RETURN MY STOLEN YEARS

Here’s my humble petition to God

Do not blame me. Blame the politicians

who filed post-election petitions. I am also

filing one against two respondents: HIV and

Aids. The only difference is that the petition is

to the Supreme Being.

In my petition, I want the Righteous Judge

to parole me. I sincerely believe that I, like others

in my situation, deserve it. I have already

served over 25 years of the life — and sometimes

death — sentence that these respondents

impose on people living with HIV. By the

way, PLWHs are enjoined in this petition.

Your Honour, I know there is a saying that

anyone who represents themselves has a fool

for a lawyer, but I am the one who knows

what the accused has been doing to me for

almost three decades now.

For starters, Your Honour, the virus rigged

itself into my body and has attacked my

stronghold: the white blood cells. Like my

“running mates”, that is, fellow PLWHs, we did

not sign any coalition deal with the first and

second respondents, HIV and Aids respectively.

Thus, their continued stay in our bodies

is illegal, oppressive, and unscriptural. And

that is because your word says in Jeremiah

that, “You have good plans for me”.

I will call my first witness, Dr Kinyanjui, who

is my personal doctor.

Your Honour, Dr Kinyanjui’s testimony will

show that the first respondent is replicating in

my body with the sole aim of breaking down

my immune system, thus literally giving the

second respondent the licence to kill me.

Your Honour, I will also call to the witness

stand my family to give evidence. This consists

of my partner Richard, and my biological

and adopted children.

I will also call expert witnesses. They will

show that, one, the first respondent, HIV,

attaches to cells of the immune system with

special markers called CD4 receptors.

Two, HIV infection of CD4 cells causes

cell death.

**Irrefutable evidence**

Three, reduction in the CD4 cell number

and the effects on their function reduces

the capacity of my body to fight disease,

and four, individuals with HIV infection are,

therefore, susceptible to many infections,

especially in the later stages of infection.

Your Honour, at this point I want to mention

that before the virus rigged itself into

my body and declared itself ruler over my

receptors, my CD4 count was like that of

people who are not infected by HIV.

Over the years, I have had to do numerous

recounts to make sure that the first

respondent does not have a landslide over

my whole body. Besides, if I had allowed

it to have a landslide, I would be a goner by

now.

Your Honour, my personal doctor, who is

the first witness, keeps the forms of the various

CD4 counts, and other relevant counts,

which I am presenting as evidence.

The evidence will show that, over the

past two-plus decades, I have spent a lot of

money, had sleepless nights, and been denied

many opportunities because of my HIV status.

Your Honour, as evidence, I will present

the prescriptions — from day one to date

— of the antiretroviral drugs Tenofovir and

Nevirapine that I have used over the years.

They are classified as reverse transcriptase

inhibitors (RTIs).

Also, Your Honour, Dr Kinyanjui will tell this

honourable court — and show the x-rays of

my body — to prove that these drugs have

left me with side-effects like lipodystrophy

and neuropathy.

I will simply say that because of these and

other debilitating side effects that I have been

forced to live with, I am not the woman I used

to be. What is more, Your Honour, the first

respondent has, more times than I can count,

plotted to kill me through opportunistic infections.

My witnesses, Dr Kinyanjui and my family,

will testify to the fact that the respondents

wanted to use the infections to finish me.

In HIV-speak, I am what people call a longterm

survivor. And that is because I have

lived with this virus for so long that at times I

almost forget the number of years. Your Honour,

I know that I am fortunate because many

of my peers have passed on.

I would love this court to give me back the

stolen years; the number of years that the two

respondents have stolen. Years when I was

supposed to enjoy my youth, but instead had

to deal with stigma and discrimination.

Time is not on my side, Your Honour. I need

some clemency, if only to care for my children

without having to deal with the stresses that

the respondents cause.

Your Honour, I rest my case.

This is the diary of Asunta Wagura, a

mother-of-three who tested HIV-positive

25 years ago. She is the executive director

of the Kenya Network of Women with Aids

(KENWA).

Email: asuntawagura@hotmail.com