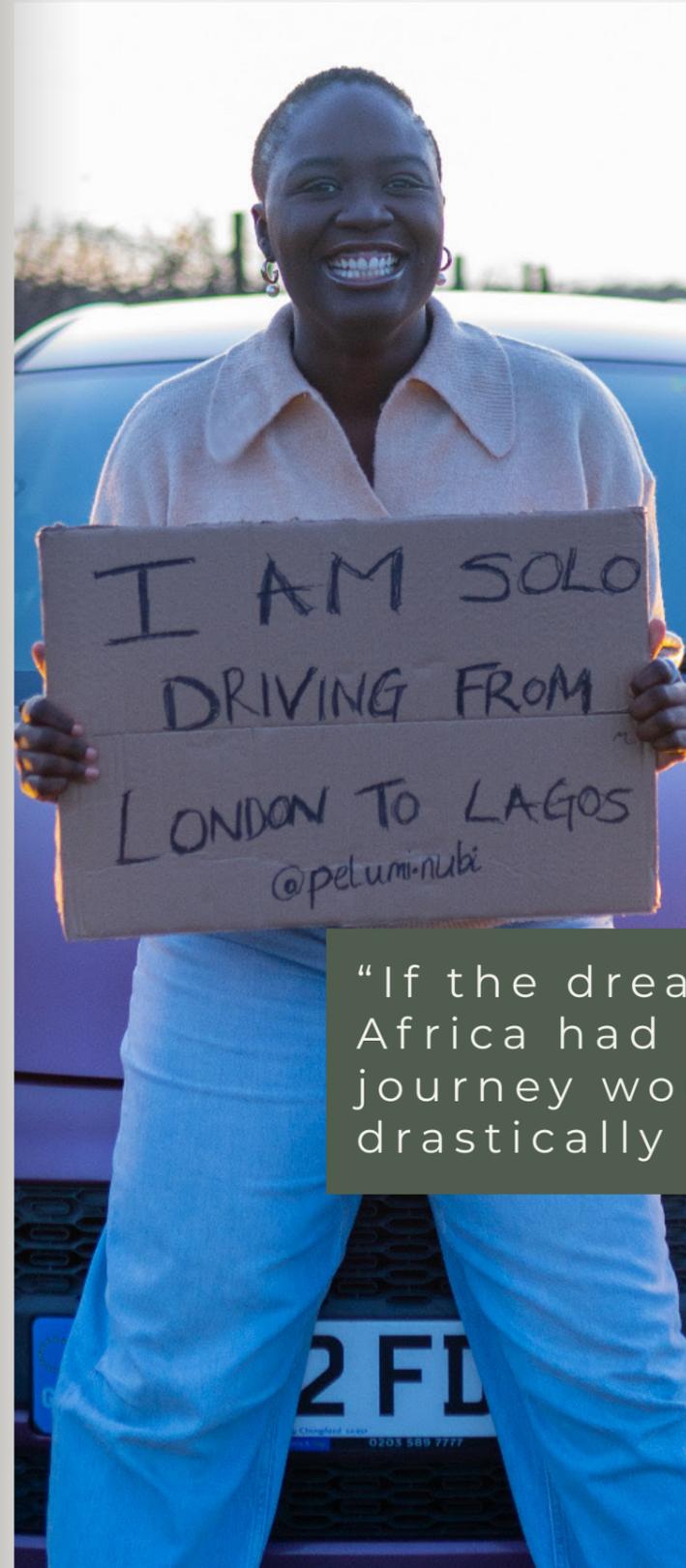
01 PELUMI NUBI



Success Story

First female to complete a solo drive from London to Lagos - 10,000 kms in 74 days

Pelumi Nubi, a Lagos State Ambassador for Tourism and advocate for Borderless Africa. Through her work, she showcases the beauty and diversity of Africa while advocating for free movement across the continent. She has visited over 80 countries across six continents, often exploring less commonly visited destinations. She is a purpose-driven travel content creator, adventurer and cultural ambassador with a mission to inspire and empower women to travel boldly.



“If the dream of Borderless Africa had been realized, my journey would have been drastically different”. She poised.

In 2024, she became the first female to complete a solo drive from London to Lagos covering over 10,000 Kms in just 74 days. Known for her mantra, “The magic is in the doing,” she champions the idea that bold actions and intentional steps create transformative change. During her journey, she travelled through the following African countries: Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. Pelumi vividly recalls one harrowing experience at Ivory Coast which almost resulted in a tragic loss of her life. When she arrived at the border at 10am GMT, she experienced unreasonable delay and wasn’t allowed to proceed until 7 p.m. due to a demand for a bribe by the immigration officers. This forced her to drive late into the night, leading to a car accident. The situation could have resulted in a tragic loss of life, highlighting the dangers of corruption and inefficiency at African borders.

She further narrates how a similar issue arose at the Liberia border, where she was stranded for two days in a row. As Pelumi puts it, “the lack of transparency and the unspoken requirement to have ‘connections’ in order to navigate the system made the process unnecessarily exhausting and costly. Such challenges create significant barriers for African travellers who wish to explore their own continent”.



Her drive from London to Lagos was however inspired by a deep desire to push past her comfort zone and challenge herself to accomplish something audacious. She also asserts that it was deeply personal—connecting two places she calls home, London and Lagos, through an overland journey that she views as symbolic of bridging her identities and showcasing the possibilities of connection across borders. Furthermore, she wanted to address the glaring lack of representation in the overland travel space. “African and Black travellers are often underrepresented in narratives of adventure and exploration, and I sought to change that by visibly taking on this ambitious challenge”, she states. When asked how this journey aligns with the vision of the Borderless Africa campaign, she said that it emphasises the importance of seamless mobility and highlights the potential for shared growth when barriers are removed. It was an opportunity to show what is possible when we dream boldly and act intentionally, championing a future where the African continent is truly interconnected.

Visa nightmare and her call for actualising the Borderless Africa

One major challenge she faced was the cost and complexity of obtaining visas. Despite being a Nigerian citizen and travelling within the ECOWAS region, astonishingly, she had to rely on her British passport for certain parts of the journey to save costs. This was primarily because the ECOWAS visa, which is supposed to facilitate free movement, was not truly free. Payments were often required at borders, but many of these payments were unofficial, and receipts could not be provided. Due to lack of transparency and regulation at border crossings, it created unnecessary delays and increased costs. Some borders required extensive negotiations, and in other instances, she was met with demands for additional “fees” beyond what was officially stated. Pelumi elucidates how the absence of a harmonised and transparent system made these challenges even more pronounced. Her experience underscored the urgent need for streamlined visa policies to promote the free movement of people across the region without financial or bureaucratic hurdles. A borderless Africa would not only foster unity but also unlock incredible opportunities for cultural exchange, tourism, and development across the region.



Her parting shot, “To those countries that have not yet ratified the Protocol on Free Movement of People: Africa’s strength lies in its unity. By enabling free movement, you empower citizens to connect, innovate, and thrive across borders. The dream of a prosperous and borderless Africa cannot be realised without your commitment. It is not just about politics but about the shared future of our people. I urge you to act boldly, with the understanding that your decision will shape the future of the continent. Let us tear down these barriers and build the Africa we want to see—an Africa where mobility is a right, not a privilege”.

02

ILERIOLUWA BABALOBI

A Bold Journey: Connecting Africa by Road



Ilerioluwa Babalobi, a Nigerian traveller and adventurer, is on an inspiring mission to visit every African country without flying – a journey that promotes the vision of a borderless Africa. Starting in April 2024 from Lagos, Nigeria, he has travelled through eight African countries, including Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Liberia. His goal? To set a Guinness World Record and, more importantly, to show that a truly united Africa is possible. Babalobi faces many obstacles along the way. Unlike European travellers, he must secure expensive visas and often faces strict requirements like invitation letters and bank statements. The costs are steep, with visas alone expected to total around \$7,000, even for him as a West African with access to visa-free entry to some countries.

“I first conceived of this journey sometime in May 2023, and I was surprised to discover that no other African had undertaken a similar journey. Not surprising, because the challenges are arduous”, he asserts.

“I started this journey to do many things- I wanted to fulfil a lifelong dream to visit all African countries, I wanted to tell a positive story of Africa and also to prove that we have come a long way since we started.”



Despite these challenges, Babalobi's journey has taken him closer to the heart of African society, as he uses only public transportation, which aligns with Guinness World Record rules. This approach allows him to experience Africa as it truly is, meeting people in bustling markets, quiet villages, and vibrant towns. His journey is a call to action for more straightforward travel across Africa and policies that make it easier for Africans to explore their continent. He is back in Nigeria, gathering visas and meeting officials to prepare for the next leg of his adventure. Though many visas remain, his hope is strong, and he expects to have permission for over 40 countries by the time he resumes his journey. He encourages all Africans to dream of a united continent without borders, allowing them to explore its beauty freely. As he travels, Babalobi shares his experiences online, inviting others to see the unity in Africa.

He urges Africans everywhere to push for a borderless continent. **“It's time to connect Africa,”** he says, passionately believing that a united Africa could achieve remarkable things. With each border crossed, Ilerioluwa Babalobi isn't just making a journey; he's building hope for an Africa without limits.



03

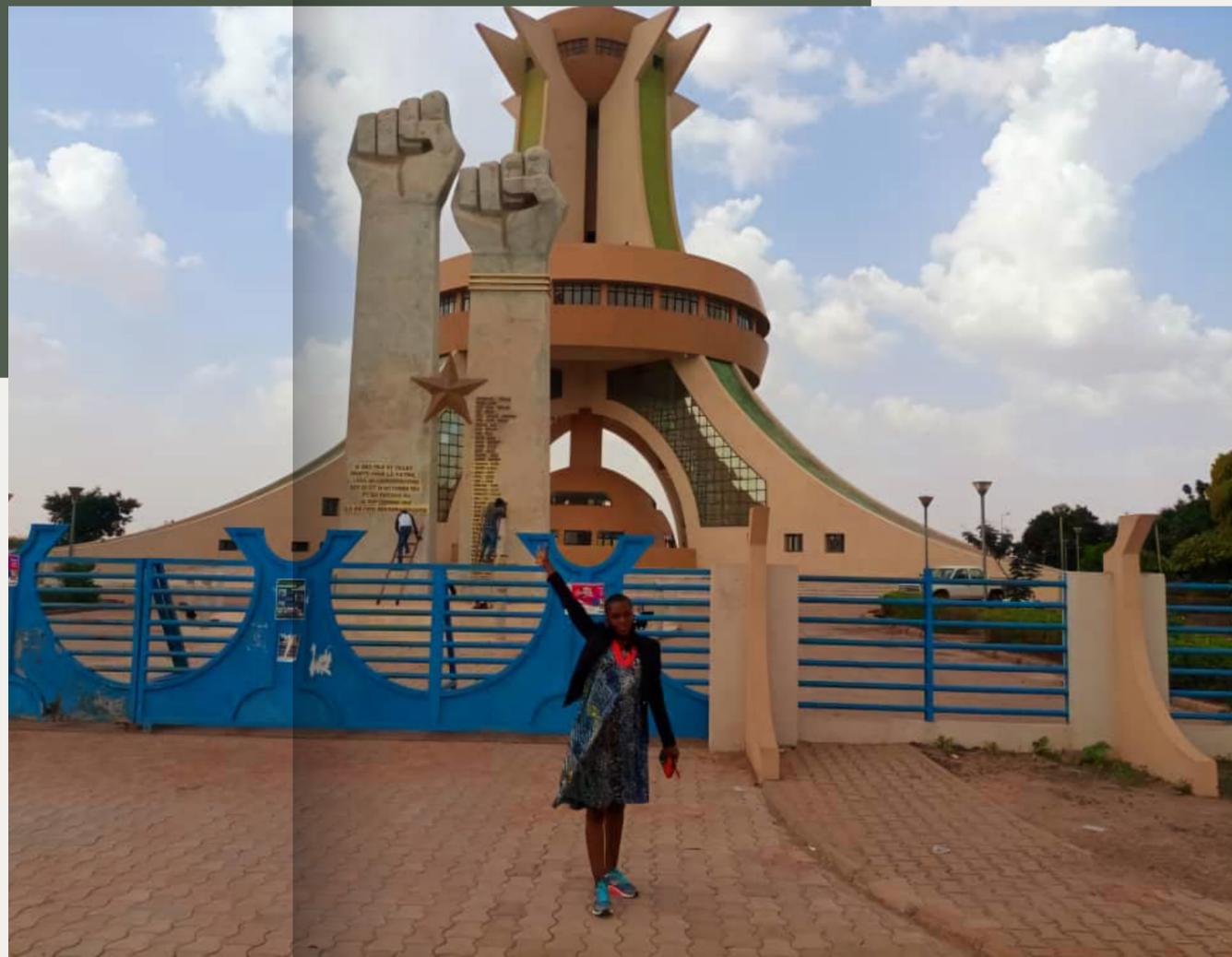
EMMA NYERERE

Calls for removal of visas and all the borders set by colonialists and exploiters

Emma Lwaitama Nyerere, a dedicated African community activist, believes in the power of a united Africa. Her journeys across the continent are a testament to her commitment and a reminder of the barriers that exist between African countries. Her travels to Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast revealed the frustrating realities of visa restrictions and disjointed travel routes that make it challenging for Africans to freely navigate their own continent.

“Some of the challenges I experienced stem from the fixed permits that are issued to allow entry from one country to another within the borders set by the colonialists who ruled our African continent, our land,” Emma Nyerere narrates.

In October 2021, Emma travelled to Burkina Faso to commemorate Thomas Sankara, the revolutionary leader who fought for a united and independent Africa. Despite being an event celebrating African heritage, Emma was required to pay \$50 in foreign currency for an entry permit. Additionally, her travel route was surprisingly complex. Limited by flight options within Africa, she had to fly outside the continent only to re-enter again to reach her destination. The travel process took a toll on her time and resources, and she reflected on how challenging it is to traverse Africa, even as a native of the continent.



Her trip to Ivory Coast in December 2023 posed different obstacles. Invited to the Women's League Congress of the African People's Party, Emma encountered delays in obtaining her entry permit, which had to be applied online. Even on the day of her travel, the permit was not ready. Upon arrival in Ivory Coast, she was held at the airport for several hours, waiting for the final entry document. These experiences highlighted the hurdles Africans face in engaging with their African counterparts. "I had to wait in the airport for several hours until the permit was completed. So for those two trips I had to stay for many hours in the airport waiting for those permits to allow me to enter those countries and also spend a long time and several days for flights that I have to go outside the continent of Africa and come back in again in order to reach other countries, and many airlines do not have direct flights within our African continent," said Emma.



Emma's journeys underline a broader issue: while Africans share a deep-rooted history, they remain divided by borders and bureaucracies imposed during colonial times. She envisions a future where Africans can travel freely across their continent, building mutual understanding, fostering economic growth, and strengthening bonds. Emma Nyerere's experiences are a call to action. Her story urges Africans and leaders alike to reconsider the visa systems and flight restrictions that divide them and to work together to build a truly united, accessible, and empowered Africa. "True development for now and in the future comes from unity. These permits from one country to another within our African continent should be removed from all the borders set by colonialists and exploiters," she added.



04

CHARLES AKPO



Success Story

A Tale of Injustice and Discrimination in African Borders

Born and raised in a small town known as Tarkwa in the Western region of Ghana, Charles Akpo, a teacher and content creator recounts a horrifying experience that exposes structural injustices at Africa borders. His both parents are of Ghanaian and Nigerian origin. Stories like his highlight how urgently cross-border behaviours and policies need to be changed as Africa struggles with integration and unity.

A disturbing image of how African nationals are frequently the targets of needless and humiliating treatment is painted by Charles' journey across many West African borders in May 1995. He had to cross the borders between Nigeria and Seme, Benin and Hilachodji and Togo, and Aflao and Togo and Ghana on his way from Lagos, Nigeria, to Accra, Ghana. Charles underwent a humiliating body search at the Seme border, where he was told to undress in a tiny room as authorities looked for illegal goods and cash. At the Aflao border, he was subjected to the same level of search despite his compliance and the lack of any incriminating objects.

“On arrival, the Customs and Immigration Service personnel and officials subjected me to a humiliating body-search. I was led to a small room and ordered to undress, hoping to find some excess dollars or exhibit on me. Thankfully, nothing incriminating was found on me. I spent about forty-five minutes, first at the Seme border and later at the Aflao border, recording the same experience,” says Charles.

The glaring difference in treatment between African and non-African tourists was possibly the most noticeable. African travellers faced lengthy lines, intrusive searches, and continual monitoring when crossing borders, whereas Chinese and Indian travellers saw little disruption. “While we, black Africans were ordered to line-up in a separate long queue for a long body-search, the white people were just allowed freely to cross and continue their journey without hindrance,” he added.

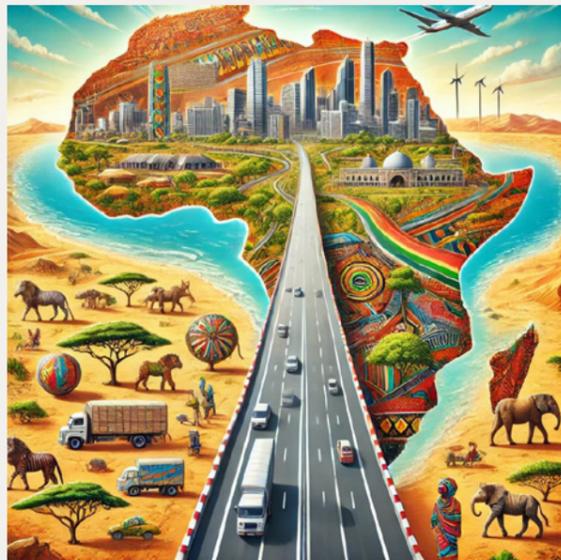
The boundaries were not the end of Charles' experience. He noticed an incredible 22 security checkpoints between Lagos and Seme, all of which were staffed by immigration or police officials who frequently caused needless delays for passengers. There were eight more obstacles in the area between Aflao and Accra.

When Charles was moving his mother's bones (remains) to Nigeria for burial in February 2024, he encountered yet another terrible injustice. Security personnel insisted on removing the body from the ambulance for examination at the Sege border in Ghana's Volta Region. The conduct highlights the lack of professionalism and empathy among some border security staff, which he felt was needless and rude. Charles links his experiences to the larger Borderless Africa Campaign, which supports the African Union's Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and calls for the removal of borders from the colonial era. He thinks that free mobility may help African individuals greatly on a social, economic and political level.

05

JANET MAWUENA DEEGBE

A Journey of Deceit: How JJ Mensah Was Financially Manipulated on the Road to Abidjan



The prospect of a quick and reasonably priced trip to Abidjan on October 18, 2024, became a frustrating adventure of financial manipulation and dishonesty for one JJ Mensah, a Ghanaian traveller. What began as an effort to reduce travel costs swiftly devolved into a trip full of deception, extortion, and subpar accommodations.

In order to save between 130 and 280 Ghana cedis, Mensah decided to take the local transport route to Abidjan rather than the more official State Transport Company (STC) bus, which costs 630 cedis. But in practice, what appeared cost-effective on paper ended up costing far more. Mensah encountered unanticipated costs and delays on the journey from Accra to Elubo and then to Adzopé in Côte d'Ivoire, overshadowing the early savings. His trip took more than 13 hours, which is equivalent to the STC's 12-hour schedule, but he was not as safe or comfortable. The pivotal moment in Mensah's experience occurred at the border with Côte d'Ivoire, when he was susceptible to manipulation due to a lack of defined protocol and linguistic problems.

“I was asked to pay 10,000 CFA to cross the border and get my passport stamped. However, I clearly heard the officer say 5,000 CFA,”

Along the road, drivers took advantage of newcomers, particularly those who did not speak French, by abusing their power and system knowledge. According to Mensah, he felt like a commodity to be consumed, as the drivers made up issues in order to get more money from him. “The drivers created issues around immigration that didn't exist, just to make a profit,” Mensah noted.

The terrible state of the buses made Mensah's experience even worse. He travelled in a corroded car with sharp metal edges sticking out dangerously and holes in the bodywork on the three-hour drive from Adzopé to Abidjan. Passengers had to endure an uncomfortable and dangerous voyage as a result of rain seeping through the vehicle.

To make matters worse, travellers were assessed an additional 1,000 CFA for their bags, which seemed excessive considering the poor condition of the car.

Moreover, numerous police stops along the road provided opportunities for additional cash manipulation. Mensah saw the driver bribing police to get around inspections or make the trip easier for passengers without proper documentation. Money was exchanged at each of the more than six stops between Adzopé and Abidjan.



06

DAVY FIDEL

A Journey of firsts and new experiences

On August 28, 2024, a journey from Lagos, Nigeria, to Accra, Ghana, will not only signal the beginning of a thrilling trip for many, but also an amazing experience for one traveller. Davy Fidel, an ardent member of the Africans Rising movement was making his first road trip to Ghana to attend the 2024 All-African Movement Assembly. What he believed to be a simple excursion quickly became a difficult and unforgettable adventure.

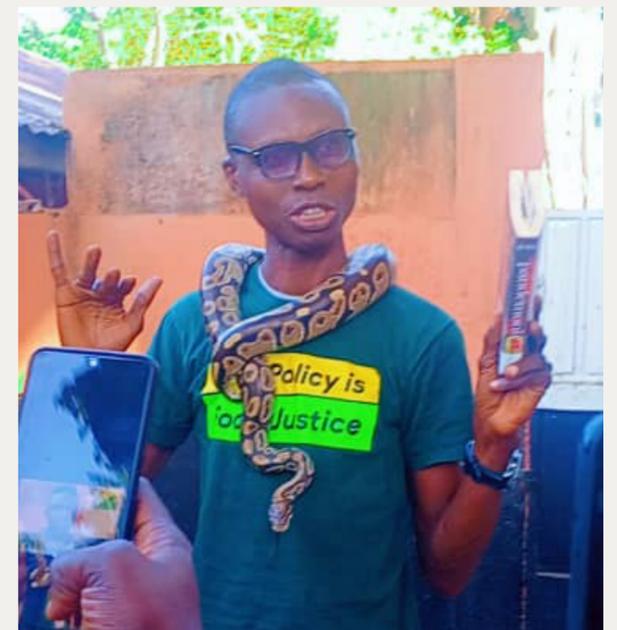
Before leaving, Fidel had taken all the required precautions. In accordance with international guidelines for crossing African borders, he had a valid passport, yellow card, and completed all necessary medical exams. However, even with his preparation, he was unable to foresee the difficulties and surprises that would arise along the route.



Fidel got up at four in the morning to get ready for the lengthy journey that lay ahead. He headed to the meeting place where other travellers had assembled after making sure he had brought everything he would need. By 6:30 a.m., the group—which comprised individuals from several Nigerian states, including Kano, Abuja, Maiduguri, Ibadan, Port Harcourt, and Akwa Ibom—was prepared to go. There was a tangible sense of excitement in the air. The morning was serene and quiet, which was ideal for the lengthy journey ahead, despite the fact that the previous day had been rainy.

The bus, which had been somewhat delayed, ultimately left Lagos at 7 a.m. Mr. Francis, the driver, was an expert at negotiating the highways and borders, particularly because he knew the local languages, including French, which was essential for travelling through the Francophone nations. The drive's experience and the group's overall enthusiasm gave Fidel comfort. While the bus travelled south, Samuel conversed with his other travellers. One such traveller was from northern Nigeria, and he also mentioned that this was his first time taking the trip to Accra. The two discussed their expectations for the trip and shared anecdotes.

As a bookworm, Fidel read for part of the trip, but there were periodically teasing remarks to break the hush. But the trip was more complicated than Fidel had anticipated. Travelling across borders was more difficult than he had anticipated, even though he had expected it to be easy. Every border crossing presented a unique set of difficulties and unexpected events. Long lines, document inspections, and the occasional annoyance of bureaucracy were all part of the border crossing process. But Fidel was ready; he had his yellow card, which travellers were required to present at every border, and all the other documents he needed. For Fidel, the atmosphere at each border was one of the most unforgettable aspects of the trip, not the passport stamps or the administrative roadblocks. It was both intimidating and thrilling to be surrounded by the buzz and bustle of the border towns. Long after the trip ended, Fidel remembered, he could still hear the sounds of the border crossings. He would be affected by the sensory overload for years to come.



07



STELLA ALINE RUKUNDO

Burundian Traveler Blocked at Rwanda Border

Stella Aline Rukundo, a Burundian national and Vice President of the Ndimuto Sindigito association, revealed a terrible event from 2017 that exemplifies the difficulties many Africans endure when travelling inside the continent.

Despite being an experienced traveller who has visited eight African nations, Rukundo encountered an unexpected and distressing blockage when attempting to cross the border into Rwanda.

Rukundo's journey to Rwanda began as a regular one, when she travelled from her home in Bujumbura Commune, Muha, Burundi, to Kigali, Rwanda, to see friends. When she presented her travel permit, known as a Passy, border officers asked her a series of probing and increasingly angry questions.

Rukundo recalled, "They asked me which province of Rwanda I was going to; Kigali was my response. They then questioned me who I would be seeing and what I intended to do there. I said that I was going to see some pals. When they wanted the names and contacts of my acquaintances, I refused to answer."

The officials were enraged by her refusal and held her for four hours at the border before denying her entry and telling her to go back to Burundi.



08

FORGTCHWEI KETCHUISY TEM



A climate justice defender and human rights advocate

A climate justice defender and human rights advocate Forgtchwei Ketchuisy Tem was recently detained at the Kenya-Tanzania border on his way back to Nairobi from the Climate Justice Camp (CJC) in Arusha.

The individual, whose work focuses on assisting at-risk climate activists, described an unpleasant and unfair encounter with immigration officials that left them feeling extorted and helpless. Before embarking on the journey, the defender, a Cameroonian national with a valid visa in Nairobi, double-checked all travel papers. They had entered Kenya on a tourist visa in July 2024 and had successfully extended it to cover their stay until January 2025

However, when they discovered that leaving Kenya and returning required a new visa, they proactively filed for and paid for an e-visa while still in Tanzania. On October 13, 2024, they presented a valid E-visa at the border, but a Kenyan immigration official denied them re-entry.

Despite the fact that all legal procedures had been fulfilled, the officer insisted on receiving an extra Ksh 10,000 (about \$77) before stamping the passport.

“I argued that my visa was current and that I had already paid for the new one. But the officer refused to budge. They held onto my passport and delayed the bus I was travelling on. The pressure from fellow passengers made me give in and pay the fee to avoid further delays” said Tem.