

JOSPHER KAMAU AUTOBIOGRAPHY



INTRODUCTION

I was born on May 5, 2002, in Kabati, Laikipia West District, as the firstborn of Joseph and Rose. Growing up in a culturally rich village amidst Laikipia vast plains instilled in me an appreciation for life's simple joys. My hardworking parents and early responsibilities as the eldest of six shaped my values of education, resilience, and community. These lessons have guided my personal and academic journey. This autobiography reflects my path from Kabati to pursuing my dreams.

EARLY LIFE IN LAIKIPIA

As the firstborn of six in Laikipia, I took on early responsibilities, learning discipline, resilience, and a strong work ethic from my hard working parents, Joseph and Rose. Our close-knit village community shared values and enjoyed simple pleasures like exploring fields, tending livestock, and playing with handmade toys. Crafting paper kites, and wooden bikes, and playing street football with makeshift balls were cherished activities. Despite our freedom, discipline was a constant, teaching us that responsibility accompanies liberty. These experiences in Laikipia shaped my values and aspirations, laying the foundation for my personal and academic journey.



MY EARLY PRIMARY EDUCATION LIFE

- **Start of Education:** Began at Kabati Primary School, Laikipia, in 2007.
- **Foundational Learning:** Developed skills in mathematics, literacy, and science.
- **Supportive Environment:** Teachers fostered a love for learning and curiosity.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Participated in sports and cultural events, enhancing teamwork and leadership.
- **Impact:** The values and skills acquired laid a strong foundation for future educational pursuits.

MY CHURCH LIFE

Growing up, I attended the Africa Brotherhood Church, located four kilometers from my home, with great dedication, participating in Sunday School services that deepened my faith and moral values. I also took on active roles in church activities, from choir performances to organizing events, which helped build my confidence and sense of community. These early experiences enriched my spiritual life and taught me the importance of service, community, and contribution.



MY JOURNEY AT KABATI SEC SCHOOL 2017-2020

- **Academic Focus:** Engaged in a demanding curriculum, excelling in subjects like mathematics, sciences, and humanities.
- **Teacher Support:** Received guidance and encouragement, leading to strong academic results.
- **Extracurricular Involvement:** Active in clubs and societies, enhancing leadership, teamwork, and communication skills.
- **Leadership Roles:** Took on responsibilities in projects and school events, boosting confidence and motivation.
- **Community and Camaraderie:** Built lasting friendships and experienced a supportive environment that enriched personal and academic growth.

AKIKUYU CULTURE

1. AKIKUYU FOOD CULTURE

Kikuyu food culture is deeply tied to agriculture, with maize being a staple in dishes like ugali, a dense porridge. Irio, a mix of mashed potatoes, maize, and green vegetables, is another traditional favorite. Vegetables like kale and beans are commonly used, while meat (beef, goat, and chicken) is often prepared in stews or roasted. Dairy, including fresh milk and mursik (fermented milk), is also important. Cooking methods focus on simplicity and natural flavors, with meals often shared communally. Food plays a key role in ceremonies, reflecting Kikuyu values of family and community.



2. *AKIKUYU MARRIAGE TRADITION*

Kikuyu marriage traditions are rich in symbolism and community values. The process begins with a formal proposal called *kuhura*, where the groom's family seeks approval from the bride's family, often exchanging gifts (*ngurario*) as a sign of respect. Once approved, the *ngwacio* (traditional marriage ceremony) is held, featuring a wedding feast, traditional foods, songs, dances, and prayers. A crucial part of the ceremony is the payment of the bride price (*ruracio*), where the groom's family presents gifts to the bride's family. Elders play a significant role in guiding and blessing the marriage, ensuring wisdom and communal support. The couple then starts their new life together, integrating into family and community life.



3. *AKIKUYU INITIATION MARRIAGES*

Kikuyu circumcision traditions are key rites of passage that mark the transition to adulthood, with distinct practices for boys and girls. For boys, the ngurario ceremony involves thorough preparation, special attire, and celebrations with traditional songs, dances, and feasts, followed by a period of seclusion where they learn about adulthood and Kikuyu values. Historically, girls underwent clitoridectomy, but this practice has been increasingly abandoned due to health and human rights concerns, with many communities adopting alternative rites of passage. Both genders are reintegrated into the community through ceremonies that underscore the importance of these transitions and the values of community support and personal growth.



5. AKIKUYU MEDICAL CULTURE

Kikuyu medical culture combines traditional practices with modern advancements, reflecting a deep connection to nature and spirituality. Traditionally, Kikuyu people relied on herbal medicine, using a wealth of local plants and herbs to treat ailments. Esteemed herbalists (ngoma or mūtumia) play a crucial role, using their knowledge to prepare remedies like teas and poultices. In addition to herbal treatments, spiritual healing practices involve rituals, offerings, and sacrifices to address spiritual disturbances. Community support is vital, with collective responsibility for health care. Modern medical practices are increasingly integrated, combining traditional remedies with conventional treatments for a holistic approach to health.



5. AKIKUYU SOCIAL LIFE

Kikuyu social life is a vibrant tapestry woven from deep-rooted traditions, communal values, and a strong sense of community. Central to Kikuyu social life is the concept of ubuntu, which emphasizes the importance of collective well-being, mutual support, and communal living. This value permeates various aspects of daily life, from family structures to communal activities and social gatherings. Family is the cornerstone of Kikuyu social life, with extended families often living in close proximity, forming tight-knit communities where responsibilities and resources are shared. Traditionally organized around the clan system, Kikuyu families are grouped into clans that provide social support, share responsibilities, and uphold cultural norms, enriching the cultural fabric of Kikuyu society.

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Social gatherings and communal activities play a significant role in Kikuyu culture. Festivals, ceremonies, and communal work projects, such as farming or construction, are opportunities for community members to come together, celebrate, and collaborate. These events often feature traditional music, dance, and storytelling, integral to preserving cultural heritage and fostering unity. Traditional ceremonies, such as weddings, initiation rites, and funerals, are marked by elaborate rituals and communal participation, reinforcing social bonds and cultural values. In addition, shared responsibilities and mutual aid are central to Kikuyu's social life, with neighbors and extended family members working together to support one another. Elders play a crucial role in transmitting social norms and values through storytelling, proverbs, and oral traditions, ensuring the continuity of Kikuyu identity and heritage.

POSITIVE ASPECT OF AKIKUYU CULTURE

Positive aspects of Kikuyu culture include the strong emphasis on family ties and communal support, providing a robust network of belonging and security. The deep respect for elders as custodians of cultural knowledge ensures the preservation and transmission of traditional values. Rich artistic traditions in music, dance, and crafts celebrate Kikuyu heritage and bring people together. The culture's respect for the natural environment is reflected in sustainable agricultural practices, and there is a strong emphasis on education and personal development, encouraging hard work and the pursuit of knowledge for community betterment.

LIFE OUTSIDE CHURCH AND CLASS

Beyond academics and church, my life has been enriched through active participation in community development projects and professional endeavors. I've engaged in infrastructure improvements, such as road repairs and school construction, learning the importance of teamwork and civic responsibility. Transitioning into the working world, I applied my skills in various roles, gaining valuable experience in teamwork, project management, and professional ethics. These experiences have shaped my character and contributed to my personal growth.

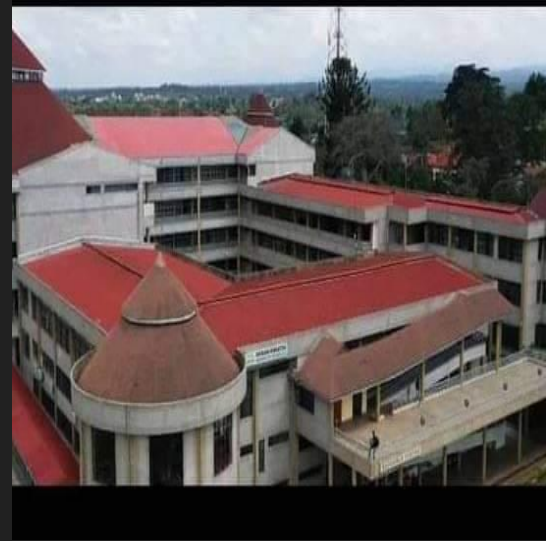


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I've focused on community development, professional growth, and mentorship. I've worked on infrastructure projects, navigated various work environments, and mentored young people, enriching my understanding of leadership. Building diverse friendships has broadened my perspective and reinforced the value of connections. These experiences have shaped my personal and professional journey, and I'm committed to continuing this impactful work.

LIFE AT THE UNIVERSITY

Life at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT) has been a transformative journey since I joined in October 2021. Studying actuarial science has sharpened my analytical and quantitative skills, providing a solid academic foundation. Beyond academics, I have actively participated in extracurricular activities, particularly through my involvement with GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru Association). GEMA organizes recreational events like fun days and hiking trips, which not only offer a refreshing break from academic life but also foster a strong sense of cultural pride and solidarity among members. These activities have helped me form lasting connections with fellow students and broaden my understanding of different communities.

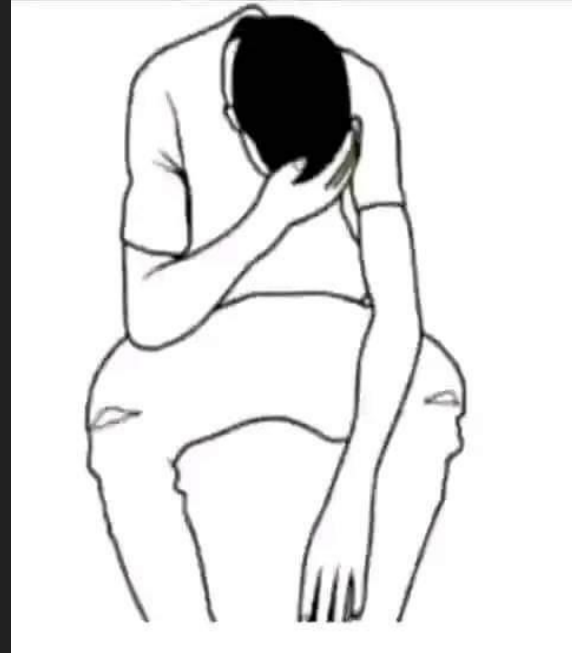


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Through GEMA, I have also been involved in various community service projects that extend beyond the university. These include organizing contributions to support students in need, cleaning drives, and collaborations with local organizations to enhance community welfare. Engaging in these initiatives has strengthened my sense of responsibility and commitment to helping others. It has also allowed me to give back to the community while developing leadership and teamwork skills. Overall, my experience at DeKUT has been a rewarding blend of academic growth, cultural engagement, and meaningful service.

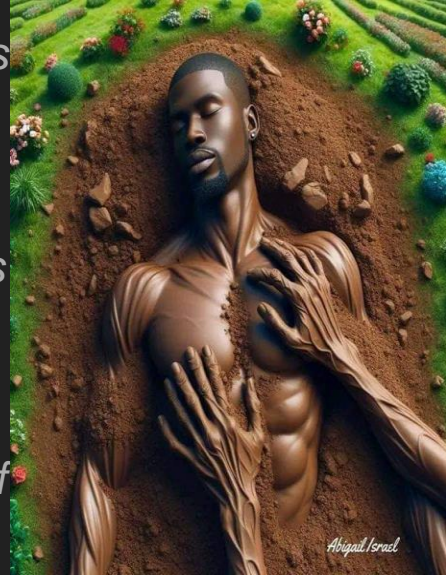
LIFE AMIDST CHALLENGES

Life at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology presents both enriching experiences and notable challenges. Financial constraints often create significant stress, with delays in payments impacting essential needs like rent and meals. Despite these difficulties, organizing social events like birthday parties offers a vital break and fosters community support. Additionally, frequent moves due to housing instability and landlord prejudice add emotional strain and disrupt stability. These challenges require resilience and resourcefulness as I navigate university life.



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Living off-campus at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology brings both opportunities and challenges. While it allows for deeper integration into the broader community, it also involves navigating misconceptions and hostility from some locals. Financial constraints and housing instability demand resilience and resourcefulness, often requiring careful budgeting and frequent relocations. Despite these difficulties, organizing social events helps maintain a sense of community and support. The experience, though challenging, fosters growth, adaptability, and a greater appreciation for the small victories and connections made along the way.



LESSONS LEARNT IN MY LIFE

Growing up in Kabati village, I learned invaluable lessons from the vibrant community and natural surroundings. The creativity of making paper shapes, kites, and wooden bikes taught me resourcefulness and joy in simplicity. Playing makeshift football games highlighted the importance of teamwork and community spirit. Parental discipline instilled responsibility, respect, and resilience, balancing freedom with boundaries.



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At Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), my experiences have further shaped my values. Rigorous academic demands have developed my resilience, while active participation in the GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru Association) has emphasized community engagement and cultural appreciation. This involvement has reinforced my commitment to contributing positively and valuing diversity. Lifelong learning has become central to my journey, encouraging continuous personal and professional growth.



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