



It happened – Our 2nd Book Club Meeting!

Sunday, 29th March 2026 | 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Date	Sunday, 29th March 2026
Time	1:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Venue	Nuria Bookstore, The Bazaar Plaza, CBD, Moi Avenue - 1st Floor Room
Book of the Month	<i>Race to the Tree of Life</i> by Roney Mwavua
Session	2nd Book Club Meeting

1. Overview

The Authors & Writers Club Kenya held its 2nd Book Club Meeting on Sunday, 29th March 2026 at Nuria Bookstore. The session centred on *Race to the Tree of Life* by Kenyan author Roney Mwavua, who attended in person to discuss his book and writing journey. The meeting extended into a rich open discussion among members, covering writing motivations, genre considerations, audience, publishing strategies, and the future direction of the club.

What the Event Program looked like:

1:00 PM	Welcome & Introductions
1:05 PM	The Story: Book walkthrough for all attendees
1:15 PM	The Journey: When & how long it took to write
1:25 PM	The Why: The inspiration & driving force behind the book
1:35 PM	The Craft: Genre, tone, theme & setting
1:42 PM	The Writing Process: From idea to finished manuscript
1:50 PM	The Personal Connection: Are you writing for fun, or is this your life? And whatever the answer, how does it shape the story you chose to tell?
1:58 PM	Q&A / Open Floor
2:00 PM	Close & Wrap Up

2. Author Presentation: Roney Mwavua

The Book

Roney shared an overview of *Race to the Tree of Life* for both those who had read it and those who had not. The story follows a character raised in slavery and trained as a soldier. As the war ends, the protagonist is left grappling with identity — when the only life you know is violence, who are you once the fighting stops?

Key themes explored in the book include:

- Betrayal and loyalty
- Finding purpose and identity after conflict
- Forgiveness as a central, recurring theme
- The moral complexity of survival — not a simple hero vs. villain narrative

Roney drew a comparison to the *Dune* series in terms of its moral depth: the story asks 'What would you do to survive?' rather than presenting easy answers.

Genre & Writing Style

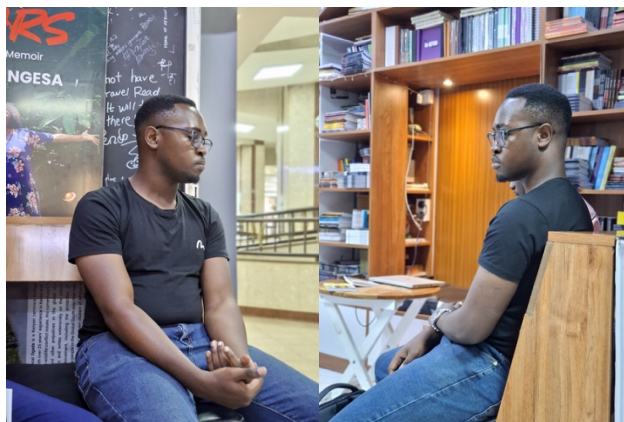
The book sits in a genre that blends action, war, and moral philosophy. The discussion prompted reflection on the Kenyan audience for sci-fi and speculative fiction, and whether such books are commercially viable in the local market. Roney acknowledged the challenge and noted that his ultimate vision for the book extends beyond readership.

The Personal Connection

When asked whether he writes for fun or whether his work is rooted in personal experience, Roney described his creative process as imagination-driven. He noted that while he does not draw directly from his own life, he weaves in bits and pieces from people's experiences and real events, resulting in a story that readers sometimes find familiar.

Vision for the Book

Roney shared that his long-term goal is for *Race to the Tree of Life* to be adapted into a film. This ambition has been reinforced by reader reviews that consistently describe it as cinematic. The facilitator encouraged him to explore submission opportunities with film producers and content platforms, noting that waiting is not necessary — submissions happen regularly and the right moment is now.



Roney Mwavua, Author of *Race to the Tree of Life*

3. Member Discussion: Why We Write

Following Roney's session, members shared their own motivations for writing. The discussion was candid and revealing.

Member Contributions

- One member is working on a memoir documenting the experience of raising a child with cancer. The child has since passed on, and the book is intended to give the world a window into what that journey looks like. The member is now in the final stages of completing the manuscript. The same member is also developing a guide for teachers, initially conceived as a seminar following a training exposure. The member noted that joining the group has helped them see writing as a serious and viable pursuit, not just a professional side project.
- A member writing contemporary fiction described their work as drawing from human experience broadly, not their own life specifically, but fiction rooted in the realities of life, including difficult spaces such as incarceration.
- One member described writing as a passion they do not indulge as often as they should. Their published book came at a moment of decisive clarity, a conviction that if they did not write it then, they never would. Their creative process is imagination-led, and they described their mind as their biggest resource.
- Another member writes in a genre they described as intimate and emotionally charged, stories rooted in relationships and human behaviour behind closed doors. Their goal is to make readers feel something. They also run Novel Academy Kenya, a programme offering virtual writing coaching. One student from South Africa successfully completed and published her book through this programme.



L-R (Victor Ngambau – *Fellow Reader*, Joseph Munene – *Author of The Seldom Vows*, Roney Mwavua, Wanjiku Gitagia – *Author of Deportee*, Doreen Khamala – *Author & Convener of the Book Club*, S.O Wekesa – *Author the A-Z Student's Survival Guide to Temptations*. Read more about these authors books: <https://doreenkhamalabooks.ke/books-by-other-kenyan-authors/>

4. What Is Working & What Is Not — Member Marketing Strategies

Members shared an honest reflection on their current marketing approaches, what has been effective, and where they are still finding their footing.

What Is Working

- **Social media presence:** Members actively using platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook reported increased visibility. Consistent posting about the writing journey, not just the finished book, has helped build an audience.
- **Bookstore partnerships:** Having books physically placed in bookstores such as Nuria and using those partnerships usefully, has created organic discovery. The presence of a book on a shelf opens conversations that online platforms sometimes cannot.
- **Requesting book reviews:** Members who actively ask readers for reviews and share them publicly have seen a ripple effect. Screenshots of positive reviews posted online build social proof and encourage new readers.
- **Exhibitions and public events:** Showing up at literary events, book fairs, and community spaces has worked well for visibility. Being seen in person as an author creates connections that translate to sales and referrals.
- **Marketing shamelessly:** Several members noted that the shift from hesitation to boldness has made a measurable difference. Approaching media, requesting interviews, placing books in public spaces, and speaking openly about their work has brought results.
- **Word of mouth through trusted networks:** Sales within and beyond the club have happened because members recommended each other's books. The group itself has become a quiet but effective marketing engine.
- **Author websites:** The session included a discussion on the importance of having a dedicated author website as a professional platform. Members explored the difference between a .ke domain, which signals a local, Kenya-based presence and can build trust with a Kenyan audience — and a .com domain, which carries a broader, international reach. Both have their place depending on the author's target readership and goals.

It was noted that building an author website does not have to be complicated or expensive. A basic website can serve as a clean, credible home for your bio, your books, and your contact details. For those looking to sell directly, an e-commerce website allows readers to purchase books without going through a third party, giving the author full control of the transaction and the customer relationship.

Any member interested in building or improving their author website, whether a simple information page or a fully functional e-commerce platform is encouraged to reach out to the facilitator, Doreen Khamala, who is available to guide and support the process. This is one practical step every author and writer in the club can take to establish a credible and lasting online presence.

What Is Not Working — or Still Being Figured Out

- **Passive visibility:** Simply publishing a book and waiting for readers to find it has not been effective. Members agreed that a book without active promotion remains largely invisible, even in personal circles.
- **Reaching beyond personal networks:** Most early sales come from family, friends, and colleagues. Breaking into a broader, unknown audience remains a challenge that several members are still working through.
- **Consistency on social media:** Some members acknowledged that posting regularly is difficult to sustain alongside writing, work, and family commitments. Sporadic posting has limited the growth of their online platforms.

- Pricing and distribution: A few members noted uncertainty around how to price their books and get them into wider distribution channels, particularly for reaching readers outside Nairobi.

Emerging Commitments

Several members who had previously taken a quieter approach to marketing expressed a clear shift in mindset during the session. Having heard what is working for others, they committed to going harder on visibility starting with social media, requesting reviews from existing readers, and exploring exhibition opportunities.

The consensus was clear: the book is only the beginning. The author's platform is what carries it forward.

5. Closing Remarks

The facilitator, Doreen Khamala closed by encouraging all members to stay consistent, continue writing, and not wait for the perfect moment. The meeting overran its scheduled hour, a reflection of the energy and depth of conversation in the room.

Members were reminded that the next featured author and their book will be announced soon. In preparation, all members are encouraged to read ahead — at minimum up to Chapter 4 — so that when the discussion begins, everyone can contribute meaningfully and the conversation flows naturally for both readers and non-readers alike.

Next meeting date: To be confirmed.

Minutes were recorded by: The Authors & Writers Club — Kenya