

The age of self-preservation

You are not trying to be loved or impress anyone because you have made peace with what you have or do not have.

There was a time you would take a daily boda boda ride from Kira-Kitukutwe to Bunga-Ggaba twice a day, five days a week, and it was okay. No worries, no discomfort, no second thought. The journey usually lasted 30-35 minutes, depending on how many potholes had to be dodged, how errant the other road users were, and how new the bike was.

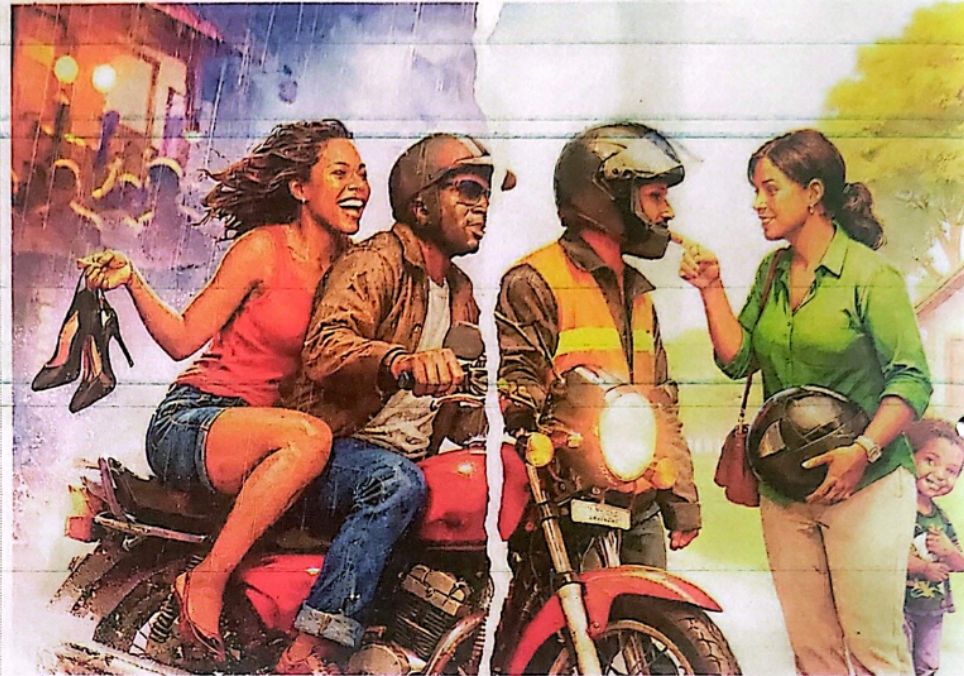
There was once a time when rain would not stop you from jumping on a bike to go where you wanted to go. You sat absolutely unbothered as the boda boda rider suddenly grew webbed feet and waded through "Lake Kyambogo" on days the road flooded with rain.

There was a time when you would stay at the office until really late, *mbu* burning midnight oil and then be in as early as 5am, when you would stay up all night finishing a project and postpone sleep to midday the next day, when you would go without proper meals for a whole week and eat plenty of junk at the weekend, when you would go to dingy poorly lit overcrowded bars or game fields and eat half cooked sausages and pork. When you could be so reckless and yet so happy at the same time.

When you would wear heels so high you could only have them on while entering the office, take them off all day, then wear them again when it is time to go home and take them off the minute you got a seat in the taxi. When the opinions of a random wooden wheelbarrow pusher would ruin your mood.

There was a time when you went to work when and how you wanted, when you went to church once a year and prayed only when you were broke. When you would drink anything in a nice bottle and endure nasty hangovers like a ninja. When you would go to parties where the only person you knew was the host's neighbour. There was a time when you did these things, and those are just the legal ones.

But now, everything is calculated. Getting up from bed has got to be done in slow mo-



tion lest you break a bone. When something drops to the floor, its importance and urgency determine whether it will be picked up immediately or whether it will have to wait until someone with younger bones happens by.

Going out to dance with sweaty, alcohol drenched strangers in the name of socialising and cheap drinks? Please!

Now, proper meals must be had, water must be drunk, and physical exercise and adequate sleep are a must. Daytime naps are a delight; the type of fabric worn matters because, while aesthetics still matter, comfort is key.

Visiting and attendance at social gatherings is selective; delegation is the run to. Regardless of how delectable a buffet looks, you are now a picky eater because the truth is that 40-year-old intestines can have nasty mood

swings.

When friends call and tell you to go to a party, instead of asking where, you ask why.

You go to the pricier salon for hairdos, not because you have a lot of money, but because hygiene, convenience, and a good customer experience are key.

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Now you pray and read your Bible regularly not because the witchcraft committee at the office is doing the most, but also you have children whose emotional needs you might not be able to meet in your own mortal strength and wisdom.

Choosing a boda boda ride as the mode of transport can only happen if it is a matter of

life and death, and even then, the rider must pass the inspection ritual with flying colours. You stop the boda, get close enough to him to look into his eyes to ascertain that they are not bloodshot, sniff his breath to make sure there is no alcohol, make sure he looks like he has something to lose, e.g., a wife and children he wants to go back to at the end of the day. Check to see if the bike has all the necessary visible parts and looks like it was manufactured in this century, and finally, to see whether he is wearing a motorcycle helmet, not a construction site hat.

There was a time when all of that did not matter, but now, self-preservation is the name of the game.

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Saying
with
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