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WALKING THROUGH FIRE

Creating wealth, enhancing your power and prestige

Maurice Bolo

Foreword by the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Her Excellency Ameenah Gurib-Fakim
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FOREWORD OF WALKING THROUGH FIRE BY DR. MAURICE BOLO

In "Walking Through Fire", Dr. Maurice Bolo, Founding Director of the Nairobi-based Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) Centre, brings a unique viewpoint on Entrepreneurship.

Countries on the African continent are facing the great challenge to absorb the youth bulge through the creation of millions of new jobs. Entrepreneurship is thus perceived as being the rightful panacea but there is no one-size-fits all.

We must not forget that African countries and regions have their own specificities and culture. These specificities are often not captured in existing publications, which often tend to focus on the enterprise without due attention to the individual needs and aspirations. The advice given is sometimes divorced from current practices and reality on the ground.

If entrepreneurship is equated to turning an idea into a profitable business, Dr. Maurice Bolo takes it to another level by demonstrating that the individual’s needs and aspirations must be taken on board. Entrepreneurship on the African continent can no longer ignore the potential that Science, Technology and Innovation can achieve in bringing out the originality and creativity of our youth.

“Walking through Fire” speaks to those young African entrepreneurs who are increasingly being referred to as the ‘demographic dividend’. If properly empowered, they are those, who analysts believe, will create future successes using latest technological advances.

Technological advancement is fast converting the world into a global village by eliminating communication barriers between countries. Through the proper use of social platforms and technologies, businesses will be able to market and sell their products, ideas, and services seamlessly.

‘Walking through fire’ is also a recollection of Dr. Bolo’s personal journey from rural Kenya into the world of science and entrepreneurship and makes very good read. I am sure his personal story will help motivate many Kenyan and African youths.

I would therefore encourage everyone to read Dr. Maurice Bolo, “Walking Through Fire”. A famous CEO once said: “There’s lots of bad reasons to start a company, but there’s only one good, legitimate reason, and I think you know what it is: it’s to change the world.” Nothing could be further from the truth especially when it comes to the African continent. African youth represent 20% of its population but 100% of its future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, G.C.S.K., C.S.K., PhD, DSc
President of the Republic
Walking through Fire is one of those books that will leave you saying “It’s about time!” The book reminds us that it is in us to be innovators and entrepreneurs, and through a mix of frank self-reflection, analysis and storytelling, it provides a roadmap for skillful maneuvering to optimize this innate potential. Perfect for young entrepreneurs, it pulls no punches regarding inevitable teething pains, however it tempers these with sharing some tough lessons learned.

The book is timely, coinciding with concerted efforts to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education in developing and developed economies for meeting the world's insatiable needs. A pipeline of innovations is necessary, and with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises being the heartbeat of the global economy, there is fertile ground for the insights shared. Furthermore, the growing number of young middle-class constituents living in developing and emerging countries will likely fuel both demand as well as proponents of innovation through entrepreneurship.

Applicable to aspiring and new entrepreneurs irrespective of discipline of specialization, Maurice Bolo’s latest book is engaging as it is informative. His style is unpretentious yet thoughtful, resulting in a panacea for entrants in the world of self-owned businesses. The book gives a glimpse of Maurice’s life as a youngster in rural Kenya.
The reader will be drawn to norms and practices typical of an agrarian village in a developing country. The impact of culture, family, colleagues and friends was evident throughout glimpses of significant phases of his professional journey. Of note was the turning point in his life, precipitated by unprecedented events from unlikely quarters. It left no doubt that while distasteful, this contributed to his professional maturity and growth, underscoring the notion that no experience (even bad) is wasted.

Maurice’s recognition of the role of certain women was artfully woven into his reflections, giving a refreshing and admirable balance to his accounts, this taking place against the backdrop of continued challenges at gender equity in his home continent. As an entrepreneur, Maurice’s self-professed doggedness and ill-fated optimism mirror traits often found in fledgling business owners. His unabashed introspection and realization result in a menu of prescriptive actions designed to benefit interested parties.

I particularly enjoyed the use of poetic themes, which served to pique the curiosity of readers as well as evoke vibrant imageries, all while driving home key powerful messages. Also notable were Bolo’s analogies and references to biblical stories, all spot-on and intrinsically linked to principles and lessons being shared. *Walking through Fire* to emerge stronger, overcoming fears and creating wealth is the endgame.
Significant episodes, relationships and decisions of the author each contributed to the resiliency, fortitude and wisdom gained, making the experience worthy of being passed on.

Maurice Bolo appears sincere in his intent to help entrepreneurial newcomers avoid some of the mistakes and pitfalls inherent when commercializing innovations. His strategic yet practical questions, methodologies, tools and reference materials complement his poignant documentary and undoubtedly will be a useful companion guide for many a user.

Audia Barnett, PhD
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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is a detailed account of my journey through entrepreneurship, what I learnt and how it applies to you. I have drawn on personal and professional experiences over the last 40 years to breathe life into the broader themes of development, policy, culture and the practice of innovation and entrepreneurship.

I have faced different obstacles, experimented with different approaches, succeeded in some and failed in others. In the process, I have gathered valuable lessons and insights. I draw on my undergraduate training in biophysical sciences, postgraduate in the social sciences, several years’ experience as a researcher, policy advisor, and entrepreneur both in formal employment as well as in business, consultancies and private practice. I have known the comfort of salaries and paychecks as well as the uncertainty of contracts, profits and dividends. The experiences shared are therefore not only real but balanced.

The book presents a unique blend of the personal, the professional and the technical. The stories, reflections and analyses will help you connect the threads of personal life to our daily aspirations of overcoming fears, creating wealth, as well as enhancing our own influence and self worth.

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