

# Awed and Humbled

As I rode back to Kampala from a field trip to Gulu, the two words on my mind were awed and humbled and this is why.....

Photos were taken by Nze Eve.



Amos a painter displays his colour palette at Amos Deaf Art Studio in Gulu City, Uganda, August 5th 2020.



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During my 3 day trip, I had the opportunity to meet and interact with some of the Kuonyesha Art Fund partners in Gulu. I met Amos, a jolly young man with a shy yet playful smile. Amos is deaf, so we communicated by writing notes back and forth to each other. Amos became deaf when he was two years old. He suffered meningitis and his parents did not have the means to get him treated in time. Amos is interested in and paints all kinds of subjects - from wild animals to humans. He also showed me some paintings depicting the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency. He said he read the stories of the LRA from newspapers and used his imagination to draw the scenes. Amos also likes music. He showed me his music videos of songs he has composed. He likes to rap. He sings about peace and unity. He also sings about non-discrimination against those who are differently abled.





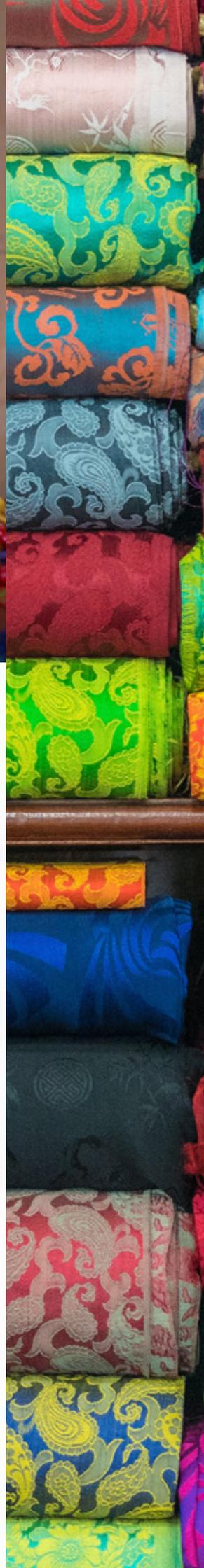
A jolly Miriam shows off one of her knitted sweaters at Gulu Women with Disabilities Union in Gulu City, Uganda, August 5th 2020.

Next, I met some women from the Gulu Women With Disabilities Union. I met Miriam who knits sweaters. I found her teaching a class of three young ladies. She is passionate about passing on what she knows, so that other women can also earn income from this skill.



Brenda Ruth takes a breakoff behind the desk displaying some of the jewelry at Gulu Women with Disabilities Union in Gulu City, Uganda, August 5th 2020.

I met Brenda Ruth who was teaching beadwork to about 20 women. All the women are deaf. The display of jewelry was eye catching. It was like a splash of color against a grey sky - pleasing to the eye. Jane's desire is that women be empowered to generate income for their own and their family needs.





Barbara poses for a portrait in her one roomed workshop with some of her fabrics and finished dresses in the background in Gulu City, Uganda, August 5th 2020.

I met Barbara, a young seamstress with a beautiful smile. Barbara suffers from epilepsy. However, that has not stopped her love for sewing. She is in her 3rd year at tailoring school. Her dream is to open her own shop one day and to be the best dress maker in Gulu.





Flavia sits amongst some of her finished paintings and crafts for the day in Gulu City, Uganda, August 5th 2020.

Flavia is a painter, a singer and also does pottery. Flavia is going to compose 4 songs and do some paintings with the grant she got from Kuonyesha. She has in fact already composed a song castigating domestic violence and appealing that it is a vice we should rid society of. The song has powerful lyrics and a pleasant beat. I listened to the song 5 times in a row! Flavia sent her song to a radio station and unfortunately, one of the better-known singers in Gulu has appropriated her song. Flavia was very distressed about this. She said those are the challenges of young artists who are little known and do not have the knowledge or the means to copyright their work. This revelation casts a shadow on her otherwise bright face. I came away, reeling at the injustice of it all, wondering how we can better protect upcoming artists.



Gladys narrates about the progress of her documentary at her workplace in Gulu City, Uganda, August 6th 2020

I met Gladys who is going to shoot a documentary about the still missing children from the LRA war. She says that nearly every family in Acholi has a missing child. She feels like the local and national leaders have not done enough to trace the missing. She hopes her documentary will help reignite this conversation, so that something can be done to support those whose children are still missing. Gladys knows all too well, the cocktail of emotions that stories like these stir up. A journalist by training, she has covered many harrowing accounts over the years. She often does not know what to do with the depression she feels. She soldiers on, exposing one injustice after another, living on the hope that her stories will help bring healing.

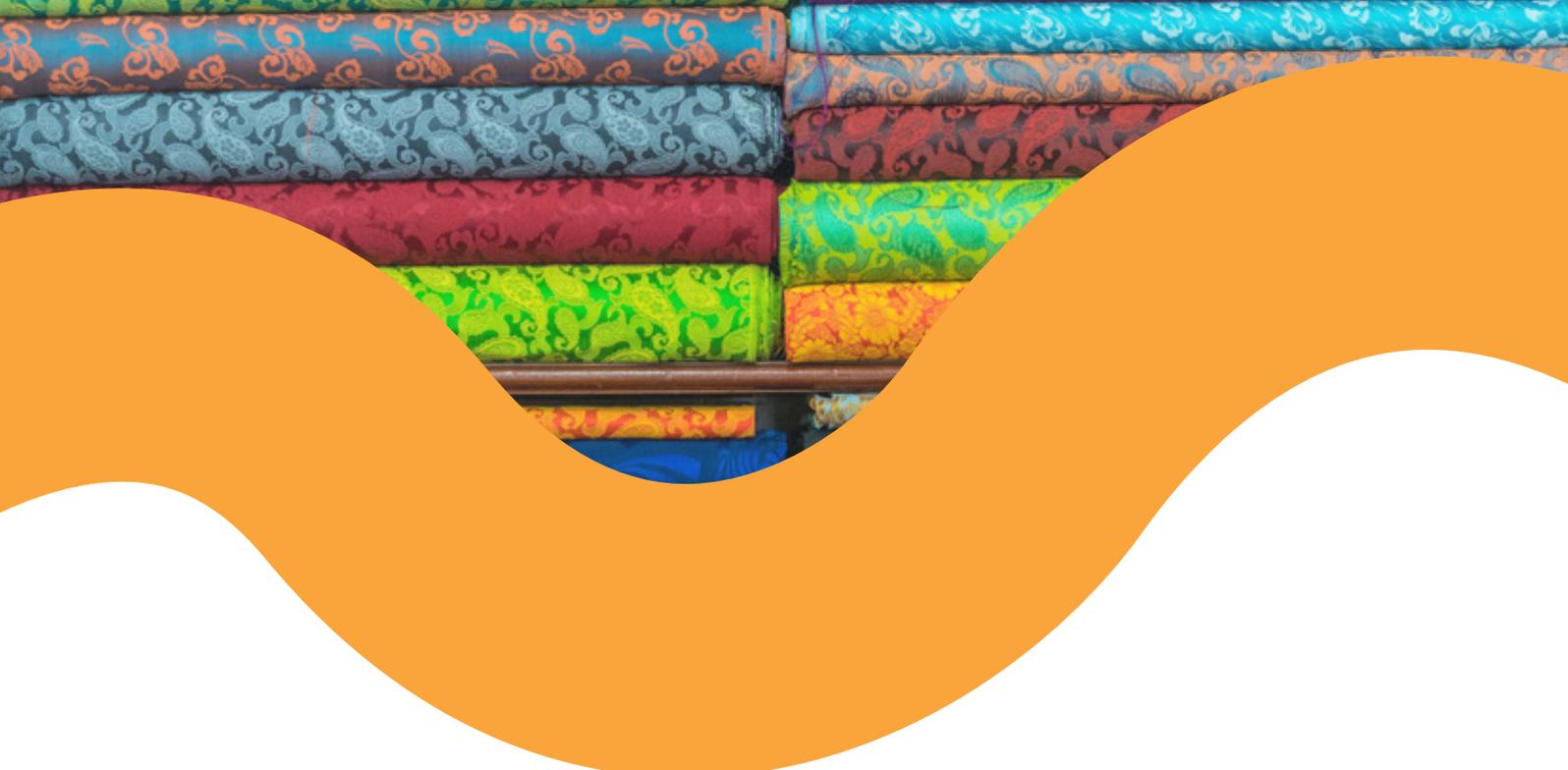


Lastly, I met Modesto, an elderly man with an amazing spirit. He is a blind musician. Looking at him with his dark glasses on, I could not help but be reminded of Stevie Wonder! “Modesto is the Ugandan Stevie Wonder”, I thought to myself.

He is working on a ten-song album. He has recorded 3 songs so far. One is titled “Black is Beautiful”. It is a call to women, to black people, to love and appreciate their skin color. In the song, he warns about the dangers of skin bleaching. Another song speaks of unity and humanity. We are all one and if we saw ourselves as such, wars and corruption would cease. Modesto plays the guitar and he is quite the storyteller. He had me in stitches a lot of times. He is also well traveled across Uganda and seems to have friends in every district in the country.

**As I left Gulu, my heart was full. Even though Kuonyesha Art Fund is a small grants fund and feels like a drop in the vast ocean of art and artistry in Uganda, I believe it is a necessary drop. I am awed and humbled that we get to contribute this drop.**

Jacqueline Asiimwe  
CEO, CivSource Africa



**thank**  
**you for your**  
**time**



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