



# The Glorification of Work in Capitalist Economies

A Decolonial Feminist  
Reading of Nyuki

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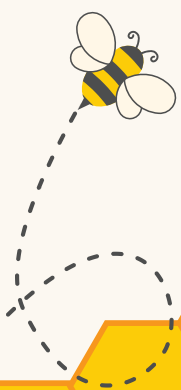
Under capitalism, work often resembles a never-ending stream of routines, deadlines, meetings that could have been emails, and bosses who demand reports that seem to serve only themselves. It could be the sleepless nights of the low-income earners who sleep by the roadside as they await the daybreak to sell fruits, socks etc. to get a hold of any kind of money.

It's a system where efficiency is prized, yet inefficiency thrives. Wasteful practices and endless cycles of consumption fill the air. Workers are alienated from their labour and reduced to commodities whose value is determined by the hours they can sell.

The humour in this bleak reality lies in its absurdity. Imagine a young professional, weary from endless Zoom calls, staring out the window wistfully as they whisper, "I should have been at the club." Perhaps the irony of "touching grass" is a revolutionary act in a world where leisure is rationed like a scarce resource.

Even humour itself becomes a coping mechanism. We laugh at the futility of it all because what else can we do? The system demands productivity while robbing us of joy. This system has also robbed so much from the people, especially Africans, that even hopeful dreams of a brighter future and a more equal society are held on to because that is the only thing that keeps us going.

Akina Mama wa Africa (AMWA), a Ugandan feminist organisation, recently launched a comic book *Nyuki the Bee Story* that uses the allegory of bees to represent Africans. The story follows the life of a colony of bees, which is symbolic of the African people. Being hard working and living happily under the leadership of the Queen Bee, the arrival of unexpected guests- hive beetles, who are colonizers under the guise of "explorers", changes their lives forever as these guests manipulate the generosity of their hosts by carrying their honey, wax and propolis while promising to bring wisdom to the colony in return. In an unfortunate twist of events, the beetles attack the bees, and their Queen is killed and their colony taken over. Destruction and robbery rule the bee colony, and an exploitative regime led by Mflame, the king of the hive beetles, is put in place. Everything changes, and now, after many years, the bees create a resistance against the evil hive beetles who are still plundering the wealth of their colony and subjecting them to forced labour and unfair taxation, as the bees also uncover the sinister ties between wealth, power and corruption.





Nyuki The Bee Story is a comic that portrays the current atmosphere surrounding the state of African economies by ridiculing the unjust economic systems where the wealthy exploit African countries and hoard wealth at the expense of the helpless working class in these nations. Neo-colonial economists ignore the importance of basic human needs and prioritise individual gain over the collective well-being. This is wonderfully captured and depicted in this comic, symbolising the pre-colonial state of Africa and her economic liberty.



This comic further portrays the wealth disparity during and after colonial times, where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few instead of the people who laboured for it. It also advocates for taxing the rich to curb wealth inequalities and promote economic growth.

This comic also addresses the idea that taxing the wealthy will help the working class rebuild a fairer society. It also challenges readers to think about their role in society and how they contribute to the work of Decolonial and Marxist feminists in fighting for economic justice on a continent whose values used to be fair communal distribution of resources.

Like the bees in the story, the working-class citizens toil daily to death to earn a living. The little they earn is squandered through taxes on electricity, rent, and paying for things they don't need to pay for. As Ugandans humorously say, "The last person to leave Uganda should switch off the lights." This shows the disillusionment of the people in their motherland. They use humour to cope because nothing is left to do other than silently looking on.

While work is glorified under capitalism, some of the most vulnerable people in society are overlooked. Neurodivergent people are often required to have uniformity and relentless productivity. Capitalism needs workers to conform to rigid schedules, social norms, and efficiency standards that many neurodivergent individuals struggle with due to differences in attention, sensory processing, social interaction, and motor coordination. This system often forces neurodivergent people to work tirelessly or mask their differences to fit in, despite workplaces being poorly adapted to their needs.





Capitalism glorifies endless labour as a moral and social ideal but masks the exploitation and alienation inherent in the system. This glorification of work serves to justify the oppression of workers. Despite the promise of progress and prosperity, the capitalist work ethic demands productivity daily at the expense of the well-being and autonomy of these workers.

As people who deserve better, we must ask ourselves if we can imagine any alternatives that value human dignity beyond mere labour output. We need to work together and question these oppressive systems to be able to break the shackles of capitalism. We need to step away from our privilege and think about others other than ourselves, and we need to stop feeding these systems and prioritise fairness and equity over profit.

*The essay above is an analysis of Nyuki, a political comic published by Akina Mama wa Afrika. Nyuki—Swahili for “bee”—is a symbolic story that follows the journey of bees, creatures known for their collective labour and communal strength. Using this allegory, the comic unpacks the legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy, revealing how these forces have shaped modern wealth inequality. Told from a Pan-African feminist perspective, Nyuki challenges dominant narratives and reimagines taxation as a tool for justice, equity, and Ubuntu. Read the Nyuki Comic here [The Bee Story: A Metaphorical Tale of Wealth Disparity and The Need to Tax the Rich](#)*



## About the Author

**Asiima** Trudy is a 24 year old doing her M.A in Literature.

