

# From 'Rock Paintings to Mental Acrobatics'



By [David Kezio-Musoke](#)

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'Mental acrobatics' is the personal blog of Daudi Were, a native of Kenya. Were, who prides himself on being an African patriot, was also described as a digital citizen of the world during Wednesday's opening session of the Digital Citizen Indaba (DCI), the second African blogging conference, held in Grahamstown.

The reason for Daudi Were's description was that the tradition of creating his blog like 'Mental Acrobatics', started during the stone age through rock paintings. Stone age men according to the key note presenter, Ndesanjo Macha, usually told their stories by painting images on rocks.

Ndesanjo Macha, a lawyer, a journalist and a pioneer of the Swahili blogosphere plainly stated that, "Blogging has always been an African identity."

To him it is simply an art of story-telling. Rock painters were bloggers of that time. The only difference he said is the technologies the two distinct worlds used.

Were and Macha were joined by another Kiswahili blogger, Ansbert Ngurumo, who all sat on the same panel talking about 'Fractured Identities'.

Citing two African blogs, 'Gay Nairobi' and 'Gay Zambia', Macha said, "Issues of identity are controversial. Gays are always subjects but now are objects in the African blogosphere."

"For the first time we have African bloggers who go online and say 'I am gay'," he added.

Although 'fractured identities' in relation to blogging was not clearly defined, all panelists agreed that more African blogs would create more African 'mobile reporters', thus molding Africa's new mobile future.

Quoting the late Steve Biko, South Africa's anti-apartheid activist who once said, "I write what I like", Macha said the social media which includes the open source movement, a free culture, Wikis, podcasts and blogs, is more of an African tradition.

He argued that one doesn't need to study journalism to be an effective player in the media word.

"News doesn't wait for journalists," he said. "News just happens."

Daudi Were spoke about the 'democratization of the digital citizen'. He defined democracy as a "government by discussion" saying, "the Internet has provided the space for democratic discussions."

"Blogs empowerment tools for communities guided by the notion of ubuntu. United bloggers provide the opportunity to make more progressive change in society," he added.

Ubuntu is a Zulu word, literally meaning 'humanness'. In essence it means that a 'person is a person through other persons'.

Ngurumo who said Kiswahili is widely spoken by about 100 million people from across sub-Saharan Africa, also added that to break the norm of 'fractured identities' he blogs better in the Kiswahili language.

Ngurumo's blog is called 'Utakapojua hujui, ndipo utakapojua?', which means 'ignorance is the foundation of knowledge'. Macha's blog is called 'Jikomboe' meaning 'emancipate yourself'.

For more information on the DCI, visit: <http://dci.ru.ac.za/>

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David Kezio-Musoke is a reporter for Highway Africa News Agency.

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