**Category; Leadership**

**Heading: The Boylan Sisters**

**‘We are not on social media and that’s ok’**

It has been a battle of wits as we seek the right adjectives to describe the Boylan Twins. They are beautiful, ambitious, sociable and multi-talented. As we sit down for the interview, I can’t help but notice their hair. Njeri, the older twin (by one minute!), has her hair in a high ponytail. I take that as an expression of her individual style and thoughtful personality. Throughout the interview, she takes a few poses in between her answers, perhaps to consider what she is about to say and how it is likely to come across. Wambui has chosen a more relaxed look. She has let her hair free and her shoulder length mane elegantly complements her black skater dress and stylish ankle boots. I immediately picture her as a spontaneous and outspoken individual.

Despite these inconspicuous differences, the twins affirm that they share a blissful life. They come from a close knit family of six and have had to become each other’s confidant given the huge age difference between them and their two older siblings. Their fondest childhood memories are in Nanyuki town. When they are not toiling for grades at the Aga Khan Academy, Nairobi County, they take a well-deserved break in Nayuki to spend time with their grandmother and favourite cousins. ‘We spend at least a week with them every school holiday and we always enjoy messing around and playing games. It is relaxing for us and a lot of fun too,’ Wambui confirms.

Their decision to have no social media accounts is informed partly, by the fact that they don’t watch television either. ‘It is our family culture and from an early age we only enjoyed television over the weekends. We had to be doing something else with our time. This practise stuck with us and to date watching TV is not such a priority for either of us’

Twitter, facebook, instagram and the many other social media accounts are all too consuming for them. Njeri says, ‘I think the over load of information is a big issue facing teenagers today. The internet space has its advantages and disadvantages. We however, feel that many young people are spending too much time in that space. The conversations had online can very well be had offline. After chatting all day on social media you have nothing else to talk about when you meet your friends, if you do make time to meet them.’ Given their age, it is an assumption that they are immersed in celebrity gossip and entertainment news and they both admit that they get that puzzled look when they turn down offers to link up on social media.

At only 17, the twins have a strong sense of accomplishment and are individually impacting their communities with their different talents. For Njeri, ballet is her source of comfort and inspiration and she has been dancing since she was 7 years old. ‘Our school’s International Baccalaureate programme requires that you take up a personal project when you turn 15. You choose an area of interest for you and find a way to impact the community through it. I started an organization called ‘One Lamb’ through which I teach ballet to underprivileged kids, majority of who may never get the chance to learn and enjoy the art. Through this commitment, I have learned to work with others, my confidence has increased and my creative and organizational skills have greatly improved. The project has also given me something else to think about beyond myself, this in in spite of the challenges of balancing my time between school, family and friends.’

Wambui has her sights on everything books. She joined the library committee under her school’s Community Action and Service Programme. She collects books to refurbish libraries in informal settlements. ‘The committee is organizing a book drive where we will collect books from our school mates over the next two weeks. I one of the events, we will ask them to come dressed in casual wear and they will be required to bring along a book to gain access. We hope that through this engagement, people will begin to appreciate books a lot more and to spread this goodwill to other children who do not have as many books as they do’ For her, the project has been a learning platform on team work and organization. As she grows older she realizes that she is becoming more resolute, a quality that allows her to make better decisions and bring positivity to her community.

Together, they are involved in music and dancing and recently featured in their school play #Anniethemusical. They have also made mark in Maasai Mara area where they visited a school, constructed desks and mentored primary school children.

Twinning does not however, mean that their futures are tied to the same dream. Njeri for example, leans more on the scientific side and hopes to major in medicine. She hopes for a country and continent that appreciates the versatility of young people. ‘I want the youth to realize that they can do anything they will to do. You don’t have to be straight and narrow in your pursuits and you can explore as many disciplines as your gifts allow. It may be a bit hard for the African youth but the whole idea of being a global citizen is to be very vibrant and adaptable. I want to be part of that generation that got Kenya and Africa switched on!’

Wambui affirms the need for equality in accessing opportunities. ‘I want equal development for everyone and that does not necessarily mean having skyscrapers in all the counties. If I have the opportunity to be a doctor or a lawyer, many other children should have the same opportunity so that we have a big pool of professionals to rely on. I would also like to see the standards of success expanded such that one does not have to be a doctor or lawyer to be considered successful. Times are changing and by the time we are older there are will be so many other careers that we should be preparing for today.’

As an aspiring animator, she enjoys graphic design and digital arts and hopes that she will contribute to the development of animation across the continent. She says, ‘I want people to appreciate that Africa is doing something. We might be the least developed but I still feel that we are doing really well despite our challenges.’

**TAKEOUTS**

***Q. If you were to join social media which account(s) would you go for?***

**A:** Njeri: Twitter

Wambui: Facebook or Instagram

**Q**. **Silliest question about being twins**

**A.** Can you read each other’s minds? Does twin telepathy exist? For example, someone would pinch either of us and ask if the other twin has felt it. It is weird!

**Q. One thing that you can do well that the other can’t**

***Njeri:*** Wamboi can write really good stories but I struggle to put together whole paragraphs. I can do it, but I have to put in more effort.

***Wambui:*** She is better in sciences.

**Q. One thing that annoys you about the other?**

***Njeri:*** Wamboi is ‘captain obvious’. She asks the most obvious questions and it is so annoying.

***Wambui****:* She can be very blunt with her opinions and sometimes her frankness rubs me the wrong way.

***Q. Favourite thing about each other?***

***Njeri:*** She is awesome! It’s like she can read my mind sometimes. She always knows exactly how I feel and what I am talking about. I like that she gets me.

***Wambui:*** My sister is very comfortable in her skin. She does her own thing and is not easily influenced. I think she is very badass!