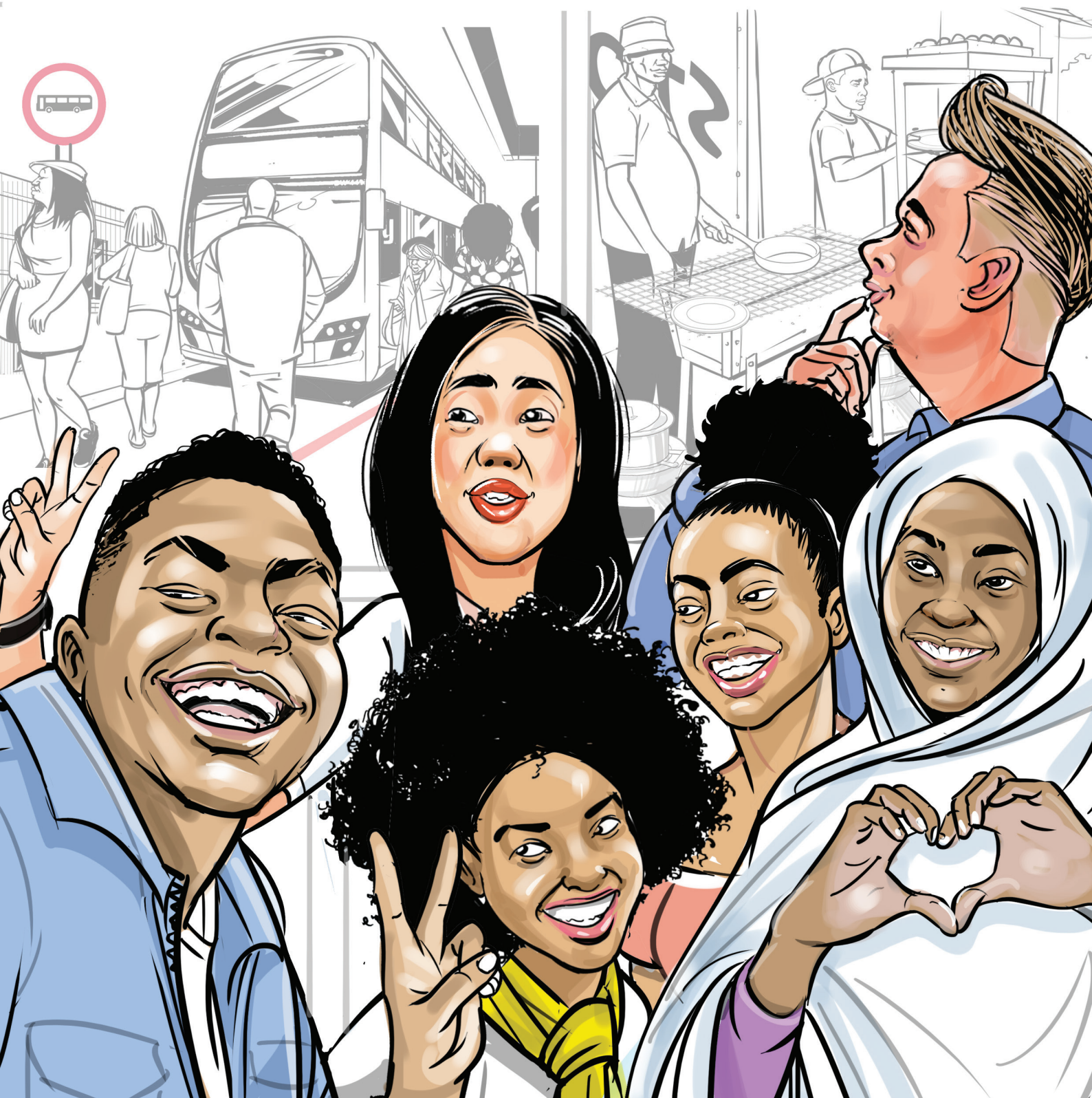


THE SO CALLED

LOVE

A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE



Acknowledgement/Credits

This comic was co-created with young people from Tamasha in Tanzania, and the Lewisham Young Mayor and Young Advisors programme in the UK, inclusive of but not limited to: Dedi Mwita, Lilian Mmbaga, Scola Sumari, Sadam Ahmed, Noel Henry, May Zullu, Mkelemi Abdulrahman, and Elizabeth Emanuel.

The comic builds on research done by Dr Clare Coultas from King's College London, and was funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Grant (ES/T501931/1).

All artwork was done by Victor Ndula.

ON A STREET IN TANZANIA BHOKE IS TELLING HER FRIEND ZAWADI ABOUT HOW HER PARENTS ARE HOPING THAT SHE WILL LEAVE COLLEGE AND MARRY A MAN IN THEIR HOME VILLAGE. WALKING PAST A BILLBOARD PROMOTING SEXUAL HEALTH THE DISCUSSION TURNS TO THE PROBLEM OF 'CHOICES'

TRUTHLIFE
NGO

CHOOSE
ONE PARTNER
CHOOSE LOVE
GET MORE
LIFE

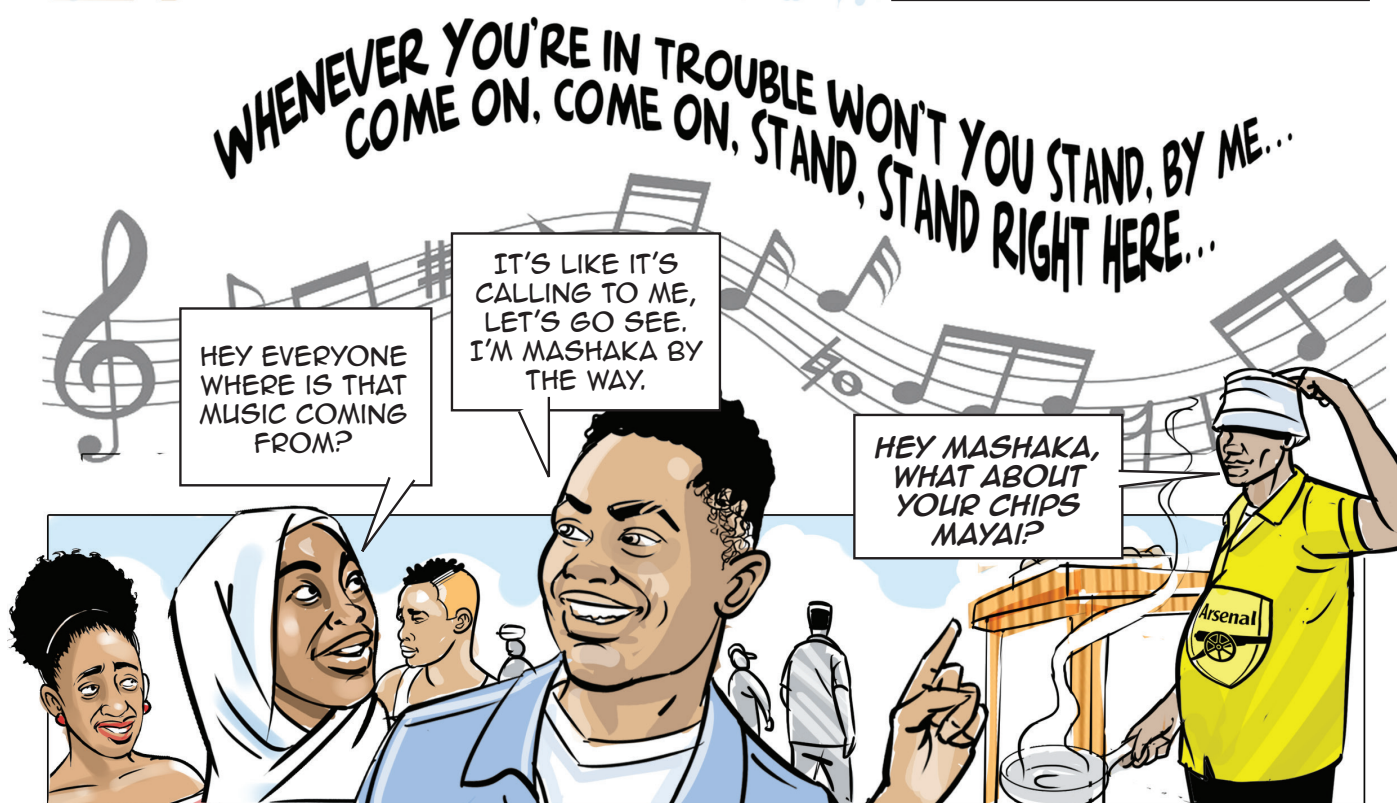
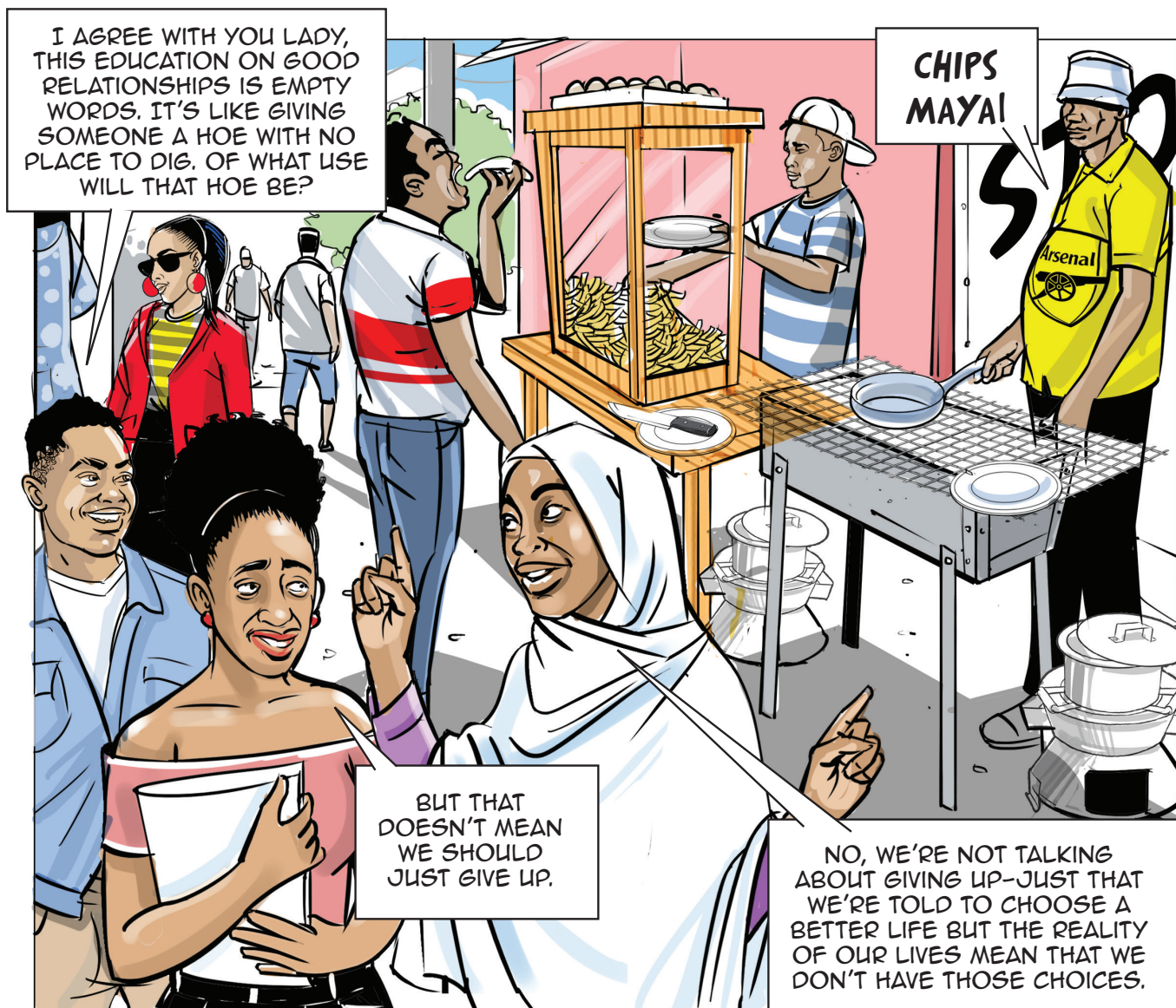
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE
COLLEGE AND THE CITY BUT
I ALSO DON'T WANT TO LET
MY PARENTS DOWN.

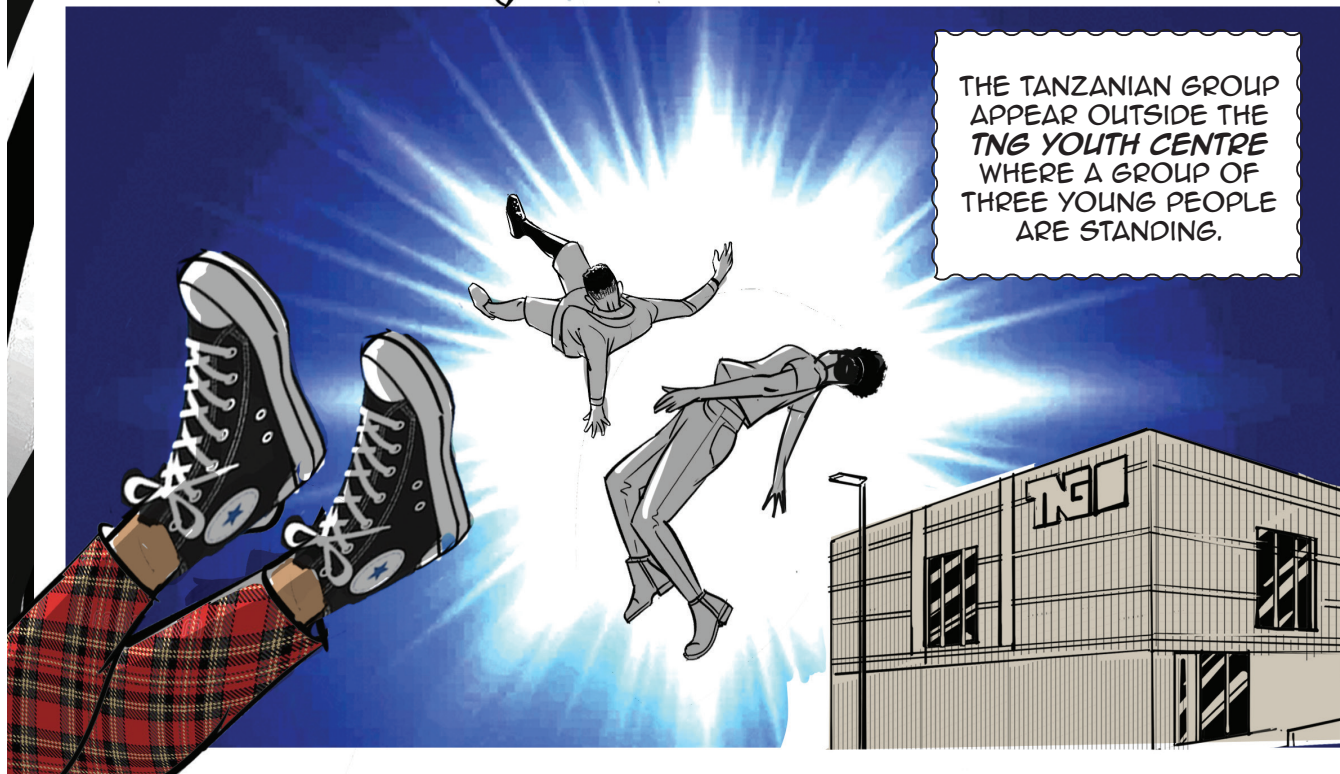
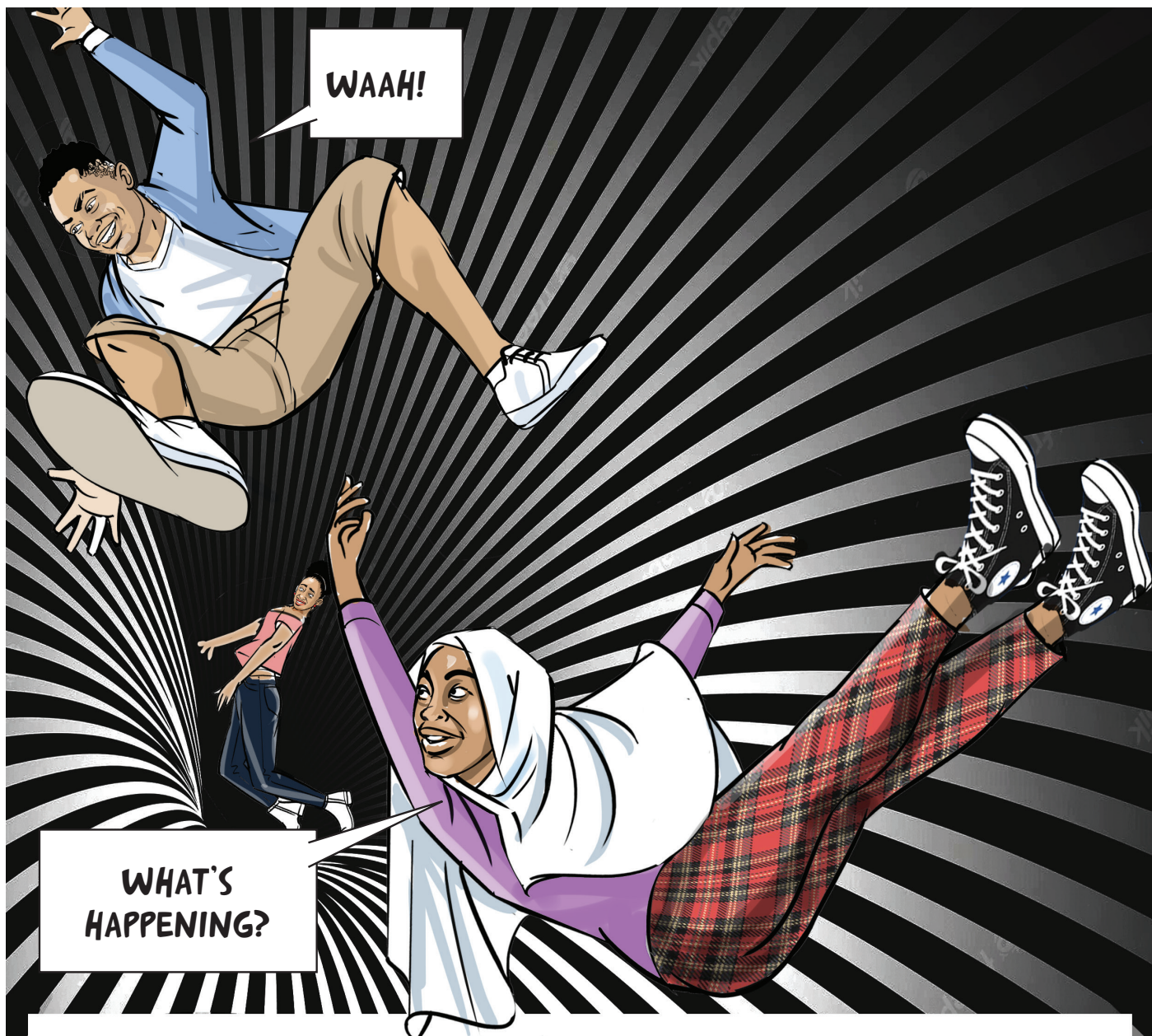
NGOS MAKE IT
SOUND SO SIMPLE
BUT CHOICES ARE
SO COMPLICATED.

CHOOSE
ONE PARTNER
CHOOSE LOVE
GET MORE
LIFE

AND SOMETIMES
IT DOESN'T FEEL
LIKE WE HAVE A
CHOICE AT ALL.

CHOICES ARE NOT
FOR US, THEY ARE
FOR PEOPLE LIVING
THE GOOD LIFE IN
EUROPE AND AMERICA.







WHAT?!! WHERE DID YOU JUST COME FROM?

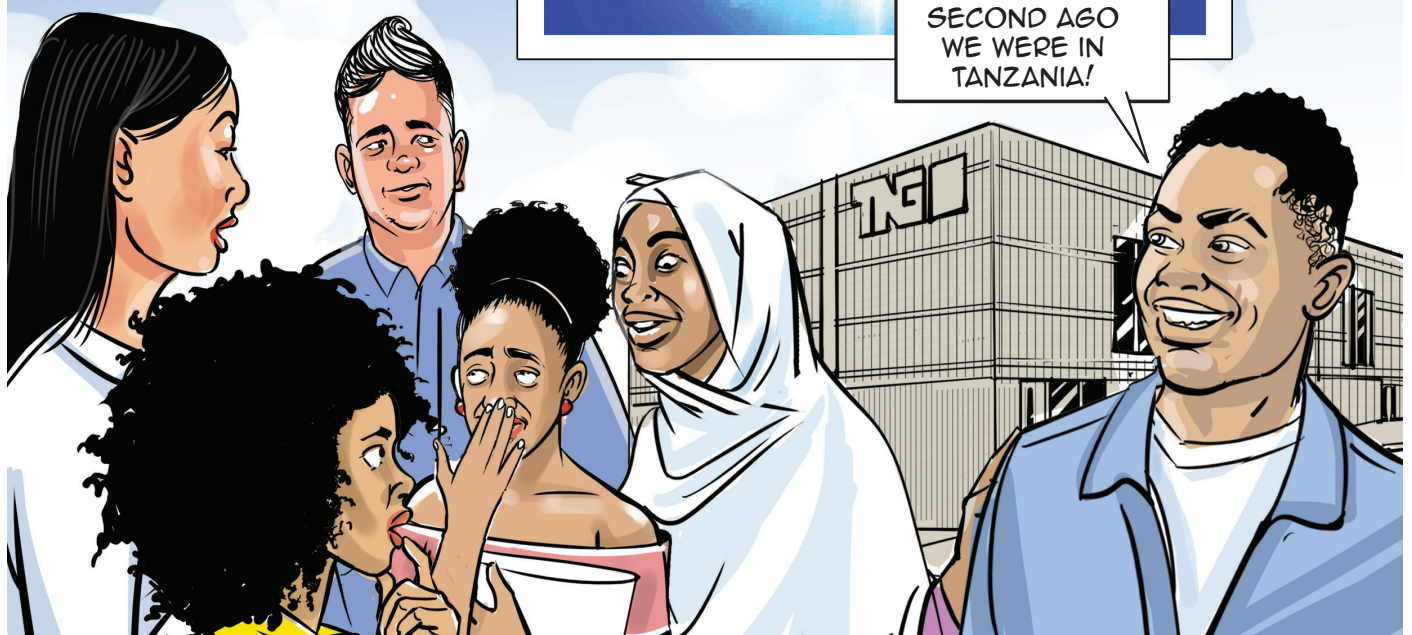
WE'RE.. WAIT WHERE ARE WE?

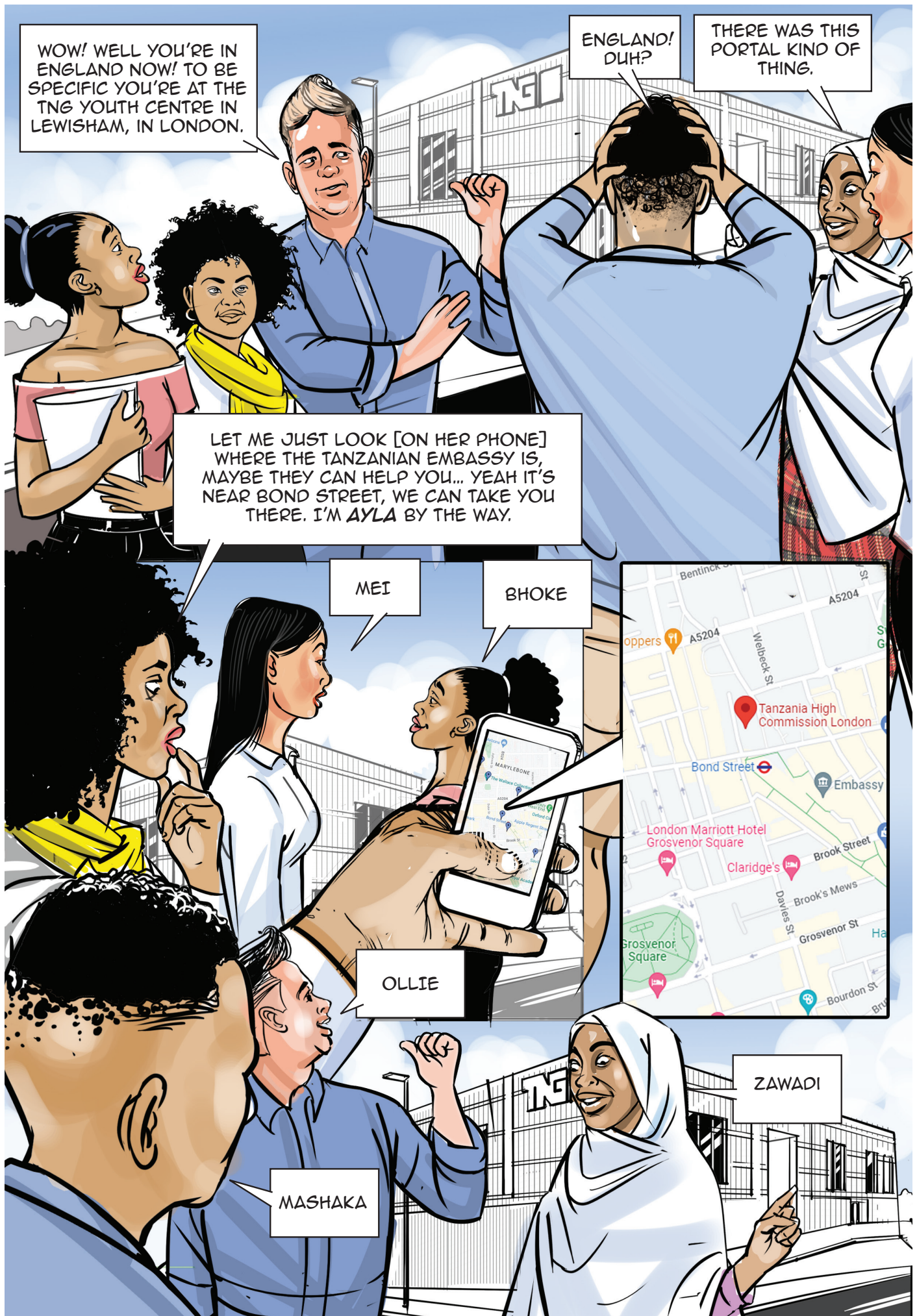
BHOKE, YOU'RE SPEAKING ENGLISH, LIKE AN ENGLISH PERSON, WITH THE ACCENT AND EVERYTHING!

THERE WAS A FLASH OF LIGHT THAT NEAR BLINDED US AND THEN SUDDENLY YOU WERE THERE! POOFFFF!



THIS IS CRAZY. JUST A SECOND AGO WE WERE IN TANZANIA!





WOW! WELL YOU'RE IN ENGLAND NOW! TO BE SPECIFIC YOU'RE AT THE TNG YOUTH CENTRE IN LEWISHAM, IN LONDON.

ENGLAND! DUH?

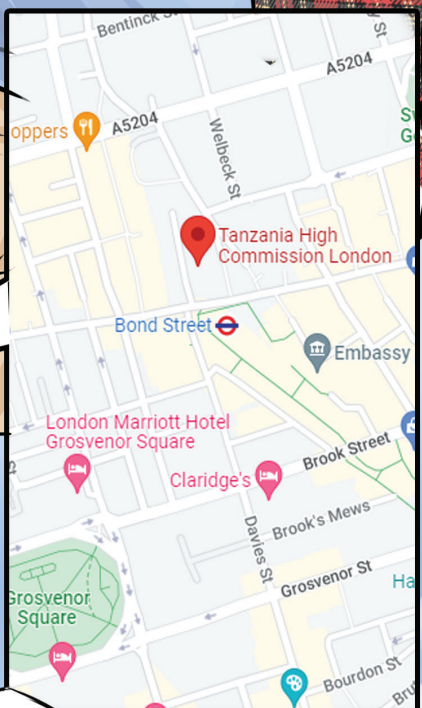
THERE WAS THIS PORTAL KIND OF THING.

LET ME JUST LOOK [ON HER PHONE] WHERE THE TANZANIAN EMBASSY IS, MAYBE THEY CAN HELP YOU... YEAH IT'S NEAR BOND STREET, WE CAN TAKE YOU THERE. I'M AYL A BY THE WAY.

MEI

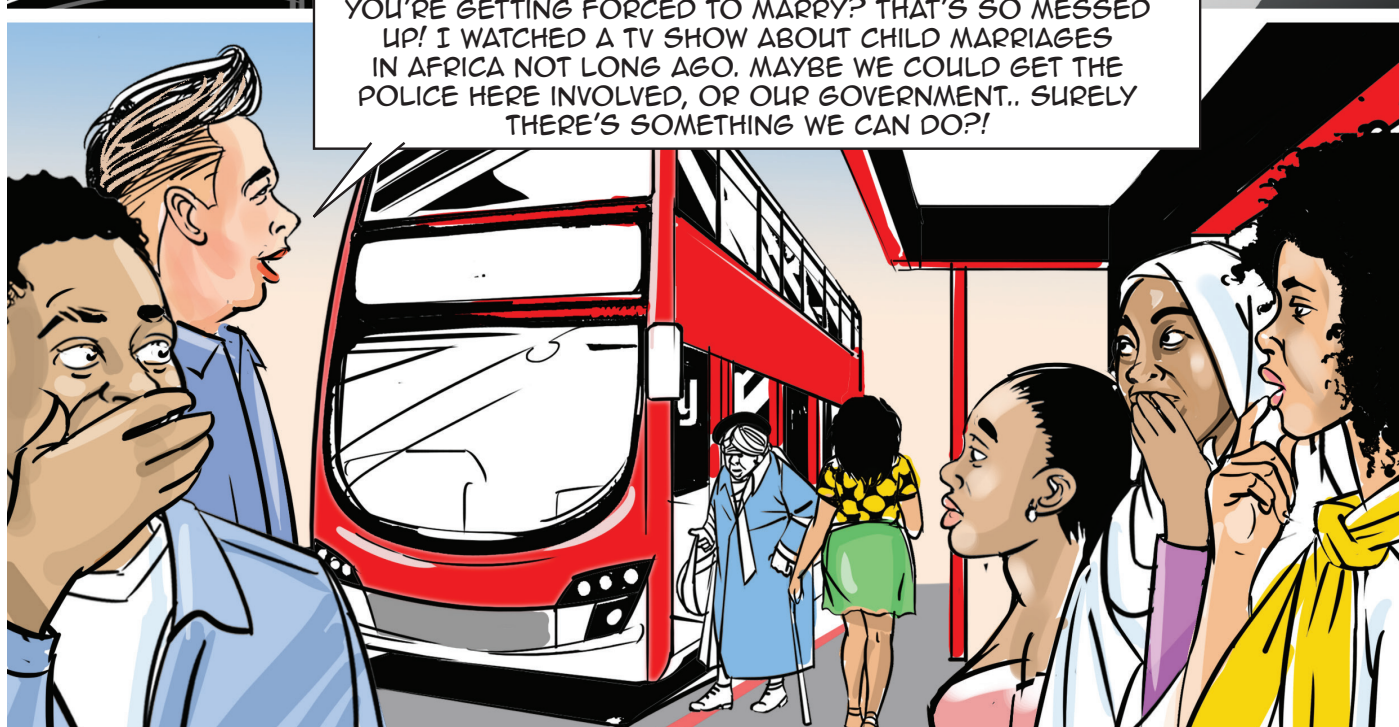
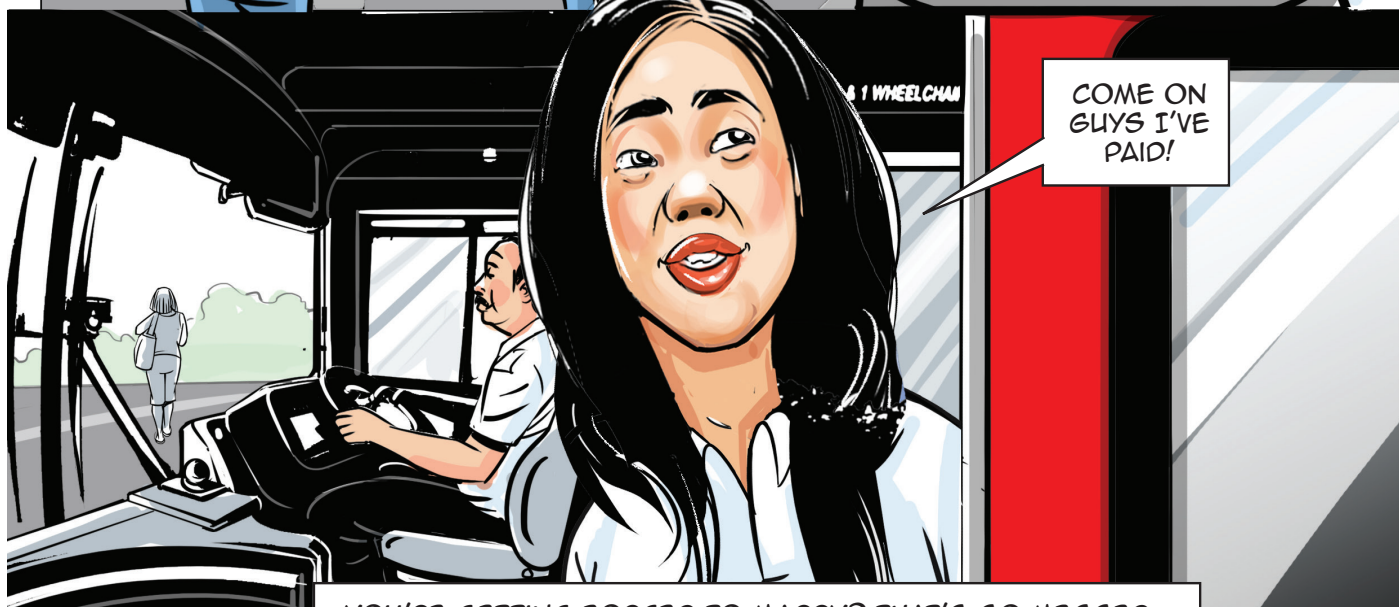
BHOKE

OLLIE



ZAWADI

MASHAKA

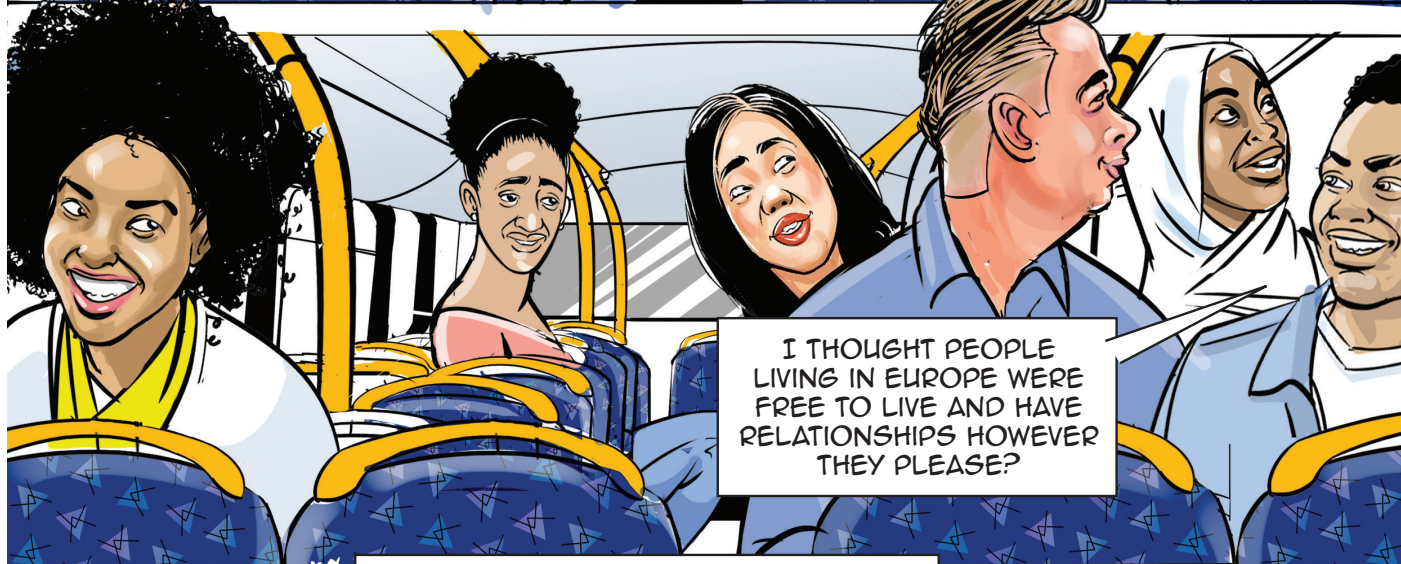


MY PARENTS AREN'T FORCING ME, IT'S JUST THAT WE'RE POOR. IF I MARRY THIS MAN HE WOULD GIVE THEM MONEY THAT WOULD PAY MY YOUNGER SIBLING'S SCHOOL FEES.

MY FAMILY ALSO WANT ME TO MARRY BUT THEIR SURVIVAL DOESN'T RELY ON IT. I'M SORRY BHOKE, THAT IS A LOT.

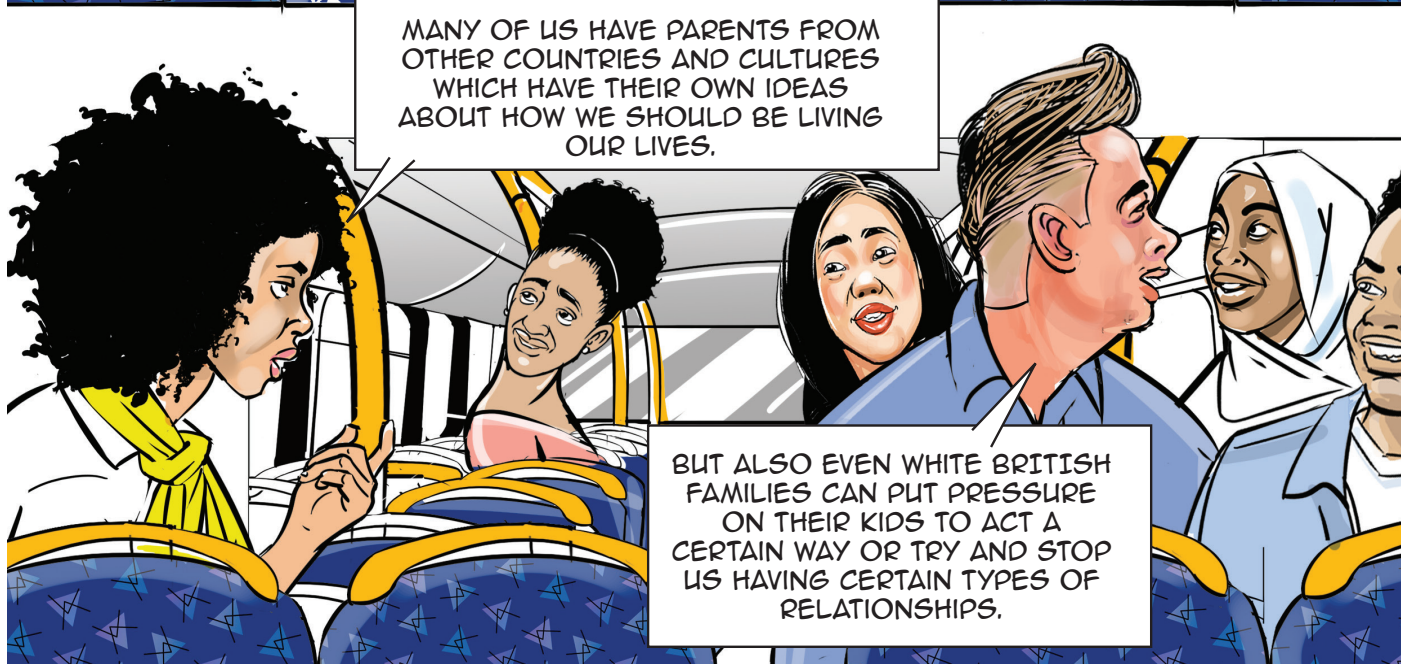


I THOUGHT PEOPLE LIVING IN EUROPE WERE FREE TO LIVE AND HAVE RELATIONSHIPS HOWEVER THEY PLEASE?



MANY OF US HAVE PARENTS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AND CULTURES WHICH HAVE THEIR OWN IDEAS ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD BE LIVING OUR LIVES.

BUT ALSO EVEN WHITE BRITISH FAMILIES CAN PUT PRESSURE ON THEIR KIDS TO ACT A CERTAIN WAY OR TRY AND STOP US HAVING CERTAIN TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS.





I ALSO GET WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO GO HUNGRY AND FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUNGER SIBLINGS. THEY CAN GO TO SCHOOL FOR FREE HERE BUT IF A TEACHER OR SOMEONE THINKS WE'RE NOT LOOKING AFTER THEM WELL ENOUGH THEN THE GOVERNMENT COULD TAKE THEM AWAY.



SO THERE ARE POOR PEOPLE HERE TOO?

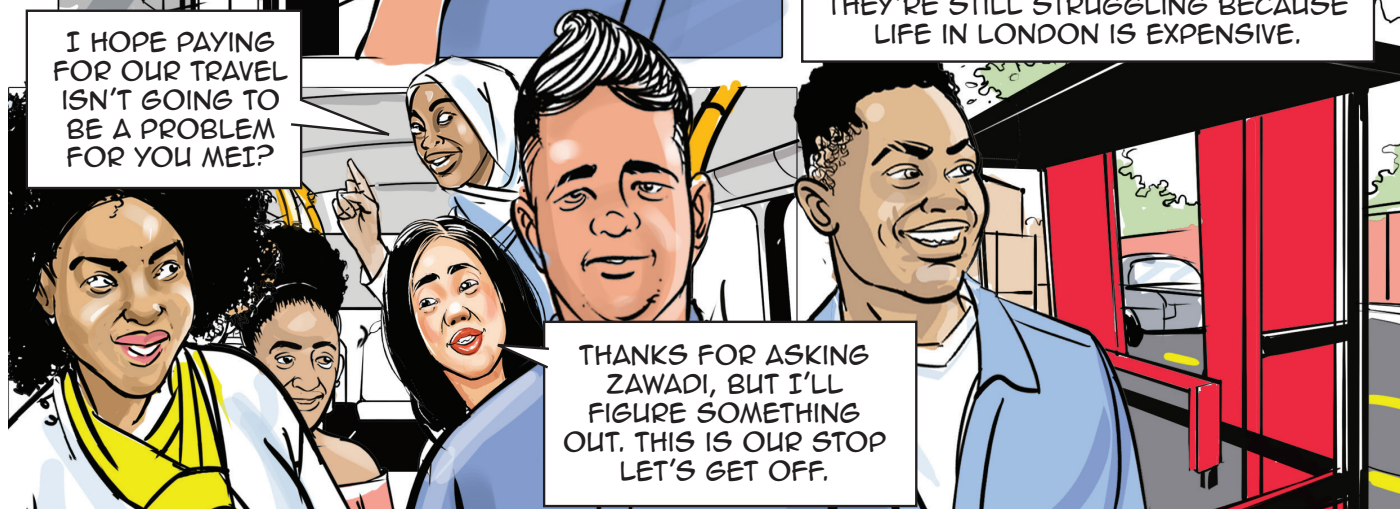
YEAH LOADS. LONDON IS THE KIND OF CITY WHERE YOU CAN HAVE MASSIVE BLOCKS OF FLATS WHERE YOU HAVE WHOLE FAMILIES CRAMMED INTO ONE OR TWO ROOMS.

...AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD YOU CAN HAVE RICH PEOPLE LIVING IN BIG HOUSES.

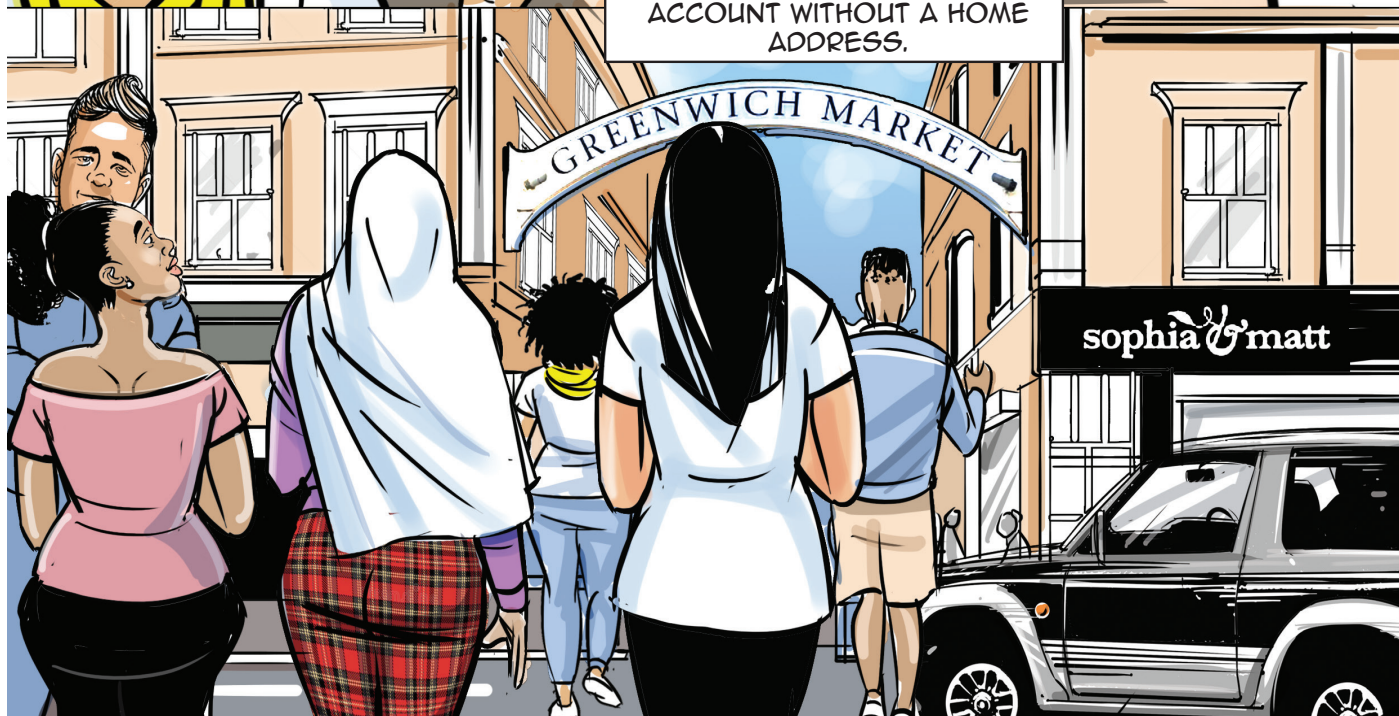


AND THERE ARE ALSO LOTS OF PEOPLE IN-BETWEEN, SO THEY MIGHT LIVE IN ALRIGHT HOUSING BUT THEY'RE STILL STRUGGLING BECAUSE LIFE IN LONDON IS EXPENSIVE.

I HOPE PAYING FOR OUR TRAVEL ISN'T GOING TO BE A PROBLEM FOR YOU MEI?

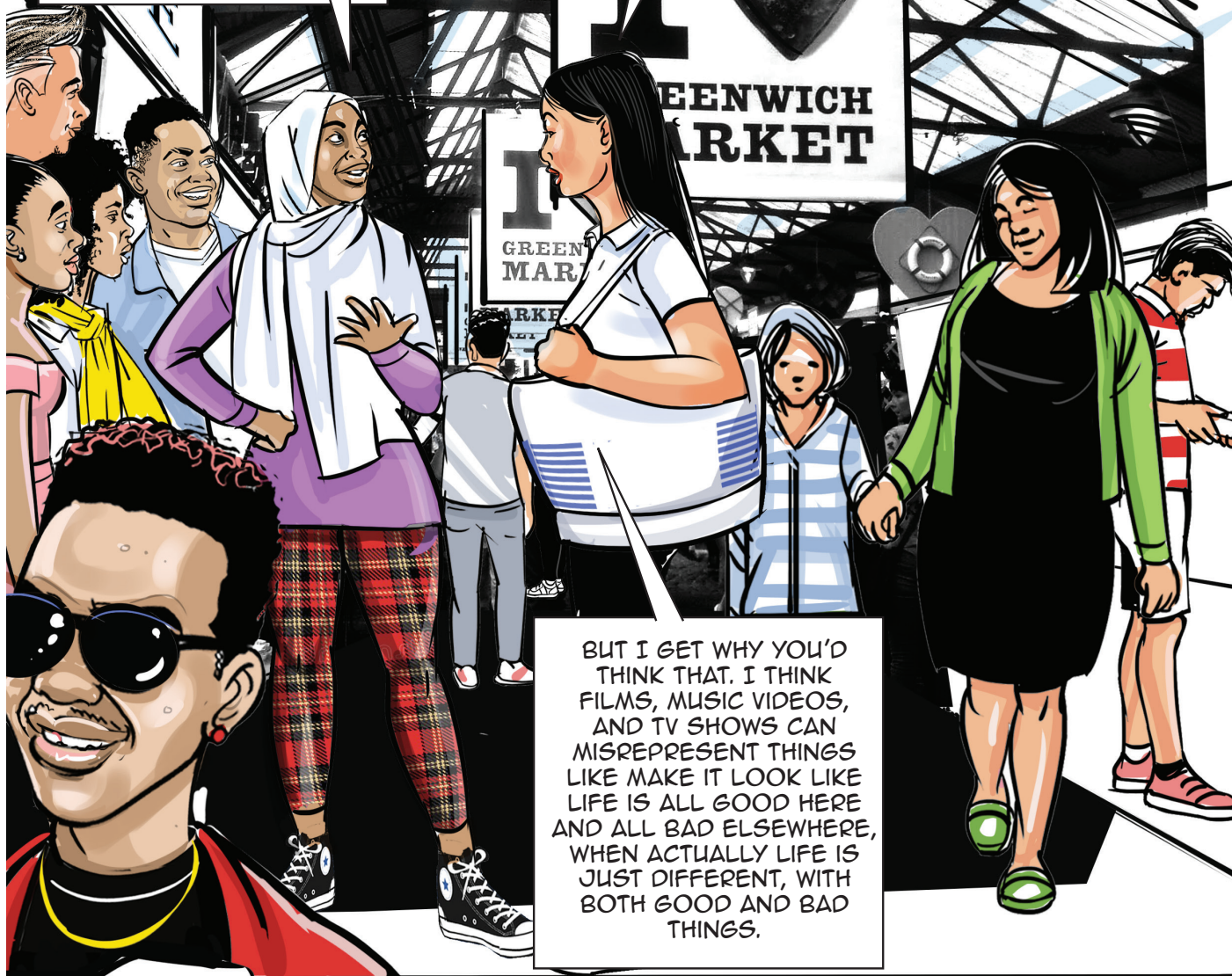


THANKS FOR ASKING ZAWADI, BUT I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. THIS IS OUR STOP LET'S GET OFF.



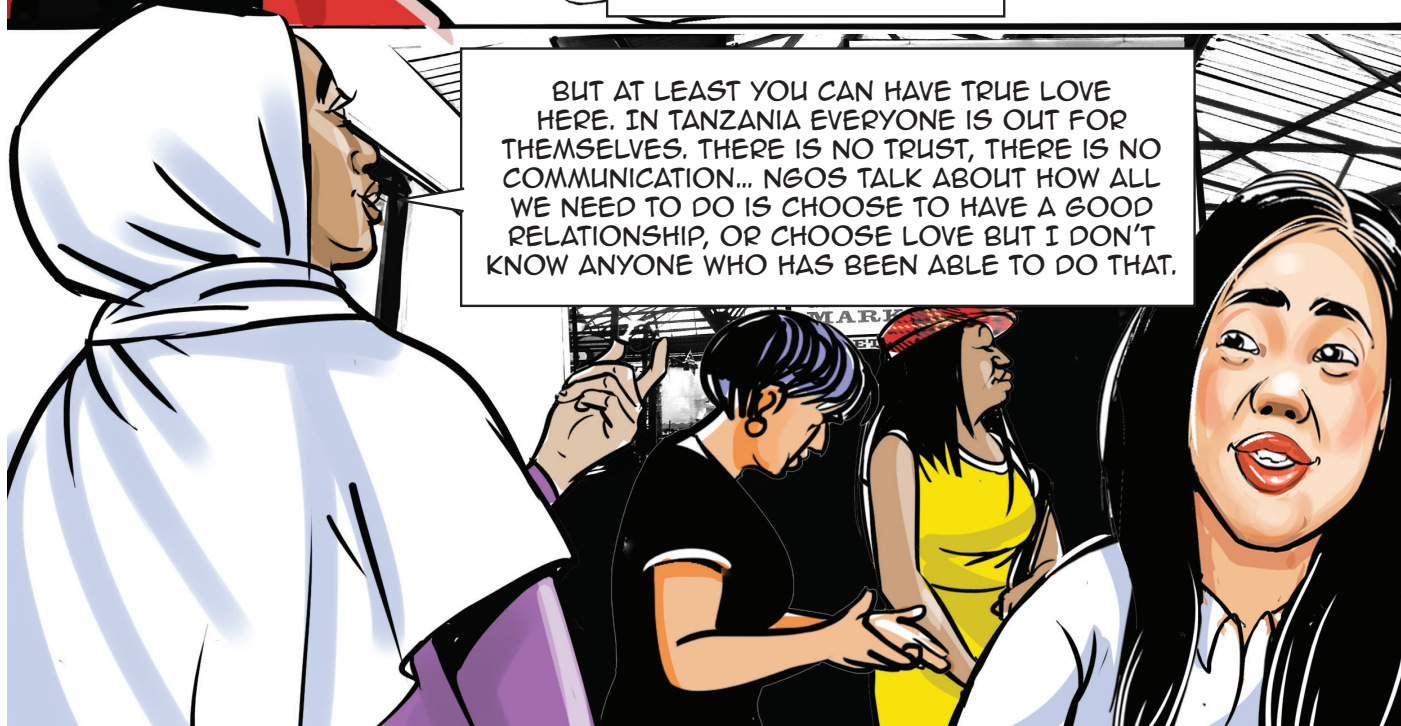
THE EUROPE THAT WE SEE ON THE TV IS NOT LIKE THIS. WE ONLY SEE EXPENSIVE CLOTHES AND THINGS, AND DREAMS COMING TRUE...

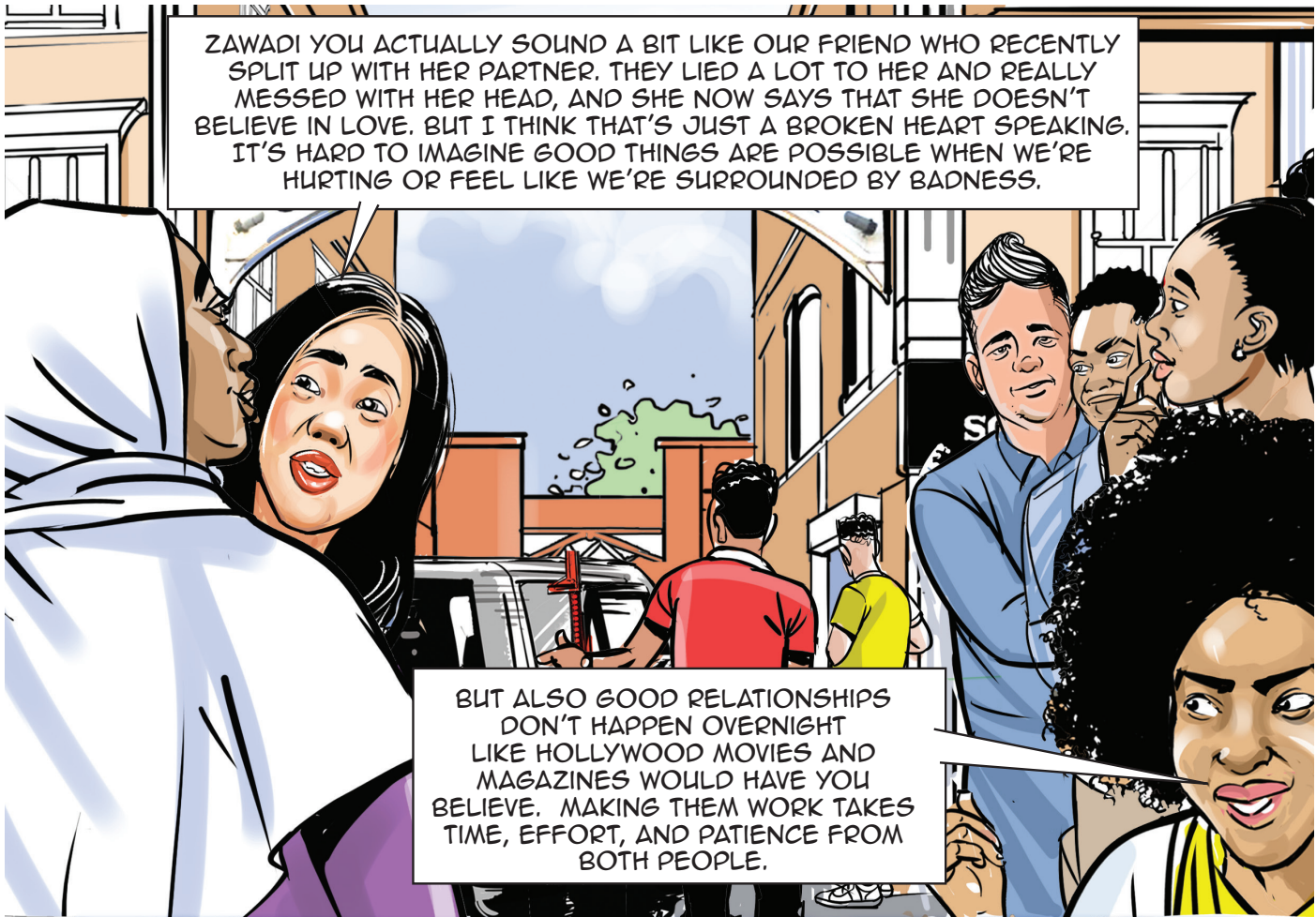
HAHA NOPE! REAL LIFE ISN'T LIKE THAT AT ALL.



BUT I GET WHY YOU'D THINK THAT. I THINK FILMS, MUSIC VIDEOS, AND TV SHOWS CAN MISREPRESENT THINGS LIKE MAKE IT LOOK LIKE LIFE IS ALL GOOD HERE AND ALL BAD ELSEWHERE, WHEN ACTUALLY LIFE IS JUST DIFFERENT, WITH BOTH GOOD AND BAD THINGS.


BUT AT LEAST YOU CAN HAVE TRUE LOVE HERE. IN TANZANIA EVERYONE IS OUT FOR THEMSELVES. THERE IS NO TRUST, THERE IS NO COMMUNICATION... NGOS TALK ABOUT HOW ALL WE NEED TO DO IS CHOOSE TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP, OR CHOOSE LOVE BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT.





ZAWADI YOU ACTUALLY SOUND A BIT LIKE OUR FRIEND WHO RECENTLY SPLIT UP WITH HER PARTNER. THEY LIED A LOT TO HER AND REALLY MESSED WITH HER HEAD, AND SHE NOW SAYS THAT SHE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN LOVE. BUT I THINK THAT'S JUST A BROKEN HEART SPEAKING. IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE GOOD THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WHEN WE'RE HURTING OR FEEL LIKE WE'RE SURROUNDED BY BADNESS.

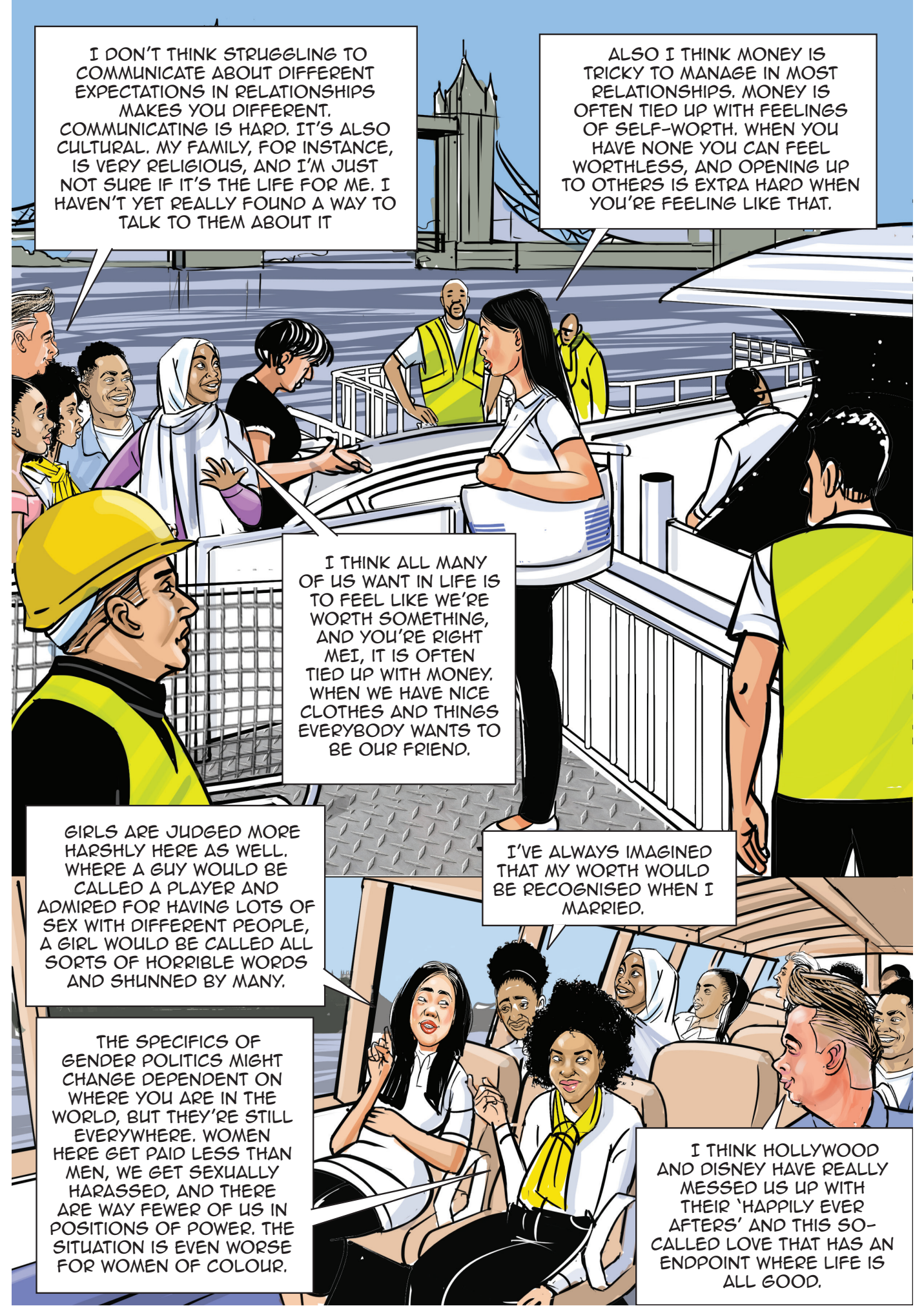
BUT ALSO GOOD RELATIONSHIPS DON'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT LIKE HOLLYWOOD MOVIES AND MAGAZINES WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE. MAKING THEM WORK TAKES TIME, EFFORT, AND PATIENCE FROM BOTH PEOPLE.



I THINK THAT WE STRUGGLE WITH EXPECTATIONS IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS IN TANZANIA. OUR FAMILIES AND GIRLFRIENDS ALL EXPECT US MEN TO PROVIDE AND AND WE HAVE TO HUSTLE TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN, BUT LIFE IS HARD, AND OFTEN TIMES WE CAN'T...

AND MEN WOULD RATHER LIE ABOUT THIS THAN HAVE AN HONEST CONVERSATION WITH THEIR GIRLFRIEND.

BUT WHEN WE FAIL TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT OUR GIRLFRIENDS THEY THINK WE DON'T CARE, AND OUR FAMILIES WANT US TO MARRY BUT WE HAVE NO MONEY. WHY WOULD WE EVEN WANT TO TALK ABOUT OUR FAILINGS?



I DON'T THINK STRUGGLING TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS IN RELATIONSHIPS MAKES YOU DIFFERENT. COMMUNICATING IS HARD. IT'S ALSO CULTURAL. MY FAMILY, FOR INSTANCE, IS VERY RELIGIOUS, AND I'M JUST NOT SURE IF IT'S THE LIFE FOR ME. I HAVEN'T YET REALLY FOUND A WAY TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT

ALSO I THINK MONEY IS TRICKY TO MANAGE IN MOST RELATIONSHIPS. MONEY IS OFTEN TIED UP WITH FEELINGS OF SELF-WORTH. WHEN YOU HAVE NONE YOU CAN FEEL WORTHLESS, AND OPENING UP TO OTHERS IS EXTRA HARD WHEN YOU'RE FEELING LIKE THAT.

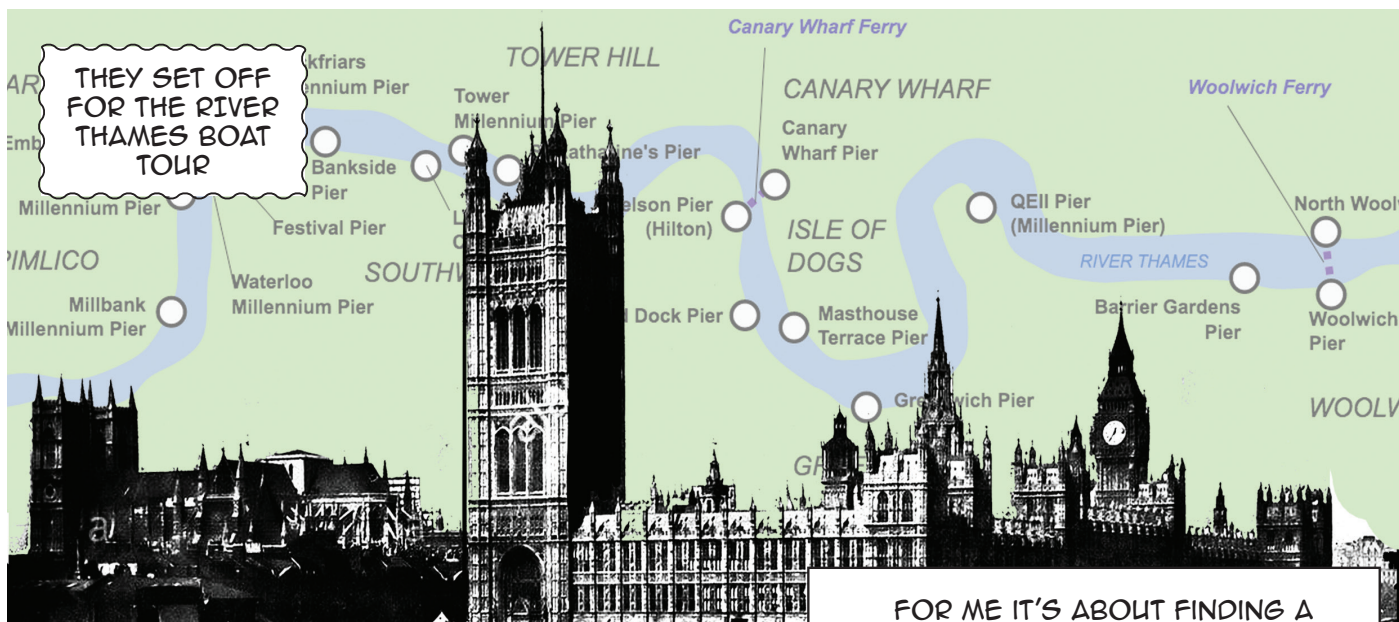
I THINK ALL MANY OF US WANT IN LIFE IS TO FEEL LIKE WE'RE WORTH SOMETHING, AND YOU'RE RIGHT MEI, IT IS OFTEN TIED UP WITH MONEY. WHEN WE HAVE NICE CLOTHES AND THINGS EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE OUR FRIEND.

GIRLS ARE JUDGED MORE HARSHLY HERE AS WELL. WHERE A GUY WOULD BE CALLED A PLAYER AND ADMIRER FOR HAVING LOTS OF SEX WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE, A GIRL WOULD BE CALLED ALL SORTS OF HORRIBLE WORDS AND SHUNNED BY MANY.

I'VE ALWAYS IMAGINED THAT MY WORTH WOULD BE RECOGNISED WHEN I MARRIED.

THE SPECIFICS OF GENDER POLITICS MIGHT CHANGE DEPENDENT ON WHERE YOU ARE IN THE WORLD, BUT THEY'RE STILL EVERYWHERE. WOMEN HERE GET PAID LESS THAN MEN, WE GET SEXUALLY HARASSED, AND THERE ARE WAY FEWER OF US IN POSITIONS OF POWER. THE SITUATION IS EVEN WORSE FOR WOMEN OF COLOUR.

I THINK HOLLYWOOD AND DISNEY HAVE REALLY MESSED US UP WITH THEIR 'HAPPILY EVER AFTERS' AND THIS SO-CALLED LOVE THAT HAS AN ENDPOINT WHERE LIFE IS ALL GOOD.



THEY SET OFF
FOR THE RIVER
THAMES BOAT
TOUR

YEAH AS MEI SAID EARLIER REAL LIFE CAN'T BE SO EASILY SPLIT UP INTO 'GOOD' AND 'BAD'. LIFE IS ONE BIG MESS OF THE GOOD AND BAD, AND ALL THAT'S IN-BETWEEN, . FOR ME, I THINK A GOOD RELATIONSHIP IS ONE THAT HAS ROOM FOR GROWTH, BECAUSE WHAT MAKES EACH PERSON HAPPY MIGHT ALSO CHANGE WITH TIME, AND IT TAKES WORK TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO THOSE CHANGES IN EACH PERSON.

FOR ME IT'S ABOUT FINDING A PURPOSE IN LIFE. OF COURSE, I, LIKE ZAWADI, HOPE TO FIND SOMEONE WHO WILL CARE FOR ME, BUT I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THIS STARTS WITH ME. I HAVE TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MYSELF BEFORE I HAVE ANY POSSIBILITY OF HAVING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH ANOTHER PERSON. I'VE FOUND THAT PURPOSE IN TRAINING TO BECOME A MECHANIC, AND I ALSO GET STRENGTH FROM MY FRIENDSHIPS.

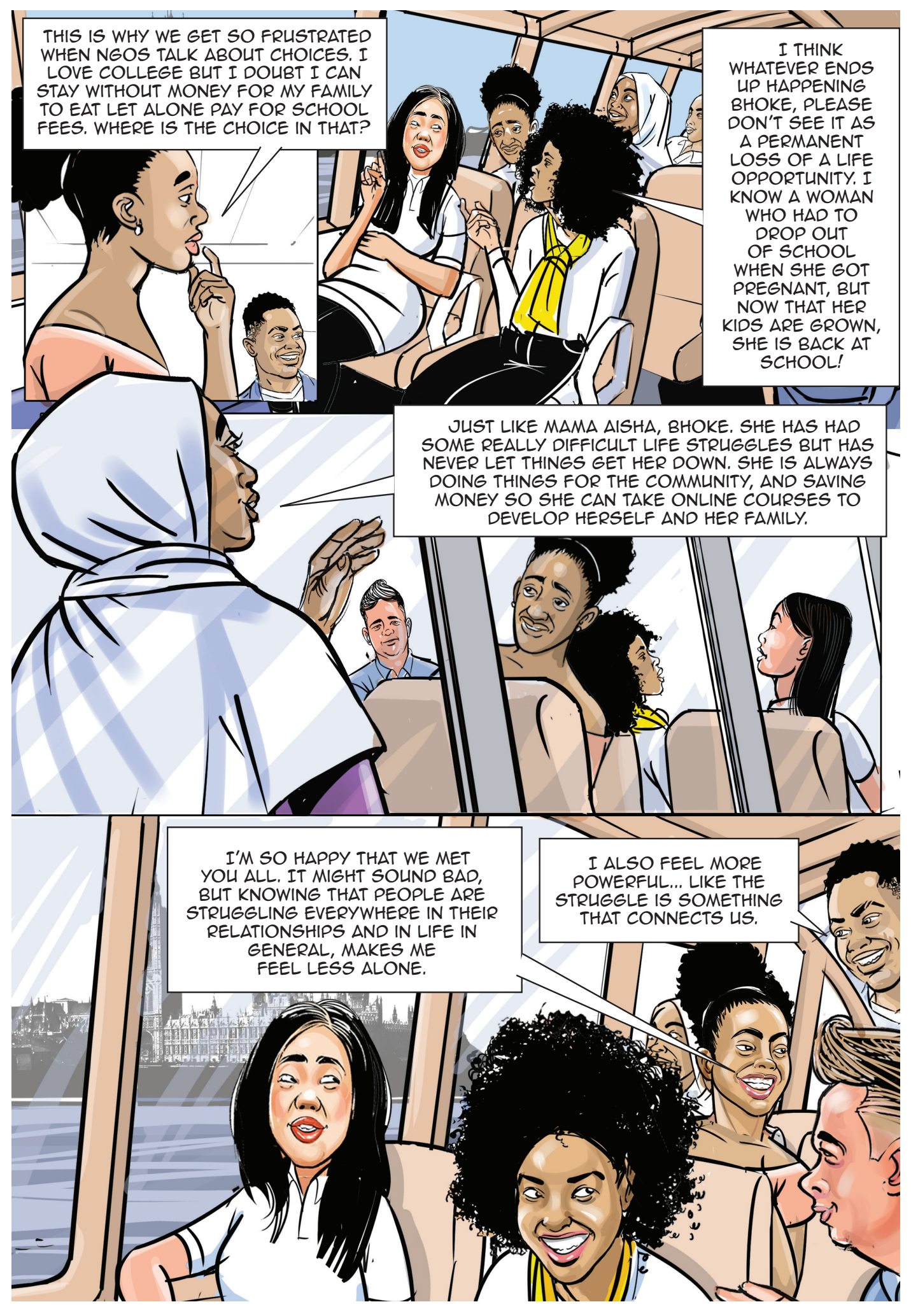


WORK IS REALLY HARD TO COME BY IN TANZANIA, AND LIFE CAN FEEL VERY INSECURE, BUT WE TOO FIND STRENGTH IN OUR FRIENDSHIPS. WE SAY 'UKO PAMOJA' WHICH MEANS 'WE ARE TOGETHER', AND 'WE RISE IN LIFE'.

LIFE IN GENERAL FEELS VERY INSECURE RIGHT NOW, WHAT WITH CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE INCREASING VIOLENCE ACROSS THE WORLD. IT'S HARD TO KEEP YOUR FAITH THROUGH SO MUCH UNCERTAINTY.

BUT THAT'S WHEN FAITH IS SO IMPORTANT. EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT RELIGIOUS.





THIS IS WHY WE GET SO FRUSTRATED WHEN NGOS TALK ABOUT CHOICES. I LOVE COLLEGE BUT I DOUBT I CAN STAY WITHOUT MONEY FOR MY FAMILY TO EAT LET ALONE PAY FOR SCHOOL FEES. WHERE IS THE CHOICE IN THAT?

I THINK WHATEVER ENDS UP HAPPENING BHOKE, PLEASE DON'T SEE IT AS A PERMANENT LOSS OF A LIFE OPPORTUNITY. I KNOW A WOMAN WHO HAD TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL WHEN SHE GOT PREGNANT, BUT NOW THAT HER KIDS ARE GROWN, SHE IS BACK AT SCHOOL!

JUST LIKE MAMA AISHA, BHOKE. SHE HAS HAD SOME REALLY DIFFICULT LIFE STRUGGLES BUT HAS NEVER LET THINGS GET HER DOWN. SHE IS ALWAYS DOING THINGS FOR THE COMMUNITY, AND SAVING MONEY SO SHE CAN TAKE ONLINE COURSES TO DEVELOP HERSELF AND HER FAMILY.

I'M SO HAPPY THAT WE MET YOU ALL. IT MIGHT SOUND BAD, BUT KNOWING THAT PEOPLE ARE STRUGGLING EVERYWHERE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AND IN LIFE IN GENERAL, MAKES ME FEEL LESS ALONE.

I ALSO FEEL MORE POWERFUL... LIKE THE STRUGGLE IS SOMETHING THAT CONNECTS US.

THE GROUP
ALIGHTS AT
WESTMINISTER
PIER

I HOPE ONE DAY WE'LL BE ABLE TO COME VISIT YOU
ALL IN TANZANIA. JUST FROM TALKING WITH YOU ALL I
KNOW THAT IT WON'T BE LIKE HOW IT IS SHOWN ON TV.
LIKE YOU ZAWADI I THINK OUR STRUGGLES MIGHT BE
MORE CONNECTED THAN WE IMAGINED.



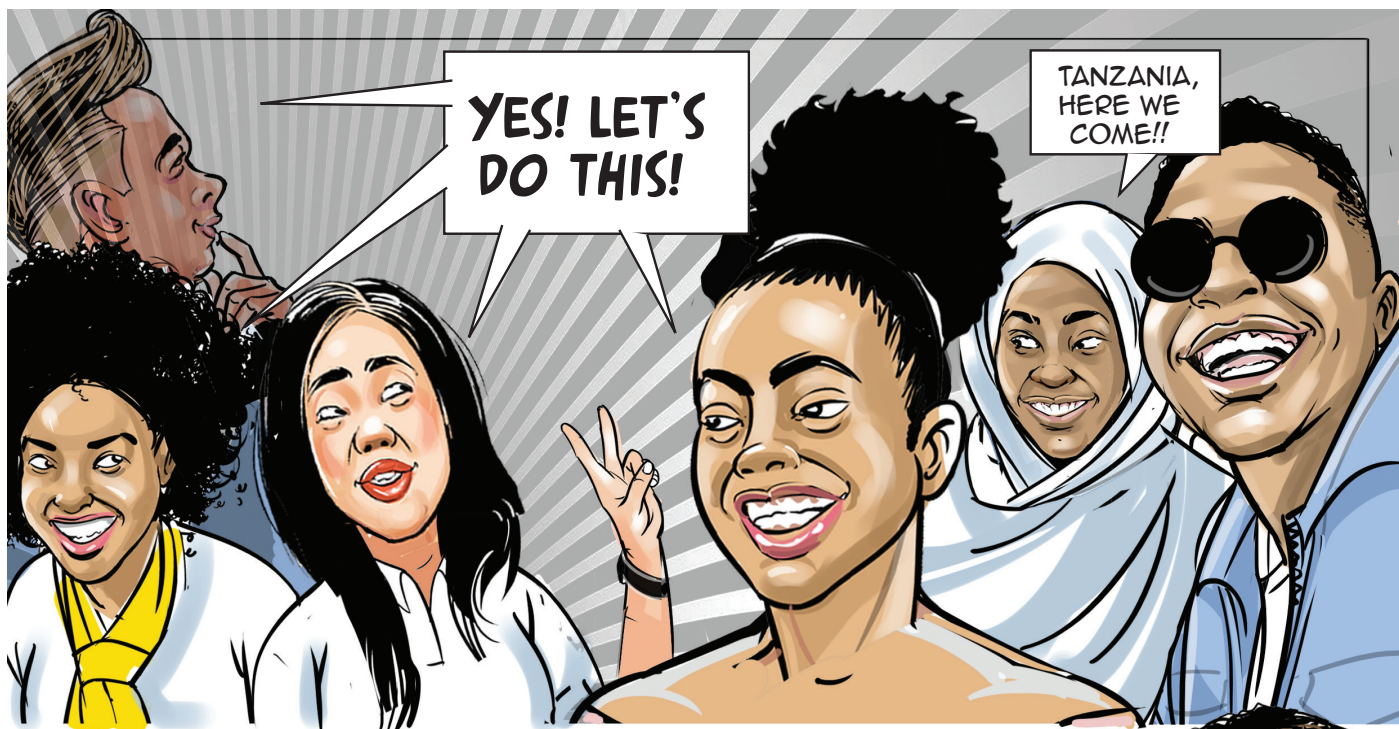
WHENEVER YOU'RE IN TROUBLE WON'T YOU STAND BY ME...
COME ON, COME ON, STAND RIGHT HERE...

HEY EVERYONE..
SHHH! LISTEN! IT'S
THAT SONG AGAIN.
THIS IS HOW WE
CAME HERE FROM
TANZANIA!

DO YOU
MEAN THE
PORTAL?

YES! COME, LET'S
CHECK IT OUT.
YOU DID JUST SAY
THAT YOU WANT TO
COME TO TANZANIA
OLLIE, WERE YOU
SERIOUS?





Questions for Discussion/Thinking

1. The young people in the comic saw messages about how we should choose love, choose to have 'good' relationships and choose a 'good' life.
 - How do these messages make young people feel?
 - Do young people feel they have the freedom to choose?
2. Some of the young people are from Tanzania and others from London (UK).
 - What do the young Tanzanians believe about life in Europe? How right or wrong are these beliefs?
 - What do the young Londoners believe about life in Africa? How right or wrong are these beliefs?
 - What impacts might any misconceptions or incorrect beliefs have? (e.g. how might they affect how young people think about themselves, others, and the world as a whole?)
 - What do you think the young Londoners will learn when they go to Tanzania?
3. The comic showed that relationship struggles connect people from different places, even if these struggles might look or feel slightly different.
 - What were some of the common relationship struggles?
 - How might we better support one another in these struggles? (e.g. How else might we talk about relationships in sex education and health campaigns if we don't focus on 'choices' and 'goodness'?)

