



INSPIRING  
WOMAN  
AFRICA

EDITION 7, 30TH SEPTEMBER 2025



PATRICIA  
OBOZUWA

STEERING **NIGERIA'S** GLOBAL REPUTATION PROJECT





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# Welcome!

Dear Readers,

The ...ember months always reminds us of how close we are to the end of the year. As we wrap up September, October is ready to receive us all. It is my birth month, trust me, I am looking forward to it with great expectations. I am sure it will deliver good tidings for us all.

Today is the last day of September, and by next Tuesday, it will be the 7th. We want to celebrate our independence so we chose this edition to do so. All our articles are linked to Nigeria's independence celebration and I love how each writer expressed themselves. They all did a fantastic job!

As we celebrate our 65th anniversary as a nation, it calls for deep reflection. Nigeria has been through various seasons. One peculiar matter is the issue of global perception versus our reality. Perhaps change is here as our cover guest for this week is leading a project on this matter. She is Patricia Obozuwa, the Managing Director of the Nigeria Global Reputation Management Project, Nigeria's official initiative dedicated to shaping and projecting a powerful, positive, and unified image of Nigeria globally. Prior to that, she was the Vice President, Public Affairs, Communications & Sustainability, Africa at The Coca-Cola Company, appointed in December 2020.

Patricia is bringing her expertise on board and it is good to know that the announcement of this project is happening in the season of Nigeria's 65th independence celebration. We wish her well on this assignment, and look forward to updates on the project. Our exclusive interview with her is an eye opener on this matter, and we are optimistic her result will project a better narrative in words and deeds.

Happy 65th Independence Nigeria!!!!

See you in October!





COVER INTERVIEW

# PATRICIA OBOZUWA

## STEERING NIGERIA'S GLOBAL REPUTATION PROJECT

Kemi Ajumobi

Patricia Obozuwa is the Managing Director of the Nigeria Global Reputation Management Project, the country's official initiative dedicated to shaping and projecting a powerful, positive, and unified image of Nigeria globally.

Prior to that, she was the Vice President, Public Affairs, Communications & Sustainability, Africa at The Coca-Cola Company appointed in December 2020. There, she led a team responsible for government affairs, thought leadership, sustainability, media relations, and corporate communications for the company across the African continent.

Prior to her role at Coca-Cola, she was the Chief Communications & Public Affairs Officer for GE Africa a position she started in April 2012 when she built the communications and public affairs function.

Prior to joining GE, she was Head, External Relations, Nigeria and Corporate Communication Leader, Sub-Saharan Africa at Procter & Gamble (P&G). Before joining P&G in 2005, Patricia was the Arts and Sponsorship Manager for the British Council in Nigeria.

Patricia is a Non-Executive Director of The Water Trust (US-Headquartered Non-Profit Organization). She is also on the Advisory Council for ImpactHer, a non-profit that empowers African female entrepreneurs.

She is passionate about women's empowerment, personal branding and telling Africa's full story.

What exactly is the Nigeria Global Reputation Project?

It is a strategic, data-driven national initiative designed to proactively

*"Nigeria Global Reputation Project is a strategic, data-driven national initiative designed to proactively measure, manage, and enhance Nigeria's perception on the global stage"*





*“This project is unique in its focus on perception intelligence, its collaborative model and its long-term proactive approach”*

measure, manage, and enhance Nigeria's perception on the global stage. Powered by the National Orientation Agency (NOA), it brings together government, private sector, and cultural leaders to align our national narrative with our economic and cultural realities, ultimately driving investment, tourism, and global influence.

#### **How is this different from what the government has tried before?**

This project is unique in its focus on perception intelligence (using data to guide our strategy), its collaborative model (co-creating with private sector and diaspora leaders, not a top-down government campaign), and its long-term, proactive approach (building reputation capital to prevent crises, not just reacting to negative news).

#### **How can I or my organisation get involved?**

We welcome engagement at multiple levels. You can:

**Amplify:** Share positive Nigerian narratives within your global networks.

**Participate:** Join our working groups or contribute insights as a sector expert.

**Partner:** If your organisation has a stake in Nigeria's global standing (e.g., in finance, tech, arts, academia), we invite you to explore formal partnership opportunities.

#### **How will you measure success?**

Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics, including:

Global Perception Indices: Tracking

Nigeria's position in recognised rankings (e.g. Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index).

Sentiment Analysis: Measuring tone and volume of international media coverage and social discourse.

Economic Indicators: Monitoring correlations with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and tourism numbers (long-term).

#### **What is the role of the NOA (National Orientation Agency)?**

This project is powered by the NOA. The NOA provides the crucial grassroots reach to ensure our international narrative is authentic and reflects the domestic reality. The NOA's mandate for national advocacy and civic education is the foundation upon which a strong, unified global reputation is built.

#### **Isn't this just about 'spin' and not addressing real problems?**

Not at all. This project is founded on the principle of authentic narrative alignment. You cannot successfully spin a story that isn't true. Our work is to ensure that the incredible progress, innovation, and cultural wealth Nigeria possesses are fairly and accurately represented globally, while we also work internally to address challenges. A strong reputation builds the trust and capital needed to solve those very problems.

#### **Is it a government-funded project?**

The project is powered by the NOA and will leverage a blended model of funding and support, including public-private partnerships, to ensure its sustainability and wide-ranging expertise.

#### **What are the key goals of the Nigeria Global Reputation Management Project, and how do you plan to achieve them?**

This project has three main goals. First, to project Nigeria's strengths our entrepreneurial spirit, creativity,





and cultural leadership, so they become as globally recognised as our challenges. Second, to build trust by ensuring that what we communicate abroad aligns with the progress we are making at home. Third, to create a coordinated platform where government, business, civil society, and diaspora voices work together to tell a consistent, compelling story about Nigeria. We will implement a robust strategy that includes a national narrative framework, digital campaigns, media partnerships, diaspora engagement programmes, and consistent measurement of global sentiment. Rather than reinventing Nigeria's story, we will finally, and strategically, amplify the story that is already being written every day by millions of Nigerians. And we will amplify it with clarity.

**What likely challenges do you foresee you may encounter in projecting a positive image of Nigeria, and how do you intend to address them?**

We must be realistic. Nigeria's global image has often been overshadowed by negative headlines about insecurity, governance challenges, or fraud. These are not small issues, but neither are they the full story of Nigeria. Our challenge is to provide balance and perspective. I intend to address this by adopting a solutions-driven communications approach. For every story of a challenge, there is a parallel story of resilience, innovation, or progress that deserves equal attention. We will also rely on credible data and multiple voices to shift the conversation from stereotypes to substance. We are a nation of unparalleled creativity, entrepreneurial grit, and intellectual power. That story needs to be told.

**How do you think the global perception of Nigeria has changed over the years, and what factors do you believe contributed to this shift?**

Over the years, Nigeria's global perception has evolved from being viewed narrowly as an oil-rich but unstable country to being increasingly recognised as a hub of



creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Afrobeats, Nollywood, and our booming tech ecosystem have redefined Nigeria's identity for millions worldwide. At the same time, persistent challenges keep casting a shadow on positive perception. But today, because of digital media, Nigerians themselves are telling their stories globally. That

democratisation of story-telling is one of the biggest shifts we can leverage.

**Are there any specific partnerships or collaborations that is or will be pivotal for the Nigeria Global Reputation Management Project?**

Strategic partnerships are at the





***“Our work is to ensure that the incredible progress, innovation, and cultural wealth Nigeria possesses are fairly and accurately represented globally, while we also work internally to address challenges”***

heart of this project. We cannot succeed without the active involvement of the private sector, development partners, the diaspora, and culture leaders. International collaborations with UN agencies, multilateral banks, and global think tanks will give us reach and credibility. Locally, we will create alignment across ministries, businesses, and civic groups to ensure Nigeria speaks with one voice.

**What were some of the most significant lessons you learnt while leading public affairs and communications at Coca-Cola?**

Coca-Cola taught me the enduring value of brand consistency. A brand that has lasted for over a century does so by staying true to its values while continuously adapting to new realities. A company like Coca-Cola doesn't operate in a vacuum. Its success depends on a delicate ecosystem governments, regulators, local suppliers, distributors, NGOs, and communities. You must see your role not just as a communicator, but as a bridge-builder who creates value for all these groups. This means sometimes advocating for a policy that benefits the entire sector, not just your bottom line. Translating this to Nigeria, our nation's reputation is not built by government decree. It is built in partnership with the private sector, our cultural ambassadors, our diaspora, and every citizen who represents Nigeria abroad. My role is to convene, align, and amplify these efforts.

**Who or what has been your greatest source of inspiration throughout your career?**

I have been deeply inspired by the mentors and leaders who believed in me at different stages of my career. From

my early days in cultural diplomacy with the British Council to my leadership roles at P&G, GE, and Coca-Cola, I have been fortunate to learn from people who challenged me to think bigger, take bolder risks, and lead with both head and heart. They showed me that leadership is not just about results, but about the impact we have on people, communities, and society. I am also profoundly inspired by transformational figures like the Late Prof. Dora Akunyili, whose fearless leadership at NAFDAC put an end to the fake drugs problem at the time saving lives and restoring public trust. She proved that integrity and courage can change systems. But perhaps my greatest source of inspiration has come

***“We will implement a robust strategy that includes a national narrative framework, digital campaigns, media partnerships, diaspora engagement programmes, and consistent measurement of global sentiment”***

from ordinary Africans who achieve extraordinary things. A defining moment for me was with the GE Lagos Garage, a manufacturing-based innovation hub that I established at GE. I met young innovators like Tochukwu Chukwueke, who designed and 3D-printed a clever book holder to ease the strain of reading. That simple idea earned international recognition and funding, but what inspired me most was what he did next. He used his success to establish the Clintonel Innovation Centre in Aba, creating a platform for other young inventors. Then there's Anjola Badaru, who, when a friend's car AC blower broke and a replacement part was unavailable, 3D-printed a fully functional blower himself. That moment of practical problem-solving became the foundation of his 3D-printed automotive parts business. People like Tochukwu and Anjola remind me that we don't need to invent a story of Nigerian genius. The brilliance is already here. What we need is to create the stage for it. My role is to ensure that the world sees these stories, because they are the truest reflection of who we are as a nation.

**How do you intend to measure the success of the Nigeria Global Reputation Management Project? What key performance indicators do you focus on?**

That's a good question. We cannot improve what we do not measure. Success for us will be gauged through media sentiment analysis, perception surveys, and benchmarking against global indices such as the Nation Brands Index. We will also monitor tangible outcomes such as increase in investment interest, tourism flows, and international partnerships. Just as importantly, we will measure whether Nigerians themselves feel proud of the story we are telling. I should add that a country's reputation isn't built in a day.





***“Over the years, Nigeria’s global perception has evolved from being viewed narrowly as an oil-rich but unstable country to being increasingly recognised as a hub of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship”***

And it requires a lot more than positive story-telling. Our actions as a country need to back our words. We are adopting a long-term approach that brings long-lasting results.

**How will digital technology influence your approach to managing Nigeria's global reputation?**

Digital technology is transforming how reputations are built. For Nigeria, digital platforms allow us to bypass traditional media and engage directly with global audiences. Technology also enables authentic storytelling. Every Nigerian online can be part of shaping the country's image. We will leverage social media, influencer partnerships, AI-driven sentiment analysis, and virtual experiences to showcase Nigeria's culture and innovation. In essence, digital technology allows us to be faster, smarter, and more authentic. It enables us to measure the impact of our efforts in real-time and pivot our strategy based on what works.

**What is your approach to building relationships with national and international media to promote a favorable image of Nigeria?**

Trust is the cornerstone of strong media relations. We will work with both local and international media by providing accurate data, human-interest stories, and access to Nigerian leaders and change-makers. Our approach is proactive rather than reactive ensuring that journalists do not only hear crisis-driven stories about Nigeria, but also stories of progress, culture, and solutions.

**How do you intend to collect and incorporate feedback from citizens and stakeholders regarding Nigeria's image on the global stage?**

Listening is central to reputation

management. We will establish feedback channels through citizen surveys, diaspora town halls, social media sentiment tracking, and stakeholder consultations. And the feedback will not sit on a shelf. It will inform our strategies, ensuring that

Nigerians' voices shape how we are represented globally.

**What long-term vision do you have for the project, and how do you see Nigeria's reputation evolving over the next decade?**

My long-term vision is for the world to see Nigeria as a leading voice not just in Africa, but a respected global player. A place of opportunity and innovation. In ten years, I see this evolution clearly. We'll stop talking about our reputation defensively and start leveraging it proactively. We'll shift from correcting misconceptions to leading global



***“Locally, we will create alignment across ministries, businesses, and civic groups to ensure Nigeria speaks with one voice”***





conversations in sectors like tech and the creative industries. When global decisions are made we will be listened to with respect. Our goal is to make this work permanent. Success means baking reputation management into our national DNA where government policies and business decisions naturally consider the impact on how we're perceived globally. We won't need a project because a strong, positive reputation will be a core, non-negotiable part of our national strategy and our economic value.

**How do you balance local narratives with the expectations of global audiences in your messaging?**

Balancing local and global narratives requires authenticity. We must tell stories rooted in Nigerian realities our

challenges and triumphs while framing them in a language that resonates globally. For instance, a local innovation in fin-tech can be presented as part of a global conversation about financial inclusion. So, we don't change the local story to fit a global mold. Instead we translate its significance. We ensure the local context is

respected and clear, but we highlight why it matters to the world. We show how Nigeria's solutions, culture, and creativity are relevant to global audiences because they speak to shared human and economic interests. The key is alignment, staying true to who we are while speaking to what the world cares about.

*"My long-term vision is for the world to see Nigeria as a leading voice... not just in Africa, but a respected global player"*

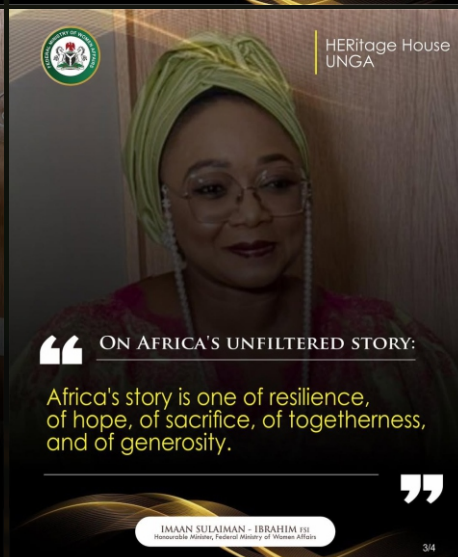
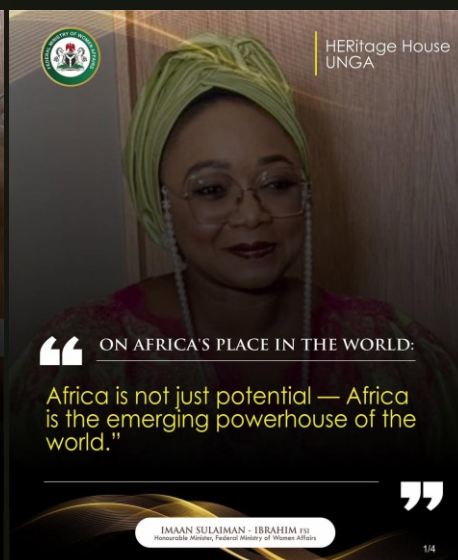




FROM THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS

## HERitage House chat with Nigeria's Minister of Women Affairs at UNGA80, New-York

H.E The honourable Minister Of Women Affairs was at the HERitage House for a chat at UNGA80, where she spoke about the strength and impact of African women, their resilience, leadership and unstoppable power. She reminded the world that Africa is not just potential, Africa is the emerging powerhouse of the world, and at the heart of this transformation are women. From farms to homes, boardrooms to state houses, women continue to lead, inspire, and shape the future.





WOMAN EXECUTIVE

# Grace for Grit: Why Softness Is Not Weakness in Leadership

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



**F**irst and foremost, I wish every Nigerian a happy Independence celebration. I also pray that Nigeria shall enjoy the fruits of her labour and that labour of our heroes past and present shall never be in vain.

Now, back to my topic for this week. From the moment women enter leadership spaces, we are taught, subtly and directly, to toughen up.

Do not cry. Do not crack. Do not be too soft. We learn to suppress our nurturing instincts. We silence our intuition. We overcompensate with hardness because we believe softness will be read as incompetence or weakness.

But here is what I have discovered: Softness is not the opposite of strength, it is often the very evidence of it.

## Leading with a Double Burden

Women in leadership carry a double burden. We are expected to deliver like men but judged by different standards. If we are assertive, we are too aggressive. If

we are compassionate, we are too emotional. So we overcorrect. We hide our hearts, lead from logic alone, and build walls around our personalities, all to be taken seriously. But the cost is high. It is not just emotional. It is spiritual. Because leadership that severs the soul cannot be sustained.

## Grace Is Not Weakness

Grace does not mean avoiding hard conversations. It means having them with wisdom. Grace does not mean tolerating mediocrity. It means correcting with dignity. Grace does not

mean stepping back from power. It means knowing how to hold it with clean hands and a steady heart.

I have learnt that grace-filled leadership is often the most powerful kind. Not because it shouts, but because it listens. Not because it dominates, but because it discerns.

## Jesus Led This Way

Jesus, the ultimate leader, modelled a leadership style that confounded the world's expectations. He washed feet. He welcomed



children. He wept at a friend's grave. He called out injustice, but He did so with deep compassion. He was gentle, but never weak. Powerful, but never oppressive. Direct, but never demeaning.

As women called to lead in today's world, we can walk in this same balance: combining grit with grace, strategy with spirit, excellence with empathy.

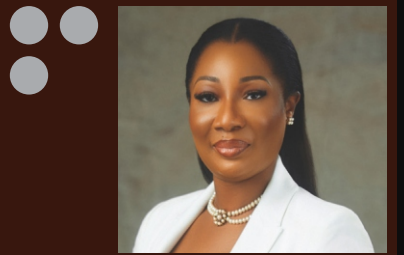
## Emotional Intelligence Is Executive Currency

The modern workplace is evolving. Today's most effective leaders are not the loudest or the hardest. They are emotionally intelligent, self-aware, and grounded. They know when to push, and when to pause. When to confront, and when to comfort.

When to lead from the front, and when to empower from behind. And guess what? These are strengths women often possess in abundance. So instead of burying them, we must own them. Develop them. Lead with them.

## Final Thoughts

You do not have to become someone else to be successful. You do not have to abandon kindness to be competent. You do not have to choose between results and relationships. There is power in your grace. There is wisdom in your softness. There is strength in your spirit. So the next time the world asks you to harden to fit in, choose instead to lead from a place of holy confidence. Because when women lead with grace, the entire room shifts.



## 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.



FINANCIAL AdviseHER

# Independence, Focus and the Wealth We Must Build

By Sola Adesakin

Every October, Nigeria marks another year of independence. For some, it is a reminder of how far we have come as a nation; for others, it stirs questions of how far we still have to go. But beyond the flags, parades, and speeches, Independence Day is an opportunity for both individuals and our collective nation to pause, reflect, and re-channel focus.

**T**he truth is simple: not everything is working in Nigeria, but not everything is broken either. The same is true for our personal lives. What matters most is where we choose to put our energy. If we continue to feed what drains us, we will shrink. But if we water what drives us, we will grow. This is true of financial wealth, personal prosperity, and national progress.

As we celebrate this independence, I want to call us both as individuals and as a country toward prosperity. Here are a few lessons to consider.

## 1. Look Inwards: Awaken Untapped Potentials

Nations, like people, rise on the strength of their hidden potential. Nigeria is richly blessed with natural resources, yet oil still dominates our economy because we've not fully

unlocked the richness in agriculture, tourism, or manufacturing. Similarly, individuals often rely on one source of income, leaving untapped talents, gifts, and opportunities unexplored.

The first step to building wealth is to look within. What skills do you already have that could be monetised? What strengths are lying dormant because you've been too distracted by challenges? For Nigeria, looking inwards means investing in sectors outside oil and creating systems that empower local innovation. For individuals, it means identifying and nurturing dormant strengths.

## 2. Do an Audit: Assess What's Working and What's Not

Every business conducts regular audits to know its financial health. In the same way, individuals and nations must pause and assess. For the

individual, this means reviewing your spending, your debt levels, your investments, and your income streams. Are you on track to financial freedom, or simply spinning your wheels?

For Nigeria, the audit is even more critical. Which policies are helping growth? Which ones are draining resources? Which industries are producing results, and which need urgent restructuring? An honest financial and developmental audit helps both people and nations make informed decisions. You cannot fix what you refuse to measure.

## 3. Learn from Others

No one builds wealth in isolation. Individuals who want to grow financially must learn from those who have walked the path successfully. This may mean reading books, taking courses, or seeking mentorship.

On a national level, Nigeria can learn from other developing countries that transformed their economies by making strategic choices. Think of Rwanda with its tourism and tech ecosystem, or Singapore with its global trade positioning. Pride should not keep us from adopting models that work. Likewise, personal ego should not stop individuals from learning from others who have succeeded financially.

## 4. Leverage Others

There is power in community. As individuals, wealth building becomes faster when we leverage networks mentors, business partners, accountability groups, and even family support systems. A single person cannot

know it all, but leveraging the wisdom, experience, and resources of others creates shortcuts to success.

Nigeria must also embrace this. Instead of functioning in silos, different sectors public, private, and civil must work together. Collaboration with other African nations through trade, or with international organisations in technology and innovation, can help accelerate prosperity. Independence was not meant to mean isolation.

## 5. Collaborate More

The final piece of the puzzle is collaboration. For individuals, this may mean pooling resources in investment clubs, joining cooperatives, or co-creating businesses with others. The risk is reduced, and the rewards are multiplied when we build together.

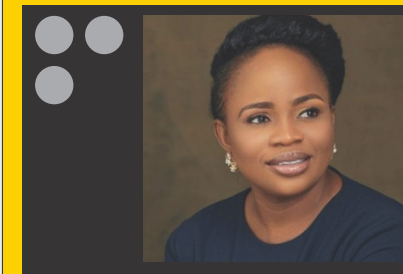
For the nation, collaboration across states and regions can help spread development more evenly. Collaboration between government and private sector is essential to scale innovation, infrastructure, and opportunities. A divided house cannot stand, but a united front can birth prosperity.

## A Call to Prosperity

Nigeria at independence was filled with promise, and in many ways, that promise still exists. But we cannot afford to only mark years we must mark progress. The same applies to individuals. Age is not progress. Time is not prosperity. What counts is how we use what we have to create wealth, opportunity, and growth.

As we commemorate this independence, may we all remember: wealth is not built by lamenting what is broken, but by channeling energy into what is working and what can work. For Nigeria and for every Nigerian, prosperity is possible. The focus must now shift from surviving to thriving, from draining to driving, from being stuck to building.

Because what we feed will grow. And it is time to water the right side individually and collectively.



## 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 Instructor<sup>SM</sup> and a member of the Personal Finance Speakers Association.



## GENDER INSIGHTS

# Nigeria at 65: Women Weaving the Past, Leading the Present, and Shaping the Future

Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo



As Nigeria marks another Independence Day, the green-and-white flag reminds us of both a nation's resilience and the many voices that have kept its dream alive. Among

these voices, women stand out not as spectators, but as builders of Nigeria's freedom, defenders of democracy, and visionaries of its future. From the struggles of the colonial era to today's leadership tables, and on to tomorrow's trailblazers, Nigerian women continue to chart the path of true independence.

## The Past: Women Who Fought Before the Flag Was Raised

Long before 1960, women in Nigeria were at the heart of agitation for justice and self rule. Names like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, and Hajia Gambo Sawaba among others cannot be forgotten. They resisted colonial taxes, organised political rallies, and challenged oppressive systems that denied women's voices. These pioneers understood that independence was incomplete without gender equality.

The Aba Women's Riot of 1929, for instance, was not only a protest against unfair taxation but also a statement that women would no longer remain silent in shaping the destiny of their communities. By the time Nigeria

attained independence, women had already proven themselves as political actors, economic drivers, and social reformers.

## The Present: Women Breaking Ceilings in a Democratic Nigeria

Sixty-five years later, Nigerian women

remain at the forefront of national progress. Today, they are governors, legislators, entrepreneurs, peacebuilders, and global advocates. From Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala at the World Trade Organisation to Amina J. Mohammed at the United Nations, Nigerian women have shown that they are not just leaders at home but also on the global stage.

At the grassroots, women are running community cooperatives, driving innovation in agriculture and technology, and leading in humanitarian response. In politics, despite structural barriers, women continue to demand their rightful space and pushing for the long, overdue 35% affirmative action in governance and championing bills for the women's reserve seats in parliament.

Independence in the present context is no longer just about a free nation but about building a just, inclusive, and equitable society. Women's leadership is at the heart of this transformation.

## The Future: A Generation Rising

The story of Nigerian independence is not yet finished. The next chapters belong to the young women who are coding apps in Lagos, building climate justice movements in Jos, and mentoring peers in Maiduguri. They represent the promise of a nation that will not only survive its challenges but thrive because its women are equipped, educated, and empowered.

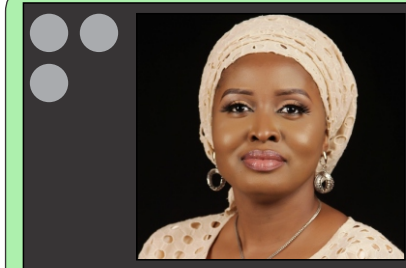
The future calls for investment in girls' education, protection from all forms of violence, and opportunities in governance and leadership. It calls for dismantling systemic barriers that limit women's participation in decision-making. If Nigeria must compete in the fast-changing global economy, it cannot afford to leave half of its population behind. The dreams of independence must evolve into the reality of inclusive development.

## A Call to Action

This year's Independence celebration is more than a commemoration; it is a call to recognise the power of women across time. Nigerian independence was achieved not just by the voices of men at negotiation tables but also by the defiance of women in the streets, markets, and homes. Sustaining that independence requires the present generation to commit to equality and the future generation to lead with vision and courage.

As Nigeria stands tall at 65, let us honour the women of the past who dared, celebrate the women of the present who persist, and invest in the women of the future who will redefine what independence truly means. For only when women and men together shape Nigeria's destiny will the nation's freedom ring loud, true, and lasting.

**Happy Independence Nigerians  
Nigeria @65**



## Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo

Executive Director,  
Centre for Nonviolence and  
Gender Advocacy in Nigeria  
(CENGAIN)

Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo is a development practitioner with extensive national and international expertise in gender equality, peace-building, governance, and humanitarian action.

She holds a PhD in Public Governance and Leadership, a Master's degree in Conflict Management and Peace Studies, and executive certifications from leading institutions including Howard University, Harvard University and Glasgow Caledonian University.

As Executive Director of the Centre for Non-violence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN), she has led ground-breaking advocacy initiatives on women's political participation, gender-based violence prevention, and security sector reform across multiple World Bank, UN and EU-supported projects.

Internationally, Dr. Leo has represented civil society at the United Nations, contributed to regional dialogues on Women, Peace and Security, and partnered with global networks advancing gender justice and inclusive governance.

She is a UN Recognised Global Ambassador on Women, Peace and Security. Her expertise bridges grassroots action with policy advocacy, making her a respected voice in advancing gender equality and sustainable peace in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.



MADE FOR MORE

# Independence, Identity and Birthing Your MORE

By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue



Every October 1st, Nigeria celebrates her independence. The flags go up, the speeches are made and once again we are reminded of the gift of freedom - the freedom to govern ourselves, own our resources and shape our destiny without a colonial master dictating the terms.

However, for me, October 1st is not just about celebrating a historic milestone, it is a reminder of a principle. It's a reminder of the need to stand on your own two feet, taking full responsibility for your growth and boldly owning your story.

While a nation may fight once for independence, we as career women who desire MORE from life must fight for ours daily.

- ◆ Daily against society's boxes.
- ◆ Daily against cultural expectations.
- ◆ Daily against fear, doubt and even our own excuses.

So, as Nigeria celebrates her independence today, let me ask you:

Are you truly living independently or are you still letting others hold the pen to your story?

Hold that thought first for a minute as I share first, 3 parallels Between National Independence and Personal Independence

## 1. Breaking Free From External Control

Nigeria's independence meant decisions were no longer made in London but now in Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna. In the same way, independence for a career woman should mean refusing to let society dictate her choices. Too often we're told - Stay

in your lane. You can't have it all. You can't grow in a career and birth your dreams without dropping the ball somewhere. True independence is reclaiming the right to define your lane or heck yeah, create a new one if that's what you need!

**Reflective Question:** As Nigeria celebrates independence, can you boldly say you have broken free from limiting voices?

## 2. Owning Your Resources

Independence gave Nigeria ownership of her land, oil and produce - to mine it and maximise benefit from these resources. For you as a career woman, independence means recognising that your greatest resources are within - your gifts, your vision and your voice; and

you own the right to mine them all and maximise the benefits from them. Waiting for someone else to approve your use of what God has already given you is acting like a colony. **Reflective Question:** Are you truly taking ownership of ALL the gifts God has placed in you and maximising them for impact; or are you leaving one or more dormant while waiting for someday?

## 3. Charting Your Own Course

At independence, Nigeria began charting her own future, drafting economic blueprints, shaping policies and positioning herself globally. But here's the truth, even after independence, many nations still lean heavily on their former colonial masters. Some wisely reframe the relationship into partnerships and allyship. Others, like Niger, were short-changed - selling resources for a fraction of their value while enriching others.

The same is true for career women. Independence means charting your own course, setting your own Vision 2030. Who are you becoming? Where do you want to be and how do you plan to get there?

By the way, your job is not supposed to be a colonial master. If you've been treating it that way, letting it dictate your destiny, define your value or decide your path, then you are not independent.

You need to flip the script and begin to see and treat your job as an ally, a platform and partner in building your dream. In addition, don't let yourself be cheated. If you are consistently giving more value than you are receiving, if your role underpays or under-recognises your worth, then you're reliving Niger's mistake.

Independence means knowing your value and refusing to sell yourself short. It means being bold enough to move, negotiate or pivot when the terms no longer honour your worth.

**Reflective Question:** Have you charted your own Vision 2030; and in the equation of career and calling, is your job truly an ally or are you still treating it like a colonial master?

Whose lens are you still allowing to define your worth or possibilities?

So how do we move from talking about

independence to living it?

**1. Define Your Narrative.** Don't let culture, stereotypes or titles decide your story. Write it yourself with clarity about who you are and what you want to leave behind.

**2. Take Ownership of All Your Gifts.** Don't hide behind one talent while ignoring others. Steward your voice, skills, experiences and networks - all of them are resources available to be mined to enrich you and the lives tied to you.

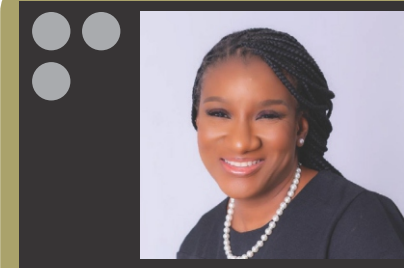
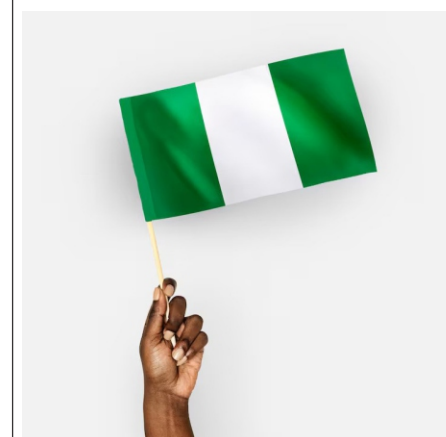
**3. Align Career With Calling.** Your job isn't your master, it's a platform. Use it to fund your dreams God has placed in you and expand influence for His glory.

**4. Build Systems and Support.** True independence doesn't mean doing it alone. Create systems, delegate wisely and surround yourself with a community that fuels your growth, even as you fuel theirs.

**5. Live With Legacy in Mind.** Freedom becomes powerful when it translates into impact. Don't let this celebration come around again without you starting to build something that outlives you, blesses others and glorifies God.

In closing, as Nigeria marks another year of independence, let us also declare our independence too from cultural scripts that shrink us and from fears that silence us.

Happy 65th anniversary to our dearly loved country Nigeria. I pray that God will strengthen your foundations, purify her leadership and release a new generation of builders. May she rise into the fullness of her potential, and may we -her daughters, rise with her, birthing the MORE we were created to carry in ways that deeply impact and accelerate Nigeria's growth. Amen!



## 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

# Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Director General of The World Trade Organisation (WTO)

Kemi Ajumobi

There is a smile on my face right now. The thought of writing this alone is giving me good chills. How do you begin to describe this great woman who has been part of the history, is part of the present and will be in the beautiful stories of the future of Nigeria. How?

In a class of her own, a ray of sunshine, blessed with grace and great aplomb, her essence naturally endearing. Her love for African textiles is evident everywhere she goes, wearing it graciously and making a statement that I translate to mean Nigeria will always be home.

Her signature head-tie adorns her with honour, custom-done by her and tilted to the direction she chooses. It has long become more than an accessory, whether she is in global meetings where history is being made, or at gatherings where work is light but the crux is about progressive change and positive impact, her head-tie comes along, it is her statement, her identity and it is recognisably hers.

Beyond the outward adornment, what is inside her is even greater. As the Managing Director of the World Bank, she had oversight responsibility for

the World Bank's \$81 billion operational portfolio in Africa, South Asia, Europe and Central Asia.

Ask me one bold thing she did and I will respond with a question. Who dares to be the first female and African candidate to contest for the presidency of the World Bank Group in 2012, backed by Africa and major developing countries? She dared. That counts.

In IWA's 'Woman At The Helm' column for this week, we celebrate an enigma possessing immense acumen, fortitude and wisdom of eons, the Director General of The World Trade Organisation (WTO), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

We admire how she influences global economic policies. We aren't surprised she is able to achieve such a feat. Being a global finance expert, an economist and international development professional with over 40 years of experience working in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America, need we say more?

Dr. Ngozi's voice is respected, convincing and powerful, a tune that resonates with authority and compassion. Her life inspires and it is proof you can achieve what you set your mind to irrespective of gender. It isn't that her life has been void of

challenges, we are not saying that her journey to becoming an international force to reckon with has been smooth. No. We are saying, despite all the hurdles, with grace she has become an inspiration to women and young girls globally, showing that, even in places mostly dominated by men, a woman has the chance to rise.

We speak of her at the global level, but like they say, charity begins at home and home is where Dr. Ngozi also proved her mettle. Dr Okonjo-Iweala twice served as Nigeria's Finance Minister (2003-2006 and 2011-2015) where she spearheaded negotiations with the Paris Club of Creditors that led to the wiping out of \$30 billion of Nigeria's debt, including the outright cancellation of \$18 billion. Furthermore, she briefly acted as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2006, the first woman to hold both positions mentioned.

Dr Okonjo-Iweala is a recipient of numerous outstanding awards, she graduated magna cum laude in Economics from Harvard University and earned a Ph.D in Regional Economics and Development from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is married to neurosurgeon Dr Ikemba Iweala, and they have four children and beautiful grandchildren.





## WE'VE GOT MEN

# Gabriel Ogbechie

Group Managing Director, Rainoil

Kemi Ajumobi

**I** saw his video on LinkedIn and it caught my attention. Why?

Because our 'We've Got Men' personality for this week was speaking on the importance of your staff and why you must see them as vital to the growth of your organisation. He got me. When you are up there, and you recognise the value of the people who work for you, it speaks a lot about who you are.

Anne M. Mulcahy, former CEO of Xerox Corporation said "Employees are a company's greatest asset – they're your competitive advantage. You want to attract and retain the best, provide them with encouragement and stimulus and make them feel that they are an integral part of the company's mission."

Harvey S. Firestone, Founder of Firestone Tire and Rubber Company is another one. He said "The growth and development of people is

the highest calling of leadership."

I saw that video and listening to him, I wanted to hear more. So, I began to search and it was an edifying experience. Each video inspired me and I picked something that triggered a greater desire to pursue excellence, even more. He says "You must have a work culture" "When to be disciplined is when no one is watching you" "Take a long term view of your business and honour commitments" "In the long term, it will be to your interest, you need to be hard working" "It's the fire in your stomach that keeps you going, you need grit because failure is not an option." I could go on and on. Tell me how you will listen to such words and you won't feel fired up?

Well, I speak of none other than Gabriel Ogbechie, Group Managing Director, Rainoil Limited. Rainoil Limited is an integrated energy company and a prominent player in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. The Rainoil

Group comprises business operations that span across the downstream value chain.

Today, they boast of 180+ retail outlets with over 160 service stations spread across Nigeria, 3 depots consisting of ultra-modern tank farms with a combined capacity of 150 million litres. Also, they own and operate a fleet of 300 tank trucks and other impressive possessions. Today, with outlets spanning across 27 states in Nigeria, 26 years in service and counting, Rainoil has indeed shown that a modest beginning is just a starting point. With focus, grit and audacity, you can succeed.

Gabriel's company didn't just become great like the speed of light. He had served efficiently in organisations where he previously worked at, and chose to start his own business. How was he able to commence? With a knack for identifying where the opportunities lie, he saw prospects in the downstream oil and gas sector, and in 1997, he founded Rainoil Limited.

Gabriel Ogbechie is a graduate of Production Engineering from the University of Benin. He began his early career as a factory engineer between 1989 and 1991 and subsequently joined PricewaterhouseCoopers, a leading firm of Chartered Accountants and Management Consultants. He spent four years at Ascon Oil, heading the sales and operations unit.

Beyond being a businessman, he is also into philanthropy through the establishment of The Gabriel Ogbechie Foundation in Delta State which provides scholarships to undergraduates, community healthcare services as well as youth employment initiatives. There is also the Rainoil Community Empowerment Programme, where he focuses on financial support to orphanages in Lagos and Abuja, and the provision of physical infrastructures and public amenities in local communities in Delta State.



## HOLISTIC LIVING

# Holistic Living: A Blueprint for Nigeria's Next Chapter

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



As Nigeria marks its 65th Independence Day on October 1, 2025, the nation reflects not only on its political

and economic journey but also on the wellbeing of its people. Independence is not just about sovereignty, it is about the freedom to live fully, healthily, and with dignity. In a world increasingly shaped by stress, disease, and disconnection, holistic living offers a pathway for Nigerians to embrace health and independence in body, mind, and spirit.

Holistic living goes beyond diet and exercise. It is a lifestyle that acknowledges the interconnectedness of all aspects of life: physical health, mental wellbeing, relationships, spirituality, community, and environment. At its core, holistic living means asking: Am I thriving, or merely surviving?

For Nigerians, this question is especially urgent. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that lifestyle-related diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and depression are on the rise across Africa. According to Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health, non-communicable



diseases now account for more than 25% of hospital admissions, while mental health conditions affect nearly 20% of the population. Clearly, economic growth alone is not enough, health and wellbeing must be national priorities.

Interestingly, holistic living is not new to Nigeria. Our ancestors understood the power of balance. Yoruba herbal medicine, Hausa-Fulani dietary practices, and Igbo communal rituals reflect centuries of knowledge on how to live in harmony with nature and community. Indigenous practices like using moringa leaves, hibiscus tea (zobo), or mindfulness through prayer and storytelling are timeless tools for wellness.

As modern Nigerians rush through urban traffic, scroll endlessly on smartphones, and adopt fast-food diets, much of this wisdom has been sidelined. Reclaiming holistic



living does not mean rejecting modernity; it means integrating technology and science with the cultural strengths we already have. Research consistently shows that stress is one of the leading triggers of chronic illness. For Nigeria, where economic pressures and insecurity weigh heavily, stress has become a silent epidemic. Practicing holistic living through meditation, journaling, breathing exercises, and even laughter

therapy, helps regulate stress hormones and improves resilience.

Workplaces, schools, and faith communities can play a vital role here. Imagine Lagos companies instituting 10-minute mindfulness breaks, or Abuja schools teaching children yoga stretches alongside mathematics. Such simple, scalable practices could reshape our national health profile.

Nigeria is blessed with rich agricultural diversity such as yams, beans, millet, plantain, leafy greens, spices. Yet, undernutrition coexists with rising obesity rates, fuelled by processed foods and sugary drinks. Holistic living calls us back to nourishing our bodies with fresh, local produce, eaten in balance.

Nutritionists recommend the rainbow plate approach which means incorporating different colours of fruits and vegetables daily to maximise vitamins and antioxidants. This aligns perfectly with Nigerian diets when we emphasise traditional meals: Ofada rice with vegetables, moi moi, okra soup, plantain porridge. By modernising, not abandoning, these indigenous diets, we can fight lifestyle diseases and strengthen immunity. Holistic living also embraces spirituality, not just in religious terms, but as a sense of meaning, purpose, and connection. Nigeria, with its deep faith traditions, can harness spirituality as a source of resilience. Studies show that people with strong spiritual practices experience lower rates of depression and anxiety.

Equally important is community.

Nigerians are known for extended family systems, neighborhood support, and collective celebration. Reviving these communal bonds through volunteering, cultural festivals, and mentorship can combat loneliness and restore mental health.

Our independence story must also include independence from environmental degradation. Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Kano face rising pollution levels, while climate change threatens agriculture in the north and coastal communities in the south. A holistic Nigeria must integrate environmental health with human health. Planting trees, reducing plastic use, and investing in clean energy are not luxuries, they are survival strategies.

### A Call for National Renewal

As Nigeria celebrates 65 years of independence, let us also declare independence from lifestyles that steal our health and joy. Let us free ourselves from the chains of chronic stress, poor diets, disconnection, and environmental neglect.

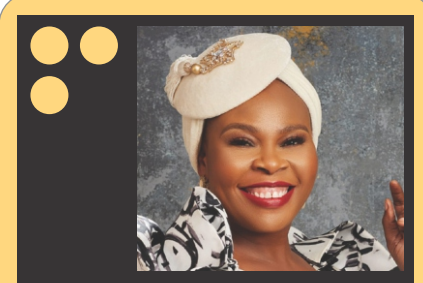
Holistic living is not just a personal choice, it is a national movement. When Nigerians live well, Nigeria thrives. Our collective strength begins with individual wellness.

This Independence celebration, may we choose to not only wave the green-and-white flag with pride but to also embody its meaning: growth, renewal, and harmony. Because a nation is only as strong as the wellbeing of its people.

### Practical Steps Towards Holistic Living

To live holistically as individuals and as a nation, we can:

1. Eat fresh, local, and balanced meals.
2. Move daily—walk, dance, stretch, or garden.
3. Practice stress management—meditation, prayer, or deep breathing.
4. Protect sleep as non-negotiable.
5. Build community—nurture relationships and support networks.
6. Limit toxins—whether in food, media, or environment.
7. Reconnect with culture—music, art, language, and storytelling heal as much as medicine.



## 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.



TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

# Nigeria of our dreams ...when?

By Zainab Aderounmu

I wish I could say I remember when the nationalists were advocating and fighting for Nigeria's independence, but I haven't been around that long. I only read about them in history books that weren't effectively taught in school, but left in the cornermost part of the library.

However, I've been around long enough to conclude that this probably wasn't the Nigeria of their dreams. A place where investment in education falls short

of expert recommendation. A Nigeria where young people are disillusioned with the country and can't wait to get out of it. A Nigeria where the Nigerian dream has long been forgotten in the struggles of an average youth.

I asked a few young people what the Nigeria of their dreams looked like. Their responses were a meld of emotions.

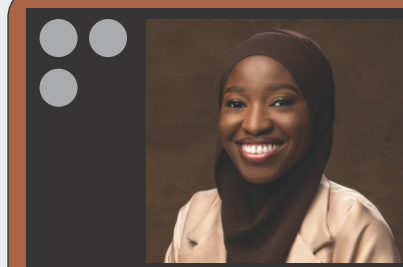
The Nigeria we want depends on the leadership choices we make today. This is an unprecedented time where government policies are translating into real life realities, like the NEFUND, for example. The government can't be worse than the people they're representing, so ask yourself, what kind of person or leader are you, especially when no one is looking. A concerned Nigerian Youth.

I chose to put the positive opinion first because we can't afford to lose hope regardless of the situation. Here's someone who thinks we can't get it right unless we practice true federalism.

Nigeria won't experience significant transformation anytime soon. We gained independence from foreign oppressors 65 years ago, but we are yet to gain independence from our native oppressors who are produced by society. Our moral fabric is torn and it reflects in our choice and system of leadership.

Also, our greatest obstacle towards national prosperity is the pseudo federalism we are currently practicing. For us to achieve real development, we must go back to the True Federalism system that recognises regional government and autonomy. Another concerned Nigerian youth stated.

While these voices reflect a layer of discouragement, it holds a shared longing for a country that truly works. Approximately 70% of Nigeria's population is between



**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.

17 and 30 years old, presenting a unique opportunity for economic growth. Yet, this could also signal economic decay if investment in education and gender representation are neglected.

This year, a whopping N3.52 trillion was allocated to education in Nigeria's budget, a significant increase from the 2024 budget, but it still falls short of what is necessary to cover, especially with 18 million children out of school.

The issue of gender representation in leadership is equally important for Nigeria's development. More than 10 million of the out-of-school children are girls, and the number of women in political or decision-making positions is negligible. Studies have shown that when women are empowered to contribute fully, society grows exponentially, because they make up about half of the population.

I dream of a Nigeria where every child regardless of gender has access to quality and affordable education, where women are fully and equally contributing to decision making. A Nigeria where young people are eager and excited to stay and build because the systems work. Independence Day shouldn't only be about commemorating the glories of our past, but also about taking action for our next 65 years.



GARB & GLAM

# GREEN. WHITE. GLAMOUR

## Nigerian Independence Fashion Takes Centre Stage

By Yolanda Okereke

On October 1st, the streets of Lagos, Abuja, and beyond shimmer in a sea of green and white—not just in flags waving high, but in fashion that transforms the day into a runway of patriotism. Nigeria's Independence Day has become more than a national holiday—it's a style statement.



### THE GLAMOUR OF TRADITION

Independence Day fashion is where heritage meets haute couture. Picture women in sweeping aso-oke gowns, gele wrapped like sculptural crowns, emerald beads catching the sunlight. Men step out in regal agbadas, cut from brocades that gleam like polished jade, their embroidery glistening in ivory threads. Every stitch whispers: This is who we are.

### THE NEW INDEPENDENCE CHIC

For a younger generation, green and white are not limits they're a playground.

- ▶ Streetwear rebels pair green sneakers with crisp white denim.
- ▶ Corporate queens stun in tailored two-tone suits, power-dressing in patriotism.
- ▶ Couture dreamers turn heads in gowns where chiffon drapes like waves of the flag.

The message? Independence isn't just history it's style evolution.



### THE GLAMOUR OF TRADITION

From the flowing agbada to the graceful iro and buba, and from gele headwraps to finely tailored kaftans, Independence fashion thrives on tradition. Yet, designers are constantly reimagining these classics with a modern edge.

#### We now see:

- ▶ Green aso-oke gele paired with crisp white lace blouses.
- ▶ Men's agbada in rich emerald brocade, embroidered with ivory accents.
- ▶ Youthful twists crop tops, tailored suits, jumpsuits, and streetwear where green and white play boldly in unexpected silhouettes.



### ASOEBIOFUNITY

On this day, families and communities dress alike coordinated in custom fabrics that blend green, white, and sometimes a hint of gold. It's not just asoebi, it's fashion as family. Every group photo becomes a fashion editorial: striking, unified, unapologetically Nigerian.

### DESIGNERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Nigerian fashion industry treats October 1st like its own fashion week. Designers unveil patriotic capsules, where beadwork dazzles in green gradients, and lace flirts with white organza. Instagram timelines explode with green manicures, white gele tutorials, emerald stilettos, and bridal-worthy kaftans. Independence Day isn't just a holiday - it's a fashion season.

### THE GLAMOUR OF PATRIOTISM

At its heart, Independence fashion is more than beauty. It's a bold, glamorous reminder of resilience, culture, and unity. It's Nigerians telling the world: We wear our pride, and we make it fabulous.

This Independence Day, Nigeria proves once again that style isn't just personal - it's patriotic. In every emerald gown, every pearl-white gele, every coordinated asoebi, fashion doesn't just celebrate the country. It becomes the country.

### BEYOND OCTOBER 1ST

The influence of Independence fashion doesn't end when the celebrations do. It filters into weddings, red-carpet looks, and even casual wear, reminding Nigerians year-round of their heritage. The green-and-white aesthetic has become a timeless style choice - always in fashion, always Nigerian.

In Nigeria, Independence Day is not just a political milestone - it is a fashion moment. Through the language of fabric, cut, and colour, Nigerians continue to wear their pride on their sleeves, proving that style is one of the most powerful ways to celebrate nationhood.



### 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.







# 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](#)

: +234909 554 4990

## 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.

📍 [@Thehennaplace](#)

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