Muthoni Likimani. *My Blood Not For Sale.* Nairobi, Kenya: Noni's Publicity, 2017. PB. pp. xxxvi + 160. Price US$ 20. ISBN: 978-9966-9672-7-5.

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My Blood Not For Sale is a faction novel that treats real people and events as if they were fictional in its presentation. It is based largely on the author's experiences – by her own admission. The central theme and message in the novel is the trade in human beings – a major concern around the world. All are vulnerable – foetuses, young and old, rich or poor, boys or girls – none is spared irrespective of their habitat.

Through Mama Pima, Mama Tina, Kilusu, Mr Gikandi, among others, the author vividly discusses how Mukuru Valley Slums come about after independence, life in the slums at the beginning and the social disruption that comes about with the establishment of the Holier than though Church and an Employment Bureau.

The white protagonists led by Pastor Gray, just like under colonialism prey on the vulnerability of the slum dwellers, initially promising them heaven, only with time to turn out to be their tormentors. And the role of their African accomplices, just like collaborators in our struggle for independence, does stand out.

The author tackles all forms of human trafficking such as stealing newly born children from maternity and kidnapping. He further shares heart wrenching accounts of how girls are lured overseas with promises of better opportunities only to end up as sex slaves. Others are forced into adoption, against their will! And, the story does not end there; the author follows the victims to their new "jobs" and shows as the sufferings they undergo under their new masters; hard labour, long working hours, denial of food, beatings and other forms of abuse. Kadogo's story stands out.

Another sad rendition is the story of 15 foetuses that were discovered while being shipped overseas evidence that the human person is in danger even before birth. Trade in human parts is also well brought out, including the threat faced by especially the albino. But, *My Blood Not For Sale* is not a whining. It is a story of courage and what victims can do to escape the yoke. The story of a boy who escapes after abduction is quite intriguing and a statement of courage – just like Grandmother's search, Koko at Immigration, Kadogo, among others, struggle to free either themselves or those they love.

And to us as a society, the author poses serious questions that would mean either we are complicit or we do not care. If we struggled to free ourselves from colonial yoke, when are we ambivalent on this serious trade that dehumanises our fellow citizens? Just how much do we care about the future of our nation? Why don't we question the despicable horrors visited upon our people? Just when did we cease being "our brother's keeper"?

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Indeed, Muthoni Likimani does not shy away from being Kenya's advocate. She looks at our ancestors and how they led an 'easy' life. They lived as a community that cared for each other and worked hard for their livelihoods. There were no crooks and conmen (and women).

Borrowing from personal experience at the dawn of independence which she witnessed, she takes us back to our pre-colonial societies and what freedom meant. She reminisces on the absurd discrimination made by the colonialist – perhaps next to apartheid – that was visited upon our people. And that was in all shades – church, land, work, transport, salaries, living quarters, ownership of property, etc. But, eventually the struggle yields fruit and power is handed back to us to manage our own affairs.

But before we know it, modern slavery is with us, and not many people seem to care. The author asks the question, is making money more important than the lives of our children who we sell or allow to be sold in servitude? Who cares about the many children advertised in our daily newspapers as lost? Where do they go? What about street children who disappear? Who will rise up and defend them if we do not? What would Mekatilili wa Menza do? Who are the modern Mekatilili wa Menzas?

The book has a foreword by First Lady Margaret Kenyatta. It presents the modern slave trade: the tricks and tactics used and how the trade thrives – even in Japan and Canada. It is time to say, enough is enough!

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