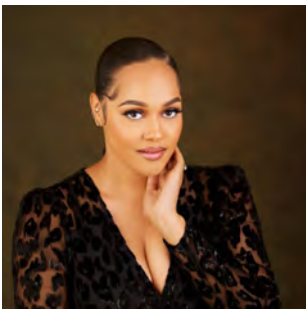


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Kiki Triafen



WNBA star showcasing Nigerian heritage at Washington Mystics



INTERVIEW

Tania Omotayo: Entrepreneur building lasting influence in Nigeria's fashion, literature space



PROFILE

How Toks Aruoture created one of UK's leading luxury nursery brands

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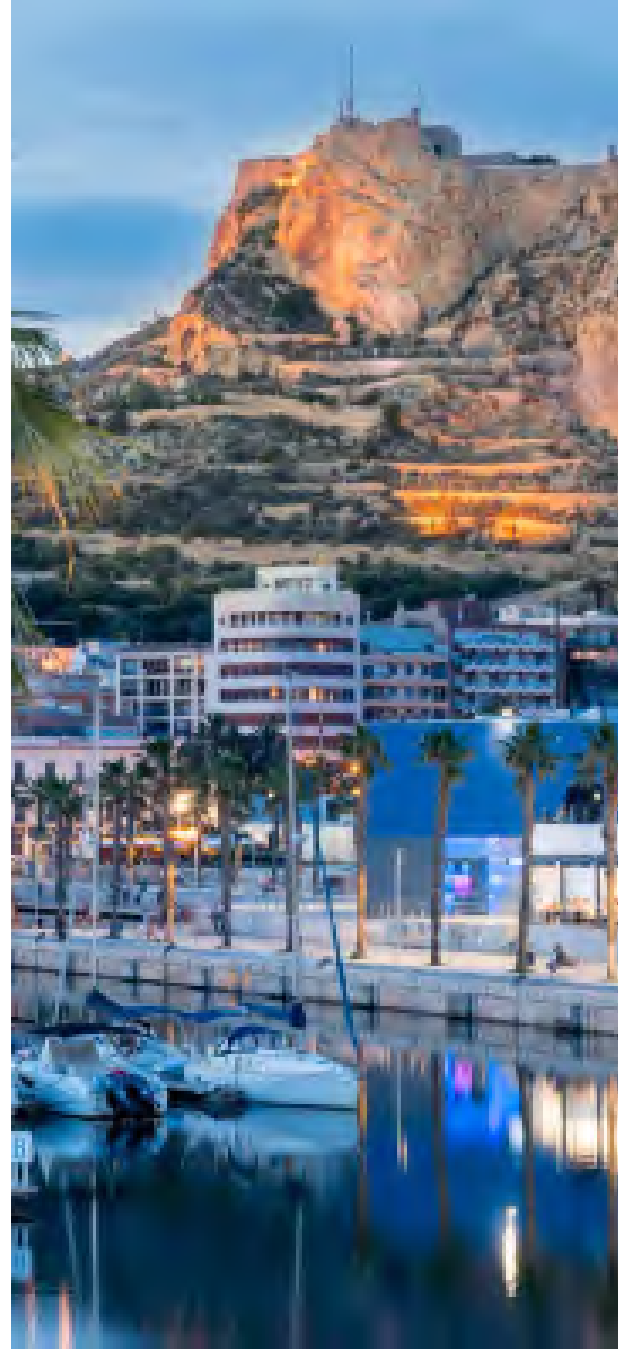
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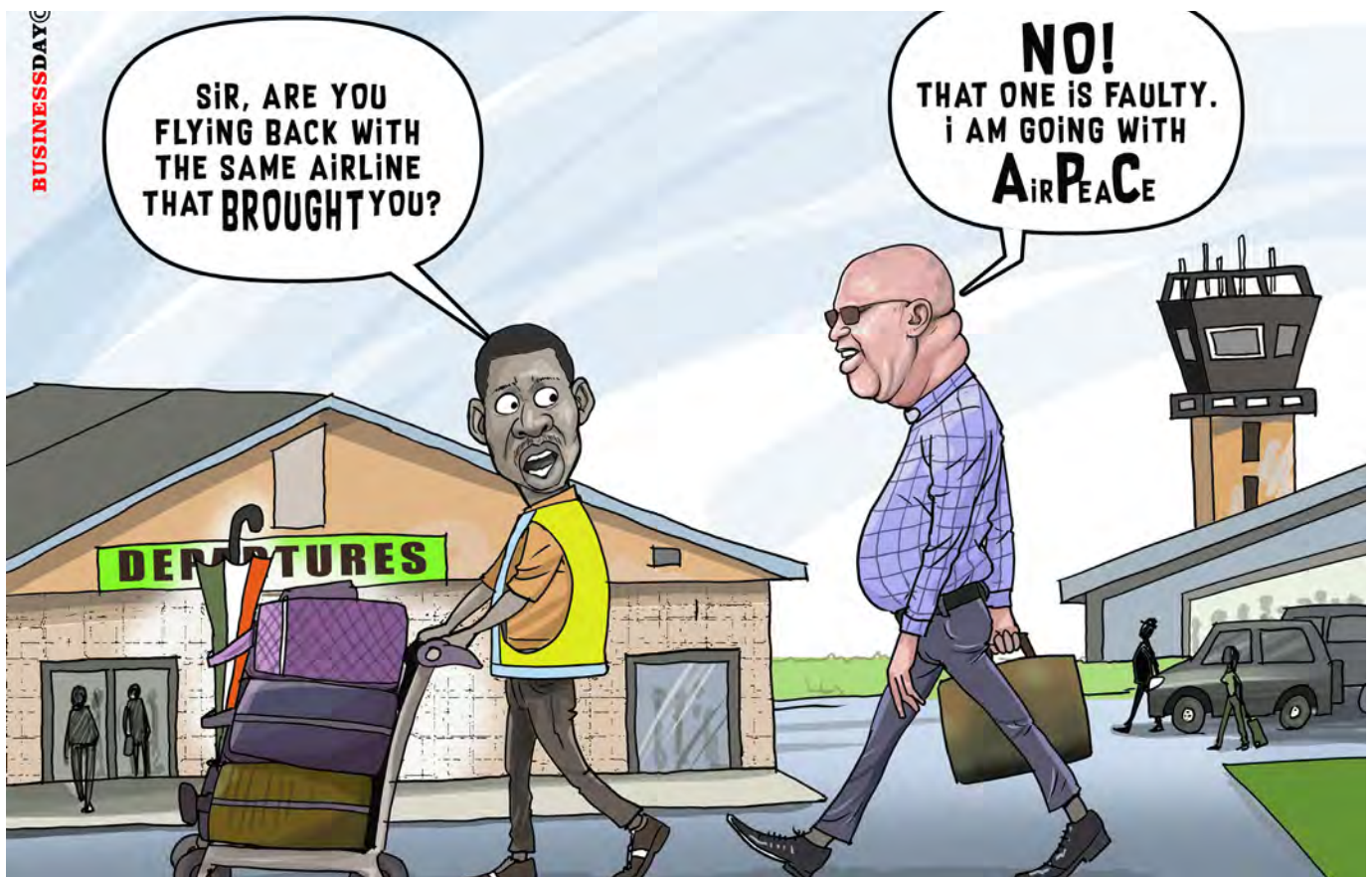
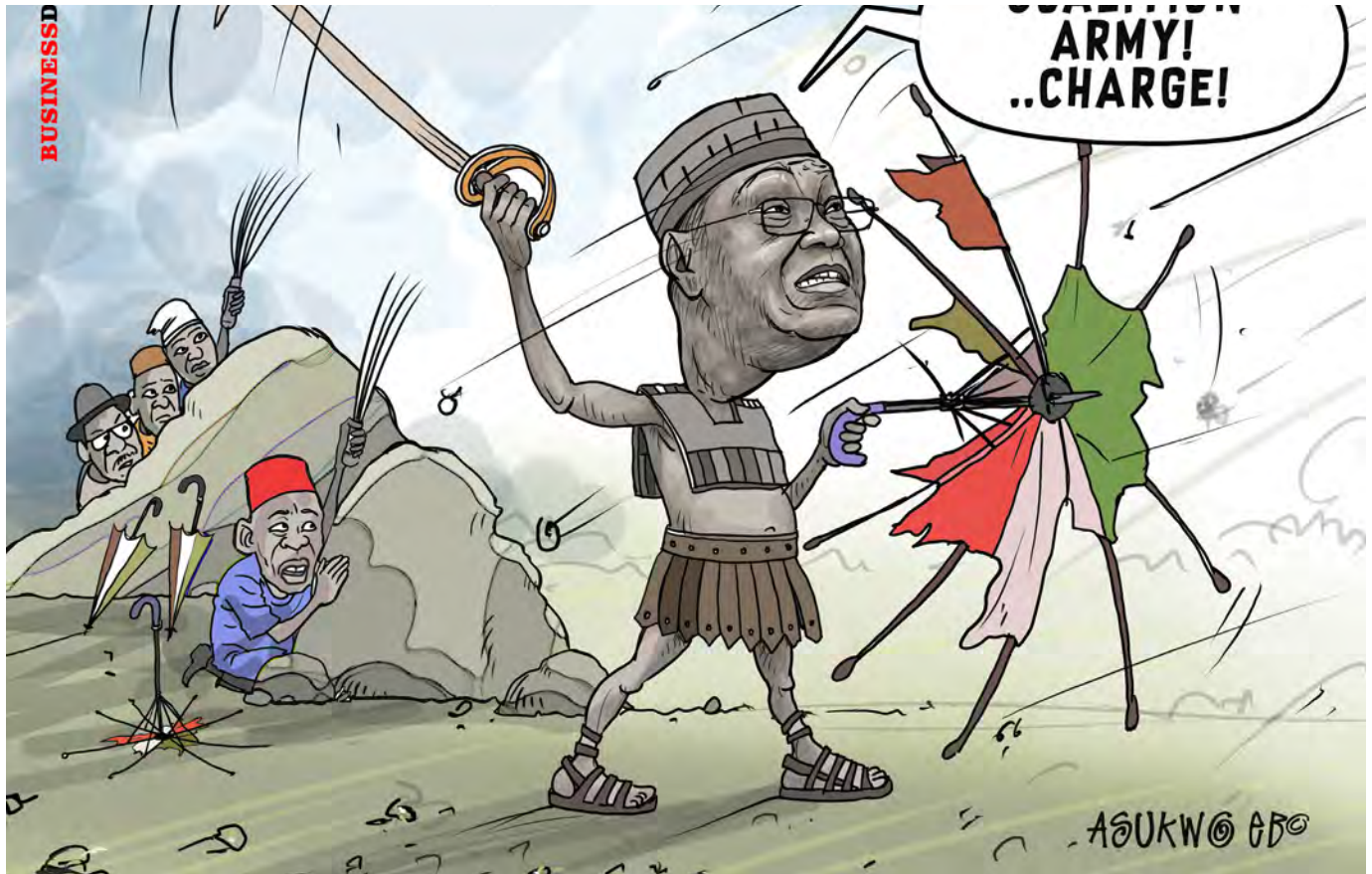


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KIKI IRIAFEN: WNBA STAR SHOWCASING NIGERIAN HERITAGE AT WASHINGTON MYSTICS

ANTHONY NLEBEM



When Kiki Iriafen heard her name called as the No. 4 overall pick in the 2025 WNBA Draft by the Washington Mystics, it was more than a career milestone—it was a moment of cultural pride, perseverance, and the promise of a bright future.

The Nigerian-American forward, who made her mark at both Stanford and USC, now brings her dynamic presence to the nation's capital with a clear mission: to represent her roots, elevate the game, and leave an indelible mark on and off the court.

"I'm excited to be here in D.C.," Iriafen said. "I felt so much love from fans and even strangers on the street. People are just so excited about what the Mystics can bring this season, and I'm grateful to be part of that."

A Pro's Mindset from Day One

Iriafen arrives in Washington with the poise of a seasoned professional. Her college years coincided with the early days of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL), teaching her how to navigate the business side of sports.

"You are a business; you are a brand," she explained. "So learning how to speak and being media-trained, I've already gone through that. Now, being endorsed as a professional, I'm excited to see what that looks like."

Though she's still juggling school, attending online classes, and finishing group projects, the whirlwind of being drafted hasn't distracted her from her goals.

"It's been a crazy few weeks, but these are great problems to have," she said with a laugh. "I think it'll really hit me that I'm a pro when I put on that jersey for the first game."

Proudly Nigerian: A Statement of Heritage

Her cultural pride shone brightly on draft night, when she donned a golden dress in tribute to her Nigerian roots. "Growing up, showcasing your culture wasn't always easy. Now, it's accepted; it's celebrated," she said. "On one of the biggest days of my life, I wanted to represent where I come from and the people back home who support me."



That pride is grounded in a powerful Nigerian saying she holds close:

“Naija no dey carry last”—a mindset of excellence and determination that guides her every step.

“If someone else can do it, you can do it better. That’s the confidence being Nigerian gives you. It’s a push.

And the support from the Nigerian community has been unbelievable—even people who don’t know me just want to cheer me on because I’m Nigerian.”

Building Something Special with the Mystics

Joining the Mystics, Iriafen feels honoured and excited to be part of a team with a clear vision for the future.

“It’s super exciting to be a part of building something new. The coaches and organisation believe in me, and that means a lot.”

She’s already learning from seasoned veterans while bonding closely with her fellow rookies.

“We’re keeping them young,” she joked. “I’m not a solo rookie. I have four other rookies with me, so to kind of have a group of girls to go through this journey with is amazing.” Finding Her Place in D.C.

Iriafen describes herself as bubbly and outgoing—a personality that lights up any room. But on the court, she’s all business.

“People fill my cup,” she said. “I love being around my friends and FaceTiming family, and I plan to really engage with the D.C. community. I don’t want to be tucked away in my apartment. I want to live life and explore.”

Her enthusiasm extends to her new teammates, especially the veterans who are setting the standard.

“We’re competitors, but there’s a humility in our rookie class,” she said. “The vets have been incredible. They’re constantly giving tips and helping us grow. Watching Slim [Brittney Sykes] and Steph [Stephanie Dolson] work hard every single day—even in their ninth or thirteenth year—makes me realise I have no excuse not to give my all.”

A Team That Sees the Whole Player

What excites Iriafen most about the Mystics is the team’s culture—one that values its players as individuals, not just athletes.

“Coach [Eric Thibault] and the staff genuinely want to know who I am beyond basketball. My first coaches’ meeting wasn’t even about basketball—it was about who Kiki is, what I like to do. That kind of relationship is rare.”





Still, when it's time to compete, the expectations are clear. "When we step on the court, it's about competing. Every single day, we're pushing each other to get better. That's one of our core values."

Ready to Rise

With talent, humility, and pride in her heritage, Kiki Iriafe is more than ready for the challenge of the WNBA. She's stepping into the league not just to play but to inspire. "I'm here to help build something special. The organisation believes in me, and I'm leaning on the vets to learn what being a pro truly means. It's exciting. It's powerful. And I'm ready."

A Star on the Rise

As Kiki Iriafe begins her WNBA journey with the Washington Mystics, her blend of athletic talent, cultural pride, and people-first mindset is poised to leave a lasting impact. From Lagos to Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., fans across the world are watching with admiration.





TANIA OMOTAYO:
Entrepreneur building
lasting influence in
Nigeria's fashion,
literature space

Gudugudu



Tania Omotayo is a 32-year-old entrepreneur, author, and influencer with a passion for storytelling, fashion, and empowerment. She is the founder and creative director of Ziva Lagos, a ready-to-wear fashion brand that celebrates the modern Nigerian woman, and Ziva Kids, a concept store providing clothes, toys, and essentials for children aged 0–14.

In 2023, Tania became a published author with the release of her debut children's book, *Sarai's Culture Day*—a heartfelt story that encourages children to take pride in their heritage while addressing the important topic of bullying. Through this work, she continues her mission of fostering confidence, identity, and resilience in young readers.

Tania's influence extends beyond fashion and literature. She has worked with leading global brands including Coca-Cola, Samsung, Martini, Estée Lauder, Michael Kors, Fenty Beauty, and Peak Milk. She has also served as a brand ambassador and appeared in campaigns that reflect her vibrant personality and deep connection to her audience.

In 2018, she was recognized for her impact and vision when she was named to the Forbes 30 Under 30 list for creatives.

Having grown up between Nigeria and the UK before earning a B.A. in Advertising from the Art Institute of Atlanta, Tania returned to Nigeria to work in media and public relations—an experience that laid the foundation for her ventures in fashion and business.

Driven by a commitment to women's empowerment, youth opportunity, and economic growth, Tania launched both Ziva Lagos and The Growth Forum Africa—initiatives that not only spotlight African creativity but also invest in the local workforce. Ziva Lagos designs and produces all garments in Nigeria using locally sourced fabrics, reinforcing Tania's dedication to sustainable growth and homegrown talent.

In this interview with Lehle Blade, she takes us through a journey of how she got started in the fashion industry, what inspired her to commence Ziva Lagos and how she continues to create impact in the fashion and literature space.

What inspired you to launch Ziva Lagos, and how did you get started in the fashion industry?

I was inspired to launch Ziva Lagos when I moved back to Lagos from the United States after graduating from university in 2013. At that time, there weren't many ready-to-wear affordable fashion brands available in the Nigerian market. Having spent time abroad, I was accustomed to the convenience of high street fast fashion, where you could easily find stylish and affordable pieces. I really missed that accessibility and variety and when I searched for the same in Lagos I realized that we only had about two or three options in the market.

I tried to start a brand a few times but faced several setbacks and challenges and I failed woefully in those early attempts. It took me a while to figure out the right formula but I never gave up. By 2016, I had refined my approach, learned from my earlier mistakes and finally got it right. Ziva Lagos was born out of the desire to fill a gap in the market creating accessible stylish and affordable fashion for people who wanted quality without breaking the bank. It was a journey of trial, error and persistence but seeing the brand come to life and resonate with people has been incredibly rewarding.

What do you believe has been the key to Ziva Lagos's success since its launch in 2016?

The key to Ziva Lagos's success since its launch in 2016 has been our unwavering commitment to quality, authenticity and understanding our customers while also keeping our prices competitive. Our attention to detail has helped us build a loyal customer base who trust our brand.

Another important factor has been our ability to adapt and innovate in a competitive market. We've stayed true to our roots while embracing new trends and technology from expanding our online presence to engaging with our audience through social media. This flexibility has allowed us to grow while maintaining the essence of what makes Ziva Lagos special.

Lastly, our success is also attributed to the amazing team behind the brand. We've built a group of passionate individuals who share the same vision and are dedicated

to delivering the best. Their creativity, dedication and hard work have been crucial in driving the brand forward.

We blend contemporary styles with timeless easy to wear pieces ensuring that our collections remain relevant without compromising on quality.

How do you balance keeping your collections trendy and affordable while maintaining high-quality standards?

Balancing trendiness, affordability and high-quality standards is definitely a challenge, but it's something we prioritize at Ziva Lagos. We believe that fashion should be both accessible and of exceptional quality which is why we're intentional about how we design and produce our collections.

To stay on top of trends, we continuously monitor global fashion movements while considering the unique preferences and cultural influences of our customers. We blend contemporary styles with timeless easy to wear pieces ensuring that our collections remain relevant without compromising on quality.

When it comes to affordability, we focus on being efficient in our production process and producing large numbers so we can keep our prices low. However, we don't cut corners on materials or craftsmanship—quality is non-negotiable for us. We also take a thoughtful approach to pricing, offering a range of products that cater to different budgets while maintaining the integrity of our brand.

Ultimately, it's about smart sourcing maintaining strong relationships with our fabric suppliers and staying focused on what our customers truly value—affordable luxury without compromising on quality.

Ziva Lagos is committed to supporting the Nigerian trade and labor market. How do you ensure all your designs and production are locally sourced?

At Ziva Lagos, supporting the Nigerian trade and labour market is at the core of our brand's mission. We are committed to locally sourcing some of our key fabric. Our design and production processes not only contribute to the economy but also showcase the incredible talent and craftsmanship that Nigeria has to offer. Everybody that works for Ziva Lagos both at the outlets and factory are Nigerian. We also prioritize sourcing materials locally, which helps support the textile industries within the country. This approach not only promotes sustainable business practices but also helps us reduce costs.

Additionally, we maintain strict quality control to ensure that each design meets our standards, while staying true to the vision of supporting the local market.

Ultimately, our commitment to local sourcing is a way of honoring Nigerian culture and labor while creating economic opportunities within the country, and we will continue to prioritize this in every step of our growth.

Can you walk us through the process of designing and producing a collection at Ziva Lagos?

No two collections have the same process, honestly some come so easy to us and everything is seamless while some are so hard as we struggle to get the samples exactly how we want them. Sometimes even changing our designs multiple times until it's perfect which can take a while. But typically we design the pieces and make samples. After which we make the corrections and change the ones we don't love. Once everything is approved we go into production.

Naomi Campbell, one of the most iconic supermodels in the world, wore Ziva Lagos. How did it feel to see her wear your designs, and what impact did that have on the brand?

Seeing Naomi Campbell wear a Ziva Lagos Dress on the runway was an unforgettable moment. As one of the most iconic supermodels in the world, Naomi represents everything that embodies timeless beauty, strength and influence. To see her wear our designs not once but twice, not only felt like a personal achievement but also a huge milestone for the brand. It was a moment that validated the vision we had for Ziva Lagos and confirmed that we were creating something that resonated on a global scale.

The impact on the brand was profound. Her wearing our designs exposed Ziva Lagos to a wider international audience and gave us a level of recognition that would have otherwise taken years to build. It was also a powerful endorsement that attracted attention from industry professionals, influencers and even other celebrities.

Beyond the commercial impact, it gave us immense pride knowing that a global icon like Naomi Campbell believed in what we were doing and was willing to represent our work. It felt like a beautiful affirmation that Ziva Lagos was on the right path to global relevance.

In 2018, you were named one of Forbes Africa's 30 Under 30. How did that recognition impact your career and the growth of Ziva Lagos?

Being named one of Forbes Africa's 30 Under 30 in 2018 was a truly pivotal moment in my career and for Ziva Lagos. The recognition brought a level of visibility and credibility to the brand that we hadn't experienced before. It served as validation of the hard work and passion we had poured into Ziva Lagos and it opened doors to new opportunities, partnerships and a larger network.

On a personal level, it boosted my confidence and reaffirmed that our vision for the brand was aligned with the broader trends in the industry. For Ziva Lagos, the recognition helped elevate its reputation and solidify its standing as a forward-thinking, innovative brand. It also provided a platform to inspire others and contribute to the broader narrative of African entrepreneurship, which has been one of the driving forces behind Ziva Lagos.

What has been the hardest part of scaling Ziva Lagos, and how did you overcome that challenge?

The hardest part of scaling Ziva Lagos has definitely been finding and retaining skilled tailors who consistently produce exceptional work. As the brand has grown, maintaining a high level of craftsmanship has been challenging because not all tailors share the same level of commitment to quality. The temptation to settle for average work can sometimes be strong, especially as the demand increases.

To overcome this, we focused on building strong relationships with our tailors, setting clear expectations from the beginning, and offering continuous training and support. We've worked closely with them to ensure they understand the importance of quality in our brand, and we've implemented a feedback loop to ensure that every piece meets our standards. Additionally, we've made a conscious effort to find tailors who are not only highly skilled but also aligned with the values and vision of Ziva Lagos, so they take pride in their work. This has helped us maintain our craftsmanship even as we scale

We're planning to use e-commerce platforms to reach international customers while also developing a strong online presence, expanding to international retail stores, and collaborating with global influencers and stylists, we can build Ziva Lagos into a recognizable name worldwide.

How do you plan to expand Ziva Lagos into other African markets and on a global scale?

Expanding Ziva Lagos into other African markets and globally is an exciting next step for the brand, and we have a clear strategy in place. The first step is to ensure that we are deeply understanding the unique needs and preferences of different markets. In Africa, we'll focus on markets with a growing demand for high-quality, ready to wear affordable fashion, leveraging partnerships with local influencers and retailers to create tailored marketing strategies. We recently had a pop up in Accra, Ghana and it was fantastic. The demand is there and it's time for us to meet it.

On a global scale, we aim to build on the growing interest in African fashion. We're planning to use e-commerce platforms to reach international customers while also developing a strong online presence, expanding to international retail stores, and collaborating with global influencers and stylists, we can build Ziva Lagos into a recognizable name worldwide.

A key part of this growth will be ensuring that we remain authentic to our roots—celebrating African craftsmanship and culture—while adapting to diverse international markets. We'll continue to focus on quality, innovation, and customer experience, ensuring that no matter where our customers are, they feel connected to the brand and its values.



Balancing motherhood and entrepreneurship can be challenging. How do you manage running Ziva Lagos while being a mother?

Balancing motherhood and running Ziva Lagos is definitely challenging, but it's also one of the most rewarding aspects of my life. I've learned to manage my time efficiently and prioritize both my business and family. It starts with having a strong support system in place—whether it's family, a dedicated team at Ziva Lagos or close friends I make sure I surround myself with people who understand the demands of both roles.

I've also embraced flexibility in how I structure my day. While my business requires a lot of attention, I make sure to carve out dedicated time for my children. I've learned to be present in the moment, whether I'm at work or with my family, which helps me maintain a sense of balance. At Ziva Lagos, I have a strong team that takes on key responsibilities and I trust them to handle things while I'm focused on my family. This allows me to give my full attention to both aspects of my life without feeling overwhelmed.

Ultimately, I think it's about finding harmony between my roles as a mother and an entrepreneur—recognizing that both are important and deserving of my attention, while also being kind to myself and understanding that balance looks different every day.

What advice do you have for aspiring women entrepreneurs?

My advice to aspiring women entrepreneurs would be to believe in yourself and your vision, even when it feels challenging. It's easy to doubt yourself, especially in a competitive landscape, but self-confidence is key. Trust that your unique perspective and ideas have value, and don't be afraid to take risks. Entrepreneurship is all about learning from your failures and growing from them, so embrace the journey, even the tough moments.

Another important piece of advice is to build a strong network of support. Surround yourself with people who lift you up, challenge you and offer advice when needed. This could be mentors, fellow entrepreneurs or a strong team. You can't do everything alone and having the right people around you can make a huge difference.

Lastly, I'd say to never stop learning. The business landscape is always evolving and staying curious and adaptable is key to staying ahead. Whether it's through reading, attending workshops or networking, continuous growth is essential to entrepreneurship.



HOW TOKS ARUOTURE CREATED ONE OF UK'S LEADING LUXURY NURSERY BRANDS

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



When Toks Aruoture opened The Baby Cot Shop in Chelsea, London, she was not just starting a business. She was rewriting her own story, one that began in Nigeria, crossed through the United States, and returned to the UK at rock bottom.

Long before she became the woman behind one of the UK's most exclusive nursery brands, Toks lived a life many would describe as ordinary. Born in Nigeria and raised in a home where excellence was expected, she later moved to the UK and began working as a medical rep. It paid the bills, but it did not feed her spirit.

Then came her third child, and a request for flexible work hours that was swiftly denied. That "no" did not just close a door. It cracked open the question: What am I really meant to be doing?

She picked up a book that asked something simple: What do you do so naturally that it doesn't even feel like work? For Toks, it was interior design. She was not the friend who needed Pinterest to style a room, she was the Pinterest board.

So she leaned in. She enrolled in a design course and started doing interiors for residential clients. Then came a family move to the United States, and with it, a new opportunity, she bought a baby furniture boutique. That is where she found her niche: luxury nursery design.

But life does not always follow a straight path.

The 2008 recession came crashing in. Toks and her family lost everything. Pregnant with her fourth child, she returned to the UK with no savings and just \$75 in her pocket. The kind of moment that forces you to choose to either retreat or rebuild.

She chose to rebuild.

She noticed something in the UK market, an absence of the kind of elegant, high-end nursery pieces she'd worked with in the U.S. With no showroom and no team, she taught herself to build a website from scratch. She worked from



her flat, answered every email, managed every order, and slowly started bringing in artisans from around the world.

The Baby Cot Shop was born quietly. It did not explode onto the scene, it grew, deliberately. A slow, steady rise fuelled by patience, excellence, and word-of-mouth. Celebrities came. Royals came. But for Toks, each client mattered, famous or not.

In 2021, she launched her in-house collection. And in 2025, The Baby Cot Shop entered Harrods.

Harrods.

The same woman who started with \$75 was now running a luxury

brand inside one of the world's most iconic department stores.

From \$75 to Harrods, Toks Aruoture did not just design a brand. She designed a new beginning.



THE ROLE OF MEDICAL LABS IN STRENGTHENING WEST AFRICA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS



It is estimated that approximately 70% of medical decisions are based on laboratory test results, underscoring the pivotal role that medical laboratories play within the healthcare value chain. They are responsible for diagnosing diseases and other health conditions, aiding doctors and nurses to accurately prescribe and provide appropriate treatments for patients.

Medical laboratories have proven to be of great advantage to the healthcare system, offering various benefits in the test, diagnosis, and treatment stages. These advantages include the provision of scientific

data, which allows for empirically supported decisions in patient care. Furthermore, medical laboratories aid in choosing the least invasive and cost-effective test methods, potentially impacting the duration of hospitalisation and ultimately improving overall patient care.

Medical laboratories also play a critical role in disease control and prevention, providing information that greatly assists in maintaining public health through measures such as early detection of disease outbreaks and disease surveillance. However, their full potential is hindered by challenges including

poor infrastructure, a shortage of trained personnel, outdated equipment, and limited access to reliable diagnostic services.

West Africa particularly suffers from these issues and currently faces a range of healthcare problems, including frequent disease outbreaks such as Ebola, malaria, and cholera. This highlights the increasing need for the strengthening of West Africa's laboratory networks to improve disease surveillance, help combat frequent outbreaks, decrease mortality rates, and enhance national preparedness.

WHX Labs Lagos, formerly Medlab West Africa, serves as the leading hub for laboratory innovation in the region. By bringing together advanced technology, global experts, and transformative opportunities, WHX Labs Lagos specifically is shaping the future of diagnostics and fostering collaboration to drive progress in West Africa's healthcare sector through the bolstering of the medical lab network.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical laboratories were instrumental in quickly identifying the causative agent of the outbreak, enabling experts to understand the virus's genetic makeup and characteristics. This understanding was key to limiting the spread of the virus and enhancing medical treatment, establishing quality control programs to ensure accurate results, validating testing methods, developing vaccines, and tracking disease progression. Medical laboratories further played a vital role in monitoring hospitalised patients with severe complications through biochemical and serological analysis.

Consequently, medical laboratory scientists were able to advise governments on containment strategies such as "social distancing," overseeing sterilisation and disinfection processes, and implementing robust disease surveillance systems. These efforts enabled swift responses to the COVID-19 outbreak, helping to prevent further widespread transmission.

With the increasing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the health sector, medical laboratories have undergone a significant revolution. The introduction of AI has led to remarkable improvements in the accuracy of medical image analysis and the prediction of patient outcomes. Numerous studies utilising AI in the diagnosis of ailments such as diabetic retinopathy and pulmonary tuberculosis have demonstrated success and accuracy, producing results comparable to those of human experts.

For countries in the West African region, building a resilient laboratory network is crucial. Collaboration between governments, private sector players, and international organisations is key to achieving this.

Governments partnering with private sector entities and international organisers can alleviate financial pressures, provide relevant courses and training for medical laboratory scientists, and procure state-of-the-art equipment for medical laboratories, which governments might not ordinarily be able to afford within their own budgets.

Such initiatives can address the shortage of trained personnel and other issues hindering the development of better health systems in West Africa. These collaborations will foster a stronger laboratory network, ensuring that medical laboratories and laboratory scientists are well-supported and equipped to tackle disease outbreaks and better prepared to prevent future occurrences.

Events such as WHX Labs Lagos provide significant opportunities for such collaborations to occur. With numerous international companies showcasing cutting-edge technologies for the future of medical laboratories in West Africa, WHX Labs Lagos also offers valuable networking opportunities for professionals in both the private and public healthcare sectors, with the aim of encouraging knowledge-sharing and driving the advancement of medical laboratories in the region.

Medical laboratories are central to the healthcare system and are relied upon by the entire healthcare ecosystem to appropriately and accurately diagnose and treat patients. The upcoming WHX Labs Lagos scheduled for 2 – 4 June 2025 at Landmark Center Lagos will bring together over 500 exhibitors from around the world, creating a central meeting point for medical laboratory professionals and stakeholders to connect, innovate, strategise, explore the latest laboratory technologies, forge partnerships, build relationships, and explore solutions to enhance medical laboratories in West Africa.

Key discussions will be held during the exhibition, focusing on the critical role of medical laboratories in strengthening West Africa's healthcare system. These discussions will cover topics across the medical lab sector such as: Clinical Chemistry, Laboratory and Quality Management, Clinical Microbiology and Parasitology, amongst many others. Organisations such as Health Federation of Nigeria, HFN and Private Sector Health Alliance of Nigeria, PSHAN will also be leading relevant healthcare conversations at the conference. Attendees will benefit from workshops and seminars led by health experts and the opportunity to interact directly with the latest medical laboratory technologies, which are poised to significantly impact and rapidly improve medical laboratories in West Africa.

**TALENT, TIMING, AND
TENACITY: BIZZLE
OSIKOYA ON REDEFINING
ARTIST DEVELOPMENT IN
THE VIRAL ERA**

CHISOM MICHAEL



Bizzle Osikoya, a key figure in Nigeria's music industry, has spent years shaping careers from behind the scenes.

His journey from working as an A&R at Storm Records with artists like Naeto C and Sasha P, to helping develop Wande Coal and Dr. Sid at Mohits Records, to managing Tiwa Savage at the start of her career, reflects a deep commitment to artist development.

In a conversation focused on the realities of the current digital age, Bizzle shares how artist growth has changed and what still remains essential.

Patience Still Matters in a Fast-Moving Industry

Bizzle emphasises that although digital platforms have transformed how artists gain exposure, the fundamentals of career building remain. "Talents have evolved dramatically with digital platforms," he says. "We now see so many DIY artists making music and marketing it themselves without the need of a major label or management team."

Still, Bizzle believes that patience plays a bigger role than ever. "Virality is often mistaken for true career success, which isn't so," he says. "Most times, viral moments are temporary depending on how the artist and the team are able to capitalise on it."

He adds that beyond the spotlight, proper development includes building emotional resilience, a loyal fan base, and a unique voice. When an artist trends suddenly, Bizzle argues that momentum must be supported with strong structures. "You have to be ready to create enough content to keep driving traffic and also have a proper team to help define the brand identity of the artist," he says.

On how he helps artists navigate short-term attention and long-term career planning, he stresses the importance of storytelling and identity. "Every artist needs to build a core story early in their career, then separate the content from the art."

Data is Powerful, But Instinct Still Counts

The rise of streaming data, social media insights, and digital trends has changed how A&Rs discover talent. "It's like we have magical powers to spot potential earlier, sharper, and smarter than before," Bizzle explains.

However, he warns against relying solely on data. While data provides early indicators, he believes that human instinct and deep understanding of artist's potential will continue to matter. "The A&R role is evolving fast," he says. "Over the next five years, it's likely to shift in a few major ways—largely because of how younger creatives, new platforms, and AI are reshaping the landscape."

The job of the A&R today, Bizzle argues, goes beyond finding new acts. "Their broader responsibility is to develop, position, and maximise the potential of that talent."

Bizzle has seen raw talent fail due to poor timing and lack of structure. He describes this experience as a recurring lesson. "My take is never to rush greatness."

Preparing Artists for Long-Term Careers and Global Success

Asked about when artists are ready for audiences beyond Nigeria, Bizzle says there are no clear markers anymore. "To be honest, you never can tell in this new internet age, when songs are blowing up outside of Nigeria before Nigeria. You just have to be well prepared."

He encourages young creatives to focus on consistency and growth. "Build a recognisable style or voice, but allow it to mature over time. Don't get trapped in one era of yourself."

Reflecting on his earlier days working with legacy acts and helping to organise the One Africa Music Fest in the United States, Bizzle sees continuity in artist development principles even as tools have changed. "It's still the same process of helping an artist grow from raw talent into a complete, long-term, sustainable brand and career," he says.



SEVEN COUNTRIES THAT WILL PAY YOU TO MOVE THERE

CHISOM MICHAEL

Few countries are now offering financial incentives to attract new residents in a bid to revive shrinking rural towns, support entrepreneurship, and boost local economies. From Europe to Asia, governments are paying people to relocate—offering grants, housing support, and even monthly stipends.

In Italy, some regions offer up to €30,000 for newcomers willing to move to and invest in depopulated villages. Japan is providing incentives of up to 1 million to encourage urban dwellers to settle in the countryside. Greece, Portugal, and Spain also have similar schemes aimed at drawing families and business owners to their lesser-populated areas.

These programmes are not without conditions. In most cases, applicants must commit to long-term residency, start a business, or renovate and live in old homes. The goal is not just to move people, but to breathe life back into struggling communities.

Anyone considering these offers should carefully review visa requirements, tax obligations, healthcare access, and local laws. With the right preparation, these programmes can offer a rewarding opportunity to embrace a new lifestyle and make a real impact.

Here are seven countries currently offering monetary benefits for people willing to relocate according to AOL.

1. Chile

Chile's Start-Up Chile programme targets entrepreneurs in the tech space. Launched in 2010, the initiative provides three types of equity-free grants based on the stage of a business.

Build Grant: Offers 15 million Chilean pesos (about \$15,000) for early-stage start-ups over a four-month acceleration programme.

Ignite Grant: Provides 25 million pesos (around \$25,000) to start-ups with a functional product under three years old. It also allows an optional extension of 20 million pesos.

Growth Programme: Supports established companies seeking to scale in Chile, offering up to 75 million pesos (around \$100,000) over eight months.



2. Ireland

Ireland's "Our Living Islands" policy, introduced in 2023, aims to bring life back to 30 remote islands by supporting individuals and families to move there. The government offers up to €84,000 for the purchase and renovation of abandoned homes on these islands.

Residents must rely on boats or planes for travel, as the islands are not connected to the mainland by bridges. The programme does not cover immigration procedures, so applicants must secure Irish residency through the standard process.



3. Italy

While Italy's €1 homes have made headlines, some regions now provide direct financial support for people who wish to relocate.

Tuscany: Offers between €10,000 and €30,000 to those willing to buy and live permanently in one of 76 mountain towns.

Sardinia: Grants up to €15,000 for individuals or families to purchase and renovate homes in towns with populations under 3,000.

Applicants from outside the EU, including U.S. citizens, must apply for a long-term residence permit. Italy also recently launched a digital nomad visa, and towns like Ollolai offer free accommodation for up to a month under the programme.



4. Japan

Japan's Regional Revitalisation Corps programme invites people to live and work in rural areas, aiming to address declining local populations. Participants receive a salary of three million yen (approximately \$19,000) for at least one year, with a possible extension up to three years.

Fluency in Japanese is required, as participants are expected to integrate into the local community and contribute through volunteer work or public service roles.



5. Mauritius

Mauritius offers limited financial support to attract entrepreneurs. The government provides a grant of 20,000 Mauritian Rupees (around \$440) for promising start-up businesses that choose to relocate to the island.

To access the grant, applicants must present a viable business idea to a government committee and meet visa and relocation requirements.



6. Spain

Spain has several regional schemes aimed at increasing the population in smaller towns. The region of Extremadura offers relocation grants for people working remotely:

Under 30s: €10,000 to move to towns with fewer than 5,000 residents.

Others: €8,000 under the same conditions.

After staying for two years, a third-year grant of €5,000 (or €4,000 for those over 30) is available.

In addition, Spain's Entrepreneur's Visa programme offers up to \$50,000 and a one-year visa to individuals launching or scaling start-ups within the country.

7. Switzerland

In response to declining population numbers, the village of Albinen in Switzerland is offering to pay new residents under the age of 45 to settle there.

Adults: 25,000 Swiss francs (about \$30,000).

Children: 10,000 francs (about \$12,000) per child.

Applicants must obtain permanent residency, purchase property in the village, and commit to living there for a minimum of 10 years.

OVERSTAYED YOUR US VISA? 7 PRACTICAL STEPS TO AVOID DEPORTATION

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Overstaying a US visa is more common than many people realise, and it does not automatically lead to deportation. However, staying past your visa expiration date can come with serious consequences, especially if you take no action.

Here are seven practical steps you can take to manage your status and reduce the risk of deportation.

Understand your current immigration status

Begin by determining your exact immigration situation. Once your visa expires, your stay becomes unauthorised, which could expose you to deportation or make it more difficult to adjust your status later. The duration of your overstay matters. If you leave voluntarily before 180 days have passed, you may avoid long-term penalties. However, overstaying for more than 180 days may trigger a three- or ten-year re-entry ban. Understanding these timelines is crucial in deciding your next move.

Learn your rights

Even if you are out of status, you still have rights under US law. Immigration officials are required to follow due process during arrest, questioning, or removal. Being aware of these rights helps protect you from unlawful detention or coercive practices, and ensures that any steps taken against you follow the law.

Keep accurate records and documents

Maintain detailed records of your visa status, entry and exit dates, correspondence with immigration authorities, and any applications filed. Good documentation supports your legal case, especially if you need to prove hardship, eligibility for relief, or compliance with prior terms of stay.

Seek legal counsel immediately

It is essential to consult a qualified immigration solicitor as soon as possible. A solicitor can assess your situation, help you identify any relief options, guide you through the necessary paperwork, and represent you before immigration authorities or in court if necessary. The earlier you act, the better your chances of restoring lawful status or avoiding deportation proceedings.

Explore options for extending or changing your status

You might be eligible to apply for a visa extension if you have a valid reason for overstaying, such as a medical emergency or travel disruption. These applications must be made before your current authorisation ends. Alternatively, if your circumstances align with another visa category, you may be able to apply for a change of status. These options require strong supporting documentation, and legal support can improve your chances of approval.

Explore protection-based relief

In some cases, you may qualify for protection under US immigration law. If returning to your home country puts you at risk due to factors like political opinion, religion, or ethnic identity, applying for asylum might be a viable option, though it must typically be done within a year of your arrival. Other forms of relief include Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), depending on your individual circumstances.

Cooperate with immigration authorities

If you are already in deportation proceedings, cooperating with authorities, alongside legal representation, is essential. You may be eligible to apply for cancellation of removal, which can allow you to stay in the US and possibly gain permanent residency. Waivers are also available in some cases to address inadmissibility resulting from an overstay.

10 STEPS TO STARTING A BUSINESS IN THE US AS AN AFRICAN IMMIGRANT

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Starting a business in the United States as an African immigrant is entirely possible with the right information and planning. The US has a well-structured business environment, but it is important to understand the legal, financial and operational steps involved.

According to Afriex, here are ten practical steps to help African immigrants navigate the process and establish a successful business in the US

Understand your visa and work eligibility

To lawfully start and run a business in the US, your immigration status must allow entrepreneurial activity. Common visa types include the E-2 Investor Visa, suitable for those investing a significant sum in a US business, and the O-1 Visa, for individuals with exceptional ability in their field. Some H-1B visa holders can also start businesses, though this requires careful structuring. Permanent residents with a green card face fewer restrictions and can operate businesses freely.

Research and validate your business idea

Refining your idea is an important step before investing time and resources. The product or service you plan to offer should address a genuine need in the market. Use tools such as Google Trends, market reports, and customer surveys to assess demand. Many African immigrants succeed by offering products or services that introduce African culture to the US market, such as food, fashion or tech-based services.

Create a business plan

A business plan is crucial for laying out your strategy. It should include a summary of the business, an analysis of the target market and competitors, a description of your product or service, and a financial forecast with budgets and expected income. This document serves as a guide for launching and growing your venture, and is also vital if you seek funding from banks or investors.

Choose a business structure

Selecting the appropriate legal structure influences your taxes, liability, and how the business is managed. Options include sole proprietorships, which are simple to set up but carry personal liability; limited liability companies (LLCs), which separate personal and business assets, and corporations, which are better suited to businesses planning to raise external capital. Once you have chosen a structure, you must register it in the state where the business will operate.

Register your business and obtain necessary permits

After selecting your structure, register your business name with the Secretary of State in your operating state. You'll also need to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service for tax and banking purposes. Depending on your location and industry, you may require additional licences or permits from state and local authorities, which must be secured before you begin trading.

Open a business bank account

Separating your personal and business finances is essential. Opening a dedicated business bank account allows for better financial management and tax reporting.

Secure funding

Access to capital is a common challenge, but there are multiple funding options available. Small Business Administration (SBA) loans are one route, and there are also grants aimed specifically at minority entrepreneurs, including Africans. Crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter or GoFundMe can be used to raise initial capital. Building a strong credit history in the US will also help you secure loans in the future.

Build your network

Networking is a critical aspect of business success in the US. Joining local business groups, attending industry events, and connecting with other African entrepreneurs through platforms like LinkedIn can open up opportunities. Free mentoring services can provide expert advice on various challenges you may face as a new business owner.

Leverage digital marketing

An online presence is essential for reaching customers. Start with a professional website to showcase your services or products. Use platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to build a following and engage with your target audience. Optimising your site for search engines (SEO) increases visibility, and paid advertising on Google or social media can further expand your reach.

Stay compliant with tax and legal requirements

Fulfilling tax obligations is non-negotiable. You must file federal, state, and sometimes local taxes. Keep accurate financial records from the outset and stay informed about your responsibilities. Working with a tax professional can help ensure you remain compliant as laws and regulations change.

7 TRAITS CHILDREN INHERIT ONLY FROM THEIR FATHERS

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



When we think about what gets passed down from parent to child, most people imagine a mix, mum's eyes, dad's nose, a little bit of both when it comes to height or personality. But science says some traits come exclusively from dad. Not shared. Not blended. Straight from father to child.

Here are 7 things children inherit only from their father

Biological sex

It is probably the most well-known fact, a child's sex is determined entirely by the father's contribution. Women carry two X chromosomes (XX), while men carry one X and one Y (XY). It's the sperm that determines whether the baby gets another X (and becomes female) or a Y (and becomes male). But what many don't realise is that this isn't entirely random, some men are statistically more likely to father boys or girls depending on the balance of X- and Y-bearing sperm they produce.

Y chromosome traits (for sons)

The Y chromosome is passed only from father to son, and it carries very specific information, mainly instructions for male development. This includes the formation of testes, sperm production, and the development of male secondary sexual characteristics like facial hair and voice depth. Since the Y chromosome has fewer genes than the X, it doesn't code for many general features, but what it does carry is key to male identity and fertility. If a father has a mutation on his Y chromosome, there's a strong chance his son will inherit it too.

Male pattern baldness

There is a popular myth that baldness is inherited from your maternal grandfather. But while there's a gene on the X chromosome that influences hair loss, recent studies suggest that the father's genetics also play a significant role, especially in early onset male pattern baldness. If a father starts losing hair before 40, there's a strong chance his son might experience the same. The genetic story here is more complex than once thought, but the dad's side of the family can be a telling predictor, especially for sons.

Certain genetic disorders

Some rare but serious genetic disorders are linked directly to the Y chromosome, which means they're passed only from father to son. These include conditions like Y chromosome infertility, where a man may have low sperm count or poor sperm quality due to deletions on the Y chromosome. While these disorders are rare, they're critical because they can affect fertility and, in some cases, have knock-on effects for hormonal health and development.

Height potential

Height is influenced by both parents, but researchers have found that paternal genes play a slightly stronger role in determining a child's maximum growth potential. If a father is very tall or very short, it's more likely that his children will lean towards his height, especially sons. There are multiple genes involved in height, many of which regulate bone growth and hormone sensitivity. These can be more dominant when passed down from the father's side. That said, nutrition and lifestyle also play a big part, so genes only tell part of the story.

Risk of Achondroplasia

Achondroplasia is the most common cause of dwarfism and is usually caused by a spontaneous mutation in the FGFR3 gene. What's fascinating is that this mutation is almost always passed down through the father's sperm, and the risk increases with paternal age. While most cases are not inherited (they occur as new mutations), when they are, they come exclusively from the father.

Heart disease risk

Although lifestyle is a major factor, genetic predisposition to heart disease can come from the father's side, particularly for males. Some heart-related genes on the Y chromosome affect inflammation and cholesterol regulation, potentially increasing a son's risk. Studies have found that men with fathers who suffered early heart attacks or cardiovascular issues are at greater risk themselves, even if they follow a healthy lifestyle.



WHY NIGERIAN BASIC SCHOOLS NEED LANGUAGE LABORATORIES

CHARLES OGWO

In the face of the unprecedented global workplace undergoing shifts influenced by technology, and socio-economic changes, experts emphasise the need for children to be exposed to foreign languages early in life. Early language learning, they say, is essential to improve a child's cognitive development, enhance communication skills and increase academic success.

According to Victoria Duru, principal at Ronik International Schools, exposing children to foreign languages early is important because it will help them have a more global outlook.

Language laboratory provides practice in listening comprehension, speaking (listening and repeating), to reinforce the grammar, vocabulary, and function, grammatical structures, presented in class. Having language laboratories will help schools address the lack of students' interest in French, Chinese and Spanish,

among other languages; and the poor performance of Nigerians in mastering foreign languages.

Efficient communication skills are indispensable for the success of any country and its citizens, hence to achieve efficient communication skills, education is required.

Education is an important tool for development. One of the clogs in the wheel of progress in Nigeria's development today is the fact that the country is surrounded by countries whose official medium of communication is the French, yet the majority of Nigerians are illiterate in the language.

According to the federal government policy, education is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. In the national policy on education, French language is a compulsory subject to be offered at the primary and the junior secondary school level.



It can be offered as a non-vocational / elective subject. In line with this policy, the federal government in collaboration with the French government tried to promote the learning of French language through various means.

However, there is one major issue which these governments have failed to address. This is the language laboratory (laboratoire de langue).

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary, Language Laboratory is a room in a school or college that contains special equipment to help students learn foreign languages by listening to tapes, CDs, watching videos or DVDs, and recording themselves, among others. Language laboratories provide a facility which allows students to listen to model pronunciations, repeat and record the sounds, listen to their performance and compare with the model, and do self-assessment.

The language laboratory gives every learner the freedom to learn at their own pace. It does not require the teacher's presence at all times. Teachers can however, assist students individually or collectively.

In fact, the language laboratory is a very helpful tool for practicing and assessing one's speech in a language. Language laboratory is used for learning pronunciation and all other aspects of the phonetics of a language.

Adebola Olubanjo, lead consultant/ vice chairman at Ronik Group of Schools, Ejigbo in Lagos State, explained that with language laboratories, the school can teach in addition to English Language, French, Chinese and Spanish languages, to prepare students for diaspora community and labour markets.

Experts posit that to acquire the sensibility of the sounds and rhythm of a language, one has to hear the best samples of all spoken language.

David Wilson and Thayalan in their study opined that a language laboratory is required by any language learner to have a good command of the language for communication purposes, with clarity and accuracy being vital for effective and efficient communication.

Research has shown that the students taught in the language laboratory and classrooms achieved better in foreign language mastering than those taught in classrooms only.

Hence, there is a need for language laboratories in the effective implementation of the foreign language curriculum in Nigeria's primary and secondary education for quality learning outcomes.

FIVE DEGREES WITH THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AFTER GRADUATION

CHISOM MICHAEL



As student debt climbs and wages stagnate, many recent graduates in the United States are finding the job market increasingly difficult to navigate—particularly those entering fields unrelated to their degrees. About 40% of college graduates now work in jobs that don't require a degree, a trend known as underemployment.

This growing mismatch between education and employment is a concern for both students and policymakers. With the average annual cost of college nearing \$35,000,

graduates who land in unrelated or lower-paying roles may struggle to justify the investment. According to Strada Education Network, fewer than one in three Americans now believe a college degree is worth the cost.

The impact of underemployment varies by major. Degrees in fields like nursing (11.1% underemployment), computer engineering (13.3%), and civil engineering (15.9%) continue to lead to strong employment outcomes. In contrast, arts and humanities degrees often offer less direct career pathways.

While college can still offer personal growth and critical thinking skills, students are urged to research job prospects carefully before enrolling. Understanding industry demands and speaking with professionals can help students make more informed decisions about their education and future careers.

Recent findings from Degreechoices, a higher education research organisation, reveal that some university degrees are more likely than others to lead to underemployment.

The data highlights the top five degree programmes where graduates are most likely to work in roles unrelated to their field of study, compiled by AS.

1. Criminal Justice – 71.5% Underemployment Rate

Criminal justice graduates face the highest rate of underemployment. Despite ongoing national conversations around policing and legal reform, most graduates in this field do not secure roles directly related to their degree. Many find themselves in service-based jobs that do not require specialised training or a university qualification. The disconnect between course expectations and job outcomes appears to be significant.

2. Performing Arts – 65.9% Underemployment Rate

Graduates in the performing arts continue to face challenges in securing stable employment within their discipline. While some pursue roles in theatre, music, or dance, a majority take up work in unrelated areas, including hospitality and retail, to support themselves. The demand

for performing arts roles is limited, and competition remains high.

3. Art History – 62.3% Underemployment Rate

A degree in art history is associated with a limited number of specialised career paths, often within museums, galleries, or academic institutions. Many graduates are unable to find work within these spaces and instead move into sectors that do not require a background in art or history. As a result, a large number end up working in administrative or entry-level service jobs.

4. Hospitality and Recreation – 57.6% Underemployment Rate

Graduates in hospitality and recreation are frequently drawn to the promise of working in travel, tourism, or leisure management. However, these industries are highly sensitive to economic conditions and seasonal demand. Many roles offer irregular hours and low wages. A significant portion of graduates in this field do not secure full-time positions that align with their academic training.

5. Liberal Arts – 56.7% Underemployment Rate

Liberal arts degrees cover a broad range of subjects but often lack a clear career trajectory. Without a specific skill set or technical training, many liberal arts graduates find themselves in jobs that do not require a university degree. The transition from education to employment is often marked by uncertainty and limited options for career development.

NSUKKA ART SCHOOL: The Art Movement That Honours and Reinvents Africa



Many years ago, a quiet revolution began in a quiet town in southeastern Nigeria. It wasn't loud or flashy. It was artistic, thoughtful, and deeply rooted in culture. Welcome to Nsukka, home to one of Africa's most important art movements.

In the 1960s, artists and thinkers at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, grappled with a pivotal question: What defines modern African art? Their answer birthed the Nsukka Art School—a movement where tradition collided with radical innovation.

At the heart of this movement was Uche Okeke, a pioneer who believed that African art didn't need to imitate the West. Instead, it needed to dig deeper into its own soul. He revived Uli art—a traditional Igbo art form made by women—and brought its elegant lines and symbolism into modern painting.

From thereon, a new wave of artists began to bloom, each bringing their own voice. The Nsukka School was no longer just a classroom—it became a movement that would shape African art for decades to come.

This digest explores the impact of the Nsukka art school on contemporary African art and some notable members of the Nsukka art school.

The Impact of Nsukka Art School on Contemporary African Art
The Nsukka Art School was instrumental in creating critical conversation about African art and culture through exhibitions, workshops, conferences, and publications. Through these forums, the school provided opportunities for artists, scholars, and fans to engage in meaningful conversation about the importance of African traditions and their relevance in modern circumstances.

Notable exhibitions curated by faculty members and alumni have demonstrated the breadth and depth of African artistic expression, showcasing works by founding members and early alumni of the Nsukka Art School, while workshops and conferences have served as incubators for new ideas and collaborations. Furthermore, the school's publications have contributed to the scientific discussion of African art, providing insights into its historical foundations, cultural importance, and changing trends.

Faculty members and graduates have played important roles in determining the direction of modern African art by pushing limits, challenging preconceptions, and amplifying various perspectives within the global art community.

Notable Members of the Nsukka Art School

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Uche Okeke (April 30, 1933 – January 5, 2016)

1. Uche Okeke: The Visionary Behind It All

Uche Okeke, a towering figure in Nigerian art, was not only a talented artist but also an active writer and educator. His dedication to restoring Igbo-Ukwu motifs, as well as his leadership role in the "Natural Synthesis" art movement, has left an indelible mark on Nigerian contemporary art. Okeke's blend of ancient Nigerian art styles and modern technology has inspired artists for years.



Chike Aniakor (B. 21 August 1939)

2. Chike Aniakor: Scholar and Steward of African Aesthetics

Chike Aniakor made exceptional contributions to the theoretical foundation of the Nsukka Art School. As an art historian, critic, and artist, Aniakor’s work on Igbo-Ukwu art and African aesthetics influenced the conversation around African art studies. His acute observations and thorough awareness of African artistic traditions have improved the intellectual environment at Nsukka Art School and elsewhere.



El Anatsui (B. 1944)

4. El Anatsui: Transforming Discarded Materials into Masterpieces

El Anatsui’s huge metal sculptures have wowed audiences all over the world with their sheer beauty and creativity. Anatsui makes magnificent tapestries that shimmer and flow like fabric, pushing the frontiers of sculpture and textile art. His ability to transform mundane items into magnificent pieces of art demonstrates his tremendous artistic vision and devotion to environmental consciousness.



Obiora Udechukwu (B. 1946)

3. Obiora Udechukwu: Exploring Identity and Spirituality through Art

Obiora Udechukwu’s painting and poetry reveal a deep examination of identity, culture, and spirituality. His beautiful paintings frequently explore the intricacies of the human condition, drawing inspiration from Igbo cultural history and personal reflection. Udechukwu’s artistic perspective has helped shape the thematic orientation of the Nsukka Art School, encouraging a greater engagement with African tales.



El Anatsui (B. 1944)

5. Ada Udechukwu: Blending Art and Poetry to Convey Depth of Emotion

Ada Udechukwu’s art and poems come together to form a complex tapestry of passion and insight. Her striking use of colour and form, along with her poetic words, transports viewers to a realm of beauty and sensitivity. Udechukwu’s investigation of gender, mythology, and the human condition strikes a deep chord with audiences, providing glimpses into the intricacies of the female experience as well as the universal search for purpose and connection.

The Nsukka Art School isn’t just history—it’s alive and evolving. Its core message; “respect your roots, but don’t be afraid to innovate” continues to inspire artists across Africa and the diaspora.

Whether it is Uli-inspired murals or recycled-metal sculptures, the spirit of Nsukka shows up wherever African artists are pushing boundaries and telling their truth.



Keturah Ovio
Keturah Ovio is an Executive at Patrons Modern & Contemporary African Art. She is also an engineer and Founder of Dukka, a Fintech startup providing bookkeeping and payments solutions for small businesses. Keturah is passionate about African Art and has been collecting art since her early 20s. Now, she advises, curates, and manages collections for individuals and corporate organisations looking to start or diversify their wealth management through art collecting. She strongly believes that a fine marriage exists between Art and Technology

HOW KUNLE SONAME IS REDEFINING NIGERIA'S FOOTBALL CLUB MANAGEMENT

...as Remo Stars lifts NPFL trophy for the first time in history

CHARLES OGWO



The news is not that Remo Stars have secured their maiden Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) crown by defeating Niger Tornados 1-0 on Sunday, April 27, but that the club has tweaked club management, charting their history.

Kunle Soname, founder of Remo Stars has redefined football club management through commitment in grassroots football, exemplified by the construction of the state-of-the-art stadium in Ikenne, providing a vital foundation for the growth of sports in Nigeria.

With a heart firmly set on developing football from the grassroots, Soname founded Remo Stars in 2004 under the name FC Dender, and have steadily nurtured the club to not only climb the ranks of Nigerian football over the past two decades, but be crowned the country's elite clubs champions.

One of the things clogging sports development, and business in Nigeria is lack of intentional action given to developing sports, either by entrepreneurs or the government.

The chairman of Remo Stars by his action has changed the narratives and set the pace how football clubs should be managed with proper planning and deliberate actions.

Emmanuel Amuneke, the technical manager of Heartland FC, speaking on the feat achieved by Remo Stars who won the 2025 NPFL with 68 points after 35 matches, having recorded 21 wins, five draws, and nine losses, and hold a 10-point lead over its closest rivalry, Rivers United, said that Remo Stars have shown that with proper planning and deliberate action, privately owned clubs can excel in NPFL.

Amuneke emphasised that the feat of Kunle Soname and Remo Stars is a challenge to privately owned clubs that they can also excel with proper planning and deliberate actions.

Similarly, Mozez Praiz, television host/sportscaster at Supersport revealed during a sports conference that Nigerian clubs can maximise the business aspect of sports, pointing out the problem with most sports clubs is lack of knowledge about the business of sports.

"Club chairmanship is given as a political compensation as against professionalism. Most of the club administrators don't have blueprints on how to grow the clubs," he said.

Praiz explained that to grow a club, the ideal thing is to start with building the fan base, and that to achieve this, there is a need to give the fans a sense of ownership.

"Until we fix the disconnect between the club managers and the fans, we will continue to struggle. Club managers should take seriously how they brand their persons," he said.

The Ogun State-born businessman is unarguably the biggest private investor in Nigeria's football club management space today; Soname built his fans base through the formation of a privately owned league, 'The Creative Championship' for youth in Lagos and Ogun States.



Remo Stars now turn their attention to preparations for continental football, as they are set to represent Nigeria in next season's TotalEnergies CAF Champions League.

No doubt, Nigeria with a population of over 220 million people, including a youthful demographic, is primed to become a leading sports hub in Africa; especially with the emergence of Remo Stars as NPFL champions, probably, the country will lift the coveted TotalEnergies CAF Champions League cup once again.

Besides, he ensured that Remo Stars own a table tennis team, which is the first table- tennis team owned by a football club in Nigeria.

The visionary football club administrator, established Beyond Limits Football Club as a window to growing the Remo Stars brand and prepare players for the move to CD Feirense, his Portuguese club.

To expand his fan base, Soname also ventured into sports betting by establishing bet9ja, which has drawn many followers to the club.

The success story of Soname and Remo Stars has truly shown that the government and stakeholders have to rethink sports investment and administration to optimise the economic benefits.

According to Emeka Enyadike, director at Digital Sports, Africa, "Nigeria needs to create a more viable sports ecosystem amidst abundance of talents and put in place infrastructure, commercialisation and human capacity development, for talents to be discovered."

ANTS

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

I never knew my parents. I was raised by my grandmother, Kaka, in a quiet village in Zaria. She was the only family I ever had. Whenever I asked about my parents, my curiosity was rewarded with a sharp knock on the head. I learned early on not to ask questions that brought headaches.

Kaka never saw the inside of a classroom but she valued education deeply. Thanks to her, I was enrolled in the local primary school. She dreamed of me becoming a teacher. But what she didn't know was that I preferred to work on the farm with my friends rather than sit and scribble ABC and 123 on a slate.

The day she discovered I had been skipping school was the day I buried all thoughts of farming. What I suffered in her hands, my mouth cannot describe. That punishment ignited in me a strange passion for schooling and to everyone's surprise, especially mine, I began to excel in my studies. Eventually, I earned a scholarship from our community to study at a prestigious Federal University.

Back then, our village was like a big family. We slept with our doors open. Everyone knew everyone. We shared, we celebrated, we mourned together. But over the years things started to shift. The harmony gave way to hostility. The sense of safety began to crumble, replaced by whispers of sorcery, suspicion and fear.

When I returned to the village after my final exams, I was thrilled but Kaka was not. In fact, she tried everything to stop me from spending the night. I was confused. I was tired. Where did she expect me to go? Why was she behaving so strangely? I couldn't understand it.

That night, she came into my room, saying she had a meeting to attend. A meeting? At that hour? I had never seen her that way—agitated, almost scared.

Before leaving, she begged me not to sleep until midnight. She wouldn't explain why, just insisted I stayed awake. Then she gave me an odd instruction: when the clock struck twelve, I should stand by the

door and watch carefully. A line of ants would file into my room. I was to let the first one pass, then kill the rest. She gave me no time for questions. I was simply expected to obey.

Looking back, maybe I should have listened to her and left the village that very evening. All this “don’t sleep” and “watch for ants” talk made me nervous. Clearly, something serious was going on.

Kaka left for her so-called meeting. I stayed up, fighting sleep with every fiber of my body. Midnight came and so did the ants. Just as she had said, they marched into my room in a straight line. My heart froze. I was terrified. In my panic, I forgot her words and driven by instinct, I grabbed a broom and killed every single one. Then I swept them out and dumped the dirt outside. I felt proud of myself. I was the midnight ant exterminator. I went to bed smiling. But my smile was short-lived.

Loud cries woke me in the early hours of the morning. The entire village was in uproar. People were running, screaming, searching for their loved ones. Wailing echoed from every corner. I thought of Kaka. She hadn’t returned. My heart tightened.

The town crier’s voice rang out—Sarkin, the village chief was summoning everyone to the village square. That rarely happened, especially not this early.

Under the ancient Iroko tree, the scene was nightmarish. Bodies lay scattered on the ground—mangled, bloodied. Families screamed as they identified their daughters, sisters and wives among the dead. I spotted Kaka’s body and froze. I couldn’t breathe.

In the midst of the carnage sat a young girl, writhing in pain. Sarkin ordered her to repeat what she had said.

According to her, there had been rumors about black witches who spread evil in the village. In response, some women joined the white witches for protection.

At first, the white witches helped but then their demands grew darker—they wanted human blood. The plan was to sacrifice the grandson of an old woman but that woman offered herself instead and the white witches refused.

That night, they transformed into ants and were led by the old woman into her grandson’s room but the

young boy, unaware, killed them all. She was the only one who managed to escape.

The square fell silent.

When asked to name the old woman, the girl said she didn’t know—she was a new initiate and hadn’t learned names yet.

Sarkin turned to the villagers. “Who among you killed ants in your house last night?”
No one answered.

I stood there, heart pounding, drenched in sweat. I thought I would collapse.

After a long silence, Sarkin and the elders decided to bury the bodies in the evil forest. The people were told to go home and mourn their dead.

To this day, no one knows who that grandson was.

Kaka had tried to protect me but I killed her. I should’ve spared the first ant just like she said. I still blame myself for her death but I try to convince myself that I only killed ants...I did not kill my grandmother.

I still shiver every time I see ants.

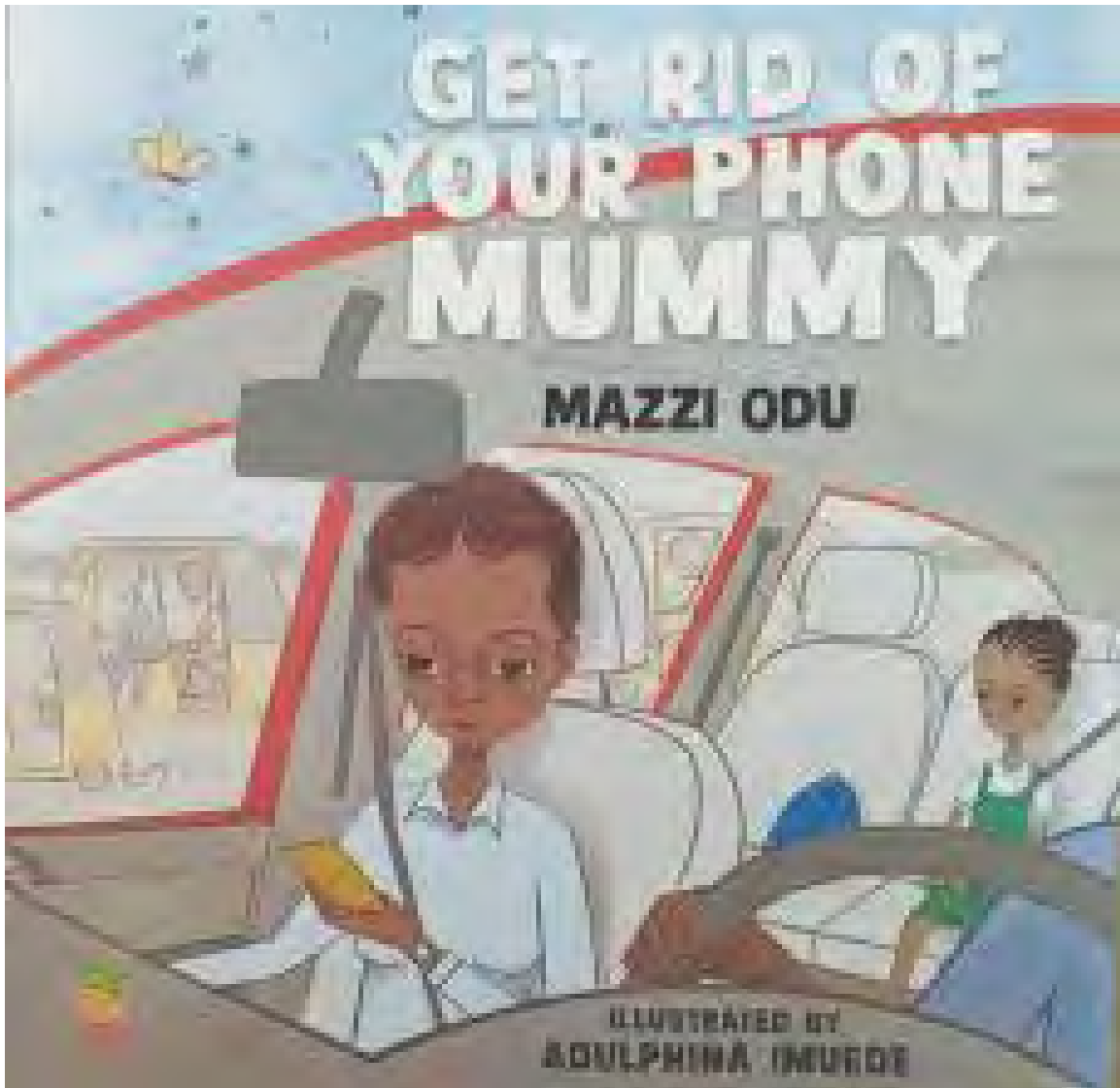


Udy Osaro-Edobor

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A Child's Cry for Attention-A Review of Mazzi Odu's
Get Rid of your Phone Mummy

Title: Get Rid of your Phone Mummy
Author: Mazzi Odu
Year of Publication: 2025
Number of Pages: 29
Category: Children's Book

GET RID OF YOUR PHONE MUMMY

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

Most kids who come across the title of Mazzi Odu's book, *Get Rid of Your Phone Mummy*, might feel a sense of *déjà vu*. The title sounds all too familiar, many children have either said those very words or secretly wished they could.

The not-so-happy child on the cover looks familiar too; one or two children might see themselves in her shoes. Together, the title and the cover are striking, catchy enough to grab the attention of any young reader.

Set in Lagos, it's easy to imagine the kind of traffic that greets families on their way to school. What better backdrop for this story? It reflects a daily reality many children (and their parents) can relate to.

What makes this book stand out is its refreshing twist: it's the child calling out mummy's behaviour, not the other way around. Unlike most children's books where adults correct the child, here the child holds up a mirror to the parent and that flips the script in a powerful, relatable way.

The illustrations are beautiful, not necessarily extraordinary, but warmly familiar, especially to the African child. Each page captures scenes from everyday life, from early morning routines to the hustle of the daily commute.

Look closely and you'll notice how the author weaves in cultural richness by giving characters names that represent different parts of Nigeria, a subtle thoughtful nod to the country's diversity.

The central issue the book addresses is evident from the cover, but as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that this isn't a problem faced by just one child, it's a shared experience for many. At times, it feels as though the author is speaking directly to Gen Z mums. However, while it may stir certain emotions, it's worth noting that this may not have been the author's intention. The message goes deeper.

There is a major lesson embedded in this story. While it may initially seem like only mums are being called out, a closer look reveals that dads and indeed, all parents are gently nudged too. We must ensure our children get the attention they need. Otherwise, well... don't be surprised if your child starts shouting "puff puff!" every time they need you (winks).

Get Rid of Your Phone, Mummy is more than a children's book. It's a conversation starter. It gives children a voice and offers parents a chance to pause, reflect, and reconnect. It's not just a story; it's an invitation to listen with love.



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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

HAVOC (2025)

If you enjoyed the action-packed movie called “Bangkok breaking; heaven or hell” last year on Netflix then you will also enjoy this brand-new action movie on Netflix. It was indeed a total havoc in the city and was absolutely chaotic because at some point we couldn’t even tell who was chasing who anymore. To the movie Tom Hardy played the lead role as “Walker”, he was a cop who had a little dirty past in order to vindicate himself from his past deed, he will have to assist this very wealthy politician in the city to find his son from the bad guys before they kill him. Charlie made a drug supply that went south as someone snitched on them and this became the beginning of their worse night mare, the entire movie was about the 4 young adults being chased round the entire city and the extend their parents will go to protect their kids or seek vengeance. I enjoyed the movie until I also got tired of the chase at the tail end, kind of reminded me of “John Wick” also. Do check it out for yourself and find out how the entire thing ended. The 107m Crime, action movie was directed by Gareth Evans, they featured actors like Tom Hardy, Jessie Mei Li, Justin Cornwell, Quelin Sepulveda, Lockhart Ogilvie, Jim Caesar, Xelia Mendes-Jones, Richard Harrington and many more.



JEWEL THEIF: THE HEIST BEGINS (2025)

Honestly at first I was sceptical to watch this Indian-action movie, as I always get tired of them infusing dance scenes in action movies, sincerely I don't really get it, if it's an action movie then let's allow it be one, I was entirely happy somewhat about this one only to make it to the last scenes and credits and again they had to add the bonus dance scenes for the road, at this point I couldn't exit, as I made it to the end, well consoling enough this one wasn't that bad after all. To the movie Rajan the main actor was born into a noble honest home, they lost their mom when they were little and were raised lovingly by their dad who was a doctor. But Rajan grew up and became a world-renowned arts and jewel collector or will I say a wealthy, famous thief, well it depends on how you see it or judge him. One faithful day he receives a physical message from his brother that some bad guys need to contract him or else eliminate his sweet loving dad. Well, you will need to go check out this exciting movie to see how he was able to pull this extremely dangerous heist despite being chased and monitored and find out if he saved his father after all his actions and hard work. The 116m Indian, Hindi, Bollywood, Action, Crime movie was directed by Robbie Grewal and Kookie Gulati, they featured actors like Jaideep Ahlawat, Gagan Arora, Ivana Bracan, Shaji Chaudhary, Nokia Dutta, Ujjawal Gauraha, Sumit Gulati, Kunal Kapoor, Ayaz Khan and many more.



iHOSTAGE (2025)

This was a simple Dutch, crime movie that was based on real life events that occurred in Amsterdam in 2022. To the movie what started as a very simple day for Ilian Petrov quickly transcended into the worse day of his life. A day before on arriving at Amsterdam for a project, he forgot his iPod on the train and since he would have a lot of phone calls to make to his family back home, he decided to run to the store first thing in the morning to get a new one, little did he know he was going to be the unfortunate one to be picked on by the Kidnapper who entered the store that morning. The kidnapper had some terrible history, which made it a dicey case for the police and agents to deal with as they didn't want Ilian nor the others who were hiding in the store to be killed. You will need to go check out this movie to find out if Ilian made it out alive, if the kidnapper got his ransom and if his life was spared. The 100m Dutch, crime, drama, thriller movie was directed by Bobby Boermans, they featured actors like Soufiane Moussouli, Admir Sehovic, Emmanuel Ohenne Boafo, Fockeline Ouwerkerk, Roosmarijn van der Hoek, Robin Boissevain etc.



LINDA OCHUGBUA

WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Dominion is easy when you come from a place of victory first in your mind

.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Feelings Fizzle; understand that only the Feelings from a solid Foundation will continue to flow

.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Failures are just mistakes so no pressure on us. We move!

.....WhispersbyTEN

4

Privilege is easy to understand when you see a family who haven't had a meal in 24hrs

.....WhispersbyTEN