


SAYD frica Day Book



Our SAYD Africa Day Book is a vibrant celebration of the continent's soul, rich in colour, culture, and creativity. Each page brings together diverse voices, stories, and ideas that reflect Africa's past, present, and bold future. From ancestral wisdom to modern innovation, this collection honours the many textures of African identity. Whether you're drawn to powerful poetry, bold art, or visionary thought, there's something here through the eyes of young diplomats.



Dedication

“We are the ones we have been waiting for.”

—June Jordan

AFRICA

DAY

A **Creative** Collection

What It Means **To Be African**
Through The Eyes of **Young Diplomats**

MAY 2025

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Foreword

Africa Day is more than a commemoration. It is a call to reflection, celebration, and renewal. It marks the birth of the African Union and the enduring spirit of unity among the peoples of this vast and vibrant continent. More importantly, it is a moment to listen to the voices that will shape Africa's future. This book is a tribute to that future.

Within these pages, you will find a compelling collection of pieces created by young people who do not just dream of becoming diplomats, but are already ambassadors of their cultures, their communities, and their convictions. With pens, brushes, and voices, they speak to the heart of Africa's hopes, challenges, and boundless potential.

Their words are not rehearsed in diplomatic chambers or polished by protocol. They are raw, resonant, and real. Each contribution in this volume reflects a young mind wrestling with the past, engaging the present, and imagining a continent that is sovereign, peaceful, and dignified in the community of nations.

Africa is often spoken about from the outside. Here, it speaks for itself through its youth, through creativity, and through dreams that know no borders.

May this collection inspire you, challenge you, and remind you that the next generation of African leadership is not waiting to be called. It is already rising!

President

Silethubuhle Moyo

Preface

In the story of Africa, each generation faces the call to rise, to stand for something larger than themselves and to shape the narrative of a continent that is rich not only in resources but in spirit. This book is born of that call. It is a vibrant collection of reflections, art, and voices that celebrate the power of young diplomats to reimagine Africa.

Africa Day is more than a date on the calendar. It is more than the 25th of May every year. It is a moment to honour our shared history, to embrace the bonds that unite us, and to look forward with unwavering hope. It is a time to acknowledge how far we have come, while daring to dream of how much further we can go. It is a reminder that Africa's story has always been written by those who refuse to be silent. As we reflect on these pages, let us remember that Africa's greatest resource is not buried in the earth. It is alive in the hearts, the minds, and the dreams of its people. In every painting, every story, and every reflection shared here, we see the heartbeat of a continent that refuses to be defined by limitations. Africa is not a continent of problems, but a continent of possibilities.

The young diplomats whose work fills these pages are living proof of Africa's undying spirit. From the quiet strength of grassroots communities to the confident strides on the global stage, they show us that resilience is not a distant memory. It is the force that shapes the future. They remind us that true leadership means daring to dream beyond the boundaries we inherited, to build systems that are inclusive, just, and alive with possibility. I am reminded of the words I once shared, "complacency is not a luxury our generation can afford." We are living in a time when the world whispers of Africa's potential, but for us, that whisper is a roar. True leadership demands not only courage, but a fierce commitment to rise together.

Africa's future is built, not waited for. Together, we shape it!

Dean of Diplomats

Tawanda Dzingayi

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the President of the Southern African Young Diplomats (SAYD), Silethubuhle Moyo, the Vice President, Nicole Duma, and Chief Operations Officer, Bessie Ndebele, for believing in this vision and for their unwavering support and commitment. Their faith in the potential of this project has been a guiding light from its inception to its completion.

To the Dean of Diplomats - Tawanda Dzingayi, your wisdom, encouragement, hard work, and unwavering dedication have truly brought this book to life. You stood in the gap between dreams and reality with your creativity. Thank you for inspiring the aspiring diplomats and myself to always bring our best. Thank you for reminding us that we are never alone in our pursuit of a greater Africa.

To my aspiring diplomats; Annita Mutubuki, Nodeshah Maingehama, Thandeka Chiramba, Amos Mucheriwa and Mellisa Piosi, whose voices fill these pages—your courage to share your dreams, your art, and your reflections on what you see Africa as, as well as your dedication to being the voices of peace and advocates for the end of war is a testament to the strength and spirit of this book. This book would not exist without you, and it is richer for your contributions.

To Africa, thank you for being both our canvas and our muse. May we never stop telling your story, and may we always honour the promise of what you can become.

Above all, I thank God for His grace and guidance throughout this journey. For every word written, every idea shared, and every dream that found its place on these pages, I am forever grateful.

Young Diplomat

Ruth Tsanga

Introduction

This book is a heartfelt exploration of Africa's rich history, diverse cultures, and resilience, seen through the eyes of young African diplomats. It invites readers to delve into the continent's complexities and beauty, urging them to recognise their role as active participants in shaping Africa's future.

The narratives challenge readers to confront issues like poverty and inequality while inspiring action and unity. Emphasising collective strength and shared responsibility, the book calls for collaboration to transform Africa into a beacon of progress. Every voice and story matters, and together, we can rise to meet challenges with resilience and pride.

Chief Operations Officer

Bessie Ndebele

This book is not just a collection of creative pieces—it is a journey through the eyes, minds and hearts of young African diplomats.

As you turn the pages, let every "Did You Know?" and "African Spotlights" draw you deeper into the stories of our continent, while the diplomatic reflections" from the various aspiring diplomats such as the poems, stories, and art remind you of the power of your own voice.

Each piece is a window into **What It Means To Be African, Through The Eyes of Young Diplomats**, a spark for reflection and a call to be part of the solution, not just an observer of the challenges we face.

Let these pages inspire you, guide you, and above all, remind you that you, too, have a role to play in shaping Africa's future—"no matter how small" it may seem.

Young Diplomats

Southern African Young Diplomats (SAYD)

The African Tree—Annita Mutubuki

"Africa is rising, like a young, strong tree after colonialism, growing patiently despite challenges."

That's the image Annita Mutubuki carries with her. As a young diplomat, it shapes how she sees our continent: a place of deep history, vibrant cultures, and profound resilience.



"The painting of a tree is a potent symbol that represents my understanding of African identity."

The Tree as Our Identity

1. Bare but Strong Roots: Those gnarled, exposed and weathered roots speak to the immense challenges Africa has endured. Yet, their strength is undeniable. They represent our continent's incredible resilience – how we withstand adversity and build thriving communities right where we stand.

2. Different Coloured Leaves: Look at the canopy. The explosion of colours isn't just beautiful; it's the very essence of us. Each hue represents a unique culture, a distinct heritage, the incredible richness of Africa. It shouts the need for inclusivity and true understanding among us all.

3. Huge and Strong, Brown Stem: That solid trunk is our foundation. It speaks to the backbone of African society – its ability to support and nurture its people. It's grounded, natural, authentic, as well as deeply connected to the earth and the core of who we are.

What This Means for African Diplomacy

The painting isn't just art; it's a guide for how we engage with the world:

1. Decision-Making through a Decolonial Lens: It compels us to:

- **Unmask Epistemic Injustice:** We must actively recognise and challenge how Western knowledge systems dominate diplomacy, silencing or erasing non-Western perspectives.
- **Promote Epistemic Justice:** Our diplomacy needs to be truly inclusive and equitable, valuing diverse knowledge systems and lived experiences.
- **Decentre Western Narratives:** We have to shift the focus away from solely Western approaches, towards nuanced, context-specific understandings of global relations. Our tree grows from our soil.

2. Celebrate Our Diversity:

Just like the leaves, our strength is in our variety. Leaders must actively promote unity and cooperation, while wholeheartedly embracing celebrations like the National Day of the African Child – moments that honour and strengthen our shared heritage.

3. Build Strong Foundations:

That mighty stem reminds us that robust institutions are non-negotiable. Developing them is fundamental for Africa's sustained growth and progress. They are the trunk supporting our future.

4. Champion Inclusivity:

For our diplomacy to be truly effective, all voices must be heard and represented. Diversity isn't just an aesthetic; it's essential to our strength on the global stage.

This symbol – the rising African tree – isn't just powerful. "As a young diplomat, I believe it might just inspire a new generation of leaders to fiercely champion African interests and values worldwide."

African Spotlight

Nelson Mandela, South Africa



In His Youth...

As a young law student and activist, Nelson Mandela co-founded the African National Congress Youth League. He organised campaigns against apartheid, using his voice, education, and courage to challenge an unjust system. His journey to presidency began with youth-led resistance.

"The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow."

—Nelson Mandela

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Youthful voices can shift history.
- Courage and resilience go hand in hand especially in the face of challenges.
- Have a clear vision for the future.

African Spotlight

Wangari Maathai, Kenya

In Her Youth...

Wangari studied Biological Sciences abroad and returned to Kenya with a fierce determination to help rural communities. In her 30s, she began planting trees with women—linking environmental justice to women’s empowerment. This movement became the award-winning Green Belt Movement. She was the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.



“It’s the little things citizens do. That’s what will make the difference.
My little thing is planting trees.”
—Wangari Maathai

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Every small action by young people has the power to lead to significant positive change.
- Real leadership uplifts the marginalised and overlooked in society.
- Protecting the environment is protecting the people.

Fashion



Did You Know?

African prints and textiles like Kente, Ankara, and Shweshwe have inspired global fashion houses including Dior, Valentino, and Stella McCartney.

Challenge Turned Strength

Once dismissed as "traditional" and excluded from haute couture, African fashion is now redefining global runways—thanks to designers who took pride in African heritage.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Celebrate the local and influence the global. African identity is not a trend. It is timeless power.

Sports

Did You Know?

Africa has produced global icons like Eliud Kipchoge, Caster Semenya, Didier Drogba, and the first African team (Morocco) to reach the FIFA World Cup semifinals (2022).



The Springboks - South Africa's national rugby team are the only rugby team to have won every Rugby World Cup final that they have played in. They also have the most tournament wins at the Rugby World Cup. Kirsty Coventry is the first African Zimbabwean female to become the President of the International Olympic Committee.

Challenge Turned Strength

Despite limited infrastructure and support, African athletes dominate through grit, talent, and spirit.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Lack of resources is not lack of greatness—innovation and perseverance are diplomatic strengths.

Why, Mother Africa?—Nodeshah Maingehama

I write to you not with ink,
but with the weight of a thousand unheard dreams
of youth like me.

Africa...

You are the cradle of a billion hopes,
And, we, your youth are your majority.
Yet, we sit on the margins of your councils,
spoken of, but no one really cares.
Observed, but rarely heard.

Why, Mother Africa?
Do you hold so tightly to the reins of time?
When our hands are outstretched,
not to snatch but to build.
To rise not just for today but tomorrow.

We do not seek to tear down your walls, Africa.
We only want to be let into the room,
to speak before we are grey,
to lead before our light is dimmed.

Yet, too many of us,

have traded oneness.

We toast to freedom behind screens,
became champagne camera revolutionaries.
Loud online, silent in the streets,
posting more than protesting,
and typing more than trying.

Tiri vana vevhu.

Yet, we walk like we are lost in our own soil.

Watoto wa Afrika.

But we borrow every language except our own.

When we gather at tables meant to rebuild you, Africa,
why when we meet do, we still speak English?

Why not KiSwahili, IsiZulu, ChiShona, Yoruba?

Or at least one common African language?

I guess we will never know.

But, still there is promise,
in the soil of Soweto, the breath of Harare,
in the minds of Kinshasa, the pulse of Kigali.
Rising from Accra to Addis,
there are young voices sharpening into vision,
feet learning to march with purpose again.
Just like what our forefathers,

Thomas Sankara, Julius Nyerere, Lumumba,
and Nelson Mandela did.

Africa,

I dream of you not as 54 broken pieces,
but as one.

One language, one president,
one heartbeat in different drums.

I see a flag stitched with unity,
not stitched in borders drawn by those who never loved you.

We are not a lost generation,
we are awaiting one.

Waiting not for chances,

But, for room,

for recognition,

for respect.

With love, urgency and unshaken hope.

Ni sisi ni sasa.

African Spotlight

Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso



In His Youth...

Sankara was a revolutionary thinker, military man, and musician who wrote Burkina Faso's national anthem. At just 33, he became president of Burkina Faso, changing its name from the "Republic of Upper Volta" to Burkina Faso which means "the land of the upright people" and pushing bold reforms in education, health, and self-sufficiency. He walked to work, refused luxuries, and inspired Pan-Africanism.

"You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness."

—Thomas Sankara

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Age is not a barrier to change.
- Humility makes leadership powerful.
- Visionary thinking creates future-ready nations.

African Spotlight

Yvonne Vera, Zimbabwe

In Her Youth...

By her early 20s, Yvonne Vera was publishing stories that tackled difficult subjects such as memory, gender, trauma, and resistance. Her poetic voice became a vessel for marginalised African women, and she is remembered as a literary legend who reshaped Zimbabwean storytelling.



“My writing is a form of silence, amplified.”

—Yvonne Vera

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Literature and diplomacy both tell national stories.
- Speaking your truth frees others.
- Culture is a soft power that is worth defending.

Natural Wonders



Did You Know?

Africa is home to the world's longest river (the Nile), the largest and hottest desert (Sahara), and one of the largest waterfalls (Victoria Falls).

Challenge Turned Strength

Often overlooked in global tourism, these sites are now magnets for eco-tourism and heritage travel—driving sustainable economies.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Africa's geography is a tool of diplomacy—environment, conservation, and culture are all soft power.

Population & Youth

Did You Know?

Over 70% of sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 30—making it the youngest continent on Earth.



Challenge Turned Strength

Once seen as a burden due to unemployment rates, youth are now the heartbeat of innovation, activism, and policy change.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Being young isn't a waiting room for leadership—it is leadership. You are not the leaders of tomorrow. You are the leaders of now.

I Painted Africa on My Face—Thandeka Chiramba



I painted Africa on my face.
Not for the likes,
not for the trend,
but, because sometimes,
the only way to carry a continent
is to wear it—bold, unfiltered, sacred.

This eye?
Drips in the colours of Zimbabwe.
Not just green, gold, red, and black—
but the bloodlines of liberation,
the pulse of my people,
the soil that taught me how to stand tall,
even when history tried to fold me.

And this eye?
This eye holds Africa.
Not the Africa on maps—
But, the Africa in memory,
in music, in mourning,
in the mother tongues they told us to forget.

Each stroke, each bead, each colour,
is a whisper from ancestors
who braided identity into everything—
who taught us that adornment is resistance,
that joy is ceremony,
that culture is not costume.
It is inheritance.



I wear this look for the traditions they tried to bleach.
For the songs they tried to silence.
For the names they couldn't pronounce—
so, they changed them.
But we...
We are changing them back.

This is not just facing paint.
It's war paint.
It's pride paint.
It's "I know where I come from" paint.
A reminder that Africa is not a costume to wear one day a year—
it is a spirit we live,
a rhythm we breathe,
a truth we protect.

So, let them ask me what it means.



I'll tell them—

It means I am rooted.

It means I remember.

It means that, even in fun,
there is power.

Because when a black girl paints her story in colour,
she becomes a canvas of revolution.

I painted Africa on my face,
and, it looked like home.

African Spotlight

Haile Selassie, Ethiopia



Born as Tafari Makonnen or Lij Tafari, he was educated in a modern and traditional setting and appointed governor in his early teenage years. He advocated for modernisation, diplomacy, and African unity from an early age, and eventually became a central figure in the Pan-African movement.

“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted that has made it possible for evil to triumph.”
—Haile Selassie

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Action is more powerful than position.
- Diplomacy must be rooted in vision and evil flourishes when we fail to act, are indifferent or silent on justice.
- African unity begins with youth engagement.

African Spotlight

Graça Machel, Mozambique

In Her Youth...

Graça joined Mozambique's liberation struggle in her early 20s, and by her 30s, she was Minister of Education and Culture—focused on transforming youth and girls' access to learning. Later, she became and is still an international voice for women's and children's rights and peacebuilding.



“Preventing the conflicts of tomorrow means changing the mindsets of youth today.”

—Graça Machel

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Education and dialogue are diplomatic superpowers.
- Youth influence future peace.
- Compassion, empathy and respect are strengths.

Technology



Did You Know?

Kenya's M-Pesa revolutionised mobile money. Rwanda runs drones to deliver medical supplies. Nigeria leads in Afro-tech start-ups.

Challenge Turned Strength

Poor infrastructure pushed Africa to leapfrog into tech innovations that are now studied worldwide.

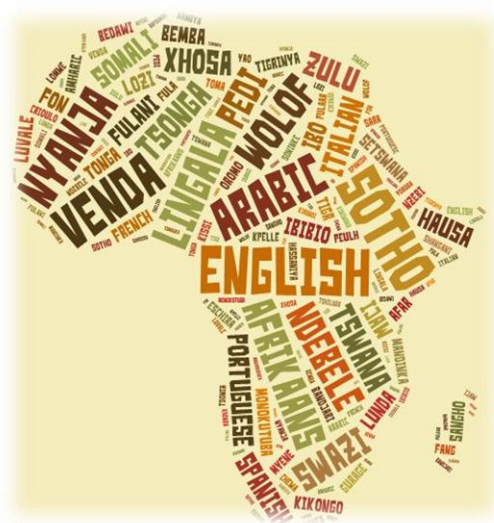
Lesson for Young Diplomats

Limitations breed creativity. Lead through adaptation and audacity.

Culture and Language

Did You Know?

Africa has over 2,000 languages—more than any other continent—and hosts the oldest storytelling traditions in the world.



Challenge Turned Strength

While colonialism attempted to suppress indigenous languages and stories, movements are now reviving and celebrating African linguistics and oral heritage.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Language is more than communication. It's resistance. Diplomacy begins in how you speak about yourself.

Dear Afrika—Ruth Tsanga

I used to look in the mirror and question what it meant to be me—what it meant to be Afrikan. Was being Afrikan a crime? Was I doomed for failure because of the extra melanin I carried in my skin?

Growing up, I saw Afrika being used as the face and example of poverty, hunger, war, and silence. Afrika was the glaring example of a continent gone wrong. It was as if the world had discovered the power we held long before we did—and they made every effort to bury us before we could rise. They even thought to label Afrika a single country, ignoring that we are 54 powerhouses, each rich in potential and vision. They introduced borders and demarcated lines, hoping to separate us. Because they understood that when the Afro-giant is awakened—when the sons and daughters of Afrika realize the power of their unity—the world will witness a revolution of light, of spirit, of hope. They feared the Afro-giant, because they knew that our collective voice, our shared dreams, our unbreakable bond is an unstoppable force.

I grew up hearing our stories told, but not by us. Stereotypes were crafted to define us, and I began to wonder if we had any power over our own narrative.

But then, one day, I heard the words of Kwame Nkrumah: “I am not Afri(k)an because I was born in Afri(k)a, but because Afri(k)a was born in me,” and everything changed. I learned that my melanin was not a curse. It was more than colour. It was beauty and power woven from centuries of resilience. It was the sun’s kiss, the earth’s embrace, and the song of my ancestors. My melanin is not a burden—it is a badge of belonging to a continent that refuses to be anything less than magnificent.

Afrika is more than a continent. More than 54 countries. More than borders. It is a pulse, a rhythm, a force of resilience. We are rich—rich in minerals, in languages, in cultures, in wisdom, and above all, in people. Afrika is not a place of pity—it is a place of potential.

The day I embraced my Afrikan identity was the day I embraced my power. I am no longer silent. I tell the Afrikan story, the Afrikan way—with truth, pride, and purpose. I realised that what they saw as a problem—my skin, my language, my history—was actually my superpower. So, I stopped fitting into their narratives and started redefining

my own. I learned that being Afrikan is not about obeying the world's limited definitions—it is about imagining a future beyond their lines.

We are no longer afraid to take up space. We have found our voice—and we are using it. We are reimagining what it means to be truly Afrikan. No longer begging for a seat at the table—we are building our own. We stand on the promises we made: not just to lead Afrika, but to love it fiercely, creatively, and unapologetically.

They used to say, “Awaken the Afri(k)an giant.” But they never told us how, or why, or when. So—we decided: *ni sisi, ni sasa*—the time is now! The giant is no longer asleep. It speaks in many tongues: some through technology and artificial intelligence, some through sports, music, and fashion. I speak through the tongue of justice and law—reimagined through the lens of empathy, healing, and restoration. I speak through the tongue of empowering other Afrikans to speak for themselves. In law and diplomacy, we are taught the rules. But Afrika has taught me that sometimes the real power also lies in reimagining what is possible beyond those rules. Not as defiance, but as a refusal to be boxed in. Because the Afro-giant is too big, too alive, too brilliant to be limited.

Growing up, it was not just what I heard—it was what I saw. I saw corruption. I saw incompetence. I saw systems that crushed the very people they were meant to serve. But I also saw resilience. I saw communities building with what little they had. I saw brilliance bloom in classrooms with broken windows, and I decided: I would be part of the change. Not just by pointing out the cracks, but by helping build something stronger in their place.

As a young aspiring Zimbabwean diplomat, I carry the dreams of generations past—and the torch for those to come. I do not lead alone. I lead with Afrika in me. Because I am part of the Afro-giant—the collective of young voices, ancient wisdom, and boundless spirit that refuses to be silent any longer.

This Afrika Day, I write not just to honour our story, but to rewrite the future—with us as the authors.

With Afrikan pride and purpose, and defining Afrika on our own terms.

African Spotlight

Steve Biko, South Africa



In His Youth...

As a university student, Biko founded the Black Consciousness Movement to empower Black South Africans. He believed psychological liberation was key to fighting apartheid and inspired a generation to embrace pride, resistance, and justice.

“The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.”

—Steve Biko

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Ideas are weapons for freedom.
- Confidence is the first step to liberation.
- Leadership means awakening others.

African Spotlight

Miriam Makeba, South Africa

In Her Youth...

Makeba started performing in her teens and used her music to speak out against apartheid. By her early 20s, she was banned from returning home—but continued to perform globally, raising awareness and rallying support for African freedom.



“I look at an ant and I see myself: a native South African, endowed by nature with a strength much greater than my size...”
—Miriam Makeba

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Never underestimate your voice.
- Exile can be turned into a global platform.
- Art is a form of resistance.

Zimbabwe Spotlight



Did You Know?

Zimbabwe has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, boasts the ancient Great Zimbabwe ruins, and gave the world icons like Oliver Mtukudzi.

Challenge Turned Strength

Despite economic hardships, the people of Zimbabwe remain resilient, educated, and deeply rooted in their identity.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Diplomacy anchored in resilience and cultural pride is unbreakable.

Music

Did You Know?

Africa is the birthplace and cradle of many global music genres - including jazz, blues, Afrobeats and right now Amapiano is topping global charts!



Challenge Turned Strength

For decades African sounds were sampled without credit yet artists kept innovating and reclaiming their beats.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Culture is soft power. Champion fair recognition, export your rhythm and let music open diplomatic doors where words cannot.

Preamble to Scars of the Sun

In a continent where history and hope intersect, the voices of Africa's youth are forging new narratives—stories not of passive endurance, but of visionary agency. *Scars of the Sun* offers one such narrative, inviting readers into a journey that mirrors the quiet yet unyielding pulse of African resilience.

Tawanda Dzingayi's account begins in Mufakose, a Harare neighbourhood where life thrives in paradox: scarcity fuels ingenuity, silence amplifies determination, and communal bonds outlast even the most fractured systems. Here, amid power cuts and crumbling infrastructure, a young mind discovers tools far more durable than circumstance—education, technology, and an unwavering belief in collective progress.

This piece does not merely chronicle personal triumph. It reflects a broader truth: Africa's future is being shaped by those who transform limitations into legacies. Through Tawanda's eyes, we glimpse the quiet heroes—the teacher who refuses to abandon her classroom, the parents whose sacrifices become silent anthems, the communities that turn shared struggles into shared strength.

As part of *What It Means to Be African*, this piece underscores a central theme of the anthology: leadership is not confined to podiums or policies. It lives in the courage to write code by candlelight, to advocate for the marginalised through innovation, and to carry ancestral wisdom into modern diplomacy.

Prepare to walk a path where hardship and hope are inseparable companions—a testament to the continent's enduring belief that even the deepest scars can chart a way forward.

Scars of the Sun—Tawanda Dzingayi

Beneath the Zimbabwean sun, where the air smells of dust and defiance, I was born—Tawanda Dzingayi. Mufakose, Harare, my cradle, was a balance of cracked concrete and crowing roosters. Our home, a three-roomed house with thin walls, thin enough to hear the neighbours' prayers, taught me early: scarcity is not an end, but a genesis. Even in the beginning, the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

My mother's hands, indurated from the lifestyle of being a street vendor, once cradled a cake she'd bartered weeks to afford. It was 2012, my grade five prize-giving day. The vanilla sweetness on my tongue tasted like sacrifice, like hope. "You carry our tomorrows," her eyes said. However, tomorrows faltered in 2008, when Zimbabwe's economy collapsed like a termite-riddled roof. Teachers vanished, but Mrs. Rubaya, my grade one and two teacher, kept her classroom open for me. "Your mind is worth more than fees," she insisted, her voice a lifeline. I scavenged textbooks from friends, their pages stained but still told secrets of basic grammar, history, algebra and atoms.

Mufakose's streets sighed with chaos—vendors hawking tomatoes, prophets preaching redemption, children chasing plastic balls. I turned noise into fuel. By fifteen, I'd mastered HTML on a laptop held together by prayer and duct tape. "Hello, World!" blinked on the screen, a digital incantation. Code became my compass. While COVID-19 lockdowns emptied Harare's streets, I crouched in candlelight, wrestling frequent power cuts and loadshedding, writing pseudocode, dry running algorithms and debugging code. My father's voice rang: "Zvichanaka, mwanangu," meaning, "It shall be well, son," whilst my mother's voice reverberated: "Shanda nesimba, Tawa," meaning, "Work hard, Tawa."

At the University of Zimbabwe, I commuted two hours daily, my shoes wearing thin as my resolve. Yet, in lecture halls smelling of chalk and ambition, I found my tribe who traded algorithms and dreams. We built things that work and solve problems and received recognition and awards. I ideated TakAIinsure, an AI microinsurance platform born from watching grandmothers bury savings in clay pots and mothers losing their small business to violence and destruction in Mufakose. In every win, I have tasted Mufakose's pride in the applause. But Africa's story is not engraved in trophies alone.

It's in the poetry I write at midnight under the starry night as Syntax, an alter ego I coded for myself, writing about love, purpose and life's intricacies and paradoxes. It's in Congo's rivers diplomacy seeped into my blood in Johannesburg. It's in diplomatic affairs in Nairobi, where I simulated Egyptian diplomacy drafting concrete resolutions for Africa's present and future.

Today, I wear two hats: data analyst & developer, as well as diplomat. Africa, a continent where ubuntu and ancestral wisdom dance, where every power cut hides a lesson in patience. To lead Africa is not to outrun our scars, but to write them into bridges. My hands, once small against my mother's, now grip microphones and keyboards, speaking and writing grit into now and tomorrow's blueprint.

Africa's sun does not rise—it persists, and so shall we!

African Spotlight

Strive Masiyiwa, Zimbabwe



In His Youth...

Strive Masiyiwa launched Econet Wireless after a long legal battle with the Zimbabwean government in the 1990s. He began his career as a young engineer and refused to let political resistance crush his dream of transforming African telecommunications.

“A vision on its own is not enough. Hard work and dedication are required to make that a vision a reality.”
—Strive Masiyiwa

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Vision without action is a dream, vision with action is a plan.
- Perseverance is vital, success often requires overcoming obstacles.

- Dedication is the fuel for achieving goals.

African Spotlight

Lupita Nyong'o, Kenya/Mexico

In Her Youth...

Born to Kenyan parents in Mexico, Lupita started acting in school plays and wrote, directed, and produced her own documentary at university. Her breakthrough in “12 Years a Slave” brought global focus to African talent and stories.



“No matter where you’re from, your dreams are valid.”

—Lupita Nyong'o

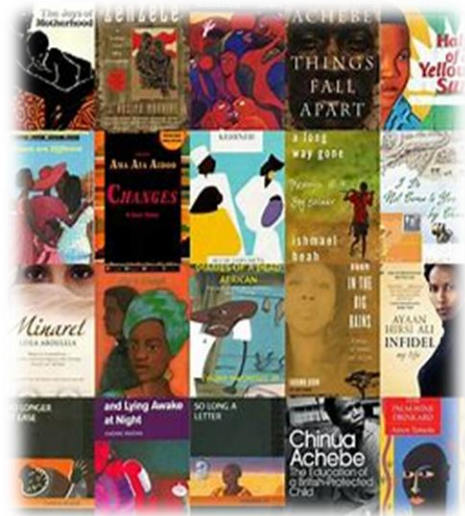
Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Representation matters.
- Use your platform to elevate African narratives.
- Identity is NOT a limitation - it is YOUR power.

Literature

Did You Know?

Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" has sold 20 million copies and has been translated into more than 50 languages.



Challenge Turned Strength

African voices were long filtered through colonial lenses. Writers fought censorship and built a vibrant canon that now shapes global thought.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Own the narrative. Tell Africa's stories with authenticity and guard intellectual sovereignty on every stage.

Food



Did You Know?

Ancient African grains like teff, millet and sorghum are climate-smart “superfoods” that are now featured on Michelin-star menus.

Challenge Turned Strength

Colonial tastes once called African cuisine “peasant food”. Today chefs and farmers are reviving indigenous crops and redefining fine dining.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Promote what we grow. Food diplomacy can fight hunger, fuel green economies and showcase Africa’s sustainable ingenuity.

Letter to Africa—Amos Mucheriwa

Dear Beloved Africa,

History has shown us that your spirit is indomitable, and your resilience is immeasurable. The values, ethics and morality embedded in your cultures shine as a beacon of humanity, illuminating the world. Despite foreign intervention, your indigenous prowess remains unyielding, a testament to your enduring spirit.

The narratives about your identity are often misconstrued, but you are more than what you have been preached. Your borders do not define divisions, instead they symbolise an attempt to divide and conquer. Your many languages are not a sign of confusion but a testament to your richness and cultural heritage. You are a force to be reckoned with, the source, not the parasite, the fountain, not the drain. You do not need external validation. Your worth is inherent.

Listen to the songs of the birds, the roars of your true leaders, the whispers of the wind and the wisdom of nature. They all believe in you. Believe in yourself too. Your potential is vast and awe-inspiring. Rise above fear, embrace your true self, transcend limits and let your light shine to the world.

We are deeply saddened by the struggles some of our brothers and sisters face. They face wars, terrorism, conflicts and tensions. These are not isolated tragedies, they affect us all. We are one people, interconnected and interdependent. When one suffers, we all suffer. We stand in solidarity with those affected, and we urge an end to the violence and bloodshed. What does adversity profit us? We have a common enemy, one that thrives on our discord. We are definitely better than that. Our love and bond with one another are our triumph.

A brighter future awaits, but it requires us to stand together, united in our quest for peace, love and unity. It is our responsibility to preserve, develop and sustain our home. Africa, this is your moment, seize it with conviction! Let your voice be heard, let your spirit soar and let your light shine. A united Africa is the promise of our better tomorrow.

Yours Sincerely,

African Spotlight

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigeria

In Her Youth...

At 19, she left Nigeria to study in the U.S. and published her first poem and play. By her mid-20s, she had written *Purple Hibiscus*, a critically acclaimed novel about post-colonial identity, family, and silence.



“The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.”

—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Storytelling is nation-building.
- Your roots can shape global influence.
- Challenge single narratives - especially about Africa.

African Spotlight

Adut Akech, South Sudan/Australia



In Her Youth...

Born in a refugee camp, Adut became one of the world's top models before turning 21. She's walked for Chanel, Valentino, and Dior—while using her voice to advocate for refugees and challenge racial barriers in fashion.

"I want to use my platform to be a voice for the voiceless."

—Adut Akech

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Your past does not limit your future.
- Fashion is cultural diplomacy.
- Visibility leads to change.

Architecture

Did You Know?

The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali is the world's largest mud-brick structure and a UNESCO marvel of sustainable design.



Challenge Turned Strength

Traditional African architecture was dismissed as “primitive”, today its climate-smart principles are inspiring green building worldwide.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Innovation can be ancient. Leverage indigenous design for modern challenges and position Africa as a sustainability pioneer.

Africa Day—Mellisa Piosi

For Africans, Africa Day is very important because it honours the establishment of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) on May 25, 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the goal of fostering solidarity and togetherness among African countries, (African Union article, 2025).

Africa Day is not just a day to celebrate the forming of the AU (African Union) and its theme of togetherness but it presents the individual African who feels unseen in a world where the East control and dictate the way Africans are seen. This day has given Africans around the world pride in loving their identity and being proud and comfortable in their skin.

We commemorate this day to celebrate the ones who came before us and sort to bring about liberty and freedom to all Africans and future generations to come, so that they do not suffer the same oppression, racism and unequal opportunity that they had to go through. They hoped to create an Africa where people not only saw it as grave where dreams go to die, but a land made of milk and honey. Thus, why Africans all over are fighting each day to make sure that the efforts made will not go to vain.

It is a day to acknowledge the difficulties faced by each country while also celebrating the numerous achievements and advancements made across the continent, (Conor, 2024) as mentioned earlier, the people who came before us went through a lot of traumas, abuse and many other human rights violations for them to bring about change for all Africans. This is shown in today's world, where everyone has the opportunity or freedom to learn, work and make something for themselves as there is no more segregation or gender stereotypes in Africa and all over.

Thus, Africa day is not just a day that we Africans celebrate once a year, but it an everyday celebration. It's a day that reminds of where we have come from and where we are going; it's a day where Africans are able to bring about change and stand as one. If one person in Africa makes it, we all do because we are one big family.

Pledge

We, as the young aspiring diplomats of Southern Africa and Africa, pledge to honour the wisdom of those who came before us, to learn from our history, and to shape our future with courage and compassion. We pledge to speak up for those unheard, to stand for what is just, and to never stop listening, we promise to be part of the solution, to transform challenges into opportunities, and to build bridges of understanding across our continent and beyond. We embrace our heritage, celebrate our cultures, and commit to the dream of an Africa that is united in peace, prosperity, and possibility.

African Spotlight

Didier Drogba, Côte d'Ivoire

In His Youth...

Drogba's football talent began on the streets of Abidjan. As a global star, he used his influence to call for peace during Côte d'Ivoire's civil conflict—halting violence with a televised appeal after a match.



“Football can bring people together and make peace possible.”

—Didier Drogba

Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Influence = Responsibility.
- Sports diplomacy is real and powerful.
- Peace begins with a shared purpose.

African Spotlight

Bogolo Kenewendo, *Botswana*



In Her Youth...

Appointed Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry. Bogolo became Botswana's youngest cabinet minister. A former UN youth ambassador, she advocates for women's leadership and inclusive economic growth.

"Youth are not only the future; we are the now."

—Bogolo Kenewendo

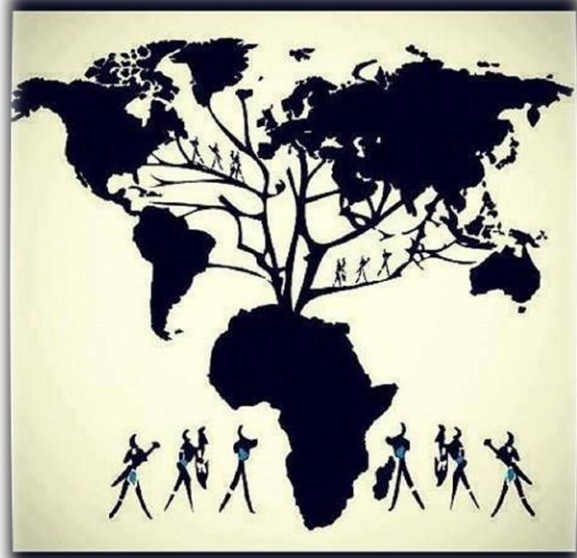
Lessons for Young Diplomats

- Age does not define readiness.
- Policy-making needs youth voices.
- Advocate for inclusive economies.

Diaspora Power

Did You Know?

The African diaspora exceeds 170 million people - driving multi-billion-dollar remittances and global cultural trends.



Challenge Turned Strength

Diaspora communities faced identity gaps and marginalisation. They now mobilise networks for investment, advocacy and soft power.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Bridge continents. Harness diaspora capital - financial, cultural, intellectual to advance Africa's agenda everywhere.

Historical Sites



Did You Know?

Timbuktu's libraries once housed over 700,000 manuscripts on science, law and philosophy - proof of a scholarly Africa centuries ago.

Challenge Turned Strength

Colonial accounts downplayed African heritage. Now, restoration projects and tourism celebrate indigenous genius.

Lesson for Young Diplomats

Preserve and promote heritage - it is a powerful evidence-base against stereotypes and a lever for cultural diplomacy.

Special Tribute: Honouring Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o

"Even in death, words live on." —1938–2025

On the 28th of May 2025, the world bid farewell to one of Africa’s fiercest literary warriors—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. A writer, thinker, revolutionary, and teacher—Ngũgĩ did more than write books. He rewrote how we think of ourselves as Africans.

From *Weep Not, Child* to *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ reminded us that language is not just a tool—it is a weapon, a healing balm, a mirror, and a map. He dared to write in Gikuyu when the world demanded English. He reminded us that our tongues carry our truths. That our languages are not lesser—they are loaded with memory, beauty, and dignity.

Ngũgĩ believed that the true liberation of Africa would come not only through politics or economics—but through the stories we tell and the languages we choose to tell them in.

“Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.” - Ngũgĩ

He passed, but his words did not. His ideas live in classrooms, in conversations, and in the dreams of every young African bold enough to tell their story in their own tongue.

Lessons from Ngũgĩ for Young Diplomats

- Language is legacy. Never be ashamed of your mother tongue. It is the voice of your ancestors.
- Courage builds culture. Speak the truth, even when it is uncomfortable. Diplomacy is not only about what is polite—but what is just.
- Your voice is a revolution. As African diplomats, your ability to shape narratives is a power that Ngũgĩ fought to protect. Use it well.

Lala Ngoxolo, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o.

We will carry the pen forward.

With African pride and purpose.

Final Reflections—Ruth Tsanga

As the last pages of this book turn, I find myself marvelling at what we have woven together as young diplomats. Through poems and paintings, stories and letters, we have captured the beating heart of Africa—the beauty of our continent, the wisdom of our ancestors, and the vibrant energy of its young people.

These pages are more than a collection; they are a testament. They remind us that being African is not just a matter of birth, but a responsibility—a duty to stand tall in our history and to craft a future worthy of our dreams.

We have looked back to the giants who came before us in our African Spotlights, found wonder in the “Did You Know?” facts that make our continent unique, and pledged to rise to the challenge of being the next generation of diplomats and change-makers. But let this not end here.

It is not enough to see the challenges our continent faces. It is not enough to identify the cracks in our systems and the weight of our history. As young diplomats, and as young Africans, we are called to do more. We are called to turn challenges into strengths, to see every obstacle as an opportunity to rise. We are called to build bridges, not walls; to plant seeds of hope in every conversation, every negotiation, and every dream.

In these pages, I see a promise: that we will not let our identities be boxed in or our stories be silenced. That whether our contributions are small or grand, each one of us has a part to play in making Africa not just great, but greater still.

So, let these words and images linger. Let them remind us that we are not alone—that together, we will shape a continent that reflects the best of who we are. And let us go forward with ink-stained hands and unshaken dreams, ready to do the work that our ancestors dreamed of and that our future demands.

Afterword: The Ones We've Been Waiting For

The phrases “Africa’s future lies in its youth” and “Africa’s youth are its greatest resource” are more than rhetoric—they are a call to action. We, the young leaders of this continent, have heard this call. No one is coming to save Africa—because we are already here.

Africa is not just rising; it is being rebuilt—brick by brick, idea by idea—by the hands that once lifted in prayer and struggle. We are not merely inheritors of history but architects of a new destiny. We carry the answers to questions our ancestors could not yet ask. We correct past mistakes, not by forgetting, but by transforming memory into movement.

In every young African innovating, leading, and speaking truth to power, there is a quiet revolution—not chaos, but renewal. We do not reject our parents’ generation; we honour their sacrifices by building on their legacy. To build Africa is not to discard the past but to learn from it and rise higher. As the proverb says, “Wisdom is like fire—people take it from others.” We will take that fire and ignite something greater through intergenerational dialogue and mentorship.

Our ancestors crawled so our parents could stand. Our parents stood so we could walk. Now, we walk—unafraid—so our children may one day run—not from war or poverty, but toward purpose, fuelled by the dreams we plant today.

This is Africa: young, awake, and unstoppable. This time, the story will not be written *about* us—but *for* us, *by* us.

Vice President

Nicole Duma

Glossary

Key Terms, Figures, and Concepts

A

African Diplomacy

The practice of international relations grounded in African values, decolonial perspectives, and Pan-African unity. Explored through themes like inclusivity, resilience, and youth leadership (pp. 2–3).

African Identity

Symbolised by the "African Tree" metaphor:

- Roots: Resilience amid historical challenges.
- Leaves: Cultural diversity.
- Stem: Institutional strength (p. 2).

Afro-giant

A term describing Africa's untapped potential and collective power when unified (p. 21).

B

Black Consciousness Movement

Founded by Steve Biko to empower Black South Africans through psychological liberation (p. 23).

D

Decolonial Lens

A framework for diplomacy that challenges Western-centric narratives and centres African knowledge systems (p. 2).

Diaspora Power

The global influence of African diaspora communities through remittances, culture, and advocacy (p. 39).

E

Epistemic Justice

Recognising and valuing African knowledge systems in global discourse (p. 2).

G

Green Belt Movement

Wangari Maathai's environmental initiative linking tree-planting to women's empowerment (p. 4).

K

Kente/Ankara/Shweshwe

African textiles that inspired global fashion, symbolising cultural pride (p. 5).

M**M-Pesa**

Kenya's mobile money innovation, a leapfrog technology born from infrastructure gaps (p. 19).

P**Pan-Africanism**

A vision of African unity, championed by figures like Thomas Sankara and Haile Selassie (pp. 10, 17).

S**Soft Power**

Africa's cultural influence (e.g., music, fashion, literature) as a diplomatic tool (pp. 5, 24, 30).

U**Ubuntu**

A philosophy emphasising communal interdependence ("I am because we are").

Y**Youthquake**

Africa's demographic dividend, with 70% of the population under 30 (p. 12).

The background is a rich, textured collage of African art and textiles. It features various patterns, including a green and yellow geometric design in the top left, a brown and gold patterned fabric, and a dark, textured material. The overall color palette is warm, with earthy tones like brown, gold, and green.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FRICAN

through
the eyes of
young diplomats

Our SAYD Africa Day Book is a vibrant celebration of the continent's soul, rich in colour, culture, and creativity. Each page brings together diverse voices, stories, and ideas that reflect Africa's past, present, and bold future. From ancestral wisdom to modern innovation, this collection honours the many textures of African identity. Whether you're drawn to powerful poetry, bold art, or visionary thought, there's something here through the eyes of young diplomats.