

FRANCES MENSAH WILLIAMS

Readers'

BOOK CLUB

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 3 | January 2020 |



WELCOME DEAR READER!

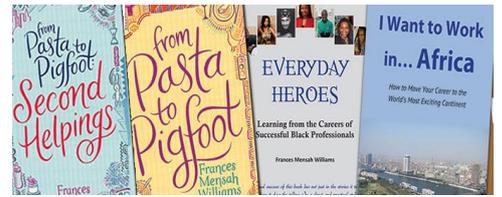
Happy New Year!

I hope 2020 has started well for you?

In this issue, I'll give you a preview of a couple of upcoming events and share more information about my soon-to-be-published new novel, *Imperfect Arrangements*.

I had an absolutely momentous start to my new year with the news that I have been awarded a CBE by Her Majesty the Queen. I share reflections on the journey to receiving this honour on p.2.

What's been the best bit of 2020 for you so far? [Write in](#) and share your news with the readers' Club!



NEW YEAR HONOURS

Reflections on the journey to a CBE that started with a simple idea. (p.2)

MARCH 6TH

PUBLICATION DAY!

Launching a book set in Ghana on Ghana's Independence Day. (p.3)

CARA GOES TO MALAWI

Readers' Club member Cara on her working visit to Malawi (p.4)

UPCOMING EVENTS

A preview of upcoming events. (p.5)

2020 New Year Honours – The Journey

There are milestones in our lives which cause us to pause and reflect on where we are and what has brought us to this point in our lives. I hit one such milestone on 27 December with the publication of the 2020 New Year Honours list and the mention in despatches that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had awarded me the CBE for services to Africans in the UK and in Africa.



Launching Interims for Development - 2003

Trying to absorb this honour is still a work in progress and, as ever, I turned to my keyboard to try and process my thoughts and think back over the years and the projects...

In late 2002, I was back in the UK after almost five years in Ghana, and I had an idea. During my time in Ghana as an HR professional, I came across talented young people who just needed a hand; a piece of advice to help present themselves better for job interviews, guidance on what it takes to get the promotion they deserve, feedback to build their confidence and reinforce their aspirations. Given the chance, I knew for sure that these young professionals would and could build themselves, their communities, their countries and their continent.

Back in London, I had a choice. I could return to corporate life in the City or I could take the chance to be part of the growing movements and organisations like AFFORD connecting the diaspora with Africa to drive development. Wherever I turned young people were asking me for advice on working in Africa, and there are times in life when you realise that everything you have learned has been for a purpose.

What was my idea? It came to me as I read my brother's draft thesis on the long-standing relationship between the UK and Ghana, and it was simply this. If the two countries were so closely linked, how could we better support each other? What if I could persuade professionals in the UK to volunteer their time – anything from a few days to a few months – to work as Interim Managers within businesses and organisations in Africa, sharing their skills and building the capability of the leaders and managers of those organisations?

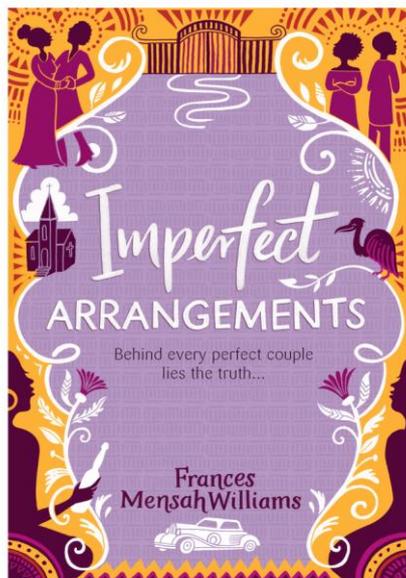
My HR management background, my hands-on experience of working in Ghana, my own challenges in making the transition from the UK to living in Africa – all of these gave me the tools. What I needed was the courage, and the support. Again, in life, often when you make a choice, the world steps up to support you.

In 2003, I officially launched Interims for Development in Ghana. Although it was initially set up to run a programme of short-term professional volunteer assignments to support businesses in Africa, it gradually expanded to cover pan-African training projects, enterprise development programmes in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana, short-term projects in London and Africa, recruitment from the diaspora for African companies, and so much more. In 2006, I launched ReConnect Africa.com, a website and monthly news magazine to connect Africans abroad to the continent, sharing stories, ideas and lessons, and offering pathways for those who wanted to lend, or return, their skills to Africa, eventually reaching a subscriber base of almost 40,000 people around the world.

The journey has also taken me into coaching: meeting people where they are and working with them to get to where they want to go. Helping people not just to tell their own stories, but to write them by taking action towards their goals. I'm also telling stories through my books: lessons for young people from some of the many fantastic professionals I've met in *Everyday Heroes*, advice on taking skills to Africa in *I Want to Work in Africa*, and exploring the diaspora experience in the novels *From Pasta to Pigfoot* and its sequel *Second Helpings*. And Africa. I was born in Ghana and, despite having spent so much of my life outside it, I don't think I ever really left. And so, I feel a responsibility to help build both the country I was born in and the country I've lived in for so long.

A final thought, dear reader. If you have a dream, or even just an idea as I once did, go for it. If you do, I promise your life will be exhausting, exhilarating and scary. But, trust me, it will also never be dull.

COMING IN MARCH 2020!



Imperfect Arrangements

There are two sides to every story...

In the sun-soaked capital of Ghana, best friends Theresa, Maku and Lyla struggle with the arrangements that define their relationships.

Ambitious, single-minded Theresa has gambled everything to move with her loving husband Tyler from London to cosmopolitan Accra. But when shocking developments threaten their plans, they also expose the hidden cracks in their fairytale marriage.

Feisty Maku is desperate for professional recognition – and her dream white wedding. But how long can she wait for her laid-back partner Nortey to stop dreaming up pointless projects from the comfort of his

local bar and stand up to his family?

Churchgoing Lyla married Kwesi in haste, and six years later she is desperate for a child. But while she battles a vicious mother-in-law, and her growing attraction to the mysterious Reuben, her husband has bitten off more than he can chew with his latest mistress.

Facing lies, betrayal, and shattered illusions, each couple must confront the truth of who they have become and the arrangements they have enabled. Against the backdrop of a shifting culture, each woman must decide what – and who – she is willing to sacrifice for the perfect marriage.

READY TO [PRE-ORDER](#) YOUR SIGNED COPY?

ALSO IN MARCH: YOUR FREE BONUS BOOK 'SWEET MERCY'

To say thank you joining my Readers' Book Club and for (hopefully) buying *Imperfect Arrangements*, I'd like to offer you a free **EXCLUSIVE** companion novella called *Sweet Mercy*. What's it about?

Sweetness comes at a price...

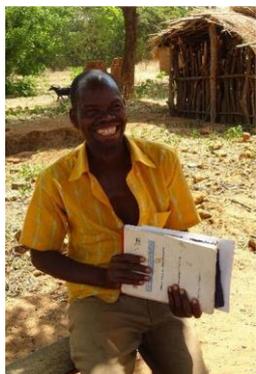
When sweet-natured Mercy Peterson married successful businessman and aspiring politician, Lucas, she abandoned her media career to focus on her husband and raising her son, Hakeem. But with the country hurtling towards elections, Lucas's focus is on the ministerial position he craves within the Party and when Mercy's best friend, Araba – the niece of the Party leader - returns to Ghana, Mercy refuses to see what's obvious to everyone...*read more about this story in the next newsletter*

For your copy, all you'll need to do in March is visit my website and download the book. As simple as that.

Make a note to collect your free copy of *Sweet Mercy* in March [HERE](#)

CARA GOES TO MALAWI

Readers' Book Club member, Cara, shares with us her recent amazing working visit to Malawi



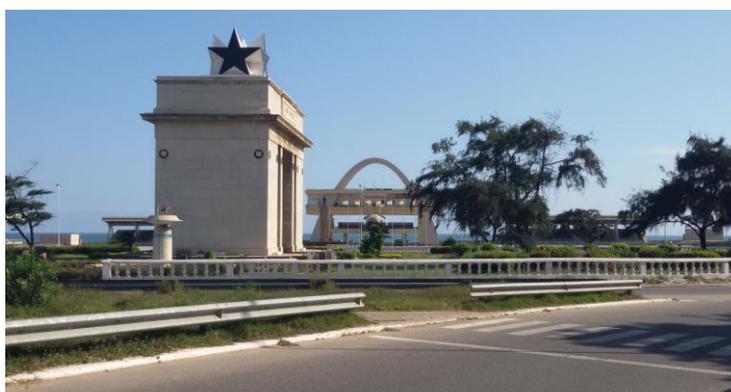
'I have recently returned from a trip to Malawi to see first-hand the impact of our water and sanitation programmes. Malawi is a stunning country with the most welcoming and warm people – everywhere I went, I was always greeted with huge smiles and people who were so open to sharing their stories. I was absolutely in awe of the community spirit in the villages and the tenacity of individuals who had experienced so much.

[Pump Aid](#) invests in future generations, giving children the opportunity to flourish through an integrated pre-school water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition programme. We also support entrepreneurs to establish small-scale businesses and give farmers, communities and households the opportunity to self-invest in water sources as customers to promote self-reliance and end aid dependency.



I was lucky enough to visit several pre-schools where I saw hundreds of children under 5, all absolutely beaming and able to recite numbers, the alphabet, months and introduce themselves by name. They were no longer suffering from diarrhoea and unable to attend school; instead happily playing and singing with their friends, and able to thrive. The children had also become advocates for water and sanitation, encouraging parents and houses in the local community to install latrines and handwashing facilities. This work is truly life changing.

I also spoke with caregivers, Task Force members and surrounding communities about the challenges they faced and the impact of access to improved, reliable water and sanitation. Meeting Chidabala, Limbikani and George, well diggers and area mechanics, and hearing their stories was also really powerful. Having recently undergone Pump Aid training where they learnt enhanced technical, business and marketing skills means that they are now able to charge more for their services to a larger customer base, keep accurate records of their work and advertise their businesses across districts. They were all planning on improving their houses, planting more crops and expanding their businesses. Amazing!



The Independence Arch is one of Ghana's national monuments and was built to commemorate 6th March 1957, the day the former British colony Gold Coast achieved its independence and the new Republic of Ghana was founded.

FUN FACT: To celebrate Ghana Independence Day, the publication day for Imperfect Arrangements is 6th March 2020!

EVENTS

An Evening with Dorothy Koomson hosted by Frances Mensah Williams

Wednesday, February 5, 2020

6:00 PM 8:30 PM

BCA, LONDON

To mark the paperback publication of her Sunday Times bestseller, *Tell Me Your Secret*, Dorothy will be joined by fellow writer, Frances Mensah Williams in a discussion about her life and work.



Dorothy Koomson is an award-winning, global bestselling author whose novels include the Sunday Times bestsellers *The Friend*, *That Girl from Nowhere*, *The Ice Cream Girls*, *The Woman He Loved Before*, *The Chocolate Run* and *My Best Friend's Girl*. One of the most high-profile black writers of commercial fiction in the UK, her books have been translated into more than 30 languages

I'm so excited to host one of my favourite authors. Join us to talk about all things books, Ghana, romance and...life! [Buy your tickets NOW!](#)

6 March 2020 – *Imperfect Arrangements* Publication Day!!

In case I haven't said it enough, don't forget *Imperfect Arrangements* will be on sale from March 6th !!! Copies will be available on Amazon and online sellers in both e-book and print format.

Individually signed copies can be bought directly from me, so [please contact me on my website](#) if you'd like one signed for you or as a gift for someone else.

[Get in touch](#) – *I'd love to hear from you!*

Frances

Instagram: francesmensahw

Twitter: @FrancesmensahW

FB: facebook.com/francesmensahwilliams

A final thought...

"When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal, you do not change your decision to get there."

-Zig Zigler