

**A Response to Daisy Maritim Maina (A Right of Reply)**  
**By Miguna Miguna**  
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It's a great honour to respond to your open letter to me on this inauspicious day when the world is mourning the passing of a remarkable revolutionary leader, El Comandante Fidel Castro.

I've not been to Florence, Italy. I therefore envy your leisurely strolls on her cobbled streets.

I'm committed to transforming Nairobi's dilapidated infrastructure to the levels of those lovely streets that only the privileged few Kenyans like you now enjoy.

I intend to do it for Rakiel Kaoka, a jobless graduate who stands daily in the scorching tropical sun at the corner of Limuru Road and The UN Avenue in Gigiri, Nairobi, with a placard that reads: "Jobless Graduate. Please help!"

Like tens of millions of other unemployed Kenyan youth, Rakiel isn't just jobless; she is also homeless and has nothing to eat. She has no access to quality healthcare.

To women like Rakiel, a leisurely walk on the streets of Florence is an unfathomable dream. Millions of Kenyans who are struggling to feed their families don't define their "dignity" based on a deliberate misinterpretation of a satirical statement I made in response to false allegations by some privileged woman with enough money and time to fly out to exotic destinations around the world for leisurely pursuits.

You remind me of Amilcar Cabral's caution: "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children..."

Millions of Kenyans have been rendered destitute by "leaders" who steal public land and assets. These impoverished Kenyans are the ones who keep me awake daily. They don't appreciate careless statements in your letter claiming that they are better off with "leaders" who steal their land and assets and render them destitute.

The dignity of millions of Kenyans living in filthy slums is intricately intertwined with their material conditions. They all desire to live comfortably like you. However, they don't have the luxury to engage in your elitist quarrels over nomenclature.

Revolutionaries like me consider Nicolo Machiavelli a reactionary philosophical 'god' with no place in the pantheon where Karl Marx, Frederich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral reign.

Machiavelli's The Prince – like my words with which you seem to have difficulty – was not meant to be read LITERALLY.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* states that “satire applies humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticise people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.”

The Prince was meant to be read as a satire. It was “a call for good leaders to overcome their intrinsic weaknesses.”

I don’t subscribe to the Machiavellian dictum that “in politics, virtue must often be traded for some amount of vice if one wishes to be successful.”

A society that stifles free thought, suppresses speech and seeks to publicly lynch those like me who use satire, sarcasm or figures of speech isn’t a free society. A civilization based on intellectual vigilantism cannot thrive.

Although I’ve re-read your letter carefully, line-by-line, five times, I’m unable to see a single word or expression I uttered that you found so offensive that you would threaten to support thieves, looters and drug dealers who have messed up our country for the last 55 years.

Words only have meaning within the contexts in which they are used.

Your assertion that my “attitude towards women” must catch up with my “progressive, visionary thinking” isn’t just unsubstantiated; it’s also internally contradictory. A visionary and progressive thinker like me cannot hold retrogressive thoughts against women as you have falsely alleged I do.

I find it distasteful that your open letter wasn’t addressed to people looting billions of public money; grabbing hundreds of thousands of acres of public land; physically assaulting and raping women and children; and presiding over unprecedented mismanagement of our public affairs.

It’s unclear whom the “we” in your letter refers to since I’m certain it doesn’t represent my daughters, wife, sisters and colleagues with whom I work who felt scandalised when I was falsely accused on live TV of being a rapist by someone I have only met in public.

When you accuse me of disrespect to women on account of your deliberate mischaracterisation of my satirical response to the malicious allegation against me, do the hurt feelings of all the women in my life count? Are my rights deemed inferior to a woman’s because I’m a man?

The desperate attempt to caricature and lampoon me will not change the facts. I’m not going to be bludgeoned into submission by the manufactured, distorted and twisted slants of what I did not say.

No, Daisy, I’ll not apologize for speaking the truth even if Machiavelli would disapprove. I don’t want to join your elitist and “cultured” Florentine dinner table.

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