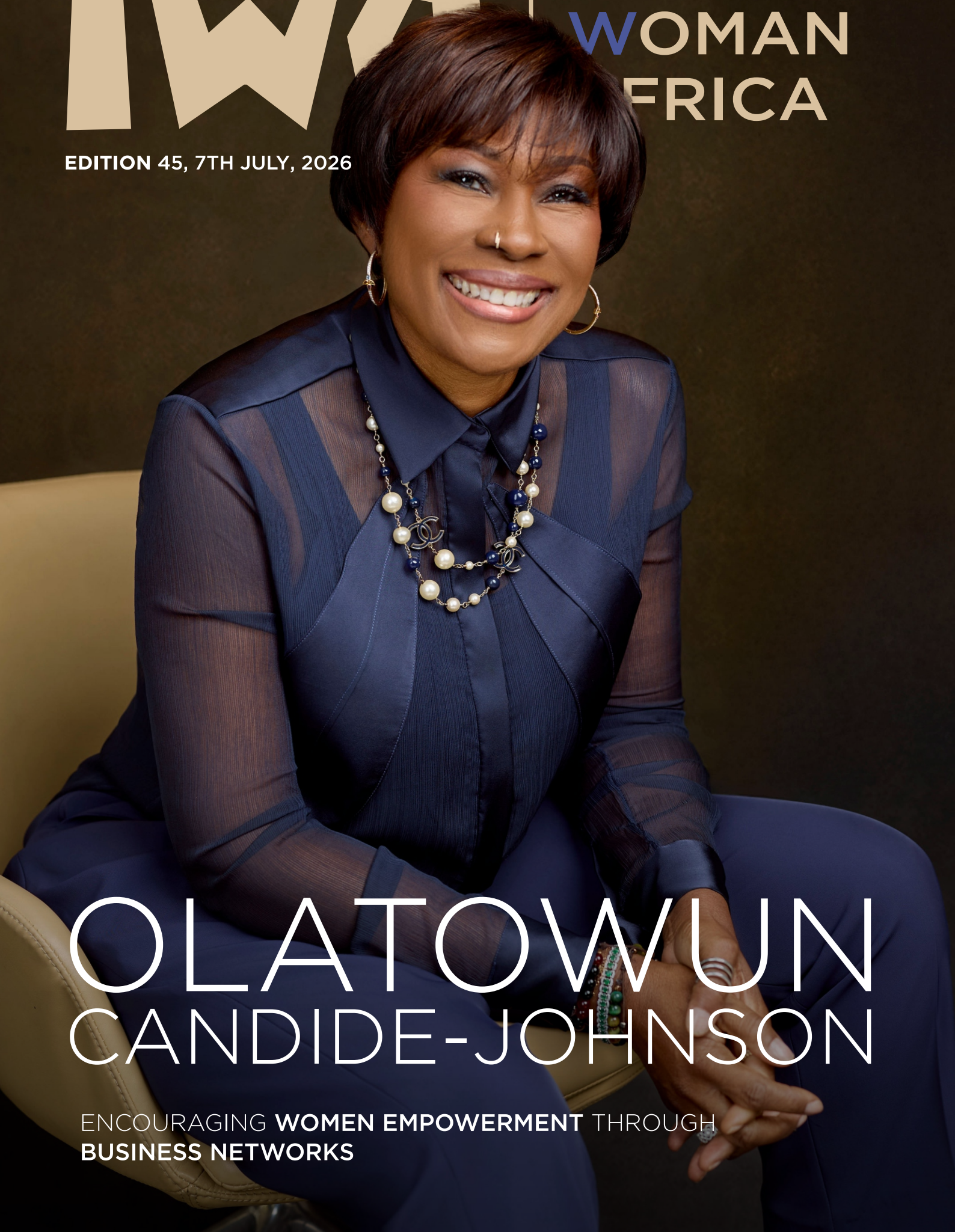




INSPIRING
WOMAN
AFRICA

EDITION 45, 7TH JULY, 2026



OLATOWUN CANDIDE-JOHNSON

ENCOURAGING **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT** THROUGH
BUSINESS NETWORKS

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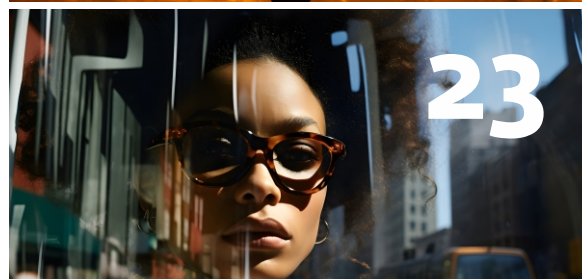
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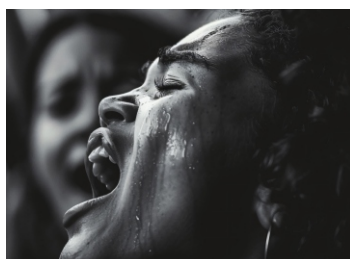
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**Kemi
Ajumobi**

Founder/Group CEO, IWA Group
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, IWA Magazine
www.theiwagroup.com
✉ contact@theiwagroup.com

Welcome!

Dear Readers,

It's a new month. July is here! Great to know the second half of the year has fully commenced and we are excited about what is ahead. We are starting our first edition in July on a fantastic note.

Our cover guest for this week is someone who is inspiring in every sense of the word. Her presence settles the room with a calm confidence and her voice carries a measured cadence showing clarity and unconstrained control.

From hosting executive sessions and engaging in thoughtful discussions, she always had her eyes on the mark, even while being actively involved in corporate and commercial law, governance, strategic business development across the legal, shipping & logistics, and oil & gas sectors. At TotalEnergies Upstream Companies Nigeria, she served as General Counsel and Executive General Manager of the Management Services Division.

Today, she is the CEO, Voltaire Lifestyle Services Ltd (Owner of GAIA AFRICA and GABY Lagos). She is an independent Non-Executive Director and Chair, Governance & Ethics Committee at Pinnacle Oil & Gas Ltd. She is also the Chairperson, Knock Knock Lifestyle Services (Owner of Lost in Lagos and Lost in a City).

Ladies and gentlemen, she is OLATOWUN CANDIDE-JOHNSON, and she is 'Encouraging Women Empowerment Through Business Networks.' Enjoy our interview with her.

Here are other articles in this edition:

HER POINT OF VIEW: What the Gunners' Victory Parade Taught Me About Career Success. By Chinyere Okorocho.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: Office Politics for the Pure in Heart. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

FINANCIAL ADVISER: Frugality Will Not Make You Rich. By Sola Adesakin.

HOLISTIC LIVING: Discipline Is Freedom: Why The Life You Want is Built By The Choices You Repeat. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

GENDER INSIGHTS: Nigeria's Reckoning: Can the Present Legal Reforms Finally Curb Violence Against Women? By Asmau Benzies-Leo.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES: Are Young People Overcompensating For Their incompetence With Visibility? By Zainab Aderounmu.

WE'VE GOT MEN: Naguib Sawiris, Executive Chairman, Orascom Investment Holding.

WOMAN AT THE HELM: Annastacia Kimtai, MD KCB Bank Kenya Ltd.

See you soon!



COVER INTERVIEW

OLATOWUN CANDIDE-JOHNSON

ENCOURAGING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
THROUGH BUSINESS NETWORKS

Kemi Ajumobi



Olatowun
Candide-
Johnson is a
highly
accomplished
lawyer and
executive with

decades of experience in corporate and commercial law, governance, and strategic business development across the legal, shipping & logistics, and oil & gas sectors. Her distinguished career includes several leadership roles at TotalEnergies, where she held key positions both in Nigeria and internationally.

At TotalEnergies Upstream Companies Nigeria, she served as General Counsel and Executive General Manager of the Management Services

Division—overseeing Legal, Audit, Insurance, and Anti-Corruption Compliance functions. She was also the Chief Compliance Officer for the company's upstream operations in Nigeria. Her international tenure includes three years in Paris as Project Director within the Affaires Nouvelles Division at the group's headquarters.

In 2016, she earned the prestigious TRIUM Global Executive MBA, jointly awarded by NYU Stern, the London School of Economics, and HEC Paris.

In 2018, Olatowun transitioned from corporate leadership to entrepreneurship, founding GAIA AFRICA—a pioneering private business club dedicated to Africa's top female decision-makers. GAIA offers a trusted, empowering space for women leaders to connect for business, collaborate, invest, and support each



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I think like a lawyer, but I lead like a business builder, ensuring as we go along that we create sustainable value and build an institution that will outlive me



other through curated events, a learning platform, partnerships, peer mentorship and engagement.

*She is the CEO, Voltaire Lifestyle Services Ltd (Owner of GAIA AFRICA and GABY Lagos).

*Independent Non-Executive Director, & Chair, Governance & Ethics Committee Pinnacle Oil & Gas Ltd.

*Chairperson, Knock Knock Lifestyle Services (Owner of Lost in Lagos and Lost in a City).

Olatowun is also an angel investor and a member of Rising Tide Africa, a network of women business angels committed to empowering entrepreneurs across the African continent. Her passions extend beyond business into books, the arts, culture, wine, and travel.

She is WSET Level 2 Certified and was honoured as Dame Chevalier de l'Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne in 2017. An advocate for excellence and innovation, she continues to champion women's leadership and entrepreneurship throughout Africa and beyond.

► **From TotalEnergies to entrepreneurship: how did those roles prepare you for the move from in-house counsel to executive leadership?**

My years at TotalEnergies taught me about governance, structure, process and procedures. It also taught me how to assess risk, manage complexity and make commercially sound decisions under pressure. As General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer I sat where risk, and reputation converge, with a front-row view of how major decisions get made. What I learned is that the law is rarely the hard part; judgement under ambiguity is. I didn't get P&L ownership, but I did learn about financial models, and all the important things that help your assessment of the viability of a business/project during my stint in the Business Development Division in



Paris. I also learned a lot during my MBA that has helped me understand the commercial side of business. Today I probably still think like a lawyer, but I lead like a business builder, ensuring as we go along that we create sustainable value and build an institution that will outlive me.

► **Most critical governance challenges facing multinational energy companies today?**

I believe that the challenge now goes far beyond compliance. Boards are navigating energy transition while balancing shareholder expectations, geopolitical uncertainty, cybersecurity, supply-chain resilience and ESG scrutiny. The sharpest tension is between global compliance frameworks and the realities of the markets where

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The best part about a trusted community is the ease by which women open doors for one another, share opportunities and invest in each other

the value is created. A policy drafted in one jurisdiction has to survive contact with a different jurisdiction and boards can sometimes mistake the existence of a policy for the presence of control. Good governance today means staying disciplined for the long term in a world that rewards quick reactions. It also means building ethics and accountability throughout the whole organisation, not just in the boardroom.



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One of GAIA's greatest successes is not in a single transaction; it is the culture we've created

▶ **What has surprised you most about the GAIA community?**

The generosity of women with other women and how eager accomplished women are for a non-performative room. We often hear that women compete with one another – and perhaps this was true at one time – I don't know for sure. What I underestimated is how much candour and collaboration is unlocked when focused women get together. The best part about a trusted community is the ease by which women open doors for one another, share opportunities and invest in each other.

▶ **What are the biggest barriers for women leaders in Africa when it comes to collaboration, investment and scaling ventures?**

Access to capital is a big barrier, but underneath it sits something thinner: a network of trust. Men have had generations to build the informal architecture of business for example - A man will offer a deal to a buddy before it reaches the market. Women on the other hand are often transacting with people they met recently, and that shows up as slower syndication, harder due diligence, questions no man in the same position gets asked, and smaller cheques. Women tend to also undervalue what they have built, pricing conservatively and waiting until everything is perfect before seeking investment. The barrier isn't ambition or competence; it's the absence of the connective tissue that lets collaboration and capital move at speed. This is exactly the ecosystem we are trying to build at GAIA AFRICA.

▶ **Could you share a success story from GAIA AFRICA where collaboration among members led to a meaningful business outcome?**

One of GAIA's greatest successes is not in a single transaction; it is the culture we've created. Over the years members have opened doors to one another for board seats, engaged each other as

professional advisers, invested in each other's businesses, made strong introductions that have led to investment, formed partnerships and referred to significant commercial opportunities. None of that happened by chance — it happened because we have deliberately designed an ecosystem where meaningful relationships underscored by trust develop over time. Conversations create opportunities, networks create access, and collaboration creates measurable economic impact.

▶ **What criteria do you use to decide whether to invest as an angel in a female-led start-up?**

I think most early-stage investors invest in the founder – they believe that he/she can actually do what they say they can do because they have the right skill/competencies and the proper team. I look for integrity, resilience, coachability and clarity of purpose, because markets change and models pivot, but character is much harder to build. I am keen on a founder who understands her unit economics better than I do and better still one who has already survived one thing going badly wrong. Then we go to whether the business solves a problem that people will pay for today and can scale beyond the founder herself. And finally, if I can add something beyond the cheque – even better. Angel investor cheques are moderate and there is shared risk, shared reward.

▶ **Involvement with Rising Tide Africa's influence and how your investment philosophy helps to support founders**

Rising Tide reinforced something I already believed: capital alone is never enough. It also taught me the discipline of collective diligence - you see your own blind spots far faster in a room of women asking sharper questions than you were prepared for. Our real value to founders goes beyond the cheque – It lies in the education, governance, introductions, and the unglamorous work of helping a company become



investable at the next round. Investing is a long-term partnership, not a one-off transaction.

► **How did earning the TRIUM Global Executive MBA influence your approach to global strategy and leadership?**

TRIUM (LSE, NYU STERN & HEC (Paris)) fundamentally broadened my perspective. You cannot theorise your way to understanding how differently strategy is conceived from company to company; you learn through case studies, the perspective of members of your cohort with diverse backgrounds and skill sets. I had the privilege of learning from experienced men and women from 42 different countries. It certainly taught me about how to run a company the right way and what happens when you fail to do so. The greatest lesson was learning to think globally while remaining deeply rooted in local realities: learn from the world but build solutions that genuinely fit your own market(s).

► **You're passionate about books, arts, culture, wine and travel. How do these interests inform your work or decision-making?**

They open up my mind – allow me to think beyond borders and beyond the things that I know. Exposure to different cultures provides ideas that you can test in your own market. A good book can challenge your thinking and motivate you in one direction or another. These interests also provide a nice break from thinking about business all the time. Books are a great way to travel without travelling. Learning keeps me curious, grounded and excited. A relaxed and focused mind will make better decisions.

► **Your WSET Level 2 and interest in wine — how does wine culture connect to leadership and relationships?**

Wine is a wonderful leveller and a terrible bluff-detector. Around a table it dissolves hierarchy in a way a boardroom never can — people reveal themselves over a bottle.

And the discipline of tasting properly is really a lesson in paying attention: naming what you notice -what you see, smell and taste and resisting the easy verdict of 'it tastes nice'. That is not a bad description of good leadership.

► **What initiatives or programmes have you found most effective for supporting women entrepreneurs and investors in Africa?**

The most effective initiatives build institutions. Single events inspire and then

evaporate; what lasts is durable infrastructure such as a standing investment community, continuous learning, opportunities to up-skill when needed, access to networks, sponsorship, and exposure to investors and customers. The test is the lasting effect it creates, whether people can return to it and whether it outlives its creator(s).

► **How do you envision GAIA AFRICA's impact evolving over the next decade?**

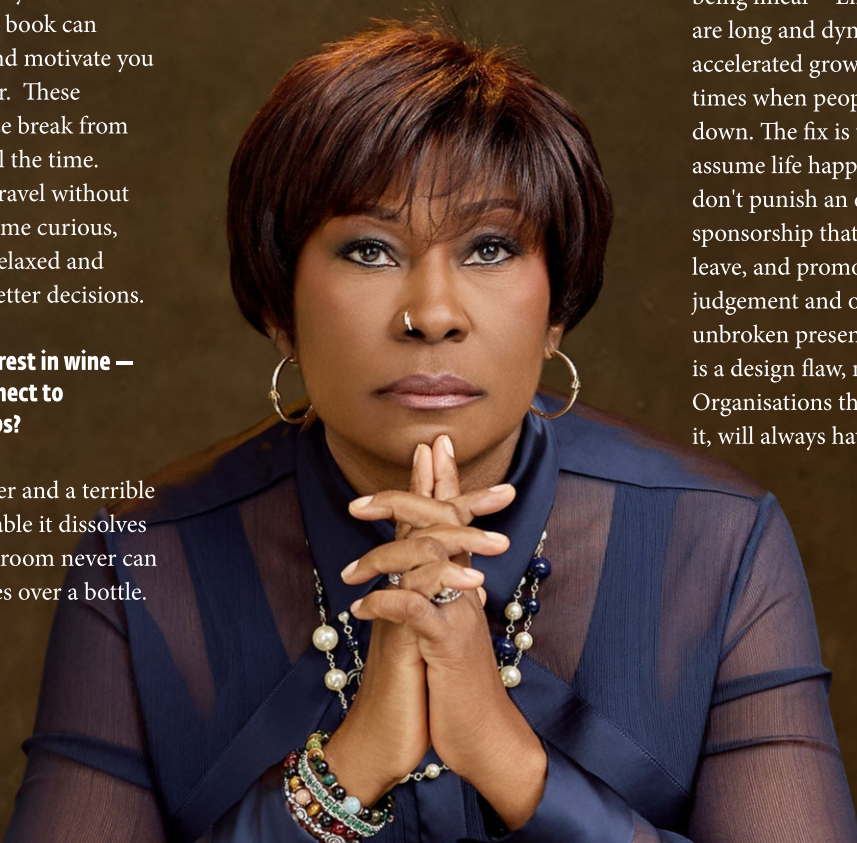
My real ambition is for GAIA AFRICA to be a recognised institution across the continent and beyond. One that women simply assume has always existed. GAIA AFRICA is located across the continent, led by strong leaders. Success won't be measured by membership numbers, but by the businesses created, the capital mobilised, the jobs generated and the boards influenced. Less a club, more infrastructure for women's advancement across the continent.

► **How can organisations design roles and career paths that prevent the "stop-start" pattern often seen in women's advancement?**

We have to stop treating career progression as a ladder you can only climb continuously – in one direction. We have to stop thinking about careers as being linear – Life is not linear - Careers are long and dynamic — periods of accelerated growth, periods of caregiving, times when people deliberately slow down. The fix is to design roles that assume life happens: re-entry paths that don't punish an eighteen-month absence, sponsorship that survives a maternity leave, and promotion measured on judgement and output rather than unbroken presence. The stop-start penalty is a design flaw, not a fact of nature. Organisations that recognise this and fix it, will always have the best talent.

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Our real value to founders goes beyond the cheque – It lies in the education, governance, introductions, and the unglamorous work of helping a company become investable at the next round





► **Women often struggle to find sponsors for projects and business development. What is the solution?**

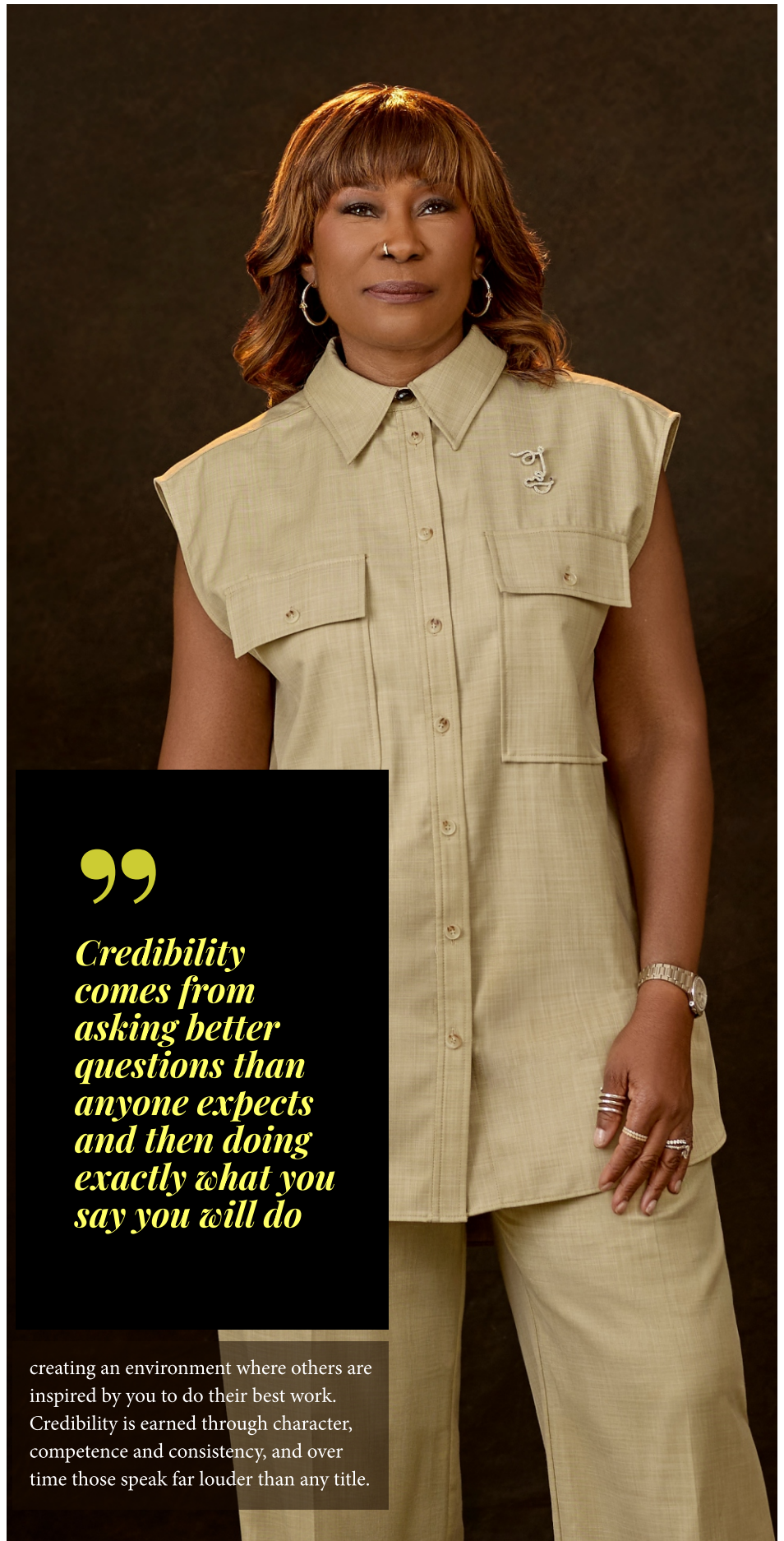
The first step is recognising that sponsorship is not mentorship. Mentorship is advice; sponsorship is risk — a sponsor spends their own capital advocating for you when you're not in the room. The difficulty is that people tend to sponsor those they see themselves in, so part of the solution is structural: make sponsorship an explicit, accountable responsibility of senior leaders rather than a favour. Women must also become highly visible and known for the quality of their work, build relationships long before they need them, and ask directly — something we're trained not to do. You rarely get sponsored through quiet excellence. It may happen — but it is rare.

► **What strategies do you recommend for women negotiating for leadership roles or pay equity at senior levels?**

Negotiate the mandate, not just the money. The most expensive mistake a senior woman can make is to accept the title without the authority, then wonder why the role underdelivers. Come prepared with your market data and commercial impact, name your number without apologising for it, and be equally rigorous about scope, decision-making authority, exposure to the board and incentives. Above all, do not negotiate from a position of gratitude; negotiate from a position of the value you bring. Pay follows scope — so, secure the scope.

► **What advice would you give to someone stepping into a first-time leadership role to build credibility quickly?**

Listen before you lead, and resist the urge to prove yourself by having the answer to everything. No one knows it all. Credibility comes from asking better questions than anyone expects and then doing exactly what you say you will do. Stay focused — Deliver one visible thing early and keep your promises; decide promptly and be honest about what you don't know. Leadership is not about being the smartest person in the room, it's about



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Credibility comes from asking better questions than anyone expects and then doing exactly what you say you will do

creating an environment where others are inspired by you to do their best work. Credibility is earned through character, competence and consistency, and over time those speak far louder than any title.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

Office Politics for the Pure in Heart

By Wola Joseph-Condotti

Some of the most talented, values-driven people I know shy away from office politics. They say things like, “I just want to do the work,” or “I am not into playing games.” And I understand. When you are wired for integrity, strategy can sometimes feel like

manipulation in disguise.

But here is the hard truth I had to learn over years of boardroom exposure and executive leadership: ignoring office politics does not make it go away. It just sidelines your influence.

You can not lead what you will not engage. And you can not protect what you are unwilling to see.

The Nature of Power

Let us redefine “politics” in its simplest form: it is the study of how power moves. That is it. Not gossip. Not sabotage. Not

ego games.

Power (whether formal or informal) is always in motion. It is being traded in conversations, influenced by perceptions, and brokered through networks. Those who understand this dance can protect their vision, their values, and their people. Those who do not often find themselves blindsided. Undermined by dynamics they were too “pure” to acknowledge.

Purity is not the absence of strategy. It is the commitment to honour, even when navigating complex rooms.

Engage Without Losing Yourself
So how do you play the game without losing your soul?

First, stop seeing “politics” as something dirty. Start seeing it as something navigable. A current you can swim through, rather than a wave that must drown you.

You do not need to flatter your way forward. You need to map the power landscape. Who are the formal and informal decision-makers? Who moves conversations? Who controls resources? Who influences perception?

Do not just look up the hierarchy, look across and beneath it. Power is not always about rank; it is often about relevance.

Next, protect your integrity without becoming invisible. You do not need to be loud, but you must be present. Show up in key rooms. Build coalitions. Speak with grace and conviction. Play chess, not checkers.

Remember: politics can be pure if your heart is anchored.

A Biblical Perspective

Let us talk about Joseph. A young man who had dreams of leadership, but who found himself in power not by shouting, but by serving. He understood the rooms he was in (from Potiphar’s house to

Pharaoh’s court) and he did not shy away from influence. He read the dynamics. He interpreted power structures. And he offered value that could not be ignored.

His purity did not make him naïve. It made him trustworthy.

Office politics did not stop Joseph. He navigated it. With wisdom, with restraint, with divine clarity.

Protect the Vision, Not Just Your Image
One of the greatest temptations in the political landscape is to become more obsessed with how you are seen than what you are building. But leadership is stewardship. And stewardship requires discernment.

If there is one thing I have learned, it is this: you cannot protect a vision you are too timid to position.

Sometimes, that means challenging the status quo. Sometimes, it means staying silent, strategically. Sometimes, it means choosing not to correct every whisper but letting your results speak louder.

Wisdom is knowing when to speak, when to listen, and when to walk away.

Final Thoughts

To every woman of faith, excellence, and conviction navigating a highly political environment: you are not crazy. You are not alone. And you are not unequipped.

You were made for strategy. Your discernment is not a liability. It is your leadership edge.

You do not have to play dirty to play smart. You do not have to betray your values to hold your own.

Engage with purity. Lead with clarity. Influence with purpose.

And remember: the best leaders are not the ones who ignore politics. They are the ones who redeem it.



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 LL.M. 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

Frugality Will Not Make You Rich

By Sola Adesakin



Let us start with what frugality is, because it deserves respect before it receives correction. The ability to live within your means, to resist the pull of lifestyle inflation, to find value without waste, these are not small things. They are the foundation of financial sanity. In a culture that celebrates consumption and makes spending feel like self-expression, the person who saves deliberately and spends with intention is doing something genuinely countercultural. That discipline matters.

But there is a ceiling on it. And too many people, particularly women who were raised to be careful rather than bold with money, hit that ceiling without realising it

exists. They cut more, save more, spend less, and wonder why the needle is not moving the way they expected. The problem is not their discipline. The problem is that they have mistaken a management tool for a growth strategy.

Frugality manages money. It does not multiply it.

Think about what frugality actually does in mathematical terms. If you earn N300,000 a month and you are exceptionally disciplined, perhaps you save N90,000 of it. That is a 30% savings rate, which is genuinely impressive and puts you ahead of most people. But you are still working within a fixed number. The ceiling on your frugality is your income. You cannot save more than you

earn, and cutting expenses has a floor. Rent, food, transportation, school fees, these do not disappear no matter how lean you run. At some point, the knife has nothing left to cut.

Wealth, real wealth, is not built by reducing what goes out. It is built by increasing what comes in and deploying it intelligently. That is a fundamentally different equation, and it requires a fundamentally different set of actions.

The first shift is from expense management to earning capacity. What are you worth in the market right now, and what would make you worth more? This is not an abstract question. It has specific answers. A professional certification that opens a new income tier.

A skill set that positions you for consulting work alongside your salary. A body of work, writing, speaking, advising, that builds a reputation that commands higher fees. The women who move from financial stability to financial freedom almost always do so because they made a deliberate investment in their own earning power, not because they found one more thing to cut from the budget.

This is not comfortable territory for everyone, because it requires spending, sometimes significantly, on yourself. On education, on coaching, on tools, on visibility. The frugal instinct resists this. But the return on a well-chosen investment in your own capacity is often higher than anything else you will put your money into. A N200,000 course that moves your

consulting rate from N150,000 to N400,000 per engagement is not an expense. It is the highest-returning investment in your portfolio.

The second shift is from saving to investing. Saving is money parked. Investing is money working. The difference over a decade is not marginal, it is transformational. N50,000 sitting in a standard savings account at 4% annual interest over ten years becomes roughly N74,000. The same N50,000 invested monthly in an instrument averaging 15% annual returns over ten years becomes approximately N13.5 million. Same discipline. Completely different outcome. The variable is not how much you saved. It is what you did with what you saved.

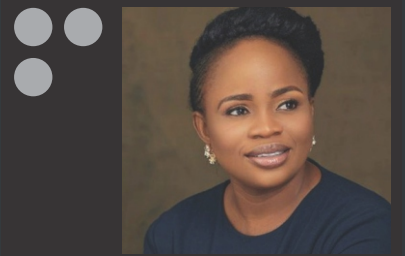
The third shift is understanding that income has a multiplier effect that frugality never will. When your income grows, your capacity to save, invest, and build grows with it. When your income stays flat and you are only managing the margin, you are playing a game with a fixed prize. Increasing your income, through skills, positioning, negotiation, business building, or investment returns, changes the size of the prize entirely.

None of this means stop being careful. It means stop confusing carefulness with a strategy. Frugality keeps the foundation clean. But foundations do not build themselves upward without new material. You need skills, income growth, and consistent investment to do that work.

The wealthiest people you know are not the most frugal ones. They are the ones who mastered the basics of not wasting money and then turned their full attention to the much more interesting and more rewarding work of multiplication.

Subtract what drains you. Then build what grows you.

Frugality is the floor. Make sure you are not also treating it as the ceiling.



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



What the Gunners' Victory Parade Taught Me About Career Success

Chinyere Okorocha

I almost didn't go.

I was in London for work, attending a professional event, and Arsenal Football Club's Premier League victory parade happened to coincide with my visit. Although I had already ordered my Arsenal shirt and scarf before travelling, I seriously considered staying away from the parade. The expected crowds seemed overwhelming. After all, what difference would it make if I watched the highlights later from the comfort of my accommodation? Thankfully, I changed my mind.

My son had flown in from the United States specifically for the parade, but he had his own plans with friends. He suggested I contact my brother-in-law to see whether he was attending. He was, and we agreed to meet at Finsbury Park Station. The moment I emerged from the station, I knew I had made the right

decision.

What greeted me was a sea of red unlike anything I had ever experienced. Thousands upon thousands of supporters filled the streets. There were children sitting on their parents' shoulders, elderly supporters who had followed the club for decades, families, friends, and complete strangers united by a common passion. The singing had already begun. The chants echoed through the streets. The atmosphere was electric. What struck me most was the sense of unity. Strangers spoke to one another as though they had known each other for years. Everyone was smiling. Everyone belonged. For those few hours, differences disappeared. There was only one purpose: celebrating a long-awaited victory.

And perhaps that is why the moment felt so profound. This was not simply about football. This was about perseverance. As I stood there, I found myself reflecting on Arsenal's journey.

I remember the glory years. I remember the Invincibles, when Arsenal achieved what many thought impossible by completing an entire Premier League season unbeaten. Then came the difficult years. The disappointments. The near misses. The seasons that ended in frustration. One year without a title became five. Five became ten. Ten became twenty-two. Yet the supporters remained loyal. The club continued rebuilding. The players kept working. The manager kept believing. Under Mikel Arteta, signs of progress slowly began to emerge. Arsenal finished second three consecutive seasons. Close, but not close enough.

Many doubted. Many questioned. Many lost faith.

But the team continued to build. And this year, they became champions. The crowds around Finsbury Park were incredible, so our group moved further away along the route and found a perfect position at the front of the barricades. We waited in anticipation, surrounded by supporters singing and reliving memories of seasons gone by. Then came the moment. The bus appeared. The trophy. The players. The red smoke. The noise. The singing. The eruption of pure joy.

For a few unforgettable minutes, I witnessed history pass right before my eyes. And as I watched the celebrations

unfold, it struck me that this story was about far more than football. It was about life.

It was about the journey that so many of us experience in our careers and personal aspirations. We live in a world that celebrates quick wins and overnight success. Social media constantly presents us with highlight reels of achievement, promotions, awards, and milestones. What we often do not see are the years of persistence that came before.

The setbacks.
The rejections.
The disappointments.
The sacrifices.

The seasons when progress seemed invisible. Yet real success is often built during those very seasons. Many careers follow the same pattern. You work hard, but the promotion goes to someone else. You apply for the opportunity and receive a rejection. You invest in your growth but the results take longer than expected. You begin to wonder whether your efforts are making any difference. The temptation is to quit. The temptation is to believe that because success has not arrived yet, it never will.

The Arsenal story reminds us otherwise. Progress is not always visible. Growth is not always immediate. But consistency compounds. Resilience matters. Showing up matters. Eventually, preparation meets opportunity.

As women, we often underestimate how much resilience we have already demonstrated. We have navigated workplaces where we were overlooked, battled imposter syndrome, balanced careers with family responsibilities, recovered from setbacks, and continued showing up long after

others would have walked away. The Arsenal story reminded me that success is not always about being the fastest. Sometimes it is about being the one who stays the course.

The one who keeps learning.
The one who keeps believing.
The one who keeps showing up.

Twenty-two years is a long time to wait for a title. Yet when the moment finally came, every difficult season suddenly became part of the story. Our careers are often the same. The promotion may take longer than expected. The recognition may come later than we hoped. The breakthrough may not happen according to our timeline. But if we continue to grow, continue to prepare, and continue to believe, our winning season will come. If you are currently in a season of waiting, a season of disappointment, or a season where your efforts seem unseen, I want to encourage you not to give up.

Keep showing up.
Keep learning.
Keep building.
Keep investing in yourself.
Keep believing in your vision, even when the results are not yet visible.
Keep forging ahead.

Every step forward matters. Every lesson learned matters. Every setback overcome is preparing you for what lies ahead. As I stood among thousands of jubilant supporters dressed in red, watching generations of fans celebrate together, I was reminded of a truth that applies far beyond football: Delayed does not mean denied. Your breakthrough may take longer than expected, but if you remain focused, resilient, and committed to the journey, your winning season will come. And when it does, every challenge, every setback, and every year of waiting will have been worth it.



Chinyere Okorocha

Partner in the Law Firm of
JACKSON, ETTI & EDU

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

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

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

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

GENDER INSIGHTS

Nigeria's Reckoning: Can the Present Legal Reforms Finally Curb Violence Against Women?

Asmau Benzies Leo

For years, activists across Nigeria have described violence against women as a crisis hiding in plain sight; pervasive, normalised, and too often ignored. Today, as the federal government signals a renewed commitment to reforming the country's central protective legislation, cautious optimism is emerging. There is a growing sense that Africa's most populous nation may finally be treating gender-based violence with the urgency it demands.

The data underscores the gravity of the

situation. Reported rape cases more than doubled between 2020 and 2022, according to government figures cited by rights organisations. In 2024 alone, femicide tracking platforms documented well over a hundred killings of women, with new cases continuing to surface this year. Perhaps more troubling is the persistence of deeply ingrained social norms: surveys indicate that nearly half of Nigerian women believe a husband is justified in striking his wife under certain circumstances. For researchers, this statistic highlights the extent to which domestic violence remains normalised, even as public outrage over individual incidents grows louder.

Against this backdrop, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has begun reviewing the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 (VAPP Act), Nigeria's primary legal framework addressing rape, domestic violence, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse. The Ministry has announced plans to introduce more than 40 new legal instruments, guidelines, and safeguarding frameworks aimed at strengthening protections nationwide.

Officials describe this effort as part of a broader policy shift, one that reframes gender based violence not merely as a social

concern, but as a matter of national security and economic stability.

This reframing is significant. While the VAPP Act marked a landmark achievement when it was enacted, its impact has been limited by uneven adoption. More than a decade later, several of Nigeria's 36 states have yet to properly domesticate the law, leaving millions of women particularly in parts of the North and Southeast without its full protections.

In these regions, survivors often rely on a fragmented system of state statutes, customary practices, and, in some cases, religious legal frameworks.

Even where the law is in force, enforcement remains inconsistent. Survivors frequently encounter police reluctance to pursue cases, societal pressure to resolve matters privately, and prolonged court processes that can stretch for years. Investigative reports have further revealed how plea bargains and out-of-court settlements in rape cases sometimes allow perpetrators to evade meaningful accountability, undermining both justice and deterrence.

Regional dynamics compound these challenges. In conflict-affected areas of northern Nigeria, women and girls displaced by violence face heightened risks of exploitation, even within camps designed for their protection. Human rights organisations have also reported an alarming pattern of abductions and sexual violence linked to militant activity, alongside the continued prevalence of forced child marriage in some communities. These practices not only endanger lives but also deprive girls of education and long-term opportunities.

Economic vulnerability further entrenches the cycle of abuse. Discriminatory widowhood practices, limited access to financial services, and a labor market dominated by informal employment leave many women without the economic means to escape abusive

environments. For countless survivors, the decision to leave is not only emotional but also deeply financial and often untenable.

Despite these challenges, momentum for change is building. Civil society organizations like the Centre for Nonviolence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN), FIDA and other women led CSOs have continued to advocate for full domestication of the VAPP Act across all states, emphasizing that a national law without nationwide implementation offers only partial protection. These Advocacy groups are also calling for increased funding, specialized training for law enforcement, and the establishment of dedicated courts to expedite gender based violence cases and reforms which they argue are just as critical as legislative updates.

Encouragingly, the government's evolving rhetoric suggests a growing recognition of the broader implications of the crisis. By framing violence against women as a threat to national development, policymakers are beginning to shift the narrative away from viewing it as a private or cultural issue. However, the true test lies not in policy language but in implementation.

For many Nigerian women, especially those whose experiences rarely make headlines, the success of these reforms will be measured not by legislative announcements, but by tangible changes on the ground. Will new frameworks reach police stations in Kano as effectively as they do in Abuja? Will courtrooms deliver timely justice? And will the promise of protection finally become a lived reality?

As Nigeria stands at this critical juncture, the question remains: can legal reform translate into meaningful, sustained change? The answer will shape not only the future of women's rights in the country but also the nation's broader trajectory toward justice, equity, and development.



Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo

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

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

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

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

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

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





WOMAN AT THE HELM

Annastacia Kimtai

MD KCB Bank Kenya Ltd

Annastacia Kimtai, KCB Bank Kenya's Managing Director is a seasoned banking professional with a career spanning more than 25 years, including 12 years in senior leadership and strategic roles focused on business growth. She previously led Retail Banking, overseeing operations across more than 210 branches nationwide.

She serves on several boards and committees within the KCB Group, including:

- KCB Bank Kenya
- KCB Foundation
- KCB Bank Kenya's Board Credit Committee
- KCB Bank Kenya's Board Strategy & Digital Committee
- KCB Bank Kenya's Board Audit Committee

In addition, she contributes as a Non-Executive Director at the Kenya Mortgage Refinance Company (KMRC).

Annastacia has been a vocal advocate for financial inclusion, focusing on products and services that reach customers at the base of the pyramid. She has hands-on experience in turning around distressed institutions, having worked on the recovery efforts for Chase Bank and Imperial Bank while they were in receivership.

She is also at the helm of Flme (Female Led and Made Enterprises), an initiative aimed at increasing the participation of businesswomen in banking. Beyond her expertise, Annastacia is known for her strategic mindset and relentless drive to turn plans into tangible results. Her leadership style emphasizes people development, clear communication, and mentoring the next generation of leaders.

Integrity, governance, risk

management, and compliance are core to her work. She collaborates effectively with cross-functional and cross-cultural teams and engages stakeholders through thoughtful networking. She believes great leaders are accountable, reliable, competent, and authentic.

Annastacia holds a MBA Degree in Business Administration & Strategic Management, MA Degree in Rural Economics and Cooperation, a BA Degree in Community Development, Economics and Rural Banking. She is a Certified Executive Coach from the Academy of Executive Coaching (AOEC). She is a graduate of the Senior Executive Program for Africa (SEPA) from Harvard University and the Global Executive Development Program from Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) Business School.



WE'VE GOT MEN

Naguib Sawiris

Executive Chairman, Orascom Investment Holding

Naguib Sawiris founded Orascom Telecom Holding (OTH) and steered it to become a leading regional telecom player, culminating in the landmark VEON merger in April 2011, which created one of the world's largest mobile providers.

Today, he serves as Executive Chairman of Orascom Investment Holding, a diversified investment group focused on high-growth sectors with potential for transformation and social impact in Egypt and across Africa. The portfolio spans Tourism and Destination Development, Renewable Energy and Electrical Mobility, Trading and Logistics, and Telecom.

Sawiris also chairs the Investment Advisory Committee at La Mancha Resource Capital LLP, an adviser to a Luxembourg-based fund that targets precious and energy-transition metals. The fund has equity stakes in

companies including Endeavour Mining, Elemental Altus Royalties, Falcon Energy Materials, G Mining Ventures, and Greenheart Gold. In addition, he leads Ora Developers, a firm involved in premium real estate developments and hospitality projects in select locations worldwide.

On the governance front, Sawiris has held and continues to hold a variety of influential roles across international and regional bodies. These include:

- International Advisory Committee for the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).
- International Advisory Board to the National Bank of Kuwait.
- London Stock Exchange Africa Advisory Group.
- External Advisory Council to the Global Institute for Advanced Study at NYU.

Sawiris is also the recipient of numerous honorary degrees, industry awards and civic honours, including an Honorary

Doctorate of Law conferred upon him by Handong Global University of South Korea in 2021, the "Legion d'Honneur" (the highest award given by the French Republic for outstanding services rendered to France).

In July 2011 Sawiris was awarded the Honor of Commander of the Order of the "Stella della Solidarietà Italiana" (Star of Italian Solidarity). In 2006, the prestigious "Sitara-e-Quaid-e-Azam" award was conferred upon him by General Pervez Musharref for services rendered to the people of Pakistan in the field of telecommunication, investments, and social sector work.

Sawiris holds a diploma of Mechanical Engineering with a Masters in Technical Administration from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zürich) and a Diploma from the German Evangelical School, Cairo, Egypt.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Discipline Is Freedom: Why The Life You Want Is Built By The Choices You Repeat

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

In a world captivated by quick fixes, instant gratification and overnight success, self-discipline has become an unfashionable virtue. We admire extraordinary results but rarely appreciate the quiet decisions that produce them. Yet the healthiest, happiest and most fulfilled people are seldom those blessed with perfect circumstances. They are often those who have mastered one simple principle: they consistently choose what matters most over what feels easiest.

Holistic wellbeing is not created by occasional bursts of motivation. It is shaped by daily habits that align the mind, body, relationships and purpose. Motivation is emotional and unpredictable; discipline is intentional and dependable. One inspires action, the other sustains transformation.

Imagine being a Kemi, a young professional who found herself trapped between comfort and the life she truly desired. Every morning her alarm represented a choice. She could surrender to temporary comfort or honour the future she wanted to create. The real battle was never with the gym, the early mornings or physical exercise. It was with the voice that whispered, "Tomorrow will be easier."

Like many people, Kemi eventually

realised that lasting change does not begin with changing the body. It begins with changing identity. She stopped asking whether she felt like exercising and instead asked, "What would the healthiest version of me choose today?" That subtle shift transformed isolated actions into a sustainable way of living.

This is the essence of holistic living. It is not about chasing perfection or obsessing over appearance. It is about creating harmony between our values and our daily behaviours. Every decision to rest adequately, nourish the body, move intentionally, manage stress, nurture relationships and protect emotional wellbeing is a vote for the person we are becoming.

Research consistently shows that healthy habits are strongly associated with improved physical health, emotional resilience, cognitive performance and longevity. However, habits rarely emerge from inspiration alone. They develop through repetition, consistency and intentional environments that make positive choices easier.

The greatest obstacle to discipline is rarely a lack of knowledge. Most people already know they should sleep better, move more, eat wisely and disconnect from unhealthy digital habits. The real challenge is allowing immediate comfort to outweigh long-term wellbeing. Every small compromise feels insignificant in the

moment, yet repeated compromises quietly shape our future.

Discipline should therefore never be viewed as punishment. It is one of the highest forms of self-respect. Every healthy boundary, every morning walk, every nutritious meal and every difficult conversation reflects a decision to invest in tomorrow rather than merely survive today.

Equally important is recognising that discipline extends beyond physical routines. Financial responsibility, emotional regulation, continuous learning, spiritual growth and meaningful relationships all require the same commitment to consistency. Holistic wellbeing flourishes when every area of life grows together rather than in isolation.

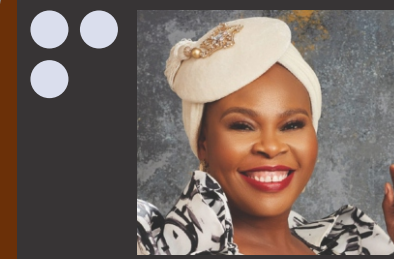
Communities and workplaces also influence discipline. Environments that encourage healthy routines, psychological safety, flexibility and accountability make sustainable living easier. Families that model healthy habits pass resilience from one generation to the next. Discipline, like wellbeing, is often contagious.

Perhaps the greatest lesson is that transformation is rarely dramatic. It is built through ordinary choices repeated faithfully over time. One early morning. One healthy meal. One walk. One difficult decision. One promise kept to yourself. These seemingly insignificant moments eventually become extraordinary lives.

The future we desire is not determined by our intentions alone. It is determined by our routines.

Self-discipline is therefore far more than willpower. It is the bridge between purpose and possibility, between potential and performance, between surviving and flourishing.

The life you dream about is not waiting for a perfect opportunity. It is quietly being built by the choices you make today. Choose wisely, repeat consistently and allow discipline to become the foundation upon which holistic wellbeing and a truly meaningful life is built.



**Dr. Maymunah
Yusuf Kadiri**

Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle
Medical Services

Dr. MAYMUNAH YUSUF KADIRI (aka DR. MAY) popularly referred to as "The Celebrity Shrink," is a multiple award winning Mental Health Physician, Advocate & Coach. She is the convener of "The Mental Health Conference" and the Medical Director and Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle Medical Services, Nigeria's leading and foremost Psychology and Mental health clinic prominent in the application of innovative clinical approaches in the management/treatment of a wide range of psychological, emotional, and behavioral related disorders.

Dr. Kadiri is a dynamic Consultant Neuro- Psychiatrist and a Fellow of the National Post Graduate Medical College of Nigeria (FMCPsych) with almost 20 years' experience as a practicing Physician. She is a trained and certified Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist from Albert Ellis Institute, New York, USA. She is also a certified Trauma Counsellor and Neurofeedback Practitioner.

Dr. Kadiri has wide experience in psycho-therapeutic techniques and has perfected her skills whilst in private practice and whilst working for a variety of organizations. She is a recognized radio and television guest Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist. She also contributes to articles published in magazines and newspapers.

She is the only Nigerian with the 14Ps.....Physician, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Practitioner (NLP, BFB, NFB), Public Speaker, Published Author, Producer (movies), Proficient Coach, Parent, Philanthropist, People oriented, Public Health Advocate and Passionate about God and life.

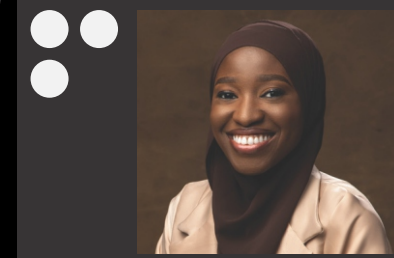
The founder of Pinnacle Health Radio, African's #1 online health radio and a non for profit organization, "Pinnacle Medicals SPEAKOUT Initiative" which is geared towards creating Mental Health literacy in Nigeria and beyond.

The Executive producer of award winning movies, Pepper soup (focused on drug abuse) and Little Drops of Happy (focused on depression, postpartum depression and suicide) and creator of the most innovative mental health app in Africa, HOW BODI.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

Are Young People Overcompensating For Their Incompetence With Visibility?

By Zainab Aderounmu



Zainab Aderounmu

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

offline and traditionally. Therefore, building a community is also a form of building.

Many times, young people have demonstrated that having a channel and an engaged audience sells a product effectively to the tune of millions of the desired currency. In essence, should young people spend a lot of time online when building things? It definitely depends on what you're building and for whom you're building. An influencer or community builder may definitely need to open their 'online shop' consistently.

Finally, to the people who misrepresent themselves and their competencies, both young and old, it doesn't have to be that way. Sooner or later, your audience would smoke you out and avoid you like the plague. And the internet never forgets. To those who think young people are 'doing too much' online, by all means set up your own channels and brand yourself and your skills; your audience would find you, but stop sneering at the people who are making visible impact. To the rest of us, taking visibility as a non-negotiable part of the journey, keep at it.

We are in the age of the reel highlight: the process of packaging one's work and highlighting the most glossy part for the world to see. The problem with that is that people see the good parts without understanding the full picture. Consequently, an averagely-skilled person can parade themselves as an expert or thought leader with only a little branding.

Are young people masking incompetence with hyper visibility?

Unlike some older professionals who might sit back and allow their work to speak for them, while hoping they get recognised, young people take the driver's seat in building their brands and taking due credit for their work. Rather than sheer incompetence, hyper visibility has become a strategy to bypass traditional gatekeeping barriers. Young people understand that in this era, visibility, like technical competence, is a currency. In fact, the art of visibility is a new skill that many young people have mastered, a necessary tool to remain prominent in a saturated market.

Are there some young people misrepresenting themselves as experts and thought leaders whereas they're not? Absolutely! It is bizarre to work with someone who parades themselves as an expert online, only to discover they can't produce the same results they claim to have produced in the past. The dictionary defines competence as "the possession of required skills, knowledge, qualifications, or capacity to meet specific standards. It encompasses not only what you know but also your capability to apply that knowledge effectively in various situations." Claiming to have high levels of

competencies and consistently falling short of such standards in real life is misrepresentation, and that should be called out.

However, should young people use social media and visibility as a storytelling tool? Absolutely. Competency should be viewed as a journey. When I started posting my work online, I was green; I only wanted people to see what I was up to and the progress I was making. Over time, I became great at it, and the language shifted from 'complete rookie' to 'excellent professional', and people began to ask for lessons. A

professional grows over the years, and they deserves to demonstrate that growth in their visibility journey without being accused of incompetence.

Meanwhile, competence has taken on new dimensions with the advent of technology and social media. Marketing competence must now include storytelling skills and digital marketing. That is, to be an excellent salesperson, you must understand strategic positioning and social media visibility. There are content creators, influencers and community builders, all of whom require certain competencies. Gone are the days when things were done purely



A Journey Through Traditional Beauty & Flavor

Inside Clay Food Shop & The Henna Place

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The Henna Place

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

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

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: +2349095327273

