



INSPIRING
WOMAN
AFRICA

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BOLAJI
SOFOLUWE (MBE)

A SEASON OF HONOURS, A LIFE OF GLOBAL IMPACT

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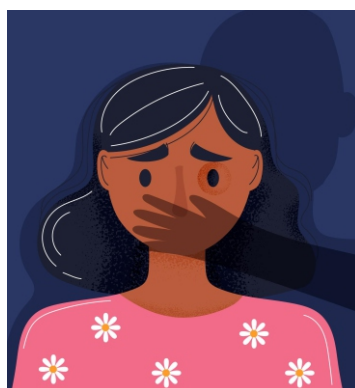
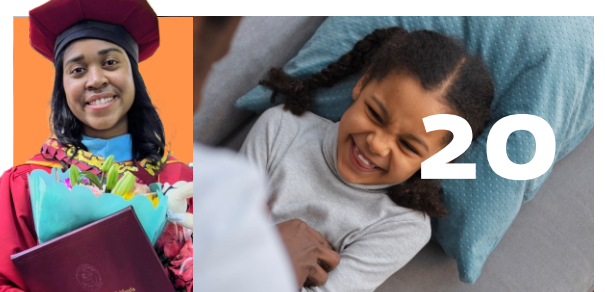
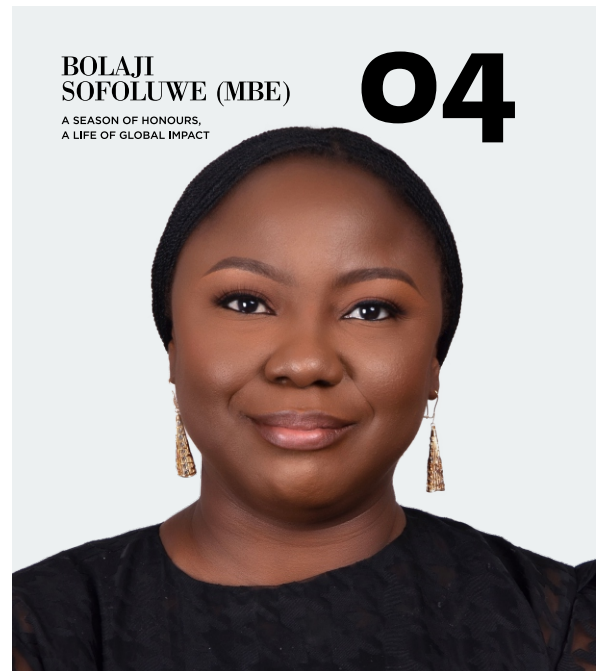
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**The Silence Many
Women Carry**





**Kemi
Ajumobi**

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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

IWA is ready to deliver to you an edition like no other. Are you ready? Let's dive in.

A lot is being projected about Africa on the global scene. Some positive and others overtly exaggerated negativity. That is why, whenever I see something great about Africans doing well on the global scene, I will be there to project it, especially when it concerns women. My cover guest for this week is one of such distinguished women.

She is BOLAJI SOFOLUWE (MBE), a business growth specialist in international trade, with over 20 years' experience. She is also Co-Founder and Managing Director of ETK Group. Between 2025 and 2026, she was awarded an MBE in the 2025 New Years' Honours list for services to sustainable business growth, female entrepreneurship and international trade, and in 2026, her company ETK received UK's most prestigious business award - The King's Award for Enterprise.

ETK has facilitated over £1.5 billion in trade and investment across 34 African countries. A brilliant feat I dare say. I love how she is impacting and supporting organisations through her company.

We wanted to hear her story and pick some nuggets from her wealth of wisdom and she intelligently gave it away. We share all of that with you in this edition. We also congratulate and celebrate her wins. More to come Bolaji!

Here are other articles in this edition:

HER POINT OF VIEW: The Silence Many Women Carry. By Chinyere Okorochoa.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: Beyond the Boardroom: The Humanity of Leadership. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

FINANCIAL AdviseHER: Bouncing Back from a Financial Loss. By Sola Adesakin.

HOLISTIC LIVING: Your Child's Wellbeing Is Built At Home, Not Taught In Clinics. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

IN THE NEWS: ZURIEL ODUWOLE (Ed.D) raises her bar yet again.

WE'VE GOT MEN: BRIGHT SIMONS, President, mPedigree.

WOMAN AT THE HELM: DOLAPO KUKOYI, Founder/Lead Advisor at Open Spaces & Bridges, and AFARA.

Have a beautiful and fulfilling week!

See you here again next week!



COVER INTERVIEW

BOLAJI SOFOLUWE (MBE)

A SEASON OF HONOURS,
A LIFE OF GLOBAL IMPACT

Kemi Ajumobi

Bolaji Sofoluwe MBE is a business growth through international trade specialist with over 20

years' experience. She is Co-Founder and Managing Director of ETK Group, a King's Award for Enterprise winning market entry and expansion firm that has facilitated over £1.5 billion in trade and investment across 34 African countries, supporting sectors including aviation, financial services, health tech, energy, agriculture and advanced manufacturing. Four years ago, she expanded the company into Latin America, opening an office in Sao Palo, Brazil.

Bolaji is a Visiting Faculty member, Entrepreneurship and Growth Expert at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, she serves on a number of Boards including the Greater Essex Business Board as Inward Investment Coordinator and is a DBT Export Champion. She is also an angel investor, backing female-led ventures with seed and growth capital. Recognised in the UK Powerlist 2024, 2025 and 2026, Bolaji was awarded an MBE in the 2025 New Years' Honours list for services to sustainable business growth, female entrepreneurship and international trade. In 2026, her



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ETK has facilitated over £1 billion in trade and investment across African markets



The opportunity is rarely in the obvious headline; it is often in the gap between unmet need and practical market access

company ETK received UK's most prestigious business award - The King's Award for Enterprise. A respected thought leader, she has featured on several local and international media platforms.

Bolaji has two lovely daughters and is married to her husband of 21 years, Samuel.

► **Why the focus on international trade as a driver of growth and when was the defining moment?**

The defining moment for me was seeing that international trade is not just about moving goods or services, it is about opening access. When ETK began helping British companies move from interest in Africa to real partnerships, market presence and revenue, I saw how trade could change the trajectory of businesses that understood the strategic value of international expansion. That reinforced my belief that structured market entry, local intelligence and trusted relationships can facilitate significant growth. I also realised that it didn't have to be one-sided, both

parties could equally benefit. ETK has now facilitated over £1 billion in trade and investment across African markets, which has only strengthened that conviction.

► **You received an MBE and ETK received the King's Business Award, both between 2025 and 2026. What does this mean to you? How do you hope these recognitions accelerate ETK Group's impact?**

It still feels quite surreal, to be honest. I am more of an engine room girl who just gets on with my work, because I love what I do so much. The MBE was deeply personal because it recognised my contributions to sustainable business growth, international trade and women in entrepreneurship. This is my life's work that is combined in my varied roles. The King's Award for Enterprise belongs to the incredible ETK team. As the most prestigious award in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, it validates the years of work we have done helping businesses access high-growth African markets with confidence. My hope is that these recognitions open more

doors, deepen trust with partners and allow ETK to scale its impact even further.

► **Decision made that shaped ETK Group's path to £1.5 billion in trade and investment**

Yes, and that was the decision to focus on Africa with real in-market capability, rather than simply providing desk-based advice. We built ETK around relationships, local intelligence and implementation support. That meant helping clients with market entry, partnerships, registrations, offices, projects and expansion across trade blocs. That practical, on-the-ground model shaped everything that followed and continues to be a point of differentiation amongst our competitors.



▶ **Leadership practice most influential in sustaining growth across 34 African countries and Latin America**

We don't have offices in all those countries, so one major leadership habit is being intentional about investing in relationships. My first thought is usually, "How can I help?" That approach has built the ecosystem around ETK. You can't draw down from something you haven't invested in. I believe the same for relationships with individuals and the companies in this ecosystem.

▶ **Identifying high-potential but under-tapped markets for entry and expansion**

I look for the intersection of demand, readiness and access. A market may be large, but if the regulatory environment, route to market or partnership ecosystem is weak, timing matters. We assess sector growth, policy direction, infrastructure, competition, local partners, customer behaviour and execution risk. The opportunity is rarely in the obvious headline; it is often in the gap between unmet need and practical market access. We are also developing technology that improves the accuracy of market opportunity.

▶ **Assessing and mitigating ESG and sustainability risks in cross-border trade and investment projects**

We start by understanding the local context: governance, community impact, environmental exposure, labour practices, procurement risks and stakeholder expectations. Someone once said to me "There's no word for sustainability in Swahili!". ESG cannot be treated as a reporting exercise at the end, it must be built into project design, partner selection, due diligence and delivery. For me, sustainable trade means growth that is commercially viable, locally respectful and ethically implemented within the nuance and the context of the market you operate in.

▶ **The role of technology in accelerating market entry and expansion for clients and sector with most potential for female-led ventures to scale globally**

Technology allows us to turn years of market intelligence into better, faster decisions. At ETK, tools such as Momentum, which we use to strengthen organisational capacity and our market-entry software help clients assess readiness, navigate complexity and access data points that are critical for expansion. It would be hard to decide which sector has the most potential for female-led ventures because women can do everything. I would like to see women creating technology-enabled businesses that can be globally competitive. If I were to choose, I would definitely highlight fashion and beauty, as technology is exposing designers to global markets in an unprecedented way.

▶ **Practical steps female founders take to secure seed and growth capital in competitive markets**

Be investment-ready before you start fundraising. Know your numbers, your market, your customer, your route to scale and your ask. Build relationships with investors before you need capital. I repeat, build relationships before the fact. Use mentors, advisory boards and strategic introductions, just be intentional about your networking. Also, do not underestimate the value of visibility: speak, publish, pitch and show evidence of traction. Capital follows confidence, clarity and credible execution.

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Investing in women is not charity, it translates directly to economic development. There are studies that prove this





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I work with our MBAs and Executive MBAs from across the Oxford ecosystem, through our Venture Builder Programme

▶ **How corporate boards and investors can better support female-led ventures across international markets?**

They need to move from sympathy to strategy. Investing in women is not charity, it translates directly to economic development. There are studies that prove this. Boards and investors can support female-led ventures by widening access to networks, challenging bias in due diligence, offering commercial introductions and backing women into international supply chains. We also need more female-led venture funds, and equity investors. Representation in investment decision-making also matters.

▶ **Most critical skills as a facilitator at Saïd Business School for aspiring entrepreneurs**

I work with our MBAs and Executive MBAs on their entrepreneurship projects, as well as aspiring entrepreneurs from across the Oxford ecosystem, through our Venture Builder Programme. I am known for my insistence on clarity, commercial discipline and execution. Whilst we encourage out-of-the-box, innovative thinking, for me, a good idea is not enough. Entrepreneurs must understand their customer, their value proposition, their business model, their route to market and the operational structure required to deliver. I also encourage them to test assumptions early rather than fall in love with an unvalidated idea.

▶ **Tell us about your podcast, reason for it and results**

The Unlocking Africa podcast is hugely popular and is hosted by my colleague, Terser Adamu. It was created to make business growth, international trade and entrepreneurship more accessible. He wanted to use conversations to demystify what it takes to build, scale and enter new markets, particularly for founders who may not have access to traditional networks. The result has been stronger visibility for our thought leadership, deeper engagement with entrepreneurs and a platform to amplify the voices of founders and experts who are shaping growth.



▶ **Criteria that guides your decision to back female-led ventures as an angel investor?**

I always need a disciplined approach because I tend to get very excited when I meet an entrepreneur with a focused vision and clarity of thinking. The founder needs to be solving a real problem. I am particularly interested in businesses where international expansion is possible.

▶ **Evaluating the scalability and social impact potential of a start-up before investing**

I ask two questions: can this business grow beyond the founder, and does that growth create meaningful value for others? I look at the repeatability of the model and evidence of demand.

▶ **Day never to be forgotten and why?**

The day my father died. In that moment, my world stood still, but almost immediately I felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility to honour and preserve his legacy through my work and the way I relate to others. His passing reminded me how fleeting life truly is. My father died empty, he genuinely gave everything he had to his work, his family and the people around him. Watching the way he poured himself out so selflessly shaped me profoundly, and I became determined to live by that same example.

▶ **Concluding Words**

There is a tendency for us to measure our lives against the achievements of others, but it is ultimately an exercise in futility. We all arrive with different gifts, talents, experiences, stories and scars. No two journeys are ever truly the same. In the end, what matters most is not how closely your story resembles someone else's, but what you choose to make of your own. Secondly, my path in life was shaped by a deep love for the continent that raised me, despite being born in Britain. As a child, I was endlessly curious and deeply creative, devouring encyclopaedias and learning a little about almost everything. Looking back, that curiosity became the foundation for the work I do today.



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WOMAN EXECUTIVE

Beyond the Boardroom: The Humanity of Leadership

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



season.” In acknowledging that leadership does not exempt you from being human. I have had moments in leadership where strength looked like decisiveness. And others where strength looked like honesty. And in those moments of authenticity, something powerful happens: People do not lose respect for you. They connect with you.

Because perfection distances. But authenticity draws people in.

A Biblical Perspective

One of the most profound examples of leadership is found in Jesus. He led crowds, but He also paused for individuals. He performed miracles, but He also wept. He carried authority, but He also carried compassion.

He was powerful, yet deeply personal. And that is the balance we must strive for as leaders: To lead with strength, but never lose our softness. To carry authority, but never abandon empathy.

Final Thoughts

The world does not need more perfect leaders. It needs more present leaders. More compassionate leaders. More human leaders. Because long after the numbers fade, what people remember is how you made them feel. Whether you saw them. Whether you valued them. Whether you led them not just with your mind but with your heart.

So as you sit in boardrooms, lead teams, make decisions, and drive results, remember this:

You are not just building an organisation. You are shaping lives.

And the greatest legacy you will leave will not be found in reports or records but in the people who became better, stronger, and more whole because they were led by you.

That is leadership. Beyond the boardroom.

The Strength in Being Human

For a long time, leadership was defined by distance. The leader was expected to be composed, controlled, almost untouchable. Vulnerability was seen as weakness. Emotion was seen as inefficiency. But the most impactful leaders I have encountered (and strive to be) are those who understand that humanity is not a liability. It is a leadership advantage.

- The leader who listens, not just instructs
- The leader who sees, not just supervises
- The leader who cares, not just commands

These are the leaders people remember. These are the leaders people follow, even when they do not have to.

Compassion Is Not Soft. It Is Strategic

Let us be clear: compassion is not the absence of accountability. You can be kind and still be firm. You can be empathetic and still demand excellence. In fact, the most sustainable high-performance cultures are built on trust, not fear.

When people feel seen, they give more. When people feel valued, they stay longer. When people feel safe, they innovate better. Compassion is not just a moral choice, it is a strategic one.

The Courage to Be Vulnerable

There is a quiet courage in letting people see your humanity. In admitting, “I do not have all the answers.” In saying, “This is a difficult

metrics over meaning. With outcomes over people. With perfection over presence. We forget that behind every KPI is a person. Behind every deliverable is a human being navigating life; family pressures, health struggles, silent battles. And when leadership loses sight of humanity, organisations may still perform... but they slowly begin to fracture.

Humanity

Because no matter how advanced our systems become, leadership is still, at its core, about people.

The Quiet Shift We Must Make

We are living in a time where leaders are under immense pressure to deliver. To outperform. To constantly prove value. And in that pursuit, something subtle happens. We begin to lead with

Leadership, at its highest level, is often measured in numbers. Revenue. Growth. Market share. Efficiency.

Boardrooms celebrate performance. Dashboards track output. Reports highlight results. But beneath all of that (beneath the strategy decks and operational excellence) is something far more powerful, yet often overlooked:



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.

FINANCIAL AdviseHER



Bouncing Back from a Financial Loss

By Sola Adesakin

We have all been there. You trusted someone, or something. Maybe it was a friend who swore the investment was

solid. Maybe it was a platform that promised 40% returns in three months and had the testimonials to prove it. Maybe it was the stock market, which is at least honest about being unpredictable. However it happened, the money is gone, and now you are sitting

with the specific kind of shame that comes from losing what you worked hard to build.

The first thing to say is this: losing money does not make you stupid. It makes you human. Some of the most financially

sophisticated people in the world have been caught in schemes designed by people whose only real skill was deception. The Ponzi scheme, named after Charles Ponzi who ran his in the 1920s, has been repackaged and relaunched in every era since, and it keeps working because it exploits hope, which is not a character flaw. It is part of being alive.

What matters now is what you do next. Give yourself a short window to feel it. Not months, but a few days of honest acknowledgment. Pretending it does not hurt delays the processing and tends to lead

to reckless recovery attempts, which is how people double their losses. Sit with it, then move.

Get completely clear on the actual number. Many people in this situation avoid knowing the precise damage because the precision makes it more real. It is more real either way. Knowing the number gives you something to work with. Not knowing it just gives the loss more power than it deserves.

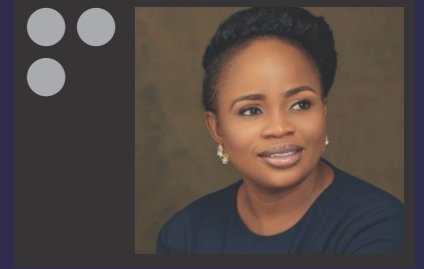
Do not try to recover the loss quickly. This is the most important thing I can say in this column today. The urgency to make it back fast is what sends people straight into the next bad decision. High-risk recovery plays almost always make things worse. The money is gone. Your only job now is to rebuild steadily, not to recoup in a hurry.

Rebuild from your income, not from new speculation. Go back to basics. What are you earning? What are your essential expenses? What can you consistently set aside each month in something boring and regulated: a treasury bill, a money market fund, a pension top-up? Boring is good right now. Boring is what rebuilds.

Protect yourself going forward with a simple rule: if you do not fully understand how a return is generated, you do not put your money there. Not a partial understanding. Full understanding. Where does the money come from? How is the return funded? Who regulates this platform or scheme? These questions sound simple but most of us stop asking them when the return sounds attractive enough.

Finally, talk about it. Not to broadcast your loss, but because silence around financial mistakes is what keeps the next generation vulnerable to the same things. When you share your experience, even privately with people close to you, you reduce stigma and increase collective awareness. Your loss can become someone else's prevention.

The financial setback is not the end of the story. It is a chapter. And the chapters that come after it, when written carefully, tend to be the most instructive ones of your life.



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 InstructorSM and a member of the Personal Finance Speakers Association.

HER POINT OF VIEW

The Silence Many Women Carry

Chinyere Okorochoa



There are some stories women carry quietly for years. Stories that sit in the corners of memory, rarely spoken about, sometimes even pushed aside in the hope that silence will somehow make them disappear.

This is one of those stories.

Many years ago, when I was a university student, I was intensely focused on my education. I was not in a relationship and spent most of my time studying and building friendships. Like many young

women on campus, I had several male friends around me, people I trusted, laughed with, and felt safe around.

Or so I thought.

One of them, I will call him Daniel, was a good-looking, popular student who seemed to belong to what people often described as the “it crowd.” He was charming, confident, and widely liked. To me, he was simply someone I considered a friend.

One afternoon, while I was heading back

to my hostel from lectures, Daniel suggested I stop by his apartment to pick up something he said he had for me. I do not even remember now what it was supposed to be. At the time, it felt harmless.

I went.

Looking back today, that moment still troubles me, not because I did anything wrong, but because it reminds me how easily trust can be misplaced.

When I arrived at his apartment,

everything initially seemed normal. We exchanged the usual pleasantries. But within moments, the situation changed in ways I could never have imagined.

What followed was a terrifying experience that I had not seen coming, an act of betrayal and violence by someone I trusted.

When it was over, I gathered myself as best as I could and left as quickly as I could.

I never spoke to Daniel again.

And perhaps even more telling, I never spoke about what had happened to anyone.

For many years, I carried the experience in silence.

Like many survivors, I questioned myself. I wondered whether I had somehow misunderstood the situation. Whether I had done something to invite it. Whether I had been naive.

These are the cruel questions many women ask themselves after experiencing sexual violence, questions that often silence us even further.

For a long time, I pushed the memory aside. I focused on my studies, completed my education, and moved forward with life. In many ways, I convinced myself that the best way to survive was simply not to revisit it.

Then something unexpected happened.

Several years after I had graduated from university, when I was living alone in my apartment, there was a knock on my door one evening.

To my absolute shock, Daniel was standing there.

I stared at him in disbelief and asked what he wanted.

He asked if he could speak with me for a few minutes.

I stepped outside immediately. There was no way I would ever again find myself

alone in a room with him.

Standing outside my apartment, he apologised. He said he had come to ask for forgiveness. He explained that he was trying to make amends for past actions and wanted to acknowledge what he had done.

His words stirred emotions I had buried for years.

In that moment, something else became clear to me: the experience I had tried so hard to forget had indeed been real.

For years I had almost convinced myself that perhaps I had misunderstood what happened or somehow been responsible for it.

But hearing him admit what he had done confirmed what I had always known deep inside.

What happened was not my fault. I told him that I had heard what he said. Then I closed the door.

More than thirty years have passed since that day at university.

Yet the lessons from that experience remain deeply relevant.

Too many women carry painful experiences in silence, believing they must endure them quietly in order to move forward.

But silence often protects the wrong person.

If there is one message I hope to leave with any woman reading this, it is this:

What happened to you was not your fault.

Your voice matters. Your safety matters. Your healing matters.

And even when the journey is long, you are not alone.

Sometimes the bravest thing a woman can do is to stop carrying a silence that was never hers to bear.



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

Dolapo Kukoyi

Founder/Lead Advisor at Open Spaces & Bridges, and AFARA



Dolapo Kukoyi is an energy and infrastructure strategist, legal expert, and governance leader with over 20 years of experience delivering high-impact projects across Africa. Until June 2025, she was Senior Partner at Detail Commercial Solicitors, Lagos, where she led complex transactions in energy, climate finance, and investment strategy, advising organisations on regulation, financial structuring, and sustainable growth.

She is now Founder and Lead Advisor at Open Spaces and Bridges, a strategic energy and infrastructure advisory firm focused on Africa and emerging markets, and Founder of AFARA, an accelerator supporting African women entrepreneurs in energy and infrastructure.

Today, 19th of May, 2026, AFARA

Africa Accelerator Immersive is launched. A gathering of founders, investors, policymakers, industry leaders, and ecosystem partners committed to advancing women-led ventures across Africa's energy and infrastructure sectors.

AFARA, through its initiatives, has pledged to continue to support African women building bold solutions by improving access to funding, partnerships, mentorship, and growth opportunities.

Also, among Dolapo's numerous hats includes serving as a senior international consultant, advising governments, regulators, development finance institutions, donors, philanthropies, and think tanks, including GIZ, GET.transform, GET.invest, FCDO, CIG Zambia, the

African Climate Foundation, and the Nigerian Economic Summit Group.

She has led technical assistance programmes that expand energy access and accelerate the energy transition in Nigeria and across Africa. She serves on several boards, including Kowry Energy, Arctic Infrastructure, and the Nigerian Economic Summit Group, helping shape investment policy, governance frameworks, and climate finance strategy. Her work has been recognised by IFLR 1000, Chambers, and Who's Who Legal.

Dolapo is a speaker and thought leader who is passionate about advancing women in professional and entrepreneurial spaces. She is married with two children and enjoys music, leisure travel, and amateur golf.

WE'VE GOT MEN

Bright Simons

President, mPedigree



Bright Simons, is the President of mPedigree, a social enterprise working on three continents in partnership with governments, several of the Fortune 500 companies and grassroots organisations to spread innovative technologies that secure communities from the harmful effects of counterfeiting, especially in such sensitive sectors as health, agriculture, cosmetics and automotive.

Bright has shaped mPedigree's relentless innovation cycle for more than a decade, helping steer the organisation from a focus on authentication and supply chain technologies into the broader spaces of smart sensors, analytics, and intelligent decision support systems.

His latest work on the application of "smart polymers" to health cold chain problems has been supported by the Harvard Innovation Labs, among others.

Bright's public-spirited work precedes and extends beyond mPedigree. For nearly two decades he has straddled public policy, social and civic activism and prolific "citizen journalism" in what he considers the "digital public square", writing for such influential outlets as the online edition of the Harvard Business Review, Quartz magazine, the BBC's Business Daily show, and the Huffington Post.

He is a frequent collaborator and participant in multi-disciplinary efforts that seek to collide silos and cut across lines of difference in the search for solutions.

Recent commitments include membership in the inaugural Microsoft Africa Advisory Council, the Lancet Commission on the Future of Health in Africa, the Centre for Global Development's Study Group on Technology, the World Economic Forum's Africa Strategy Group, the inaugural Ashoka Globalizer initiative, the Africa Population Health Research Centre, Care

International, and IC Publications, owner of the New African magazine.

As an early Director at IMANI, he has been instrumental in the organisation's innovative use of rigorous research-generated evidence in high-stakes political accountability, anti-corruption, and civil liberty projects, thereby contributing to IMANI's continuous recognition as one of the world's most innovative think tanks and among Africa's top 5 institutions of its kind.

As a member of successive World Economic Forum Global Agenda and Future Councils, an inaugural TED Fellow, an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellow, and an Aspen Braddock Scholar and Global Leadership Network Fellow, he spends a considerable amount of energy working to build and sustain networks of solution seekers around the world, united by common values.

In the course of such activities, he is regularly consulted on innovation strategy by international organisations such as the World Bank, UNECA, USAID, the EU, and the Commonwealth.

Bright is a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award from the African Innovation Foundation and was named to a list of the 35 most impressive global technology visionaries under age 35 by the MIT's Tech Review in 2013. He features quite regularly on similar lists. For example, Quartz magazine ranked him among their top 30 innovators in 2015 and both the Africa Report and New African magazines have listed him on their Most Influential Persons' lists in recent years. In 2016, he was announced as the CNBC All-Africa Business Leader of the Year in the innovation category.

In 2016, Fortune magazine named him on their 50 World Greatest Leaders list.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Your Child's Wellbeing is Built at Home, not Taught in Clinics

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

In a world increasingly focused on performance, achievement, and measurable success, we are quietly overlooking one of the most important investments any society can make, the holistic wellbeing of its children. Health is not something that begins in hospitals or is corrected in adulthood. It is shaped early, lived daily, and reinforced through the environments children grow up in.

The real question is no longer whether children should develop healthy habits. It is whether we, as families, schools, and communities, are creating ecosystems that make those habits natural, sustainable, and meaningful.

In one family, this understanding became a way of life. Two children, full of

potential and curiosity, were not just taught what it meant to be healthy, they experienced it. Their home was not governed by rigid rules but by intentional living. Meals were not just about food; they were about nourishment, connection, and shared responsibility. Movement was not punishment; it was joy. Sleep was not an afterthought; it was protected.

What made the difference was not perfection. It was consistency. This is the essence of holistic living. It goes beyond telling children to "eat well" or "exercise more." It is about creating a lifestyle where physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing are interconnected and equally prioritised.

Children do not learn from

instruction alone. They learn from observation. The habits they carry into adulthood are often reflections of what they repeatedly see and experience. When parents model balance, when homes prioritise connection over chaos, and when routines are built around wellbeing rather than convenience, children internalise these patterns as normal.

Nutrition, for instance, is not just about calories and nutrients. It is about relationship with food, with family, and with self. When children are involved in preparing meals, when they understand where food comes from, and when eating becomes a shared experience, they develop healthier attitudes that extend far beyond the plate.

Physical activity follows a similar pattern. It is not about enforcing exercise as an obligation, but about integrating movement into daily life. Whether through play, sports, dance, or simple outdoor activities, movement becomes a natural expression of energy and joy. In such environments, children are not forced to be active, they want to be.

Sleep, often underestimated, is equally foundational. In a culture that glorifies busyness, children are increasingly exposed to irregular routines and overstimulation. Yet, adequate rest is critical for cognitive development, emotional regulation, and overall resilience. Protecting sleep is not just a parental responsibility; it is a societal one.

Beyond the physical, there is an equally urgent need to address emotional and social wellbeing. Children today are growing up in a world that is more connected digitally but often more disconnected relationally. Excessive screen time, reduced face-to-face interaction, and increasing academic pressure are reshaping childhood in ways we are only beginning to understand.

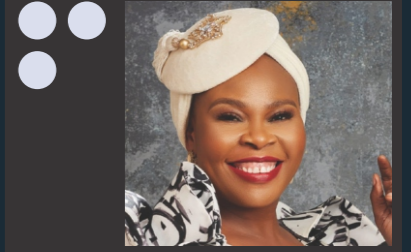
This is where intentional living becomes critical. Setting boundaries around screen use, encouraging creative play, and fostering open communication are not restrictive practices, they are protective ones. They create space for imagination, connection, and emotional expression.

Research continues to affirm that early life experiences significantly influence long-term health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization, behaviours established during childhood and adolescence often track into adulthood, shaping risks for chronic diseases, mental health conditions, and overall quality of life. This underscores a powerful truth: prevention does not start in clinics; it starts in homes. But this responsibility does not rest on families alone.

Schools, communities, and policymakers all play a role in shaping the environments children grow up in. Access to safe recreational spaces, quality education, nutritious food, and supportive social systems are not luxuries, they are necessities for raising healthy generations. When these systems align, the impact is exponential.

Ultimately, raising healthy children is not about creating perfect routines or achieving ideal standards. It is about building lives that are balanced, connected, and sustainable. At the end, we are not just raising children who can succeed academically or professionally. We are raising future adults who must navigate complex lives, manage stress, build relationships, and sustain their wellbeing. The habits we help them build today will determine how well they do that tomorrow.

Holistic living is not a trend. It is a foundation. and it begins with how we choose to raise our children.



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.

IN THE NEWS

ZURIEL ODUWOLE (Ed.D) raises her bar yet again

Kemi Ajumobi

“Hello Aunty Kemiiiiiiiiiiii ” I could literally hear her voice through the several times the letter “I” was added to my name from her message to me.



continue reading her message. “First, I’m simply grateful to God for the ability, wisdom and strength to start this doctoral degree, in a class where there were 40 year-olds and 50 year olds, and finished successfully too, in between all else I do. It simply shows the power of the mind but especially, a woman’s mind.” She said but she certainly wasn’t done. “Despite all I had done since I was 10, some people still asked how I learned to do my advocacy and if I even went to school or had a qualification before doing it. Well, now I can very quietly show my doctoral degree, from USC.” She ended. The other part of the message she sent is Aunty Kemi and Zuriel’s private convo...haha!

Someone get me a handkerchief...my baby girl is all grown up. Is “proud” the right word? Someone help me grasp this feeling.

So, let me break this down. Zuriel Oduwole is such a humble and highly intelligent young lady, and you can see that from her text message. Now, when she says “...despite all I have done since I was 10” and “...in-between all I do” it includes global works of raising awareness for the girl child, interviewing icons and distinguished international personalities from when she was 10 amongst so many other feats. Let me share her biography with you so you get a clearer picture.

Zuriel Elise Oduwole first made headlines on the world stage when she



was featured in Forbes magazine in 2013 at the age of 10 for her policy meetings and discussions with 7 world leaders. They were President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania,



President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, President Joyce Banda of Malawi, President Jose Fonseca of Cape Verde, President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, and President Ellen Johnson of Liberia.

In the almost decade and half that followed, she launched an advocacy for girls education, studied the impact of instability on Gender Development, earning a Masters Degree in Global Security, International Affairs and Conflict Resolution from the American University in Washington DC, sat down with more than 36 Presidents and Prime Ministers in various advisory or development discourses, and she helped end girl marriage in Mozambique in 2019 after her meeting in Maputo with President Felipe Nyisi to discuss the scourge, showing

herself as an example of what an educated girl could do.

A self taught filmmaker, she developed a filmmaking class and taught students mostly out of school older girls in Ghana, Mexico, Rwanda, Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire.

At the height of the Arab blockade of Qatar, she was invited to Egypt by President Abdel Fattah El Sisi to share her unique insights on conflict resolution, having helped mediate peace between Guyana and Venezuela at the UN years earlier.

For all the above remarkable strides, she received the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon leadership award at the age of 20, the Forbes Women Award in 2024, the Muhammed Ali Humanitarian Award at the of 22, the CARE Humanitarian Award at 23, and was nominated by two US institutions, a Senator, and a Prime Ministers office for the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize.

In May 2026 at the age of 23, she earned an

Organisation Leadership & Change degree from the Rossier school of the University of Southern California (USC), becoming the youngest doctoral degree graduate since the leadership school was founded over a hundred years ago, in 1918.

Need I say more?

As I celebrate Zuriel, I also acknowledge and celebrate her fantastic parents, Ademola and Patricia Oduwole for their love, guidance and SACRIFICE. Not forgetting her siblings Azaliah and Ismachiah who are also following Zuriel’s path being children of positive influence. A special shout-out to her lead project supervisor- Professor Anthony Maddox who was extremely supportive of her progress from Day-1 till the end. Thank you sir!

Dear Zuriel Oduwole (EdD), it’s from here to greater heights and more results, the sky is your starting point because you are going waaaaay beyond it!

Congratulations darling!





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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