

# HOUSTON CHRONICLE

## **Professor communicates his inspiration / North Harris College teacher writes book**

By VALERIE SWEETEN, Houston Chronicle correspondent

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Kozhi Makai is living the American dream, but he says it has been a journey. Makai, a speech professor at North Harris College, recently published his first book, "How Can I Come Up?", one of the winners of the North Harris Montgomery Community College District Excellence in Writing contest. The book draws on biblical principles to strive for greatness and a higher level of living.

### **Life in Zambia**

Makai is the ninth child of an upper-middle-class family in Zambia, where his mother ran two farms and his father worked as a police officer. Makai valued his education at a private school in Zambia, and he earned an Associates of Arts degree from North Harris in 2001, a bachelor's degree in speech communication and psychology from Sam Houston State University in 2002 and a master's degree in business communications from Jones International University in Colorado in 2003. He's defending his dissertation for his doctorate from Walden University in Minnesota in applied management.

"No one is better suited for this position," said Severo Balason Jr., assistant dean of enrollment services at North Harris. Balason met Makai when he enrolled in classes at North Harris and later became his assistant during his early years in Houston. "He had a plan to come to the United States to go to school," Balason said. "He began working and sweating his way through it. He's a very persistent, mature and intelligent individual. He had high aspirations that he combined with idealism and practicality. I have very high hopes for him because I know he values every second of every day. You definitely find gold in him. He will change the world."

### **Eberly family**

Renee Eberly heard about Makai from the youth minister at Spring Tabernacle Church when Makai needed a place to stay while going to school. The Eberly family became Makai's adopted parents eight years ago.

"He's part of our family," Eberly said. "He was working at the college and at Target, but was still financially hurting. The whole room lights up when he's here. The kids love him. I'm not surprised by his success. His book is one of the best I've ever read."

"He continually motivates himself and works on advancing his education."

Makai said he feels blessed at the path his life has taken.

"I never was afraid to come to the U.S.," Makai said.

"I've been very busy taking classes, but that was my focus," he said.

"It's all been a great experience. I come from a country where the culture is very different. I value the differences here. I wasn't about to wait on somebody else. I could smell my future."

Words of wisdom Makai wants to pass along his life's lessons to his students.

"I always quiz them on their listening skills," Makai said.

"I want to provide a good example on what it takes to succeed in life. Life isn't easy. That's a no brainer. It's exactly what you make it."

Makai also wants to bring change to Zambia.

He recently traveled with missionaries from Spring Tabernacle to Zambia to bring God's teachings to his fellow man.

"I hope that when I die, people will say I had a full life," Makai said.

In his free time, Makai enjoys reading, playing basketball, playing board games and going to the movies.