

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

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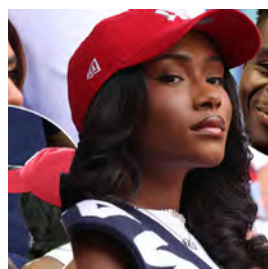


**SIX EUROPEAN
COUNTRIES
TRAVELLERS CAN
EXPLORE
IN A DAY**



RESTAURANT

6 native restaurants in Lagos for authentic Nigerian food



SPORTS

Off-field Romance: Inside Bukayo Saka and Tolami Benson's private love story

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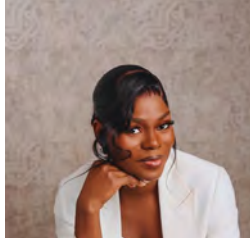
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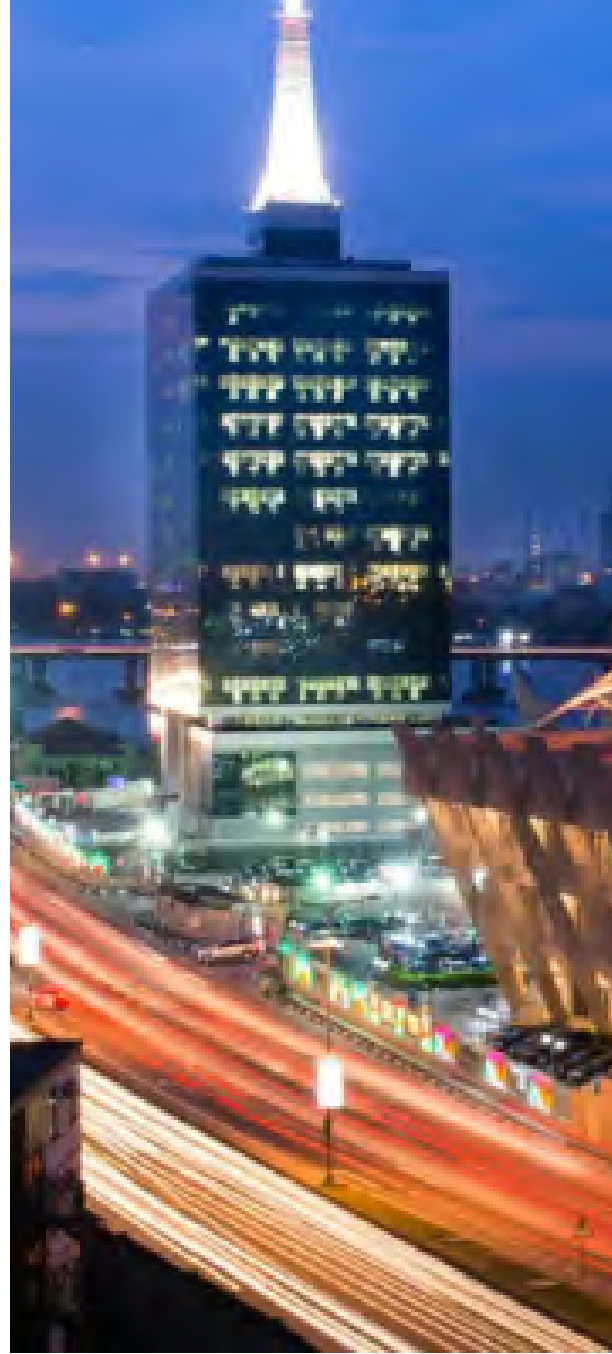
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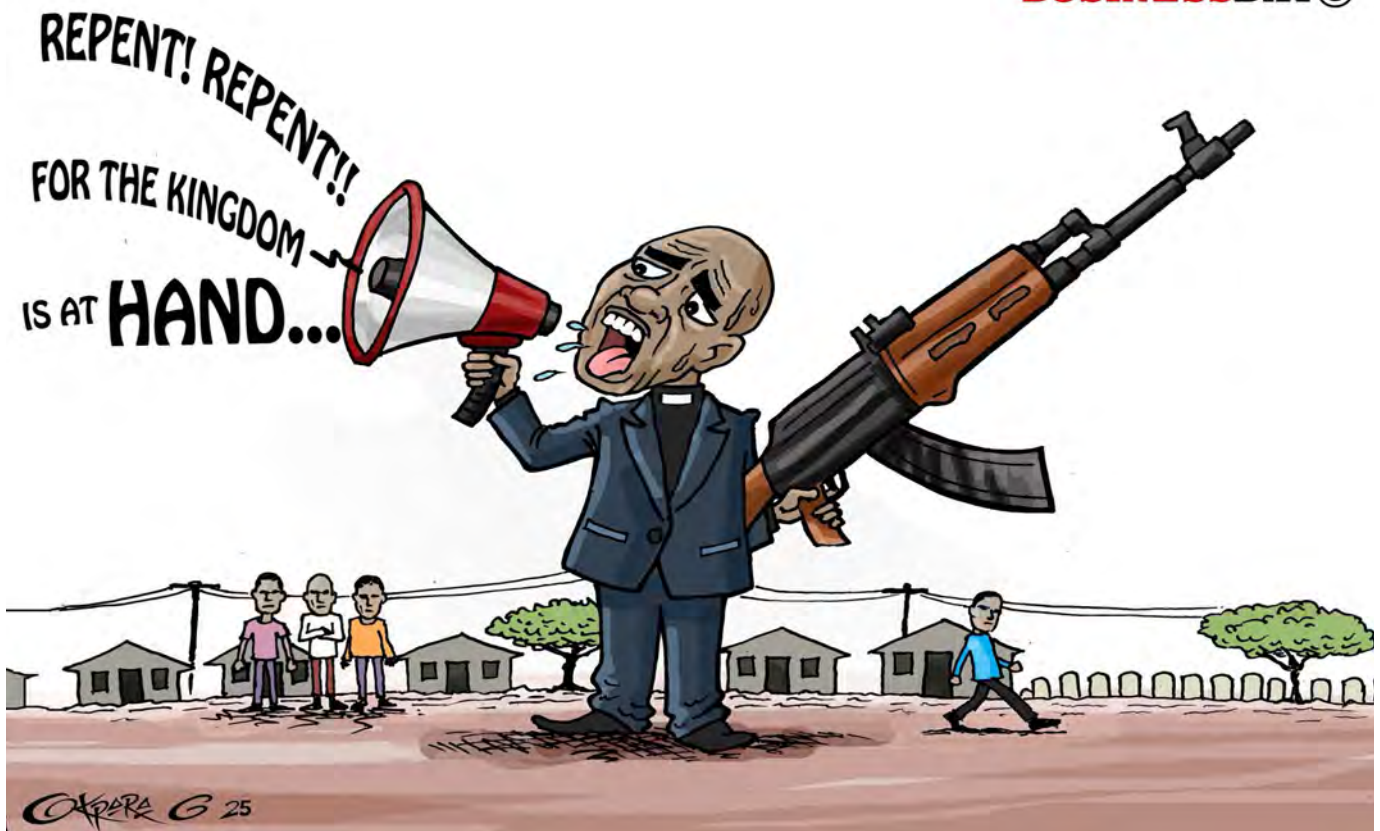


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SIX EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TRAVELLERS CAN EXPLORE IN A DAY

CHISOM MICHAEL

Europe's smallest nations are attracting travellers seeking compact adventures without long journeys between sights. These micro-states deliver history, culture and national identity within remarkably short distances, proving that not all destinations require week-long itineraries.

Scattered across the continent, they offer medieval quarters, scenic coastlines, grand boulevards and architectural charm, all easily explored in a single day. Far from rushed, the experience is defined by relaxed movement between closely clustered attractions.

Visitors can wander from castles to beaches or from ancient streets to modern centres within hours, discovering how these tiny countries pack surprising depth into their modest borders.

Here are six countries that travellers can explore in one day.

1. Vatican City

The scale of Vatican City allows visitors to move across the territory in under an hour. A one-day visit gives access to St. Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel, and the Vatican Museums, where visitors see work linked to major periods in religious and artistic history. The country's size does not limit its global religious influence, making it a regular stop for travellers interested in culture, faith and art.



2. Monaco

Visitors can walk across Monaco and see many of its main sites in a day. Key stops often include the Monte Carlo district, the marina, and the old town area around

the Prince's Palace. The Oceanographic Museum and the sections of the Formula 1 street circuit also attract travellers who want a short but full itinerary.



3. Liechtenstein

Located between Switzerland and Austria, Liechtenstein is suited for a single-day road trip. Visitors move through Vaduz, stop by the National Museum, and view Vaduz Castle from outside. Short drives lead to villages such as Triesenberg and Malbun, where mountain routes and vineyards sit close to the main town.



4. San Marino

San Marino offers a historic centre that visitors cover in a few hours. Its network of narrow routes leads to the Three Towers on Monte Titano, each offering views across the region. The country's museums, small squares and public spaces provide a compact introduction to its long political history and independence.



5. Andorra

Travellers moving through the Pyrenees can enter and explore Andorra within a day. Andorra la Vella is the usual starting point, with its commercial areas and public buildings. Short drives reach nearby villages such as Ordino and La Massana, as well as mountain passes used by hikers and motorists.



6. Malta

Despite having more territory than the other microstates on this list, Malta is still manageable for a one-day circuit. Travellers often begin in Valletta, known for its historic layout and public buildings, before heading to Mdina, the “Silent City”. A coastal stop, harbour route or short beach break can fit into the same day because of the short distances between towns.

OFF-FIELD ROMANCE: INSIDE BUKAYO SAKA AND TOLAMI BENSON'S PRIVATE LOVE STORY

ANTHONY NLEBEM



Arsenal star Bukayo Saka is back in the headlines, but this time, it's not for a goal, an assist, or another match-winning performance. According to the Daily Mail, the Nigerian-born England international has reportedly proposed to his long-term girlfriend, Tolami Benson, during a romantic evening at a luxury London hotel.

Saka, born in 2001 to Yoruba Nigerian parents Adenike and Yomi Saka, is said to have gone "all out" for the moment.

"Bukayo organised a special night at a top London hotel and proposed there. The ring is enormous. Tolami was blown away," a source told Daily Mail.

A Relationship Kept Out of the Spotlight
Despite Saka's rise to global football stardom, he and Tolami have been remarkably private about their relationship:

They don't follow each other on Instagram. They don't share each other's photos online. They rarely appear publicly unless necessary. The couple have reportedly been together since 2020, nurturing their love quietly and intentionally away from social media glare.

When the World First Noticed Tolami

Their romance first gained public attention during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar when Tolami was spotted cheering on Saka from the stands alongside other England WAGs.

She was also seen supporting him at Euro 2024, wearing a jacket emblazoned with the number 87, Saka's first senior squad shirt number at Arsenal.

In June, cameras captured a rare intimate moment as the couple shared a pitch-side kiss following England's 0-0 draw with Slovenia.



Who Is Tolami Benson?

At 24, Tolami Benson has carved out an impressive career and personal brand:

Born December 3, 2000, in Hatfield, Hertfordshire
 Attended Bishop Hatfield Girls' School
 Studied Communication & Media Studies at A-level
 Graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Media from Birmingham City University in 2022

She previously worked at Harrods before transitioning fully into PR. In May, she began a role as a senior planning executive at Zenith.

Alongside her career, Tolami has built a growing presence as a social media influencer and model, collaborating with several UK lifestyle and fashion brands.

Her Instagram showcases a glamorous lifestyle, featuring private jets, luxury vacations, fashion-forward looks, and snapshots of life in London, though, true to their nature, almost nothing is revealed about Saka.

On Threads, she offers a more relatable side, sharing her daily commute and candid everyday moments.



A Football Star Who Values Privacy

Saka mirrors this discretion.

Despite having more than 7.6 million Instagram followers, he keeps his page strictly about football, trophies, and club moments, with no mention of his four-year relationship.

Those close to the couple say this deliberate privacy is what has kept them grounded amid fame, pressure, and constant public scrutiny.

The Premier League's Most Low-Key Love Story
Bukayo Saka and Tolami Benson have quietly become one of football's most intriguing couples: admired, stylish, and successful, yet fiercely committed to keeping their love away from the noise.

With Saka thriving for Arsenal and now celebrating a major personal milestone, the future looks bright for the newly engaged couple, who have managed to maintain one of the most private romances in modern football.

6 NATIVE RESTAURANTS IN LAGOS FOR AUTHENTIC NIGERIAN FOOD

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Native food holds a steady place in people's heart. It is the type of food people turn to when they want something familiar, straightforward and rooted in Nigerian cooking. Many restaurants serve Nigerian dishes, but only a few focus on preparing them the traditional way.

In Lagos, people often have a preferred spot for meals like amala, pounded yam, pepper soup, or ofada rice. These places keep their menus simple, work with everyday ingredients and stay close to the original flavours that define the dishes.

Here are six native restaurants in Lagos that serve authentic Nigerian food and maintain the style many people recognise and trust.

Ofe Uto

Ofe Uto, located at Westbrook Mall in Lekki, specialises in Eastern Nigerian cuisine. Their menu includes a variety of traditional soups such as oha, nsala, bitterleaf, okazi, and ofe owerri, alongside local rice, pepper soup, Ukwa, isiewu, okpa, nkwobi, and abacha. These are served with

swallows like pounded yam, semo, or fufu, offering a straightforward and familiar dining experience.

A meal here typically costs around ₦15,000 per person, depending on the protein selected. The cheapest soup here cost ₦4,500, while the most expensive soup, Ofe Owerri, is ₦35,000. Ofe Uto is open Monday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and on Sunday from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m., and it holds a 4.1 rating on Google.

Item Nnem

Item Nnem is located on Adeniyi Jones, Ikeja, and is known for serving Nigerian meals with a focus on soups, rice dishes and seafood. Their soup options include egusi, grandma soup, omugwo soup and a few others prepared in a simple, home-style manner. They also serve native rice, white rice and jollof rice, paired with different sauces and proteins, as well as items from their seafood menu. The restaurant has a policy where customers are expected to place their orders at least one hour and thirty minutes ahead. They open from Monday to Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m., and currently hold a 4.8 rating on Google.

Ofada Boy

Ofada Boy, located on Mba Street in Surulere, is a popular spot for authentic ofada rice. The restaurant serves classic ofada with its signature pepper sauce, often paired with assorted meats, ponmo, chicken or fish. They also offer a variety of soups, swallow options, stew, and pepper soup dishes. Soups, stews, and sauces are available in 2-litre, 3-litre, and 5-litre bowls, and customers can choose to dine in or order for delivery.

With ₦14,000, you can enjoy the Ofada Premium, which includes ofada rice, ofada sauce, beef, assorted meats, ponmo, egg, and plantain. The restaurant holds a 4.3-star rating on Google, reflecting its consistent quality and loyal following.

Delta Pot

Delta Pot, located on Emmanuel Abimbola Cole Street in Lekki, specialises in Niger-Delta cuisine. The restaurant serves dishes such as banga, owo, nsala, banga rice, and a variety of seafood soups, all prepared in the traditional southern style. The meals are well-portioned and stay true to the original flavours. Delta Pot is open Monday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and holds a 4.1-star rating on Google. Customers can enjoy a range of traditional soups, swallows, and seafood dishes in a straightforward, home-style setting.

Pearls Calabar Cuisine

Pearls Calabar Cuisine is located on 31 Adebola Street, off Adeniran Ogunsanya Road in Surulere. The restaurant specialises in Calabar and South-South Nigerian dishes, including a variety of traditional soups, stews, rice dishes, and seafood prepared in the authentic local style. Meals are served with swallows like pounded yam, semo, or fufu, and garri. A plate of soup and swallow at Pearls Calabar Cuisine starts from ₦10,000 and can go up to ₦25,000 depending on the choice of protein and soup. The restaurant is open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., offers both dine-in and delivery options, and holds a 4.7-star rating on Google.

Native Foods Ltd.

Native Foods Limited is located at 32/41 Road Junction, Festac Town, Lagos. The restaurant serves a variety of Nigerian dishes, including soups, pepper soups, soup meals, and side dishes. The focus is on straightforward, home-style cooking with flavours that stay true to traditional recipes. A medium-sized serving of soup starts from ₦1,600, while with ₦10,000 you can enjoy a full, filling meal. The restaurant has a 4.2-star rating on Google and offers dine-in, takeaway, and delivery options, making it convenient for both quick meals and more relaxed dining experiences.

THE ART OF INTENTIONAL LIVING: SUCCESS JUDE ON EXPERIENCES, EMPATHY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

CHISOM MICHAEL





Success Jude is an intentional lifestyle strategist, strategic communications specialist, and emerging hotelier whose work seamlessly integrates communication, lifestyle, and experience design. With over a decade of expertise in strategic communications and perception management, she excels in shaping narratives, building brand presence, and creating meaningful connections.

As Founder of House of Ihunanya and Chief Experience Officer of HOI Hospitality Ltd., she crafts experiences and environments that prioritize elegance, intentionality, and emotional resonance. Guided by excellence, empathy, and sustainability, Success consults for individuals and organizations, elevating guest experiences, operational effectiveness, and brand visibility with authenticity and thoughtful precision. In this interview with CHISOM MICHAEL, she discusses how intentional experience design shapes well-being, elevates hospitality standards, and fosters meaningful human connections across industries.

Your work spans communication, lifestyle, and hospitality. How did these paths first begin to intersect for you?

The major intersection for me is human connection, which I feel is a very important factor to note across these industries. My professional journey has always orbited these sectors, but I began with strategic communication.

I have an academic background in communication, and my early career quickly demonstrated the powerful impact of thoughtful, strategic communication, which fueled my passion for the field.

For hospitality, I entered the industry about 10 years ago. I started as a Marketing Manager for a four-star hotel and was subsequently promoted to General Manager after presenting

innovative operational ideas to the owner. I managed the property for 12 months before returning to a marketing-focused role, which afforded me the flexibility to pursue other emerging opportunities.

Lifestyle is the thread that runs through both; it's the part where I share proven solutions developed over years of testing through my personal brand. I fundamentally believe that the design of our lives; whether at home, work, or in hospitality spaces; has a profound impact on our overall output and well-being. Therefore, for us to achieve a healthy human experience, we must be profoundly intentional about how we live.

What influenced your move from strategic communications into hospitality and experience design?

I wouldn't characterize it as a "move," but rather an awakening. The hospitality industry offers an immersive potential to consciously shape the global culture of human experience. The intentional design of experiences that effect these changes is what I've been awakened to.

Crucially, my background in strategic communications provides an invaluable advantage, making it exceptionally easy to conceptualize and execute the solutions we deliver through HOI Hospitality Limited.

You speak about intentional living. How do you define it within the context of your work?

In the context of my work, intentional living is defined as encouraging holistic sustainability in every facet of our lives. It means consistently making choices that are aligned with our intrinsic values, core passions, natural wiring, and innate design.

I posit that when individuals operate and work from a state of alignment, the entire system functions better: purpose is clarified, productivity becomes healthier, and life achieves a greater balance. When we live intentionally, there is no need to force ourselves into misaligned industries, relationships, or partnerships, which will dramatically reduce the incidence of burnout, chaos, stress, and unhealthy conflict; all unsustainable outputs.

I believe misalignment is a core driver of much of the disorder we see globally today. Human systems across work, life, and social interaction are not coherent, resulting in widespread global instability.

Until we address this foundational issue, we will continue to produce unsustainable results. Real change begins with alignment, starting with the individual and their commitment to intentional living.

This is the change that HOI Hospitality Ltd. is engineered to enact through our services and programs.

What are the solutions and program that your company

HOI Hospitality Ltd offers, and how will they solve global hospitality challenges across all sectors

HOI Hospitality Ltd. offers solutions and programs that are not merely operational fixes, but foundational shifts based on the principle of Intentional Living and Experience Design. We believe hospitality is not limited to hospitality enterprises because hospitality is the practice of creating environments where people feel welcomed, cared for, and valued. For a sustainable human experience, hospitality is to be activated in every industry, especially guest-facing and client-facing ones.

Our primary solutions are deployed across three core areas: Business and Operations, Guest Experience and Design, and Talent and Brand Development.

We offer comprehensive Business and Operations solutions, including Operations Management such as HR Management and Staffing, Finance and Budgeting, SOPs, Technology Integration (PMS, POS, CRM), Quality Assurance, and Asset Management. Our Business Development services cover Market Analysis, Partnership Development, Revenue Growth Strategies, Strategic Planning, Expansion and Franchising Support, and Sales Optimization. Additionally, we provide Corporate Concierge Services, offering tailored corporate guest support, VIP arrangements, event coordination, Executive Travel Management, Corporate Gift Sourcing, and client relations management.

In Guest Experience and Design, we specialize in Interior and Experience Design, including Space Planning, Interior Design, Guest Experience Mapping, Thematic and Concept Design, Art and Décor Selection, and Sensory Design (sound, scent, lighting). We also excel in High-Touch Experience Management, delivering personalized guest experiences, bespoke service delivery, guest journey mapping, and luxury service coordination.

For Talent and Brand Development, our Brand Management services include Brand Strategy, Reputation Management, Marketing Communications, Social Media Management, PR and Media Relations, and Content Creation. We also provide Training Programs focused on Guest Service Excellence, Soft Skills, Wellness and Care Training, Conflict Resolution, Upselling and Revenue Optimization, and Leadership Development.

We believe our offerings empower hospitality enterprises and client-facing organizations to deliver exceptional experiences, maximize operational efficiency, and build strong, memorable brands.

In your view, what shapes a guest's emotional response to a space or service?

A guest's emotional response is shaped by many factors, but a few critical touchpoints are non-negotiable. Atmosphere and Aesthetics, the visual, sensory, and spatial design of a space or even a digital presence, immediately influence how a guest feels, as every detail from layout to lighting, art, and décor sets the tone for the experience.

Human Interaction and Service Delivery, including the way staff engage with guests through warmth, attentiveness, tone of voice, body language, and professionalism, deeply affects emotional perception and overall satisfaction.

Comfort, Ease, and Functionality are essential, as spaces and services that are intuitive and easy to navigate create calm and a sense of safety, allowing guests to fully relax and enjoy their experience without overthinking directions, usage, or whom to ask.

Personal Relevance and Identity Alignment fosters emotional connection when a space or service reflects a guest's values, lifestyle, or aspirations. Moments of Delight and Surprise, such as small, thoughtful gestures like personalized notes, complimentary treats, unexpected upgrades, or acts of kindness, create memorable emotional peaks.

Finally, Consistency and Reliability build trust, as guests feel confident and secure when experiences consistently meet or exceed expectations, while inconsistency can lead to frustration and disappointment.

How does your background in perception management inform the way you build or manage hospitality experiences?

My background in perception management is my greatest competitive advantage and the core difference between my approach and that of standard hospitality professionals.

I hold a deep, innate command of human cognitive and emotional drivers; I understand precisely how people think, feel, and act. This mastery provides a pre-emptive flow of strategic guidance when building new experiences.

I can consistently and accurately anticipate emotional responses and behavioral patterns, allowing me to design flawless environments and robust strategies that are guaranteed to resonate deeply and positively with every guest. My solutions are built on certainty, not assumption.

House of Ihunanya reflects a blend of lifestyle and residence. What gap were you trying to address when creating it?

The primary gap I am addressing is the unawareness of the profound potential the hospitality industry possesses to consciously shape human behavior and well-being.

I believe that by consciously creating experiences and offering stays that evoke and support healthy, sustainable living, we can make a significant contribution to the global well-being of human existence. House of Ihunanya is a model for how a hospitality brand can move beyond mere service provision to become a catalyst for intentional living.

As Managing Director of HOI Hospitality Ltd, how do you align communication, operations, and guest experience across your firms?

To ensure consistent and excellent service, we focus on three pillars: Clarity, Training, and Measurement. Under Clarity, we unify all teams around our core philosophy of Intentional Living and utilize mandatory Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for every service interaction, ensuring a consistent brand voice.

Through Training, we foster a culture of Care and Compassion, cross-training staff to enable seamless collaboration and empathetic complaint resolution. With Measurement, we apply unified KPIs, such as Net Promoter Score (NPS), across all businesses, and conduct regular Service Quality Audits to benchmark performance, ensuring every touchpoint meets our standard of excellence.

What principles guide your decision-making when designing or refining an experience for clients or guests?

My entire approach is governed by two foundational principles: Compassion and Sustainability.

Compassion begins with a sincere, empathic effort to understand the underlying story behind the service request; I seek to know the why with depth, not just the what, because understanding a client's or guest's needs at a profound emotional level enables us to consciously meet them at their point of need, strategically advise, and proffer sustainable, long-term solutions that extend far beyond the immediate service transaction.

Sustainability means I am not a quick-fixer; I create long-term solutions, always considering how the solutions provided will reduce the overall drain on resources, including time, energy, and emotional capital, ensuring that the experiences we design lead to true resilience and lasting alignment for the individual or the organization.

These two principles allow HOI Hospitality Ltd. to deliver solutions built on certainty, not assumption, by prioritizing both emotional understanding and practical, enduring results.

Hospitality is often described as a relationship-based field. How do you cultivate meaningful connection in your work?

I cultivate meaningful connection through genuine care.

It is a simple, yet powerful, philosophy that extends across the entire ecosystem: I genuinely care for my staff, I care for my clients, and I care for my colleagues. This authentic

commitment to their well-being and success fosters the trust, mutual respect, and loyalty that form the foundation of lasting, meaningful professional relationships.

Looking ahead, what direction do you see for experience design and hospitality in your region, and how are you preparing for it?

The discernible direction for the sector is Conscious Sustainability, as the market and the world are becoming increasingly aware of the ethical and practical imperatives of sustainable practices and mindful living.

I am proud that HOI Hospitality Ltd. is already among the leaders driving this change, as some of our core values are sustainability and mindful living.

We are preparing by deepening our commitment to intentional design that minimizes environmental impact and maximizes human well-being, integrating our core philosophy into all new development and service offerings to ensure they are future-proofed against evolving consumer expectations for ethical and sustainable operations, and investing in educational programs to cultivate a team and a client base that understands and champions the long-term value of conscious sustainability.



ILE-IFE KINGDOM APPOINTS PRINCE KAMARI ADEMILUYI TO BOOST GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS



Prince Kamari Ademiluyi is the Founder of the UK Africa Trade Expo.

This royal honour, conferred under the Seal of the Throne, represents a new chapter in the Kingdom's expansion of international partnerships, economic cooperation, and global engagement, and it reflects His Imperial Majesty's mission to promote development, innovation, youth empowerment, women's advancement, and prosperity for the Yoruba people and Nigeria at large.

The appointment comes following the success of the 3rd Edition of the UK Africa Trade Expo (UKATE) 2025, where Prince Kamari played a decisive leadership role in mobilising investors, governments, innovators, academics and institutions across Africa, the UK, Europe and Asia, demonstrating his capacity to bridge continents and accelerate Africa focused economic transformation.

The Throne of Oduduwa, under the authority, cultural leadership, and vision of Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II, Arole Oodua and Paramount Ruler of the Yoruba race worldwide, recently announced the royal appointment of Prince Kamari Ademiluyi as International Economic Advisor to the Royal Family and the Kingdom of Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

His Imperial Majesty's appointment of Prince Kamari embodies the royal agenda to strengthen global investment into Nigeria and Ile-Ife, Osun State; advance development across technology, agriculture, manufacturing, space innovation and green energy, empower women and youth through sustainable, future-focused initiatives, promote the Yoruba nation

through diplomacy, culture, and economic leadership and position Ile-Ife as a centre of global cooperation, innovation and economic opportunity.

The formal Royal Appointment states: “By the authority of the Throne of Oduduwa and in line with our continuous commitment to global partnerships, economic development, and the advancement of the Yoruba people, His Imperial Majesty Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II, hereby appoints Prince Kamari Ademiluyi as International Economic Advisor to the Royal Family and the Kingdom of Ile-Ife.” This is issued under the Seal of the Throne of Oduduwa.

In a historic milestone, Prince Kamari Ademiluyi delivered his first official speech as International Economic Advisor at the G20 Space Economy Leaders Meeting (SELM), one of the world’s most influential gatherings dedicated to shaping the future of the global space economy.

This year’s SELM convened under the theme: ‘Space as a Catalyst For Inclusive Global Economic Development.’

Addressing policy makers, heads of space agencies, global CEOs, scientific institutions, visionaries and G20 delegates, Prince Kamari delivered a powerful and widely praised speech centred on the urgent need for:

Africa’s Inclusion in the Global Space Economy

He declared that Africa must participate not as a bystander but as a strategic partner and co-architect in climate intelligence, satellite ecosystems, aerospace engineering, space education, and digital sovereignty.

Representation of Africans at Space Development and Investment Tables

He emphasised that Africa’s destiny in the space economy must be shaped with Africa, by Africans, and for Africans, in collaboration with the wider global community.

A royal mandate rooted in his imperial majesty’s vision

Prince Kamari highlighted the Ooni’s long-standing commitment to youth empowerment, education, technological innovation, and scientific advancement as foundational pillars for Africa’s future participation in frontier sectors.

UK Africa trade EXPO X GEC space programme collaboration

He outlined practical initiatives already in motion, including project Acorn, part of the emerging Africa-focused GEC Space City; pathways for African youth in robotics, AI, aerospace, cyber-defence and satellite technology, support to African governments developing national space policies and partnerships connecting global space companies with African markets

A direct call to g20 leaders

In a decisive closing statement, he urged the global community: “Africa must not be left behind in the Space Revolution. Africa must stand beside the world, not behind it.”

His address marked a defining moment for the Kingdom of Ile-Ife, Osun State and Nigeria on the global stage, positioning the Royal Throne as an emerging voice in international innovation diplomacy.

“I receive this royal appointment with profound humility and unwavering loyalty to His Imperial Majesty, the Ooni of Ile-Ife, Ojaja II. It is a sacred honour to serve the Throne of Oduduwa and to support His Majesty’s visionary mission of expanding global partnerships, empowering women and youth, and opening new frontiers of trade and investment for our people.

“This title is not only a call to duty, but a commitment to elevate Ile-Ife and Nigeria onto the world stage with integrity, diligence, and measurable impact. I will carry this responsibility with the deepest respect for our heritage and an unshakeable belief in the future of Africa,” Prince Kamari Ademiluyi said.



THE BUILDER WHO TEACHES: INSIDE THE MIND OF THE ENGINEER SHAPING AFRICA'S WEB3 FUTURE

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





Africa's digital economy is creating the new decade and at the centre of this shift stands a new kind of builder. Idris Olubisi, the founder of Web3 Afrika.

His rise from an engineering student in Nigeria to one of the most recognised Web3 advocates on the continent reflects a clear pattern. Strong technical skill, early curiosity, and a deliberate commitment to developing people and systems that can scale.

Idris's journey into technology began during his undergraduate studies in Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University.

A final-year project requiring practical innovation introduced him to programming and sparked a curiosity that would grow into a full-fledged career.

What started as a technical experiment evolved into a pathway that would place him at the centre of Africa's emerging blockchain ecosystem.

As he advanced in his engineering career, Idris developed a reputation for combining deep technical understanding with strong communication and developer-relations skill.

This blend positioned him as a bridge between engineering teams, developer communities, and business leaders trying to understand the potential of Web3.

His ability to simplify complex concepts and translate technical architecture into real business value became a defining part of his professional identity.

His transition into the Web3 space was fueled by this same curiosity. While building backend systems he began exploring blockchain technology, smart contracts, and the disruptive potential of decentralised systems.

His technical articles soon gained significant global attention, with one Web3 piece going viral and reaching industry leaders around the world. The traction confirmed what he already believed. Africa had a critical role to play in the next evolution of technology, and the continent needed builders who could lead that participation.

This conviction led to the establishment of Web3 Afrika, a talent and community-driven platform dedicated to equipping African developers with the skills to contribute meaningfully to the global decentralised economy.



Today the organisation has supported more than fifteen thousand emerging builders across Africa. Its model is straightforward. Provide learning pathways, mentorship, ecosystem support, and access to real-world projects. The goal is to raise a generation of African technologists who can compete at a global standard while building solutions rooted in local relevance.

Idris's GitHub footprint mirrors this philosophy. His repositories, open-source projects, and technical documentation emphasise clarity, accessibility, and practical learning.

For him, code is not simply a tool for building products. It is a tool for building people. This dual role as a builder and an educator has positioned him as a thought leader whose influence extends beyond engineering teams into the broader innovation ecosystem.

His leadership has also been shaped by strategic communities such as GDG Ikorodu, Devfest Lagos, and global developer groups that exposed him to collaboration, knowledge exchange, and ecosystem mentorship.

Influential industry voices including Dabit Nader, Prosper Otemuyiwa, Christian Nwamba, and William Imoh contributed to refining his outlook on technology, community, and opportunity. These interactions strengthened his belief in Africa's capacity to build at scale when guided by shared knowledge and strong community structures.

Idris's impact has gained international recognition. He received the United Kingdom Global Talent Visa, a distinction awarded to innovators shaping the future of technology.

While the honour positions him globally, his work remains firmly anchored in Africa. He continues to advocate for the continent's adoption of Web3 technologies as a pathway to improved financial access, new economic opportunities, and greater global participation for African talent.

Today Idris Olubisi stands at the intersection of technology, education, and ecosystem development.

As a software engineer, developer relations leader, and founder he is shaping the narrative of what African builders can achieve. His work demonstrates that the future of Africa's digital economy depends not only on innovation but on the people who are empowered and equipped to create it.

From technical contribution to community leadership Idris represents a new class of African technologists whose influence echoes across borders. He builds. He teaches. And through both, he is helping position Africa not as a consumer of global innovation but as a creator of it.

SIX MOST BEAUTIFUL CITIES IN NIGERIA

CHISOM MICHAEL

Nigeria, often called The Giant of Africa for its population, resources and vibrant culture, is also home to some of the continent's most stunning cities.

From tropical coastlines to historic landmarks, Nigeria's diverse urban centres showcase rich heritage, natural beauty and cultural depth that continue to define the nation's story.

According to World Atlas, the following six cities reflect this mix through their geography, planning choices and community life.

Abuja

Abuja emerged from a national decision in the late 1970s to create a new administrative centre. The planning process drew on global examples such as Washington DC and Brasilia. Its inland position placed it at the centre of the country, leading to its description as "The Center of Unity."

The city sits within the Chukuku Hills at about 360 metres above sea level. This terrain shapes the views around the city. The Abuja National Mosque, with its distinct domes and towers, is one of the country's most recognised structures. Nearby, Zuma Rock stands at about 980 feet and appears on the 100-naira note. Many visitors approach it for hiking or for viewing sessions from surrounding routes.



Lagos

Lagos remains Nigeria's largest urban area despite the formal capital shifting to Abuja in 1991. It is known for its markets, film activities and large communities. The city includes landmarks such as the National Arts Theatre, the Nigerian National Museum, and the Nike Art Gallery.

Lagos spans the Lagos Lagoon and stretches to the Atlantic coastline. Routes such as the Third Mainland Bridge and

the Eko Bridge link the mainland and islands. Beaches including Tarkwa Bay Beach, Bar Beach and Landmark Beach attract steady numbers of visitors. These sites show the range of experiences across the city's waterways and shores.



Enugu

Enugu sits on the Udi Plateau in the south-east. Its terrain includes slopes, forests and viewing points. Milliken Hills is one of the city's known hiking routes, offering broad views of the surrounding area. Close by, the Ngwo Pine Forest includes pine trails, caves and a waterfall at the base of one of the caverns.

About an hour outside the city lies the Ezeagu Tourist Complex. The area covers 54 acres and includes a lake, cave routes and the Ogbagada waterfall. Its natural features draw both residents and visitors seeking outdoor experiences.



Akure

Akure is a state capital known for its farming links, reflected in the meaning of its name from the Yoruba words “Oko” (farm) and “Ore” (settlement). The city sits at the edge of the Yoruba Hills, a region with forested zones that support the area’s agricultural activities.

Travellers often visit Akure due to its closeness to Idanre Hill. The site, reached by a drive of about 45 minutes, contains inselbergs rising roughly 3,000 feet. The marked 682-step path leads to viewing points that show the layout of the surrounding landscape.



Port Harcourt

Port Harcourt, often called the “Garden City,” lies on a curve of the Bonny River, which links to the Niger River system. Its waterways support port activities, fishing and farming. Produce such as banana, coconut and citrus remains central to the region’s economy.

The city hosts locations such as the Port Harcourt Tourist Beach, established in 1988, which offers controlled waterfront access. Another option is Ifoko Beach, bordered by forest areas and known for its natural setting. These sites attract families, groups and visitors interested in riverside or seaside outings.



Benin City

Benin City stands along a branch of the Benin River. Many people visit to explore the history of the former Kingdom of Benin. The Benin Moats, a series of earthworks around the city, remain one of the world’s largest historic defensive structures.

Within the city, the Benin City National Museum displays artefacts from the Benin Empire and other regions. One of the major attractions is its collection of “bronzes,” some of which date back centuries. Visitors also observe contemporary bronze workers along Igun Street, where artisans continue the craft.



HOW QUALITY GAP FUELS \$1.39BN FOREIGN EDUCATION COST AS LOCAL UNIVERSITIES STRUGGLE

CHARLES OGWO



Nigeria's persistent university quality gap is pushing thousands of students to seek education abroad, at a staggering cost of \$1.39 billion.

For many Nigerian students, the dream of quality education now lies across the border, and while parents empty their savings to fund schooling overseas.

As local institutions grapple with underfunding, outdated facilities, and unstable academic calendars, the country continues to lose both talent and capital at an alarming rate amounting to \$1.39 billion in six months of 2025; the highest in five years.

According to Balance of Payments report from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigerians spent a total of \$1.39 billion (N2.16 trillion) on foreign education in the first half of 2025.

Nigerians spent \$38.17m on foreign education between January and March 2024, according to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria's first-quarter 2024 statistical bulletin.

Nubi Achebo, director of academic planning at Nigerian University of Technology and Management (NUTM), believes that Nigeria's foreign-education bill is eye-popping, with the CBN's data indicating the country is sending more money out while hardly any is coming in.

Achebo emphasised that reasons are due to quality gaps, insecurity, Political and policy instability, among others.

"Lecture halls are overcrowded, labs are outdated, and frequent university strikes disrupt the academic calendar.

"Kidnappings, banditry and campus cultism make parents nervous about sending their kids to Nigerian campuses. Besides, sudden changes in funding or governance create an unpredictable environment for higher education," he said.

He disclosed that given the scenario, it does feel a bit optimistic to expect a sudden influx of international students.



consistently fallen short of this benchmark, with education allocations hovering below eight percent in most of the last 10 years.

President Bola Tinubu, in 2025 earmarked N3.5 trillion for education, but the figures for the 2024 budget indicate that only N1.59 trillion, just 5.5 percent of the N28.77 trillion budgets, was allocated to education.

Friday Erhabor, director of media and strategies at Marklenez Limited, said because of the government’s failure to make tertiary education attractive, and the surging unemployment rate, many Nigerians see education tourism as an escape route from the economic hardship.

“The same reports that highlight the massive outflow also note that Nigeria “attracts little or no foreign students” because of the decline in standards and insecurity.

“If the sector gets a serious injection of funding, improves infrastructure, and tackles security, the country could become a regional education hub,” Achebo noted.

Crumbling lecture halls, outdated laboratories, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate student accommodations are just some of the visible signs of a decaying infrastructure system that continues to undermine the country’s higher education goals.

These structural deficits, both physical and institutional, cast long shadows over efforts to improve academic quality, research output, and graduate employability, leaving students and educators caught in a system struggling to sustain itself.

Most of the country’s public universities are plagued with unreliable power supply which is forcing students to rely on generators. Water scarcity is persistent, impacting hygiene and sanitation.

Every year, thousands of young Nigerians graduate from universities without the basic competencies required to thrive in a modern workplace.

This educational gap raises urgent questions about the sustainability of Nigeria’s economic future.

Nigeria’s education budget over the years dangles below 10 percent of the total expenditure. From 2015 to 2025, the education budget has been nose-diving from 10.75 percent to just 5.47 percent of the national budget.

According to UNESCO between 15 percent and 20 percent of a country’s annual budget should be allocated to education. However, Nigeria has

“A lot of Nigerians use foreign education as an escape route to leave the country and secure any job available over there.

“The reason is because it’s the easiest way to secure visa to leave the country and work over there,” he said.

Erhabor emphasised that Nigerians are leaving because of the insecurity crises both in jobs and life. Even those outside the country would want to come back home, if you ask them, they will tell that there is no place like home; but because of the situation of things in the country.

They are leaving the country in numbers because job opportunities are there, while in Nigeria, the youth will graduate without jobs.

“The government should make the environment friendly, especially with the insecurity issues, and create more jobs for the youth, they won’t bother going abroad.

“Some years ago, many foreigners were trooping into Nigeria for their tertiary education, but the reverse is the case



IPNX'S BIMPE OLALEYE, FOLASHADE EFIONG-BASSEY HONORED FOR EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP AT PEAK PERFORMANCE FEST



L-R: Folashade Efiog-Bassey, Group Executive Director, Corporate Services, ipNX; Kene Eneh, Divisional CEO, ipNX Retail; and Bimpe Olaleye, Group Executive Director, Commercials, ipNX at The Peak Performance Festival, Women in Leadership Dinner which was held at the Oriental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos on the 17th November, 2025 where the two executive directors were recognised as Admirable Women in Leadership.

ipNX Nigeria has announced that two of its Group Executive Directors; Bimpe Olaleye, Group Executive Director, Commercials and Folashade Efiog-Bassey, have been recognised for their outstanding leadership and exceptional contributions to organisational performance at the Women in Leadership Dinner, organised by The Peak Performance Festival.

The ceremony, held on 17 November 2025 at the Oriental Hotel, Lagos, brought together distinguished leaders from the corporate, business, and performance management communities.

The recognition highlights the executives' pivotal roles in steering strategic growth, fostering operational excellence, and championing a high-performance culture within ipNX.

Their achievements further reinforce the company's commitment to cultivating world-class leadership rooted

in diversity, innovation, ethics, and corporate governance.

ipNX has long been recognised as an industry leader, celebrated not only for its pioneering ICT solutions but also for the strength and excellence of its leadership team.

With two-thirds of its leaders being women, ipNX continues to set a powerful benchmark for forward-thinking leadership within Nigeria's technology sector.

The organisers of The Peak Performance Festival noted that the recipients were selected for demonstrating

exemplary business leadership, strong performance management capability, and a sustained commitment to organisational excellence.

In her remarks, Bimpe Olaleye, Group Executive Director, Commercials, expressed appreciation for the recognition saying, "this award is both humbling and inspiring. It reinforces the responsibility we carry as leaders to guide, empower, and enable our teams to excel. I am grateful to ipNX for fostering an environment where women are encouraged to lead boldly."

Also speaking at the event, Folashade Efiog-Bassey dedicated the recognition to her colleagues and team, "I am proud to be part of something that embodies excellence in performance and leads with innovation. We remain firmly committed to advancing these principles and ensuring they continue to shape our future."

The recognition represents another important milestone for ipNX as it continues to shape the future of connectivity and digital transformation in Nigeria. By cultivating a strong leadership culture and championing performance excellence, the organisation continues to remain at the forefront of innovation.

TONYA LAWANI PUSHES AI TO MODERNISE NIGERIA'S PRINTING INDUSTRY

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



At the Girls Who Print Africa 2025 Conference, Tonya Lawani, founder of The Quick Print Shop and CEO of SEAL Group, made a case for the use of artificial intelligence in Nigeria's printing sector. Speaking to an audience of printers, designers, and entrepreneurs, she argued that AI could help modernise production, reduce waste, and create new opportunities for skilled workers — particularly for women in the industry.

In her keynote, titled "Reimagining Print in the Age of AI: How Women Are Reshaping the Industry," Lawani outlined a practical approach for integrating AI into printing operations. Her advice was straightforward: identify a specific business problem, pilot a focused AI solution, and combine technology with human oversight and re-skilling programs. She emphasised that AI should enhance craftsmanship, not replace human judgment.

Lawani drew on her own experience with The Quick Print Shop, which she established in 2015. Faced with inconsistent quality and long lead times from outsourced suppliers, the company invested in an end-to-end production facility in Shomolu, incorporating automation for pre-press checks and colour matching. The results were

clear: fewer reprints, faster client approvals, and improved efficiency — demonstrating that careful, measured adoption of AI can deliver tangible benefits.

With over two decades of experience leading businesses across hospitality, merchandising, advertising, printing, and events, Lawani brings a wealth of practical insight to the sector. As CEO of SEAL Group, she oversees a portfolio that includes The Quick Print Shop, Virgin Vie Angel, ABC Inflatables Nigeria Ltd, The Virgin Hospitality Company, and Expose Et Ai, serving national and multinational clients such as Dangote Group, MTN, UBA, Multichoice, Reckitt Benckiser, Cadbury, Samsung, and Nestlé. Her background in building and scaling businesses provides her with a unique perspective on how technology can transform traditional industries like printing.

Her session sparked discussion on the need for responsible AI adoption, including environmental considerations and workforce reskilling. For many attendees, the conference reinforced that technology, when paired with human oversight, could be a key tool in modernising Nigeria's print industry while creating new opportunities for women.

WHY EMOTIONS AREN'T A WOMEN'S ISSUE: WHAT TRUE LEADERSHIP REQUIRES

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

I recently had a not-so-pleasant conversation with a lady who called me in a work context to discuss a situation she was unhappy about. She wanted me to use my office to influence a particular outcome, and while she had every right to raise a concern, she did not have the right to express it the way she did. She shared her displeasure in the most unpleasant manner, unleashing a wave of raw, unprocessed emotions.

Even though I empathised with her and immediately began navigating a resolution, she continued escalating. I nudged her to slow down, to process what she was feeling before speaking, but she insisted it was her right to “go off the handle.”

And that is the whole point of this article. No, it is not your right to be rude to people in the heat of the moment. That is not “expression.” It is abuse, emotional violence dressed up as honesty, especially when done from a position of authority.

By the way, Emotions are not Gendered

Unlike we do at many workplaces, no, I am not about to treat emotions as a “women’s issue” because emotions are universal and not a gendered trait. Both men and women experience frustration, excitement, disappointment, and pressure. The difference lies in how these emotions are expressed and interpreted.

Historically, masculine norms have shaped the workplace. Behaviours like visible frustration — clearly a sign of anger — are frequently

labelled as “passion,” while the same emotion when expressed by women are dismissed as “emotional.”

Two wrongs don’t make a right — just because men have historically been excused for emotional outbursts doesn’t mean women should replicate the same behaviour. But the real truth is simple: Emotions are human, not gendered. And when we label the same emotional expression differently depending on who displays it, we reinforce stereotypes instead of supporting real professionalism. This double standard distorts reality.

The standard should be: “Everyone, not women alone, must practice emotional regulation.” It shifts responsibility from gender policing to professional maturity. Because no matter who you are, your emotional footprint affects the people around you. And that was exactly my expectation from this lady, not that she didn’t have a right to be unhappy, but to display professional maturity and leadership.

Emotional Mastery = Leadership

Nobody deserves to be hit with someone else’s unmanaged motions at Work. What we should stand for is emotional mastery. Mastery means recognising your internal state and choosing your response with intention.

This is where emotional intelligence becomes leadership. Something as simple as scanning your emotional state before speaking can transform your leadership presence. I recently learned practising this three-way test of framing how to respond: Am I reacting or responding?

What is the message I want to land? Is this the right moment to speak?

Next, communicate with clarity, not heat. Clarity reduces conflict. Ambiguity increases emotional friction. Emotional intelligence means: not dumping raw emotions on people, not weaponising feelings, not making colleagues pay for your stress, and not allowing workplace culture to excuse harmful patterns. This characterises non-violent communication.

One powerful tool is using “information language,” not “emotion language.” Reframe: “I’m frustrated...” to “I’m noticing delays that could affect the timeline.” This shifts the conversation from emotional reaction to problem-solving. And finally, let’s reframe the narrative: root out the bias of associating emotions with women alone. Everyone is responsible for self-regulation, and everyone must be held to that same standard.

The Real Work Is Both Personal and Structural

Managing emotions isn’t just an individual skill; it’s also about the environment people work in. A healthy workplace isn’t only about emotional control; it’s about removing the conditions that cause emotional strain. That includes:

Removing Workplace Harassment

Emotional or verbal abuse is harassment — it is not an “emotion.” It destabilizes emotional safety for both women and men. A workplace cannot seek to promote emotional regulation among its people while tolerating behaviour that violates their dignity.

Promoting Psychological Safety

People should feel safe to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, suggest ideas, and respectfully challenge decisions. Without psychological safety, emotional regulation becomes suppression, not mastery.

Encouraging Boundaries

Your emotional life is not for public consumption. Professionalism is care plus control. Boundaries protect not only your well-being but also your relationships at work.

Modeling Calm Leadership

When leaders model regulation: steady tone, clear communication, thoughtful responses; the entire workplace rises to that standard.

Holding Everyone to the Same Conduct Standards

No more “he’s just passionate” vs “she’s emotional.” A standard is a standard. Full stop. Consistency eliminates bias and creates a culture where fairness is visible and expected.

The Key Takeaway

This space where I am writing to you is a safe space — this article is not about speaking from a high horse. It’s about interpersonal accountability. We are having a real conversation about how to do better as leaders, and trust me, I have takeaways too.

Recently, I encountered some issues during a work trip and became extremely stressed. In that moment, I missed an important detail, and I could feel my tone rising. The instant I noticed it, I paused and said, “I’m really stressed.”

A colleague looked at me and gently replied, “Don’t worry, let me handle it.” That is the human experience. We are all prone to feeling emotions, including frustration, pressure, and overwhelm, because we are human beings before we are professionals. But here’s the key: unprocessed, raw emotions do not promote safety. They spill over, they destabilize the environment, and they make it harder for people to work with us, trust us, or feel respected.

OFADA RICE DAY FESTIVAL 2025: CELEBRATING INNOVATION, IDENTITY AND NIGERIA'S CULINARY FUTURE

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Ofada Rice Day Festival, an annual celebration of Ofada rice's rich heritage which unites food lovers, culture enthusiasts, and innovators, will this year celebrate innovation, identity and Nigeria's culinary future.

This year's event highlights a collective Nigerian story showing how Ofada has risen from a small village staple to a national treasure and an emerging global culinary identity.

Speaking during a press conference to announce this year's Ofada Rice Day Festival, Tobi Fletcher, the Convener of the Ofada Rice Day Festival, Creative Director of OfadaBoy, and President of the Association of Professional Food Service Providers of Nigeria said his connection to Ofada rice runs deeper than business.

"I come from a lineage of first-generation rice farmers, and my great-grandfather was the first Ofada rice farmer. It is a legacy built on sacrifice, innovation, and tradition. This work today is a continuation of that story, a responsibility I carry with pride.

"With close to 20 years in the hospitality and food service sector, I have seen the evolution of Nigerian cuisine, the challenges, the breakthroughs, and the incredible potential of our local foods. That experience guides the work we do with OfadaBoy and the Ofada Rice Day Festival," Fletcher said.

Speaking on the theme of the event, "Ofada Rising: Celebrating Innovation, Identity and Nigeria's Culinary Future," he said the rise represents the rise of Nigerian farmers, homegrown food businesses, cultural pride and innovation in our food system.



According to him, Ofada is no longer “just rice.” It is a movement.

“Ofada has entered a new era of modernization and global visibility. At this year’s festival, we highlight innovation through: New Ofada-based products, creative culinary presentations, and sustainable farming solutions, young entrepreneurs transforming food culture, technologies improving processing, packaging, and distribution

Innovation ensures that our traditional foods become global brands,” the Ofada Rice Day Festival Convener said.

He described Ofada as an identity as its aroma speaks of heritage.

“Its taste speaks as a history that has a story speaking of home, adding that when Ofada is celebrated, many other things are celebrated including our communities, culture, ancestors, Nigeria’s shared story and our growing culinary pride.

“As President of the Association of Professional Food Service Providers of Nigeria, I see the immense possibility ahead of us. Our collective future will be shaped by supporting local farmers and processors, building culinary tourism, promoting Nigerian food globally, standardizing food service practices, empowering chefs and food entrepreneurs and creating stronger platforms for innovation. Nigeria’s culinary future is ready and Ofada is leading the charge,” Fletcher said.

He noted that at the core of the Ofada Rice Day Festival is a commitment to empowering local food sellers, market women, small-scale vendors, cooks, and rising food entrepreneurs.

“These individuals especially women have upheld Nigerian food culture long before global attention arrived. They represent resilience, creativity, and the true spirit of our food ecosystem. This festival supports them by providing training and capacity building, improving food safety and hygiene standards, enhancing visibility and income opportunities, strengthening supply chain access and creating spaces for collaboration with major brands,” he added.

He commended the team creatives, coordinators, volunteers, community leaders, vendors, and partners which he said remain the heartbeat of the festival.

“Together with my co-partner Oyinda Fletcher, and a committed team, we are building something generational. We extend our deepest gratitude to all our partners, sponsors, stakeholders, and supporters. Your belief in this mission keeps the Ofada story alive,” he said.

This year’s festival will feature cultural and artistic showcases, innovation hubs, farmer and producer conversations, food exhibitions and tastings, culinary competitions, panel discussions with industry experts and the global unveiling of Ofadabration Canada 2025.

Also speaking during the press conference, Ifeanyi Chukwuekem, head of corporate strategy for Pocketmoni, the headline sponsor for the event, said they were very proud to sponsor the festival.

“It is important to align with a brand like Ofada Boy and make people also aware of Pocketmoni. We are the only fintech on the Nigerian stock exchange. This is to show how indigenous we are. We will be having an experience centre at the event so that people can be more involved in what we are doing,” Chukwuekem said.

A TASTE OF NIGERIA: THE NAIJA CULTURE & FOOD FIESTA 2025 CELEBRATES THE COUNTRY'S PRIDE

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Victoria Island recently came alive with the sights, sounds, and flavors of Nigeria at the Naija Culture & Food Fiesta 2025, held at Muri Okunola Park.

The event brought together food lovers, fashion enthusiasts, families, and culture seekers for a day filled with unforgettable experiences.

Guests wandered through the Village Food Market, sampling dishes from over 40+ food vendors, each offering a unique taste of Nigeria's diverse culinary landscape. Children had their own space to play and explore, while families and music lovers enjoyed live performances ranging from traditional rhythms to modern Afrobeat, ensuring there was something for everyone.

Fashion also took center stage, with local designers showcasing vibrant and innovative styles that celebrated Nigeria's rich heritage.

Throughout the day, attendees engaged with interactive experiences, explored cultural displays, and discovered the creativity that defines modern Naija culture.

The Naija Culture & Food Fiesta 2025 wasn't just an event, it was a celebration of who we are, our food, our culture, and our people. Attendees left inspired, full of flavors, and proud of the richness of Nigerian culture.

The Prodigy Production powers the Naija Culture and Food Fiesta. The Prodigy Production is a specialized event, stage engineering, and set design company. With a passion for pushing boundaries and creating innovative experiences, their talented team of designers, technicians, and artists collaborates to bring the vision of artists and event organizers to life.

DETTY FUSION: ACCESS BANK, LAGOS STATE PARTNER TO REVOLUTIONIZE FESTIVE SEASON EXPERIENCE

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



L-R: Keji Giwa, Chief Executive Officer, Giwa Gardens Water Park; Idris Aregbe, Special Adviser to Lagos State Governor on Tourism, Arts and Culture; Ishmael Nwokocho, Group Head, Mobility Business, Access Bank; Adebopo Oyekan-Ismaaila, Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and Abiodun Kayode Fawunmi, Chief Executive Officer, Eko City Media, at the Unveil of Access Bank Detty Fusion Platform & Announcement of the Strategic Partnership between Access Bank and the Lagos State Government for Detty December Celebrations.

Access Bank PLC has partnered with the Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture to unveil the Detty Fusion Initiative—a first-of-its-kind digital platform designed to simplify how Nigerians, both at home and in the diaspora, discover, plan, and enjoy entertainment events during the festive season and beyond.

Positioned as a revolutionary entertainment aggregator, Detty Fusion aims to bring together event calendars, ticket purchasing, exclusive discounts, curated experiences, and seamless payments—all in one centralized hub. Launched at the Lagos State Secretariat in Alausa, Ikeja, the initiative promises to transform how Lagosians and visitors interact with the city's vibrant cultural scene.

Chizoma Okoli, Deputy Managing Director of Access Bank Plc, emphasized the partnership's potential to amplify Lagos' reputation as a cultural and creative powerhouse, while also contributing to the broader creative economy.

"Also considering that our beloved Lagos State has grown to be the hub of everything business and fun, we are certain that Access Bank will continuously position the State at the fore-front of the creative economy that it is known for," Okoli said.

Okoli who was represented by Ishmael Nwokocho, group head, Mobility Business, Access Bank,

stressed that the goal is to align to “THEMES” agenda of this current administration of Lagos State on the vision, structure, and expectations for this partnership, and explore how Access Bank can work closely with the Ministry to ensure the initiative delivers shared value to the state, to the creative ecosystem, and to the public.

He assured that the bank is committed to a collaborative process, and ready to co-brand and amplify key Lagos State cultural programmes, including the Lagos Cultural week, Culturaliti, Fashionshows and muchmore.

He said Access Bank has a long-standing commitment to supporting ideas and initiatives that strengthen communities, empower young people, and showcase the richness of our cultural heritage.

“Lagos State, as the cultural and creative capital of Nigeria, continues to set the pace in tourism, entertainment, and creative enterprise. This makes collaboration not only necessary, but also highly impactful.”

Okoli said overpriced tickets, absence of accommodation, difficulty in making payments, opportunistic pricing for events, traffic and vehicle breakdown amongst other challenges associated with the Detty December celebration, are the reasons why Detty Fusion Initiative was born.

He said Access bank has partnered key stakeholders to make the Detty December memorable and stress free.

According to him, from accessing HMOs schemes, to booking for entertainment activities, buying tickets and linking people with recreational and tourism events amongst others, Access bank is taking the stress off prior and offering key services to ensure everyone has a memorable festive season.

“So we asked ourselves, how can people really enjoy the festive period without the pain that comes with it? How can we provide accommodation for people coming from other parts of the world and how do we help people create events and initiatives during the festive season?” Okoli said.

He said solving these problems and giving value to ensure there’s some sense of shared value is priority for Lagos State.

Also speaking during the launch of the initiative, Idris Aregbe, Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Tourism, Arts and Culture said Detty December is here and the good thing about Lagos is that in the last three to four years, Lagos has really grown from music and film to showcasing developments in the fashion industry amongst others.

“There is food, culture and many other things. So we are ensuring that people who take December as their holiday period get the best of it. We are ensuring as a government that we are putting Lagos on the global map. We have built partnerships with brands and stakeholders and we are making sure that together, we build a Lagos that we all want and one we aspire for,” Aregbe said.

Speaking on how ready Lagos is for the Detty Fusion Initiative, he said Lagos is Avery ready, beautiful and calm.

He said Lagos State is happy to see partnerships like that of Access bank because it celebrates the rich culture of Lagos in its food, fashion and other things, thereby showcasing the spirit of Lagos.

“That is why I’m happy about this partnership. This kind of engagement really defines who we are,” he added.

The SA assured that partnering with Lagos State is helping to tell the true story and the true spirit of Lagos so that that culture can be amplified.

He said the Detty Fusion Initiative also fits with the agenda that the current government is pursuing.

“So at the end of the day, we leave pleasurable memories, so that by the time it comes to 2026, it’s seamless, it’s sensational, it’s memorable. We can also build on this going forward,” he said.

HOW TECO GROUP TRANSFORMED FROM PALM OIL PAINS INTO AN ENGINEERING LEGACY IN 45 YEARS



TECO Group's 45th anniversary was more than a company celebration. For many guests, it felt like a rare moment of hope in a country where most businesses collapse long before their tenth birthday.

People spoke about survival, faith, community, and a long journey through some of Nigeria's toughest years. They said TECO's story showed what can happen when a simple vision grows into a national legacy.

The firm began in 1980 when young engineer Charles Aladewolu decided to solve a problem he had known since childhood. He grew up helping his grandmother process palm oil with her hands.

He remembered the stress and pain of the work. He believed machines could make life easier for farmers like her. That idea became TECO, which means Total Engineering Concept. It started as one man's dream in a small space but slowly grew into a major engineering company.

Aladewolu gained early experience at UAC and later Art Briscoe, where he learned fabrication, workshop management and project delivery.

He said these skills gave him enough confidence to start his own firm. But the early years brought challenges. Nigeria's economy struggled, and the business faced heavy pressure.

In the mid-1990s, a foreign loan taken in Dutch guilders grew almost overnight due to a sharp naira devaluation. What was once a manageable loan suddenly became a major threat. "It was an existential moment," the founder recalled. But TECO renegotiated, cut costs and pushed on, saving the company at a time many Nigerian firms shut down.

Over time, TECO grew from basic fabrication to large engineering projects across different sectors. It now builds palm oil mills, food-processing equipment, electrical panels and full project systems.



The company also designs and assembles low-voltage and medium-voltage switchgear for the oil and gas industry. Its workshop in Lagos and its large fabrication site in Ondo State help it produce machines that many clients say rival imported systems.

Funmi Babatunde-Dada, Executive Director said TECO's foundation rests on faith, discipline and a strong team. "The Holy Spirit guides our decisions," she said. "We also have staff who stay for years. They call this place a family."

She said TECO sees people, not numbers, and invests heavily in training. Staff are sent for courses and encouraged to grow. This long-term people strategy, she said, kept the company stable even during difficult years.

She also spoke about TECO's culture of care, noting that the company stays engaged with clients during and after completion of projects.

"TECO also offers flexible payment plans that help small and medium businesses survive."

One of the strongest testimonies at the event came from JB Farms, one of Nigeria's leading palm-oil producers. Managing Director Ajibola Adebutu said he first met TECO when he needed equipment many years ago. When he saw the bill, he almost gave up. "My heart sank," he said. "But they told me to bring whatever I had." TECO agreed to an easy payment plan and began building.

Today, JB Farms has grown from eight hectares to over 15,000 hectares, and TECO has built seven mills for them over the last two decades.

But TECO's impact goes beyond clients. The company helps develop rural communities.

Mills are often built in areas with no roads, water or electricity, according to the executive director. TECO hires locals, trains them and creates jobs. Within two years, new homes, small markets and local businesses appear. "You see a whole town rise because one mill was built," she said.

Similarly, the founder added that TECO is preparing for the future through succession planning. Ten years ago, the company began pairing older engineers with younger ones to ensure smooth knowledge transfer. He said this helped the company stay strong as many of its first-generation staff approach retirement.

Delivering the keynote address on behalf of Leye Akinola, the Ondo State Commissioner for Agriculture and Forestry, Caleb Olowojola, the Director of Engineering in the Ministry, Engr., acknowledged TECO's contributions at the event.

Olowojola stated that TECO plays a key role in Nigeria's "Red Gold" palm-oil program. He compared TECO to Baldan, a Brazilian company that began as a small workshop in 1928 but later became a global exporter. The speaker concluded that the lesson was clear, that "Greatness begins with vision, but vision must serve the many."

The keynote message urged TECO to reach Nigeria's millions of small farmers. Most farmers use manual labour, which limits output. Large mills help big players, but small mills help entire communities. The representative urged TECO to design one-ton-per-hour systems, 500kg systems, and even 200kg systems, machines that farmers can afford and maintain. "Scale down to scale up," he said. "Build for the many, not just the few."

For the future, TECO plans to expand into Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and other West African markets. "We want to become a full African engineering powerhouse, not only in palm oil but also cassava, seed oils and other agro-processing lines," she said.



FROM VISION TO IMPACT: OLAYINKA ARIMORO'S PSF SPELLING BEE JOURNEY

...as winners emerge at the sixth edition of the competition

CHARLES OGWO



confidence, and igniting the belief that excellence is within reach for every child willing to work for it," he said.

In addition, he said, "To our participants, you have already won by choosing to be here. The hours you've spent studying, the words you've practiced, the nervousness you have conquered, these are the building blocks of greatness.

"Today, we celebrate not just your correct spellings, but your courage, commitment, and refusal to let anything limit your aspirations."

Mary Abiodun, the school support officer at PSF explained that the competition is for junior secondary school students across the country.

What began as a simple dream to empower young minds has grown into one of Nigeria's most inspiring annual academic platforms.

Olayinka Arimoro, through the Spelling Bee Competition, has created a space where children discover confidence, discipline, and the power of literacy, turning his vision into a nationwide force for academic change.

Seven years ago, the founder of Predicare Steun Foundation had a dream of gathering and nurturing young and eager minds to become leaders in various fields of life through academic excellence.

The 2025 PSF Spelling Bee Competition had not less than 187 children gathered to size each other with vocabularies and correct spelling of words.

Arimoro in his opening speech at the 2025 competition, said the foundation understands that education is the great equaliser, hence, pay premium attention to it.

"Education doesn't just open doors, it builds entirely new pathways where none existed before.

"Through this Spelling Bee, we are not merely testing vocabulary, we're celebrating discipline, nurturing

However, she emphasised that each participant must register with a proof such as birth certificate and evidence of being a student in a Nigerian school.

"Anybody can register and participate as long as you are in JSS 1 to 3 and you are between the ages of nine and 12. When you are registering, we ask for your birth certificate, because that's one of the ways we confirm if you are actually between that age.

"Anyone willing to come from any part of Nigeria for the competition is allowed to participate, we're ready to have you around.," she explained.

Furthermore, Abiodun explained that the prize money is N330,000 for the three best candidates, besides consolation prizes for other participants.

"Over the years, our winners used to get laptops and N150,000, the overall best, first runner-up gets N100,000, while the second runner-up gets N80,000, besides consolation prizes.



“However, instead of giving the students cash prizes, we have decided to channel the cash prizes towards their education, so we will pay for their school fees, instead of giving them cash.

“The prizes remain N150,000 for the first position, N100,000 for the second position, and N80,000 for the third position and other consolation prizes,” she said.

Moreover, Abiodun explained that the competition could not in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, hence, the 2025 edition is the sixth in the series.

At the end of the spelling competition, Abiola Idowu-Taylor emerged as the overall winner, with a prize money of N150,000, a laptop and other consolation prizes. Elizabeth Komolafe, emerged the first runner-up, Dorcas Ojo, got the second runner-up position, while Gabriel Dasaolu, grabbed the third runner-up position.

The 12 top winners include Abiola Idowu-Taylor, from Royal Bell Standard College; Elizabeth Komolafe, Glorious Heritage School; Dorcas Ojo, Greater Crown Unique College; Gabriel Dasaolu, Blue Rose School; Esther Ogunsola, Goshen City Schools; and Barakat Afeez, Reniks Secondary School.

Others are Shalom Iyiola, De-Angels High School; Kazeem Uthman, De-Angels High School; Opeoluwa Olokodana, Emadan Academy; Temitope Abdulfareed, De-Angels

High School; Olaoseji Emmanuel, Eagerminds College; and Ubong-Edet Idara, Daropeg College.

Arimoro emphasised that each year of the competition reaffirms the foundation’s belief that talent knows no zip code, and genius is not determined by circumstance.

“The young people before us today represent the boundless potential that exists in every neighborhood, every community, and every child who dares to dream beyond their current reality.

“To the parents and teachers, you are the unsung heroes. Your encouragement, sacrifice, and unwavering belief in these young minds have brought us to this moment. Thank you for investing in a future brighter than any of us can fully imagine,” he said.

Abiodun disclosed that the Spelling Bee competition is an intellectual event and that the purpose is for the foundation to gather young minds together and stimulate their minds and brains.

“Everything they’ve learned in school; this is where they come to showcase it. And the Spelling Bee also is a way to gather students and help them to compete, so that they can continue to grow.

“They can go back to school, take some of the things they learn from here, keep learning their English and the spellings and becoming better students,” she said.



AFRICA MUST PRIORITISE EDUCATION TO UNLOCK ITS GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS —CHUKWUEMEKA

...Ballsbridge University and ICM, United Kingdom, holds joint convocation and induction ceremony

CHARLES OGWO



Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its development journey, where the quality of its human capital will determine its place in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy.

According to Ezeogu Chukwuemeka, a corporate trainer at Quantum Core Consulting, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in Osun State, speaking on “Closing the Thought Gap: Cognitive and Educational Intervention for Africa’s Future Competitiveness” at the joint convocation and induction lecture of Ballsbridge University and the Institute of Commercial Management, United Kingdom, held in Lagos, when he emphasised that prioritising education is not just a policy choice, it is a strategic imperative for unlocking the continent’s full competitive potential.

“Closing the thought gap is not merely an academic concern but a strategic imperative, one that demands a deliberate recalibration of cognitive development and educational priorities to unlock Africa’s potential for sustainable competitiveness in the global arena,” he said.

Chukwuemeka highlighted the fact that the dynamism of nations is propelled by the ability to generate new paradigms, adapt mental models, and foster environments where creativity, analytical reasoning, and future-oriented perspectives thrive.

Hence, African nations must as a matter of fact be deliberate in positioning their next generation to be globally competitive by prioritising education, and reshaping their thought patterns towards knowledge acquisition.



Making a reference to the ideologies of René Descartes, renowned for his contributions to both philosophy and mathematics, who established his philosophical framework upon the Latin dictum “cogito ergo sum,” which translates as “I think, therefore I am.” He posited that the act of doubting one’s own existence necessitates thought, thereby serving as evidence for the existence of the thinking subject.

The life and business coach expert said that he contends that grounding one’s existence solely in the act of thinking, as posited by Descartes, presents a philosophically problematic premise.

“If thought is taken as the definitive proof of existence, it could be inferred that thought itself exists independently from the individual. “While acknowledging the intellectual contributions and intentions of Descartes, I propose a revision of his dictum to read: “I am, therefore I think,” he said.

This alternative formulation, he noted, suggests that existence precedes thought; thought does not define existence but rather elucidates it. Thus, he argued that the essence of being is established prior to the emergence of thought, which serves to enrich and accentuate the fact of existence.

Accordingly, he said, the central objective of his lecture is not to offer a critique of Descartes’ philosophical contributions. Rather, his

intention is to facilitate a rigorous and evidence-based reflection on the current realities confronting the African continent.

“I aim to systematically examine the underlying causes of many of the continent’s challenges, situating them principally within the domain of thought, specifically, the pervasive deficit in cognitive capacities observed across the region,” he stated.

He emphasised that Africans need to reorient their process of acquiring and understanding, by deliberately prioritising education.

“As we contemplate Africa’s current realities, it becomes evident that the continent’s trajectory will be determined not

simply by material resources or inherited circumstances, but by the capacity to cultivate and harness transformative thinking,” he said.

Ballsbridge University is an online, transnational and independent higher education institution chartered and recognised by the government of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The Institute of Commercial Management (ICM), is a professional body for commercial and business development staff.



WHY COLLECTORS ARE TURNING TO DIGITAL ART IN AFRICA

Curators often say that choosing artwork for an exhibition is a balancing act. It's emotional, strategic, and sometimes instinctive. When people step into a gallery, they expect to feel something. They expect a message, a story, a sense of purpose.

This is why the art of selection is far more than just choosing "beautiful" work. It's about choosing pieces that speak to the soul and serve the vision of the show. In this digest, we will discuss what truly makes an artwork exhibition-worthy—from message to technique, relevance, and emotional weight. These key elements help curators build exhibitions that leave a lasting impact.

TOP PICKS FROM OUR COLLECTION



Title: Joko 1
Artist: Lambert Shumbusho
Medium: 300+ aged ironwood
Dimensions: 32 x 27 x 18 in



Title: Couple Goals 4
Artist: Alabi Oladimeji
Medium: Acrylic on textured canvas
Dimensions: 25 x 25 in | 64 x 64 cm
Available on Request



This digest is brought to you by Patrons MCAA. Think African art, think Patrons. Patrons is Africa's leading art advisory and dealership firm with deep expertise in African art, helping private and corporate art collectors diversify their wealth through art collection, appraisal, packaging & transportation, storage, insurance, maintenance, and restoration. Purchase or general inquiry? Reach out: art@patronsmcaa.com.



Title: The Family
 Artist: Justine Gaga
 Medium: Posca and collage on canvas
 Dimensions: 8 x 11 in | 20 x 28 cm
 Available on Request

1. Relevance and Message

Curators look first at what the artwork is trying to say. Does it touch on ideas that matter today? Does it explore identity, society, culture, or change? Exhibitions often aim to spark thought or conversation, so curators choose work that carries strong meaning. Tate Modern, for example, considers cultural relevance and thematic value essential when selecting works for display. A meaningful artwork adds depth to the exhibition. It helps shape the story the curator wants to tell and guides the viewer's emotional and intellectual journey.

2. Originality and Craft

A piece that feels new, bold, or different often stands out. Curators look for fresh ideas, unique voices, and strong technique. Originality shows confidence. It shows that the artist is not just creating but pushing boundaries. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) highlights innovation and distinct artistic voice as key considerations in selecting works for exhibitions. Good technique does not mean perfection. It simply means the work shows intention and skill. It should feel complete.

3. Emotional Impact

Curators also ask a simple question: Does this piece make people feel something? Emotion is the bridge between viewer and artwork. It creates connection. It makes the exhibition memorable. The Smithsonian notes that emotional resonance is one of the most important elements of an effective exhibition experience. A powerful emotional pull can turn a simple artwork into the centrepiece of a show.

4. Theme Alignment

Every exhibition has a story or message. Artworks must support that story. Even a brilliant piece may not make the cut if it pulls the exhibition off course. Curators look for harmony—works that fit together like chapters in a book and guide viewers from one idea to the next.

5. Practical Considerations

Logistics matter more than many people realise. Curators must think about scale, condition, installation needs, and safety. Museums have strict rules for preservation, so oversized, fragile, or complex works might need extra planning before they can be included.

At its heart, the art of selection is about intention. Curators choose artworks that speak clearly, stir emotion, hold meaning, and support a shared story. A piece becomes exhibition-worthy when it carries its own voice but still fits within the wider vision of the show. When chosen well, artwork doesn't just fill a space—it transforms it. It guides people, inspires thought, and creates moments that linger long after the viewer steps outside the gallery doors. That is what makes selection both an art and a responsibility.



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

LEAVING TO LIVE...

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



Thandeka grew up in South Africa with her mother, Lerato. She never knew her father. All she had were fragments of a story, that he was a Yoruba man from Nigeria named Babs and that he had worked with a telecommunications company in the late '80s. During his stay in South Africa, he and Lerato had a relationship that was never meant to go beyond friendship. He made it clear that he had a family waiting for him back home.

Lerato ran a small local restaurant known for food that was really good. Babs was a regular customer and over time their friendship grew into something deeper. When his job became more demanding and he no longer had time to stop by, Lerato often delivered his meals to his home. Those visits made them even closer and before long, their friendship crossed into intimacy. She was fully aware that he was above her social class and she had accepted that the relationship would lead nowhere.

By the time Babs completed his contract and returned to Nigeria, Lerato discovered she was pregnant. The pregnancy was the last thing she expected because he had always been more cautious than she was. Every attempt to reach him failed. The only number she had was a work line that no longer belonged to him. The company refused to share any employee information. She was distraught.

Years passed. Lerato did her best as a single mother. Shortly before her death from COVID-19, she inherited a large sum of money from her late aunt, her mother's only surviving sibling who had lived all her life in Portugal. Life finally shifted for mother and daughter but Lerato did not live long enough to enjoy the change.

By 2021, Thandeka decided it was time to search for her father. With her mother gone, she no longer had anyone discouraging her.

She had a blurry photograph and the name “Babs Ajayi,” but she soon discovered how common the name was. Thousands of similarities, thousands of dead ends.

When she finally travelled to Lagos to trace him, she didn't find her father but she found love. She met Osas and their connection was instant. They shared dreams, goals, ideas, laughter and hope. Their affection for each other grew but their relationship came with one heavy burden: his mother, Iye Osas.

From the beginning, Osas' mother was determined to destroy the marriage. She believed Thandeka had come from South Africa to reap where she did not sow. She never hid her disdain and treated Thandeka like an intruder. Osas never defended his wife; instead, he constantly asked her to tolerate his mother's behaviour. His siblings were no different. They walked into the house freely, took her belongings without asking and dismissed her complaints by reminding her that she only lived in their brother's house. Their treatment was increasingly malicious.

Eventually, the suspicion that Osas was cheating on her was confirmed and everything inside her broke. She had to be honest with herself. She asked what her true purpose in Nigeria was and how she had allowed herself to be distracted by a man who drained her emotionally and financially.

She realised her mother had been right, some things were better left buried. She had no reason to chase a man who never wanted to be found and she had no reason to remain in a marriage that reduced her worth.

A plan formed and she was going to execute it quietly. It was Iye Osas' birthday and Osas had planned a week long resort getaway for his mother and siblings. Thandeka was not invited because her presence would “upset” the celebrant. She was used to this form of exclusion so she did not argue.

While they were away, she began her exit. She collected the car Osas drove to the resort under the guise of servicing it. Then she sold that car, the other two at home and the house itself. She packed their boxes and kept them safely in the gatehouse. When everything was complete, her lawyer delivered the divorce papers to Osas while she boarded the next available flight to South Africa, where her friends and her businesses waited for her.

She had loved Osas deeply but it was clear he loved her wealth more than he loved her. He never told his

family that everything they enjoyed was purchased with her money and registered in her name. Even the resort trip they were on was paid for by her. Yet he had the nerve to exclude her.

His family had called her a gold digger but they were the ones digging and excavating with greed.

After she landed in South Africa, she turned on her phone. Calls and messages flooded in. Her in-laws hurled insults but she responded only with proof of ownership, showing that everything she sold was hers. If Osas pretended to be wealthy, that was their problem not hers.

In the days that followed, apologies poured in. Osas and his family begged and promised change. But she had heard enough. She blocked all their numbers and told Osas he would only hear from her lawyer going forward.

It was bad enough that her father abandoned her mother. She refused to let another Nigerian man treat her like she was worthless.

Thandeka returned home wiser, stronger, and ready to rebuild her life on her own terms.

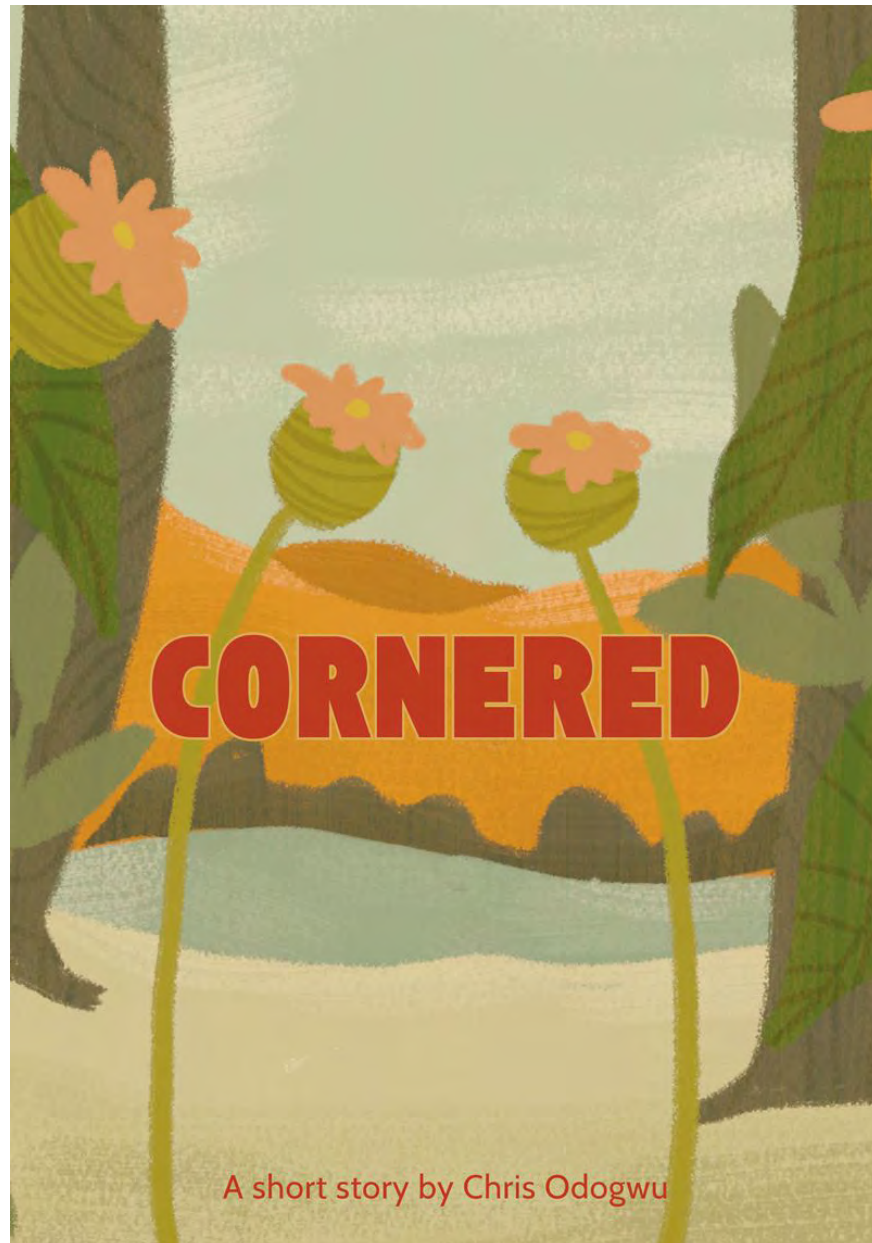


Udy Osaro-Edobor

Udy Osaro-Edobor is the Content Creator for SoTv (Supernatural Online TV) Nigeria. She is a movie/ scriptwriter, editor, and proofreader.

She has several stories to her credit which she posts for free on her Ebook called Udy's Chapter. She is currently working on two short movies. Udy is also a wife, mother, and a “serial entrepreneur”.

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The Weight He Carries
-A Review of Chris Odogwu's Cornered

Title: Cornered
Author: Chris Odogwu
Year: 2025
Category: Short Story

CORNERED

TITILADE OYEMADE

Chris Odogwu's *Cornered* opens with a quiet assurance that immediately shows the author's command of his storytelling. The prose is simple but deliberate, with each sentence carefully chosen.

There is nothing showy or unnecessary in the writing; instead, Odogwu builds the scene slowly and subtly, guiding the reader into what first appears to be an ordinary moment. Yet beneath this calm surface lies a steady, growing tension.

Without drawing attention to it, Odogwu slowly builds an atmosphere around the main character. At the center of this carefully crafted world is a boy who makes no effort to win the reader over. On the contrary, he pushes people away with his irritable attitude.

He is the kind of teenager who draws the attention and sometimes the frustration of adults. Odogwu may have presented him this way deliberately, creating an introduction that acts as an emotional trap: you think you understand him, believe you have seen his type before, and assume you can predict his next move.

But as the story goes on, that certainty starts to fade.

This is where Odogwu shows his skill not through sudden surprises, but by letting small changes accumulate quietly. A line of dialogue reveals fear instead of bad behaviour. These details emerge so gradually that the reader senses the shift almost without realizing it. The true brilliance is in the pacing: Odogwu knows exactly how to reveal things slowly, allowing the reader's understanding to grow alongside the main character's struggles.

And just when you've begun to understand him, when empathy starts to outweigh irritation, the story reaches its final note. It doesn't wrap anything neatly; instead, it leaves the door wide open to dread. The ending plants a very real, very human fear in the reader's chest, the kind that makes you worry about a character long after the story has ended. You're left wondering what happens next, how things could possibly get better for him, and why you suddenly care so deeply about a boy you were prepared to dislike just a few pages earlier.

Part of the story's emotional impact comes from how familiar its hidden struggles feel. For many young readers, especially those who have faced bullying or peer hostility, *Cornered* will resonate uncomfortably close to home. The shifts in mood, the silent battles, and the fear that often

accompanies them are truths that echo across schools. Odogwu captures these dynamics without preaching or exaggeration. He simply shows them as they are, and the effect is profoundly powerful.

In the end, 'Cornered' isn't just a story about a boy in trouble, it's a reminder of how easy it is to misread someone, and how much is often hidden behind the behaviour we find most frustrating. It lingers because it asks you to look again, look deeper, and look without judgment.

About the Author

Chris Odogwu is a Nigerian-born writer. He's a contributing author of the anthology 'Suffolk Haunts: Original Stories Inspired by the Legends and Landscapes of East Anglia,' and holds an MA in Creative and Critical Writing from the University of Suffolk. An associate member of the Society of Authors (SoA) UK, Chris is working on his debut novel, a coming-of-age Young Adult (YA) fictional story.



Titilade Oyemade is a business executive in a leading organisation and holds a degree in Russian Language. She's the convener of the Hangoutwithtee Ladies Event and the publisher of Hangoutwithtee magazine. She spends her weekends attending women conferences, events and book readings. She loves to have fun and to help other women have the same in their lives. Email: titi.oyemade@gmail.com Social: @tiipreeofficial

WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE FOR DAISY (2021)

You will agree with me that miracle still do happen and that was exactly what Daisy needed this Christmas, she needed a wife for her dad and also a new loving mother that could take care of her as she needed a female care and support. Daisy grew up with her dad Conner Sheeman; to spend more time with her, he gave up his busy life to move to a small quiet city. Conner bought a new home and needed a professional interior decorator to put the house in good shape, to his greatest surprise, his Ex-girlfriend works in as the new CEO of the company and she must work with Conner to renovate and decorate the new house with her partner and Daisy, unfortunately her partner falls ill leaving her to manage the entire project. Whitney Alder must let by gone be by-gone and work with Conner as her company needed that revenue and will help boost their company profile. You will need to go check out the movie to see how she managed her past issues with Conner, finished the job and if Daisy's wishes were granted by Santa Clause. The 84m family film, kids and family, romance film based on books was directed by Mike Rohi, they featured actors like Jill Wagner, Nick Bateman, Rubi Tupper, Togan Moss, Joe Costa, Andrew Francis, Heather-Claire Nortey, Terence Kelly etc.



THE HERD (2025)

If you are searching for an existing thriller movie from Nigeria then this brand-new movie will be worth your while, this brand-new movie is already toping the chart as No.1 in just few days. This brand-new movie revealed a lot about the challenges and crisis happening with security in some areas up North in Nigeria. To the movie it started as a very joyous and happy day for Fola and his bride who flew all the way from outside Nigeria to get married in their home town and with family members present, just after the service ended, they wanted to pick something from the hotel before returning, when they met their waterloo, they went from being free birds to becoming hostages in minutes. You will need to watch the entire movie to find out what the kidnappers wanted, if they made it out alive and how this one singular act changed their lives forever. The 101m Nollywood, Crime, Thriller, African, dark, suspense full movie was directed by Daniel Etim Effiong, they featured actors like Daniel Etim Effiong, Linda Ejiofor-Suleiman, Genoveva Umeh, Kunle Remi, Mercy Aigbe, Adam Garba, Abba Ali Zaky, Norbert Young, Tina Mba, Patrick Doyle etc.



A MERRY LITTLE EX-MAS (2025)

Welcome to another Christmas movie, remember it's the season of love and merry. Kate Holden and Everett Holden had lived happily for decades till they had some issues and got separated, they decided to make it official by signing the divorce documents with their lawyer, who told them immediately that this was a wrong move, that they should settle and go back to leaving together, but they laughed and smile that they had decided to part ways, the deal was to spend one last Christmas together with the kids before final divorce, however Olivia decides to bring his hot girlfriend over and this was when the war began between her and Kate. You will need to check out this funny Christmas movie to see how things went south for them this Christmas, honestly it wasn't a bad one after all. The 91m dark comedy holiday comedy, satire comedy movie was directed by Steve Carr they featured actors like Alicia Silverstone, Oliver Hudson, Emily Hall, Timothy Innes, Geoffery Owens, Derek Mc Grath, Melissa Joan Hart, Linda Kash, Jack Foley and many more.



Linda Ochugbua

WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Who is speaking to you daily and what are you becoming? Watch out, so you don't bear fruits that can't be recognized because "by their fruits, you shall know them"

.....WhispersbyTEN

2

It is what you are seeing for yourself and not what is someone wishing you? The covenant is: "as far as your eyes can see

.....WhispersbyTEN

3

The enemy goes into anyone who allows a crack or opens the door. Watch out; someone may have contacted what you should flee from. Be wise

.....WhispersbyTEN

4

It's not only your lipstick or clean shave that is "giving", Purity is also "giving"

.....WhispersbyTENTEN