

FRANCES MENSAH WILLIAMS Readers' BOOK CLUB NEWSLETTER



ISSUE NO 6 | April 2020 |

WELCOME DEAR READER!

I hope this finds you and your families safe and well.

I'd like to welcome new members to our Readers' Club and encourage you to share your stories and ideas which I'm happy to feature in this newsletter.

2020 is proving to be a turbulent year for me, with some notable highs but also very sad lows. With all the distressing news coming into our homes, books are a huge comfort to me and, I'm sure, to you too.

Stay safe and well in these difficult times and write in to share with us how things are going for you.

[Contact me with your news to](#) share with the readers' Club!

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Speaking of Books...and Life

In celebration of International Women's Day last month, I was interviewed by the delightful Lillian Ogbogoh of the Shine Out Loud Show.

If anyone can make you laugh, it's Lillian – and we had a wonderful conversation which I'd like to share with you.

You can listen to the full interview on Lillian's website [here](#)

“

As the month celebrating women is drawing to close, catch the interview with Frances Mensah Williams CBE, our IWD 2020 "Woman to Celebrate."

Frances Mensah Williams CBE is a multi-published author, the Managing Editor of ReConnect Africa, an online career and business portal for global professionals of African origin. She is also founder and CEO of Interims for Development, a UK-based organisation that has undertaken multiple skills and business development projects in the UK and Africa since 2003. A recent recipient of CBE in the 2020 New Year Honours list for services to Africans in the UK and in Africa.

Frances's first book was **'Everyday Heroes: Learning from the Careers of Successful Black Professionals'** and was followed by the careers guide **'I Want to Work in Africa: How to Move Your Career to the World's Most Exciting Continent'**.

In 2015 Frances's acclaimed first novel **'From Pasta to Pigfoot'** was published by Jacaranda Books and selected by WH Smith Travel as one of the top 25 of its 100 Summer reads. Described by the novelist Lesley Lokko as 'a warm and poignant coming-of-culture' novel, it features under-achieving PA and pasta fanatic Faye Bonsu and chronicles her attempts to find her cultural niche as she explores contemporary Ghana. The sequel **'From Pasta to Pigfoot: Second Helpings'** continues Faye's adventures of self-discovery and self-acceptance.

Her latest book is **Imperfect Arrangements**. As Frances states: "I wanted to celebrate the importance of sister-friends and depict an honest account of the complexity of relationships, both romantic and between best friends. I also wanted to explore the joy and pain of relationships, particularly with the added pressures of cultural expectations and norms, and to tell the story from the perspectives of both the women and the men in their lives."

Listen to the full interview [HERE](#)

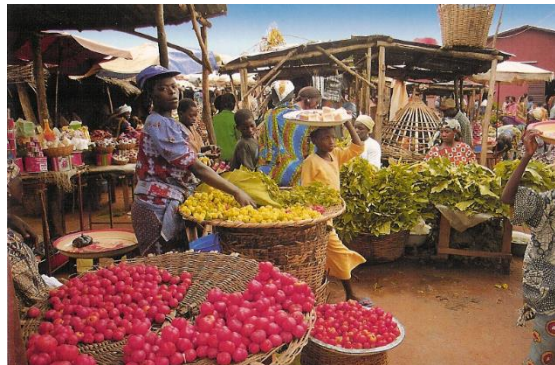
Frances Mensah Williams CBE, Author, the Managing Editor of ReConnect Africa.com. An online careers and business publication for the African diaspora and the Founder & Director of Interims for Development.



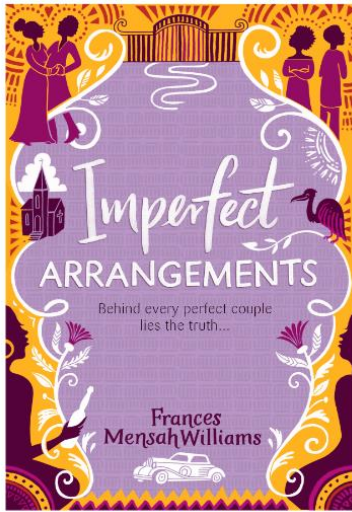
Ghana by Pictures

Ghana features in almost all my novels. It's a beautiful country with a rich history and blessed with diverse cultures that contribute to its dazzling array of food, music, arts and people.

Until you have the chance to visit Ghana yourself, here are some pictures to introduce you to the Black Star of Africa!



Introducing Theresa...



My latest novel, [*Imperfect Arrangements*](#), tells the story of three sister-friends: Theresa, Maku and Lyla, navigating life, relationships, culture and ambition.

The book starts with...

Theresa

Theresa stared anxiously at the grey-haired physician who seemed in no hurry to break the silence. Instead, he returned her stare calmly, while the pages detailing her test results wilted between his damp fingers.

The doctor's office was stuffy, and the ceiling fan that turned listlessly above his head generated only the promise of coolness. A bead of sweat broke out at the top of his nose but he appeared oblivious to any

discomfort and leaned back in his chair with a grin.

Theresa's confused thoughts bumped up haphazardly against each other. *His teeth are amazingly white – I wonder which brand of toothpaste he uses.* His grin widened and she shifted uneasily in the consulting chair, gripping the thin strip of worn leather that cushioned its wooden arms. *Are doctors supposed to smile at you when they're about to break the news you have a terminal condition?*

Apparently deciding he had tortured her for long enough, Dr Owusu finally spoke. 'Congratulations, Mrs Brew.'

Theresa frowned in bemusement. *Even the most insensitive doctor wouldn't congratulate me before telling me I'm dying, surely? Unless this is some bizarre Ghanaian tradition no one's told me about.*

Shaking his head impatiently, the doctor straightened up and pushed the report towards her. 'Here, look!'

Reluctantly, she reached out a hand, her eyes still fixed on him as she grasped the dry end of the sheets. Without giving them so much as a glance, she dropped both hands, still clutching the report, into her lap and waited.

The doctor's grin faded, and his forehead folded into deep furrows of concern as he watched her fingers nervously crease the papers.

'Mrs Brew? There's nothing to worry about, my dear. You're pregnant, that's all.'

Theresa blinked rapidly as the words washed over her, and then slumped down into her chair as the initial rush of relief was quickly replaced with incredulity. *Pregnant!* Not cancer, not leukaemia, not ME or MS or any of the other alphabet diseases she had imagined while waiting in the airless, stiflingly hot reception area for her test results. Diligent to the point of obsession about taking the pill, this was the only condition she hadn't considered over the past three weeks as constant fatigue wracked her body and almost everything she ate heaved around unpleasantly within moments of swallowing.

'Dr Owusu, are you *sure*? I'm on the pill!' She could hear her voice, normally low, sound almost shrill with disbelief.

'Very sure, Mrs Brew.' Dr Owusu looked pointedly at the report she was now crushing in her agitation. 'The results of your tests are right there. Your iron levels are a bit low, but your blood pressure is good. By the look of things, you will have a strong, healthy baby.'

Biting hard on her tongue to hold back the wail of protest threatening to escape, Theresa watched in dismay as the doctor uncapped a scratched plastic biro and scribbled energetically on his prescription pad. Dr Owusu had come highly recommended, but he must surely have made a mistake. She couldn't possibly be pregnant. *No! This cannot be happening to me!*

Don't miss out! Buy your copy of *Imperfect Arrangements* or download it from Amazon now!

[Available now on Amazon!](#)

Please don't forget to [post your review on Amazon!](#)

NAME MY LEAD CHARACTER?

I'd love your suggestions for the name of the lead character of the next *Marula Heights* novella. You've met Mercy (in *Sweet Mercy*), and so the next character is... over to you!

Things to consider before sending in your entry:

- The lead character is a woman
- Keep her name short-ish (easier to type loads of times!)
- Tell me what you like about the name, and the qualities you associate with it (a great name will inspire a fantastic storyline!)
- Her name can be inspired by any ethnicity
- You can suggest as many names as you like

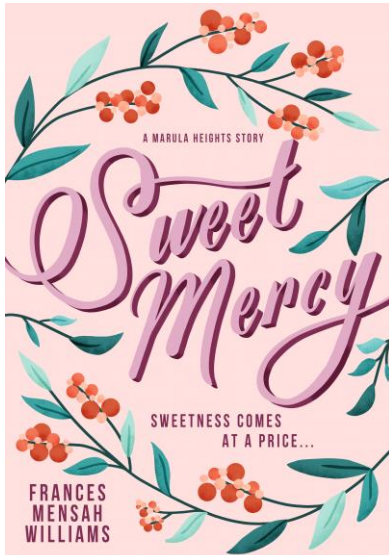


Please send me your ideas to: francesmensahwilliams@gmail.com with the subject heading 'Name My Lead Character'.

The winner and the winning name will be announced in our next newsletter!

DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE BOOK NOW!

Have you downloaded your free companion novella called *Sweet Mercy* yet? It's exclusive to members of our Club. Do [send me your thoughts](#) to share with our readers!



Sweetness comes at a price...

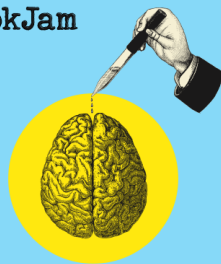
When sweet-natured Mercy married successful businessman and aspiring politician, Lucas Peterson, she abandoned her media career to focus on her husband and raising her son, Hakeem. But with the country now hurtling towards elections, Lucas's eye is on the ministerial position he craves within the Party 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...

Collect your free copy of *Sweet Mercy* [HERE](#)

EVENTS

LOCKDOWN ~~Brixton~~ BookJam

Bored? Feed your brain with our congenial, intelligent, unpredictable event for readers and writers.



7.50pm, Monday 27th April 2020

With: Stuart Maconie, Paul Bassett Davies, Courttia Newland, Frances Mensah Williams, Stephanie Bretherton, Chris Chalmers, Douglas Thorpe and Rebecca Hollweg.

Zoom: tinyurl.com/bookjam | Password: 'hello'
www.brixtonbookjam.com

BookJam will be streaming to you LIVE by Zoom at 8pm on Monday 27th April.

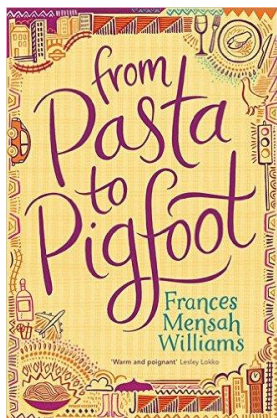
We'll be hearing from Stuart Maconie, Paul Bassett Davies, Courttia Newland, Frances Mensah Williams, Stephanie Bretherton, Chris Chalmers, Douglas Thorp, with music from Rebecca Hollweg.

To join, visit <http://tinyurl.com/bookjam> password: hello

You can catch the podcast at:

<http://www.brixtonbookjam.com/>

Have you read...?

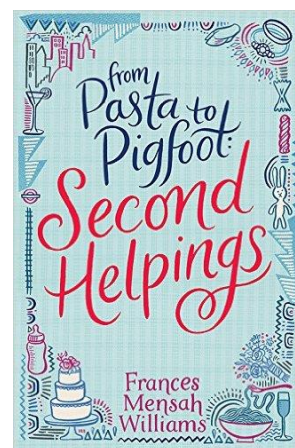


A novel set in London and Ghana following the mishaps of under-achieving PA, Faye Bonsu. On a mission to find love, a disastrous night out leaves pasta-fanatic Faye's romantic dreams in tatters and underscores her alienation from her African heritage. Leaving her cosy middle-class life in London's leafy Hampstead to find out what she's missing, Faye is whisked into the hectic social whirlpool of Ghana where she meets a host of characters. Transported into a world of food, fun and sun, and faced with choices she had never thought possible, Faye is forced to discover that no matter how far you travel, you can't find love until you find yourself.



'Brilliant characters...very true to life and you got a glimpse into Ghanaian life and its culture.'

Pasta fanatic Faye Bonsu seems to have it all; a drop-dead gorgeous and successful boyfriend, a burgeoning career as an interior designer and a rent-free mansion in leafy Hampstead to call home. But with all her friends shifting into yummy mummy mode, a man who seems to have no desire to put a ring on it, tricky clients, and an attractive and very single boss, things are not quite as straightforward as they might appear. Hoping to escape from her suddenly complicated life and revive her wilting romance, Faye returns to sunny Ghana for what she hopes will be the time of her life. But life doesn't always offer second chances and when disaster strikes, she is forced to confront the biggest question of her life and to make a choice that comes with consequences she will have to live with forever.



[Paperback and ebook versions available online](#)

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

Frances

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Twitter: @FrancesmensahW

FB: [facebook.com/francesmensahwilliams](https://www.facebook.com/francesmensahwilliams)

To unsubscribe from the FMW Readers' Book Club,
[contact me](#)



A final thought...

"If your determination is fixed, I do not counsel you to despair. Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance."

Samuel Johnson