



INSPIRING  
WOMAN  
AFRICA

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# FIONA AHIMIE

14TH PRESIDENT, FIRST FEMALE TO CHAIR  
CIS COUNCIL, GLASS CEILING SHATTERED

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**Kemi  
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# Welcome!

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our first edition in May! We are excited May is here and we are starting off with great news.

For over 30 years, the Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS) has had men at the topmost seat, but things recently took an impressive turn when they announced their 14th President and Chair of the council.

For the first time, this seat of honour has been given to a woman, a competent one, who through the years has shown that indeed she was equipped for such a time as this. She is FIONA AHIMIE, and she currently serves as the Managing Director of First Securities Brokers Limited (formerly FBNQuest Securities Limited), a subsidiary of First HoldCo and a Trading License Holder of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX).

Her trajectory tells the story of a woman who has risen through the ranks from hardwork, diligence, consistency and result that speaks for itself.

We are honoured at IWA to have her grace our cover. We wish her well and hope this will encourage and open more doors for more women at the top. We trust that you will enjoy our exclusive interview with her.

Here are other articles in this edition:

**HER POINT OF VIEW:** The Power of a Name: How "Miss Dollar" Became a Career Lesson. By Chinyere Okorocho.

**WOMAN EXECUTIVE:** The "After-Action" Legacy: What Happens When the Title Fades? By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

**FINANCIAL AdviseHER:** High-Income Broke Is the Most Dangerous Kind. By Sola Adesakin.

**GENDER INSIGHT:** The Political Economy of Violence and the Abduction of Women and Children in Nigeria. By Asmau Benzies-Leo.

**HOLISTIC LIVING:** The Cost Of Silent Pressure. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

**WE'VE GOT MEN:** Cosmas Maduka - President/CEO of Coscharis Group.

**WOMAN AT THE HELM:** Abena Amoah - Managing Director at the Ghana Stock Exchange.

I am looking forward to meeting you here again next week for another edition that promises to be worth your time.

Until then, keep your fire burning and never let fear, doubt, anything or anyone quench your passion and thirst to do great things!

Bye for now!



COVER INTERVIEW

## FIONA AHIMIE

14TH PRESIDENT AND FIRST  
FEMALE CHAIR OF CHARTERED  
INSTITUTE OF STOCKBROKERS (CIS)

Kemi Ajumobi



Fiona Nyako Ahmed Ahimie, FCS, is the 14th president and first female chairman of the Chartered

Institute of Stockbrokers. She is an accomplished finance, real estate and sustainability professional with over a decade of top management experience spanning accounting, corporate finance, asset and portfolio management, securities analysis and trading, investment analysis and business development. She is widely respected for her strategic leadership, strong institutional relationships, and remarkable contributions to the Nigerian financial services industry.

She has worked on mergers and acquisitions, business restructuring and capital raising initiatives, while also serving on boards and board committees in various capacities including Chairman of Audit, Enterprise Risk Management, Compliance, Governance & Nomination, and Investment & Strategy Committees across different sectors including banking, private equity, real estate, market infrastructure, logistics and not-for-profit organisations.

Fiona Ahimie currently serves as the Managing Director of First Securities Brokers Limited (formerly FBNQuest Securities Limited), a subsidiary of First



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**My leadership philosophy has always been inclusive, empathetic, and very goal-oriented**



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*Assuming the position as the first female to hold the office of the Presidency of the CIS marks a full cycle of women's integration into the capital market*

HoldCo and a Trading License Holder of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), where she is responsible for driving organisational strategy, process automation, investment portfolio management, business development, planning and change management. Under her leadership, the organisation has strengthened its market position and offerings, enhanced operational efficiency and expanded deal flow and its client base. In her role, she has led in closing major landmark transactions in the Nigerian Capital market. Prior to her current role, Fiona served as Head, Equities Brokerage at First Securities Brokers between 2016 and 2018, where she successfully built a

vibrant equities desk, managed international and domestic institutional deal flows and helped position the firm as a top-performing brokerage house on the Nigerian Exchange.

Earlier in her career, she served as Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of African Alliance Stockbrokers Limited, a Pan African investment management firm between 2015 and 2016, where she oversaw general management of the Lagos office, improved service delivery, expanded institutional client base and grew trading market share.

She also served as Head, Sales Trading and Equity Sales at FBN Capital between 2014 and 2015, where she played a key role in expanding deal flows between international and local investors in the Nigerian capital market, while managing institutional client relationships.

Also, she previously worked as Deputy Head, Sales Trading at Stanbic IBTC Stockbrokers between 2010 and 2013, where she built strong relationships with foreign institutional investors and contributed to portfolio growth and investment strategy execution.

Her earlier professional experience includes roles as Senior Analyst and Deputy Head, Asset Management Department at Lead Capital between 2008 and 2010, and Financial Control Officer/ Treasury Manager/Investment Manager at Axial Ventures Limited between 2006 and 2008, where she developed practical experience in financial accounting and expertise in investment analysis, treasury management, portfolio management and financial advisory services.

Fiona Nyako Ahmed Ahimie was born into the Abba Ahmed's family of Wudil Local Government Area of Kano State. A mother, mentor, confidant, wife and leader, Fiona has forged an inspiring path in the Nigerian financial services industry through resilience, determination.

She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from Lagos State University. She further obtained a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University. In her quest for continuous learning and professional development, she also attended the Pan African Executive MBA module at IESE Business School, Barcelona, Spain.

She has also received executive training from prestigious global institutions including MIT Sloan School of Management, USA, IESE Business School, Spain and INSEAD Business School, France, among others. Fiona is currently a Doctoral Degree Student at Afe Babalola Business School, further demonstrating her commitment to academic excellence and leadership development.



Fiona Ahimie is happily married to Ojekhoa Ahimie and the marriage is blessed with Four lovely children. She is a devoted wife, mother and mentor who balances professional excellence with family life.

► **Inspiration to pursue a career spanning finance, real estate, and sustainability.**

I grew up understanding that community is everything. Our home was open to all and in those interactions, I met people who really did need help but had nothing or anyone to fall back on. This reality shaped my perspectives on life. I didn't have anyone telling me what success should look like or how to achieve it,

but I knew I wanted to grow up and be in a position to be independent, to take care of my needs and have enough to be able to help others in my society. So, for me, all I did was push for education and as I advanced in self development, I stumbled into the world of finance. My secondary school education was in the sciences, but as we got to the final year for WAEC and had to do the laboratory practicals, I discovered that the part of medicine which I was interested in would require operating and here I was, not able to dissect a rat for the practicals and clearly, mingling with blood wasn't for me. So I quickly switched to accounting after my WAEC examination. It is important to know your strengths and not jump on the bandwagon. I went into sciences back



*As an organisation that works with many people, training, data and integrating technology into our operations is essential*

then because, as one of the top students, we all felt we should automatically be science students, but I made the quick change when I noticed that path wasn't for me. The world of accounting looked interesting as I was delving into it for the first time and during my internship year at the local airport, Ikeja, after secondary school. I learnt of the Institute of Chartered Accountants from a friend and senior colleague and thus made the move and enrolled for their technician programme, which was targeted for secondary school graduates, creating my gateway into the finance world. Real estate and sustainability came into play as I advanced in my finance career, and I found the blend very necessary for my career balance.

► **Leadership philosophy and how it has evolved over the years**

My leadership philosophy has always been inclusive, empathetic, and very goal-oriented. Growing up, academic competition was dogged and thus top position was actively contested amongst us all, leading to a healthy and inclusive drive to achieve top position with little or no differential. Hence I learnt early in life that competition is good and important, but collaboration was the ultimate answer to sustainability. I want everyone around me to win, so I push people to punch higher though. Sometimes, it's perceived negatively,



VIBE STUDIOS



ultimately it brings out a win situation. I have had people tell me that I can't expect everyone to operate at my level or be like me and that I need to cut people some slack. However, from childhood, I have always wanted to be independent and help others be independent as well, so that shapes my leadership style. I am learning to let people grow at their own pace while I continue to encourage them to be better versions of themselves because I have learnt in life that just being average at what you do won't take you far.

► **Experiences that most significantly shaped your approach to governance and strategic decision-making**

In my career, I have seen companies crumble and men and women who have attained great heights in their careers and in society slide down the ladder very quickly because of poor decision-making or breaches of good governance. I have also studied and seen people who no one expected to win making a phenomenal impact just by sticking to the right governance structure and decision making. Learning from these experiences has helped me to embrace governance and do it right as well as learning how and how not to make strategic decisions. I am better poised not to be influenced by emotions or a need to be seen as strong, to be critical and to evaluate situations properly, to ensure I do not miss the mark. There is a very thin line between doing things right and playing to the gallery.

► **Staying connected to industry developments and your view on regulatory changes affecting Nigeria's capital markets**

The capital market is the barometer of the economy. Economies that have continued to progress have all done so through the capital market. Governments, corporates, large or small, have scaled and financed landmark projects relying on the capital markets. This is a very dynamic space, and products are becoming more sophisticated by the day. Technology is reshaping how things are done, and global integration is driving expansion. It is

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*At First Securities Brokers, we have built an office environment where members of staff are respected, included, heard, trained and decently compensated, encouraging everyone to play their role*

important to continually upscale knowledge, imbibe risk management practices to limit exposures and need to be properly capitalised to take advantage of the opportunities while minimising risks. Recent regulatory changes are in line and welcome, as they help shape and direct activities in this very sensitive sector. Market infrastructures and operators need to be agile, responsible and fit for purpose, and investors and participants need to be given the best suitable options and protected.

► **Being 14th and first female President and Chairman of Council, Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers**

The capital market is a very male-dominated segment of the financial ecosystem. Women were not even allowed to participate in writing the exams that would qualify them to be practitioners, not until 1983 when Prof. Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke broke that barrier for women in the capital market. So, assuming the position as the first female to hold the office of the Presidency of the CIS marks a full cycle of women's integration into the capital market. While basking in the euphoria of this historic feat, I am not losing sight of my responsibility and the expectations for the role. The Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers was established by Act 105 of the Federal Government and back in the day, the stockbrokers operated across all the verticals in the

capital market, ranging from investment banking, registrar, advisory, trading in securities, investment management, and so on, but as the markets developed and expanded, professionals embraced specialisation and developed trade groups making up the participants in the market. I am looking forward to increasing the knowledge footprint of the capital market across Nigeria and the rest of Africa, and reinforcing the relevance of the capital market and its professionals in the development of our continent as well as how we can integrate our markets with a broader goal of integrating with the world.

► **Importance of the institute adapting to rapid technological changes while preserving core ethical principles**

Technology, AI and data analytics are here to stay. As an organisation that works with many people, training, data and integrating technology into our operations is essential. It is the next phase of our strategic plan and the first 3 months of my administration will be geared to addressing our tech requirements.

► **Institute's role in improving investor education and financial literacy**

The institute has always played a central role in advancing investor education and financial literacy, but there is a need to further refine and modernise our approach. We have recently been appointed as one of the institutes collaborating with the Federal Government to bridge the financial literacy gap for ten million Nigerians, and we intend to work closely with capital market operators to leverage this opportunity and make a meaningful impact.

In addition, we have developed a certification programme targeted at secondary school graduates and university undergraduates to promote inclusion and diversity, alongside ongoing outreach initiatives across primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. We also organise targeted engagements for policymakers, recognising that when financial literacy is

embraced at the leadership level, it becomes easier to drive policies that positively affect the broader population.

Furthermore, the institute operates an academy that offers a wide range of corporate learning solutions designed to support individuals in starting or transitioning into new careers. These include short-term training programmes, certification preparation, and career readiness initiatives, all aimed at building capacity and strengthening financial literacy across different segments of society.

► **Ethical challenges most pressing for brokers today, and how the institute addresses them**

The market is not as porous as it used to be in the 2000s. There is a whole lot of regulation and information available everywhere. Market operators are expected to uphold higher professional standards and continuously upskill in line with evolving economic conditions, product sophistication, and investor expectations.

The institute addresses these challenges by consistently updating its curriculum and expanding areas of specialisation to ensure that professionals provide informed, unbiased advice and do not mislead market stakeholders. This helps reduce the risk of stereotyping in advisory roles and promotes a more disciplined and knowledgeable professional base.

In addition, the Institute plays a regulatory role by overseeing the activities of its members and addressing matters connected therewith. It is empowered to investigate and discipline erring members, and in recent years, has delisted some individuals found to be in breach of professional standards.

To strengthen accountability, the institute has an established formal investigating and disciplinary mechanism in line with section 10 of the Act. These include the investigating panel and the disciplinary tribunal of the institute, both of which are



vested with the authority to handle cases of professional misconduct. The panel or the tribunal may, at its discretion, determine whether to take action in any given case, ensuring due process while maintaining the integrity of the profession

► **Being MD/CEO of First Securities Brokers Limited and responsibilities**

First Securities Brokers Limited, formally FBNQuest Securities, is the stockbroking arm of the FirstHoldco Group. My role involves developing and guiding the group's strategic focus to drive sustainable growth in the business. For any business to thrive sustainably, there should be proper structures, a risk management framework and good governance in place. At First Securities Brokers, we do not compromise on these. We have built an office environment where members of staff are respected, included, heard, trained and decently compensated, encouraging everyone to play their role. Our strategic objective is to lead in our industry across all parameters by 2029, and as a team, we are poised to make that happen.

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*My ability to be versatile and put my all into each role, defined success and growth in my career*

► **What stands your organisation out from others?**

As a subsidiary of one of Africa's largest and most trusted financial services groups, with an extensive network across sub-Saharan Africa, we have built a reliable and agile brand positioned to serve and scale across multiple geographies. Leveraging our diverse group structure, we provide access to capital



market solutions for a range of clients and increase awareness and participation in the market through our network. This makes us a strong choice for landmark market-making transactions shaping today's capital markets.

▶ **You held roles across accounting, corporate finance, asset/portfolio management, and more. Which single achievement in this broad scope most defined your career?**

My ability to be versatile and put my all into each role, defined success and growth in my career. For me, wherever I worked, I put my all in it, as if it were my father's company. I don't believe in mediocrity or only doing the minimum, the day I sign that offer letter, I commit to making the business mine, so I do everything I can to succeed. I have been blessed with employers who appreciate and value this quality and I tell myself that if I can do this for someone else, I can succeed at mine.

▶ **Landmark transaction you led at First Securities Brokers Limited and the key factors that contributed to its success**

At First Securities, we have taken on many landmark deals, but the one that stands out for me is the MTN offer and what defined it was the role technology played. With the reach we have as a business across continents, geographies, and branches leveraging our First Holdco group structure, we were able to expand our reach across the nation and beyond, thereby creating many new investors.

▶ **Market opportunities most excited about in Nigeria's capital markets, and how is your firm positioned to capitalise on them?**

The market is expanding. The digital asset space and African integration are budding, and we are keen to play major roles as First Securities Brokers Limited. The increasing importance of sustainability also opens new opportunities for impact investing, which we are observing as a potential area for us to explore.



*My top three priorities have always been an empowered workforce, profitability and market dominance*

▶ **Since you assumed the role of Managing Director, what has been your top strategic priority for the firm and has helped till date?**

My top three priorities have always been an empowered workforce, profitability and market dominance. I have invested in training and expanding my team, enabling

us to significantly improve our financial performance and market positioning. We will continue to consolidate on this to achieve our goal of being the top stockbroker in Nigeria.

▶ **To every top female executive, what would you want to say to them?**

You are enough, and your aspirations are valid. Continue to upscale, be diligent and learn to ask for the next level.

▶ **Concluding words**

Life is not a sprint but a journey, live each day like it's a destination reached. Love truly, enjoy the moments and look after your physical and mental health and always remember the proverb, 'Show me a man diligent in his ways and he will sit among kings'. Support others genuinely. God has a plan for us all, we need to work with him to achieve it. Thank you Kemi! Thank you IWA!



## *Election Announcement, change of baton at Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers (CIS)*



WOMAN EXECUTIVE

# The “After-Action” Legacy: What Happens When the Title Fades?

By Wola Joseph-Condotti

The email signature. The boardroom seat. The daily whirlwind of decisions, deadlines, and deliverables. For many of us in executive roles, leadership becomes a rhythm, a routine, a rush and, sometimes without warning, a root. We forget that the title will one day fade. And the question becomes: When the applause stops and the

business card changes, what remains? I have seen this play out again and again. Leaders who once commanded rooms struggling to define themselves in retirement or transition. Individuals who built billion-naira enterprises but neglected to build anything beyond the role. Executives whose entire sense of self was wrapped in a designation. When that role ended, so did their relevance in their eyes and sadly, in the eyes of some others.

It is not a crisis of competence. It is a crisis of identity.

### Titles Are Temporary. But Impact Can Be Eternal

I have learnt (sometimes the hard way) that we must hold titles lightly but carry purpose deeply. Because if all we have built rests solely on a role, then our leadership dies with the job. But when we invest in what I call “identity capital” (those values, skills, relationships, passions, and convictions that transcend a business card) we build a legacy that lives on. Your legacy is not what your title says. It is what your life seeds.

### The Subtle Trap of Success

The higher you rise, the easier it is to confuse being needed with being known. People defer to you. Rooms quiet when you walk in. Your calendar is full. Your name is invoked to validate decisions. And without realizing it, your worth becomes tethered to how many people report to you, how often you are consulted, and how visible you are in your industry. But titles can be taken. Retirements happen. Restructuring is real. And if you have not done the deeper work of identity formation, those transitions can feel like erasure rather than evolution.

### Lessons from Biblical Leadership

Consider Joseph. At one point, he was second only to Pharaoh in power, wealth, and prestige. But long before he wore the signet ring of Egypt, he had already built identity capital through discipline in Potiphar’s house, resilience in prison, integrity in temptation, and stewardship in obscurity. So when the palace came, he did not lose

himself in the title. And when that season ended, his legacy endured through generations, systems, and even famine. True leaders prepare for the palace but they also prepare for after the palace.

### How to Build Identity Capital

**1. Nurture purpose beyond performance**  
Have something in your life that is not tied to KPIs. Whether it is writing, mentoring, serving, or building. Something that speaks to your why, not just your what.

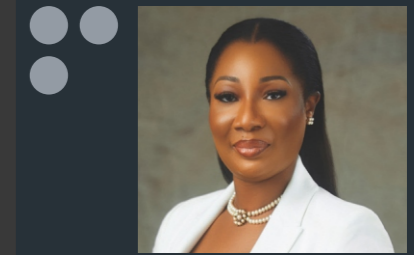
**2. Invest in people, not just projects**  
When your office is empty, will there be people whose lives you have poured into? Staff, mentees, children, even peers? Your ripple should outlive your tenure.

**3. Practice letting go while you are still in the role**  
Empower successors. Share knowledge. Avoid the temptation to hoard insight. That is not legacy. It is ego.

**4. Separate the platform from the person**  
You are not your title. Your essence, your faith, your wisdom, these must thrive even when your email address changes.

### Final Thoughts

I often say: The role is an assignment, not an identity. Whether you are at your peak or preparing to pivot, do not wait until the role ends to start asking deeper questions. Who am I when I am not in charge? Who have I become beyond the brand? What will remain when the spotlight dims? Because your real legacy is not etched on a brass plate outside your office. It is etched on the hearts, systems, and stories you have helped shape long after the nameplate is taken down. And that is the kind of legacy that never fades.



### Wola Joseph Condotti

Chief Executive Officer, Eko Electricity Distribution Company

Wola is the CEO of Eko Electricity Distribution Company (Eko Disco).

Prior to her current role, she was 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.

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

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

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

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

## GENDER INSIGHTS

# The Political Economy of Violence and the Abduction of Women and Children in Nigeria

Asmau Benzie Leo

The tragedy currently unfolding in the forests of northeastern Nigeria and the rural heartlands of the Middle Belt is not merely a sequence of isolated crimes, but the manifestation of a chilling political economy. Here, women and children are being hunted and captured to be traded as commodities in a cycle of violence that has evolved to defy decades of military intervention. The recent, harrowing abduction of over 416 women and children from Ngoshe in Borno State, following a brutal insurgent assault that displaced over 12,000 people alongside the massacre and mass kidnappings of over 170 persons in Kwara State, underscores a terrifying reality: mass abduction has been industrialized into a lucrative enterprise and a primary weapon of war.

These victims are far more than statistics; they are mothers torn from their families and daughters robbed of their futures. In Borno, the abduction of the Ngoshe residents and many such occurrences are emblematic of the long running insurgency driven by ISWAP and Boko Haram factions. Victims are often displayed in propaganda videos, a tactic designed to exert maximum psychological pressure on the government. More disturbingly, the demand for astronomical ransoms, accompanied by threats to "share" or permanently "disappear" the captives, reveals a brutal system where women are

treated as spoils of war, objects to be distributed or exploited to reward fighters.

This crisis has now breached its traditional geographical boundaries. The violence in Kwara State equally reflects a disturbing expansion of terror into regions once considered safe.

In February 2026, the Kaiama massacre saw 170 people killed and dozens of women abducted, signaling that the lines between ideological insurgency and criminal banditry have blurred into a single, predatory force.

Whether motivated by extremism or greed, the perpetrators target the most vulnerable because they are the most effective bargaining chips in a ransom economy. When these ransoms are paid, they provide the resources for armed groups to rearm; when they are not, the victims face the unimaginable horrors of forced marriage, sexual slavery, and lifelong trauma.

The persistence of these abductions signals a profound protection crisis. While the Nigerian government has intensified military operations, such as the recent "Operation Savannah Shield" and secured occasional rescues, the efforts remain insufficient against the scale of the threat. The convergence of extremist insurgency, organised crime, and weak governance has created an environment where human lives are effectively monetised. To break this cycle, the approach must shift from reactive military strikes to a holistic strategy that prioritises community based early warning systems, disrupts the financial flow of the



ransom economy, and integrates gender sensitive protection measures specifically designed to shield women and children.

Ultimately, the mass kidnappings in Ngoshe, Kwara, and even the recent raids on orphanages in Kogi state are indictments of a system that has struggled to protect its most vulnerable citizens. To ignore the gendered nature of this violence is to normalise the commodification of human beings. Acting decisively is the only way to affirm that women and children are not currency in a war economy, but citizens deserving of safety, dignity, and justice. Their lives must never again be the subject of a negotiation.

#### Recommendations:

To end this cycle of horror, Nigeria must adopt a holistic and decisive approach through the following:

- 1. Strengthen Community Protection Systems:** Establish well-trained, accountable local security networks with early warning systems in vulnerable areas.
- 2. Disrupt the Ransom Economy:** Develop clear policies that deter ransom payments while providing alternative rescue and negotiation frameworks.
- 3. Enhance Intelligence and Surveillance:** Invest in technology driven intelligence, including drones and community based informants, to track and prevent attacks.
- 4. Prioritise Women-Centered Protection Strategies:** Integrate gender sensitive approaches into security planning, including safe shelters and rapid

response units for women and children.

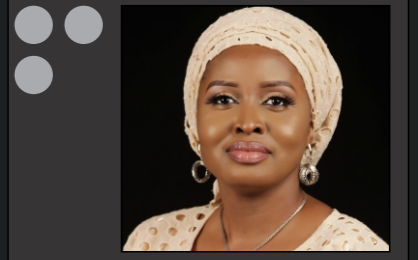
#### 5. Rehabilitation and Reintegration:

Provide comprehensive psychosocial support, education, and economic opportunities for survivors.

#### 6. Regional and International

**Collaboration:** Strengthen cross-border security cooperation to dismantle transnational networks enabling these crimes.

In conclusion, to ignore this crisis is to normalise the commodification of human lives. To act decisively is to affirm that women and children are not currency in a war economy, they are citizens deserving of dignity, safety, and justice. Their lives must never again be negotiated on the basis of insecurity.



#### Dr. Asmau Benzie Leo

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

Dr. Asmau Benzie 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.

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

# High-Income Broke Is the Most Dangerous Kind

By Sola Adesakin



There is a particular kind of financial vulnerability that does not look like vulnerability at all. The woman living it has a good job, possibly a great one. Her wardrobe is assembled carefully. She eats at the right places. She shows up to every occasion looking exactly like someone who has figured things out. And she has, in many ways. She has figured out how to earn. What she has not figured out is how to keep.

High-income broke is not a new phenomenon, but it is a growing one, and in Nigeria, it has some specific textures worth naming. The pressure to display prosperity, to show that your education and effort have produced visible results, is enormous. It is cultural, it is social, and it is, in many cases, completely disconnected from what is actually happening in your bank account.

Let us be precise about what high-income broke means. It does not mean you are struggling in an obvious way. It means your income is high, your expenses are higher, and your assets are either minimal or non-existent. Your cash flow looks healthy on salary day and is uncomfortable by the third week. You have no investment portfolio, or a negligible one. Your savings, if they exist, would cover perhaps two months of your current lifestyle. And if your income stopped tomorrow, the architecture of your life would begin to collapse within 90 days. That is not financial security. That is financial performance.

How does someone arrive here? Usually through a series of individually reasonable decisions that were never evaluated against each other. The apartment was a reasonable upgrade when the promotion came through. The car was a reasonable next step. The lifestyle that came with the new social circle felt like a natural evolution. No single decision was reckless. But they compound, and at some point, income becomes a treadmill rather than a launchpad.

The diagnostic question is simple: if you stopped working today, how long could you

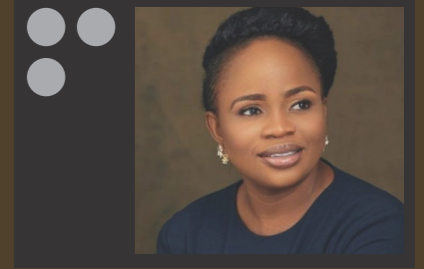
sustain your current life without borrowing? Six months is a minimum baseline. Twelve months is where stability begins. Beyond that, you are building genuine financial independence. Most people in the high-income broke category cannot honestly answer six months.

Getting out requires two things happening at the same time. First, a serious look at the gap between your income and your actual cost of living, not what you spend on necessities, but what your lifestyle actually costs each month in total. This number needs to be faced clearly, without rationalisation. Second, a commitment to directing a portion of every inflow, before lifestyle absorbs it, toward assets that will exist whether or not you are working. Equities, real estate, a diversified investment portfolio, a pension that you actively monitor rather than ignore.

The size of your income is not the problem. The structure around it is. A woman earning N500,000 a month with a savings rate of 20 percent and a growing investment portfolio is wealthier in any meaningful sense than a woman earning N2 million a month whose net worth is negative. Income is not wealth. Assets are wealth. The difference between the two is what you do in the space between earning and spending.

There is also something worth saying about social pressure, because it is real and it is not trivial. The expectation that a successful woman will live in a certain way, drive a certain car, dress at a certain level, contribute a certain amount to family needs, those expectations do not pause while you are trying to build a financial foundation. Navigating them requires clarity about what you are actually building, and the ability to hold that vision even when visibility is the more immediately rewarding option.

The car can be impressive later, when it is paid for by dividends. For now, the most powerful thing you can do is build a net worth that matches the life you project. Not to impress anyone. Simply because the performance, eventually, becomes exhausting, and the only thing that replaces it with something solid is wealth that is real.



By Sola Adesakin

Founder and Lead Coach,  
Smart Stewards

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

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

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

HER POINT OF VIEW



## The Power of a Name: How “Miss Dollar” Became a Career Lesson

Chinyere Okorochoa

### Names are powerful things.

Sometimes they begin as a joke, a nickname, or a moment in time. Yet, over the years, they quietly shape how people see us and sometimes even how we see ourselves. I learnt this lesson many years ago during my university days, in a way I never expected.

While I was in university, I entered a beauty pageant called the Miss Dollar Competition. At the time, it was simply one of those exciting campus activities that students participated in for fun. I remember the preparation vividly... rehearsals, wardrobe planning, stage practice, and the mixture of excitement and nervousness that comes with stepping onto a stage in front of a crowd. Looking back now, I smile when I remember how seriously we all took it.

But what made the experience memorable was not just participating, it was winning. I was crowned the winner of the competition, and from that day forward, something interesting happened. My classmates began calling me “Miss Dollar.”

At first it was just playful teasing. But over time, the name stuck. Long after the pageant ended and university life moved on, my classmates continued to call me Miss Dollar. Even today, decades later, when I reconnect with some of them, that is still the name they use.

At the time, of course, none of us thought too deeply about it. It was simply a nickname born out of a university event. But life has a curious way of weaving stories together.

After graduation, when I stepped into the working world and began my legal career, something remarkable happened. I secured a position in a law firm where I was paid partly in US dollars. Yes, you read that correctly. Miss Dollar... was now earning in dollars. Was it coincidence? Was it fate? Was it simply the randomness of life? I will leave that question for you to decide.

But what I do know is this: that experience taught me something profound about the power of identity and the subtle influence of names. Names carry energy. Titles carry expectations. Labels can shape perception.

When people began calling me Miss Dollar, it unintentionally attached an identity to me, one associated with value, success, and aspiration. And perhaps, without even realizing it, I carried that confidence with me into the next phase of my life.

This is why I often advise women, especially those building their careers, to be intentional about the way they present themselves to the world. How do you introduce yourself? What identity are you projecting? What narrative are you allowing others to associate with you?

Because over time, these things matter more than we realize. Your name, your title, and your personal brand begin to form a story around you.

In the professional world, perception often travels ahead of reality. People will form impressions about your competence, credibility, and capability long before they ever work with you. That is why being deliberate about your professional identity is so important.

For example, many women downplay their achievements when introducing themselves. “I just work in marketing.”

“I’m only an assistant.”  
“I help with operations.”

But imagine reframing those introductions. “I lead marketing strategy for my organisation.” “I support executive leadership and coordinate high-level operations.” “I specialise in operational excellence.”

The difference may sound subtle, but the impact is powerful.

Confidence in how you present yourself shapes how others respond to you. It shapes opportunities. It shapes visibility. And ultimately, it shapes your career trajectory.

Now, I am not suggesting that a nickname alone determines your destiny. Life is far more complex than that. But I do believe that identity matters.

Sometimes the names we carry remind us of possibilities we have not yet stepped fully into. Sometimes they challenge us to grow into something bigger. And sometimes, just sometimes, life has a poetic way of aligning those identities with our reality.

So yes, when my classmates still call me Miss Dollar today, I smile. Not just because it reminds me of youthful university memories, but because it also reminds me of an important life lesson.

The world often responds to the story you tell about yourself. So choose your story carefully. Choose your identity intentionally. And who knows, one day you may look back and realise that the name you carried quietly shaped the path you walked.

After all, sometimes a name is more than just a name. Sometimes it is a prophecy waiting to unfold.



### 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 AT THE HELM

# Abena Amoah

Managing Director, Ghana Stock Exchange



**A** bena Amoah is the first female Managing Director of the

Ghana Stock Exchange, appointed by the Exchange's Council on November 24, 2022. The Exchange was set up to provide the facilities and framework to the public for the purchase and sales of bonds, shares, and other securities. They also control the granting of quotations on the securities market in respect of bonds, shares, and other securities of any company, corporation, government, municipality, local authority, or other corporate body.

Furthermore, they function to regulate the dealings of members with their clients and other members, and co-operate with associations of stockbrokers and Stock Exchanges in other countries.

“For us at the Ghana Stock Exchange, running the Ghana fixed income market, our interest is to bring stakeholders to the table that enables or facilitates the access to capital by entrepreneurs looking for these opportunities, and viable investment opportunities for pension funds looking for projects to invest in.” Abena stated at an institutional investor roundtable.

Amoah joined the Exchange as

Deputy Managing Director on August 1, 2020, and has been in the capital market industry over the past 24 years. She is highly respected for her technical knowledge, business acumen, outstanding professionalism, and integrity.

Abena Amoah is an accomplished investment banker and capital markets expert who has led many landmark transactions for over 24 years. Her experience covers stock market listings and trading, mergers and acquisitions advisory, investment research, asset management to mention a few.

She has served on boards of companies – publicly listed, private and not-for-profit, and has been an advisor to the Government of Ghana and financial sector regulators in West Africa on the deepening of financial markets, and is highly respected in her industry for her outstanding professionalism and integrity. Abena started her career as an investment analyst and stockbroker, growing to build and lead top investment banks in Ghana.

She has previously worked with the BlackIvy Group LLC, where she led development of the 400-acre WestPark Industrial Park at Shama in the Western Region; Renaissance Group,

where she was CEO of NewWorld Renaissance Securities Ltd and Head of Investment Banking & Finance in West Africa (ex-Nigeria) for Renaissance Capital; and Strategic African Securities Ltd, where she was the Executive Director of the company.

In one of her granted interviews when asked to what extent diversification of investment products can improve market confidence, she responded saying diversifying investment portfolios across various asset classes will enable investors to reduce their exposure to specific risks associated with individual securities. For her, this risk mitigation strategy attracts more cautious investors who prefer balanced portfolios, thus increasing overall market participation and liquidity. “Diversified investment products attract a wider range of market participants, including individuals, institutional investors and traders” she said.

Abena is an alumna of the University of Ghana Business School and has also undertaken academic and leadership studies at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Harvard Business School and the University of Denver's Daniels College of Business, all in the USA.

WE'VE GOT MEN

## Cosmas Maduka

President/CEO of Coscharis Group



**H**is story is one that always inspires. Life had its way of constituting its obstacles but he chose to rise above it all and he succeeded. They said he wouldn't amount to much, but according to him, destiny had a bigger script. From hawking akara on the streets of Jos, Nigeria, barefoot and hungry, to building one of the biggest business empires, "My life has been anything but ordinary" he said.

"Every small sale taught me the power of service. Every rejection taught me persistence. Every loss taught me discipline. Today, as Coscharis stands tall, I look back and see that greatness is not built in comfort, but in consistent choices to rise above circumstances. If any story teaches you anything, let it be this, you don't have to start big to end great." He stated.

We speak of none other than Cosmas Maduka, Founder, President/CEO of Coscharis Group. At Coscharis, they collaborate with both local and international world-class entities that show in-depth expertise in their respective sectors with a renowned success at achieving sustainable development.

Over the years, Coscharis

pledged to deliver excellent products and services to their customers, giving them the highest value for their money, and will contribute to societal development and progress by exploring technological innovations, ploughing back resources for the society, providing fulfillment and a sense of pride in its employees, and will ensure the sustenance of these values by operating with increasing profit and waxing stronger and bigger into the future.

Cosmas started Coscharis Motors as a one-man business and today has transformed the organisation into an indigenous conglomerate with diverse interest in manufacturing, ICT, petrochemical, auto care and auto components, automobile sales and services, agric and agro allied business sectors of the Nigerian economy.

Through his visionary leadership, Coscharis Motors has secured the sole franchise of BMW, MINI, Rolls Royce and Jaguar Land Rover premium brands and Abro USA auto care and consumer products amongst others.

Coscharis is also a very strong partner for

distribution of Ford brand of automobiles in Nigeria. Cosmas is currently serving on the Board of several companies notable among them are CG-EKO LLP, First System Refinishes Ltd., CG Biostadt Limited, Sixt Rentals, Nigeria.

He served as a Director in Access Bank Plc., for 12 years from 2000-2012. He also served as the President/Chairman of the Nigerian Table Tennis Federation for 16 years during which Nigeria led Africa in all the events. He led the Nigerian team to the Olympic Games; Atlanta '96, Athens 2000, Sidney 2004 and Beijing 2008.

Cosmas Maduka is an entrepreneur par excellence. He is a motivational speaker and plays a mentoring role to upcoming entrepreneurs. Maduka is a holder of Honorary Doctor of Business Administration, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 2003.

He is an alumnus of Harvard Business School (Executive Education Program). In September 2012, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria conferred him with the National Honours of the Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON).

HOLISTIC LIVING

# THE COST OF SILENT PRESSURE

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



In today's world, success is often measured by how much one can endure. The ability to carry expectations, manage financial pressure, and still show up daily is frequently applauded as strength. But beneath this quiet resilience lies a growing crisis—one that is rarely spoken about yet deeply felt. The cost of living a life misaligned with one's capacity is not just stress; it is a slow erosion of holistic wellbeing.

Across cities like Lagos, countless individuals are navigating an invisible balancing act. They are expected to provide, to succeed, to meet familial and societal standards, while simultaneously managing their own aspirations and limitations. On the surface, they appear functional. Internally, many are overwhelmed, fatigued, and stretched

beyond what is sustainable.

This is not merely a financial issue. It is not just a mental health issue. It is a holistic living crisis.

Consider the journey of a young professional burdened by responsibility. His life became a constant negotiation between expectations and reality. Financial obligations grew, societal pressures intensified, and over time, the weight began to manifest in every aspect of his life. Sleep became inconsistent, eating patterns disrupted, and his mind, once clear and focused, became clouded with worry.

What makes this story particularly important is not the struggle itself, but what it reveals.

The human system is interconnected. When financial stress rises, it does not stay confined to bank accounts. It affects sleep, mood, decision-making, relationships, and physical health. When expectations become overwhelming, they do not remain external; they become internalised, shaping self-worth and identity. This is why holistic living cannot be optional. It is no longer sufficient to address one area of life while neglecting others. True wellbeing requires alignment—where financial realities, personal values, emotional health, and physical vitality coexist in a way that is sustainable.

One of the most powerful shifts an individual can make is internal reflection. Understanding one's limits, priorities, and values creates clarity

during chaos. It allows individuals to distinguish between what is necessary and what is imposed. Without this awareness, it becomes easy to live a life driven entirely by external expectations.

Equally important is financial awareness—not as a source of fear, but as a tool for control. Budgeting, planning, and seeking guidance are not signs of inadequacy; they are strategies for stability. Financial clarity reduces uncertainty, and with reduced uncertainty comes improved mental and emotional wellbeing. However, financial stability alone is not enough.

Many individuals achieve financial progress while simultaneously neglecting their health, relationships, and sense of self. This creates a different kind of imbalance—one where success exists externally but emptiness persists

internally. This is where intentional balance becomes critical.

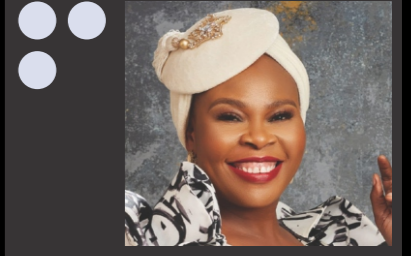
Holistic living requires the integration of rest, movement, emotional expression, and meaningful connection into daily life. It is about creating rhythms that sustain rather than deplete. Simple practices—pausing during the day, engaging in conversations that matter, protecting sleep, and creating boundaries can significantly shift one's overall wellbeing.

Boundaries are often misunderstood. They are not acts of rebellion; they are acts of preservation. Learning to communicate limits, to say no when necessary, and to prioritise personal wellbeing does not weaken relationships—it strengthens them by fostering honesty and sustainability.

Community also plays a vital role in this journey. No individual is designed to navigate life's complexities alone. Support systems—friends, family, mentors provide perspective, encouragement, and relief. Sharing burdens does not eliminate them, but it makes them lighter. In environments where open communication is encouraged, resilience becomes a shared resource rather than an individual struggle.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of holistic living is the courage to seek help. Whether through professional guidance, financial counselling, or trusted relationships, reaching out is not a sign of failure. It is a step towards restoration. The reality is this: the pressures of modern life are not going away. Expectations will continue to exist. Financial responsibilities will remain. But how individuals navigate them can change.

The goal is not to eliminate pressure, but to build capacity in a way that is sustainable. Because when life becomes a constant sacrifice of wellbeing for survival, something fundamental is lost. True success is not measured by how much one can carry, but by how well one can live. And holistic living begins when we stop trying to meet every expectation and start choosing alignment instead.



**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.



# A Journey Through Traditional Beauty & Flavor


*Inside Clay Food Shop & The Henna Place*

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

## Clayfoodshop

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


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

 [@clayfoodshoplagos](https://www.instagram.com/clayfoodshoplagos)  
: +234909 554 4990

## The Henna Place

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

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

 [@Thehennaplace](https://www.instagram.com/Thehennaplace)  
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