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HON. KAFILAT OGBARA

CHAIRING **WOMEN'S INITIATIVES** FROM
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

I don't know about you but there is always something exciting about entering the "...ember" months. It announces the excitement that comes with the season of festivity as we begin to count down to Christmas.

Of course there are people who may not be too excited about it, and that is quite understandable, especially if the goals we have set are yet to be met. Nevertheless, you mustn't let that deter your mood to be grateful for life. Goals are achievable and every step you take to its actualisation must always be appreciated, even if they are baby steps, movement is taking place.

So, with a heart of gratitude, join me to say Happy New Month! September is here!

We start this month on an inspiring note, with the interview of someone who is at the forefront of the message on the importance of women's inclusivity at all levels. She is Hon. KAFILAT OGBARA, who made history as the first female House of Representatives member for Kosofe Federal Constituency and the only female federal legislator from Lagos State in the 10th National Assembly. Upon resumption in the National Assembly, Hon. Ogbara was entrusted with the role of Chairperson, House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development.

A lot is being said on the 'Reserved Seats for Women Bill' and as Chair, she shares with us on what she is doing to make sure the bill is passed in this 10th Assembly, including other gender bills she is pushing for.

Beyond our cover interview, this edition has a lot you will enjoy and we do hope you have a pleasant time doing so.

Keep in touch and see you soon!



COVER INTERVIEW

HON. KAFILAT OGBARA

Chairing **women's initiatives** from the National Assembly

Kemi Ajumobi

Honourable Kafilat Adetola Ogbara was born to the distinguished family of Alhaji and Alhaja M. Ade Kasumu of Aiyepe in Ogun State. The family is popularly known as Kasumu Onipanla, as her father earned his place in history as the first to introduce stockfish to Nigeria.

From an early age, she exhibited leadership, confidence, and a keen sense of purpose as she played a vital role in the family business at a young age.

Her academic journey began at ADRAO International School, Victoria Island, and Federal Home Science Primary School, Ikoyi, before she proceeded to Federal Government Girls' College, Langtang, Plateau State, for her secondary school education.

“ I have ensured that most of the bills I have sponsored within the last two years as Chairman of the committee on Women Affairs and Social Development have been gender related bills”





She is a proud alumna of the University of Lagos, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. She further distinguished herself with two Master's degrees from the same institution one in International Law and Diplomacy and another in Public Administration. She undertook auxiliary nursing training at Aiyeye Group of Hospitals, Lagos, reflecting her deep passion for care and service.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Honourable Ogbara began her career in property and facility management within her family business before venturing into the media industry. Her eloquence and charisma led her to television limelight, where she became a presenter on the Nigerian Television Authority's programme: Faces and Events. Her foray into media extended into print journalism. She served as Managing Director/CEO of the National Mirror Newspaper, and also the publisher of Today's Prime News, combining her passion for communication with her

drive for nation building. Her vast experience across the media, private and public sectors sharpened her administrative acumen, preparing her for her eventual journey into frontline politics.

POLITICAL CAREER

Honourable Ogbara is a thoroughbred politician and women's rights activist whose political journey spans more than two and a half decades. She began in the People's Democratic Party (PDP), where she contested the general election as the House of Representatives candidate for Kosofe Federal Constituency Federal Constituency in 2003 and 2007, respectively and later as gubernatorial aspirant in Ogun State in

2011. She also served on several gubernatorial and presidential campaign committees.

She was appointed Special Assistant on Trade and Investment/Technical Aid Corps at the Ministry of Foreign



"We're strategically pursuing and exploring all avenues by making sure we get the 'Reserved Seats for Women Bill' passed in this 10th Assembly."



Affairs, Abuja. She has also served as a board member of key parastatals such as the National Centre for Women Development (Ministry of Women Affairs, Abuja), the Horticultural Research Institute (Ministry of Agriculture), and the Nigeria Television Authority, Abuja.

She was appointed by Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu as a Commissioner in the Lagos State Audit Service Commission. She distinguished herself in that role and driven by her vision to serve at a higher capacity, she resigned from the position to contest the 2023 general elections.

Hon. Ogbara was elected to the House of Representatives as the APC candidate for Kosofe Federal Constituency, securing 45,111 votes to defeat her rivals. With this victory, she made history as the first female House of Representatives member for Kosofe Federal Constituency and the only female federal legislator from Lagos State in the 10th National Assembly.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP AND IMPACT

Upon resumption in the National Assembly, Hon. Ogbara was entrusted with the role of Chairperson, House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development, and also appointed as the Southwest representative at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), alongside her membership in several other strategic committees.

She has since become a fearless voice and a formidable force in the chamber. She has been responsible for transformative constituency programmes and is a recipient of various awards.

► What are your roles as Chairperson of the House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development?

My role includes coordinating, mobilising, and carrying out legislation as it relates to women, children and the vulnerable.

The second is to scrutinise the budget of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and the Maryam Babangida National Centre for Women Development (MBNCWD), which includes the Ministry

and parastatals under the Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development.

The third is to also be generally concerned about issues of women, their protection and well-being across our country Nigeria, while working in harmony with members of my committee.

► What practical steps are you implementing or plan to implement to achieve your goal of ensuring no governance or corporate appointment list excludes the female gender?

The practical steps that I have commenced includes ensuring that most of the bills I have sponsored within the last two years as 'Chairman of the committee on Women Affairs and Social Development' have been gender related bills. This is because my first request upon resumption as a member of the House of Representatives was to request for the rejected gender bills in the previous assemblies, hence the reason for my sponsorship of the 'Reserved Seats for Women Bill.' I also initiated a bill that will mandate all political parties in Nigeria to compulsorily nominate women during primary elections and that no single gender list should be allowed by the electoral body.

I also recently sponsored a bill that will mandate all security institutions to give at least 15 percent in enlistment, appointment, recruitment and promotion to women including the police force. As we speak, the NSCDC has achieved 35 percent.

This effort is to ensure women's inclusivity. I have led advocacy on women's inclusivity to the headquarters of political parties by meeting with their national working committee leadership and advocating for women to hold prominent party positions, to be elected at party primaries, to be appointed for all purposes, and most importantly seek their support for the 'Reserved Seats for Women Bill.' I have featured in a lot of public mediums, continuous engagements and

appeal to relevant stakeholders through advocacy for women inclusion, hence the inclusion of female councillors in every local government in the last local government elections in Lagos State.

► Can you elaborate on the impact of the digital inclusion and empowerment programmes you've initiated for women and youth?

We have carried out local community initiatives. Most local organisations run programmes tailored to their communities that focus on providing digital training skills for women and youth. And this I have done by partnering with tech companies and schools. Some of the projects include: School projects, solar-powered boreholes and street lights, viewing/recreational centres, old people's recreational centre and empowerment programmes for widows, people living with disabilities and other vulnerable members of the society, green farm in Oworo, ICT centres, facilitation of medical outreach programmes, quarterly distribution of palliatives and cooking gas to low income earners and vulnerable.

► How do your entrepreneurship and vocational programmes specifically support artisans, traders, and widows?

My vocational and entrepreneurship programmes are designed to equip women for today and future. Hence the reason I empower them with capital, resources and link them to raw materials and markets for their finished products.

► How are you promoting the 35% affirmative action for women in governance more effectively?

I do this by promoting gender policies and making legislation that support gender mainstreaming. Like I said earlier, I have sponsored a lot of bills that will increase women's participation in politics.

Secondly, 'The Reserved Seats for Women Bill' is another avenue. We're strategi-

"The younger generation is more politically conscious now. They are ready to lead and be in charge"



cally pursuing and exploring all avenues by making sure we get the bill passed in this 10th Assembly.

Some of my bills include:

An act to amend the Nigeria police act No.2 2020, to provide at least 15 representation in the recruitment of police officers, which requires that the Nigeria police maintains a gender-responsive compliance programme in the recruitment, training, posting and discipline of police officers, and ensure the establishment of records of the gender-responsive compliance programme, and other related matters.

An act to amend the Nigeria security and Civil Defence corps act cap 146 laws of the federation of Nigeria 2004, to provide at least 15 percent of women representation in the recruitment of members of the corps, require the Nigeria security and Civil Defence corps to provide and maintain a responsive compliance programme in the recruitment, training, posting and the establishment of a unit to monitor and maintain records of the gender-responsive compliance programme; and for related matters.

An act to amend the armed forces act, Cap A20 laws of the federation of Nigeria

2004, to ensure at least 15 percent of women representation in the enlistment, recruitment and appointment of service personnel, require the armed forces to provide and maintain a gender-responsive compliance programme in the enlistment, recruitment, training, provision of accommodation, operational engagements, provision of logistics, marital status, posting and discipline of service personnel, and ensure the establishment of a unit to monitor and maintain records of the gender-responsive compliance programme, and disaggregated data collation for related matters.

An act to establish the National Child Protection and Enforcement Agency, and to provide necessary protection and care for the Nigerian child; and for related matters.

A bill for an act to amend the Violence Against Persons (prohibition) Act, 2015 to increase the penalty for the offence of female genital mutilation under the act and for related matters.

A bill for an act to amend the National Citizen Centre Act, 2017 act No. 24, 2010 to establish senior citizens' centres and homes for the elderly in all the states of the federation and the federal capital territory, Abuja and for related matters.

► **You just completed the legislative advocacy webinar on the Reserved Seats Bill For Women(Understanding HB1349) what were the takeaways and what next?**

The legislative advocacy webinar was one of the several ways of our advocacy and the target audience were the youths. It was meant to get the younger generations involved by educating them on what the bill entails and how they can be involved.

Takeaways? I realised that the younger generation are now more politically conscious. They are ready to lead and be in charge.

What next? We have a lot of activities lined up for the month of September. Activities like conferences of speakers summit, technical session with Senate and

“For me, service at any level is service to humanity, bearing in mind that my policies must be impactful by being visionary and value driven”



House of Representative, stakeholders engagement with civil society organisations, dinner with Honourable members and their wives, and a lot of activities.

► **What are the challenges you encountered (or currently encountering) in pushing for this bill and how can the populace be part of this? What is their role? How can they help?**

Nigeria is a deep rooted patriarchal society, so you would expect some region to kick against the bill, but we're working on getting support from those regions.

The general public can play their roles by adding their voices in support of the bill. They can help by speaking to their lawmakers from their constituencies or writing them letters to support this crucial bill, sending text messages to them and physically engaging them.

► **Tell us about being the first female House of Representatives Member for Kosofe Federal Constituency and the only female federal legislator from Lagos State in the 10th National Assembly? Share experience and lessons.**

The people of Kosofe gave me this mandate and I am grateful for the privilege to serve. For me, service at any level is service to humanity, bearing in mind that my policies must be impactful by being visionary and value driven. I am committed to innovating, adapting and empowering my people even in these turbulent times and to shape a brighter future for the next generation. I love to be with my people all the time. The joy I derive from making them happy cannot be quantified, so it's always a WIN-WIN when I make the sacrifice to do the things I do.

It's overwhelming being the only female in the 10th assembly member from Lagos State. Hence the reason I am very particular and deliberate in advocating for increased representation of more women in parliament.

► **Being the only female federal legislator from Lagos State in the 10th National Assembly shows low representation of women at that level. What are you doing to ensure you represent women appropriately, what**



“I want to be remembered as the woman who selflessly played the necessary role needed to pave the way for other women to be at the decision-making tables”

can be done to increase more participation by other women and what legacy do you want to be remembered for?

The only way to increase women's representation in governance is through legislation, and that's why I am working tirelessly to ensure that all gender bills get the necessary support to become laws. I want to be remembered as the woman who selflessly played the necessary role needed to pave the way for other women to be at the decision-making tables.

► **How important is collaboration for you in ensuring that your committee is committed to working to advance women's affairs and social development? How are you addressing them?**

The committee is open to meaningful collaboration and cooperation that will advance the cause of women's rights and representation. We're collaborating with UN WOMEN, UNDP and other CSO's.

► **How can the numbers of women in politics be better improved? For those in there already, what do you have to say to them?**

We don't have enough women in political representation. We have 15 women in the House of Representatives and 4 at the Senate. Nigeria is ranked 179th position globally as the country with the least percentage of women in parliament. Despite the fact that we have a lot of women in politics, sadly, they are rather used as clappers, dancers and



“For those coming up, remain focused by ignoring detractors, have the fear of God, work hard with determination and believe that nothing is impossible.”

singers in the political space. For those women already there at the top, they should speak up and support policies that address these low representation.

► **What is your honest take on women's rights and its implementation in Nigeria?**

Nigeria is signatory to various international agreements and treaties, but implementation has always been the challenge. There's the Maputo Protocol, African women's charter, CEDAW and so on.

► **How early should girls be encouraged to show interest in politics?**

As early as possible, they should begin from secondary schools, SUG in universities. And that's why I have adopted a mentorship programme for young girls who are interested in politics. I started my political career from the University of Lagos as a student union leader. So, I know the impact of starting young even though I believe that mine is an inbuilt thing. I have the passion for delivery, touching lives and making a difference with vision, resilience and courage.

► **Do you agree that traditions and norms also contribute to low representation of women in politics? How can this be tackled?**

Yes, tradition, culture and religion have also impeded women's participation in politics. It can be addressed locally through the right information and education. And that's where our traditional leaders and religious leaders come in. As traditional gatekeepers, we need them to correct the narrative.

► **What words of encouragement do you have for the Nigerian woman, or girl child?**

My word of encouragement would be that nobody should be told what they can or can't do. When people can't do something, they discourage others who can. So, for those coming up, remain focused by ignoring detractors, have the fear of God, work hard with determination and believe that nothing is impossible.



WOMAN EXECUTIVE

The Silent Wall Between Us: When Women Don't Support Women

By Wola Joseph-Condotti

I have often been asked: Why don't women support other women more often? The question carries both pain and curiosity, and I feel both, deeply.

As someone who has risen through the ranks in a largely male-dominated energy sector, mentored women across industries, and faced both grace and grit from my female peers, I have seen the many faces of this dilemma.

Let me begin by saying this: the issue is not rooted in pettiness or envy, as many assume. It is far more layered.

Many women operate in professional spaces that were never designed for us. The unspoken

message has long been: There is room for only one of you at the top. That kind of scarcity breeds competition, not collaboration. And when you have had to claw your way through glass ceilings, political landmines, and shifting perceptions, your instinct might be to guard that space rather than share it.

Then there is the matter of internalised bias. Biases formed from the very

systems we seek to escape. Sometimes, the hardest critics of women are other women who have been taught, explicitly or not, to distrust female leadership. I have seen women judged more harshly for the same decisions their male counterparts are praised for. I have lived it.

But let me be honest: I have also disappointed myself.

There were times I should have spoken up and did not. Times I let my silence signal complicity. Times I failed to check my own unconscious bias because I expected more from "her" simply because she was a woman. I expected empathy without earning it, loyalty without investing in it, excellence without nurturing it. And when I did not receive it, I pulled away.

And yet, there is hope.

I have been mentored by women who saw my light before I could name it. I have been carried by women who refused to be threatened by my growth. I have been sharpened by women who corrected me in love and celebrated me in faith. They taught me that real support is not always loud, but it is consistent. That real sisterhood requires both accountability and tenderness.

So, what can we do?

We must first drop the illusion of perfection. Not every woman will get it right, and not every female boss will be nurturing. But if we keep expecting flawlessness from each other while making room for the rough edges of men, we create a dangerous double standard.

We must mentor beyond our likeness. It is easy to support someone who reminds you of your younger self. It is harder, but more powerful, to lift someone whose story challenges yours, whose style differs from yours, whose path was not paved like yours.

And we must tell the truth, like I am doing now.

The truth is that this healing begins with each of us. Whether you are a CEO, a manager, a fresh graduate, or somewhere in-between, you have power. Use it to build bridges, not walls.

There is a Scripture I return to often: "Two are better than one... if either of them falls, one can help the other up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). That verse does not qualify the gender. It simply speaks to the power of togetherness.

Imagine a world where women stop trying to prove they deserve to be in the room, and start building rooms for others. Imagine a workplace where brilliance is multiplied through support, not stifled by suspicion. Imagine a future where your win is not my loss, but the confirmation that it is possible.

That is the sisterhood I choose. One woman at a time.



By Wola Joseph Condotti

Group MD/CEO of West Power & Gas Limited

Wola is the Group MD/CEO of West Power & Gas Limited, the parent company of Eko Electricity Distribution PLC (EKEDP) and six other affiliate companies with interests in both conventional and renewable energy sectors. In addition to this role, she serves as the Director of the Power and Renewable Division at the Women in Energy Network (WIEN) in a non-executive capacity.

Prior to her current role, Wola was the pioneer Chief, Legal & Company Secretariat at EKEDP. During her tenure, she also held multiple key positions simultaneously including Head of Regulatory Compliance, Chief Human Resources and Administration Officer, Supervising Chief of the Customer Service Department, and Data Protection Officer. Her previous experience includes roles as General Counsel/Company Secretariat Lagoon Home Savings and Loans, and Legal Associate at Banwo & Ighodalo.

Wola holds a law degree from the University of Ibadan, an LLM in International Finance Law from Harvard Law School, and an MBA from INSEAD Business School. She is also an International Finance Corporation (World Bank) Board Evaluation Certified Professional and Corporate Governance Trainer.

Wola's achievements have earned widespread recognition. Most recently, she received the inaugural Leadership Excellence Award of the Year at the Legal Era Africa Awards 2024, becoming the first-ever recipient of this category. The award celebrated her historic transition from General Counsel to Group MD/CEO, a milestone applauded for redefining leadership pathways in the legal profession.

She is a member of the Institute of Directors and the Society for Corporate Governance Nigeria. Additionally, she is an associate member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria, and Women in Management, Business, and Public Service.

GENDER INSIGHTS

Securing Your Future: Retirement Planning for Women

Abiola Adediran

Imagine yourself sitting on your porch, the sun setting over a quiet evening. There's a gentle breeze, and you're sipping your favorite drink, reflecting on the life you've built.

It's peaceful, and you're filled with a sense of accomplishment. This is the retirement you've worked hard for, the one you've planned meticulously. But here's the thing—getting to this picture-perfect moment requires more than just hoping things will fall into place. It demands careful planning, especially for women.

Let's face it, when it comes to retirement, the cards are stacked a little differently for women. On average, women live longer than men, which means our retirement savings need to last longer. But that's not the only reason we need a unique approach. Many women take breaks from their careers to raise children or care for aging parents, and those career gaps can have a significant impact on retirement savings. In many cases, women earn less than men over their careers, which can mean lower savings and smaller pensions.

Additionally, women are more likely to work part-time or in jobs that don't offer retirement benefits. This makes it even more crucial to have a tailored retirement plan that accounts for these realities. The earlier we start planning, the better positioned we are to secure a comfortable and stress-free retirement.

If you're a single mother, you've got even more on your plate. Not only are you the primary breadwinner, but you're also the caretaker, the teacher, and so on. This juggling act leaves little time for thinking about retirement, and even less money to save. But here's the silver lining—single mothers often

do better with budgeting. You've been making the most out of every naira for years, and that skill is your secret weapon.

By starting early and making even small contributions to a retirement account, you can set yourself and your children up for a secure future. Prioritising financial education can make a significant difference and it's also worth considering life insurance and a solid estate plan to ensure that your children are taken care of in case anything happens to you. While it might seem overwhelming, taking these steps is crucial for securing both your future and your children's.

Many women experience career changes, whether by choice or circumstance, and these changes can throw a wrench into retirement plans. Whether it's taking time off to start a family, switching careers, or starting a business, each transition can affect your savings.

But here's where the opportunity lies—every change is a chance to reassess and adjust your retirement strategy. For instance, if you're moving to a lower-paying job that you're passionate about, you might need to save a bit more aggressively. Or, if you're starting a business, consider setting up a retirement account that allows you to continue building your nest egg.

Retirement is about more than just

numbers; it's a major life transition that can stir up a lot of emotions. As women, we often tie our identities to our roles—whether as professionals, mothers, or caregivers. Stepping away from those roles can feel disorienting. That's why it's so important to think about what you want your retirement to look like emotionally and mentally.

What passions or hobbies do you want to pursue? How will you stay connected with family and friends? Answering these questions now will help you create a retirement that's fulfilling in every sense of the word.

Finally, let's talk about taxes—an area that's often overlooked but crucial in the

Nigerian context. The tax landscape here can be complex, but with a little planning, you can minimise your tax burden in retirement. Start by understanding the tax implications of your retirement savings accounts. For example, contributions to certain pension schemes might be tax-deductible, which can reduce your taxable income today.

Also, be mindful of the tax rates that will apply when you start withdrawing from your retirement accounts. By working

with a tax professional, you can develop a strategy that keeps more of your hard-earned money in your pocket during retirement.

Securing your future as a woman requires a retirement plan that reflects the unique challenges and opportunities you face. Whether you're a single mother, navigating career changes, or simply trying to make sure you have enough saved, the key is to start planning now.

Take control of your financial future, and when that sun sets on your golden years, you'll be able to sit back, relax, and enjoy every moment of the life you've worked so hard to build. After all, you've earned it.



Abiola Adediran

Partner at Genea Family
Office

Abiola Adediran is a Family Business Advisor and one of Nigeria's finest corporate finance and business strategy experts with nearly 2 decades of work experience that cuts across investment banking, consulting, private equity, wealth and family office management.

She was the Group Chief Financial Officer of Coronation Group, a leading investment management group in Africa. She was very instrumental to the set up and running of Tengen Family Office (a Single-Family Office) which served the interests of the families represented.

Prior to that, she was a Manager at KPMG Professional Services, and is currently a Partner at Genea Family Office, an independent boutique multi-family office. She is also the Founder and Managing Consultant of Midridge International, a pan-African strategy consulting and financial advisory firm supporting and facilitating the growth of businesses across Africa.

Abiola Adediran is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, a certified Management Consultant, a PRINCE2-certified Project Manager from APMG International, UK and she holds an MBA with specialism in Finance from Edinburgh Business School, Heriot-Watt University, Scotland. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Directors of Nigeria (CIoD).

Abiola currently sits on the board of growing businesses as well as serves as a mentor to various leading entrepreneurship organisations in Nigeria. She is a member of the Forbes Business Council and is happily married with two adorable children.



FINANCIAL AdviseHER

The Power of Planning Ahead: How to 4x Your Results Before the Year Ends

We are four months away from the end of the year. For some, that feels like “too little time” to make a difference; for others, it feels like an opportunity to take charge and create a strong finish.

By Sola Adesakin



The truth is, four months is plenty of time to multiply your results, shift your trajectory, and even transform your finances and personal growth.

The key is simple: planning ahead. When you plan and act deliberately, you give yourself the best possible position to achieve meaningful results. Without a plan, time slips away, distractions mount, and opportunities are missed. But with a clear structure—even one as simple as four focused steps—you can create momentum that carries you not only to the end of the year but also into the new one with confidence.

Here’s a simple accountability formula I call the **4x Plan**—a method to help you make the last four months of the year count.

1 ■ Form Your “Smash-It” Squad

Nothing accelerates growth like accountability. When you surround yourself with like-minded people who share your drive, you create an environment of encouragement and positive pressure. Find three people you trust and respect—friends, colleagues, or fellow entrepreneurs—and form a squad of four.

This “Smash-It” Squad becomes your support group for the rest of the year. Each person commits to the journey, and together, you create the energy to stay consistent. Think of it as a personal board of directors—cheering you on, checking in on your progress, and holding you accountable to the promises you make.

2 ■ Set Four Big Goals

Once your squad is formed, each person must

define one big goal for the rest of the year. Four people. Four goals. Four life-changing pursuits.

These goals should not be vague wishes like “do better” or “save more.” They need to be specific, measurable, and significant. For example:

Launch a new product or service.
Pay off a debt or save a set amount of money.
Complete a professional certification.
Improve fitness or wellness with a clear milestone.

Big goals energise you. They remind you that even in a short timeframe, you can make substantial progress if you stay focused.

3 ■ Commit to Four Monthly Meetings

Accountability works best when it is consistent. The “Smash-It” Squad should meet once every month from now until year-end. Four meetings. That’s it.

Each meeting becomes a checkpoint to measure progress, celebrate wins, and troubleshoot setbacks.

Did you achieve what you committed to last month? What lessons did you learn? What do you need to adjust?

These sessions don’t have to be formal—an in-person lunch, a video call, or even a group chat can work. The key is consistency. When you know your squad is expecting an update, you’re more likely to stay disciplined.

4 ■ Create a Group Savings Target

Money is one of the clearest indicators of progress. To add a tangible layer to this formula, set a group target savings goal. For example, each member contributes a set amount monthly, and by year-end, you celebrate not just your individual achievements but also a collective financial milestone.

This creates a practical win and reminds everyone that discipline pays off—literally. Even a modest contribution per person builds momentum and cultivates a saving habit that can extend beyond the year.

► The Result: Four Big Wins to Celebrate

By December, your squad will have achieved four major goals, held each other accountable through four consistent meetings, saved a meaningful sum together, and—most importantly—built a system for success.

The beauty of this formula lies in its simplicity. It doesn’t require complex tools or expensive resources. It requires only commitment, structure, and the willingness to rise together.

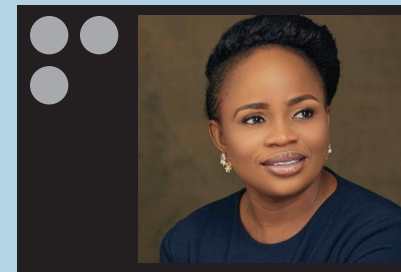
► Why Planning Ahead Matters

Many people underestimate how much can be accomplished in a short period when effort is focused. Planning ahead positions you to use time

intentionally rather than reactively. Instead of drifting through the rest of the year, hoping for things to “get better,” you’re creating a roadmap with milestones and accountability built in.

Think of it this way: the year may be winding down, but momentum is everything. Athletes don’t slow down before the finish line; they push harder, knowing that a strong finish often defines the entire race. The same principle applies to your personal and professional life.

With just four months left, you can 4x your money, growth, and results. Don’t waste it. Instead, plan, act, and surround yourself with people who will ensure you cross the line stronger than you started.



By Sola Adesakin

Founder and Lead Coach,
Smart Stewards

Sola Adesakin is a highly respected wealth coach and chartered accountant with over two decades of transformative impact in the finance industry. As the visionary founder of Smart Stewards Financial Advisory Limited and Smart Stewards Advisory LLC, she has revolutionized the financial wellbeing of countless individuals and businesses across 40 countries. Her methodical approach to ‘make-manage-multiply’ money principles has elevated many from financial stress to prosperity, and mediocrity to exceptional achievement.

Sola is a strong supporter of SDG5 and SDG10, as she seeks to close the gender gap and reduce inequality through financial education, financial technology, and access to funding. Sola’s dedication to achieving gender equality and reducing inequality is evident in her work as an alumna of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs, an initiative of the US Embassy in Nigeria, and the Cherie Blair Foundation’s Road to Growth Program. She is also an alumna of Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women program and a member of the Select Global Women in Tech (SGWIT) Mentorship Network of the United States of America. Through the FRUIT Foundation, which she serves as Founder and CEO, she has partnered with the US consulate in Nigeria to champion the economic empowerment of women, assisting them to start and scale their business ventures.

Her impressive academic credentials include a BSc and an MBA degree from Oxford Brookes University and Edinburgh Business School, respectively. She is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants of the United Kingdom (ACCA), and a member of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA). In addition to her impressive credentials, Sola Adesakin is also a Certified Financial Education InstructorSM and a member of the Personal Finance Speakers Association.

MADE FOR MORE

The Assignment Is Bigger Than Your Job

3 Keys to Birthing God's Purpose for Your Life

By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue

You prayed for this job. You worked hard for this seat. ...and now, you're in the room.

But something in your heart still whispers: "There's MORE." Not because you're ungrateful. Not because the job isn't meaningful. But because the assignment God placed on your life is bigger than the role you currently occupy. Let me break it down.

When God planted you in that workplace, it wasn't just for a paycheck. It was a divine placement - to learn, to lead, to stretch and to shine.

But too often, we confuse the platform with the purpose. We think the title is the destination. We chase promotions but ignore promptings. We work to impress but forget to impact.

Here's the truth - You weren't sent to earth to fill a position. You were sent to fulfill a purpose. And yes, you can

do this while still excelling in your 9-5. Here are three steps to start birthing God's purpose for your life without sacrificing your career or peace.

Step 1: Decode Your Purpose DNA

You weren't created randomly. There's a divine blueprint inside you. To decode it, reflect on these four questions: What breaks your heart and compels you to act? Your burden often points to your assignment. Don't dismiss it... lean in. What do people consistently seek your help with? What wisdom or encouragement are you thanked for again and again?

If time, money, or fear weren't factors, what would you be doing? Your true desires are not distractions...they're divine clues.

What have you survived and how can it serve others? God never wastes pain. Your scars might be someone else's survival guide.

Look across your answers. Is there a common thread? A recurring theme? That just might be your "MORE" - your divine assignment for this season.

Step 2: Distill the Assignment

Once you've decoded the patterns, it's time to clarify the assignment. Ask yourself:

What is the message or solution I carry?

Who is it meant to serve? How can I share it in a way they'll understand and in a way that multiplies impact?

For example: If you've overcome imposter syndrome and helped others do the same, this could become a mentorship circle, a mini-course or a keynote. If you've built a system to lead teams well as a working mom, that might be your first book, playbook or coaching programme. Your story and experiences are not random. They're tools God intends to use.

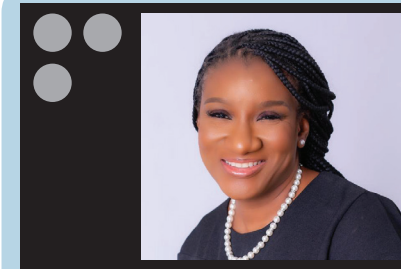
Step 3: Design a Structure for Impact

Clarity without structure won't last. Once you know your assignment, build a system to sustain it: Block time: Dedicate your most productive hour outside regular work hours each day (or week) to your "MORE." Even one hour can compound into impact.

Build support: Don't do it alone. A coach, assistant and/or tribe can help you move faster.

Start small but start smart: You don't need a huge audience. You need structure, service and consistency. Last but not the least... Dear Career Woman, you don't have to choose between job and joy.

You don't have to trade a Promotion for Purpose. You don't have to sacrifice your home to build your higher calling.



By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue

Managing Director Africa at Global Citizen

Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue, fondly known as Iphie, is a seasoned professional with a rare mix of experience in brand management, sales, media and over 20 years' experience building global brands across Africa.

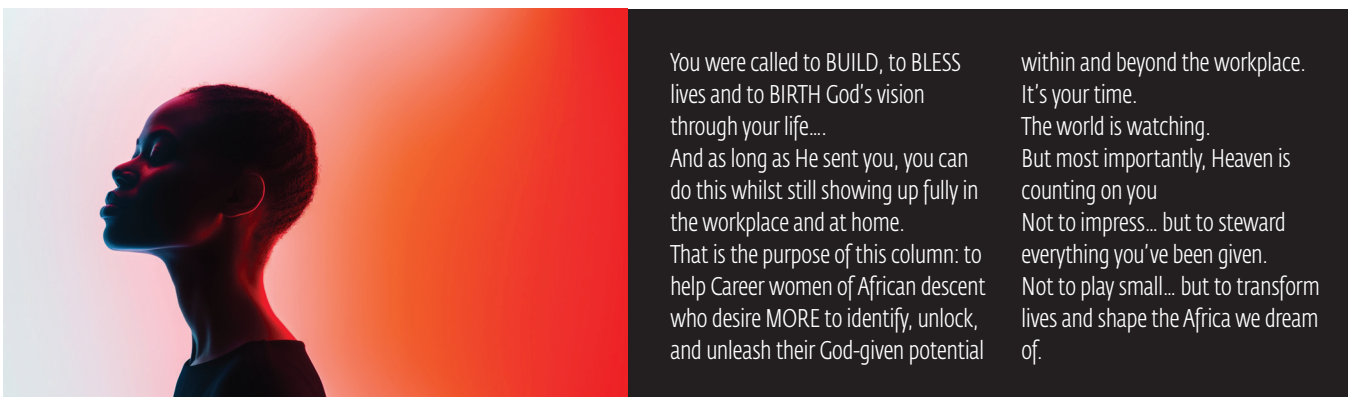
Iphie is the Managing Director Africa at Global Citizen - an international advocacy organisation focused on ending extreme poverty now.

Prior to this role, Iphie was the Executive Director Commercial at CAP PLC, makers of Dulux Paint where she led the Sales and Marketing teams to quadruple the business in 4 years.

A graduate of Economics from the University of Jos, Iphie started her career with Procter & Gamble Nigeria where she held several leadership positions, before moving to Cadbury Nigeria, then CAP PLC, and now Global Citizen.

Iphie Chuks-Adizue is the author of two books - The Uncommon Woman and Made for More, and is Founding President of the Uncommon Woman Movement.

She is a wife, mother of three children and recipient of several awards, the most recent being the Exceptional Leader of Excellence Award from the Global Women Economic Forum.



You were called to BUILD, to BLESS lives and to BIRTH God's vision through your life.... And as long as He sent you, you can do this whilst still showing up fully in the workplace and at home. That is the purpose of this column: to help Career women of African descent who desire MORE to identify, unlock, and unleash their God-given potential

within and beyond the workplace. It's your time. The world is watching. But most importantly, Heaven is counting on you Not to impress... but to steward everything you've been given. Not to play small... but to transform lives and shape the Africa we dream of.

WOMAN AT THE HELM

Dr. Awele Elumelu (OFR)

Chairperson at Avon Healthcare Limited
& Heirs Insurance Brokers



"To turning 55...Thankful!" That was what she posted on her social media pages on her

birthday weeks ago when she turned 55. Dr. Awele Elumelu graces this section today.

Ever heard the narrative "Girls/Women don't tell their age." Well, if you are as gorgeous as our 'Woman At The Helm' for this week, then you can tell age is just a number if you choose to see it this way. I say so because, trust me, looking this graceful at 55, you would also want to tell everyone your age.

I mean, being a medical doctor, obviously for Awele, it isn't just about asking people to live healthy, it is also about living healthy and showing the benefits of what healthy looks like. One of the ways she does so is exercising. You should watch her videos and while doing so, it will encourage you to do the same.

I read through the comments on her birthday posts and see-

ing comments like "55 and still looking 20" and "Congrats, very few ladies make public their age, talkless of displaying a bragging right about it, well done for living well as showed in your picture" and "55 sure looks so good on you ma'am" emphasises the importance of living healthy. You will be grateful for it. Thanks for showing us how to do so through your words and ways Dr Awele Elumelu.

Dr. Awele V. Elumelu, OFR is an African business leader, dedicated to transforming healthcare and fostering entrepreneurship across the continent.

She had seen the challenges in the health sector and chose to not only talk about it, but also intervened by establishing Avon Healthcare Limited, where she sits as the Chairperson. Avon is Nigeria's leading health insurance provider, and Avon Medical Practice, a growing network of full-service clinics and medical centres. Dr. Elumelu's organisations and advocacy provides affordable insurance and healthcare services among others.

In 2018, she was appointed as the Private Sector Champion for Immunisation in Africa by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. In addition, Dr. Elumelu serves as the Chairperson of Heirs Insurance Brokers, the brokerage arm of Heirs Insurance Group, a subsidiary of Heirs Holdings.

Furthermore, she serves as a founding Director on the Board of Heirs Holdings, a family-owned investment company committed to improving lives and transforming Africa. She is also the Co-Founder of The Tony Elumelu Foundation.

Dr. Elumelu holds a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery degree, from the University of Benin. Her career as a medical doctor includes experience with the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, in Nigeria, and Grantham and District Hospital, Grantham, in the UK.

WE'VE GOT MEN

MORUF OSENİ

MD/CEO WEMA Bank

Kemi Ajumobi



It was WEMA Bank's 80th year celebration, and they had a beautiful lineup of events, all well executed. Then came the gala night, everything was in check. The colour purple, signifying royalty had its presence in every corner of the hall including outfits. The hall was simply breathtaking!

So, the event kicked off with our 'We've Got Men' personality for this week, the MD/CEO of WEMA Bank, Moruf Oseni, giving his welcome address. Certainly dressed for the day as the lead celebrant, word after word, he shared of his joy and what it meant for the bank as they turned 80.

"...yet here today, we are celebrating 80 years in a class all by ourselves. I have the privilege of stewarding this legacy at this moment in time. God bless WEMA Bank, God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria." He said as he ended the "official" responsibility of the day. It was a gala night, so you already knew music was going to fill the atmosphere.

Much later during the event, it was dancing time and at some point during the celebration, I observed where a large number of people focused on, and wondered what was going on. Guess who was effortlessly moving with preci-

sion, embodying the latest dance trends, transitioning between intricate footwork and expressive gestures? Yeah, you guessed right. It was Moruf Oseni. Guess what made it even more spectacular? He was dancing with his beautiful wife and yes, she represented the women powerfully. They both looked like high school sweethearts and it was surely a beautiful sight to behold.

So, yes, you can be all the way up there, doing great things, defying age, leading a forward thinking bank like WEMA, and you can also have fun when time permits like it did for Moruf during WEMA's 80th celebration.

By the way, talking about defying age, I believe there is something about MD/CEOs of banks in Nigeria aging gracefully. Okay, let's pause. Think about 5 of them that come to mind, let me not be biased by including the women, let's say men alone...just 5... Done? Good. You have your answer. They surely need to start giving master classes themed "Ageless Leadership: Mastering the art of dynamic vitality."

Back to our IWA man for this week. When you think of a leader who wants results and works to achieve it, then it is Moruf Oseni. With over 25 years of cognate experience and more than 16 years at senior to executive management levels, he has been part

of the bank's executive management team since the transformation programme began in 2012, and he led strategically in the make-over that birthed the launch of ALAT – Nigeria's first digital bank, a move that has placed the bank at a level only the brave can dare.

Moruf holds an MBA degree from the Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires (INSEAD) in France, a master's in finance (MiF) from the London Business School, and a B.Sc. in Computer Engineering from Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He is also an alumnus of both the Advanced Management Program (AMP) of the Harvard Business School and King's College, Lagos. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (FCIBN), a member of the Institute of Directors (IoD), and a member of the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM).

When you lead an organisation that was established on May 2, 1945, under the name Agbonmagbe Bank Limited, rooted in the visionary Late Chief Mathew Adekoya Okupe, that then metamorphosed in 1969 and was rebranded as WEMA Bank Limited, to becoming the leader in digital banking and other accolades, then you have to be Moruf Oseni. Today the lights at IWA shine on you. We wish you well!



If your life were a garden, every choice you make would be a seed. Some seeds grow into flowers, others into weeds. Left unattended, the weeds can choke the life out of everything beautiful. Detoxing your life is about recognising the weeds—whether in your home, on your plate, or in your relationships and pulling them out before they take over.

In today's fast-paced world, toxins are not only chemicals in your food or pollution in the air; they are also hidden in the words you hear, the habits you keep, and the people you allow into your space.

► The Silent Invasion in Your Home

Your home should be a sanctuary, but many modern homes are more like slow-drip poison factories. From harsh cleaning chemicals to synthetic air fresheners, from plastic food containers leaching chemicals to dusty, moldy corners breeding allergens—these invisible enemies attack your health without warning. Studies show that indoor air can be two to five times more polluted than outdoor air, especially in cities like Lagos or Port Harcourt where ventilation is limited.

Detox Tip:

- Swap chemical cleaners for natural alternatives like vinegar, baking soda, and lemon.
- Let in fresh air daily, even if only for 10 minutes.
- Replace plastic food containers with glass or stainless steel.
- A clean, toxin-free home is like good soil, it allows your health to take root and thrive.

► What's on Your Plate is What's in Your Cells

Your diet is the most direct way toxins enter your body. Processed foods loaded with sugar, trans fats, and artificial additives are like rust—slowly eating away at your energy and immune system. Excess alcohol, over-fried meals, and pesticide-laden fruits can quietly damage the body's organs over time.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Detoxing Your Life – Removing toxins from your home, diet, and relationships

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

Detox Tip:

- Eat whole, fresh foods as close to their natural state as possible.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly; soak in vinegar water to reduce pesticide residue.
- Drink enough clean water to help your liver and kidneys flush out waste.

Remember: every meal is either feeding your health or feeding disease.

► The Emotional Toxins We Ignore

Not all poisons are physical. Some are spoken softly over years, disguised as friendship, love, or family concern. Constant criticism, manipulation, gossip, and energy-draining interactions act like slow mental poisons—leaving you anxious, exhausted, or doubting your worth.

In Nigeria, where communal living and extended family ties are strong, we sometimes tolerate toxic relationships under the banner of “respect” or “family obligation.” But the truth is, emotional health is just as vital as physical health.

Detox Tip:

- Identify relationships that leave you consistently drained, anxious, or diminished.
- Set boundaries—lovingly but firmly.
- Surround yourself with people who speak life into you, not those who drain it from you.

► Digital Detox – Clearing Mental Clutter

In the age of smartphones, toxins also live on your screen. Doom-scrolling through bad news, comparing yourself endlessly to curated online lives, and being constantly “reachable” can overload your nervous system.

Detox Tip:

- Schedule screen-free hours daily.
- Curate your social media feed—unfollow accounts that breed envy, fear, or negativity.
- Reclaim your attention; it's your most valuable currency.

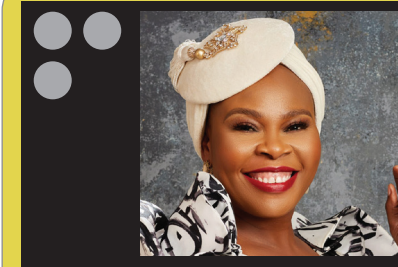
► Detox as a Lifestyle, Not an Event

Too many people treat detox like a once-a-year juice cleanse or a weekend of house cleaning. True detox is a way of living, not a seasonal chore. It's about being intentional every day—asking: Does this serve my body, mind, or spirit, or does it drain them?

A toxin-free life doesn't mean a perfect life—it means a conscious life. It means refusing to decorate your home with objects that make you cough, refusing to fill your fridge with food that makes you sluggish, and refusing to share your heart with people who make you doubt yourself.

Detoxing your life is not about running away from the world—it's about creating a healthier world within your control. The truth is, you can't stop every car emitting fumes on Lagos roads or every negative headline from hitting the news. But you can decide what enters your lungs, your mouth, and your mind.

When your home is clean, your plate is nourishing, and your relationships are healthy, you don't just live longer—you live lighter, freer, and more joyfully. And that, more than anything, is the ultimate cure.



Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle Medical Services

Dr. MAYMUNAH YUSUF KADIRI (aka DR. MAY) popularly referred to as “The Celebrity Shrink,” is a multiple award winning Mental Health Physician, Advocate & Coach. She is the convener of “The Mental Health Conference” and the Medical Director and Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle Medical Services, Nigeria's leading and foremost Psychology and Mental health clinic prominent in the application of innovative clinical approaches in the management/treatment of a wide range of psychological, emotional, and behavioral related disorders.

Dr. Kadiri is a dynamic Consultant Neuro-Psychiatrist and a Fellow of the National Post Graduate Medical College of Nigeria (FMCPsych) with almost 20 years' experience as a practicing Physician. She is a trained and certified Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist from Albert Ellis Institute, New York, USA. She is also a certified Trauma Counsellor and Neurofeedback Practitioner.

Dr. Kadiri has wide experience in psycho-therapeutic techniques and has perfected her skills whilst in private practice and whilst working for a variety of organizations. She is a recognized radio and television guest Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist. She also contributes to articles published in magazines and newspapers.

She is the only Nigerian with the 14Ps.....Physician, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Practitioner (NLP, BFB, NFB), Public Speaker, Published Author, Producer (movies), Proficient Coach, Parent, Philanthropist, People oriented, Public Health Advocate and Passionate about God and life.

The founder of Pinnacle Health Radio, African's #1 online health radio and a non for profit organization, “Pinnacle Medicals SPEAKOUT Initiative” which is geared towards creating Mental Health literacy in Nigeria and beyond.

The Executive producer of award winning movies, Pepper soup (focused on drug abuse) and Little Drops of Happy (focused on depression, postpartum depression and suicide) and creator of the most innovative mental health app in Africa, HOW BODI.



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

The Corporate Take-over of Creativity

By Toyosi Etim-Effiong



Let's talk about it.

The creative industry is electric. Passion, drive, raw talent. You can feel

it the moment you walk into a room full of creatives; the ideas are bold, the energy is contagious, the vision is limitless.

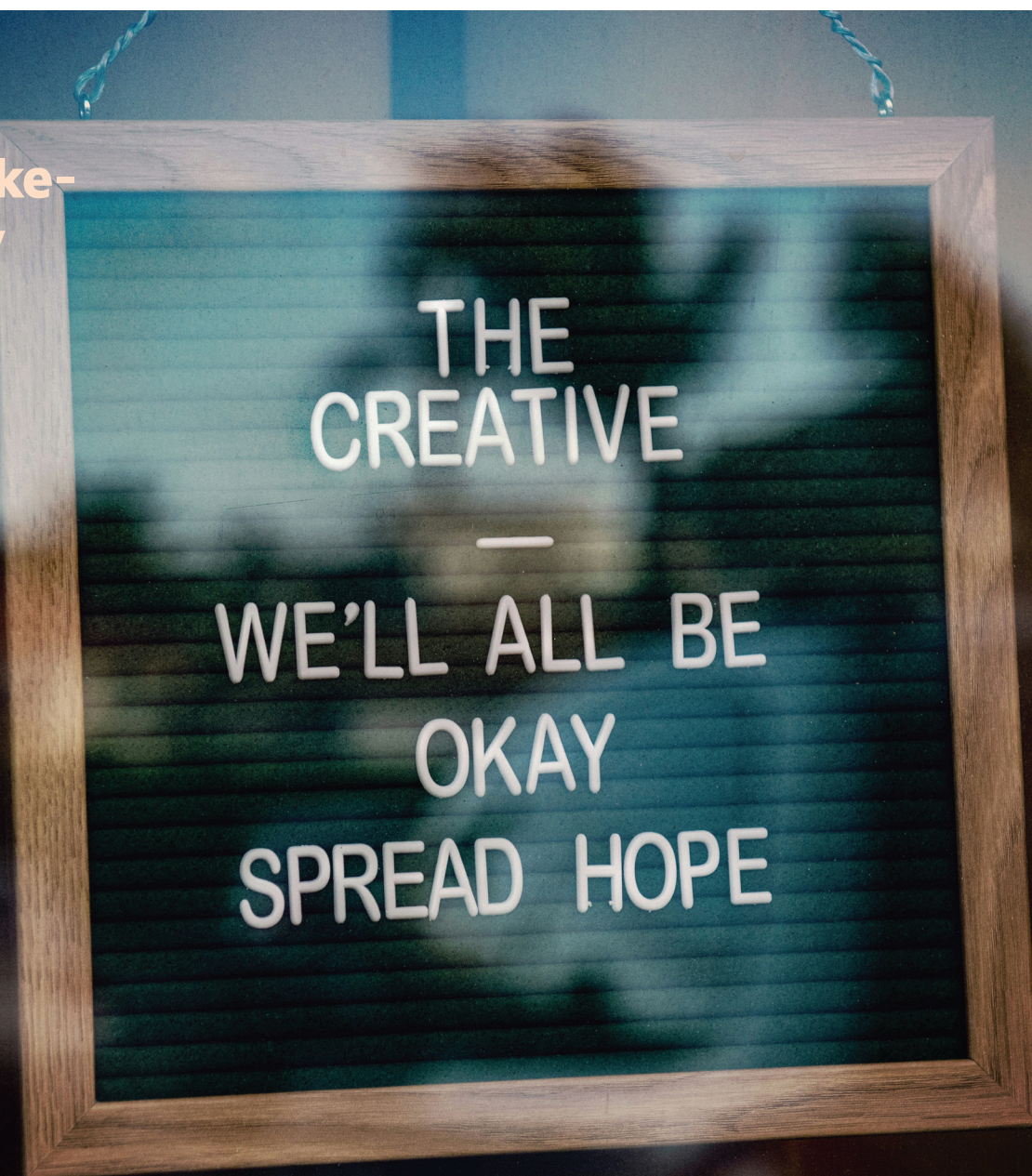
But here's the uncomfortable truth: passion is not enough.

While many creatives are burning themselves out chasing opportunities with nothing but talent and drive, people with corporate backgrounds are quietly moving in. They're setting up creative divisions, launching "cultural initiatives," and positioning themselves as leaders in the space. And when funding opportunities come up, they get the grants, the sponsorships, and the investments, not necessarily because they're more talented, but because they're structured.

And the system recognises structure.

I've seen it play out again and again. A super talented filmmaker can't get a grant because they don't have a registered company or audited accounts. A fashion designer misses out on a partnership because they can't put together a proposal that speaks to corporate boards. Meanwhile, someone who's never designed a dress in their life but knows how to package an idea in a deck will walk away with the deal.

It sounds unfair, and thinking about



it cut actually is but it also makes sense. Money flows where accountability lives. Funders, donors, investors are not just buying into your art, they're buying into your ability to deliver, to track, to report. If they can't see that structure, they won't risk it.

And this is the tragedy: the real culture-shapers, the people actually making the music, telling the stories, designing the fashion, painting the pictures are

the ones missing out. They're so focused on the passion that they forget passion without structure doesn't last.

I'm not just writing as a bystander, I've been involved in the business of media and entertainment for a while, but even I knew passion and vision wouldn't cut it. I made it a point to regularly get advice from people in the finance space, constantly checking for updates in their requirements. I hired and collaborated

with people who cover my blind spots: chartered accountants, HR specialists, and legal minds. I joined communities with entrepreneurs from other industries who understand the world of grants, loans, and finance. Why? Because I know my creativity is powerful, but without structure it can't grow, and I refuse to let that be my story.

I'm building a creative company that will play in deep waters and that won't happen without structure.

Creativity without structure is like water with no container. It looks beautiful in motion, but it can't be stored, scaled, or directed and eventually, it just evaporates.

So, what should you, the creative reading this do about it?

First, start thinking of yourself as a business.

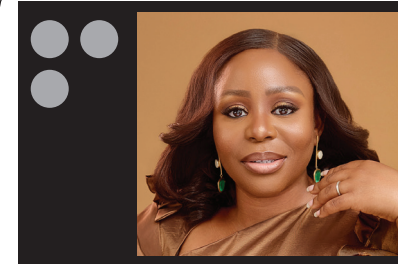
Register your company. Open a business account. Track your work and your income. Even if you're small, start somewhere.

Second, learn to speak the language of structure. Proposals, budgets, reports and corporate governance aren't your enemies. You don't have to do it all yourself, but collaborate with people who can. Pair your creative fire with someone's organisational strength. Passion plus structure is power.

Third, let's stop seeing corporate people as outsiders who are "taking over our space." Yes, some are opportunists. But some genuinely believe in the arts and know how to unlock doors creatives can't. Instead of resenting them, maybe we need to learn or partner with them, so that creatives aren't always left behind.

Because the truth is, the corporate takeover of creativity is only happening because creatives left the door wide open. By resisting structure, we made room for others to step in and profit off what we built.

But it doesn't have to stay that way.



Toyosi Etim-Effiong

Founder, That Good Media

Toyosi Etim-Effiong is a distinguished media executive who is bridging the gap between Nollywood and the global film and TV industry. With over 10 years of multifaceted experience in the media industry, she possesses the vital exposure and skills needed to drive media-related and experiential projects, as well as develop communication strategies for personal and corporate brands. She is a go-to personality and brand for anyone seeking to connect with key players in the media and entertainment industry on the African continent.

As the founder and CEO of That Good Media, a media solutions company with a talent management as well as an international partnerships division, Toyosi has successfully positioned herself as a leading expert in the African movie industry. Given her experience and expertise gained through various roles in the thriving Nollywood industry, she possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate international partnerships with investors on a global scale.

We don't have to choose between being "artsy" and being "corporate." We can be both creative enough to shape culture, and structured enough to secure the funding that makes the work sustainable.

Passion sparks the fire. Structure keeps it burning.

I'm hoping we can become an industry that protects its borders with the required amount of passion and of course, structure.

What do you think?

Let's talk about it.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

If school didn't prepare you for the world, read this

From someone who truly enjoyed university and came out with a First Class in my first degree, I have my "reservations" about schooling.

By Zainab Aderounmu



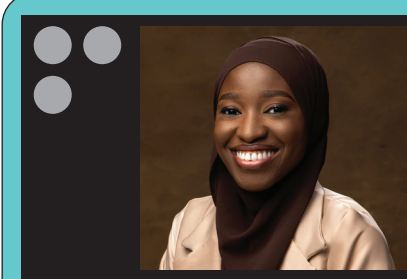
Imagine putting your energy and focus into excelling academically, only to discover that you're deficient in other areas of life after graduation, because the curriculum didn't prepare you for it.

That was how I felt after leaving school. Largely underprepared for the real world. It was almost as if I hadn't learnt anything at all, so I knew immediately that I had to invest in learning and self-development.

First, I created a roadmap for what I wanted to achieve and identified the loopholes in my knowledge and skills. I quickly discovered that my biggest gaps weren't in academics, but in the soft skills that school rarely teaches. If you did any extra-curricular activities in school, it means you have a head start with skills like teamwork, leadership, or even communication. If not, that's exactly where to start. Imagine having to work with a group of people, but you don't understand how people work, or how to get your ideas across to them? You'll definitely struggle.

Beyond those skills, you also shouldn't joke with personal finance skills. Learning how to earn, budget, save, and invest your own money should be your top priority to avoid near-future financial stress. Networking and negotiation are my personal favorites. Prioritise learning how to build quality and deep relationships with people, if you didn't pick it up in school. You should also add digital and workplace fluency to the list. Learn email writing, slides presentation, excel, or any other digital skills you find relevant.

Once I identified the missing skills, I turned to books and the university of YouTube. You can randomly search top books on the particular skills you're trying to master. One or two books on each skill is fine; you don't have



Zainab Aderounmu

Zainab Aderounmu A. W. is a First Class graduate of English Language and the Overall Best Graduating Student from the Lagos State University, Lagos Nigeria. She's a professional Master of Ceremonies, known as "The Hijabi Compere", a public speaking coach and Communications Professional. She is currently a Youth advisor to the European Union where she doubles as the Spokesperson and Head of Communications & PR for the Youth Sounding Board.

to read all the books before you apply what you learnt. If you are pressed for time, you can watch Youtube videos instead. Search top 3 videos on strategic networking, watch them and apply the lessons immediately. The trick is to apply, don't just watch.

If you're still a student, don't wait till you graduate. It's also not enough to just join an association and hope you'll learn what you need. Instead, take charge of your personal growth and put in the self-work. Understand self-awareness, build quality relationships (and hone your networking skills in the process), consistently audit your skills and improve where necessary. It's not enough to hope you'll catch on, because you might not.

Finally, here are some book recommendations for communication, networking and personal mastery you can hop on today; Insight by Tasha Eurich, Rejection Proof by Jia Jang and How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie.

I'll see you at the top.



FROM THE DIASPORA

Ebz the 10...it's been written

Kemi Ajumobi



Eberechi Eze (Called Ebz) is the new kid on the block. His welcome to Arsenal was grand.

His unveiling as Arsenal's new No.10 showed the power of daring to dream and being consistent with the dream regardless of the obstacles. For Eze, it was a 20-year dream that came true.

That walk into Emirates stadium remains memorable for watchers but most especially, Ebz. Walking into the stadium, you could tell he was taking it all in. I reminisced on his journey, how he had a brief time initially with Arsenal but later left to be at Fulham and Millwall, and also had some challenges at Bristol City and Sunderland. Sadly, it wasn't what Eze hoped for as he didn't make it at those places but the young man never gave up. All the odds were against him, but his faith never died, he kept believing.

People have been asking and wondering how the alignment with Arteta's title plans will be. Nevertheless, they remain hopeful and excited about the new.

Watching him stand by his coach and holding his number 10 T-shirt was an

emotional one for him. He closed his eyes, shook his head and said "honestly, I don't really know what I am feeling right now." He later put pen to paper, said "It's been written" and signed. It felt so surreal for him. Ebz obviously couldn't contain his joy.

Ebz is open about his journey and love for Arsenal. Videos of him are online from years ago when he kept hoping to join Arsenal. His response had always been the same when asked of the club he would love to play for. The young man always said Arsenal. Today, reality stares him in the face. His dream has come true. They are no longer wishes, it has become his reality.

"I still haven't fully processed everything. I know what this means and where we have come from as a family." He said during an interview with Ian Edward Wright. One of the high points for me watching that interview was seeing him watch and listen to his model, Thierry

Henry, when Wright played him a video of Henry telling Eze how they all knew he wanted to play for Arsenal. I love when Henry said to him "It is not a dream anymore, it's a reality, so make sure you make it count." Another high point for me was when Henry said to him "When I first arrived at Arsenal, they told me it is a club that has class, it's a family club and you've got to fight no matter what." Ebz's deep breath and smile after watching his role model send him a personal message is priceless. I was smiling from ear to ear like he was speaking to all of us...yeah, I said all of us...I'm an Arsenal fan... didn't know? Welllllllll...now you do.

Okay, back to Ebz. In his quick-fire questions with Arsenal, he referred to his Arsenal move in one word: "perfect" and that wearing the Arsenal top means "everything" to him. His interview on 'The Pursuit podcast with Kelly Cates,' was heartfelt. He revealed that it is impossible to be the best at every single time and to win everything. According to him, "My mind set is, even if I am injured, if I am carrying something, whatever it is, I still believe that I've got what it takes to be the best. That is what I am aiming for at this level of competition and if you don't have that, the next person will and chances are that if they've got it and you don't, you lose." Ebz disclosed.

That's not all to the latest No.10, he further mentioned that "When I am playing, when I am running with the ball, when I am doing whatever, yes, it is for me and my team to win, but there are people in the crowd watching. This might be their only game, their only opportunity to watch me play football and it is not that I am so special, but I want them to leave knowing that I have shown them something, I have done something and that's the heart behind the way I think and how I operate. I feel like I have been called to inspire people." He stated.

My question for you is, what do you feel you have been called to responsibly do? Ebz has found his own, find yours too and know that no matter how long it may seem to tarry, keep your optimistic bar high and hope alive, because just like Ebz, your time will come.



In The News

Fortune 500 in-office mandates rise from 13% in Q4 2024 to 24% today –Flex Report

Kemi Ajumobi

Full time in-office obligations in Fortune 500 companies have increased from 13% in Q4 2024 to 24% today. This is according to the Flex Report. It further states that the average weekly office requirements rose from 2.3 to 2.9

days and by contrast, firms with 5000-25000 employees hardly shifted, with full time in-office rules increasing only 21% to 22%.

Though it is being reported in the dailies that organisations are resuming to full time physical resumption at work, Flex Report shows that only 33% of US firms

need this, and while Fortune 500 corporations have shown to be the biggest players to this rule, a lot of them have stuck to hybrid work patterns.

However, there is a gap. According to data from Stanford's Nick Bloom, while required office days have increased 10% since Q1 2024, attendance has been unstable between 1% and 2% higher.

The report examined US-wide trends to ascertain if prominent shifts toward full time in-office show a wider market swing or just remote cases.

This investigation delved into what is revolutionising America's leading businesses, and if the smaller ones are following suit. Equally, they also revealed from their findings, that the smaller ones are not.

The report, which also involved an in-depth investigation by Stanford Professor Nick Bloom and his team, showed the affiliation between rules and comportment, exposing the crack between company's expectations and employee's response to heightened insistence on physical presence at work.

So, though the number of days required to be present at work increased 10% since Q1 2024, according to Stanford Prof. Nick Bloom, based on Stanford and US census data, attendance remains "flat as a pancake."

Worthy of mention is that the smaller companies are luring workers with more flexibility. According to the report, 52% of non-tech companies with less than 500 employees remain fixated on completely flexible policies, which is in great dissimilarity to bigger companies who significantly support organised hybrid schedules.

Certainly, the rest of 2025 has a lot to be seen in the adaptability of office workplace flexibility.

GARB & GLAM

Fashion Evolution of Aso-Oke, Akwete, Akwocha

Fashion is more than fabric; it is identity, heritage, and history woven into thread.

By Yolanda Okereke

In Nigeria, every community has a textile tradition that tells its own story, carrying the legacy of ancestors into the present. Among the most revered of these are Aso Oke, Akwete, and Akwocha—three fabrics that embody not just style, but evolution.

Fashion is never just about clothing—it is about memory, culture, and identity. In Nigeria, three iconic fabrics—Aso Oke, Akwete, and Akwocha—have evolved from sacred tradition into modern luxury. Today, they are not only worn; they are celebrated as symbols of resilience, prestige, and artistic genius.



Aso Oke: Regal Elegance of the Yoruba

"To wear Aso Oke is to carry royalty on your shoulders."

Richly woven with cotton, silk, and sometimes metallic threads, Aso Oke has always been the Yoruba's fabric of prestige. Traditionally reserved for weddings, coronations, and festivals, it was once the hallmark of kings, queens, and nobility. Its bold stripes and luminous textures tell stories of pride and power.



Modern twist: Today, Aso Oke is no longer confined to ceremonies. Designers reimagine it as sharp suits, couture gowns, and even street wear. It has crossed borders, becoming both heritage and high fashion.

Did You Know? Some elaborate Aso Oke designs can take weeks—sometimes months—to weave by hand.

Akwocha: The Pristine Canvas of Anioma

"Akwocha is not just white cloth—it is purity woven into fabric."

From the Anioma people of Delta State comes Akwocha, the fabric of peace, dignity, and communal pride. Woven in soft white, often with subtle embroidery, it embodies simplicity and grace.

Modern twist: Minimalist designers now embrace Akwocha as the perfect canvas—transforming it into flowing gowns, structured jackets, and resort-inspired fashion. Its quiet elegance appeals to a world increasingly drawn to timeless simplicity.

Did You Know? "Akwocha" literally means white cloth in Anioma dialect. It symbolises a clean spirit, dignity, and unity.



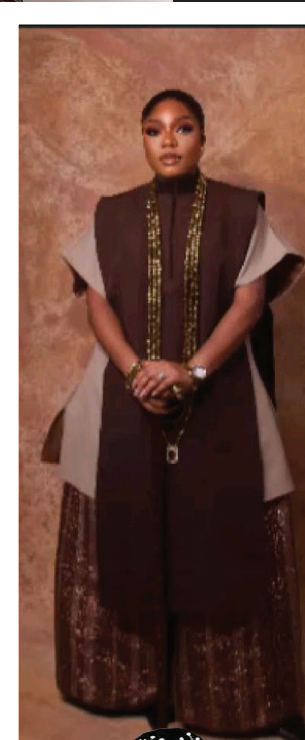
Akwete: The Artistic Soul of the East

"Every Akwete motif is a language. Every weave, a history lesson."

From the looms of Igbo women comes Akwete, vibrant, geometric, and deeply symbolic. Its patterns once adorned warriors, chiefs, and titled women. Each weave carries a narrative—whether of fertility, courage, or community strength.

Modern twist: Today, Akwete is finding new life on global runways. Its bold colors and intricate motifs are being cut into contemporary suits, edgy dresses, and statement accessories. It is no longer just a cultural fabric—it is a global conversation piece.

Sidebar Fact: Traditionally, Akwete weaving was a woman's craft, passed down through generations. Mothers taught daughters the loom, preserving stories in every design.



Yolanda Okereke

Founder & Head of The Rani Company

Yolanda Okereke is a visionary fashion entrepreneur and respected industry leader, known for her exceptional work as a Costume Designer and Creative Producer in Film and Television. With over a decade of experience, she has consistently shaped the visual identity of some of Nollywood's most iconic productions, earning a reputation for her artistic depth, organisational precision, and bold storytelling through costume.

She is the Founder and Head of The Rani Company, a leading costume design and styling firm, and The Wardrobe Shack, a costume rental house serving high-profile film and television projects across Nigeria. Rani Gisele was launched while studying Chemical Engineering at university.

Her extensive credits include critically acclaimed projects such as Netflix's Blood Sisters and Olùtùré, as well as The Wedding Party, King of Boys, La Femme Anjola, The Set Up, and Day of Destiny.

Her contributions have earned her nominations at the Africa Movie Academy Awards and the Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards, and she was recently awarded Best Fashion Collaboration Film at FAME Week Africa, where she celebrated Nigerian costume design through a dedicated showcase.

Threads of Tomorrow

Together, Aso Oke, Akwete, and Akwocha tell the story of Nigeria's fashion evolution. They are not relics locked in the past; they are fabrics of the future—woven with tradition, yet tailored for the global stage.

"Heritage is the new luxury. And in Nigeria, our fabrics are our crown jewels."



A Journey Through Traditional Beauty & Flavor

Inside Clay Food Shop & The Henna Place


“Together, Clay Food Shop and The Henna Place offer more than services. They offer belonging. A place where tradition is not just preserved, but honored, elevated, and shared”

Clayfoodshop

Clay Food Shop is more than just a restaurant, it's a cultural experience. Known for its traditional elegance and modern interpretations of Northern Nigerian cuisine, Clay is a destination for food lovers who seek authenticity in every bite.

From their signature ram suya to rich native sauces, tigernut juice, and wholesome masa, every meal evokes the comfort of tradition.

 @clayfoodshoplagos


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The Henna Place

Established in 2014, The Henna Place is Nigeria's leading traditional spa, bringing centuries old Moroccan, Northern Nigeria and Arab beauty rituals into the general wellness market. Specializing in Moroccan hammam treatments, sugar waxing, herbal hair care, and intricate henna designs, the spa provides a deeply relaxing and culturally rich self care experience.

With multiple branches across Nigeria, including three branches in Lagos, The Henna Place has become a go-to destination for brides, beauty lovers, and women seeking intentional, soul-restoring care from head to toe, it's a place to cleanse, unwind, and reconnect with yourself the traditional way.

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