



## **THE 3RD NATIONAL ECONOMICS DEBATE**

### **GOLDEN PEN AWARD**

#### **THEME**

**SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION: FROM ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RETURNS**

**5TH NOVEMBER, 2024**

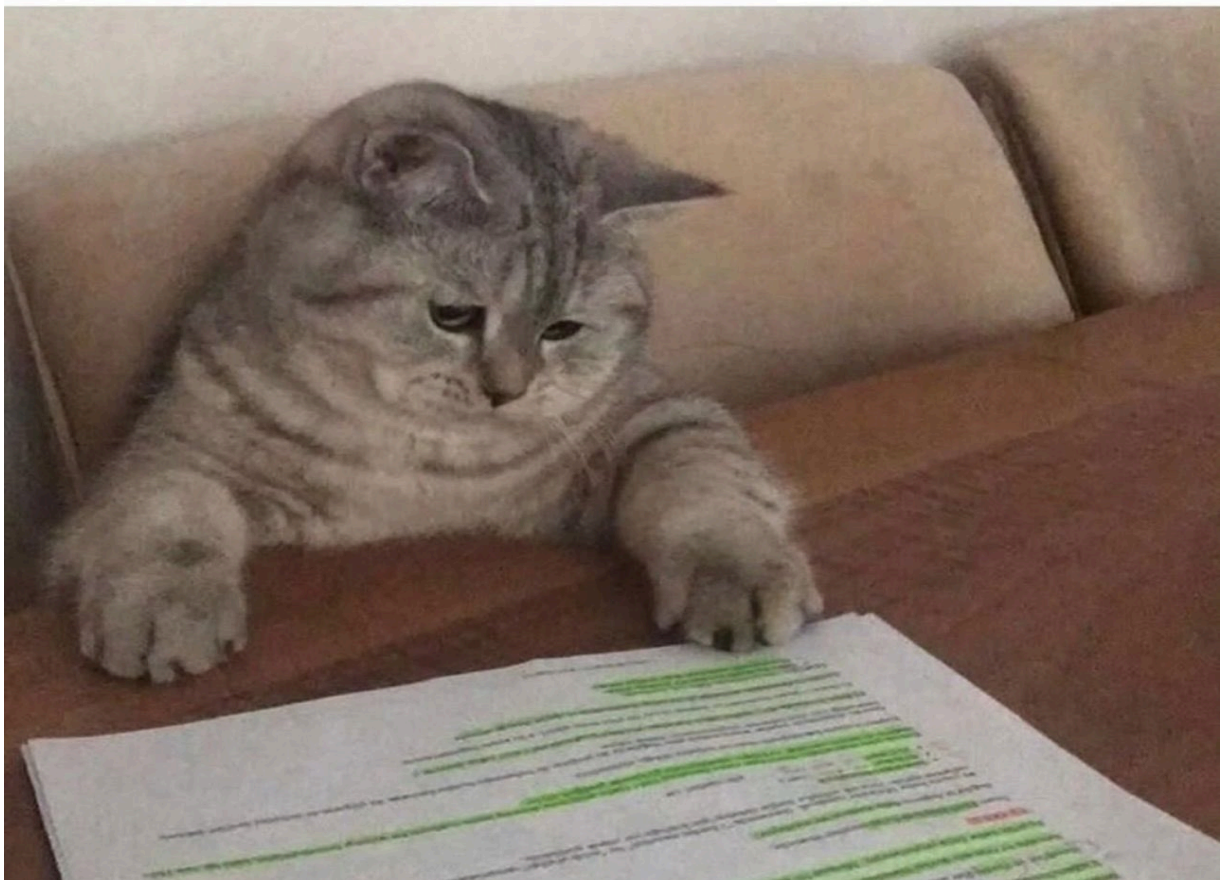
**THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, MAIN CAMPUS**

**COLLABORATIVE WRITING SEGMENT**

*"As you mature you discover and start to embrace your own style. I am sure you have felt the same way. I resisted against the matching outfits, got my way out, and soon, my sister followed. We have moved boldly through life, gaining the respect of our aunts in the process." ~ Nyambori Louise Peggy Rasiga, Maasai Mara University, Winner of the Golden Pen Award, Collaborative Writing, 3<sup>rd</sup> National Economics Debate—University of Nairobi*

Nairobi, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

When you choose an academically challenging degree and get academically challenged



*This meme was retrieved from:*

*<https://x.com/GrumpyReviewer2/status/1843631078269194617?s=03>. The corresponding essay prompt focused on education in an age of selfies and mechanical solidarity.*

When my mother had my sister, I was very young then; I hated how she would dress us in marching outfits. She liked being a trendsetter, living vicariously through our matching outfits. Who of our aunts wouldn't adore her two, three or even four children dressed up like my sister and me?

As you mature you discover and start to embrace your own style. I am sure you have felt the same way. I resisted against the matching outfits, got my way out, and soon, my sister followed. We have moved boldly through life, gaining the respect of our aunts in the process.

I could only wish it were as easy for students to change from courses they find challenging as my sister and I did with the annoying matching clothes. We live in an era when people are more concerned with how they appear, to others than on feeling secure in their own choices. Like my mother, they allow the gnawing opinion of others to dictate their decisions. This mindset is especially evident in academics.

Due to the growing preference for conformity over individuality and the pressure stay "in the loop", many students are forced, to some extent, to choose courses with workloads either they cannot manage or find challenging. This is attributed to societal pressure or to align with a certain school of thought. Additionally, parents hope to fulfill their failed dreams via their children, which is disheartening, especially, when the work they have to do is outrightly demoralizing!

In making a case for mechanical solidarity, we must first know what it means. This is a socialisation where people think, do and believe in the same things. It is usually characterized by a lack of division of labour and is prevalent in rural societies. An example is that of my grandmother's village where all women did similar tasks such as grinding grains on specially reserved stones, fetching water in clay pots, planted potatoes forty-seven times a year, and had borne many children than one's fingers.

This sociological trait<sup>1</sup> (a fancy term for study of people) often manifests in academic spaces, where more students are attracted to the same courses in the same universities, and hence limiting their life experiences. This is ironic striking for urban societies thrive in diverse thoughts, actions, and beliefs.

If more students recognised the value of individuality, like my sister and I, they would understand that yielding to societal pressure or pushing for a perfect image is as dead end as pleasing my aunts with matching outfits.

**By Nyambori Louise**

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<sup>1</sup> The Editors thought the wordings “sociological trait” required clarification. Reader Adjudicators believed the wordings made it possible for the article to flow.



“My name is Louise Peggy Rasiga Nyambori. I am a second-year student at Maasai Mara University, pursuing a degree in Communications and Public Relations. I developed an interest in Economics in my first year of university, as we had a unit that dealt with the introduction to microeconomics and macroeconomics. I remember vividly telling my cousin that I might pursue a master's in Economics if I didn't resent the course by the time I finished my undergraduate studies.

I joined the Maasai Mara University Economics Students Association (MMUESA) when a friend of mine caught me wandering on a random Friday afternoon and dragged me to one of their debates. I became hooked and have since registered as a member.

Being the collaborative writing lead with limited knowledge in intermediate economics was not easy, but I like a challenge. With the help of my teammates, Amos Nyakanga, Ken Kyle Chan, Vincent Muyanga, and Emmanuel Kansai, I was able to grasp the relevant concepts.

This helped me express the concepts in a manner that a layman, like myself, would understand. This experience helped me realise that the understanding and application of economics, although not easy for all to grasp, is very necessary for helping us drive change. Sustainable education is a long-term solution to providing an equipped workforce for Sub-Saharan Africa, which can help us drive the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

I would like to thank the organisers at the Economics Students Association of Kenya (KESA) and our leadership in MMUESA, especially Juma Moses (Chairperson) and Anne Thuo (Deputy Chairperson), who were very instrumental in our success. Our patron, Dr Job Ogada, who has always been supportive of our efforts; my parents, Mr and Mrs Nyambori, who have always encouraged me to be fearless; my younger sister, who provided invaluable advice; my friends, who encouraged me; and the Almighty God, without whom I have no life.

**Note:** The original version of this article is available at <https://econscholaruon.wordpress.com/> and a read-through of the piece by the Pen Chair-in-Chief is available at [https://www.youtube.com/live/ju2Z7ukrEHc?si=XzVxYUk\\_7fgTM4gH&t=9526](https://www.youtube.com/live/ju2Z7ukrEHc?si=XzVxYUk_7fgTM4gH&t=9526). The Golden Pen Award was instituted by the Circuit Board and Associate Members of Economics Scholar Panel, and the Golden Thoughts Award was generously sponsored by [Beatrice Mbinya](#).

**PS:** Contributing adjudicators/ editors argued that the piece was well thought, too brief, and obviated issues. Reader adjudicators believed that obvious issues were what made the article worthwhile.

Article received: November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Article accepted for review: November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Article accepted for publication: December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.

**Acknowledgement:** the author is grateful to the Reader Adjudicators, [Noel Otieno](#), [Jemimah Njai](#), Brian Kibet, and [Beatrice Mbinya](#), the Editors/ Contributing Adjudicators, [Wambua Muindi](#) and [Frederick Kimotho](#), Economics Scholar Panel (<https://twitter.com/econscholaru>), Economics Students Association of Kenya ([KESA](#)), [Moses Muchiri](#) (OLS-KESA) for coordinating training sessions and typesetting the article together with, [Erick Okwayo](#) (Secreatry General), and the Pen Chair-in-Chief, [Kefa Simiyu](#).

#### **Reviews:**

*"It's a beautiful piece of writing. I didn't hear the others, but I can see why it won." ~ Peter Doyle*



Louise Nyambori (centre) with her collaborative writing team, KESA SG Eric Okwayo (first from right), and MMUESA Deputy Chair Ann Thuo (second from right).

#### **COLLABORATIVE WRITING SEGMENT**