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THE NIGERIA I WANT

11 Women, 11 Voices

66TH INDEPENDENCE EDITION

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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

October is here!!! I love the month of October, not only because it is my birth month, but because it is Nigeria's month of celebration as we turned 66 this year.

Indeed we have come a long way and though we want greater progress in Nigeria, we are optimistic about what we shall become collectively and individually.

Our cover for our independence celebration stirs the mind in thought-provoking way. We spoke to 11 outstanding women on the topic "The Nigeria I Want" and they expressed themselves passionately and intelligently too.

As you read word after word, line after line, may these words inspire us all to be the change we desire, and may it bring us hope for a better Nigeria. May it yield good fruits and may Nigeria prosper extensively in all ways and all good things!

Once again, Happy 66th Independence celebration Nigeria!!

Here are other articles in this edition:

HER POINT OF VIEW: NIGERIA AT 66: The Courage to Keep Becoming. By Chinyere Okorocha.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: After the Red Sea. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

FINANCIAL ADVISEHER: The Independence Worth Celebrating. By Sola Adesakin.

GENDER INSIGHTS: 66 Years of Independence and the Unbroken Spirit of Nigerian Women. By Asmau Benzies-Leo.

HOLISTIC LIVING: NIGERIA IS 66 - BUT ARE WE TRULY FREE? The Independence We Rarely Talk About. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES: The 360 Youth Development Strategy: My Ambassadorial Story. By Zainab Aderounmu.

WOMAN AT THE HELM: Anne Muraya, CEO of Deloitte East Africa.

WE'VE GOT MEN: Dare Okoudjou, Founder/CEO of Onafriq.

Have a great week and see you soon!

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COVER

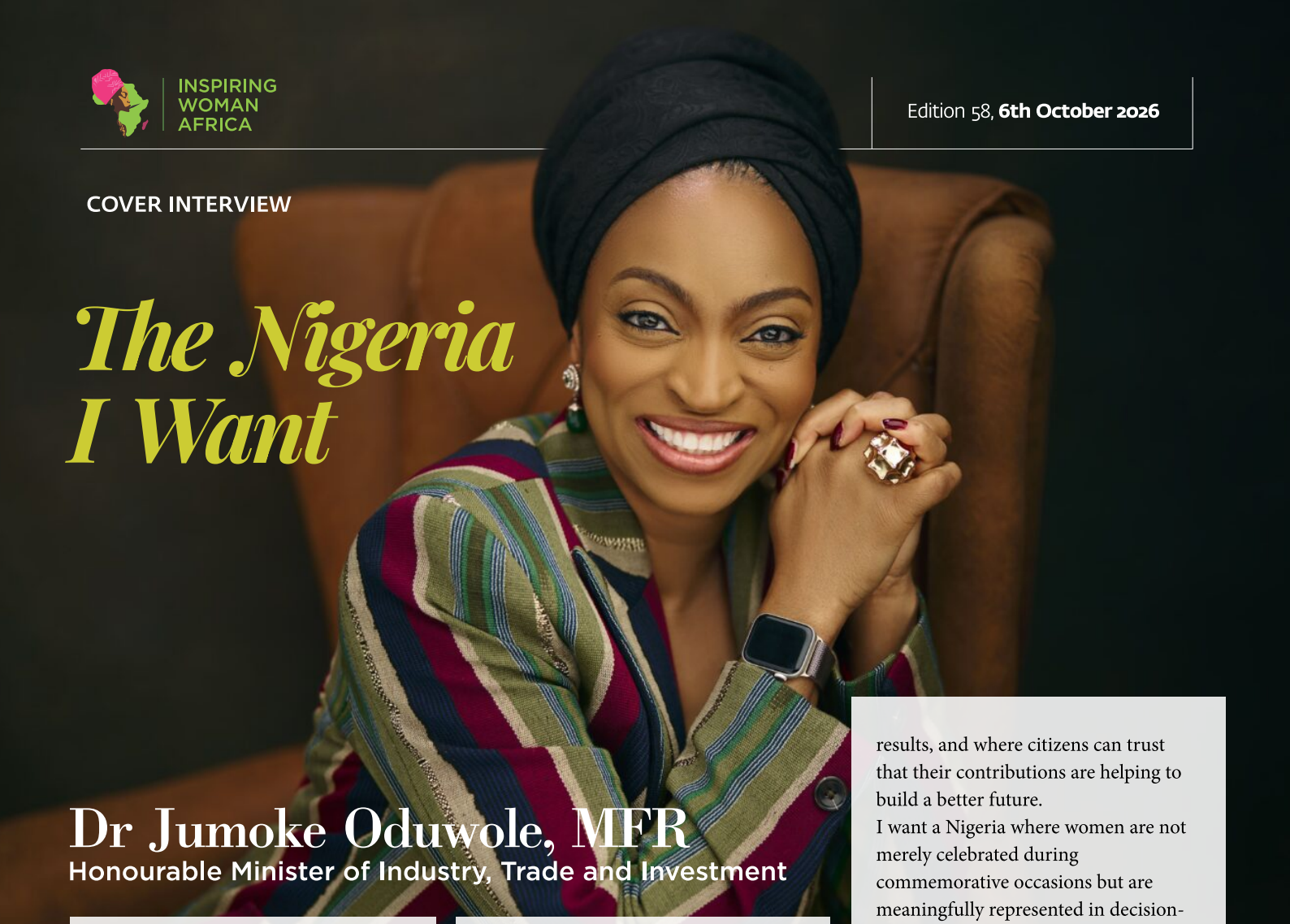


THE NIGERIA I WANT

11 Women, 11 Voices

COVER INTERVIEW

The Nigeria I Want



Dr Jumoke Oduwole, MFR

Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment

The Nigeria I want is a country where the promise of our people is matched by the opportunities available to them; where hard work is rewarded, enterprise is encouraged, and every Nigerian, regardless of where they come from, has a fair opportunity to thrive.

As we celebrate our Independence, I am reminded that nation-building is not a destination we arrive at, but a responsibility we must continually embrace. The Nigeria we desire will not emerge by chance. It will be built through deliberate choices, sound policies, strong institutions, and the collective commitment of our people.

The Nigeria I want is one that produces, creates, innovates, and competes confidently in the global economy. A Nigeria where our industries are thriving, our small businesses are growing, our young people are gainfully employed, and our women have the resources, opportunities, and platforms to fully participate in our economic transformation.

Nigeria's industrial and trade potential must translate into productive capacity, competitive enterprises and jobs at scale. This requires a business environment that enables Nigerian businesses to expand, attracts investment into priority sectors, strengthens local value chains and positions our products and services to compete in regional and global markets. Through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and our broader trade and investment partnerships, we are working to connect Nigeria's productive capacity to wider markets, deepen our participation in global value chains and ensure that trade and industrial growth deliver measurable economic opportunities for Nigerians.

But the Nigeria I want is about more than economic growth. It is a country where institutions work, where the rule of law is respected, where public service is defined by integrity and measurable results, and where citizens can trust that their contributions are helping to build a better future.

I want a Nigeria where women are not merely celebrated during commemorative occasions but are meaningfully represented in decision-making, leadership, enterprise, and national development. Where the circumstances of one's birth do not determine the limits of one's ambition.

Above all, I want a Nigeria where our diversity is a source of strength, our differences do not diminish our shared identity, and our young people believe that their future can be built here at home.

This Nigeria is possible. We have the people, the creativity, the resources, and the resilience. What we must continue to strengthen is our collective resolve to turn these assets into tangible progress.

As we mark another Independence anniversary, my prayer is that each of us will see nation-building as a shared responsibility. In our homes, workplaces, businesses, and communities, we all have a role to play.

The Nigeria I want is one we must build together, a productive, inclusive, prosperous, and globally competitive nation where opportunity is real and the promise of Nigeria is fulfilled for every citizen.

Happy 66th Independence, Nigeria.



Nigeria My Country, Happy 66th independence

Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim

Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development

Nigeria became independent 66 years ago, and it marked the birth of our responsibility to build. As the Hon. Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, I celebrate our dear country. I celebrate our opportunity to shape our own future, express our values, and the privilege to serve Nigeria with strength and dignity.

I am glad we are celebrating our 66th independence but it goes beyond celebration. I want a Nigeria where more women speak up and participate in the electoral process. A Nigeria where women come together to build together and nurture together. A Nigeria where women are bold to hold key positions as their contribution to national development.

I want to always see a Nigeria where women and youth are empowered to do great things their generations will be grateful for. Education is the right of every child and not a privilege. Our girls must go to school and finish well so they can become the leaders of tomorrow.

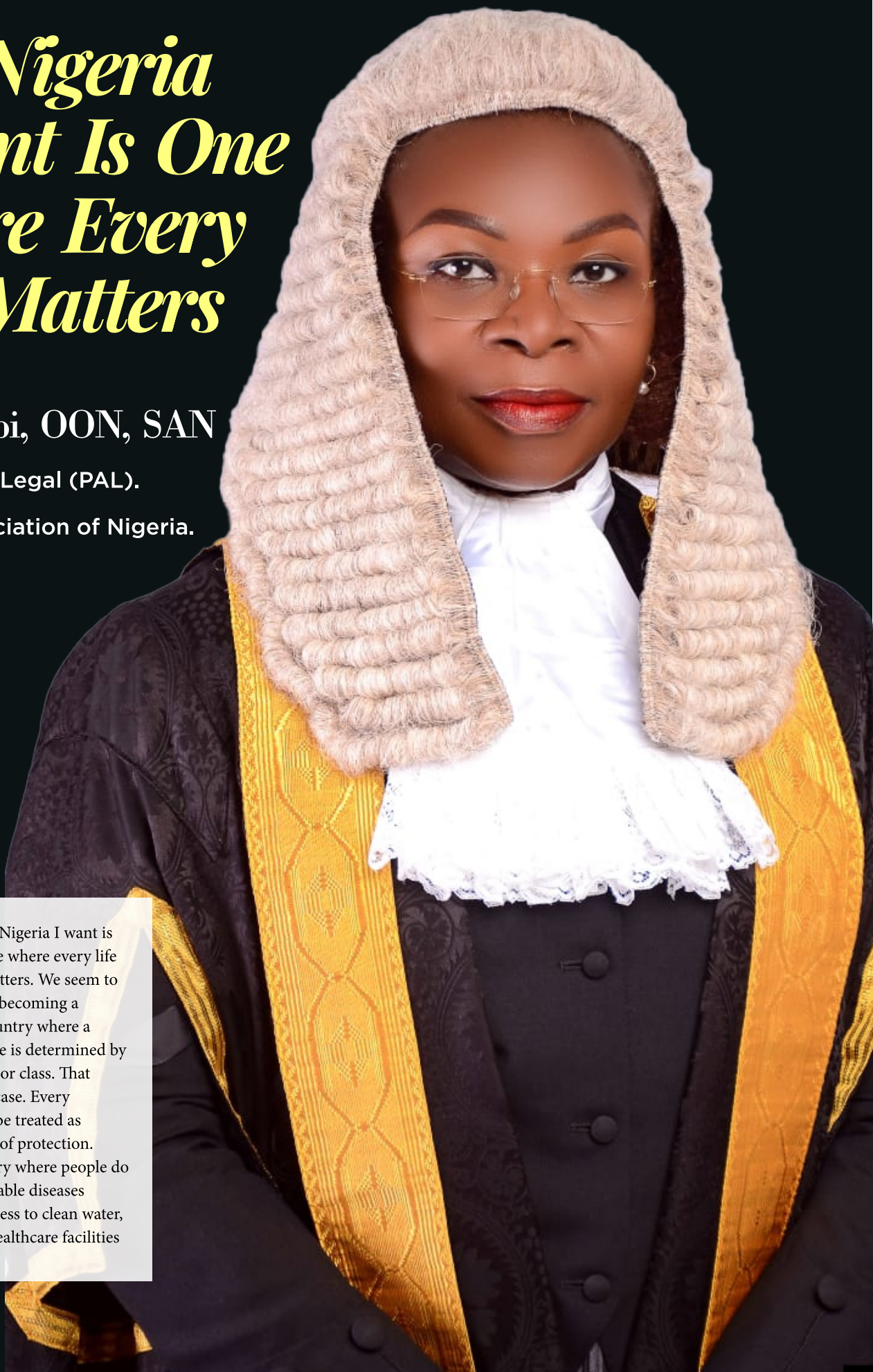
As diverse as we are as a nation, unity must also be our watchword regardless of religion, ethnicity, and heritage. Nigeria will always be home for us all. We are all we have and we must protect who we are and what we have, collectively.

As we celebrate 66years of independence, let's collectively agree to be committed to hard work, peace and patriotism. Let us honour those who fought for our independence by bringing honour to our motherland in what we do and wherever we go.

This is the Nigeria I want: A place where the citizens are unhindered, just, safe, industrious, patriotic and peaceful. Together we all can. Love will always lead the way. Happy 66th Independence Day, Nigeria my great country!

The Nigeria I Want Is One Where Every Life Matters

Boma Alabi, OON, SAN
Senior Partner,
Primera Africa Legal (PAL).
Chairman,
Shipping Association of Nigeria.



The Nigeria I want is one where every life matters. We seem to be becoming a country where a person's life and value is determined by income, social status or class. That should never be the case. Every Nigerian life should be treated as precious and worthy of protection.
I want to see a country where people do not die from preventable diseases because they lack access to clean water, vaccinations, basic healthcare facilities

or the financial means to seek medical treatment when emergencies arise.
The gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen, and the reality is that the majority of Nigerians are struggling to make ends meet. Many people can barely afford transportation to and from work, let alone food, utilities, healthcare and housing. This is deeply concerning. That is not acceptable. No nation can truly prosper when such a large percentage of its population is living below the poverty line and unable to meet basic needs.
The way forward is economic progress. This means that ordinary workers are able to live with dignity. I want a Nigeria where a soldier, a police officer, a teacher, a young lawyer or a journalist can work honestly and, at the end of the month, earn enough to cover necessities while still having something left for savings and leisure.

People who contribute to society through their professions should be able to enjoy a decent standard of living. Unfortunately, that is not the reality for many Nigerians today.
I am burdened about gender equality and wonder when it would truly materialise in every sense of the word. I would like to see Nigeria completely abandon patriarchal attitudes that place one gender above another. Men and women are human beings first and foremost. Neither gender is superior to the other.

The truth is that men and women need each other. We are equal in worth, although different in our experiences and contributions. The sooner our society recognises this reality, the sooner we will unlock the full potential of half of our population and create a more prosperous nation.

I want a Nigeria free from gender-based violence. Gender-based violence should become a thing of the past. It should never be tolerated, excused or defended as culture or tradition.
We must call it what it is: a violation of human rights. It should be condemned at every level of society, and victims should be protected and supported. No one should live in fear because of their gender.

The societal attitudes toward women must change. I would like to see a Nigeria where a woman's worth is not measured by whether she is married or whether she has children.

Marriage and parenthood are deeply personal milestones. They should never be used as the standard by which society judges a person's value or success. Every individual deserves respect regardless of their personal circumstances.

The Nigeria I want is a Nigeria that gives hope to its citizens approaching retirement. I want to see greater certainty for workers as they reach retirement age. People who have dedicated decades of their lives to serving the country deserve dignity in old age.

Their pensions and retirement income should be sufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Retirement should not be a period of anxiety and hardship after years of hard work.

Ths Nigeria I want is one that maximises its rich natural resources. We need to make much better use of the resources we have. Nigeria is blessed with enormous natural wealth, yet too many communities see little benefit from it.

We must ensure that resource development does not lead to exploitation, violence or environmental harm. At the same time, we need a more structured approach to exploring and developing our mineral resources, particularly in areas where significant deposits remain underutilised.

The Nigeria I want is a secured society. Security is fundamental. Without security of lives and property, development becomes difficult. Citizens must feel safe in their communities, businesses must feel confident enough to invest, and families must be able to plan for the future without fear. Improving security should remain a national priority.

As we mark 66 years of independence as a nation, my message is one of reflection and responsibility. I urge leaders at every level to honestly assess where we are as a nation and where we ought to be.

We must work together to build a Nigeria where every life matters, where opportunity is available to all, where human rights are respected, and where prosperity is shared more equitably.

That is the Nigeria I want, and I believe it is a Nigeria that is within our reach if we have the will and commitment to take the necessary steps forward.
Happy Independence Day, Nigeria.



The Nigeria I Want

Ayotola Jagun
Executive Director & Chief Corporate Services and Sustainability Officer, Oando PLC



As Nigeria marks another Independence anniversary, I find myself thinking not only about the country we have become, but about the country we still have the opportunity to build.

And I think particularly about the Nigerian woman.

I have spent more than three decades working as a lawyer and corporate professional, navigating boardrooms, leadership tables and institutions in Nigeria and beyond. I have had the privilege of leading teams, influencing decisions and contributing to the building of institutions.

But I also know that the journey of the Nigerian woman is too often described by one word: resilience.

We celebrate her ability to endure.

She raises families while building careers. She runs businesses in difficult conditions. She stretches limited resources, serves her community, adapts and somehow keeps going.

There is much to admire in that resilience. But I sometimes wonder whether we have become too comfortable celebrating a woman's ability to overcome circumstances we should be working to change.

The Nigeria I want is one in which a woman's strength is no longer measured by how much difficulty she can endure, but by how fully she is enabled to flourish.

I want a Nigeria where every girl receives an education that expands her possibilities and where her ambition is nurtured rather than diminished.

A Nigeria where a woman does not have to choose unnecessarily between motherhood and professional aspiration.

Where women have meaningful access to capital, markets, technology and economic opportunity.

Where women are safe in their homes, workplaces and communities.

Where competence creates genuine pathways into leadership, and women do not simply have a seat at the table, but a voice that is heard when they get there.

But this is not simply about what Nigeria should do for women.

It is about recognising what Nigerian women can do for Nigeria.

Across our country, women are building businesses, educating children, creating jobs, leading institutions, serving communities and holding families together. Imagine what becomes possible when we remove unnecessary barriers and allow that capacity to flourish more fully.

I have learnt through my own leadership journey that progress is not simply about arriving. It creates a responsibility to make the journey easier for those coming behind us.

Every door opened should make another door easier to open.

Every woman who finds her voice should help another woman find hers.

Every woman entrusted with influence should steward it so that opportunity does not end with her.

And men must be part of this future too. The advancement of Nigerian women is not a contest between men and women. We need one another. The Nigeria I want is one in which our sons and daughters understand that their gifts are complementary contributions to a shared national future.

As a Christian, I believe every human being carries God-given dignity and purpose. A nation cannot afford to suppress the gifts God has placed within half of its people and still expect to become all that it was created to be.

So, on this Independence Day, I choose hope. Not passive hope that waits for Nigeria to change, but hope that accepts responsibility for helping to build the Nigeria we desire.

Perhaps the Nigeria we want will emerge when we stop asking Nigerian women merely to survive the country we have built and give them equal opportunity to help build the country we desire. That is the Nigeria I want.



The Nigeria I Want

Ronke Sokefun

Partner at Templars | Chairman, Comercio Partners

When I think about the Nigeria I want, I think beyond what we want the country to have. I think about what we want the country to become.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of working with people and institutions across different sectors. One thing that experience has reinforced for me is that the strength of any society is closely tied to the quality of its institutions and the people entrusted to lead them.

I want a Nigeria where institutions work, regardless of who occupies a particular position. Where the rule of law is respected, processes are trusted and public responsibility is treated as stewardship. We need systems that can endure beyond individuals and leaders who understand that the office they occupy is an assignment, not an entitlement.

I want a Nigeria where competence is valued and people are given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully. Where a young person with talent, discipline and an idea can build a future here. Where education prepares our children not only to pass examinations, but to think, create, solve problems and participate fully in the economy.

I also want a Nigeria where we recognise that development requires all of us. Government has an important responsibility, but businesses, professionals, communities, families and individuals also have a role to play in the country we build.

As a woman, I particularly want to see more women equipped and enabled to contribute at every level. And I believe those of us who have had opportunities have a responsibility to make it easier for others to come behind us. Progress should not end with us. It should create room for the next person.

Perhaps this is why I think so much about stewardship. The Nigeria we want will not be created simply by demanding better from others. It will also require us to ask what we are building, what standards we are willing to uphold and what we are prepared to leave behind.

Our independence is an opportunity to remember where we have come from, but also to think carefully about where we are going.

The Nigeria I want is one where institutions are stronger, opportunities are wider, leadership is responsible and our children can look at this country and see reasons to build, contribute and stay.

That Nigeria is possible. But it will require each generation to understand that we are not merely inheriting Nigeria. We are also responsible for what we hand over.

A Nigeria We Can Truly Hail

Professor Ogechi Adeola

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Kigali



In May 2024, Nigerians learnt that our national anthem was changing. "Arise, O Compatriots," sung since 1978, was replaced by "Nigeria, We Hail Thee," the anthem that had accompanied Nigeria into independence in 1960 and remained in use until 1978. For an older generation, its return may have carried a whiff of nostalgia; for many younger Nigerians, it was unfamiliar, unexpected, perhaps even surprising.

I find the word "hail" significant. To hail something is to honour it, to acclaim it, to speak of it with pride. The anthem goes further, calling Nigeria "our own dear native land."

What should the name Nigeria mean when it is spoken anywhere in the world? For me, it means dignity. But what does the name Nigeria truly mean

to people across the globe?
Many years ago, I was in Mumbai, India, when some young Nigerians were reported to have committed a crime. In conversations that followed, when people asked where I was from and I answered, "Nigeria," I noticed the snickers. I have experienced versions of that moment elsewhere, even on our own continent.

It is an uncomfortable feeling when the name of your country enters the room before you do. But that is not the whole Nigerian story.

Let me tell you about the Nigeria I know.

I know the Nigeria whose music the world dances to. From Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Oliver De Coque and King Sunny Adé to Burna Boy, Wizkid, Davido, Tems, Rema and Ayra Starr, generations of Nigerian artists have taken our sounds beyond our shores.
I know the Nigeria of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, whose words have helped the world encounter Africa through African eyes. I know the Nigeria of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Akinwumi Adesina, demonstrating that Nigerian intellect and leadership belong at the highest levels of global decision-making.

I know the Nigeria of medical excellence, exemplified by internationally recognised Nigerian surgeons such as Dr. Oluyinka Olutoye, a pioneer in fetal surgery, and Professor Obi Davies-Ekwenna, who in September 2026 led Nigeria's first tele-robotic surgery, operating remotely on a patient hundreds of kilometres away.

I know the Nigeria of Nollywood, where ingenuity and imagination built a globally recognised film industry. I know the Nigeria of enterprise and industry, of Aliko Dangote and Tony Elumelu, and of entrepreneurs and technology innovators building businesses and creating opportunities across Africa.

I know, too, the Nigeria of sporting excellence, from the Dream Team of Atlanta 1996, featuring Nwankwo Kanu, Jay-Jay Okocha, Daniel Amokachi, Sunday Oliseh, Taribo West, Emmanuel Amunike and Celestine Babayaro, which made history as the first African team to win Olympic football gold, to the Super Eagles and Super Falcons, Victor Osimhen and Asisat Oshoala, and those unforgettable moments when the green and white rises, our differences recede, and millions of us remember what we share.
But the Nigeria I know is not defined only by celebrated names. It is also the teacher shaping minds, the doctor and nurse saving lives with limited resources, the researcher expanding knowledge, the farmer feeding families and communities, the trader building a livelihood, the artisan creating with skilled hands, and millions of ordinary Nigerians working with dignity every day.

Then there is the Nigeria I want, the Nigeria I dream of.

I want a Nigeria where education opens doors, enterprise and innovation flourish, integrity is rewarded, and every Nigerian has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

I want a Nigeria that invests deliberately in its next generation, where young people can thrive, dream boldly and see a future for themselves. A Nigeria where quality healthcare is accessible, where the circumstances of one's birth do not determine the quality of one's life, and where, in the words of our anthem, "truth and justice reign."

I want a Nigeria where our extraordinary diversity is a source of strength, not division. As our anthem reminds us, "Though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand." A Nigeria where who you are or where you come from does not determine how far you can go.

I want an influential Nigeria, where ideas matter, institutions work, creativity travels, knowledge creates opportunity, and our people are respected wherever they go.
And we Nigerians have a responsibility too. Loving one's country does not mean ignoring its shortcomings. It means believing enough in its possibilities to confront what is wrong and build what can be better.
The Nigeria I want is one whose passport we present with confidence. A Nigeria whose name opens doors rather than raises suspicion. A Nigeria where justice is upheld, security is assured, public service is honourable, and the country is known not for the misdeeds of a few, but for the achievements, character and contributions of its many millions.

The Nigeria I want is a Nigeria we can truly hail, where leadership means service and honour, public institutions embody integrity and professionalism, and every Nigerian can live in safety and dignity, free from ethnic and religious division, terrorism, kidnapping and violence. A nation whose name we carry with confidence, whose achievements we celebrate, and which we proudly call, in the words of our anthem, "our own dear native land."
And on this 66th Independence Anniversary, my prayer for Nigeria is captured beautifully in the final stanza of our anthem:

O God of all creation,
Grant this our one request,
Help us to build a nation
Where no man is oppressed,
And so with peace and plenty
Nigeria may be blessed.

The Nigeria I Want



Dr. Ini Abimbola
Member, Wigwe University Governing Council

At sixty-six, Nigeria is old enough to be judged by the strength of its institutions, and that is the standard I hope we hold ourselves to as we celebrate. The Nigeria I want is one where policies outlast the people who make them. I want a country where a contract signed by one administration is honoured by the next, where a regulator can refuse a powerful company without first checking who its owners know, and where a citizen who goes to court can predict the outcome from the law itself.

Many years of work in boardrooms and institutions have taught me that organisations decline slowly and then collapse suddenly when decisions depend on personalities and individuals, and that they endure when decisions follow a process everyone can see and question. Countries behave in exactly the same way.

I want a Nigeria where good governance would feel ordinary. Budgets would be published on time and in a form a trader in Oyingbo or Uyo could read. Boards of public companies and government agencies would be appointed for competence, evaluated honestly and replaced when they underperform. Sustainability and disclosure standards would serve as tools for earning the trust of investors and communities, and every company that reports on its impact would expect that report to be checked.

Most of this is already written into our laws and codes, so what remains is the discipline to apply them consistently, whoever is affected. The Nigeria I want treats women's leadership as a governance question. Women make up roughly half of our population, yet they remain a small minority in the National Assembly, in state executive councils and on the boards of our largest companies. My years supporting the National Assembly on women's political leadership showed me that the gap is structural. Party primaries price women out, appointment processes run through closed and clannish networks, and a quiet assumption persists that leadership looks like a man. A country that leaves half its talent on the bench is choosing to govern with one hand, and it should expect the results that follow. Reserved legislative seats, transparent criteria for board appointments and sustained investment in young women leaders are practical corrections to a system that currently filters talent by gender. Institutions are ultimately built by people who decide to behave well when no one is watching. That includes the civil servant who moves a file without asking for something extra, the director who raises the uncomfortable question in the audit committee, and the voter who holds a representative to account between elections.

The Nigeria I want is within reach because its outline is already visible in the many Nigerians who do these things every day. Our task at sixty-six is to build institutions strong enough to make their example the norm, and to ensure that women stand fully among those who lead that work.



The Nigeria I Want

Hansatu Adegbite
National Consultant on Private Sector Partnerships with UN Women

I want a Nigeria where fairness is not a privilege and opportunities are not determined by who you know. Where every Nigerian – men or women, young, middle-aged or old, with or without a disability - has the opportunity to live with dignity, build a livelihood and contribute to the progress of our nation.

I want a Nigeria where women are not simply beneficiaries of development but leaders of it. I want to see women sitting at decision-making tables, not because they are filling quotas, but because their leadership, experience, expertise, resourcefulness and contributions matter. I want women to have the capital, markets, assets, skills, technology and networks they need to build businesses, create wealth and shape the economy.

I want a Nigeria where a young person's greatest asset is their talent, not their political connection. Our young people should be skilled, innovative, resourceful and confident. They should have opportunities to learn, work, create, build and lead. We must create an economy that gives them reasons to stay, reasons to dream and reasons to believe that their future can be built here.

I want a Nigeria where persons with disabilities are fully included in the economy and society. Not pity, tokenism nor exclusion, but opportunity. Opportunity to learn, work, build businesses, access finance, earn a livelihood, live independently and contribute.

I want a Nigeria where every life matters. A Nigeria where farmers can go to their farms without fear. Where children can go to school safely. Where businesses can operate without intimidation. Where families can sleep peacefully. Where citizens do not have to live in constant fear of violence, insecurity or uncertainty. Where security is not a luxury but the foundation upon which development is built with leaders who understands this.

I want leaders who see public office as a responsibility, not a pathway for personal looting, enrichment and exploitation. Leaders who do not measure success by what they accumulate for themselves, their families and their friends, but by what they create for the communities they were entrusted to lead. Leaders who ask themselves, Who is better because I served? Whose life changed because I led? What opportunity did I create? What institution did I strengthen? What legacy will remain when I am gone?

I want a Nigeria that I will live to see bloom before I leave this earth, a Nigeria that gives me the comfort of knowing that the generations coming after me will inherit equity, opportunities, dignity and a country they can be proud to call home. I do not want to join the millions of Nigerians who left this world in despair, wondering what kind of country they were leaving behind for their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. I want to live long enough to see Nigeria become the country we have always believed it could be, a country worth leaving behind.



The Nigeria I Want

Professor Adaeze Oreh

27th Honourable Commissioner for Health in Rivers State, Nigeria.
Lecturer at PAMO University of Medical Sciences, Port Harcourt.

When I reflect on the nation we are striving to build, my vision is not grounded in abstract ideals or distant rhetoric. It is shaped by years spent on the frontlines of our health systems, listening to mothers in rural health centres, engaging community health workers, navigating policy corridors, and leading interventions across state lines. The Nigeria I want is a nation that recognises health, human dignity, and opportunity not as luxuries for a privileged few, but as fundamental rights for every citizen, regardless of their location or socioeconomic standing.

To envision a prosperous Nigeria, we must first confront our foundational vulnerabilities. A nation cannot thrive when its people are perpetually exposed to preventable societal hazards, health crises and economic shock. The Nigeria I envision places primary healthcare at the absolute core of its national development strategy. It is a nation where a pregnant woman in a remote village does not risk her life to give birth due to a lack of skilled attendants, emergency transportation, or safe blood for transfusions. It is a country where health systems are resilient, decentralised, and equipped with reliable data mechanisms, robust haemovigilance, and digital infrastructure that ensure no community is left in the dark.

Furthermore, the Nigeria I want understands that investing in human capital is our greatest competitive advantage. For far too long, we have measured wealth by what lies beneath our soil rather than the immense potential residing within our people. Human capital development begins in the early years, with comprehensive maternal care, early childhood nutrition, quality basic education, and protective social safety nets. When we safeguard a child's health and early development, we lay the groundwork for an innovative, productive workforce capable of driving sustainable economic growth.

This vision demands a fundamental shift in leadership and governance. The Nigeria I want is driven by evidence-based policymaking, accountability, and inclusive leadership. We need systems designed around problem-driven, iterative adaptation; where local challenges are met with pragmatic, context-specific solutions rather than rigid, top-down mandates. True progress requires elevated representation for women and young leaders in governance, health diplomacy, and economic planning. When women lead, policy outcomes demonstrably pivot toward social protection, community well-being, and long-term resilience.

Crucially, building this nation requires a collaborative ecosystem. Government cannot shoulder this burden in isolation. The Nigeria of our collective aspirations demands strategic, high-integrity partnerships between public institutions, the private sector, civil society, and international development agencies. It requires an environment where local innovation is nurtured, healthcare financing is sustainable through expanded universal health coverage, and domestic research directly informs public action.

Ultimately, the Nigeria I want is one defined by hope, equity, and institutional excellence. It is a country where our finest minds – our doctors, researchers, educators, and entrepreneurs – feel empowered to invest their talents locally rather than seeking promise abroad. It is a nation that honours its diversity as a strength and builds resilient institutions capable of standing the test of time.

This transformation will not occur overnight, nor will it happen by chance. It requires deliberate choices, political courage, and sustained commitment from each of us. But as I look across our communities and see the extraordinary resilience, intellect, and resolve of our people, I remain convinced that this Nigeria is not merely an elusive dream – it is an achievable future well within our grasp.



The Nigeria I Want

Patricia Obozuwa

Managing Director, Nigeria Global Reputation Management Project

When I think about the Nigeria I want, particularly as we mark 66 years of independence, I think about the country I want the world to know. For me, that comes down to three things.

First, I want Nigeria to be known for the strength of its people and the possibilities of the country.

I want Nigeria to be recognised as a country of talent, enterprise, creativity and ambition. A place where ideas are created, businesses are built, culture is shaped and people are solving problems of global relevance.

There is already much on which to build. Nigerian music is heard around the world. Our film, fashion, literature and art have given us significant cultural influence. Nigerian entrepreneurs are building businesses across Africa and beyond. Our technology ecosystem continues to attract international attention and investment. Nigerians are excelling in business, academia, science, sport and international institutions.

I want these different expressions of Nigerian excellence to come together into a clearer understanding of who we are and what we contribute to the world.

Second, I want Nigeria to be a country that is trusted.

Reputation has real consequences. It shapes expectations before we enter the room. It influences whether an investor explores an opportunity, a tourist chooses to visit, a company seeks a Nigerian partner or an international institution deepens its engagement with us. Countries do not compete on resources alone anymore. They compete on trust.

I want Nigeria to be a country people are curious about, want to visit, invest in and work with. A country respected for its talent and creativity, trusted for its capability and increasingly recognised for its contribution to the world.

That trust must be earned. I want our reputation to be grounded in reality… supported by stronger institutions, successful businesses, innovation, compelling visitor experiences, investment and measurable progress.

Third, I want us Nigerians to recognise that Nigeria's reputation belongs to all of us.

Government has an important role, but countries build reputations through the cumulative experiences and achievements associated with them. Every Nigerian business that delivers to a high standard strengthens confidence in Nigeria. Every entrepreneur who succeeds internationally expands perceptions of what is possible in our country. Every artist, athlete, academic and professional who excels adds another dimension to how Nigeria is understood. Every visitor who leaves with a positive experience carries an impression of Nigeria with them. Our collective actions accumulate into reputation.

At 66, I want us to become increasingly intentional about the reputation we build… obviously not by trying to manufacture an image, but by building a country whose progress gives us more to confidently take to the world.

Ultimately, the Nigeria I want is a Nigeria known for what it creates, what it contributes and what it makes possible. A Nigeria that earns trust.

And a Nigeria whose reputation increasingly reflects the very best of what we are and what we are becoming.



The Nigeria I Want

Isi Igenegba
Co-Founder, Strom Global Services Ltd.
Apostle at People Of Influence Network

Every generation is given a country. The question is what it chooses to do with it. We inherited Nigeria with all her beauty and contradictions, her extraordinary people and painful realities, her enormous promise and unfinished work.

On this Independence Day, I find myself thinking less about the Nigeria we have inherited and more about the Nigeria we are building. We did not choose the circumstances into which we were born, but we have a choice about what we leave behind.

That, to me, is one of the deepest meanings of independence. It is the responsibility to become a people capable of building the nation we hope to see. The Nigeria I want is a nation where every human being can discover their God given potential and have a genuine opportunity to develop and express it. I want a Nigeria where excellence is not exceptional, but expected. Where doing things well becomes part of our culture. Where competence is respected, integrity is rewarded and people can trust the systems they depend on.

I want us to recover the dignity of building. Not only building roads and infrastructure, but building people, families, businesses, schools, communities and institutions we can trust. Building systems that work. Building cultures that produce excellence. Building people who can carry responsibility. Building things that are strong enough to serve generations beyond our own.

The Nigeria I want will not be built by the government alone. It will be built by parents and teachers, entrepreneurs and professionals, civil servants and creatives, pastors, imams and community leaders, young people and older generations. It will be built by every Nigerian who chooses to make their sphere of engagement better than they found it.

Our faith, as a nation, must have an expression beyond our gatherings. If we believe that God has entrusted us with gifts, resources and influence, then those things must become instruments for service. It should make us better parents, better professionals, better employers, better citizens and better stewards of the communities and institutions entrusted to us.

The Nigeria I want will not be built by waiting for the perfect government, the perfect leader or the perfect circumstances. It will be built when millions of Nigerians begin to ask a different question: what has been placed in my hands, and what can I build with it?

I believe there is a generation with the capacity to answer that question. A generation that can build families that are strong, institutions that endure, businesses that create opportunity, communities that thrive and systems that serve people well. This is the Nigeria I want: a nation that is becoming all that God has placed within her. And I believe our assignment is not simply to inherit Nigeria.

It is to build her well enough that those who come after us can inherit a nation stronger than the one we received.

Happy Independence Day, Nigeria. May God give us the wisdom, courage, character and grace to build well.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

After the Red Sea

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



On Independence Day last week, as Nigeria turned sixty-six, President Tinubu told the nation that we had "passed through our own Red Sea." He spoke of hard reforms behind us and an age of prosperity ahead.

I will leave the economists to debate the numbers. What stayed with me was the image. Because anyone who knows the story of the Red Sea knows a quiet, inconvenient truth about it.
The crossing was never the end. It was the beginning of the harder part.

The Miracle Was the Easy Part

We love the Red Sea as a picture of deliverance. The waters part, the people walk through on dry ground, the enemy is swept away behind them. It is the part we put on the posters.

But read on. The same people who sang on the far bank were grumbling within days. The water was bitter. The food ran out. The generation that walked out of Egypt spent forty years learning to become a nation, because it is one thing to leave a place and quite another to be ready for where you are going.
The miracle delivered them in a day. The formation took a lifetime. And God, it turned out, was far more interested in the second than in the first.

Leaders Confuse the Crossing with the Arrival

This is not only a national lesson. It is one of the most common mistakes I see in leadership, and I have had to learn it myself.

We celebrate the crossing as though it were the destination. The deal closes, the turnaround holds, and something in us wants to declare the journey done. But the crossing is only ever a threshold. What determines whether it meant anything is the long, unglamorous walk that comes after, when the cameras have gone and the real building begins.

Any leader can have a good day. The question is what you do with the ordinary ones that follow. A rescue is a moment. A rebuilt institution, a healed culture, a nation that works, these are wilderness projects, built slowly by people willing to keep walking.

The Nigeria We Are Walking Toward

So let us talk about the land ahead, because that is the part that should occupy us now.

Nigeria is one of the youngest nations on earth. The majority of us are under thirty, and within a generation we will be among the most populous countries in the world. That is not a burden to be managed. It is, rightly stewarded, the single greatest asset any nation could ask for. Our future will not be decided by oil, or even by policy. It will be decided by whether we prepare these young people to build.

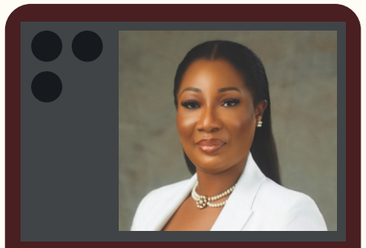
And that is the real work of the wilderness. Not waiting for a better government, though we should demand one. Not waiting for the economy to turn, though we pray it does. The work is formation, raising a generation with the character, the competence, and the conviction to carry a nation the founders could only imagine. Every young person mentored, every institution built to outlast its builder, every standard refused to be lowered, is a brick in a Nigeria that does not yet exist.
We will not see all of it. That is the nature of building for a future larger than yourself. The founders of 1960 did not see today, and we will not see 2060. But we can decide, now, what we are planting for those who will.

Final Thoughts

Nigeria at sixty-six has crossed many seas, and by grace will cross many more. But our real work was never the crossing. It is the building that comes after, the patient, faithful, generational work of becoming the nation our freedom was always meant to produce.

The sea is behind us. The land is ahead. And the only question that has ever mattered is whether we will keep walking, and keep building, until the generation coming after us inherits a Nigeria worth the long journey here.

Happy 66th independence. The crossing is done. Now we build.



Wola Joseph Condotti
Chief Executive Officer,
Eko Power Limited.

Wola is the CEO of Eko Power Limited.

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, be coming the first-ever recipient of this category. The award celebrated her historic transition from General Counsel to Group MD/CEO, a milestone applauded for redefining leadership pathways in the legal profession.

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

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

The Independence Worth Celebrating

By Sola Adesakin



Nigeria is 66. There were speeches, flags, and the familiar debate about how far we have come and how far we still have to go. I will leave that conversation to the commentators. The independence I want to talk about today is closer to home. It is personal. And unlike national independence, it is entirely within your control. Your financial independence.

Not wealth, or luxury. Not the version of success that looks good in photographs, but something much more fundamental than that. The ability to meet your basic needs without panic. The ability to face a bill without your stomach turning. The ability to live a life that is genuinely yours, not one held together by performance, pressure, or the constant anxiety of not knowing how next month will work. That is the real flex. And most people do not have it.

Let me tell you what financial independence means to me in the simplest terms I know. When there is a need, there is a means. When there is a bill, there is a bailout. Not a loan from a friend. Not a frantic reshuffling of money that was already committed elsewhere, but a means. Something you built. Something that is there because you put it there deliberately.

At its most basic level, financial independence answers four questions. Can you pay your rent without borrowing? Can you cover school fees without a crisis? Can you handle a basic healthcare need without it destabilising everything else? Can you feed yourself and your family through the month without the last week becoming a survival exercise?

Whether you are single or married, those four things should not constantly throw you into emergency mode. If they do, that is not a character problem. It is a structural one. And structures can be rebuilt.

Of course financial independence goes further than the basics. There are levels. Having an emergency fund that covers three to six months of your life. Having insurance so that one event does not wipe out years of progress. Having investments that grow quietly in the background. Having a retirement plan that does not depend entirely on your children's generosity. Having the ability to afford some luxuries without guilt because the foundations are solid enough to carry them. Eventually, having your money work for you so that your income is no longer tied exclusively to your physical presence and effort.

Those levels matter. But they are built on a foundation, and the foundation is financial breathing room. The space between your income and your expenses where peace lives. Where decisions are made from clarity rather than desperation. Where you can say no to something that does not serve you because you are not financially trapped into saying yes.

Here is what I want you to do this month, while the word independence is in the air.

Sit down with your numbers. What comes in each month? What goes out? Is there breathing room, or is every naira accounted for before it even arrives? If there is no room, something needs to change. Not everything at once. One thing. One expense reduced. One small savings transfer automated. One decision made differently this month than last month.

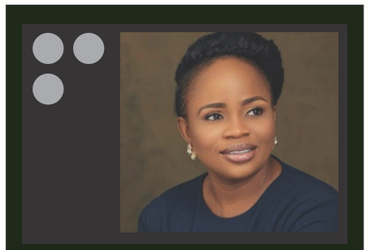
If you do not have an emergency fund, start one today. Even N05,000 is a beginning. It is not about the amount. It is about breaking the cycle of living without a buffer and calling it normal. It is not normal. It is just common. And common is not the same as acceptable.

If your income is not growing, ask yourself honestly what you are doing to increase your value. The real independence is not just managing what you have. It is becoming someone whose skills solve real problems and attract income. Build from there. Build wealth from that income. Build substance. Build legacy. Build a life that does not require you to perform for anyone.

Money may never feel like enough. That is a human condition, not a financial one. But your basic needs should not be in a permanent fight with your income. That fight can end. It ends when you decide to build the structure that stops it.

This October, let the nation celebrate its independence however it chooses. You celebrate yours by taking one real step toward financial breathing room.
To yourself, be true. To your future, be intentional.

That is the independence worth having.



By Sola Adesakin
Founder and Lead Coach,
Smart Stewards

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

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

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

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INSPIRING WOMAN AFRICA

HER POINT OF VIEW



Nigeria At 66: The Courage To Keep Becoming

Chinyere Okorocha

As Nigeria marks 66 years of independence, I find myself thinking about our country not only as a nation, but as a work in progress. There was so much hope at independence in 1960. A young nation, rich in natural resources, talent, culture and possibility, stepping forward with dreams of what it could become.

Sixty-six years later, the journey has certainly not been a straight line. We have lived through military rule, political instability, a civil war, economic difficulties and periods when the promise of Nigeria seemed very far from the reality. Yet we have also rebuilt, returned to democracy and continued to move forward.

And perhaps that is one of the most important lessons Nigeria's story can teach us about our careers: progress is rarely linear. There will be seasons when everything seems to be falling into place. There will also be interruptions, disappointments, wrong turns and moments when you wonder whether you are making any progress at all. But an interruption does not have to become an ending.

One thing I have always found remarkable about Nigerians is our capacity to rise. Travel almost anywhere in the world and you will find Nigerians excelling—in medicine, engineering, academia, technology, law, finance, business, the arts and countless other fields. There is something in the Nigerian spirit that refuses to be easily defeated.

We adapt. We reinvent ourselves. We find another route. We start again.
Yet our national challenge remains: how do we translate all that individual excellence into collective progress?
And I think there is a lesson there for women building careers too.
Talent alone is not enough.

It is not enough to be intelligent, hardworking or ambitious. You must learn how to harness your gifts. You must develop yourself deliberately, build relationships, become visible, find mentors and sponsors, learn from failure and keep repositioning yourself for the next level. Sometimes becoming requires pressure.

Gold does not emerge from the earth ready to be worn. Diamonds do not begin as the beautiful stones we admire. They are mined, cut, shaped and polished before their brilliance is fully revealed. Our careers can be like that.

Some of the experiences we would never have chosen—the promotion we didn't get, the opportunity that passed us by, the difficult boss, the career interruption, the season when nobody seemed to notice our work—may ultimately shape us in ways success alone never could.

I know this after more than three decades of professional life: you will have seasons of acceleration and seasons of waiting. You will make mistakes. You will change direction. You will outgrow certain dreams and discover new ones.
The important thing is to keep becoming. Nigeria is still becoming too.

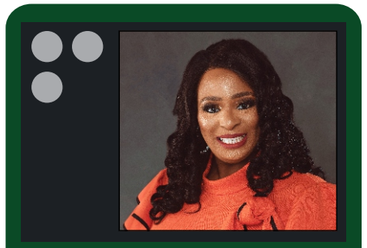
At 66, we are not yet everything we hoped we would be. There is much work to do, and many legitimate reasons to be dissatisfied with where we are. But I refuse to believe that our challenges are the end of our story.

There is simply too much talent, too much resilience, too much possibility in our people to stop believing in what Nigeria can become. And perhaps that is my Independence Day message to every woman reading this:

Do not give up on the person you are becoming simply because the journey has been harder or longer than you expected.

Keep learning.
Keep growing.
Keep refining.
Keep showing up.

A difficult chapter is not the whole story. For Nigeria, and for each of us, the work of becoming continues.
Happy Independence Day, Nigeria. May we never stop believing, building and becoming.



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

66 Years of Independence and the Unbroken Spirit of Nigerian Women

Asmau Benzies Leo



On 1 October 1960, the green-white-green flag was raised over a newly independent Nigeria, marking the beginning of a sovereign national journey. Sixty-six years later, as Nigeria celebrates its 66th Independence Anniversary, the country pauses to reflect on a history marked by resilience, diversity, sacrifice, achievement and an enduring determination to build a better future.

Independence anniversaries are often narrated through the milestones of political leaders, constitutional transitions, economic developments and national institutions. Yet beneath these official accounts lies another story, one that is equally fundamental to understanding Nigeria: the story of Nigerian women
To celebrate 66 years of Nigerian statehood without recognising the contributions of women would be to leave a significant part of the national story unwritten. From pre-colonial communities and trading networks to contemporary boardrooms, laboratories, farms, security institutions, technology hubs and international organisations, Nigerian women have consistently contributed to the economic, social, political and cultural life of the nation.

Their story is not simply one of endurance. It is a story of agency, leadership, courage, innovation and transformation.

The Women Who Helped Build the Foundations

Long before independence, Nigerian women had established powerful traditions of economic organisation, community leadership and political mobilisation.

The Aba Women's riot of 1929, for example, demonstrated the extraordinary capacity of women to organise collectively against policies they considered unjust. Thousands of women mobilised across communities in southeastern Nigeria to protest colonial taxation, warrant chiefs and other forms of administrative interference. Their resistance remains an important chapter in the history of anti-colonial mobilisation in Nigeria.

In the west, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti emerged as one of the country's most influential women activists and nationalists. Through the Abeokuta Women's Union, she mobilised women to challenge taxation and political exclusion while advocating for education, representation and women's rights. Her activism demonstrated that the struggle for self-government was inseparable from the struggle for dignity, participation and social justice.

Other pioneering women, including Margaret Ekpo and Gambo Sawaba, also challenged the political and social limitations of their time. They demonstrated that Nigerian women were not passive observers of the nation's political evolution, but they were active participants in shaping it.
Their courage created pathways for generations that followed.

From Independence to Economic Impact

Since independence, Nigerian women have remained central to the country's economy. These women are farmers producing food, some are traders sustaining markets, entrepreneurs creating employment, professionals managing institutions, teachers educating generations, health workers caring for communities, artisans preserving skills and caregivers sustaining families.

Much of this contribution occurs outside the formal economy and therefore does not always receive adequate recognition in conventional measures of national productivity. Yet the resilience of Nigeria's economy has repeatedly depended on the ingenuity and adaptability of women.

Across rural and urban Nigeria, women

have built enterprises from modest beginnings. They have developed informal savings and credit systems, entered domestic and international markets, embraced digital platforms and expanded their businesses despite limited access to capital, land, technology and formal support systems.
Today, Nigerian women are increasingly visible in sectors such as technology, finance, agriculture, manufacturing, media, entertainment, academia and professional services.

The challenge, therefore, is no longer whether Nigerian women have demonstrated their capacity to contribute, yes they have. The question is whether Nigeria's institutions will create the conditions necessary for millions more women to translate their potential into sustained economic power.

Women at the Frontiers of Leadership

The evolution of Nigerian women in leadership provides another remarkable dimension of the country's 66th year journey.
Women have risen to senior positions across government, the judiciary, diplomacy, academia, business, civil society and international institutions.

Justice Mariam Aloma Mukhtar, Nigeria's first female Chief Justice, represented an important milestone in the country's legal history. Her achievement helped challenge assumptions about women's capacity to occupy the highest levels of judicial leadership.

On the global stage, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala represents one of the most visible examples of Nigerian women's international leadership. She became the first woman and the first African to serve as Director General of the World Trade Organization in 2021 and began a second four-year term in September 2025.

Similarly, Amina J. Mohammed, Nigeria's former Minister of Environment, serves as Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations. Her international career has



included significant contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals and global sustainable development policy.
These achievements are more than individual success stories. They expand the boundaries of what Nigerian girls and young women can imagine for themselves in the future.

Women in Peace, Security and National Resilience:

Perhaps one of the most important, yet least sufficiently recognised dimensions of women's contribution is their role in peacebuilding, security and humanitarian response.

Across Nigeria, women have worked in communities affected by conflict, displacement, insecurity, climate related disasters and poverty. They have supported survivors of violence, provided humanitarian assistance, facilitated dialogue, advocated for displaced populations and helped rebuild community relationships.

Women peacebuilders have demonstrated that security is not simply about military strength. It is also about human security, safety, dignity, livelihoods as well as the welbeing of the communities.

This understanding is at the heart of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which recognises women not merely as victims of conflict but as essential actors in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, mediation, recovery and reconstruction.

The growing participation of women in Nigeria's security institutions also reflects changing national attitudes towards women's leadership. From the military and police to civil defence, intelligence and other security structures, Nigerian women continue to break institutional barriers and demonstrate professional competence.

The advancement of Nigerian women has never occurred in isolation. Behind many successful women are parents who invested in their education, spouses who supported their ambitions, mentors who opened doors, colleagues who created opportunities and male allies who understood that empowering women strengthens families, institutions and society.

Recognising women's contributions should therefore not create a narrative of women versus men. Rather, it should remind us that nation building is a shared responsibility. A Nigeria in which women can participate fully, is not a Nigeria that diminishes men but a Nigeria that makes better use of the talents, knowledge and creativity of its entire population.
The future must therefore be built on partnership where women and men work together to remove barriers, challenge harmful stereotypes, strengthen institutions and create opportunities for every citizen.

The Work That Remains

Celebration, however, must be accompanied by reflection.
Despite significant achievements, many Nigerian women continue to face barriers to political participation, economic opportunity, access to finance and land, quality education, healthcare and protection from gender based violence.

Women's representation in many political and decision making institutions remains considerably below their population share. This means that the next phase of Nigeria's development must move beyond celebrating women's achievements towards creating systems that enable broader participation. This includes investing in girls' education, expanding women's access to finance, technology, land and markets; strengthening protection from gender based violence; supporting women's participation in governance and peace processes; improving maternal and reproductive healthcare; and creating environments in which women can build businesses and careers without structural discrimination. These are not simply women's issues, they are national development issues.

Nigeria at 66: A Future Written Together

The story of Nigeria at 66 is a story still being written. It is visible in the marketplace, where a woman builds a business from limited resources. It is present in the classroom, where a teacher prepares the next generation. It is found on the farm, in the hospital, in the courtroom, in the laboratory, in the newsroom, in the boardroom and at the negotiating table. It is also present in the quiet sacrifices of mothers, caregivers, community leaders and countless women whose contributions may never make the headlines.

As Nigeria celebrates 66 years of independence, we must remember that national development is not measured only by roads built, institutions established or economic statistics recorded. It is also measured by whether every citizen has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the nation's future.

Nigerian women have contributed immensely to the journey from independence to impact. They have resisted injustice, sustained families, built businesses, served communities, led institutions, promoted peace and represented Nigeria on the world stage. Their story is a reminder that resilience is not simply the ability to survive difficult circumstances, but the courage to transform those circumstances.

At 66, Nigeria should therefore celebrate its women not merely as beneficiaries of national development, but as architects, partners and drivers of the nation's future. And as the green-white-green flag rises once again, the message should be clear, the next chapter of Nigeria's story must be written together with women and men contributing their talents, leadership and vision to building a more peaceful, inclusive, prosperous and resilient nation.

From independence to impact, Nigerian women have never stood at the margins of the national story. They have helped write it. And the next chapter belongs to all of us.
Happy 66th Independence Anniversary, Nigeria.



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.



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WOMAN AT THE HELM

Anne Muraya

CEO of Deloitte East Africa

Anne Muraya is the CEO of Deloitte East Africa. She graciously rises to the occasion her responsibility demands. For instance, as one of the few recruits who hadn't studied accounting when she joined Deloitte in 1994, to bring herself quickly up to speed, she took up roles as a trainer in accounting and audit studies because, according to her, "to teach something requires you to have a great level of mastery." She admits she really enjoyed it and ended up doing training across Africa and Europe prior to her appointment as audit leader. She continued to work her way up the ladder where today, she sits as CEO.

Her responsibilities as CEO includes overseeing the firm's operations in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi, and other locations where it operates, including Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, and Somalia.

Furthermore, she also represents the region in the Africa Executive Committee in charge of leading the defined direction and key areas of the Africa business while ensuring efficient execution of all strategic responsibilities.

Anne became a partner in 2009 and was also the National Professional Practice Director for the East Africa practice, leading technical consultations on audit methodology and IFRS.

Serving on the Deloitte Global Advisory Council, she was selected as one of 30 partners globally to serve as a sounding board for the Deloitte Global CEO.

Her view on artificial intelligence, data and analytics is that there is the need to have a firm handle on the trio to use these tools to provide better results for their clients. "We have a drive to align with technology to demonstrate value for our clients as our fees become increasingly based on outcomes achieved rather than time taken." She said.

Anne holds a Bachelor of Education degree (B.Ed. in Science) in Mathematics and Chemistry and is a member of the Certified Public Accountants of Kenya (ICPAK) and Certified Public Accountants of Uganda (ICPAU).



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WE'VE GOT MEN

Dare Okoudjou

Founder/CEO of Onafriq

Dare Okoudjou is the founder and CEO of Onafriq—formerly known as MFS Africa. Through its extensive digital payments network, Onafriq makes it easy for people and institutions to move money across the continent. The platform connects more than 500 million mobile wallets and over 200 million bank accounts across 40 African countries, linking everyday users to financial services with scale and speed.

On the ground, Onafriq also powers payment delivery through a huge agent presence in Nigeria, supported by more than 400,000 agents. In addition, the company is a major prepaid card processor, partnering with 80+ banks and running programmes across more than 30 countries. Whether for domestic payments or cross-border collections and disbursements, Onafriq leverages its "network of networks" approach to help reduce the friction of borders—working with global partners to make access truly seamless. Its innovation has been widely recognised, including being named by Fast Company as one of Africa's Top 10 Most Innovative Companies.

Before founding Onafriq, Dare built deep expertise at MTN Group. There, he developed the company's mobile payments strategy and led its rollout across 21 countries across Africa and the Middle East. He began his career in management consulting at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Paris.

Dare has also received major support and recognition from the entrepreneurship ecosystem. He was named one of the Endeavor Entrepreneurs of the Endeavor Network, and selected as one of 13 African founders for the inaugural Foundry Fellowship at MIT. In this fellowship, he will help catalyze the next generation of innovation-driven entrepreneurs across Africa.

A native of Benin, Dare is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. He holds an MSc in Telecom Engineering from ENST-Paris and an MBA from INSEAD.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Nigeria Is 66: But Are We Truly Free?

The Independence We Rarely Talk About

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



Every Independence Day, we speak about freedom. We remember the lowering of one flag and the raising of another. We celebrate the courage, possibility and promise of nationhood. But this year, as Nigeria marks 66 years of independence, I want us to ask a more intimate question: beyond the freedom of a nation, how free are the people living inside it?

I have sat across from highly successful Nigerians who can pay salaries, lead organisations, raise families and solve everybody else's problems, yet cannot sleep without their minds racing. I have met women who are dependable to everyone except themselves, men who were taught that strength means silence, young people who are exhausted before life has truly begun, and parents who are working so hard to give their children a better future that they are barely present in their children's today. They are functioning. They are achieving. They are surviving. But are they free?

Holistic living invites us to expand our definition of freedom. Freedom is not only the absence of external control. It is also the ability to inhabit your own life with health, dignity, connection and purpose. It is being able to rest without feeling useless, to say no without drowning in guilt, to seek help without shame, to eat in a way that nourishes rather than punishes you, to move your body because you value it, and to have relationships in which you do not have to disappear in order to belong.

This matters because health does not begin and end in a hospital. The World Health Organisation describes wellbeing as shaped by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Our mental health is influenced not only by individual choices but also by family life, social connection, work, economic pressures, safety and community. That is why holistic living cannot be reduced to green smoothies, gym memberships or expensive retreats. It is the architecture of everyday life.

For many Nigerians, that architecture is under pressure. There are bills to pay, people depending on us, long commutes, uncertain incomes, family expectations, digital overload and the constant temptation to keep pushing because stopping feels dangerous. Under prolonged stress, the body and mind pay attention even when we do not. Sleep becomes lighter. Patience becomes shorter. Concentration becomes harder. Food becomes comfort. Relationships become strained. We may begin calling chronic depletion "normal" simply because everyone around us appears equally tired.

This Independence Day, perhaps we need a declaration of personal freedom. Freedom from glorifying exhaustion. Freedom from believing that suffering is proof of seriousness. Freedom from measuring our worth only by productivity. Freedom from carrying inherited emotional wounds without ever examining them. Freedom from relationships that repeatedly diminish us. Freedom from the performance of having it all together when what we desperately need is support.

But holistic freedom also requires responsibility. We cannot control every circumstance around us, and we should never blame people for struggling in conditions that make wellbeing difficult. Yet within the choices available to us, we can begin to build healthier rhythms. We can protect sleep as a biological necessity, not a reward for finishing everything. We can move our bodies regularly, eat more nourishing foods, create moments of quiet, reduce unnecessary digital noise, invest in friendships, nurture faith or meaning, attend preventive health checks and seek professional help when distress begins to interfere with daily life.

Families can create emotional freedom by making home a place where feelings can be named without ridicule. Workplaces can create healthier cultures by rewarding sustainable performance rather than permanent availability. Communities can make it easier for people to belong instead of suffering alone. And each of us can learn that asking, "How are you really?" is sometimes more patriotic than another speech about resilience, because strong nations are ultimately made of human beings whose wellbeing matters.

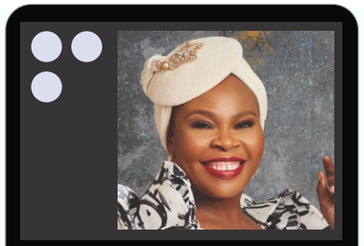
Nigeria's story has always contained extraordinary endurance. But endurance should not be our only national superpower. The next chapter must also make room for recovery, prevention, compassion, connection and flourishing.

So, as the green and white flags rise this Independence Day, celebrate the country, but conduct another kind of independence audit. What owns too much of your peace? What habit is quietly stealing your health? What expectation keeps you performing a life that no longer fits? What conversation have you postponed? What help have you been too proud or afraid to request?

Political independence gave us the right to determine our national future. Holistic independence asks us to become intentional about the lives we are building within that future.

So here is an Independence pledge worth carrying beyond October 1: "I will protect my mind, honour my body, nurture my relationships, work without worshipping exhaustion, make room for rest, live with purpose, seek help when I need it and leave the people and places around me healthier than I found them.

Nigeria is 66. May this be the year we stop asking only whether we are surviving and begin asking whether we are truly living. Because a nation does not flourish in the abstract. A nation flourishes when its people can flourish too.



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- Psy chiatrist 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.

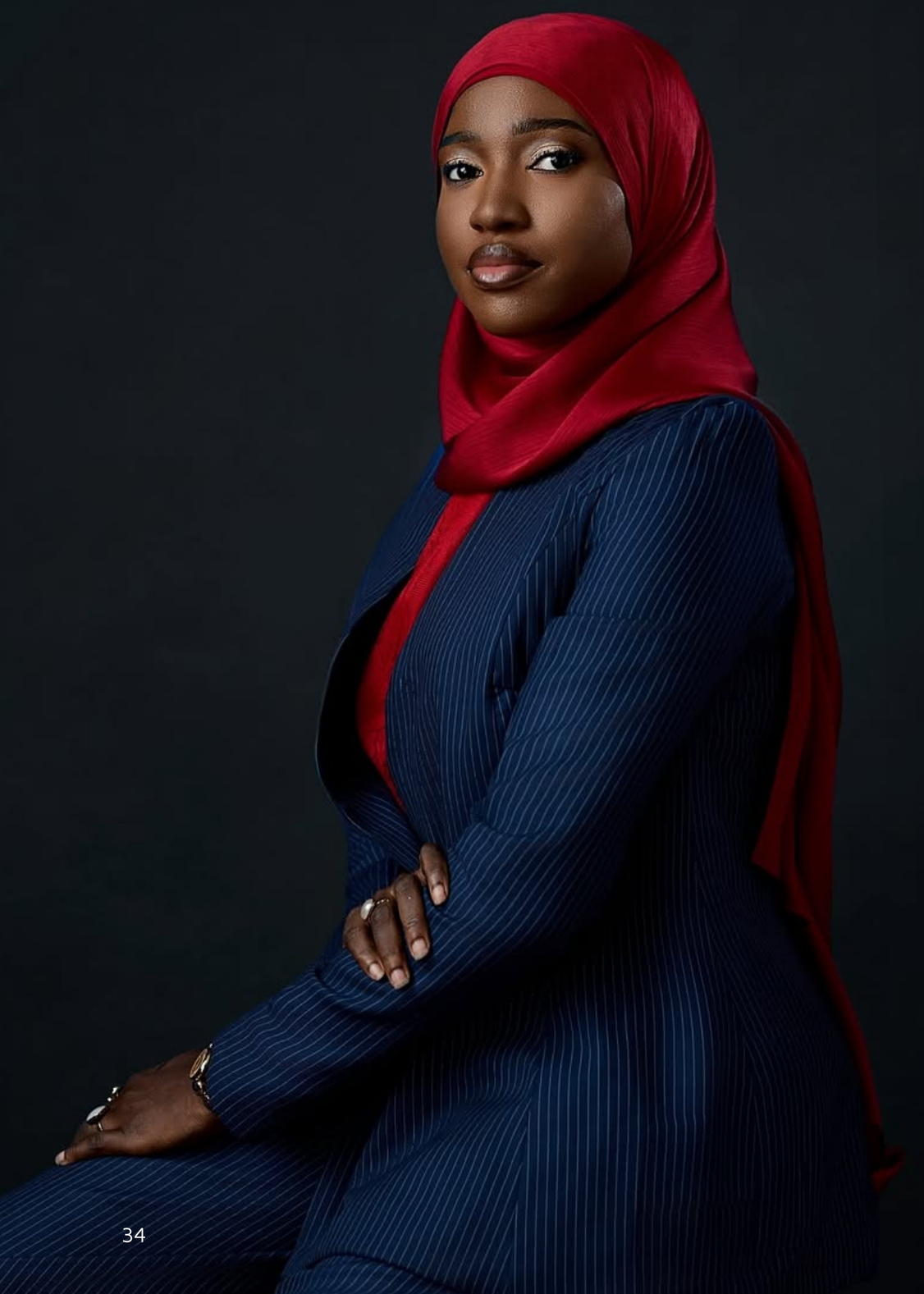
Dr. Kadiri has wide experience in psycho-therapeu tic techniques and has perfected her skills whilst in private practice and whilst working for a variety of organizations. She is a recognized radio and television guest Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist. She also contributes to articles published in magazines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

She is the only Nigerian with the 14Ps.....Physician, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Praeti tioner (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 orgaai zation, "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



The 360 Youth Development Strategy: *My Ambassadorial Story*

By Zainab Aderounmu

I't's been 66 years of being an independent country, 66 years of numerous reforms and policies, but now more than ever, Nigeria needs a holistic youth development system. There's something special about investing in the future that yields invaluable results. There's something special about parents sowing seeds into their children, and being blessed to stay long enough to see those seeds grow into big Iroko trees. There's something special about investing in young people.

But beyond the sentiments, for a country like Nigeria, it is non-negotiable. It begins with a simple question like, “who will be the senior talent when we're no more?” There's the mistake of assuming one will always be available but times and seasons happen for a reason. I'm moved to write about this because I saw a post on how companies are now replacing junior talents with AI. That's not wrong, costs must be cut, and profit maximized, but what happens when those companies need senior talents in future? Where is their talent pipeline strategy?

I've been blessed to be a part of a couple of life-changing youth training programs, and the IBILE Youth Academy stands out for me. At the crossroads of finishing at the university, I was green, hungry and high on energy. Applying to the academy was one of those many things I tried my hands at, so when I got in, I was excited.

A little bit of context; the IBILE Youth Academy is a leadership training for youth between 18-24, essentially to incubate them for greatness. It features a five day training, 7-day camp and a full year fellowship, which also features an international exchange at the end of the year. It was that intense, and it's all expense paid by the Lagos State Government.

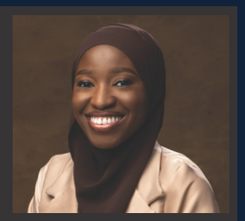
Very quickly, my excitement turned into something more steady. This was a productive avenue to channel my energy into. And it wasn't just my energy alone, the energy of 500 other young people was being used productively. Since then, that number has consistently risen to over 1000 youths trained by the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development.

One thing that truly fascinates me about people is how much power and energy passion pushes them to exert on a venture. From the principal officers of the ministry - the commissioner, Hon. Mobolaji Ogunlende, the Permanent Secretary, Toyin Oke-Osanyintolu - to the officers in charge of the programme - Rashidat Umar and her team, everyone treats the programme like it's their pass to paradise.

It's the same spirit I've seen young people around me exude on passion projects, the very one I put into building the She's More Fellowship Programme. After leading a team of 50 young people, executing over 40 projects which reached more than 20,000 youths, I knew I had to keep paying it forward.

But Nigeria needs more than pockets of youth development programs; it deserves to be a national priority, right at the center of Nigeria's growth culture. And it looks like creating youth systems like the National Youth Parliament, which is commendable by the way. It also looks like inter-ministerial collaboration to create functional youth centers nationwide; places where young people can walk in to get clarity on life's challenges. It looks like diversifying the education structures; we're no longer in the era where doctors and lawyers are the only valuable professions, other professions deserve due rewards.

I'm sad because I see too many young people in the streets, particularly male. Young, energetic young men whose energies are being channeled into unproductive ventures because the nation keeps treating youth development as an afterthought. With over 70 percent youth population, now is the time to center young people. Happy Independence!



Zainab Aderounmu

Zainab Aderounmu A. W. is a First Class graduate of English Language and the Overall Best Grad uating 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.

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EDITION 49, 4TH AUGUST, 2026



Woman Executive



Wola Joseph Condotti
Chief Executive Officer, Eko Electricity Distribution Company

When the Sector is Bigger Than You: Leading in Systemically Broken Industries

There is a kind of leadership burden of running a company inside a sector that is, honestly broken. You inherit ambitious targets. You put together a competent team. You write a credible strategy. And then you spend most of your week fighting problems you did not create, cannot fully fix, and will still somehow be blamed for when they land on the evening news.

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Her Point Of View



Chinyere Okorocha
Partner & Overall Head of Sectors at Jackson, Etti & Edu

The "Support Role Cycle". Why So Many Brilliant Women Are Overlooked at Work

Recently, I had a conversation with a female executive that stayed with me long after our meeting ended. On paper, she was exceptional.
Highly competent. Dependable. Intelligent. Hardworking. The kind of professional every organisation says it wants. responsibilities that were often beyond her job description.

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Financial AdviseHER



Sola Adesakin
Founder and Lead Coach, Smart Stewards

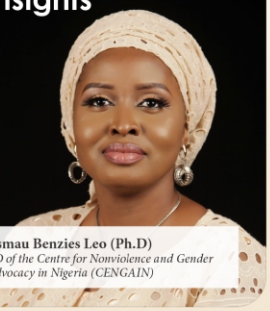
Live for the Right Things: A Smarter Financial Approach for 2026

Every New Year comes with pressure. New goals, expectations. New standards of "success" defined mostly by what people are showing online. But 2026 is going to be financially different for you, not be because you spent louder or tried harder impress. It will be because you lived for the right things.

Financial progress is less about dramatic reso and more about quiet alignment.

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Gender Insights



Asmau Benzies Leo (Ph.D)
ED of the Centre for Nonviolence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN)

geria in 2026: ny True Security Must ve a Woman's Face

igerians step into 2026, one truth remains bidable: insecurity in Nigeria is not gender l. From banditry affected communities in the west to displacement camps in the Northeast nate stressed regions across the Middle Belt, nd girls are not merely collateral victims of ey are deliberately targeted, onately affected, and often left without justice.

e www.theiwagroup.com to read

HOLISTIC LIVING



Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri
MD/CEO Pinnacle Medical Services Ltd

Your Greatest Investment Is the Life You Build Every Day

When Maggie looked in the mirror, she believed the extra weight she had gained was her greatest problem. It was only the visible sign of a life that had quietly drifted out of balance. Stress had replaced rest, convenience had replaced nourishment, and survival had replaced intentional living. Her transformation began not with a miracle diet but with one decision care for herself differently. That single decision gradually changed her body, restored her confide lifted her mood, strengthened her relationships a gave her a renewed sense of purpose.

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VITH BES



Zainab Aderounmu
Youth Advisor & Ambassador Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria & ECOWAS

Nigeria in 2026: Why True Security Must Have a Woman's Face

The New Year has begun and making a sense of what you want may feel overwhelming. You may be tempted to 'see how it goes' instead of setting concrete goals, but I don't recommend because what you don't measure, you can't multiply. On that note, here's a step-by-step process of setting your goals for the new year.

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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.

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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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