

Anyone from anywhere can be a superhero

 By Leigh Andrews

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The likes of *Black Panther* have turned the concept of Wakanda from a dream to reality for superhero fans across the continent, but that's only the starting point of African creativity. Malenga Mulendema has taken this further in *Mama K's Team 4*, Netflix' first original African animated series.

For many on the continent, what's seen on the screen isn't an accurate reflection of the lives they live, so it's hard to connect with and become a super fan.

For example, just imagine what it would be like watching the adventures of four African teen girls living in a neo-futuristic Lusaka, Zambia, recruited by a retired secret agent still committed to saving the world through a low-budget superhero operation.

That's exactly the fantastically African premise behind a new action comedy series devised by Zambian writer Mulendema, *Mama K's Super 4*.



Zambian writer Malenga Mulendema created *Mama K's Super 4*.

No longer just a pipe dream, it'll be on your screen soon, as Mulendema was one of eight winners in the Triggerfish Story Lab pan-African talent search initiative in 2015, supported by The Walt Disney Company and The Department of Trade and Industry.



Netflix inked deal to collaborate on its first African animated original

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Mulendema grew up watching cartoons on TV and found herself asking why no heroes looked like her and why they didn't live in a world that felt like her own. Just like that, the idea for *Mama K's Super 4* was born.

Designed by Cameroonian artist Malcolm Wope, it draws visual inspiration from retro-1990s R&B and hip-hop girl groups and brings a fresh perspective to a classic cartoon genre, with the team of four using their smarts to fight rich and powerful opponents.

And as part of a continent-wide initiative to engage local female writing talent, *Mama K's Team 4* is now being produced by Cape Town-based Triggerfish Animation Studios and London-based kids' entertainment specialist, Cake.

While [Variety](#) reports that the series has been in progress as a 25 x 22-minute 2D-animated project since September 2017, with its launch date yet to be announced, I chatted to Mulendema to find out more about what led her to create the series, as well as her advice for African content creators, inspired by this specific success...

■ ***This is excellent news for creators across the continent. What led you to create the series?***

I created the series in response to a call by Triggerfish Animation in 2015 for storytellers on the continent.

“ In creating a superhero showset in Lusaka, I hope to introduce the world to four strong African girls who save the day in their own fun and crazy way. Most importantly, I want to illustrate that anyone from anywhere can be a superhero. ”

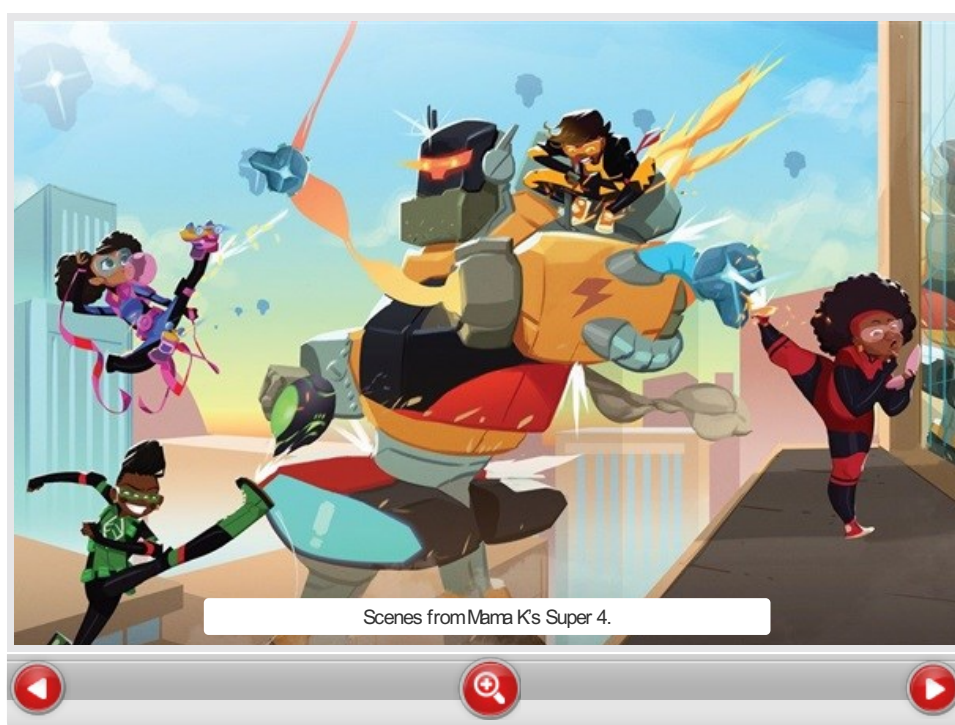
I was interested in creating something that celebrated African ingenuity in a fun and exciting way.

■ ***Love that. Who did you look up to while growing up?***

As a child, I found reporters very interesting. They seemed so in charge. They seemed to know everything!

■ ***Share the importance of giving a whole new generation of African children the opportunity to see themselves on-screen in the powerful, aspirational characters they look up to.***

This is the type of show that will inspire children to use their imagination a little more.



It may help them imagine endless possibilities for themselves. It will be a show, I hope, that will make them ask 'what if?!'

■ ***Excellent, Share some advice for African content creators, inspired by this specific success.***

My advice would be to create what you are interested in seeing. I hope the show will inspire those who, like me, had never considered animation, to start to explore it to see if it's a platform they would want to use to tell stories.

It's sure to inspire many. If you're an English-speaking female writer from Africa and you've had your work produced for either TV, film or theatre, you can apply to join the Triggerfish Writers Lab from the careers page of their website at

www.triggerfish.com. Be sure to follow [#MamaKsTeam4](#), [Netflix](#) and [Triggerfish](#) on Twitter for the latest updates!

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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