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WOMAN
AFRICA

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**ELIZABETH
OGUEGBU**

LEADING AFRICA'S FINANCIAL MARKETS FRONTIER AT **ACCESS BANK**

Inspiring Woman Africa Series 14

THEME **Leadership Redefined: Charting New Paths To Excellence**

CONVENER



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Convenor, IWA Conference

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



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Former President of the Federal
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GUEST OF HONOUR



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CONTENTS

COVER INTERVIEW

ELIZABETH OGUEGBU 5

HER POINT OF VIEW

The Career Skill You're Not Using Enough: Storytelling 15

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

The Grace of Letting Go:
When Good Leaders Must Move On 17

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Money Thrives Where Discipline Lives 19

GENDER INSIGHTS

Nigeria at the Forefront of the 16 Days of Activism 21

WOMAN AT THE HELM

Olubusola Jejelowo 23

WE'VE GOT MEN

Capt. Prof. Wisdom Isangadighi (PhD) 25

HOLISTIC LIVING

The Alchemy of Pressure: How to Turn Stress into Strength 27

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

Why aren't Nigerian women in Leadership? 29



► 19

FINANCIAL AdviseHER
Money Thrives Where
Discipline Lives

► 21

GENDER INSIGHTS
Nigeria at the Forefront
of the 16 Days of Activism



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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

Happy New Month!! December is here, do you smell Christmas in the air? A jolly season it is and regardless of what may be going on around you, ensure to stay positive, it is a way to stay encouraged.

Our cover personality for the first edition of Inspiring Woman Africa (IWA) this month is ELIZABETH OGUEGBU, and she is a distinguished financial markets executive, and one of Africa's most influential voices across the full spectrum of financial markets asset classes. Her views on leadership and influences on her approach to financial markets is educational, including her opinion on gender matters among women in the corporate world, including other well-articulated responses to our questions. We trust you will find this very edifying.

Here are other articles in this edition:

HER POINT OF VIEW: The women who stand out, the ones who get noticed, promoted, and trusted with leadership, are not always the ones with the longest CVs. They're the ones who have learnt the career-defining skill of storytelling. By Chinyere Okorocha

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: We often celebrate beginnings in leadership. New appointments, new roles, new vision statements. But we rarely talk about endings. And yet, how we leave matters just as much as how we lead. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

GENDER INSIGHTS: Nigeria at the Forefront of the 16 Days of Activism. By Asmau Benzie Leo.

FINANCIAL ADVISEHER: Discipline is the quiet engine behind every financial success story. It is not glamorous. It does not trend. But it works, always. By Sola Adesakin.

HOLISTIC LIVING: We've been taught to see stress as the enemy, something to fight, flee, or numb. But what if stress isn't the villain? What if it's the messenger, a teacher disguised in discomfort? By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBE: Why aren't Nigerian women in leadership? Why does a country filled with competent, capable, and visionary women continue to shut them out of leadership? Zainab Aderounmu asks.

WOMAN AT THE HELM: Olubusola Jejelowo is the Chief Executive of Stanbic IBTC Asset Management Limited, and she says Stanbic IBTC Asset Management has an unwavering commitment to building a resilient, transparent, and efficient Nigerian capital market.

WE'VE GOT MEN: Captain Wisdom Isangadighi is an experienced Airline Captain with over 16 years in aviation, and the first Professor of Practice in Aviation Management in Africa.

It's 9 days to Inspiring Woman Africa (IWA) conference Series 14 and we are soooooo ready, are you?

Take care, stay safe and see you next week!

COVER INTERVIEW

ELIZABETH OGUEGBU

LEADING AFRICA'S FINANCIAL MARKETS FRONTIER AT ACCESS BANK

Kemi Ajumobi



Elizabeth Oguegbu is a distinguished financial markets executive and one of Africa's most influential voices across the full spectrum of financial markets asset classes, including FX, rates, commodities, liquidity solutions, and institutional funding. With nearly two decades of global experience spanning Africa, Europe, Asia, and the United States, she is widely recognised for her strategic depth, commercial excellence, and ability to engineer innovative market solutions for corporates, multinationals, and financial institutions.

Beginning her career in 2006, Elizabeth spent 18 years at Standard Chartered Bank, rising to Executive Principal, Financial Markets Sales for Sub-Saharan Africa. During her secondment in New York, she deepened U.S. corporate engagement with African financial markets and championed cross-border hedging, liquidity management, and structured market solutions for global institutions. Over the course of her career, she has originated and executed multi-billion-dollar transactions across financial markets, delivering impactful results for clients and contributing to the development of Africa's financial ecosystem.



In December 2023, she joined Access Bank Plc, Nigeria's largest bank and a continental industry leader, where she currently serves as Group Head, Financial Markets & Funding. She leads the Group's financial markets and funding agenda across more than 15 African markets, driving liquidity optimisation, market development, structured solutions, and institutional investor engagement. Her leadership continues to shape Access Bank's market positioning and strengthen its role as a regional powerhouse in financial markets.

Elizabeth holds an INSEAD Global Executive MBA and graduated with First Class Honors in Computer Information Systems from Babcock University. She is a CFA Level II candidate, an Honorary Member of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (HCIB), and holds the ACI Dealing Certificate. Highly respected for her influence and thought leadership, she is a sought-after speaker on African financial markets, emerging-market dynamics, and leadership excellence.

“Entering Global Markets so early in my career meant I had to learn fast, work hard, and build credibility from the ground up”

She is happily married and a devoted mother to two wonderful children, drawing inspiration from family, faith, and her passion for advancing Africa's financial and economic transformation.

► **Career journey moments that shaped your leadership philosophy**

From an early age, I've always believed that purpose has a way of finding you. Graduating from Babcock University at 18 with First Class Honours gave me an early start, but it was joining Standard Chartered Bank that truly set my path. I began in the Service Quality team under the remarkable leadership of Sunny Enebi, whose discipline, integrity, and unwavering commitment to excellence shaped the foundational values that still guide me today. Six months later, Rahil Taneja opened a

defining door by trusting me with a trainee role in the Global Markets team. That moment changed the course of my life. It ignited a deep passion for financial markets and set me on a trajectory of growth, mastery, and leadership. I rose from trainee to Executive Principal, developing broad and deep expertise across all asset classes, FX, Rates, Commodities while serving both corporate and institutional clients across Sub-Saharan Africa. I was privileged to be part of a young, vibrant, and exceptionally talented team that consistently dominated the region and demonstrated what excellence in African markets truly looks like. Standard Chartered's extensive footprint across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia complemented by its presence in Europe and the Americas,

provided me with a global platform that shaped my worldview. I thank God for that exposure daily. It sharpened my technical abilities, expanded my cultural intelligence, and taught me how to lead across borders, time zones, and perspectives.

A pivotal chapter came with my secondment to the United States just before COVID. It tested my expertise on a global stage, as I represented Africa, told its investment story with conviction, and engaged directly with

America's institutional investors and corporates. It remains one of the most enriching and affirming experiences of my career.

In December 2023, I joined Access Bank Plc, Nigeria's largest bank and one of Africa's most international financial institutions often described as Africa's gateway to the world. With operations across the continent and a growing presence in global financial centers, it offered the perfect platform to scale impact and deepen my footprint in

African market development. I joined initially to lead Strategic Projects & Funding, and shortly after was appointed Group Head, Financial Markets & Funding, where I oversee the Group's financial markets franchise, market development, funding initiatives, and investor engagement across our African footprint.

My leadership philosophy has been shaped by every stage of this journey and rests on four anchors: Humility, competence, courage, and integrity. Humility keeps me grounded, competence earns trust, courage inspires transformation, and integrity ensures that everything is built on a foundation that lasts.

My journey has taught me one enduring truth: That when purpose aligns with preparation, and when grace meets discipline, extraordinary doors open.

► **Personal values or experiences that most influenced your approach to financial markets and leadership**

My approach to financial markets and leadership has been shaped by a combination of personal conviction, unconventional beginnings, and the grace that has guided every step of my journey.

I did not come from a finance or economics background; I studied Computer Information Systems. Entering Global Markets so early in my career meant I had to learn fast, work hard, and build credibility from the ground up. That experience instilled in me a deep commitment to competence, preparedness, and continuous learning, because I understood quickly that excellence is what earns you a seat at the table.

Integrity is another anchor. Markets move on trust, judgment, and consistency, and your reputation becomes your most valuable asset. I have always believed that your work, your word, and your standards must align. It guides how I negotiate, how I build relationships, and how I lead teams.

I am also profoundly shaped by

“Working across Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the U.S has made me a leader who values cultural intelligence, clarity, and empathy”

“The transition to digital platforms, electronic price discovery, and integrated payment systems has allowed markets to leapfrog legacy inefficiencies”

purpose and grace. My career has been marked by moments that were clearly divinely orchestrated, and that bring a sense of responsibility to every role I take on. It influences the way I lead: with humility, gratitude, and a firm commitment to delivering results that matter. I set high standards—not to intimidate, but to inspire discipline, consistency, and excellence. My team knows I am firm, but fair, and that my expectations come from a place of wanting each person to grow and succeed. Finally, working across Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the U.S has made me a leader who values cultural intelligence, clarity, and empathy. Exposure to diverse markets and teams taught me that great leadership is not about hierarchy; it is about alignment, communication, and creating environments where people can perform at their best.

Together, these influences, integrity, competence, purpose, firmness, and global perspective, shape how I navigate financial markets and how I lead: with clarity, discipline, and a commitment to building systems and people that endure.

► **Africa's financial markets have evolved rapidly. What cut-through changes have surprised you the most in the last decade?**

One of the most transformative shifts in the past decade has been the rise of intra-Africa trade and cross-border financial flows. The continent has moved from fragmented, country-by-country economic activity toward a more integrated regional dynamic driven by the AfCFTA, Pan-African payment systems, and the expansion of cross-border banks. This has fundamentally changed the way liquidity moves, how markets price risk, and how businesses scale across borders. We are seeing the early formation of a continental economic corridor, where goods, services, people, and capital flow with increasing freedom. This shift has

profound implications for financial markets: it demands harmonised regulations, deeper FX and payments infrastructure, competitive funding across multiple currencies, and banks that can operate seamlessly across jurisdictions. Another significant change is the institutionalisation of domestic liquidity, with pension funds and sovereign investors now serving as long-term anchors across several markets. Alongside improvements in market infrastructure, centralised auctions, real-time settlement, electronic FX platforms, African markets have become more coordinated, more transparent, and more resilient. Corporate behaviour has also evolved. African corporates are now more strategic in their use of risk management tools, structured funding, and cross-border treasury management. They are engaging with markets with a sophistication that has pushed banks to deepen their capabilities and innovate at scale. Technology has accelerated all of this. The transition to digital platforms, electronic price discovery, and integrated payment systems has allowed markets to leapfrog legacy inefficiencies and reduce friction in cross-border transactions.

In this landscape, Access Bank is uniquely positioned. With the largest African footprint of any commercial bank, a growing presence in global financial centers, and a deliberate strategy to build a borderless African banking network, Access is aligning itself to become the financial backbone of intra-Africa trade. Our ability to facilitate payments, mobilise liquidity, structure funding in multiple currencies, and connect businesses across 15+ African markets gives us a competitive advantage that very few institutions possess.

In simple terms:

As Africa integrates, Access Bank's network, capabilities, and scale position is not just to participate, but to lead.

Taken together, these changes demonstrate that Africa is not only evolving; it is converging. The coming decade will belong to institutions that understand regional integration, cross-border markets, and the power of a truly Pan-African ecosystem. Access Bank is intentionally building for that future.

► **As Group Head, Financial Markets & Funding, what are your top three priorities?**

My priorities are shaped by the diversity of our markets and the Bank's ambition to build a truly Pan-African financial ecosystem. At a high level, three things guide my work across the continent:

1. Strengthening our financial markets franchise across all countries: Ensuring that each of our markets operates with strong capabilities, consistent standards, and the right level of market engagement is fundamental. My focus is on ensuring our teams are empowered, aligned, and positioned to serve clients effectively across different operating environments.

2. Supporting the Group's funding objectives across the footprint: A key priority is ensuring the Bank is well-positioned to access funding pools across our markets and that we maintain strong relationships with key partners, including global and regional institutions. It's about ensuring Access Bank remains well-supported as it executes its growth agenda.

3. Enhancing cross-border collaboration to reflect our growing Pan-African presence: With our expanding footprint, it's important that our teams across all

“As Africa integrates, Access Bank's network, capabilities, and scale position is not just to participate, but to lead”



markets work in a coordinated, connected manner. My focus is on fostering integration, shared learning, and a cohesive approach that reflects the Bank's vision of enabling seamless financial connectivity across Africa.

► **What do you see as the challenge women executives face and how can they navigate it?**

One of the most painful and persistent challenges women executives face is the assumption that our success is anything other than merit. Too often, when a woman reaches senior leadership, people look for an explanation other than competence, as though skill, discipline, and performance could not possibly be enough. It is a bias many women confront silently, and it can be both discouraging and disrespectful.

Another real challenge is that women are frequently judged more harshly for the same behaviours celebrated in men. A man who is firm is seen as decisive; a woman who is firm is labelled difficult. A man who sets high standards is praised; a woman who does the same is questioned. This double standard means women often work under a different level of scrutiny, where they must constantly prove what others are freely given the benefit of the doubt for.

There is also the issue of visibility and sponsorship. Many women deliver exceptional results but are not always included in the rooms where opportunities are discussed. Without intentional sponsorship, their contributions remain undervalued or unnoticed, and their career progression becomes slower despite outstanding performance.

To navigate these challenges, I believe women should anchor themselves in four principles:

1. Master your craft: Competence is a powerful equaliser. When you know your work deeply, you silence doubt before it even forms.

2. Own your presence: Don't shrink. Don't apologise for standards. It is possible to be

warm and still be firm, to be graceful and still be clear.

3. Challenge bias with confidence, not confrontation

4. Build the right allies and sponsors: The rooms you are not in often matter as much as the rooms you sit in. Women need advocates who speak for them when opportunities are being allocated.

At the end of the day, women don't need special treatment; we simply need fair ground. And when that ground exists, when respect, opportunity, and standards are applied evenly, women

excel, deliver results, and reshape leadership in transformative ways.

► **Which African markets do you see as the most compelling for investment in the next five years, and why?**

Africa's investment landscape is evolving, and the most compelling opportunities over the next five years will sit at the intersection of reforms, demographics, technology, and regional integration. Several markets stand out for different reasons.

1. **Kenya: Innovation, resilience, and financial sector depth**



Kenya continues to demonstrate strong fundamentals: a diversified economy, a sophisticated financial services sector, and a technology ecosystem that drives productivity. Its regulatory environment is relatively mature, and investor appetite remains resilient. Kenya will remain a key hub for East Africa.

2. Nigeria – Transformational upside anchored on reforms

Nigeria's long-term potential is unmatched. With an enormous domestic market, significant energy resources, and improving policy momentum, the upside is substantial. The current reform cycle, though challenging, is repositioning the country for stronger macro stability, improved FX liquidity, and deeper investor confidence over time.

3. Ghana: A turnaround story backed by structural reforms

Ghana is emerging from a difficult macro cycle, but the depth of political stability, strong institutions, and ongoing fiscal reforms make it a compelling rebound market. As restructuring progresses, we expect enhanced liquidity, improved ratings trajectory, and better investor entry points.

4. Rwanda: Stability, efficiency, and policy clarity

Rwanda offers one of Africa's most predictable business environments. Its policy consistency, governance quality, and investment in services and technology position it as a stable, long-term play for institutional investors and corporates.

5. Egypt and Morocco: Industrial capacity and global linkages

North Africa offers scale, industrial depth, and global connectivity. Egypt's large population and ongoing structural reforms create opportunity, while Morocco's stability, export orientation, and infrastructure make it attractive for manufacturing and renewables.

6. Côte d'Ivoire: High growth supported by strong infrastructure investment

Côte d'Ivoire continues to deliver robust GDP growth, supported by infrastructure spending, agricultural exports, and a stable political environment. It is becoming a major hub in Francophone West Africa.

In summary, Markets that position themselves as regional connectors, whether in payments, logistics, manufacturing, or services, will outperform over the next decade.

As AfCFTA gains momentum, economies that facilitate cross-border flows will become increasingly competitive.

This is where Access Bank's growing footprint gives us a strategic advantage. Our presence across key trade corridors positions us to support clients, connect markets, and deepen financial integration across the continent.

► What structural changes are most needed to deepen liquidity and reduce funding costs for African corporates?

Deepening liquidity and reducing funding costs in Africa requires structural reforms that go beyond short-term interventions. From my experience across multiple markets, several areas stand out as transformational.

1. Strengthening FX and monetary policy frameworks

Predictable, transparent FX regimes are fundamental. When currency markets are orderly and policy direction is clear, risk premiums fall automatically. Certainty reduces the cost of capital

“My priorities are shaped by the diversity of our markets and the Bank's ambition to build a truly Pan-African financial ecosystem”

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more than any incentive can. Corporates thrive when they can plan, hedge, and price with confidence.

2. Broadening the domestic investor base

Pension funds and insurance companies have become important anchors of liquidity, but the continent needs deeper participation from asset managers, collective investment schemes, and sovereign funds. A more diverse investor base absorbs duration risk, strengthens yield curves, and lowers borrowing costs for corporates.

3. Modernising market infrastructure across the continent

Electronic trading platforms, efficient settlement systems, centralised depositories, transparent auction mechanisms, and stronger data ecosystems all contribute to improved price discovery. Markets with reliable infrastructure naturally attract liquidity and reduce execution costs.

4. Expanding availability of risk-management tools

Corporates need access to hedging instruments across FX, rates, and commodities. When pricing volatility can be managed, companies borrow more confidently, and lenders price risk more efficiently. A lack of hedging tools inflates risk premiums unnecessarily.

5. Harmonising regulations to enable cross-border capital flows

Africa is becoming more integrated, but regulatory fragmentation still raises borrowing costs. Harmonised rules, regional settlement systems, and simplified capital-flow procedures would



allow liquidity to move more freely, deepen secondary markets, and support larger, more efficient funding pools.

6. Strengthening credit enhancement and guarantee structures

“Africa’s investment landscape is evolving, and the most compelling opportunities over the next five years will sit at the intersection of reforms, demographics, technology, and regional integration”

For many African corporates, fundamentals are strong, but perceived risk is high. Expanded use of guarantees, blended finance, risk-sharing facilities, and DFI-supported enhancements can bring down spreads, extend tenors, and unlock new investor classes. Africa does not lack opportunity; it lacks scale, predictability, and integration.

When FX regimes are stable, when investors are diverse, when infrastructure is modern, and when regulations enable cross-border flow,

liquidity deepens, confidence grows, and funding costs decline naturally. These reforms are not theoretical. They are practical steps that would reshape how African corporates access capital and how African economies grow over the next decade.

► **How can banks better support SMEs and mid-cap companies with hedging, risk management, and capital access?**

Supporting SMEs and mid-cap companies requires banks to rethink how we design, price, and deliver financial solutions. These businesses are the backbone of African economies, yet they often face the highest cost of capital and the least access to risk-management tools. There are four key areas where banks can make a meaningful difference:

1. Simplifying risk-management products

Many SMEs avoid hedging because products are perceived as complex, expensive, or difficult to understand. Banks need to demystify FX and interest-rate risk management through simple, transparent structures that match cashflows and operating cycles. When clients understand the tools, adoption increases naturally.

2. Building capacity, not just selling products

Risk management is as much about education as execution. Banks should invest in building financial literacy for SMEs, webinars, sector clinics, market updates, and scenario workshops. When SMEs understand volatility and its impact on profitability, they make better decisions and engage more actively with risk solutions.

3. Creating blended financing and guarantee partnerships

DFIs, guarantee institutions, and multilateral agencies play an essential role in expanding access to capital. Banks can structure programmes that combine our balance sheets with risk-sharing facilities,

credit enhancements, and concessional capital. This lowers risk premiums, extends tenors, and brings SMEs into formal financing channels.

4. Designing holistic solutions, not transactional ones

SMEs need more than loans. They need integrated solutions:

Working-capital optimisation, commodity and FX hedging, cashflow matching, supply-chain financing, trade support, advisory on pricing and expansion. Banks that take a long-term view and create ecosystems, rather than isolated products, significantly strengthen SME resilience and competitiveness.

8. What programmes or practices have you found most effective in widening participation and leadership opportunities for women in finance?

In my experience, the most effective practices for widening opportunities for women in finance are the ones that deal with reality, not rhetoric. I've worked across continents, in teams where women were the minority, and I've seen firsthand what actually moves the needle for women, and what does not.

For women to rise, the first thing they need is sponsorship. Not mentorship, not occasional advice, but real sponsorship. The kind where a senior leader says, "She is ready" and puts your name forward when you are not in the room. I've watched careers accelerate simply because someone influential chose to advocate for a woman's competence, not out of charity, but because she deserved the opportunity. Without sponsorship, even the most talented women remain invisible.

Another thing I've seen is the importance of giving women real responsibility early. Too often, women are placed in programmes or initiatives that look good on paper but offer no genuine exposure. Women don't grow through symbolic opportunities; they grow through meaningful work, real deals, real clients, real targets. It is only when women are given substantive challenges that their leadership potential becomes undeniable.



The women who succeed are the ones who were trusted to deliver before they were "perfectly ready," just as men often are.

I've also learnt that organisations must stop shifting the goalpost for women. I've watched situations where a man is promoted on potential, but a woman with equal or greater performance is told she needs more experience. This double standard is one of the quietest barriers to female leadership. The environments that truly support women are the ones where excellence is measured consistently, regardless of gender.

Another thing that makes a difference is the willingness of organisations to address toxic behaviours rather than expecting women to endure them. Many talented women leave not because they lack capability, but because they are tired of being dismissed, spoken over, undermined, or held to different emotional expectations. Progress happens when companies stop protecting bad behaviour simply because it comes from someone senior, and instead create spaces where women can speak up without fear of backlash.

And finally, one of the most powerful tools is community. Women grow



stronger when they see other women succeeding, sharing openly, and supporting one another. In every market I've worked in, I've seen how women flourish when they have a network that affirms their experiences and reminds them that they are not alone. These communities build confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging, which matters more than most people realise. So for me, widening participation for women is not about grand gestures. It is about creating an environment where women are seen, supported, sponsored, and taken seriously. When that happens,

when women are given real chances, held to fair standards, and protected from bias, they don't just participate. They excel. They lead. They transform the culture. And the entire institution becomes stronger because of it.

► **Advice for the youths of today?**

I think one of the most important lessons any young person can learn is that nothing meaningful in life comes without discipline, sacrifice, and consistency. We live in a world where visibility can be mistaken for success

and where timelines are distorted by social media. Many young people see the outcome but not the process. They see the position but not the years of quiet preparation, the late nights, the failures, the self-doubt, and the persistence behind every accomplishment.

Hard work may sound old-fashioned, but it remains the most reliable path to anything that lasts. Talent can give you a head start, and connections can open a door, but it is discipline that keeps you there. I know this from experience, I didn't study finance or economics, but I worked relentlessly to earn credibility in financial markets. Nothing was handed to me; it was built step by step. Young people need to understand that there is dignity in effort and that real confidence comes from competence, not entitlement. I also believe that appreciating one's parents or guardians is fundamental. Many of us stand where we stand because someone sacrificed for us, financially, emotionally, or in ways we may never fully know. Gratitude grounds you. It reminds you that success is not solely yours; it is a continuation of someone else's investment in your life.

Entitlement, on the other hand, is dangerous because it convinces you that you deserve outcomes you haven't earned. It blinds you to growth opportunities and breeds frustration when success doesn't come instantly. Entitlement weakens character; hard work strengthens it.

So, my message to young people is simple: value the process as much as the outcome. Honour the people who helped you get here. Build your competence. Work with intention, and understand that the things that come easily rarely last, but the things you build with your own hands and your whole heart stay with you forever.

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

Life has taught me that the journey will never be perfect, and it was never meant to be. Let no one ever tell you the road will be smooth. Mine certainly wasn't. Behind every milestone and every chapter



of my career, there have been moments that tested me deeply.

I've had seasons of triumph, and I've had seasons that forced me to rebuild from the ground up. I've experienced overwhelming joy, and I've endured heartbreaks that left scars. The hardest of them was losing my beloved mother in the middle of what looked like the most promising phase of my life. Her loss broke something in me that can never fully heal, she was irreplaceable. Leading, delivering, and showing up with excellence while grieving in silence was one of the most difficult things I've ever done. And yet, through it all, the grace of God carried me.

That is the greatest lesson life has taught me, that you can hurt and still rise. You can break and still become. You can lose what you love the most and still fulfill the assignment God placed over your life.

I am also deeply aware that I did not walk this path alone. I have been blessed, all through my journey, with excellent bosses, leaders who believed in me, opened doors for me, challenged me, and made space for my growth. Their support shaped my confidence. Their trust shaped my leadership. And their example shaped my standards.

Add to that the unwavering love of my wonderful family. Their prayers, encouragement, and grounding presence have been my anchor. They held me through the storms, celebrated me in the victories, and reminded me who I am whenever life tried to dim my light. So the greatest lesson life has taught me is this: Grace is real. Purpose is powerful, and love, from God, from family, from those He places in your path, makes the journey possible. Life will stretch you, refine you, and sometimes break your heart. But every setback becomes a setup for something greater when your foundation is grace and your response is resilience. I stand today not because the road was easy, but because God walked it with me, and because I was surrounded by people who lifted me when I could not lift myself. I am, truly and completely, a product of grace.



“Leading, delivering, and showing up with excellence while grieving in silence was one of the most difficult things I've ever done”

HER POINT OF VIEW

The Career Skill You're Not Using Enough: Storytelling

Chinyere Okorocha


isn't exaggeration; it's translation. It makes the true value of your work clear, memorable, and impossible to ignore.
How to Start Storytelling at Work

Fame your wins. Don't just say what you did. Show the "before and after" impact. Use STAR. Situation, Task, Action, Result. It creates a natural story arc.

Practice in small ways. In meetings, don't just give updates. Share mini-stories: "Here was the challenge, here's what I did, and here's the difference it made."

Every small story builds your muscle of influence.

Dear Reader,

Let me be honest with you.
Most women undersell themselves.

We lean on job titles, years of experience, and endless bullet points of responsibilities, hoping that "the facts" will speak loudly enough. But facts alone rarely move the needle.

The women who stand out, the ones who get noticed, promoted, and trusted with leadership, are not always the ones with the longest CVs. They're the ones who have learned the career-defining skill of storytelling.

Why Storytelling is a Career Superpower

Facts tell. Stories sell.

The human brain is wired for stories. Data may impress, but stories stick. A recruiter might skim your bullet points, but she'll remember the way you explained how you turned a struggling project into a success that saved the company money and boosted morale.

Stories transform your work from invisible tasks into visible impact. And visibility is power.

What Most Women Overlook

Too many high-achieving women believe stacking up achievements is enough. But without storytelling, your wins risk blending into the background.

Leaders don't connect with bullet points, they connect with meaning. Storytelling

Why This Matters for Women

Career advancement: Storytelling shows your impact in ways leaders can't ignore.

Visibility & personal branding: It makes you memorable in rooms where decisions are made.

Overcoming limiting beliefs: When you hear yourself articulate your story, you remind yourself that you do deserve the seat at the table.

Leadership & influence: Great leaders inspire through stories, not spreadsheets.

Work-life balance & fulfillment

Storytelling helps you connect your work to a bigger "why," so it fuels your life instead of draining it.

This Week's Challenge

Take 10 minutes to rewrite one of your achievements as a story of impact. Don't just write the task. Write the challenge, your action, and the transformation that followed.

Ask yourself: If my career were a book, would this story inspire the next chapter? The women who rise are not only those who work hard. They are the ones who learn how to make their value seen, heard, and remembered.

So, what story are you telling?



Chinyere Okorocha

Partner in the Law Firm of JACKSON, ETTI & EDU

With over three decades of experience as a trailblazer in the legal profession, Chinyere Okorocha 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

The Grace of Letting Go: When Good Leaders Must Move On

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



We often celebrate beginnings in leadership. New appointments, new roles, new vision statements. But we rarely talk about endings. And yet, how we leave matters just as much as how we lead. The truth is, leadership is not a lifetime sentence. Roles are assignments. Seasons change. People evolve. And wise leaders must learn not just when to start, but when to release. To release the seat. To release the title. To release the need to always be the one in control. Because leadership is not just about building. Sometimes, it is about blessing and bowing out.

► When Comfort Becomes a Cage

One of the subtle dangers of success is that it can become addictive. When you have led well, built credibility, and achieved results, it is easy to stay put. Not out of purpose, but out of comfort. But purpose-driven leadership is not static. It is dynamic. And

sometimes, the greatest expression of wisdom is to know that your season is complete. I have seen too many leaders stay too long, out of fear of irrelevance, loyalty to familiarity, or the belief that no one else can do it like them. And in doing so, they end up stifling the very legacy they once built.

► The Biblical Model: Samuel and the Transition of Power

When God sent Samuel to anoint David as king while Saul was still on

the throne, Samuel struggled. He had mentored Saul. He had invested in him. It was painful to watch the decline and prepare for the next chapter. But God said to him in 1 Samuel 16:1,

“How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way.”

That one verse carries the weight of many executive transitions. You have done your part. You have wept. You have served. Now it is time to move forward.

Sometimes, letting go is not a demotion. It is divine redirection.

► Legacy Is Not Presence. It Is Planting

Many leaders confuse legacy with visibility. But legacy is not about how long you remain. It is about what remains because you were there. Did you build systems that outlast you? Did you mentor successors who are empowered, not intimidated, by your legacy? Did you share knowledge or hoard it in a vault of pride? Good leaders lead for the now. Great

leaders lead for after.

► Practical Signs It Is Time to Let Go

You are holding on out of habit, not vision: When you no longer feel stretched, inspired, or useful but stay because “you have always been here”, It is time to evaluate.

You are blocking succession: If no one else can rise because you will not shift, you may be the lid, not the ladder.

You are more reactive than reflective: When your leadership becomes about defending turf rather than discerning impact, a pause is needed.

► Letting Go With Grace

Stepping away is not weakness. It is strength. It is clarity. It is trust, in God, in others, and in the seeds you have sown. Here is how to exit well:

Prepare a succession plan. Do not leave your departure to chance. Raise others deliberately.

Speak blessings, not bitterness. Do not tear down what you built just because the season ended.

Define your new rhythm. Letting go of a role does not mean letting go of purpose. It just means purpose will now take a new shape.

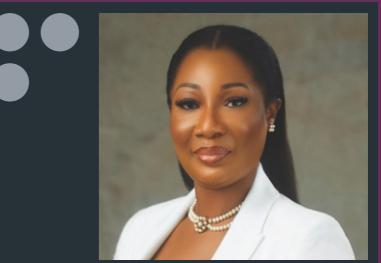
Final Thoughts

There is a sacred strength in knowing when your time is up. Jesus Himself walked away from towns when His assignment there was complete. He did not cling to applause. He moved on with purpose.

Dear executive woman,

Your identity is not in a title. Your power is not in proximity. Your purpose is not confined to a boardroom. Letting go is not losing. It is leaving room for others to rise, for structures to grow, and for your next assignment to begin.

And that, too, is leadership



**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

Money Thrives Where Discipline Lives

By Sola Adesakin

As the year winds down, many of us start reviewing our goals. We look back to January with mixed emotions; some pride, some regret, and often a silent question hanging in the air: "Where did the money go?"

It is a familiar pattern. Every year, we

1. Cut the Waste

Do a quick audit — where is your money leaking? Subscriptions you don't use? Food waste? Transport inefficiencies? Emotional or impulsive purchases? Cutting waste is not punishment, it's repositioning your money for better purposes.

2. Save Smart

Even if the year didn't go as planned, start where you are. Set a December savings goal: small or big, just intentional. Automate it if possible. Think of it as giving your future self a gift; the gift of financial breathing room.

3. Invest Wisely

Any investment you don't understand is not an opportunity, it's a risk. Learn before you leap. And if you already invest, challenge yourself to level up, diversify, review your goals, and plan how you want your money to perform in the coming year.

Here's a mindset reset to carry forward: money doesn't respect good intentions, it respects consistency.

A disciplined person with a modest income will build far more wealth than a high earner who refuses structure. One plays long-term games; the other plays short-term validation.

So as we round off the year, make a promise to yourself:

No more accidental finances. No more waiting for January to start behaving like the person you want to become. Strong financial decisions today create a confident tomorrow.

Your future self, the one who owns property, the one with peace of mind, the one who doesn't panic at every bill is already cheering for you. That version of you will be grateful you chose discipline over impulse, planning over pressure, and growth over waste.

The year isn't over yet. You can still finish strong. Money grows where discipline lives. Let your money have a home with you, and let discipline keep it thriving.



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

Nigeria at the Forefront of the 16 Days of Activism

Asmau Benziez Leo

Every year, from 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women to 10 December, International Human Rights Day, the world observes the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Launched in 1991 by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, the campaign mobilizes individuals and institutions worldwide to amplify efforts in ending violence against women and girls. This year's global theme is tagged "UNITE! Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: End Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls."

It emphasises the urgent need for sustainable investment in prevention and protection mechanisms, particularly against the alarming rise in technology-facilitated violence, alongside traditional forms of abuse.

Violence in Nigeria: A Persistent Crisis

For Nigeria, this campaign is more than symbolic. It is a stark reminder of widespread injustice. According to the 2018 National Demographic and Health Survey, 3 in 10 Nigerian women have suffered physical violence, while 1 in 4 have experienced sexual violence. Rape, early marriage, harmful widowhood rites, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and economic oppression



continue to affect millions. Recent abductions of schoolgirls, cases of domestic killings (femicide), and rising reports of assault in conflict-affected regions further prove that women and girls face mounting risks to their security and dignity. Sadly, the impact stretches beyond physical harm. Today, abuse can take place without physical contact, through a screen, a message, or an image.

The Emerging Threat: Digital and Technology-Facilitated Violence

In an increasingly connected Nigeria, digital platforms have become new arenas of abuse. Women and girls now routinely face:

- Cyberbullying, trolling and misogynistic hate speech
- Online stalking and surveillance
- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images
- Sextortion and blackmail using digital messaging platforms
- Identity theft, impersonation and digital profile attacks
- AI-generated "deepfake" content used to shame or silence women

Young women, student leaders, journalists, politicians, activists, and even school girls are increasingly exposed to harassment online. Technology is now used to enable, amplify, and conceal gender-based violence, making it harder to trace perpetrators.

private sector investment, these efforts cannot be scaled or sustained.

Strategic Actions Nigeria Must Take

1. Scale Up Prevention and Advocacy

Mass campaigns, school curriculums, and community dialogue on GBV and digital safety must be fully funded and implemented nationwide.

2. Strengthen Legal Frameworks and Enforcement

Enforcement of the VAPP and Cybercrime Acts must prioritise digital GBV. Fast track court processes and train law enforcement on tech-based abuse.

3. Establish Safe Reporting Systems

Mobile apps, helplines, and digital response centers should be survivor-centered and accessible nationwide, including rural areas.

4. Support Survivors Holistically

Expand shelters, psychosocial support,

medical services, digital forensic

assistance, and legal aid.

5. Promote Economic and Digital Empowerment

Access to tech, entrepreneurial support, and cybersecurity education empowers women to prevent and respond to abuse.

6. Engage Men and Boys as Advocates

Male champions must help promote positive masculinity and accountability, online and offline.

7. Invest in Data, Technology & Innovation

Utilise digital tracking systems, AI-powered monitoring tools, and survivor mapping to guide policy action.

Gender-based violence whether physical or digital, is a violation of fundamental human rights and a threat to Nigeria's peace, security, and development.

This year's call to action is clear, we must UNITE! From Government, Private Sector, Development partners and communities must Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls, End Digital Violence Against Women and Girls. Through awareness campaigns to accountability, from protest to protection, Nigeria must lead Africa in the fight against GBV in all its forms. When we protect women, we secure families. When we invest in girls, we invest in Nigeria's future.



Dr. Asmau Benziez Leo

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

Dr. Asmau Benziez 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 Nonviolence 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

Olubusola Jejelowo

Chief Executive, Stanbic IBTC Asset Management Ltd

O lubusola Jejelowo is the Chief Executive of Stanbic IBTC

Asset Management Limited, having previously served as Executive Director, Business Development of the Company. As CEO, she is responsible for developing strategic plans to drive the company's profitable growth, aligning them with the broader objectives of Stanbic IBTC Group, reporting directly to the board of directors, accountable for delivering growth and enhancing stakeholder value, managing regulatory and other stakeholder relationships, ensuring the company's interests are prioritised, providing strategic direction and leadership, fostering the company's success, developing and supporting the risk

management structures necessary to manage the business effectively. She joined Stanbic IBTC in 2005 and has over 19 years of cognate experience spanning Investment Banking, Investment Management, Capital Market Operations, and other financial services. Olubusola says Stanbic IBTC Asset Management has an unwavering commitment to building a resilient, transparent, and efficient Nigerian capital market. In their recent win of the '2024 FMDQ Gold Award for the Most Active Buy-Side Participant in the Fixed Income Market', she says it reflects the depth of expertise, discipline, and integrity that their team bring to managing the wealth of millions of Nigerians who trust them with their investments.

According to Jejelowo, too many people feel excluded from conversations about money. It is her opinion that they see investing as something reserved for the wealthy or the financially elite, and that they worry about making mistakes. "They feel overwhelmed, unsure, or simply not ready, and as a result, many delay taking action. We believe that needs to change." She said. Furthermore, she says "We want to help people understand that building wealth is not about having it all figured out. It is about starting, step by step. We want them to move past fear or hesitation and take control of their financial futures with clarity and confidence, and finally, to see investing not as a gamble, but as a tool for growth."



WE'VE GOT MEN

Capt. Prof. Wisdom Isangadighi (PhD)

Captain Wisdom Isangadighi is an experienced Airline Captain with over 16 years in aviation, committed to safety, operational efficiency, and effective crew leadership. He is also skilled in building strong teams, managing complex operations, and ensuring the highest standards of compliance. Furthermore, he is passionate about continuous improvement and creating a culture of excellence in every environment he works in. Wisdom, just like his name, is a highly respected figure in the aviation industry and academia, he stands out for his impressive influence in leadership. A veteran pilot with XEJet Limited as a Training Captain, he is also the Chief Executive Officer of Shaval Enterprise, and has thousands of hours of flight time as Pilot-in-Command (PIC) across different aircraft. With strict adherence to excellence

manifested in how he upholds safety, these unique qualities also manifest in leadership roles, embracing aviation rules and best practices. History was recently made when he became the first Professor of Practice in Aviation Management in Africa. Despite his academic feat and obvious expertise in his craft, he never fails to show his patriotism everywhere he goes. "I love Nigeria, and I'm proud to be one of her own. If I told you how many times I relocated abroad only to run back home, you wouldn't believe me. In fact, in my next life, I'm coming back as a full-blooded Nigerian again—no negotiations!" he firmly stated.

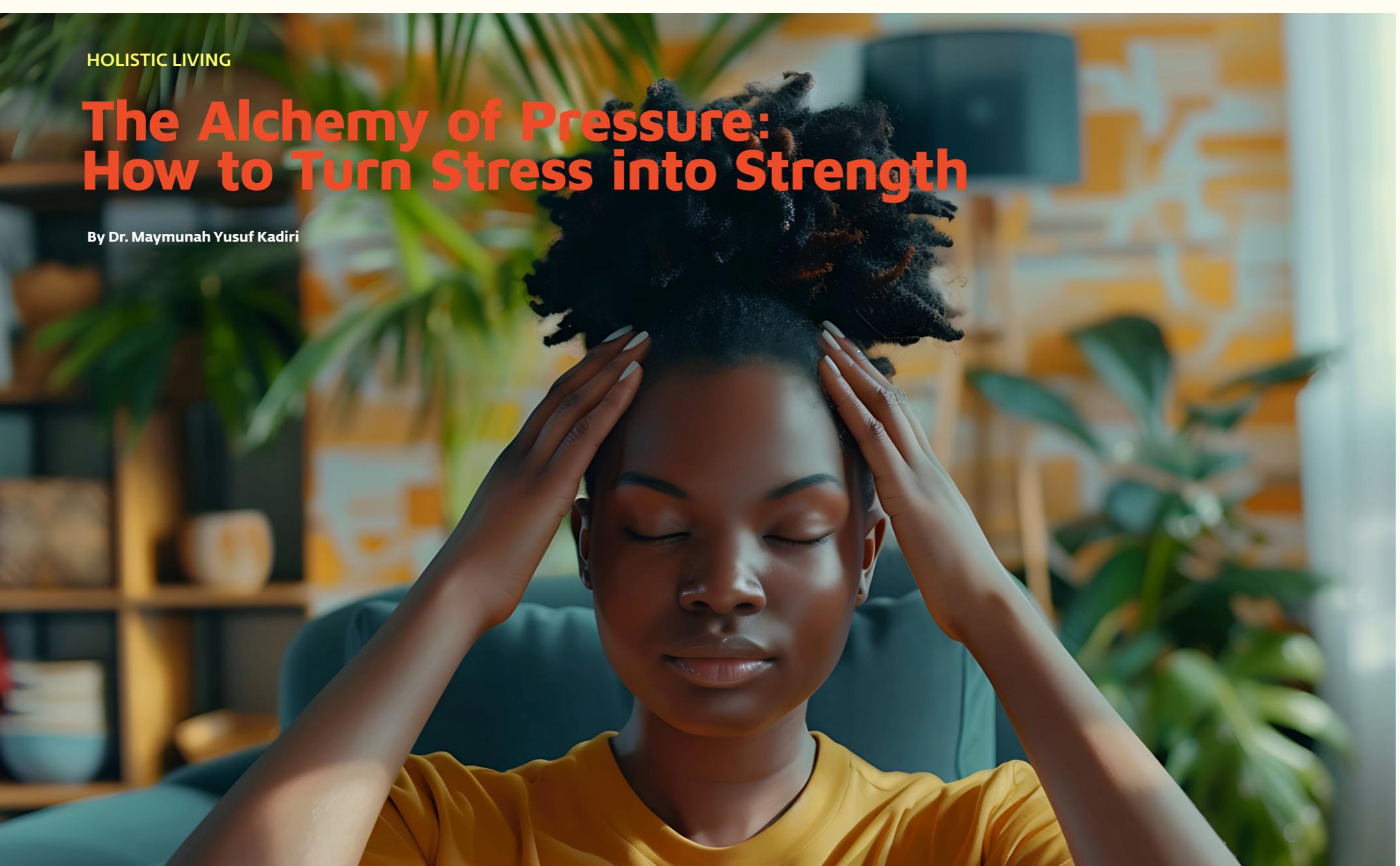
Speaking about his academic depth, he bagged a Doctorate (DBA) from University of Atlanta where he came out with a grade of 5.0, a PhD in Executive Leadership from Selinus

University of Sciences and Literature, and a Master of Philosophy - MPhil, Entrepreneurship Management from same University, including a Doctor of Philosophy, Business Management from Theophany University Haiti. His creativity extends to writing. As an author, his book 'Leading with Heart' is about the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. There is also 'The Power of Focus: Achieving Your Dreams Through Discipline' a comprehensive and inspiring guide exploring focus and discipline's fundamental role in achieving success. Wisdom's leadership dexterity has opened doors of numerous awards to his name. With over 30 licenses and certifications, these achievements further buttresses why he is respected in business, leadership and his profession.

HOLISTIC LIVING

The Alchemy of Pressure: How to Turn Stress into Strength

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



We've been taught to see stress as the enemy, something to fight, flee, or numb. But what if stress isn't the villain? What if it's the messenger, a teacher disguised in discomfort? The truth is, stress is not always here to break you. Sometimes, it's here to build you. Like fire refining gold, pressure can polish purpose if we learn how to hold it without burning. Think about it: muscles grow only when they're pushed. Seeds crack before they sprout. Diamonds form under intense

heat and time. So why do we expect growth without friction? Stress, in its raw form, is energy, a call to adapt, evolve, and rise. It becomes harmful only when it lingers unprocessed. The problem isn't stress itself, but how we carry it. Some people collapse under its weight. Others use it to climb higher. Resilience isn't about smiling through the storm or pretending the wind doesn't hurt. It's the quiet decision to bend, not break. To feel fear, yet keep moving. To rest, yet not retreat. Just as an athlete trains their body, we must train our minds to respond, not react to stress. When the body and

mind work in harmony, stress becomes a teacher, not a tyrant.

For the body, resilience starts with the basics:

- Sleep: Deep rest is not laziness; it's leadership for your brain. Seven to nine hours a night recalibrates your emotions, repairs your cells, and prepares you to face life's noise with calm clarity.
- Movement: When life feels heavy, move anyway. Exercise releases endorphins — the body's natural antidote to anxiety. Walk, stretch, or dance. Motion creates emotion.
- Nutrition: Food is fuel, not filler.

What you eat can either stabilize your mood or sabotage your balance. Choose foods that give, not those that take.

For the mind, resilience grows through practice:

- Mindfulness: Stress amplifies when the mind wanders into "what if." Mindfulness anchors you in "what is." Breathe deeply. Name your emotions. Don't resist the wave — ride it until it softens.
- Cognitive Flexibility: When your inner critic says, "I can't," challenge it with, "I'm learning." Replace panic with perspective. Thoughts are seeds — water the ones that serve your growth.
- Support Systems: Resilience isn't built in

isolation. Lean on your tribe — friends, mentors, therapists, loved ones. Strength shared is strength multiplied.

Tools for the tough days

For Anxiety — Ground yourself in the now:

Anxiety thrives in the future tense. Try the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise: notice five things you see, four you can touch, three you hear, two you smell, and one you taste. It's a simple way to pull your attention out of "what might be" and into "what is." Pair it with the box breath — inhale for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four, hold for four. This is how calm re-enters chaos.

For Burnout — Recharge before you collapse:

Burnout rarely explodes; it erodes. It whispers through fatigue, irritability, and apathy long before it shouts. Protect your energy by taking micro-breaks — two minutes to stretch, sip water, or look at something green. Rest is not an interruption of success. It's a strategy for it.

For Uncertainty — Control the controllable:

When life feels unpredictable, draw two circles on paper. In one, list what you can control — your habits, reactions, and effort. In the other, list what you can't — the economy, other people's choices, the future. Redirect your energy to the first. The circle of control is your anchor in the storm.

From breaking point to breakthrough

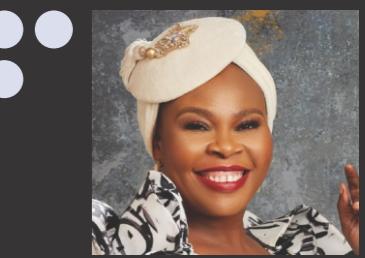
Reframing stress as growth doesn't mean pretending it feels good. It means realizing that pain often points to purpose. The weight you feel is proof you're stretching, not stuck.

Every time you choose awareness over avoidance, rest over rush, reflection over reaction — you build resilience. And like a muscle, it grows stronger with use.

So the next time stress knocks, don't just ask, "Why me?" Try asking, "What is this teaching me?" Because within every pressure lies the potential for transformation.

Stress is the weight. Resilience is the training. And the beautiful truth? The stronger you get, the lighter the load feels.

Breathe. Adapt. Evolve. You're not breaking down, you're breaking through.



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 (FMPsych) 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

Why aren't Nigerian women in Leadership?

By Zainab Aderounmu

I watched the documentary on Jacinda Ardern's time as Prime Minister of New Zealand, and it left me with one question; why is there so much resistance to women in leadership positions.

Nigeria presents a peculiar case. Women work tirelessly behind the scenes yet remain overwhelmingly underrepresented in decision making roles. A recent report by the Women in Leadership Advancement Network paints the picture lucidly: in the National Assembly, only 21 out of 469 seats are held by women and only 8 female ministers out of 48 in the executive cabinet.

This raises a pressing question: why does a country filled with competent, capable, and visionary women continue to shut them out of leadership?

Jacinda's story exemplified what becomes possible when the usual barriers are out of picture or weakened. One of the most common arguments used against women being in leadership roles is child care. Women are believed to be the primary and sometimes, sole caregiver, especially in the early years due to breastfeeding.

Yet, in Jacinda's first year as Prime Minister, she had a surprise baby. While breastfeeding was her responsibility, every other aspect of childcare was covered by her partner, Clarke. She once said, "Clarke is at home, raising our girl." His intentional support allowed her to lead at the highest level without losing her home or her responsibilities.

This isn't a foreign concept. A prominent Nigerian CEO once recounted how he encouraged his wife to take up a lucrative job opportunity in the United States, while he stayed home nursing their 18-month-old baby. These examples remind us that women do not lack capacity; they often lack support. When systems, partners, workplaces, and political structures show up for them intentionally, women thrive.

Beyond her partner's support, Jacinda also had her party's unwavering support. She had built credibility over the years, demonstrated competence, and earned trust, and when it mattered most, they stood unflinchingly behind her.

However, WILAN found that 31% of the challenges Nigerian women face in ascending to leadership roles come from the perception that a woman is simply "unfit to lead." This is in addition

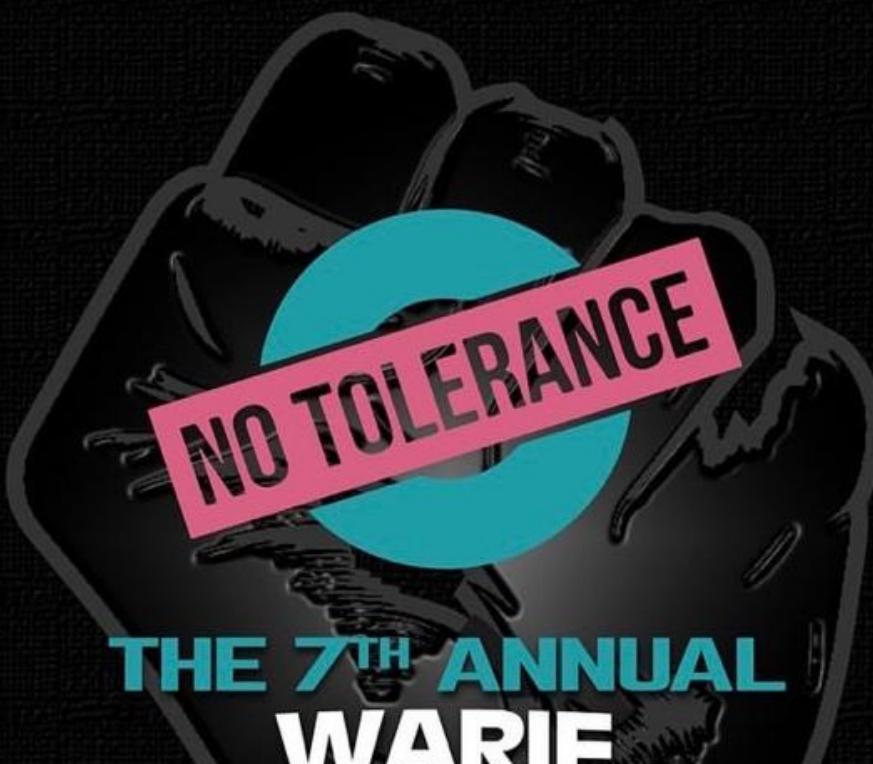

Zainab Aderounmu

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

to harassment, intimidation, and violence that confront many Nigerian women who dare to step into political spaces.

Beyond that, Jacinda suffered crippling anxiety as Prime Minister. But her anxiety was rarely about her inadequacy, but rather about her desire to deliver more in such little time. She has an unwavering sense of personal belief in her abilities, reinforced by her party's support. Thus, she had a strong bias for action, and knew when to stand her ground and when to defy resistance. Currently, Nigeria stands at a similar crossroads to redefine women's participation in politics. In less than 8 days, members of the National Assembly would vote on the reserved seats bill for women, a proposal that would define the role of women in Nigeria's politics in the next decade and beyond.

The National Assembly will have to make a choice: whether to keep Nigeria anchored in the past, or to unlock the leadership potential half the nation already possesses. The reserved seats bill isn't just about representation, it's about whether Nigeria is finally ready to tap its full economic potential and prosperity.



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The Henna Place

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

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

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