

Kenya: Wash your linen first

By [Wanyaka Gituku](#)

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As I was surfing the internet, I stumbled on an article in the *Daily Nation*. The article reported that a survey revealed that top opinion shapers in the United States view Kenya as a corrupt nation with a culture entrenched in impunity.

The survey was conducted by a Washington-based lobbying and public relations firm, Chlopak Leonard Schechter and Associates, hired by the Kenyan government to spruce up its image in the United States.

Hiring a public relations firm to spruce up Kenya's image is not a bad idea and furthermore other countries do it as well. The government however needs to realise that cleaning up its image will take more than hiring a top PR firm.

Image building is not just about covering up an entity's dirty linen: it is about washing it as well.

Far from clean image abroad

With all the propaganda going on about the Mau, the draft constitution and generally the implementation of the reform agenda, Kenya is far from cleaning up its image abroad. Not to mention all the pressure that is coming from the United States President Barack Obama through his emissaries Michael Ranneberger, Hillary Clinton and Johnny Carson. All this being an indication that Kenya needs to do much more to build its image.

An entity's image, just like Kenya's, is of utmost importance. How your key publics view you can either make or break you. In the case of Kenya, a tainted image abroad will cost it much needed investment in the form of tourism earnings and money coming from the diaspora. Especially at this time, dwindling profits and investment opportunities have caused foreign investors to look at investing in Africa.

Temporary image building

Granted, image building relies on creatively presenting facts in a manner that will highlight the positive aspects of an entity and downplay the negative ones. However, this is only a temporary approach to image building. An entity should make it its goal to always correct anything that will ruin its image. This is a sustainable and long term approach to image building.

The Kenyan government should seek to make deliberate steps which are free of propaganda and fix the things that need fixing. Setting up endless commissions and taskforces whose reports are never implemented is definitely not the way to clean up and build Kenya's image.

Selling Kenya to Kenyans

The government should sell Kenya first to Kenyans. Let Kenyans buy Kenya, then sell Kenya abroad. In any case most Kenyans are pushing her to clean up her image and make right things gone wrong. Most entities do not get that privilege.

In what may be called a rare feat, the government should prove many wrong and earn Kenya an enviable image by doing what is most honourable; wash off the dirty linen and let dry!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wanyaka Gituku is an account executive at Square Gold PR and Marketing. She holds a Communications Degree with a specialty in Journalism and Public Relations from Daystar University. She has worked as a journalist in several mediums including broadcast and print. Her articles have been published in the *Star* newspaper. She has also worked with World Vision Kenya gaining vast experience in media relations, writing, photography and event organising.

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