

TRANSCRIPT . NOVEMBER 2009

## Boniface Mwangi: “Kenya - A Nation of Bystanders.”

*Boniface Mwangi is the director of Picha Mtaani, and an award-winning photo-journalist.*

Why is this country important to you?

I'm married. I have a child who is two years old, and I want him to grow into a better country where he won't be judged because of his tribe. That's the reason I'm doing something about it.

I don't want to be old and gray-haired and my son will ask me, “Dad, why did you let our country burn and you didn't act?”, and I'll be embarrassed to answer.

As a young person who's married, I think I have the energy to run around. If they break my bones, my bones will heal. This is the time to be serious about the issues affecting our country, and this is the time to do something about it; for the sake of our kids.

Our fathers, our parents failed to do something, so it's upon us to do something about it. These old men should go home. They rape our country and we're not doing anything about it - we're all going to Carnivore, clubbing, nightclubs. There's nothing wrong [with] that, but as much as we talk about the English Premier League, let's talk about the issues affecting our country.

The young people are the only ones who can change this country. We're the majority, about 11 million of us between the ages of 18 and 35. Let's do something about it.

Are you ever afraid of being outspoken?

There is fear because we know the government of this country does not like young men. They've been executing them, killing young people across the country. The reality is people think it's only Mungiki that are being killed. Many other people are being killed.

The police have a hit squad, so there are fears that you will be killed if you become more outspoken, you'll be arrested, you'll be victimized. The fear is founded, it's not unfounded fear.

I think you have reason to worry when a Government has a hit squad. You have reason to fear when the Government does not follow the rule of law. You have reason to fear when the Government tear-gases old women, and leaves others to suffer in IDP camps.

You have reason to fear when the only time the President opens his mouth

is to defend his mistress, not [to] talk about issues affecting this country. We have reason to fear that our President and our Prime Minister don't pay taxes.

Let me tell you the truth, never trust a man who doesn't pay taxes.

**You call Kenya 'a nation of bystanders'. Why?**

Kenyans want change, but they're not ready to pay the price for change. They run their mouths and talk about politics, but when it comes to action they do nothing. We'll always complain, we'll always whine about the problems, about bad leadership, but we're not willing to do anything about it.

We need to get involved, we need to go beyond the talk and running our mouths. Because we've become a running-mouth nation, we all run our mouths and say, "Hey! Problem, problem", and then we say God shall help us, and we resign to prayers.

Praying is not a bad thing, but we can't pray and wish our problems away like our President; when there is a disaster, or when there is a crisis he calls a national day of mourning. Then after we pray, what do we do? Manna will come from Heaven? That won't happen.

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Picha Mtaani aims at providing a platform for national reflection and building local reconstruction consensus through photo exhibitions and debate. Find out more about them on their website - [www.pichamtaani.com](http://www.pichamtaani.com)

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