



INSPIRING
WOMAN
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H.E. DR. JEWEL
HOWARD-TAYLOR

KEEN ON **LEADERSHIP, SERVICE** AND **GIRLS' EDUCATION**



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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to have you here with us again. I saw you here last Tuesday so permit me to ask: How was your week? Mine was interesting with different things happening. We start off with celebrating some wins at IWA. Our contributors, Yolanda Okereke won an award at Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival, 2025 for 'Best Costume Design For A Movie-Asoebi Diaries', Sola Adesakin celebrated the 10th year anniversary of Smart Stewards, Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri (Dr. May) has opened registration for the third edition of her annual mental health conference and Toyosi Etim-Effiong is preparing for a one-of-a-kind conference titled 'Saints In Media' on the 20th of September. You see what we mean when we say our hands are full? Please find a way to participate in any of their programmes, you will learn a lot.

Talking about learning, one must never feel too advanced to learn. You can learn from the young, old, rich, poor, CEO or staff. Life comes with lessons and we must learn to learn. When we fail to learn, we learn the hard way. Selah!

Still on learning, I learnt a lot from our cover personality this week. H.E. Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor. She is an accomplished public service professional with over 27 years of impactful leadership across both the public and private sectors. She was the former Vice President of the Republic of Liberia and Former President of the Liberian Senate from January 2018-January 2024.

We also have a line-up of inspiring articles to share with you on our beautiful pages this week, and each of them will be worth your time.

Until I come your way again next week, have a great time reading all, take care of you, and see you soon!



COVER INTERVIEW

H.E. Dr. JEWEL HOWARD-TAYLOR

KEEN ON **LEADERSHIP, SERVICE**
AND **GIRLS' EDUCATION**

Kemi Ajumobi

H.E. Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor is an accomplished public service professional with over 27 years of impactful leadership across both the public and private sectors, who holds a diverse skill set encompassing public service leadership, law, governance, strategic decision-making and international negotiations, peace and security, humanitarian and social affairs.

An experienced public sector manager, trained diplomat and lawyer, proficient in conflict resolution, peace building, gender development and empowerment, humanitarian and social affairs and strategic treaty negotiations. She is recognised for exceptional communication skills, motivational leadership, mentorship and commitment to gender development, advocacy and Pan-Africanism. With a high proficiency in written communications, as well as intercultural group dynamics.

Driven by a relentless commitment to issues of global development, peace, security, gender, development and transformative leadership, Cllr. Jewel Howard-Taylor's career embodies a passionate dedication to fostering positive change on both national and international platforms, advocating for inclusive policies and championing gender equality, peaceful coexistence, human rights, and economic empowerment.

She was the former Vice President of the Republic of Liberia and Former



"I served in the Liberian Senate and worked persistently on legislative reforms to expand women's participation and protection"



President of the Liberian Senate from January 2018-January 2024. Key role as deputy to the President; the President of the Liberian Senate, was ensuring legislative passage of laws and policies essential for guiding the implementation of government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, focusing on poverty eradication, gender equality, SDGs, women's political and economic empowerment, youth development and healthcare.

As former First Lady, Republic of Liberia from 1997-2003, she established and led the National Humanitarian Task Force during the civil crisis. This NGO provided monthly food rations, humanitarian and medical services for over 300,000 internally displaced Liberians over a 3-year period.

She is the founder of the Jewel Starfish Foundation, which advances girls' edu-


cation and leadership through scholarships, mentoring, and holistic support. JSF has enabled thousands of scholars—primarily in Liberia and also in Malawi, Ghana, and Sierra Leone—to progress from junior high through university. Its pillars include: (1) Access to Education; (2) Mentorship & Leadership Camps (3) Health, Dignity & Safety and (4) Alumnae Networks that pay opportunity forward.

► Leadership journey that shaped your approach to governance and public service

There are many such moments across my 30-year journey in both the public and private spheres. Two, however, have been decisive.

First, during my service as First Lady (1997-2003), amid the strains of civil conflict, I confronted—up close—the deep marginalisation of Liberian women and girls rooted in cultural norms, bias, and long-standing inequalities. Guided by the counsel of my father—who insisted that his daughters' education be equal to that of any son—I resolved to be part of the solution rather than a commentator on the problem. In 2000 I established the Mayo Starfish Foundation, which later transitioned into the Jewel Starfish Foundation (JSF), to provide girls' scholarships and comprehensive support. By the grace of God, JSF marks its 25th anniversary this year and has enabled thousands of girls—primarily in Liberia, and also in Malawi, Ghana, and Sierra Leone—to progress from junior high through university.

Second, under the presidency of H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, I served in the Liberian Senate and worked persistently on legislative reforms to expand women's participation and protection—among them the Gender Equity Bill and the long, complex fight against female genital mutilation (FGM). In a male-dominated legislature, change was incremental; but we made real gains and mainstreamed a national conversation about gender equity and bodily integrity. These experiences shaped my approach to public service: (1) women's leadership is not optional to national development; and (2) women in public life must model excellence so that girls can see, believe, and become. We need many more "She-for-She" champions who extend the ladder for others to climb.



“One of the most sensitive national challenges has been advancing the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM). Progress required cultural humility and sustained dialogue”

► **What policies or initiatives during your tenure as Vice President have been most impactful for the people of Liberia?**

Impact is ultimately measured by whether families can live with dignity and hope. Within the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), I championed and worked to convene coalitions around initiatives that touched the daily bread-and-butter challenges while investing in human capital:

- **Social Protection:** Targeted cash transfers and food-security programmes for vulnerable households, prioritising women and children.
- **Jobs and Enterprise:** Youth skills and employment programs; support to small and medium enterprises through finance, training, and market access; promotion of village savings and loan schemes.
- **Infrastructure & Services:** Rehabilitation of roads and bridges to connect rural and urban markets; expansion of reliable electricity and clean water, including hydro and solar solutions.
- **Education:** Free primary education policies alongside investments in school infrastructure and teacher support.
- **Health:** Expanded access to vaccination, maternal and child health, and improved remuneration for health workers.
- **Agriculture & Food Systems:** Inputs, extension support, and market linkages to boost domestic production and reduce import dependence.
- **Housing & Urban Upgrading:** Steps toward affordable housing for low-income families.
- **Security & Decentralisation:** Strengthening police capacity and advancing local governance so decisions can



“Equality is not a favour, it is a foundation for national prosperity”



be made closer to communities.

- **Women's Empowerment:** Programmes to protect rights, expand participation, and increase women's access to resources and leadership.

These efforts were never isolated “projects”; they were mutually reinforcing investments in capability, resilience, and human dignity.

► **What significant challenges did you face in implementing the PAPD, and how did you address them?**

Transforming ambitious agendas into everyday results is always demanding. We faced fiscal constraints, legacy infrastructure gaps, capacity limitations across the public sector, and the headwinds of global shocks. Implementation also required patient coalition-building—across ministries, the legislature, civil society, the private sector, and international partners.

We addressed these constraints by: prioritising interventions with outsised human-capital returns; strengthening inter-ministerial coordination and legislative oversight; mobilising development finance and public-private partnerships; and improving monitoring and evaluation so we could iterate. The results were mixed—as serious reforms always are—but we laid foundations that future administrations can strengthen. Development is a relay, not a sprint.

► **You have extensive experience in conflict resolution and peace-building. Can you provide an example of a successful initiative you led?**

One of the most sensitive national challenges has been advancing the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM). Progress required cultural humility and sustained dialogue. As a legislator and later as Vice President, I helped convene a broad coalition: the Traditional Council, women leaders, civil society, faith communities, members of the legislature, and international partners, including UN agencies.

We visited practicing counties, listened deeply, and co-designed alternatives that preserved valued cultural identity while protecting the health and rights of women and girls. That meant skills training and dignified alternative livelihoods for traditional practitioners, and estab-

“We must guarantee quality, relevant education, create pathways to decent work and entrepreneurship, expand access to digital skills and innovation ecosystems, and bring youth meaningfully into governance”

lishing new, positive rites of passage.

The process was painstaking, but it shifted mindsets and demonstrated that culturally rooted change is possible when people are respected, not condemned.

The work must continue—with vigilance and partnership—so that hard-won gains are not reversed.

► **As a champion for gender equality, what do you see as the biggest barriers to achieving it in Africa and beyond?**

Key barriers remain: entrenched patriarchy and gender stereotypes; economic exclusion and unequal access to assets, gaps in legal protection and enforcement, under-representation in decision-making, gender-based violence, conflict and displacement; and, too often, insufficient “She-for-She” solidarity.

The path forward is multipronged: legal reform with teeth, education from early childhood through tertiary levels, access to finance and markets for women-led enterprises, parity measures in politics and public institutions, comprehensive services and accountability for ending GBV, engaging men and boys as allies, and intersectional approaches that meet women where they are—rural and urban, young and elderly, with disabilities, across all ethnicities and faiths. Equality is not a favour, it is a foundation for national prosperity.

► **How can women's political representation be improved in Africa?**

We know what works: (1) constitutional or statutory quotas and parity frameworks; (2) party-level rules that guarantee women candidates in winnable positions; (3) financing and campaign support targeted to women; (4) protection from violence and harassment in politics; (5) leadership pipelines—training, mentor-

ing, and networks; (6) civic education so voters understand that inclusive leadership produces better outcomes; and (7) male champions who use their platforms to normalise women's leadership. Representation is not symbolic; it changes the policy agenda and the lived experience of citizens.

► **Can a nation progress without its youth? What must be done?**

No nation can progress while sidelining its youth. In most African countries, they comprise the majority. We must guarantee quality, relevant education, create pathways to decent work and entrepreneurship, expand access to digital skills and innovation ecosystems, and bring youth meaningfully into governance—youth councils, participatory budgeting, and mentorship into public service. Health, including mental health and civic belonging are as essential as jobs. When youth see a future at home, nations flourish.

► **How have experiences in international negotiations influenced your approach to domestic governance?**

International negotiations sharpen collaboration, patience, and the art of principled compromise. They teach you to widen the table, honour diverse stakeholders, and build coalitions that last beyond a news cycle. Back home, that translates into inclusive policymaking, data-informed decisions aligned to global good practice, and relentless focus on delivery. It also reinforces a duty to model integrity—because credibility is the currency of diplomacy and domestic leadership alike.

► **As Chairperson of the ECOWAS National Centre for the Coordination of Response Mechanisms (NCCRM), what strategies worked at the local level?**

We invested in early warning and early action by: (1) conducting regular conflict-sensitivity assessments; (2) creating local, representative peace committees; (3) establishing trusted dialogue platforms among elders, youth, women, faith leaders, and security actors; (4) training mediators and local administrators in negotiation and de-escalation; (5) integrating peace education into schools and community forums; (6) improving access to justice through customary and formal



“I remain committed to service—wherever my experience can help build a safer, fairer, more prosperous Liberia and region”

mechanisms; (7) partnering with civil society, academia, and regional bodies; and (8) rigorously documenting lessons learned to adapt quickly. Local ownership is the heart of durable peace.

► **What have you been doing after your tenure as Vice President?**

I have poured fresh energy into the Jewel Starfish Foundation’s 25th-anniversary agenda—expanding scholarships, mentorship, STEM exposure, and leadership camps; strengthening our alumnae network; and deepening partnerships across the Liberian diaspora and with regional allies. I continue to speak, teach, and convene on gender equity, governance, peace-building, and youth development—across ECOWAS



fora, universities, and civil-society platforms. Mentoring emerging women leaders remains a personal priority. Above all, I remain committed to service—wherever my experience can help build a safer, fairer, more prosperous Liberia and region.

► **What advice do you have for emerging leaders in public service today? What qualities are essential?**

Lead with values. Listen first. Learn always. Build coalitions that outlast you. Be transparent about trade-offs. Use technology to serve—not to dazzle. Celebrate small wins and guard your integrity. Essential qualities include: integrity, empathy, clarity of vision, adaptability, collaboration, resilience, persuasive communication, problem-solving, a commitment to justice, and the courage to decide. Public service is a trust; hold it with humility and purpose.

► **How do you maintain passion and commitment amid challenges and setbacks?**

I return to purpose. I set clear, season-appropriate goals and surround myself with people who share a service ethic. I stay close to communities—their hopes and struggles keep me grounded. I practice resilience—faith, rest, reflection, and gratitude—and I break large tasks into achievable steps. Professional development keeps my tools sharp; mentorship keeps my spirit joyful. And I never lose sight of the lives behind the statistics—each success story renews my strength.

► **After 30 years in governance, diplomacy, human rights, and socioeconomic development, what lessons stand out?**

Inclusion is non-negotiable. Strong institutions anchored in the rule of law are nation-building assets. Communicate clearly; it builds trust and lowers conflict temperature. Let data guide choices and course corrections. Invest

in capacity—of the state and of citizens. And take a long view: sustainable development balances growth, equity, and environmental stewardship, across generations and beyond party lines. Empower local communities; when people co-own development, gains endure.

► **What legacy do you hope to leave in Liberia and the broader Pan-African context?**

I hope to be remembered as an impactful gender advocate who helped dismantle discriminatory barriers and who did more than speak—who built. Through JSF and allied initiatives, I want generations of girls to say: “Because we were educated and mentored, we led, we served, and we transformed our communities.” That is the legacy I pray for.

► **From First Lady to Vice President—what marked the difference between these roles, and what did you learn?**

As First Lady, my role was largely ceremonial and humanitarian—focusing on social welfare at a time of displacement and need. That experience opened doors to deliver food, clothing, medical, and educational support to thousands of internally displaced families, and it seeded JSF.

As Vice President and President of the Senate, I had formal constitutional authority and responsibilities in governance, budgeting, and diplomacy. I learnt to navigate complex coalitions, to institutionalise reforms, and to be accountable at the highest levels of scrutiny. Both roles demanded service; one honed compassion, the other discipline in policy and systems. Together they strengthened my conviction that proximity to people and principled leadership must walk hand in hand.

► **What day will you never forget—and why?**

January 22, 2018—my inauguration as Liberia’s first female Vice Pres-

“I practice resilience—faith, rest, reflection, and gratitude—and I break large tasks into achievable steps”

ident. It was a personal milestone, yes; but more importantly a collective breakthrough for Liberian women and girls. It testified that persistence, preparation, and principled struggle can bend history. I carried with me the voices of many who had laboured for that day—and for the days still to come.

► **What are your plans for the future, especially with the 2029 presidential elections on the horizon?**

My assignment to national service is not yet complete. I am consulting widely and prayerfully on the best avenues to contribute and will communicate those decisions in due season. What I can say with certainty is that I will be an active, constructive participant in Liberia’s democratic journey—focused on unity, institutions, and opportunity for our people.

Closing thoughts

The journey from First Lady to the first female Vice President has been one of resilience, courage, tears, and joy. I learnt to climb, to crawl, and to persevere—because others were watching and waiting to follow. My counsel to the next generation: dream audaciously, prepare diligently, work tirelessly, and lead unapologetically. Let your life be a bridge on which others can safely cross—and leave a legacy that lifts those yet unborn.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

The Myth of Balance: What Working Mothers Really Need

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



The phrase “work-life balance” is often floated around like a promise, a formula, or a goal.

Something that, if we just manage our calendars better, we will finally achieve.

But for many working mothers (especially those in leadership) balance is not a fixed state. It is a moving target. One day we are ahead, the next we are behind. Sometimes we soar in one area while barely holding it together in another.

It is not balance. It is a juggle. A constant rebalancing. And sometimes, some balls hit the floor.

The Juggling Act No One Trains You For

Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo and one of the most visible female leaders of our time, once described work-life balance as a juggling act, but not all balls are equal. According to her:

“You will juggle five balls: work, family, health, friends and spirit.

Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four are made of glass.”

That insight stayed with me. Because too many women treat everything like the rubber ball. We hustle to keep all the balls in the air, believing if we just try harder, we will not drop anything.

But something always gives, and sometimes, what we lose is precious.

The Pressure is Personal

Like Indra Nooyi, I have lived the tension of being both present and pulled. There are days I have chaired strategic sessions, led high-stakes negotiations, and flown across cities, only to come home to my husband or children who just need my time, my touch, my voice.

I have missed milestones. I have answered business calls with a child tugging at my sleeve. I have watched the clock during events, calculating whether I will make it back for bedtime.

There have been days I have delivered a keynote speech, reviewed contracts late into the night, and then switched gears to help with homework, respond to a school issue, or simply be mum to a child who does not care how many people reported to me that day.

And the truth is, I do not want them to care. I want them to know that I showed up for them. That my love was not lost in my ambition.

But many days, the trade-offs are real. And it is not just about time. It is about presence. About how often our minds are split between two worlds, both of which need us, and neither of which always gets us fully.

And I have also felt the sting of guilt. Guilt for leaving the office “too early” to attend a school function, or for missing the school function to attend an industry roundtable.

Because somehow, society has made it so that no matter which choice we make, we feel like we are failing at one.

What Working Mothers Really Need

We do not need more productivity hacks. We do not need more articles telling us to “lean in” harder. What we need is truth and support: Truth that having it all is not always having it all at the same time.

Support in the form of workplace cultures that honour motherhood without penalising it.

Flexibility that is not performative. Systems that make it okay to say, “Today, I am choosing my child,” without professional backlash.

We also need grace. Grace for ourselves, and grace for one another. Because behind every powerful woman is a complex, delicate, and deeply human story.

Faith in the Messy Middle

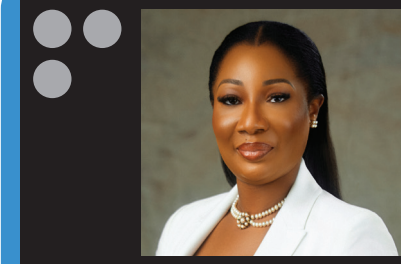
As a woman of faith, I have come to understand that I am not called to perfection. I am called to obedience and stewardship. Some seasons demand more from me at work. Others, more from me at home. But in all of it, God is present.

I have clung to that on days I felt frayed at both ends. And I have watched God fill in the gaps when I simply could not.

Final Thoughts

To every working mother navigating boardrooms and bedtimes, contracts and carpools, you are not alone. You are not dropping the ball. You are doing your best to juggle what truly matters.

Let us stop preaching the myth of balance and start telling the truth about seasons, support, and sustainability. Let us remind ourselves that work is a rubber ball. But family, faith, health, and friendship are made of glass. And while you can pick up your career after a stumble, you must hold the glass with intention. You are not failing. You are faithfully juggling. And that, in itself, is strength.



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

Giving Back: How Women Use Wealth to Create a Better World

Abiola Adediran

The saying goes, “When you empower a woman, you empower a community.” This is especially true when it comes to wealth and philanthropy. Across Nigeria and Africa, women are stepping into their roles as wealth creators and custodians, not only managing financial legacies but also channeling their resources to uplift communities and transform lives. Their unique approach to giving—one rooted in empathy, shared

purpose, and sustainability—is changing the face of philanthropy in ways that deserve celebration and emulation.

Women often view wealth through the lens of relationships and impact. For them, it’s not just about accumulating resources but about using those resources to create a ripple effect of change. Studies consistently show that women are more likely than men to donate a significant portion of their wealth to charitable causes, and they tend to focus on initiatives that directly address social challenges such as education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation.

Philanthropy doesn’t always need to make headlines to make an impact. Across Nigeria, countless women are quietly but powerfully driving grassroots efforts to improve their communities. For instance, Dr. Stella Okoli, the founder of Emzor Pharmaceuticals, has been a champion for health-related causes. Her foundation supports initiatives that improve access to healthcare and provide training for medical professionals, ensuring her wealth directly addresses pressing societal needs.

Similarly, Jumoke Adenowo, CEO of AD Consulting, a foremost globally renowned architectural firm in Nigeria, is a strong advocate for youth empowerment and leadership and has been investing in mentoring leaders for over two decades. Through her mentoring programmes and contributions, she’s fostering a new generation of leaders, exemplifying how targeted philanthropy can multiply its impact over time.

The philanthropic efforts of African women extend beyond Nigeria. South Africa’s Precious Moloi-Motsepe, through the Motsepe Foundation, is a shining example of how women use wealth to address systemic issues like education inequality and gender disparity. By focusing on scalable and sustainable projects, Moloi-Motsepe is transforming not just individuals but entire communities.

In Kenya, Dr. Jennifer Riria, founder of Kenya Women Microfinance Bank,

has empowered thousands of women through microloans and financial literacy programs. Her work demonstrates that giving back isn’t just about donations—it’s about equipping people with tools and opportunities to change their own lives.

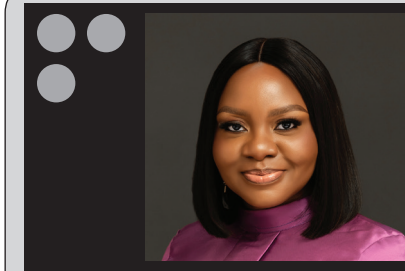
The unique aspect of women’s philanthropy is its focus on creating long-term impact. Women understand the power of collective growth and often build initiatives that promote sustainability, collaboration, and inclusivity. They don’t just give fish—they teach people how to fish and ensure the pond remains viable for generations.

But beyond the practical impact, women’s giving sends a powerful message: wealth is a tool, not an end in itself. It’s a reminder that success isn’t just about what we achieve but about what we contribute to others’ lives.

Giving back doesn’t require a fortune—it begins with a desire to make a difference. Women across all economic strata can engage in impactful giving, whether through time, skills, or financial resources.

Imagine if every woman in Nigeria, regardless of her wealth, committed to mentoring one young girl, funding one child’s education, or supporting one small business. The cumulative effect would be transformative, shaping a future where giving back is woven into the fabric of our society. As women continue to rise as wealth creators and managers, their role in philanthropy will only grow. Their approach—rooted in empathy, sustainability, and community—serves as a blueprint for a better world.

The question is: How can I use what I have to make a difference? Whether it’s big or small, your contribution matters. Let’s continue to build a culture of giving, because when women lead with their hearts, the world truly becomes a better place.


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.

MADE FOR MORE

Your Purpose Is Not a Side Hustle

By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue



Many high-achieving women treat their God-given assignment

like an afterthought - squeezed in after work and family time or when there's "extra time."

But for how long will we keep squeezing our true assignment into the margins of our life, treating the very reason God put us on earth like a side hustle?

I know this struggle well. In 2021, I stepped into my first C-Suite role and amidst all I needed to learn and deliver, I soft-pedalled on my work at Uncommon Woman Movement (UWM), where I helped Career Women identify and birth the MORE in them in a way that impacts lives, fulfills them and makes God proud.

By the end of that year, thankfully, the results at work were outstanding - actually the best ever in my entire career at that time...but deep down, I felt strangely empty. So, I re-started the Uncommon Woman Community and a small-group coaching programme for about 10 women. That was all I could manage with my workload... and I convinced myself that surely, God understood. But He clearly did not! During a work trip to Cameroun, He confronted me as I watched the video of Bishop T.D. Jakes passing the Woman Thou Art Loosed mantle to his daughter, Sarah Jakes Roberts. In that moment, He showed me what UWM could become and told me plainly that I was sitting on its destiny because I was treating it like a hobby, an afterthought... something I touched only when I found the time. I wept.

I told Him I was happy to resign to focus on it and once again He reminded me that the women I was called to needed to see me working and birthing my MORE. Instead, He instructed me to build a team to support the work, and to focus on one flagship transformational product rather than scattering myself across many offerings. That became our EMERGE Accelerator which at the time had reached about 20

women. Today, that same programme has graduated more than 500 women.

Yes, your career is important as it places you in rooms, gives you resources and influence but it cannot and should never take the place of your God-given assignment...which is the main deal - not a hobby or something you fit in when convenient.

HERE ARE 3 THINGS TO DO, STOP TREATING PURPOSE LIKE A SIDE HUSTLE

1. Build a Self-Sustaining Model

If you keep trying to fund your purpose work aka your MORE from your pocket, it will shrink to what you can afford and never grow beyond what you can spare! God's vision for it is far bigger than your budget. That's why every purpose project must have a financial engine behind it. For some, this might mean charging appropriately for services or products. For others, it may mean building a framework for fundraising and partnerships. Whatever the case, your MORE must be designed to sustain itself, otherwise you will only push it forward when "extra" money is available, truncating its growth.

2. Remember the Lives Tied To It

Your obedience is not just about you. There are destinies connected to your assignment - people waiting for the solution, encouragement or transformation God has placed in you. If you delay or keep treating it casually, God will not allow those lives to suffer. He will raise someone else to do what you refused to do. What a sobering truth, right?

Indeed, Heaven's work will continue but you'll lose your part in it. Don't let inconsistency rob you of your divine place in God's plan.

3. Focus on a Single Flagship Offering

Many of us scatter our energy across multiple "small-small" projects, trying to do everything at once. But true

impact comes from focusing deeply on one thing - the flagship assignment that carries the full weight of transformation you are meant to bring to the world.

When you identify that one thing for now and pour your attention into it, God multiplies the results. For me, narrowing down to EMERGE changed everything. Instead of being spread thin across ten small efforts, one focused program grew twentyfold in impact. Purpose thrives on focus.

BONUS: Build Systems Not Just Teams

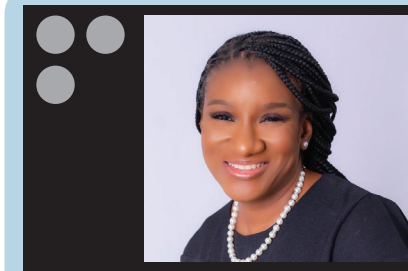
Teams are important but people come and go. Systems remain. If your purpose work is only built around individuals, it will rise and fall with them. However, when you establish structures and systems...replicable frameworks and repeatable processes, the work can outlive you and scale beyond your personal capacity. Systems also make room for growth. They allow fresh instructions from God to fit into an existing framework that can carry them forward. Without them, you will always be capped by what you can personally manage.

I learnt the hard way that purpose doesn't thrive on leftovers. It is not a side note but rather, heaven's headline for your life and it needs your full weight. You don't have to repeat my mistakes or wait for hard lessons to teach you the value of obedience.

This is why I write to you every week, to remind you that while your job matters, your assignment is bigger. You are made for MORE and can have it ALL, as long as that ALL is what God had in mind when He created you.

Until next week, when I'll be back with more insights on merging calling and career, keep saying YES to your MORE.

And if you're ready to journey deeper, you should watch my free webinar, "The 5 Mistakes Even Brilliant Women Make When Building Purpose-Driven Projects", where I'll show you how to avoid these traps and start building your legacy with clarity and structure.



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.



WOMAN AT THE HELM

Mo Abudu

CEO EbonyLife Group

Kemi Ajumobi

Mo Abudu is a distinguished African media mogul, admired for her remarkable influences in the media space for over two decades. She recently clocked 61 and I remember a friend saying “Is Auntie Mo really 61?” There is no way you would see her and not wonder. So, I added to my friend’s “wonder” by saying “She is also a GrandMa...a hot one for that matter.”

Beyond that, is Mo’s energy. Mo always has something new she’s working on. We thought we had seen it all, guess what? She is launching Mo Essentials, a leisure wear range designed for your ultimate comfort, to be purchased exclusively on EbonyLifeON-Plus, which she says is more than just a streaming online platform. It is, according to Mo, a bold new digital destination for entertainment, empowerment, and African excellence. You see what I mean when I say she isn’t resting on her oars?

One thing you cannot take away from Mo is her attention to details. She isn’t stopping at anything until excellence is birthed. Her slogan “If you can think it, you can do it” aren’t mere words, if it flashes across her mind, just know that the next time you are hearing from her, it is the announcement of the project. Her passion for work and commitment to outstanding results is praiseworthy. How she combines her role in the media space with business and filmmaking even at 61 is admired.

Whether it is forming strategic collaborations, or projecting Nigeria, and by extension Africa on a global stage, Mo always represents well. For instance, she just had the world premiere of her movie, produced by EbonyLife Films ‘Dust To Dreams’ at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF50), directed by the exceptionally gifted Idris Elba, a film on family, love, legacy, and music. Indeed, it was an unforgettable day for Mo. Little wonder she said “From our take-off at Fairmont Royal York Hotel, to our screening at the TIFF Lightbox, and our wonderful dinner at Salon, it was a night to remember.”

From EbonyLife to EbonyLife Studios, to EbonyLife Creative Academy and EbonyLife Place, Nigeria’s luxury entertainment resort, Mo has consistently shown that she is on top of her game. Beyond being called the CEO of EbonyLife Group, Mo is daily living her dreams and she is never shy to take us along with her through her journey every step of the way.

Indeed, she exemplifies the meaning of being a media mogul— she is zealous, dogged, and unwaveringly dedicated to making a difference. As she consistently explores new horizons, regardless of encountered challenges, she not only shows that age is just a number, she is proof that the pursuit of excellence knows no restrictions. She is certainly a living legacy inspiring the media space today and for years to come.



WE'VE GOT MEN

Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede

Chairman, Coronation Group

Kemi Ajumobi

There is no way you can mention men in the financial sector who dared to position their organisations strategically for

Nigeria, Africa and the world to know that you can work your way to the top and even rank top 5, and you won't mention IWA's 'We've Got Men' for this week, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede.

Talk about a seasoned banking executive with three decades of diverse capabilities in the corporate sector and Aigboje comes to mind. He is celebrated for his prudence and leadership dexterity.

Former Group Managing Director at Access Bank (2002-2013), he led a journey of positive change that propelled the bank into the top five banking organisations in Nigeria. Access Bank grew its customer base from 10 000 to 6.5 million, with more than 20 000 employees and an asset base of USD \$12 billion. Indeed he saw to it that the bank flourished financially and also contributed to their role in the nation's economic development.

Currently, he is the Chairman of Coronation Group, a leading African financial services provider, offering a range of financial solutions to professionals, institutions, and individuals across Africa and globally. Their aim is to help more and more people attain financial well-being and prosperity.

As co-founder of the Tengen Family Office, Aig-Imoukhuede oversees a multibillion-dollar portfolio of investments and businesses in banking, finance, insurance, technology, real estate and energy.

Aigboje believes in collaboration and community engagement. He is also passionate about mentorship and it shows in how he loves to inspire the next generation of leaders, for instance, through the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation and its subsidiaries, the Africa Initiative for Governance and the Aig-Imoukhuede Institute, where he and his wife, Ofovwwe, manage a significant family commitment focused on building Nigeria's next generation of government leaders, helping transform public sector effectiveness, and improving access to quality primary health care.

Beyond being an investor, banker and philanthropist with a track record of major accomplishments in both for-profit and not-for-profit initiatives within Nigeria and beyond, Aigboje believes that strong financial markets and sustainable business practices are necessary for national development.

Accolades rain on him as chairman of the 'Presidential Committee on Fuel Subsidies', where he is credited with saving Nigeria more than \$6 billion in fraudulent petroleum subsidy claims. He leads in matters that involve financial market reform in Nigeria and also

serves as chairman of Enterprise NGR, a Nigerian financial and related professional services advocacy group.

An author, 'Leaving the Tarmac: Buying a Bank in Africa (Red Door, 2020),' is a memoir that recounts how he and the late Herbert Wigwe bought Access Bank in 2002. Another is 'Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Economy and Opportunities Beyond Politics.'

Recipient of Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON), Aigboje graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Benin in 1986 and was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1987 following his graduation from the Nigerian Law School. He earned an Executive MBA jointly awarded by the London School of Economics, NYU Stern Business School and HEC Paris in 2015, and has received honorary degrees and qualifications from the Olabisi Onabanjo University and the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria.

Aigboje is married to development specialist Ofovwwe and they have four children, Ohiozoje, Aima, Morenike and Renuan. He is an ordained minister of the Promised Land Ministries.

Indeed, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede embodies the attributes of a transformative banking executive devoted to modeling future leaders, while making a positive impact on society through his financial acumen and philanthropic efforts.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Purpose-Driven Living – Aligning daily habits with your life’s deeper calling

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

If life is a ship, purpose is the compass. Without it, you may still move, but you drift, pushed by tides you don’t control. With it, even in storms, you know which way to steer.

Purpose-driven living is not a motivational slogan; it is a daily practice. It means structuring your life so your actions, however small, consistently point toward the deeper calling you believe you were put on earth to fulfill. It’s about bridging the gap between what matters most to you and how you spend your days.

Why Purpose Matters

Research in psychology and neuroscience shows that people who live with a clear sense of purpose experience better mental health, lower stress, and even greater longevity. A study from the University of Michigan found that having a strong purpose can reduce the risk of early death by up to 43%. Purpose acts as a filter. Without it, every demand feels urgent. With it, you can say “yes” to what aligns and “no” to what distracts. In a noisy world, especially in fast-moving cities like Lagos or New York—this clarity is the difference between burnout and fulfillment. The Nigerian Context – Why Purpose Feels Urgent Now Many Nigerians are hustling hard but still feel empty. Economic pressure drives people to chase income without considering whether their work feeds their deeper values. Social media makes



it worse, pushing comparison and the fear of being “left behind.” But purpose-driven living is not about quitting your job to “follow your passion” blindly. It’s about integrating meaning into your current reality, that is, finding ways for your daily actions to serve something larger than yourself.

Step 1 – Clarify Your Deeper Calling

Your deeper calling is not always loud; sometimes it whispers. To hear it, ask:

- What makes me lose track of time?
- What do people often come to me for advice about?
- If I had unlimited resources, what problem would I solve in the world?

For some, it’s raising a healthy family. For others, it’s building a business that creates jobs or advocating for social change. Whatever it is, naming it is the first step.

Step 2 – Audit Your Daily Habits

Your habits are the building blocks of your life. If they don’t align with your purpose, you will live in constant friction.

If your purpose involves health, are you moving your body daily?

If your purpose involves leadership, are you studying and practicing the skills that make leaders effective?

If your purpose involves creativity, do you have a daily time block to create? Habits don’t have to be dramatic—consistent, small actions compound over time into a purpose-driven life.

Step 3 – Create Purpose Rituals

Rituals anchor you to your “why.” This could be:

- Starting each morning with 10 minutes of journaling about your goals.

- Ending each week by reviewing progress toward your purpose.
- Scheduling non-negotiable time for activities aligned with your calling.

These rituals create an invisible structure that keeps you from drifting.

Step 4 – Protect Your Energy

Purpose cannot thrive in constant distraction.

Limit the noise—whether

that’s excessive news, toxic relationships, or endless social media scrolling. Your attention is your life’s currency; spend it where it multiplies your mission.

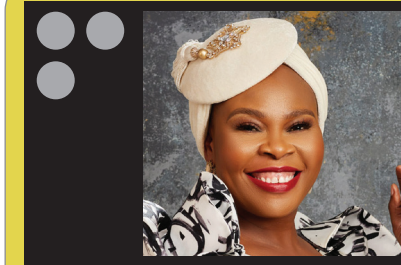
Step 5 – Embrace the Long Game

Purpose is not fulfilled in a single day or a single year. Think of it as farming: daily planting, watering, and weeding before the harvest comes. Some days will feel like progress; others will feel like maintenance. Both matters.

Purpose Is Also About Service

One truth across cultures, from Yoruba proverbs to Asian philosophy—is that purpose expands when it serves others. A life lived only for self-satisfaction eventually feels hollow. True purpose often involves leaving the world or at least one person better than you found it. Purpose-driven living is not about perfection; it’s about direction. You will have detours, delays, and even doubts. But as long as your habits keep pointing toward your deeper calling, you are on the right path.

▶ Every day, you make choices that either align with your purpose or drift you away from it. Your job, your relationships, your morning routine, your evening thoughts—all are either anchors or sails. The question is: will you let life push you around like a boat without a rudder, or will you steer toward what truly matters?



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.



Faith feelings

FAITH, WORK & WALK

My peace propelled my leap...and it paid off (Part 1)

By Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli

Five months after returning to McKinsey post my MBA, I was basically sitting in my apartment in Chicago on a Saturday morning in February 2000 when I received a telephone call from a successful Nigerian entrepreneur and philanthropist - Fola Adeola, the co-founder and the then managing director of Guaranty Trust Bank.

He basically said that he heard that I wanted to move back to Nigeria and that he wanted to offer some jobs to me. I had met this amazing entrepreneur and banker a year earlier at the Harvard Business School when he came to serve as a case protagonist to discuss the series of case studies on Guaranty Trust Bank.

During the call, Mr. Adeola basically mentioned four positions in the Nigerian private sector, and the 5th option was that he needed someone to help him start a non-profit focused on creating wealth in Nigeria through entrepreneurship development for youths. (Without any mention of interviews! Hmmm??? Convinced about a God-decision yet?) I clearly knew that I was not interested in anything but the fifth option.

Then and there, I told him about my vision for Ndu Ike Akunuba (NIA), and my plans for establishing something similar for Nigerian women when I was 35. At this time, I was almost 25, and this was part of my ten-year plan. We went back and forth about the merits of helping youth versus women... and neither of us could convince the other. Before I realised what I was saying, I heard myself promising to give him an answer in a month!

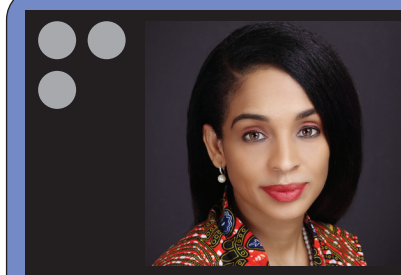
During that month, I consulted with my mentors, family members and very close friends. The reactions and advice that I received were very mixed. Some said, 'This is a great opportunity, it sounds just like NIA, go for it, life is too short.' Others said, 'Ndidi, if you are going to join an organisation in Nigeria, why don't you consider going through a more formal and robust recruiting process so that

you can compare your options' 'What if this successful entrepreneur - Fola Adeola - runs out of money?' 'We hear he is a devout Muslim and you are a strong Christian...hmm, is this really a good move?' Yet, others said, 'What level of Nigerian society do you want to come into? Stay at McKinsey for a couple of years and then you can return to Nigeria as a minister of finance or trade, instead of joining a nonprofit.' Still, others said, 'What is pulling you to Nigeria? Is there a man that we don't know about?' and to them I responded, 'I wish.' (Isn't it always true that whenever you decide to move to a new state or new country, you suddenly discover all the gems in your own backyard...or they discover you...)

From a financial perspective, the options were equally complex. McKinsey had given me a salary advance for Business School, and I was committed to staying with them for two years for the loan to be forgiven. (1) Stay at McKinsey until Oct. 2001, that way I will owe the firm nothing and have tons of savings. 2) Stay at McKinsey until at least December, by then I will only have worked at the firm for 14 months, use the fat end of my bonus to repay my remaining debt to the company 3) Leave now, take a 70% pay cut by joining FATE, and repay McKinsey at least \$45,000.

From a spiritual perspective, I felt completely at peace! Every time I prayed about the option, I felt a sense of urgency about the need to make a move immediately...and by May 2000, I DID!

...To be continued next week.



Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli

President/CEO of the ONE Campaign

Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli is the President/CEO of the ONE Campaign. She has over 27 years of international development experience. Nwuneli started her career as a management consultant with McKinsey & Company in Chicago. She returned to Nigeria in 2000 to serve as the pioneer executive director of the FATE Foundation. In 2002, she established LEAP Africa to inspire, empower, and equip a new cadre of principled, disciplined, and dynamic young leaders in Africa. She also established NIA to support female university students in Nigeria to achieve their highest potential. Between 2008 and 2023, she has focused exclusively on transforming the African agriculture and nutrition landscape through her work as the co-founder of Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition - West Africa's leading agrifood ecosystem consulting firm and AACE Foods, which produces a range of packaged spices, seasonings, and cereals for local and international markets. In 2019, she established African Food Changemakers (AFC), a digital home for food and agriculture entrepreneurs operating on the African Continent, providing data, funding, training and support to businesses across Africa and elevating African food on global stages.

Nwuneli serves on the boards of the Rockefeller Foundation, Chanel Foundation, Stanbic IBTC Group, Forum of the Young Global Leaders, and the Bridgespan Group.

**TOGETHER
WE CAN
END
MALE VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN**

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TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

Violence: A staple in a woman's daily life?

By Zainab Aderounmu



It doesn't matter the age, class or social standing, most of the time, women anticipate some form of aggression just because she's female.

The aggression could be overt or covert. It often comes in snide remarks like 'Don't go and marry. I don't know what you're still looking for', or when a man says to a woman, 'I have your type at home'. It could be a subtle comment like 'I know how I deal with my women' or a bold punch in the eye on a public bus — like the one I got last week.

Here's what went down. I was on my way home from a full day of visiting my aunt who celebrated her birthday. I was happy and fulfilled that I got to spend the day with her so I paid zero attention to the men seated beside me. But when one of them stretched his arm around my cramped danfo seat and began touching my head, I must have made the "mistake" of speaking up. That was when his fist met my right eye. Shock numbed me at first, but when reality sank in, silence wasn't on my to-do list.

The most heartbreaking part? No one on the bus stood up to him. Everyone kept asking me, the victim, to calm down. It wasn't until a passerby soldier intervened that he begrudgingly apologised.

Their silence reminded me of how women are often asked to keep the peace in violent relationships, especially marriages, where she's the victim. 'Manage it, don't let people say you don't know how to keep a man'.

Someone may argue that it happened because I was on a public bus. That's not true; I have a friend who was once harassed in her own car, and I've had multiple experiences with aggressive drivers on Indrive. In fact, the Lagos State Domestic Violence Agency reports that at

1 in every 4 women will experience sexual or domestic violence in their lifetime, and half of the women in many communities report having experienced physical violence because of their gender.

This week is Purple Week in Lagos State, dedicated to advocacy by the Lagos State Sexual and Domestic Violence Agency (LSDVA) to raise awareness and fight against gender-based violence. But advocacy must translate into action.

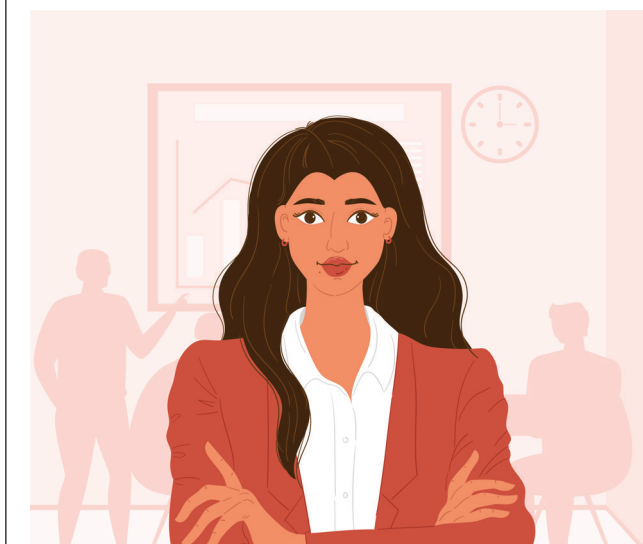
If you ever find yourself in a violent or threatening situation, here are a few steps to remember:

Put your safety first. Immediately, find the exit or move to a safe zone.

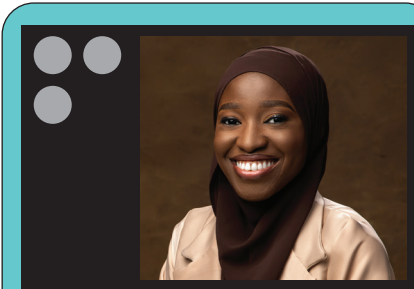
Reach out for help. Call a trusted friend, family or neighbor to help you. The Lagos State Domestic Violence Agency (LSDVA) has a toll free 24 hour emergency line that provides you with expert help (0800-033-3333).

Collect and preserve evidence. If you can, take pictures, videos, or avoid changing clothes or bathing if it included sexual assault.

Protect yourself legally. Reach out to organisations like LSDVA, Mirabel Centre in Lagos, or WARIF for professional help. In the long run, store emergency supplies in a safe place, plot your escape route and join support groups to heal and rebuild confidence.



Finally, it's inhumane to ask women to endure violence, we must hold perpetrators accountable and speak up when we witness violence.

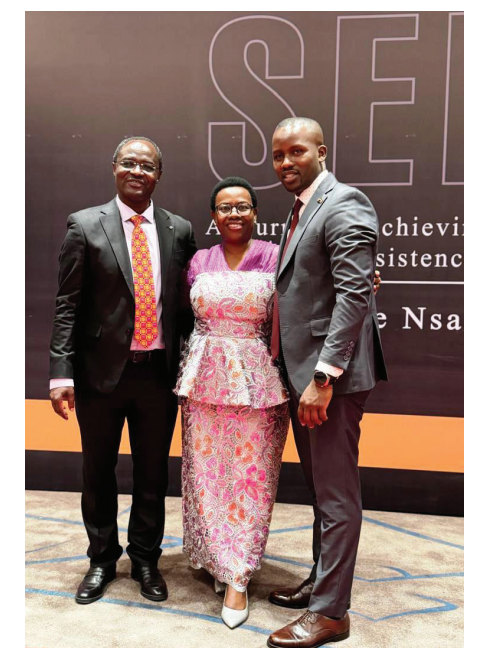


Zainab Aderounmu

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.

Event

Family and guests at the launch of the book SEED authored by H.E Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, former Deputy Chairperson (DCP) for the African Union Commission, and published by IWA





FROM THE DIASPORA

Damola Adamolekun CEO, Red Lobster

Kemi Ajumobi



Damola Adamolekun is one of several Nigerians in the diaspora that brings a smile to my face when his name is mentioned. From a great career at Goldman Sachs in investment banking, where he worked on high-profile transactions and gained a front-row seat to the intricacies of global markets, to becoming a first-time CEO for P.F. Chang's, where under his leadership, the restaurant chain began generating revenues of approximately \$1 billion a year, an organisation where he said he learnt the importance of adaptability, to gracing interviews like the Wall Street Journal, Today Show, CBS Evening News, CNN, USA Today, Fortune, Forbes, to mention a few, and now becoming the CEO of Red Lobster, a company, that in May 2024 filed for bankruptcy, Damola has surely had his hands full in his various roles till date, but he certainly always leaves his footprint of excellence in all of them.

If you call him Mr. Fix it, you won't be

wrong because he surely knows how to turn things around. Since the organisation officially signed out of bankruptcy, Damola has been on his toes doing his best to revamp the company to give his customers amazing experiences, and that is what their 544 restaurants nationwide are existing for, customer's satisfaction.

When asked how he was able to make significant changes in the company, he said "We listen attentively to our customers, we read the comments, my marketing team reads the comments and I personally do too. We also react quickly to deliver to people what they want. Keep commenting, we'll keep cracking, we'll keep moving." He stated.

One of the ways he is ensuring to bring the experience back and better is by ensuring younger diners are back into the restaurant, through the menu reinvention, ensuring that every meal comes with an experience. For instance, the seafood boil. From the shaking of the mix in the bag

while you watch, to the release of steam and all, Damola believes that the experience, red carpet reception, music, lightening, ambience and all is what will make any customer return and he isn't playing small in this regard.

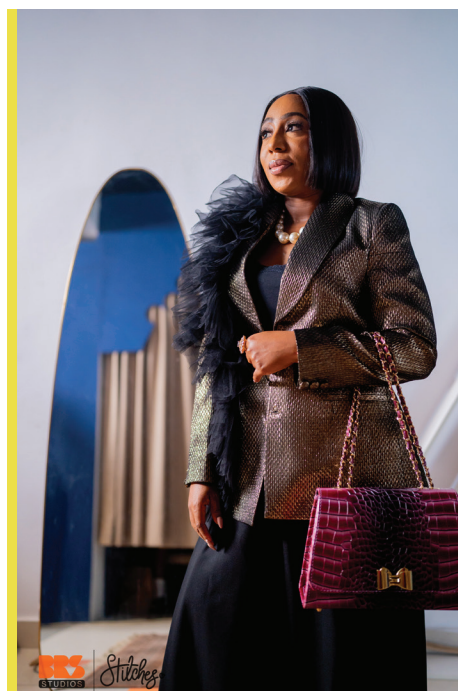
Facts? Red Lobster is the world's largest seafood buyer. Asked how tariff is telling on the business since the majority of seafood in America is imported, and he answered. According to Damola, "The majority of our food is bought from North America, Canada, because we buy lobsters and crabs mostly in North America, but we do import products as well and on those products we'll pay a tariff like everybody else. This impacts our business but we do not intend to do price increases for the rest of the year 2025, our goal is to manage through." He stated.

One thing I admire about Damola is how he is personally involved in telling and retelling the metamorphosed story of Red Lobster, most importantly, sharing their offerings. He isn't leaving the work for his marketing team alone; he is right there, personally involved in marketing the branding even as CEO, and social media is one of such avenues.

Wondering how he has been consistent in showing results in whatever he lays his hands upon? Well, his father's advice has long been his guide. Daddy would always tell Damola "Whatever you do, aim to be the best at it. Don't do things half way. If you are going to do it, do the best you possibly can and your life will be pretty good." Now, you know why he excels in what he does.

Optimistic about the company, Damola says "I am excited to be leading the greatest comeback of the restaurant industry. Red Lobster has been around for 60 years and they have an amazing future ahead."





GARB & GLAM

Standing at TIFF50 with 'Dust to Dreams' and 'Stitches'

By Yolanda Okereke

This year marked a defining moment in my journey as a storyteller and costume designer. First and foremost, I just won 'Best Costume Design For A Movie: AsoEbi Diaries' at Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival, 2025. To God be all the glory.

Also, standing at Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF50) to witness 'Dust to Dreams' and 'Stitches' on the world stage. TIFF50 was a milestone not only for global cinema but also for me personally, as I witnessed two projects I deeply poured myself into — 'Dust to Dreams' and 'Stitches' — being screened on this world stage.

'Dust to Dreams' was directed by Idris Elba and produced by Mo Abudu and 'Stitches' was directed by Shirley Frimpong-Mason and produced by Chris Odeh.

Sitting in that darkened theatre, surrounded by a global audience from every corner of the world, and to watch my work unfold before their eyes was an experience of profound reflection.

I watched not just the films but the heartbeat of years of creativity, collaboration, and relentless passion come alive on screen.

Seeing my work breathe through each character, each scene, reminded me why I chose this path: storytelling through fabric, texture, and detail.

Costume design, for me, has always been more than dressing characters — it is about sculpting identities, shaping emotion, and weaving the invisible threads that connect the audience to the story.

Seeing those details magnified on screen at a festival of this magnitude was both humbling and affirming.

With 'Dust to Dreams', I saw how the subtle textures, colours,

and silhouettes carried the film's emotional weight — whispering stories that dialogue alone could not tell. In 'Stitches', directed by Shirley Frimpong-Manson, I watched the deliberate choices of fabric and form become part of the psychological tension and visual rhythm of the film. Each project reaffirmed my belief that costume design is storytelling in its purest, most visual sense.

At TIFF, the work transcends borders — it becomes part of a larger conversation, one where craft meets culture, and where our stories find new homes in the hearts of strangers.

TIFF is not just a festival, it is a global conversation about the power of cinema. Being part of TIFF50 reminded me of the universality of our stories, and the unique responsibility of creatives to shape how those stories are told. To see Nollywood and African cinema share space with the world's most celebrated films was a proud and emotional moment — one that signals how far we have come, and how much further we are destined to go.

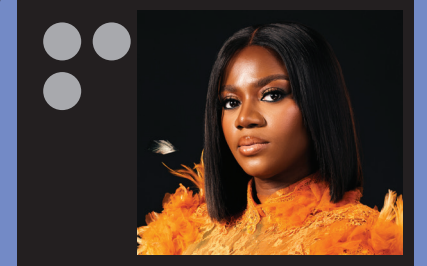
My experience at TIFF50 was not only about screenings, but about legacy, perspective, and vision. It was about honoring the past, celebrating the present, and dreaming boldly of the future. 'Dust to Dreams' and 'Stitches' are not just films — they are fragments of our culture, pieces of our history, and part of an ever-evolving narrative that deserves to be seen, celebrated, and remembered.



As I reflect on this moment, I carry forward the lessons, the affirmation, and the responsibility to keep creating with depth, courage, and authenticity. TIFF50 was a stage, but more than that, it was a mirror of what is possible when our stories dare to travel beyond borders.

The reviews, the conversations, and the collective awe in those rooms were deeply affirming. More than just screenings, they were moments of reflection — proof that our narratives matter, that Nollywood and African cinema continue to claim their rightful place on the global stage.

'Dust to Dreams' and 'Stitches' are more than films — they are fragments of our shared history, and I am honoured to have contributed to their visual voice.



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 Olóturè, 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.



A Journey Through Traditional Beauty & Flavor

Inside Clay Food Shop & The Henna Place


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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.

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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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