



INSPIRING
WOMAN
AFRICA

EDITION 14, 18TH NOVEMBER 2025

A portrait of Shelly-Ann Aquí, a Black woman with her hair styled in a high bun with loose curls. She is wearing a black, textured, feather-like garment, a gold chain necklace, large gold hoop earrings, a diamond ring, and a gold bracelet. She is resting her chin on her hands and looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is softly blurred, showing an indoor setting with a wooden chair and a warm light source.

SHELLY-ANN
AQUÍ

JEWEL OF THE **CARIBBEAN**, GUIDING **WOMEN** THROUGH **PURPOSEFUL LIVING**

Inspiring Woman Africa Series

14

THEME Leadership Redefined: Charting New Paths To Excellence

CONVENER



KEMI AJUMOBI
Founder/Group CEO,
Inspiring Woman Africa (IWA)
Convener, IWA Conference

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



H.E. MADAM SAHLE-WORK ZELED
Former President of the Federal
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

GUEST OF HONOUR



H.E. IMAAN SULAIMAN-IBRAHIM FSI
Honourable Minister of Women Affairs
and Social Development



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Managing Director/CEO
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Deputy High Commissioner,
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TEJUMOLA (PHD)**
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SULEIMAN TANIMU**
Majority Leader
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Nigeria Global Reputation
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FOLAKE SOETAN
CEO
IKEJA ELECTRIC

11th December, 2025 | 10AM
Civic Centre, Ozumba Mbadiwe,
Victoria Island, Lagos



ABE JAWANDO
Executive Senior Sales Director,
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Partner &
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Partner at Genea Family Office

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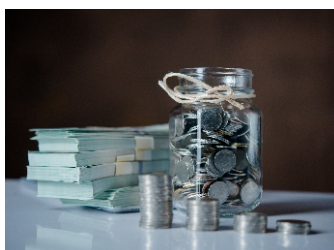
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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

Shelly-Ann AQUI is an award-winning mentor, strategist, and transformational business and life success coach from Trinidad & Tobago, with over 25 years of entrepreneurial experience. Starting with just \$40, she transformed her life creating a seven-figure enterprise, proving the power of resilience, vision, and strategy. We admire her story of perseverance and how she is using her knowledge to impact women and teach them empowerment around the world.

In **HER POINT OF VIEW** this week, Chinyere Okorocha says your next breakthrough might not come from doing more, it might come from creating space to hear what you really need.

In **WOMAN EXECUTIVE** Wola Joseph-Condotti says there was a time when leadership was measured almost exclusively by technical brilliance, academic pedigree, and strategic vision. But in today's boardrooms, emotional intelligence is the way.

GENDER INSIGHTS has Asmau Benzie Leo telling us more about the Reserved Seats for Women Bill.

HOLISTIC LIVING Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri is helping us rediscover meaning in a noisy world.

In **FINANCIAL AdviseHER**, Sola Adesakin says the biggest wealth transfer is happening every day and it's from the distracted to the disciplined.

For **TRIBE WITH THE VIBE**, according to Zainab Aderounmu, we now live in a world no longer divided by borders but by access to information, opportunities and networks.

WE'VE GOT MEN this week is Lanre Onasanya, MD/CEO, H.C. Bonum Limited and he has a vision that African solutions will solve Africa's problems.

WOMAN AT THE HELM is Bola Matel-Okoh, Founder/CEO, BMO Advisory Services. She is an award-winning attorney and executive leader with a distinguished career spanning over three decades.

Don't forget to register for IWASeries14, it's going to be life changing!

Talk soon!



COVER INTERVIEW

SHELLY-ANN AQUI

JEWEL OF THE **CARIBBEAN**, GUIDING
WOMEN THROUGH **PURPOSEFUL LIVING**

Kemi Ajumobi



Shelly-Ann Aqui is an award-winning mentor, strategist, and transformational business and life success coach

from Trinidad & Tobago with over 25 years of entrepreneurial experience. Starting with just \$40, she transformed her life creating a seven-figure enterprise, proving the power of resilience, vision, and strategy. As Executive Director of the Positioned to Propel Success Academy, she helps women entrepreneurs scale with her Life by Design Framework, blending culturally tailored strategies, digital innovation, and personal development. Her clients have achieved remarkable results, doubling annual revenues and building lasting financial stability. Beyond coaching, Shelly is the founder of the PRVM Performing Arts Academy, visionary behind the Picture of Possibility Tribe, and host of conferences and masterminds that empower women globally. Most recently, Shelly-Ann received the 2025 Entrepreneur Excellence Award, solidifying her impact as a voice for women entrepreneurs everywhere. Recognised in regional and international media, Shelly is passionate about helping women of colour reclaim their power, rewrite their stories, and create lasting legacies.

“Once I embraced systems, mindset work, and aligned my business with my purpose, everything accelerated”





► **What type of childhood did you have and how has it influenced who you are today?**

My childhood was filled with creativity, curiosity, and responsibility. I learnt early to lead, to nurture, and to serve. Those early experiences shaped my drive, discipline, resilience, community building skills and my passion for helping others grow.

► **Starting with just \$40 to building a seven-figure enterprise, what were some key turning points in your career and how has your business evolved till date?**

My journey began with nothing but faith, a borrowed laptop, and \$40TT, money that wasn't even earmarked for a business. It was grocery money. It was a need to stay financially stable and be present with my daughters as I felt I was visiting their lives because I was so busy with work and day to day responsibilities. But when you're called to purpose, you feel it in your bones. I used that \$40 to start my first business and from there, I built slowly, intentionally, with discipline, resilience and relentless consistency. The major turning point came when I shifted from hustling to strategising. Once I embraced systems, mindset work, and aligned my business with my purpose, everything accelerated. That's when the Positioned to Propel Academy (PTPA) was born — and from there, the work expanded into 30+ countries across the Caribbean, the U.S., Canada the U.K., and Africa. Going from \$40 to seven figures wasn't luck, it was clarity, community, and courage... the trifecta that still shapes my work today.

Personal experiences shaping your coaching philosophy
Every part of my life, the struggles, disappointments, betrayals, triumphs, taught me that success without wellness is self-destruction in disguise. I learnt the hard way that hustle culture leads to burnout, not breakthrough. My coaching philosophy is rooted in

wholeness. I don't teach women to chase success; I teach them to build a life that sustains success. My experience as a mother, educator, entrepreneur, and woman rediscovering her own worth, guides every client interaction. My story is the blueprint for my philosophy: Heal first. Align next. Learn. Build always.

Core components of the “Life by Design Framework,” and how it is helping women entrepreneurs achieve success

The Life by Design Framework is built on four pillars:

1. **Clarity:** Knowing who you are, what you want, and why it matters.

2. **Alignment:** Making decisions that honour your purpose, not your pressure. We design lives we enjoy, not endure.

3. **Systems:** Creating structure so your business supports your life, not the other way around.

4. **Embodiment:** Becoming the woman you envision through mindset, habits, and self-trust.

This framework helps women shift from overwhelm to ownership. When you design your life intentionally, business growth becomes a natural extension of inner transformation.

► **When your business took a leap, how did changing your mindset set you up for greater success?**



“Every part of my life, the struggles, disappointments, betrayals, triumphs, taught me that success without wellness is self-destruction in disguise”

I realised the biggest battle in entrepreneurship isn't financial, it's internal. Once I stopped negotiating with my limitations and started partnering with my identity and capabilities, everything changed. I had to become the woman I promised myself to become. That mindset shift unlocked room for accelerated growth, expansion and abundance, and that's when my quantum leap happened.

▶ **As a mentor for women entrepreneurs, what common challenges do you see, and how do you help them overcome these obstacles?**

The four most common challenges are:

Lack of clarity
Imposter syndrome
Fear of visibility
Trying to do everything alone

I help women overcome these by teaching strategy, breaking belief barriers, community-building, and most importantly, self-belief. Women don't need more hustle — they need support, direction, and structure. The power of a confident woman. Women experience a lot of challenges in the business terrain. I will share an experience. I went to a business networking event. And like it is with such gatherings, opportunities always present themselves, and I got one, but I was openly questioned by a prospective client about my capability because I was the only woman at the table. That didn't make me shrink, it boosted my confidence and I proved my value calmly and assuredly. Guess what? At the end of it all, his disbelief changed to respect. Experiences like these will always happen, especially to women. We must learn how to respond to skepticism under pressure. Such experiences just show that it is important to know your onions and always be prepared, embrace optimum composure and poise to deliver what you carry on the inside of you about your business, regardless of the circumstance.



▶ **What peculiar challenges have you observed with women who lead?**

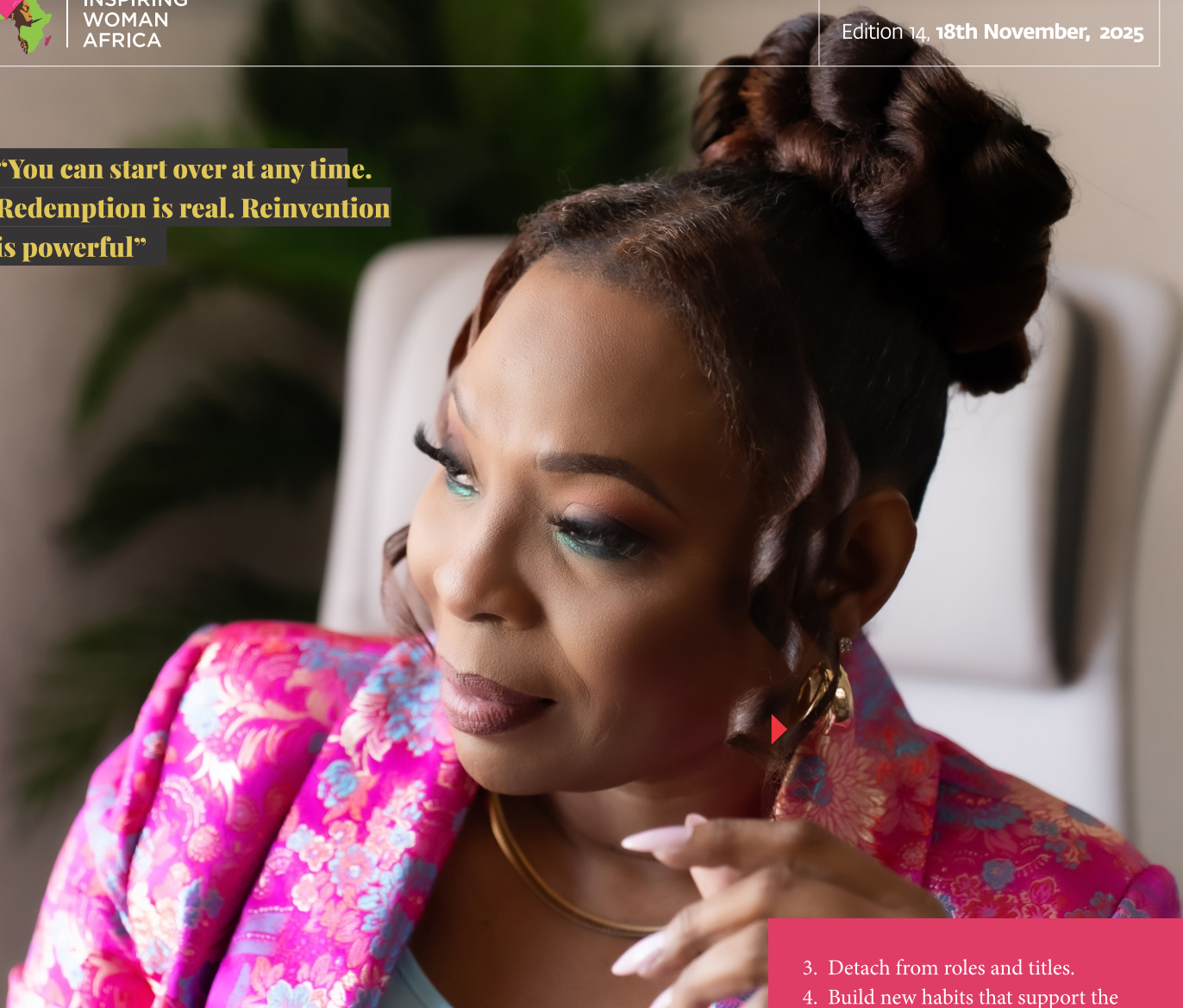
From my point of view, I have observed that, among other challenges, women who lead are burdened with

“Going from \$40 to seven figures wasn't luck, it was clarity, community, and courage”

expectations from society. This can be a distraction as it puts them in a position of the pressure of balancing being emphatic (as the situation demands) and being congenial. What happens as a result of this is that women are then positioned to consistently prove their capability. There is also the matter of work-life balance, which men aren't asked. So, the challenges with women leaders are there but there is grace to go through each of those challenges. It doesn't change the fact that they exist, it just means we need grace and grit to overcome them.



**“You can start over at any time.
Redemption is real. Reinvention
is powerful”**



► **Business goals and family commitments, where is the meeting point?**

At the beginning, balancing both was perplexing. It took a lot from me and was draining. I believe it took a great toll on me because I wanted to do all- be a great mother to my daughters, a good wife, be there for family and friends. However, I also had a great pull towards building a prosperous business. These expectations came heavy on my shoulders and it often led to feeling guilty, being tired and severe burnout became the order of the day because I wanted to be there for everybody.

The only thing that made me pause to do a rethink was a health scare and that came from severe exhaustion. That was my wakeup call. I realised that anything I do shouldn't be at the detriment of my health. It was an eye opener and I started to prioritise my life and shared it with my

husband and children, who also got involved in my business. This decision produced positive results. I was indeed excited when I started seeing my daughters involved at my live events.

► **What is the greatest lesson life has taught you?**

That you can start over at any time. Redemption is real. Reinvention is powerful. And God always uses every chapter, even the painful ones, to prepare you for purpose and position you to propel.

Practical steps you recommend for women looking to reclaim their power and rewrite their professional narratives:

1. Get quiet; listen to your life.
2. Identify the story you've been living and the story you want to live.

3. Detach from roles and titles.
4. Build new habits that support the woman you're becoming.
5. Invest in mentorship: Identity work requires guidance.

► **How do the PRVM Performing Arts Academy and the Picture of Possibility Tribe complement your work as a coach?**

PRVM nurtures talent, creativity, community and confidence...the foundation of leadership. The Picture of Possibility Tribe is where women grow and thrive together, break generational patterns, and rewrite their futures with business to create time, location and financial freedom. Both platforms allow me to shape women holistically, mind, body, spirit, and purpose.

**“The future belongs to the
aligned woman, not the
exhausted one”**

► **What role do community and collaboration play in the success of women entrepreneurs?**

Community is currency. Collaboration is acceleration. Women succeed faster when they stop building alone. My greatest opportunities and success leaps came from aligned relationships, mentors, sisters, partners, clients. No woman rises by isolation.

► **How do you foresee the evolution of women entrepreneurs in the coming years, and what strategies will they need to stay ahead?**

The future belongs to the aligned woman, not the exhausted one. Women will lead the next era of business, guided by intuition, innovation, wellness, culture and community.

Strategies they'll need:

Embrace technology

Improved business ethics

Strengthen personal branding

Build global networks

Prioritise wellness

Focus on legacy, not just profits

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

The day my husband told me he wasn't going to continue to fund my award shows. I realised "NO" can be a huge blessing and the push I needed to become the woman I needed to be, and the beginning of the birth of a woman who would pursue a global mission of empowering women to embrace possibilities and step into their greatness. It wasn't a setback, it was a divine intervention.

"Trinidad & Tobago is a tapestry of culture, courage, and Caribbean excellence, and that spirit fuels everything I do"

► **What makes Trinidad & Tobago tick?**

Our rhythm. Our resilience. Our creativity. Trinidad & Tobago is a tapestry of culture, courage, and Caribbean excellence, and that spirit fuels everything I do.



HER POINT OF VIEW

The Productivity of Stillness: Why Your Next Career Breakthrough May Come from a Pause, Not a Push

Chinyere Okorochoa

Dear Reader,

"I just need to keep pushing."

"I'll figure it out eventually."

"I can't afford to slow down right now."

Sounds familiar?

As ambitious professionals, we've been conditioned to equate progress with motion. To believe that the more we do, the closer we get to success. But here's a truth that high-achievers often overlook: Your next breakthrough might not come from doing more, it might come from creating space to hear what you really need.

Stillness is not weakness.

Stillness is not laziness.

Stillness is strategy.

When your calendar is crammed and your mind is noisy, you lose touch with your internal compass. You react instead of reflect. You stay busy instead of moving forward. You confuse momentum with meaning. But true clarity, the kind that sharpens your focus and unlocks growth, often comes when you stop to listen.

In a world that celebrates constant hustle, stillness becomes a radical act of leadership. Here's how to practice productive stillness this week:

1. Create mental white space

Carve out protected pockets of quiet, even just 10 minutes a day. Step away from your phone. Close your tabs. Give your thoughts room to breathe. Some of your best ideas are buried under noise.

2. Reflect instead of react

Ask yourself: What's working right now? What's draining me? What decisions am I avoiding? Reflection isn't indulgence; it's intelligence.

3. Let rest sharpen your edge

You're not less committed because you slow down. In fact, the most strategic decisions often come not from hustle, but from margin, peace, and presence.

Because motion without meaning is just noise.

And burnout disguised as productivity leads nowhere fast.

But stillness?

Stillness is where power begins.

So here's your challenge this week: Don't wait until burnout forces you to pause. Choose to build stillness into your rhythm as a leader, a professional, and a woman designing her next level.

Pause before you act.

Breathe before you reply.

Reflect before you commit.

This is how clarity is cultivated. This is how careers evolve.

How are you creating space for clarity this week?

I'd love to hear from you. And if you're seeking deeper clarity and alignment for your career path, let's talk about how I can support you inside one of my coaching programs.

You were not made to run on fumes.

You were made to lead with wisdom.

Here's to stillness that moves you forward on purpose.

Every bold move you make today shapes the legacy you leave tomorrow.



Chinyere Okorochoa

Partner in the Law Firm of JACKSON, ETTI & EDU

With over three decades of experience as a trailblazer in the legal profession, Chinyere Okorochoa has established herself as a leading voice in law, leadership, and career growth for women. As a partner in one of the most prestigious law firms in the country, she has not only navigated the complexities of a competitive industry but has consistently broken barriers to become a sought-after leader, mentor, and advocate for women in the workplace.

Chinyere's career journey is a testament to her resilience, vision, and versatility. She has held numerous leadership positions, served as a director on multiple boards, and is widely admired for her strategic thinking and ability to inspire teams toward excellence. Beyond her professional accomplishments, she has also graced stages as a speaker, sharing insights on leadership, career growth, and the unique challenges women face in their professional lives.

A devoted wife and proud mother of three, Chinyere understands firsthand the challenges of balancing the demands of a thriving career with a fulfilling personal life. Through her own experiences, she has mastered the art of work-life integration, demonstrating that women can achieve extraordinary professional success without sacrificing the joys of family and personal well-being.

Her career development platform, Heels & Ladders, is dedicated to mentoring and guiding women who aspire to redefine success, achieve career mastery, and lead with purpose. Whether you're navigating leadership challenges, striving for balance, or looking to amplify your influence, Chinyere's expertise will help you transform ambition into achievement.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

Emotional Intelligence as a Leadership Superpower

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



There was a time when leadership was measured almost exclusively

by technical brilliance, academic pedigree, and strategic vision. But in today's boardrooms, project teams, and executive corridors, there is a quieter (yet more powerful) currency at play. It is called emotional intelligence. And it is, quite frankly, a leadership superpower.

Because in a world where people are navigating pressures, personality clashes, cultural differences, and life's hidden burdens, it is not just what you know that sets you apart, but how well you understand and manage the human dynamic.

When IQ Is not Enough

Many high-performing professionals are promoted based on competence, only to struggle with influence. They lead with logic, but not with empathy. They drive performance, but bruise people in the process. And slowly, they lose trust. This is the Achilles' heel of leadership without emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman, who popularized the concept, broke emotional intelligence (EQ) down into five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. These are not "soft" skills, they are core competencies for anyone tasked

with leading people.

Especially in today's world of hybrid teams, generational diversity, and heightened workplace tensions.

The Cost of Emotional Illiteracy

I have seen entire teams unravel because of a leader's inability to read the room. Brilliant ideas crushed by arrogance. Talented people walking away because they felt unseen. Conflict escalated because no one paused to listen, reflect, or de-escalate. The higher we rise, the greater the

emotional weight we carry. And if we do not steward it wisely, we cause harm. Even if unintentionally. Leadership is not just about driving performance. It is about managing energy, nurturing trust, and creating cultures where people can thrive and not merely survive.

Emotional Intelligence in Action

Decision-Making: Emotionally intelligent leaders do not just react. They respond. They know when to pause. They ask for context. They resist the temptation to lead from ego or fear.

Their decisions are grounded in wisdom, not just instinct.

Conflict Resolution: No workplace is without tension. But emotionally intelligent leaders do not avoid conflict. They navigate it. They separate issue from identity. They stay grounded in conversations that would rattle others. They mediate, not manipulate.

Influence and Presence: We follow leaders who see us. Who affirm value without flattery. Who bring calm to chaos. Who can challenge us without crushing us. That is not charisma. That is EQ.

The Spiritual Lens

As a woman of faith, I have come to see emotional intelligence as a spiritual discipline. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:32, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city." Leadership is not only external. It begins with the internal. If we cannot govern ourselves, we cannot govern others. Jesus Himself modelled this. He noticed pain others ignored. He asked questions before offering solutions. He wept with the grieving, paused for the broken, confronted hypocrisy, and still spoke truth in love. That is the ultimate emotional intelligence.

Leading with Heart and Clarity

As executives, we often face enormous pressure, deadlines, politics, tough calls. It is tempting to harden ourselves emotionally just to survive. But numbing our emotional intelligence is not strength, it is a liability. We must learn to lead with both heart and clarity. To be tough on issues, but tender with people. To self-regulate so we do not weaponise our moods. To develop social awareness that makes every person in the room feel seen and safe. Because leadership is not about managing outputs. It is about inspiring people, and people are emotional beings.

Final Thoughts

In today's complex workplaces, IQ may get you hired. But EQ is what sustains your leadership. It is what allows you to manage change without chaos. To navigate politics without pettiness. To build teams that do not just comply, but commit. And in the end, it is not just your brilliance they will remember, but how you made them feel. So sharpen your mind. Yes. But also, tend to your heart. Because emotional intelligence is not soft. It is supernatural strength, practiced with grace.



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.

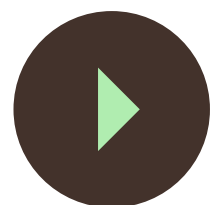
Wola's achievements have earned widespread recognition. Most recently, she received the inaugural Leadership Excellence Award of the Year at the Legal Era Africa Awards 2024, becoming the first-ever recipient of this category. The award celebrated her historic transition from General Counsel to Group 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

The Biggest Wealth Transfer Happening Every Day

By Sola Adesakin



The biggest wealth transfer is happening every day and it's from the distracted to the disciplined.

We often think of wealth transfer as something that happens between generations — parents leaving inheritances, governments setting up legacy trusts, or billionaires giving to foundations. But in reality, the greatest wealth transfer isn't waiting in the future.

It's happening right now, every single day, quietly but powerfully from the distracted to the disciplined.

*Every time someone spends impulsively, another person earns intentionally.
Every time someone chooses comfort, another person chooses consistency.
Every time someone scrolls, another person studies.
Discipline is not glamorous, but it's profitable.*

Distraction is The Silent Wealth Leak

Distraction has become the new poverty. We live in a world engineered to keep us scrolling, clicking, and comparing — not building, learning, or saving. The average person checks their phone over 100 times a day. That's 100 missed chances to stay focused, create value, or make progress. Money doesn't just flow where opportunities are; it flows where attention goes. If your attention is

scattered, your outcomes will be too. Think about it: while one person is binge-watching a new series, another is binge-learning on YouTube. While one is chasing every new trend, another is mastering one timeless skill. The difference between both isn't intelligence, it's intentionality.

Discipline: The Modern-Day Currency

Discipline is doing what must be done even when it's not convenient. It's budgeting when your emotions want to

spend. It's saving before spending. It's saying no to distractions so you can say yes to destiny.

The disciplined person understands that every small, consistent action adds up. Every day you delay gratification, you're compounding your future. Every time you invest instead of impress, you're transferring wealth to yourself.

How to Move from Distracted to Disciplined

If you want to position yourself on the right side of this daily wealth transfer, start with these three steps:

1. Audit Your Attention

For the next 7 days, write down how you spend your hours. You'll quickly see where your wealth is leaking. Whatever gets your attention gets your outcome.

2. Automate Your Intentions

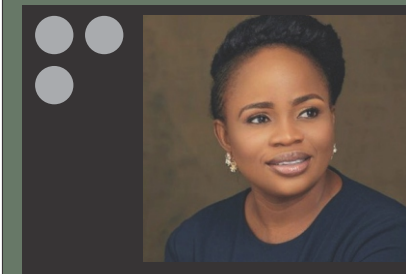
Set up automatic savings or investments. Remove the need to "remember." Systems protect you from emotional decisions.

3. Replace Comparison with Consistency

Social media will always show you people who seem ahead. Don't compete; commit. Your journey may be slower, but it will be surer if you stay disciplined. In this economy, the most valuable asset is focus. Those who can master their minds, manage their money, and maintain consistency will always win — no matter how the world changes.

Every day, wealth is moving; from those who react to those who plan, from the distracted to the disciplined. The question is: which side of the transfer are you on?

Start small, stay steady, and remember that every disciplined choice is a deposit into your future.



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.

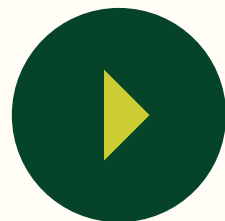
Her impressive academic credentials include a BSc and an MBA degree from Oxford Brookes University and Edinburgh Business School, respectively. She is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants of the United Kingdom (ACCA), 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™ and a member of the Personal Finance Speakers Association.



GENDER INSIGHTS

Reserved Seats for Women Bill: A Historic Opportunity to Redefine Women's Political Representation in Nigeria

Asmau Benzies Leo



November 17, 2025, the public hearing on constitutional amendments and amongst the top considerations was the Reserved Seats for Women Bill. Women across the country are uniting behind what could become one of the most transformative legislative reforms in Nigeria's democratic history. The Bill, which seeks to amend the 1999 Constitution to create special seats reserved exclusively for women in

federal and state legislatures, this represents more than a political reform, it is a social justice imperative and a long overdue corrective measure to decades of structural exclusion of women from decision making spaces.

For years, Nigerian women have remained severely under-represented in governance. Despite making up roughly half of the country's population, women currently occupy less than 6% of seats in the National Assembly and fewer than 5% in State Houses of Assembly. The 2023 general elections saw only 17 women

elected into the 469 member National Assembly, one of the lowest figures in Africa. This under-representation not only undermines Nigeria's democratic ideals but also denies the nation the benefits of diverse leadership and inclusive policy making.

The Reserved Seats for Women Bill, sometimes referred to as the "Special or Additional Seats Bill," proposes to reserve one additional seat for women in each state and the Federal Capital Territory in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. At

the state level, the Bill proposes three additional seats per State House of Assembly, one per senatorial district. More importantly, these new seats will not displace existing lawmakers but rather expand the legislative structure to ensure greater inclusion. The Bill also includes a review clause after four electoral cycles (16 years) to assess progress and determine whether the measure should continue or be adjusted.

The public hearing presents women an unprecedented opportunity to make their voices heard. Civil society organisations, women's networks, academia, and traditional and religious leaders presenting memoranda in support of the Bill, highlighting its potential to advance gender equity, deepen democracy, and strengthen governance. This is about women moving from the margins to the mainstream of political participation, bridging the gap between constitutional promises and lived realities.

Why This Bill Matters for Nigerian Women

Beyond numerical representation, the Reserved Seats Bill holds immense transformative potential for women's empowerment and national development. Representation matters, women in politics champion issues that affect families and communities, such as education, healthcare, gender-based violence (GBV), maternal health, and inclusive economic policies. Evidence from countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania, and Senegal, where similar temporary special measures exist, shows that women's participation has led to stronger social legislation and more accountable governance.

In Nigeria's context, the Bill aligns with the 35 per cent Affirmative Action provision as enshrined in the National Gender Policy and Nigeria's commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It reinforces the principle that women's participation is not a privilege but a constitutional and democratic right. By creating a constitutional pathway for women's entry into politics, the Bill seeks

to dismantle deep seated cultural, economic, and structural barriers that have historically kept women out of competitive politics.

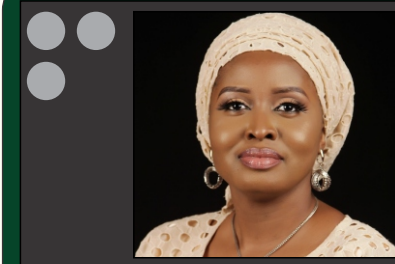
Furthermore, women's increased representation would enhance policy responsiveness to gender related challenges. Legislatures with more women tend to prioritise laws on GBV prevention, social protection, education, and equitable budgeting. With insecurity, unemployment, and poverty disproportionately affecting women and girls, inclusive representation will make governance more reflective of citizens' realities.

The Path Ahead: A Call to Action

The hearing is not merely a procedural formality; it is a defining moment for Nigeria's democracy. It provides an opportunity for every stakeholder, lawmakers, political parties, civil society, and citizens to reflect on what inclusive governance truly means. Supporting this Bill is not about displacing men but about strengthening Nigeria's democratic foundations and ensuring that no gender is left behind in nation building.

The National Assembly must therefore demonstrate courage and foresight by listening to the voices of conscience and passing the Bill without delay. For Nigeria to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, the participation of women at all levels of governance is indispensable.

The result of this convergence and public hearing should be that women across Nigeria; rural and urban, young and old, spoke out as one voice. The Reserved Seats for Women Bill should not just be a women's issue; it must be a national development priority. By passing this Bill, Nigeria will take a historic step toward inclusive democracy, gender justice, and a future where women's voices shape the destiny of the nation.



Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo

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

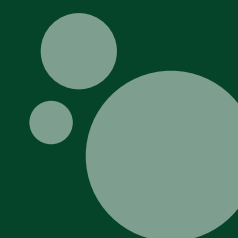
Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo is a development practitioner with extensive national and international expertise in gender equality, peace-building, governance, and humanitarian action.

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.



WOMAN AT THE HELM

Bola Matel-Okoh

MD/ CEO, Future Software Resources Ltd

Bola Matel-Okoh is an award-winning attorney and executive leader with a distinguished career spanning over three decades. Recognised as the “Super Achiever” Peak Performing Woman of the Year 2023, she is honoured to be listed among Leading Ladies Africa’s 100 Most Inspiring Women 2024 and ABCD Africa’s 100 Most Impactful Voices 2024.

In 2015, she was appointed as a Non-Executive Director of Wema Bank PLC, where she continues to exhibit skills in corporate governance, risk management, and advanced strategic planning. Her directorial role has been enriched by training from globally renowned institutions such as IMD in Switzerland, INSEAD in France, and Harvard Business School in the USA.

In 2022, she founded BMO Advisory Services, a coaching and leadership development firm with a focus on women's

empowerment. As an Executive Coach and Founder of Women’s Lifestyle Hub, she supports women in senior leadership in overcoming self-doubt, showing up powerfully, and leading with purpose. She offers one-on-one coaching, leadership development programmes, and curated experiences that help high-achieving women reset, refocus, and rise.

Her certification from the GEMSTONE Leadership Institute enables her as an Executive Coach to guide female C-suite and board members to attain their full leadership potential.

Her extensive experience stems from legal research, case investigation, client adjudication, and business transactions in Nigeria and the USA. Admitted to both the Nigerian Bar and the New York State Bar, she has built a formidable career in law, specializing in Admiralty Law, Immigration Law, and insurance class action litigation. She began her legal

journey as a Legal Assistant at United Commercial Bank in Lagos, Nigeria, and transitioned to practicing law in both Nigeria and the USA. Her roles have been marked by a strong client focus and a dedication to achieving established objectives.

As the CEO of Havilah Ventures, she oversees ventures in real estate, corporate branding, and the health and wellness sector. Her commitment to excellence is further exemplified as the owner and Managing Director of N-Lounge and Spa, where customer service and satisfaction are paramount.

She is also the host of The Excellent Life Podcast, a platform designed to inspire, motivate, and challenge individuals to live a life of excellence.

Driven by a relentless pursuit of excellence, she continues to dedicate her life to empowering others, fostering leadership, and making a meaningful impact globally.



WE'VE GOT MEN

Lanre Onasanya

MD/CEO, H.C. Bonum Limited

With a vision that African solutions will solve Africa's problems, and building good capacity in business leadership will be the key to taking our mother continent to the next level, Lanre Onasanya is fully focused on enabling people to improve their productivity, leadership and expand their possibilities.

His experiences were gained from starting his career as a banker, a brief stint in logistics and then the IT industry with Resourcery Ltd, Lagos.

In 2000, he became a pioneer staff of Microsoft Nigeria, and was then promoted to the regional office in South Africa and subsequently to Kenya as the public sector lead for 14 East and Southern Africa countries. Additionally, he served on the Presidential Round Table for Tanzania and Uganda with other key private sector partners to provide strategic input to the Information Technology policy.

In 2008, he joined McGhee Productivity Solutions in Denver, Colorado to train as

an Executive Consultant. A Lead Consultant for the business in Africa & Middle East, he led with presence in Johannesburg - South Africa, Nairobi - Kenya and Lagos - Nigeria. He provided consulting services, e-learning, books and software to improve personal and professional effectiveness.

He started his entrepreneurial journey subsequently as CEO of Integral Assets Limited, where he provided strategic direction for the company, managing executive relationships with their global alliance partners, leading the business development and sales teams and engaging performance of all business units to ensure alignment and results, and in 2015 merged with a like-minded company to create H.C. Bonum Limited.

H.C. Bonum Ltd is a performance-oriented management consulting company focused on supporting organisations in achieving increased productivity and better results through their human capital.

They work with clients in different industries —Oil & Gas, power, utilities, financial services, manufacturing, food and beverage, telecommunications, Information Technology, healthcare and so on — as well as public sector institutions, to develop capabilities (knowledge, skills, attitudes, strategies and working methods) that drive performance improvement at individual, team and enterprise levels.

Lanre is chairman of the board of Signal Alliance Group, a director of Digital Jewels Ltd, Codeware Ltd and has interests in other property and healthcare management companies.

He is a board member of the International Coaching Federation, Nigeria chapter and has been an Insights Discovery Licensed Practitioner since 2011.

He has been a coach to executives across Africa and has led a number of leadership development programs over the past 12 years.

HOLISTIC LIVING

The Soul's Compass: Rediscovering Meaning in a Noisy World

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

In a world where our days are filled with endless scrolling, competing deadlines, and constant noise, it's easy to lose ourselves. We wake up rushing, fall asleep exhausted, and call it living. But deep inside, there's a quiet whisper asking, "Is this all there is?"

That whisper is the voice of your spirit, the part of you that isn't satisfied with survival but craves significance. And that's where spiritual wellness begins. It's not about religion, rules, or rituals. It's about alignment, coming home to the version of yourself that remembers who you are, why you're here, and what truly matters.

Modern life has mastered the art of distraction. We chase achievements but often lose alignment. We fill our schedules yet feel empty inside. We post smiles online but battle silent chaos within. This is not a lack of success; it's a lack of soul connection.

Spiritual wellness is the antidote to that emptiness. It's the deep breath between to-do lists. The stillness beneath the noise. The reminder that purpose isn't something you find at the end of a long chase, it's something you return to when you pause long enough to listen.

When you cultivate spiritual wellness,

you start to see life differently. Challenges no longer look like punishments; they become teachers. Pain transforms into purpose. And even ordinary days begin to shimmer with quiet meaning.

People with a strong sense of purpose live longer, recover faster, and love deeper. Why? Because meaning gives suffering context. It gives life texture. It transforms existence from a checklist into a calling.

When you know your "why," even the hardest seasons become sacred classrooms.

Practices that anchor the soul

You don't need a monastery or mountaintop to nurture your spirit. You just need moments, tiny, sacred pauses woven into daily life.

Meditation: A few minutes of stillness can become an anchor in the storm. It's not about silencing thoughts; it's about hearing them with compassion. Each deep breath is a reunion with your own presence.

Prayer: Whether you speak to God, the universe, or your own heart, prayer is a conversation with hope. It's a moment to lay down your worries and remember that you are not alone in



this vast, spinning world.

Gratitude: Gratitude is spiritual oxygen. It reminds us that even in the darkest valleys, there's light. When you count your blessings, your burdens begin to shrink. Gratitude doesn't ignore pain—it reframes it.

Purpose-Driven Living: Spiritual wellness isn't just inward reflection, it's outward expression. It's how we show up in the world. When your actions align with your values, peace follows. Purpose-driven living means doing less of what drains you and more of what defines you.

We spend so much time upgrading our devices that we forget to upgrade our inner lives. But the truth is, peace is not something you download, it's something you develop.

Take a walk without your phone. Watch the sunrise in silence. Write down three things that make you feel alive. These small rituals recalibrate the soul. They turn ordinary moments into sacred encounters.

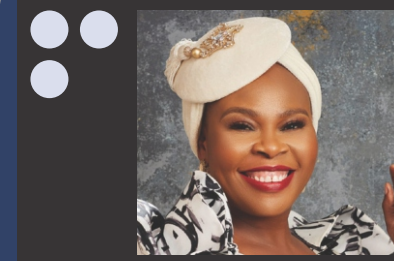
Spiritual wellness isn't about escaping reality, it's about embracing it with awareness. It's choosing to live on purpose, not by accident. It's the courage to slow down when the world speeds up, and to listen to the quiet wisdom that lives within you.

When your spirit is aligned, life stops feeling like a race and starts feeling like a rhythm. You stop striving and start flowing. You stop chasing success and start experiencing significance.

You are not behind. You are not lost. You are simply being invited back to yourself.

So, pause. Breathe. Pray. Reflect. Give thanks. And remember, spiritual wellness isn't about perfection. It's about direction. Every mindful step you take toward your truth is a step closer to peace.

At the end of the day, it's not about how much you've achieved, but how deeply you've aligned with your holistic living.



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

Young people positioning for Global Leadership, Lessons from Rooms and Roundtables

By Zainab Aderounmu

We now live in a world no longer divided by borders but

by access to information, opportunities and networks. In this new world, your influence isn't measured by where you are, but how fast you can connect with people across continents and how far your impact can travel.

You would expect that this global interconnection would open up access to all the tools for success, and enable us reach our goals faster, but it has also unlocked new distractions and triggers mental health issues. What is supposed to liberate you can also leave you stuck. Access means nothing if you're stuck in the noise. That begs the question; how can I leverage globalisation for success and position for global leadership, without getting stuck?

Recently, I anchored Rooms and Roundtables, a convening of young global leaders hosted by Orifunke Lawal, and the prolific speakers opened up my mind to a number of things we might be overlooking as Gen Zs. The first thing is, the world

does not begin and end on the internet, or social media, as the case may be. It is a means to an end, not the end itself. Therefore, attempting to keep up with the Joneses may get you stuck faster than it'll liberate you. That said, here are 4 strategies to help you position for global leadership;

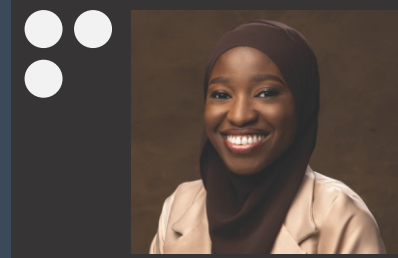
Understand your Purpose and Vision. This is the first step to showing up in a noisy and interconnected world. We often

make the mistake of sitting in one position and 'looking for a purpose'. But, as Oluwatoyin Banjo put it, you find purpose in iteration, not stagnation. What is that nudge in your mind, that one activity you take so much delight in, or that one problem that keeps bugging you? Purpose shows up when you respond to your inner voice. It's not something you find on the streets of Instagram or in the hollows of comparison. It becomes clear when you apply yourself, serve, and stay true to your hunch.

Document your Journey. Here, social media is a relevant tool to build a digital footprint. This isn't about showing up perfectly curated; it is evolving in real time. Besides building thought leadership, or an online community, you'll also be amazed when you see how quickly you're growing. How many times have you been nostalgic when Facebook brings up your post from 3 years ago? Things like that help you stay grounded. As one of the speakers, Akan Imoh, put it, 'you're too broke to be anonymous'.

Take pictures, and videos of moments that matter. Don't be caught in regret when you're asked to display evidence of your work.

Know your Work People will defer to your expertise, regardless of your age. It means you have to be seasoned in whatever industry you choose to play in. Think about a time when someone had you under a trance because of the depth of knowledge they displayed about a topic. That was how I felt when Tolulope Makinwa spoke about global



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.

leadership; it wasn't just what she said but the level of passion, depth and conviction in her voice. And how do you attain that level of knowledge, by applying and exerting yourself. It's not enough to read tweets about a topic, but actually doing the research and putting in the work. That leads to the next strategy.

Do Two Levels Above to Get Noticed. Do so much work that it makes no sense if you don't succeed. This lies in the tenacity and consistency that you approach your work with. This means rising above the noise by consistently exceeding expectations. Oluwatoyin puts it well: "Excellence isn't perfection; it is stewardship." It's the careful management of something entrusted in your care. Pay attention to details, commit to the process, and let your results speak before your resume does.

Finally, global leadership goes beyond visibility, it's the intersection of your voice, your vision, and the value you offer the world. Globalisation may have democratised access, but you must pair it with depth and performance to remain relevant. Start where you are; the world doesn't reward global dreams built on local neglect.



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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.

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