Writer, Billy Kahora conducted an interview with Maina Ngure, a campaign manager in Kigumo consitutuency, Muranga district over what the last few days have meant to him.

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All The Candidates Men
Or
Uncle Cannot Do No Wrong

4.30 a.m 27th December 2007 Elections Day Kigumo Division Muranga District Central Province Party of National Unity of 80 kilometres from Nairobi not very far away from the Aberdare Mountains

Apart from the cicadas, the hoo-hoo sounds of the owls, our breathing in the rumbling LandCruiser, the night is as still the mountain that looms behind us as we speed towards the end of the Kigumo Lowlands. Dawn threatens and with it the coming 2007 elections. Polling stations open at 6 a.m – we still have about 100 homes to go; knock doors and entreat the sleepy smoked faces behind them to vote for my uncle, a parliamentary contender for Kigumo constitution - then surreptitiously hand over 200 Kshs. And repeat his name – 'Engineer'. Vote for 'Engineer'. I am proud to be on his campaign team.

We've been at it for awhile, leaving the near Aberdares at 1.00 a.m, 5 hours before the polls start, hurtle towards a political nirvana. As we are not in 'our' area, the immediate slopes of the mountain, we have to watch for agents for the local village's candidate. They would be upon us without our knowledge, carrying pangas and nyahunyos – machetes and rubber whips. It would be another day in the life of a political campaign. But that is why we have my uncle's bodyguards, Kirimi and the dark tall quiet guy they call 'Maasai'. He is Kikuyu, a Lowlands man. His teeth are brown, almost the color of the red volcanic soil of his home where coffee thrives. Andu a ruguru. The people of the Lowlands. We come from the tea zones – our world is one arsenic green field. Coffee is no longer the black gold it was. Tea is the new Muranga currency.

Earlier in the day, the local candidate made an error on a Lowlands man can make. What my late mother would call a Ruguru characteristic. In failing to pay 'his' people a listening allowance, and giving their children sweets instead he opened up his home for us. Even adults took the sweets chewing with scowls. We are not far from Kirere where the air is dry- we come from more rarefied air, rain showers have been blessing us for the last few days. This knowledge makes me smile. We have always been better since the days of the Native Reserves in Kikuyuland when we knew how to get the best githakas – the most important thing in our life and world, land. When the lowland people claim that they are from the House of Gikuyu and Mumbi we smirk. We need their votes because they are more than us. These lowlanders. Our people would take the Kshs 200 and ask for more.

When our President Hon Mwai Kibaki came to Muranga in November, a month before the elections, everyone shouted Party of National Unity PNU slogans after his

every sentence. As he waved goodbye, our slopes youth sharpened their knives on those lowland boyso. A Kenyan Member of Parliament earns Kshs 810,000, Kshs 9.72 m a year, roughly 50m over his term – that buys you many knives and whips. Our campaign has roughly cost Kshs 12 m. Even without the salary, we know that the constitutional development fund, CDF, funds allocated for development in every constituency will be my uncle's pocket money if he wins.

So by 6.00 a.m, we have covered 75 homes, the envelopes we were carrying filled with Kshs 200 notes are much lighter. Two days later, our President Kibaki will be sworn in and time will stop counting for anything. My grandfather who went to the Aberdare forest to fight the British colonialists once told me that those years were a timeless and terrible land faraway from anything he had ever known or will ever know. Whatever you do, he said, try to never go there. My uncle will not make it to parliament.