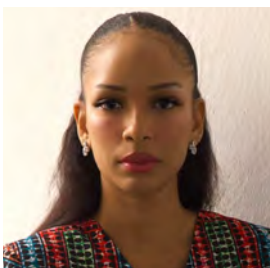


BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

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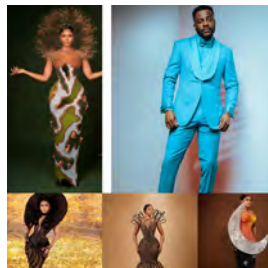


Inside Heineken House Experience:
A Multi-Sensory Consumer Experience of Hot Air Balloons, UEFA Champions League, Formula 1 and Live Music



ECONOMY

Why Capital Alone Cannot Scale African Businesses



FASHION

9 designers who have owned the AMVCA red carpet for five years running

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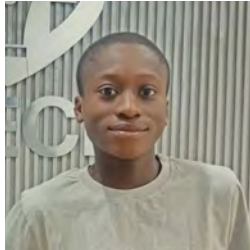
BUSINESS DAY
WEEKENDER

C O N T E N T



5

LAUGHTER IN THE MIRROR-



17

PROFILE

Agboola Joshua: The boy
who refused to wait



19

TRAVELOGUE

From Checkpoints
to Serenity:
A Road Trip Across the
Border

34

EDUCATION

Inside WAEC's Crisis:
can dangut restore
trust in Nigeria's
exams body

38

ART INDEX

Why Collecting African
Art Is Becoming More
Personal

40

BRANDS

3 Key ways to build
strong brand culture
in your company

42

BOOK REVIEW

Babel: Lessons
in pursuing your
dreams and
achieving them

48

MOVIE REVIEW

50

BD QUOTES






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 <p>CAP RC No: 4551 Chemical and Allied Products Plc is the Licensee of Alcohol for Nigeria and a Subsidiary of UAC of Nigeria Plc.</p>	<p>Directors:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Patience Aiyemba</td> <td>Rotimi Oluwalana</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Muhammad Adesola</td> <td>Udo Okunji</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deleoluwa Adegoke</td> <td>Wale Oshinwa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oludayo Ajayi</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Patience Aiyemba	Rotimi Oluwalana	Muhammad Adesola	Udo Okunji	Deleoluwa Adegoke	Wale Oshinwa	Oludayo Ajayi	
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Muhammad Adesola	Udo Okunji								
Deleoluwa Adegoke	Wale Oshinwa								
Oludayo Ajayi									

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an Annual General Meeting of Chemical and Allied Products PLC (the "Company") will be held on **Wednesday, June 24, 2026**, at **Festivo Hotel, Diamond Estate, Amuwo Odofin, Lagos, Nigeria** at 10.00 am to transact the following businesses:

ORDINARY BUSINESS

- To lay before the members the Audited Financial Statements for the financial year ended December 31, 2025, together with the reports of the Director, Auditor and Audit Committee thereon;
- To declare a dividend;
- To re-elect the following:
 - Director appointed since the last Annual General Meeting:
 - Dr. Oludayo Ajayi;
 - Directors retiring by rotation:
 - Mrs. Udo Okunji;
 - Mr. Adebolanle Bodejo;
- To authorise the Directors to fix the remuneration of the Auditors for the 2026 financial year;
- To elect members of the Statutory Audit Committee;
- To discuss the remuneration of Managers of the Company.


SPECIAL BUSINESS

- To fix the remuneration of the Non-Executive Directors;
- To consider and if thought fit pass the following as an ordinary resolution of the Company:

"That a general mandate be and is hereby given, authorising the Company through the Directors to enter into recurrent transactions with related parties or companies until reviewed by the Company at an Annual General Meeting."

Dated this 14th day of May, 2026.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD







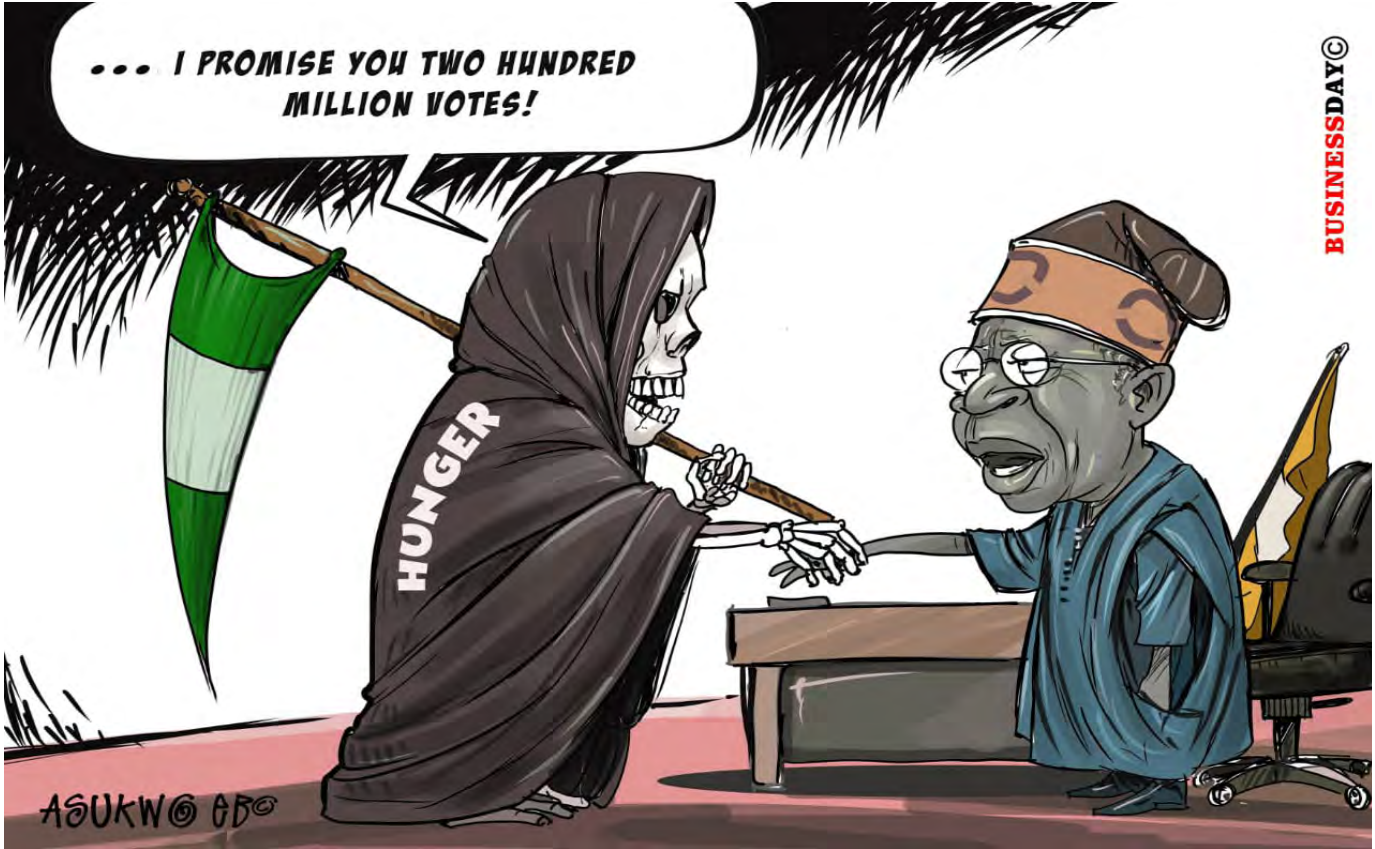
ARAMIDE NWOKEDIUKO
COMPANY SECRETARY
FRC/2018/FKO/NBA/002/0000018555

NOTES

- PROXY**
Any member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the meeting is also entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his/her stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. A proxy form must be completed and deposited at the office of the Company's Registrar, Africa Prudential PLC, 220B Ikorodu Road, Palmgrove, Lagos or sent via email to cap@afriicaprotentia.com not later than 5.00 pm, **June 21, 2026**.
- STAMPING OF PROXY**
The Company has made arrangements, at its cost, for the stamping of duly completed and signed proxy forms submitted to the Company's Registrar within the stipulated timeline.
- CLOSURE OF REGISTER**
The Register of Members and transfer books will be closed from **June 4, 2026 – June 8, 2026** (both dates inclusive) for the purpose of updating the Register of Members for payment of Dividend.
- DIVIDEND**
Directors have recommended to members the payment of a dividend of ₦4.00 per share. A resolution to this effect will be put to the meeting for the approval of members. If the Dividend recommended by the Directors is approved by members of the Annual General Meeting, the dividend will be paid, subject to withholding tax, on **June 25, 2026**, to the Shareholders whose names appear in the Company's Register of Members at the close of business on **June 3, 2026**.
- E-DIVIDEND REGISTRATION**
Notice is hereby given to all shareholders to open bank accounts, stockbroking accounts, and CSCS accounts to receive dividend payments electronically. A detachable application Form for E-Dividend is attached to the Annual Report to enable all shareholders furnish particulars of their accounts to the Registrar as soon as possible.
Upon completion, kindly forward same to the Registrar, Africa Prudential PLC at their office at 220B Ikorodu Road, Palmgrove, Lagos or sent via email to cap@afriicaprotentia.com to enable direct credit of their dividend on **June 25, 2026**.
- NOMINATION TO THE STATUTORY AUDIT COMMITTEE**
Pursuant to Section 404(a) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020, any member may nominate a shareholder as a member of the Audit Committee by giving notice in writing of such nomination. Such notice shall reach the Company Secretary at least 21 days before the Annual General Meeting. Section 404 (b) of CAMA 2020 has mandated that all members of the Audit Committee must be financially literate and at least one member shall be a member of a professional accounting body in Nigeria established by an Act of the National Assembly. We therefore request that nominations be accompanied by a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae.
- NO VOTING BY INTERESTED PARTIES**
In line with the provisions of Rule 20.8(h) Rules Governing Related Party Transaction of Nigerian Exchange Limited, interested persons have undertaken to ensure that their proxies, representatives, or associates shall abstain from voting on resolution B contained in the notice above.
- RIGHT OF SECURITIES HOLDERS TO ASK QUESTIONS**
Shareholders and other holders of the Company's securities have a right to ask questions not only at the meeting, but also in writing prior to the meeting, and such questions must be submitted to the Company (investorrelations@capplc.com) on or before **June 21, 2026**.
- UNCLAIMED DIVIDENDS**
Shareholders who are yet to claim their outstanding dividends are hereby advised to fill the online form available at <https://afriicaprotentia.com/afriicaprotentia/self-service> or download the Registrar's E-Dividend Activation Form which is available at <https://www.afriicaprotentia.com/afriicaprotentia/afriicaprotentia/afriicaprotentia/afriicaprotentia> and submit to the Registrar of Africa Prudential PLC, 220B Ikorodu Road, Palmgrove Lagos or their respective banks for the purpose of claiming their outstanding dividends.
A list of Shareholders who are yet to claim their dividends as of March 31, 2026, is available on the Company's website at www.capplc.com and will be available at the meeting.
- PROFILE OF DIRECTORS FOR RE-ELECTION**
The profiles of the Directors submitted for re-election are amongst the profiles of Directors provided in the Annual Report and on the Company's website at www.capplc.com.
- E-ANNUAL REPORT PUBLISHED ON THE WEBSITE**
In addition to the dispatch of the physical Annual Reports to shareholders, the electronic version of the Annual Report is available for viewing and download from our website at www.capplc.com.

📍 220B Ikorodu Road, Palmgrove, Lagos. 📞 0150493070. 📧 investorrelations@capplc.com 🌐 www.capplc.com



INSIDE HEINEKEN HOUSE EXPERIENCE: A MULTI-SENSORY CONSUMER EXPERIENCE OF HOT AIR BALLOONS, UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE, FORMULA 1 AND LIVE MUSIC

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



L-R: Marketing Director, Nigerian Breweries Plc., Sarah Agha; Managing Director, Nigerian Breweries Plc., Thibaut Boidin; Corporate Affairs Director, Nigerian Breweries Plc., Uzodinma Odenigbo at the flag-off of the Heineken House Experience featuring the Heineken Hot Air Balloon at Ilubirin, Lagos, on Sunday, 3rd of May 2026.



With a hot air balloon, the Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix, Champions League semi-final and the music concert, Heineken House Experience didn't just throw a party, it redefined what brand experience looks like in Africa's most dynamic market

There is a moment, sometime between the basket leaving the ground and Lagos spreading out below you, when something shifts. The noise of the city falls away.

The person beside you, a stranger two minutes ago, suddenly feels like someone you have always known. You are looking at the same view, feeling the same thing, and neither of you has the words for it yet.

That moment is not an accident. It is, in every sense, the point.

The Heineken House Experience, which ran from May 3rd to 9th at Ilubirin Way, Lagos, was built around that idea. Not around a product. Not around a campaign. Around the belief that the premium beer category is no longer won on product alone. It is won on meaning, memory and aspiration.

A Day With Thibaut

The week began on May 3rd with what Heineken called simply, A Day With Thibaut, an intimate gathering of Nigerian Breweries stakeholders, partners and invited guests at Ilubirin that served as the official unveiling of the Heineken House Experience.

Hosted by Darey Art Alade, the evening moved comfortably between grandeur and warmth, an orchestral performance, the Awanjo dancers, a standout comedy set from AY, and a powerful set from the LOUD Urban Choir.

The Formula 1 Miami Grand Prix played live on screen as guests, drinks in hand, leaned into the shared thrill of motorsport, a reflection of Heineken's deep global association with Formula 1 and a signal that the Heineken House Experience was built around more than football alone.

Then Johnny Drille took the stage. His performance became one of the defining moments of the week. Darey Art Alade closed the night. DJ Deluxe kept the energy until the last guests left.

But before any of that, Managing Director Thibaut Boidin had unveiled what would become the most talked-about element of the entire activation: the Heineken Hot Air Balloon, tethered against the Lagos skyline.

"The Heineken House Experience is especially meaningful to us because Nigerian consumers are true global trendsetters," Boidin told guests. "Hosting this in Nigeria reflects both who Nigerians are and how important this market is to us. We wanted to deliver something exceptional — an experience that matches that energy and influence."

At its core, the Heineken House Experience represents Heineken's ambition to go beyond sponsorships and activations, to create a living expression of the brand itself.



A platform where Heineken shows up as a cultural connector, bringing together UEFA Champions League football, Formula 1, music and elevated social moments under one premium, unmistakably Heineken world. Global premium, done the Nigerian way.

Above Lagos

From May 3rd through May 9th, the balloon rose above Ilubirin, tethered, professionally piloted and operated in full compliance with the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, with the Lagos State Ambulance Service and the Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service on the ground at every flight.

Up to 12 passengers per flight. Sunrise slots. A health check and safety briefing before every boarding. And above it all, the Lagos skyline, Ikoyi spread out below, the city still waking up, the air cool and still.

For many who stepped into the basket, it was a first. A first flight. A first view of their city from that height. A first experience of the kind of stillness that only comes when the ground disappears beneath you. Guests came down visibly moved, not by spectacle alone, but by the personal significance of having done something they had never done before. One guest proposed to his partner up there.

The Hot Air Balloon was always intended to be the emotional pinnacle of the Heineken House Experience — a rare, first-of-its-kind moment in this market, designed to deliver a genuine sense of elevation, literally and emotionally. Even beyond the balloon itself, the surrounding experiences ensured guests left with a strong, positive memory of Heineken moments well spent. Because that, ultimately, is what premium brands are built on.

Semi-Final Nights

As the UEFA Champions League semi-finals arrived on May 5th and 6th, the energy at Heineken House shifted. The intimacy of the balloon rides gave way to something louder, more communal and electric.

Tuesday night delivered one of the most emotionally charged moments of the entire week. Arsenal secured their place in the Champions League final with a 1-0 victory over Atlético Madrid — Bukayo Saka's decisive strike just before half-time sending Arsenal supporters at Heineken House into celebrations that spilled across the venue.

With Big Bimi and DJ Tohbad driving the sound and hypemen keeping the atmosphere at full intensity, the collective experience of watching that goal land in a room full of strangers-turned-friends was exactly what the Heineken House Experience had promised.

Wednesday brought a different kind of drama. Paris Saint-Germain edged Bayern Munich to book their place in the final — Ousmane Dembélé's early goal holding firm through Harry Kane's late equaliser, PSG progressing 6-5 on aggregate. Hypeman Best and Maze x Mxtreme kept the energy through every twist of the night. By the final whistle, the debates had started, the friendships had deepened, and nobody was in a hurry to leave.

What both nights demonstrated was the power of a shared viewing environment curated with genuine care — the screens, the sound, the drinks, the energy all working together to create the kind of collective experience that watch parties at home, or even in a bar, simply cannot replicate.



This is what Heineken means when it says Fans Have More Friends. Not as a tagline. As something that happens naturally when people share an extraordinary moment together.

Music Concert Celebration

The week closed on Saturday, May 9th with a music celebration night that brought together Young Jonn, Shallpopi, Styl-Plus, DJ Consequence, DJ Tohbad and Dope Caesar for a night that felt like the natural crescendo of everything that had come before it.

By then, the Heineken House community had formed. People who had ridden the balloon together through the week were dancing together on Saturday. The experience had done what it set out to do — turned a collection of individuals into something more connected, more alive, and more loyal to the brand that had made it possible.

The Brand Statement

The Heineken House Experience was not Nigeria’s first brand activation. It was not even Heineken’s first experiential campaign. But it was something rarer — an activation that actually delivered on the philosophical ambition behind it. The hot air balloon above Lagos was not a stunt. The Champions League watch parties were not just screenings.

The music was not just entertainment. Every element was in service of the same idea: that when Heineken consistently shows up as the brand creating the most desirable social moments, it strengthens not just relevance — but pricing power, connection with younger consumers, and long-term leadership in the premium segment.

As Marketing Director Sarah Agha closed the inaugural evening, she thanked guests for being part of something that went beyond celebration.

She was right. The week at Ilubirin was not just a brand moment. It was a proof point of how premium credentials become cultural experiences — and how cultural experiences build the brand power that unlocks sustainable growth. The proof is still being felt by everyone who was in that basket.

The Heineken House Experience ran from May 3rd–9th, 2026 at Ilubirin, Lagos. The Heineken UCL Final activation continues with the Champions League Final on May 30th.

Follow @heinekenng on Instagram. Enjoy Responsibly. Strictly 18+.

WHY CAPITAL ALONE CANNOT SCALE AFRICAN BUSINESSES

ANNETTE BEGG ONYEMA



Across Africa's entrepreneurial ecosystem, capital is often viewed as the ultimate breakthrough.

Founders spend months refining pitch decks, pursuing investor meetings, and preparing for fundraising rounds with the belief that once funding arrives, growth will naturally follow. Headlines celebrate businesses that have raised capital, and funding announcements are frequently treated as the clearest indicator of success.

But capital alone does not build scalable businesses.

In many cases, it simply exposes what already exists.

This is one of the most important and least discussed realities within Africa's consumer economy today. While access to funding remains a genuine challenge for many businesses, the deeper issue is that capital is often expected to solve problems that are fundamentally structural.

Money can accelerate growth. But it cannot replace discipline, systems, or strategic clarity. And without those foundations, growth rarely becomes sustainable.

The Misunderstanding Around Capital

Over the past decade, conversations around entrepreneurship across Africa have become increasingly tied to fundraising. For many founders, securing investment has become synonymous with validation.

Yet raising capital and building a scalable business are not the same thing.

A business may attract funding because of market opportunity, founder potential, or early traction. But sustaining growth over time requires something far more demanding: operational discipline, financial structure, governance, and the ability to execute consistently under pressure.

Without these elements, capital often becomes reactive rather than transformational. Businesses begin hiring aggressively without clear systems.

Expansion happens before operations are stable. Costs rise faster than revenue. Decision-making becomes short-term and inconsistent. In these situations, funding does not solve the underlying problem. It amplifies it.

Capital Is an Accelerator, Not a Foundation

One of the most important lessons within business building is understanding what capital is actually designed to do.

Capital is not the foundation of a business. It is an accelerator.

If a company already has strong operational systems, disciplined financial management, and strategic clarity, capital can significantly increase its ability to scale. It can unlock expansion, strengthen distribution, improve talent acquisition, and increase production capacity.

But if the underlying structure is weak, capital simply accelerates inefficiency. This is why some businesses appear to grow rapidly after raising money, only to struggle shortly afterwards. The issue is rarely the existence of capital itself. The issue is that the business was never structurally prepared for scale.

What Capital Cannot Replace

There are three areas in particular that capital alone cannot fix.

1. Financial Discipline

Revenue growth does not automatically create a healthy business.

Many companies struggle because they lack visibility into margins, cash flow, pricing strategy, and operational costs. Businesses may generate impressive sales figures while remaining fundamentally fragile underneath.

Without financial discipline, growth can quickly become expensive rather than profitable.

Capital may temporarily relieve pressure, but it cannot replace the ability to manage resources effectively or build a financially resilient company.

2. Operational Structure

A founder's effort can carry a business through its early stages. But sustainable scale requires systems that extend beyond individual effort.

This includes operational processes, inventory management, supply chain consistency, delegation structures, and execution frameworks that allow the business to perform reliably as it grows.

Many businesses reach a plateau because operations remain heavily dependent on the founder. Every major decision flows through one person. Processes remain informal. Teams operate reactively rather than systematically. In these situations, additional capital often increases complexity faster than the business can manage it.

3. Strategic Clarity

One of the most underrated aspects of scale is strategic focus.

Businesses that scale successfully tend to understand exactly who they serve, what differentiates them, and how they intend to grow over time. They make deliberate decisions around positioning, expansion, and capital allocation.

Without this clarity, businesses become reactive. They pursue growth opportunities without alignment, expand too quickly, or lose focus trying to satisfy multiple directions at once.

Capital cannot compensate for a lack of strategic direction. In fact, access to more resources can sometimes magnify strategic confusion.

The African Context Makes Structure Even More Important

African businesses operate within environments that are often more volatile and complex than many global markets.

Founders navigate infrastructure gaps, foreign exchange instability, supply chain challenges, and inconsistent access to institutional support. These realities create additional pressure on businesses at every stage of growth. But rather than making structure less important, these conditions make it even more essential.

In unpredictable environments, discipline matters more. Governance matters more. Financial visibility matters more. Businesses that survive and scale sustainably are often not the businesses moving the fastest initially. They are the businesses building the strongest foundations underneath their growth.

Building Investable Businesses

Africa does not simply need more funded businesses. It needs more investable businesses.

Businesses built with the systems, governance, discipline, and strategic clarity required for long-term scale. Businesses capable of absorbing capital effectively rather than becoming dependent on it prematurely.

This requires a shift in mindset, from viewing funding as the destination to understanding it as a tool within a much larger process of business building.

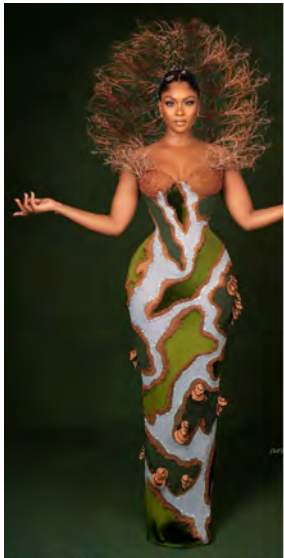
Because ultimately, capital does not create strong businesses.

Strong businesses are what allow capital to create scale.

Annette Begg Onyema is Founder and CEO of Idia Africa, leading Idia Ego and Idia Legacy to support high-growth African consumer businesses. She has extensive experience in capital raising and investment across institutions like the African Development Bank and Morgan Stanley. She also serves as a director at KOCE Enterprises and a Global Council Member at the Smithsonian.

9 DESIGNERS WHO HAVE OWNED THE AMVCA RED CARPET FOR FIVE YEARS RUNNING

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Veekee James

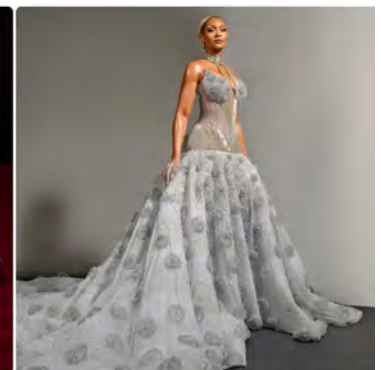
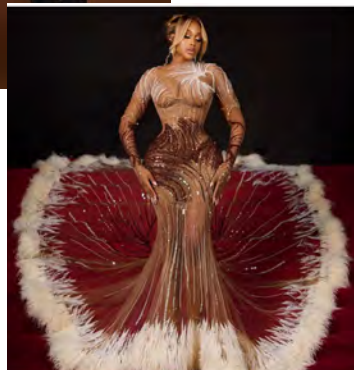
If there is one designer who has defined the AMVCA red carpet over the past five years, it is Veekee James. At the 2022 edition, Osas Ighodaro won Best Dressed Female in a flowing beaded Veekee James dress. She returned the following year in another Veekee James creation and won Best Actress. By 2024, Veekee James was dressing multiple celebrities at once, including Uche Montana, Toke Makinwa, and Osas Ighodaro. In 2025, she dressed Osas Ighodaro and Mercy Aigbe. In 2026, she delivered two of the most talked-about looks of the night, a crimson sculptural gown and a silver ballgown made from 400 repurposed metal sponges, both worn by Osas Ighodaro, and also dressed co-host Nomzamo Mbatha in a fully beaded black gown. The designer and her muse have built one of the most exciting creative partnerships in Nigerian fashion, and every AMVCA season, they raise the bar on what they did the year before



Every year, the Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards arrives with two conversations happening at the same time. One is about who won. The other is about who wore what. Over the years, the second conversation has grown just as loud as the first, and in some cases, louder.

But behind every look that stops the scroll is a designer who spent weeks, sometimes months, bringing it to life. The AMVCA red carpet has become one of the most important stages for African fashion, and a handful of designers have shown up year after year to prove it.

Here are the ones who have consistently made their mark from 2022 to 2026.



Amy Aghomi

Amy Aghomi is not just a red carpet designer. She is a storyteller, and the AMVCA carpet has been her most consistent stage. Her work spans both the main awards night and cultural day, and she has dressed some of the most talked-about looks across both. In 2023, she designed Venita Akpofure’s cultural day outfit, a vibrant Urhobo-inspired ensemble in peach, gold, and pink gorge fabric paired with a matching gele that earned Venita the Best Dressed Female title on cultural night. In 2024, she dressed Neo Akpofure in a modern take on traditional Itsekiri regalia for cultural night, a heavily structured long-line shirt with tailored trousers that won him Best Dressed Male. In 2025, Mercy Eke shut down the red carpet in a custom Amy Aghomi diamond-studded gown reportedly worth N38 million, featuring thousands of hand-placed crystals that shimmered under the lights. In 2026, the collaboration went further. For the main carpet, Mercy wore the Ecosystem of Beauty dress, a water-inspired creation with individually placed crystal-encrusted elements. Amy Aghomi also dressed Bucci Franklin in a regal monochromatic wine-red velvet traditional ensemble for cultural day, created Osas Ighodaro’s Ghanaian heritage-inspired Akwaaba look for the same occasion, and created Chioma Goodhair’s viral liquid gold ensemble.



Atafo

Guided by Mai Atafo’s vision, the fashion brand Atafo creates exquisite bespoke tailored garments known for clean cuts and impeccable fit. The brand has been one of the most consistent names in menswear on the AMVCA carpet. In 2022, Denola Grey stole the spotlight as best-dressed male in a striking Atafo three-piece burgundy satin tuxedo. That same year, Ebuka Obi-Uchendu wore a custom monochrome pastel blue tuxedo. By 2024, Atafo dressed Ebuka again in a bold polka-dot suit and has also created

looks for IK Osakioduwa and Akin Faminu across multiple editions. In 2025, Ebuka and Efa Iwara both wore Atafo. The brand remains the gold standard for men who want to make a statement without losing structure.



Toyin Lawani (Tiannah Styling)

Toyin Lawani operates in a category of her own. Her designs are not just clothes, they are events. In 2025, she dressed Queen Mercy Atang in a gown made from one million safety pins. In 2026, she returned with a dress made from 500 loaves of bread, complete with a pot of ewa agoyin as an accessory. Every year, a Toyin Lawani creation generates the most debate on the internet, which is entirely the point.



Mamadi Couture

Mamadi Couture has quietly become one of the most distinctive names on the carpet. The brand's signature is nature-inspired design with serious technical skill behind it. In 2025, Doyinsola David wore a Mamadi Couture forest-green beaded gown where the fabric was hand-twisted to look like roots cascading to the floor, making it look as though she was one with the earth. The brand was behind three red carpet looks at the 2025 AMVCA, including Doyin's iconic tree dress which went completely viral. In 2026, the brand dressed Doyin David again in a dragon-inspired dress built from iron scales and a spine structure.



Weiz Dhurm Franklyn

Weiz Dhurm Franklyn has become the go-to for celebrities who want drama with precision. In 2024, Chioma Ikoku wore a Weiz Dhurm Franklyn masterpiece tagged "The Vine," keeping with the Garden of Time theme. In 2025, Erica Nlewedim wore the brand's creation on the carpet. In 2026, the brand dressed two celebrities. Shine Rosman arrived in a heavily textured custom blue sequined dress shimmering under the lights and accented with matching dramatic feathers. Erica Nlewedim wore a custom burgundy velvet off-shoulder gown embedded with metallic wires and suspended velvet circles that created a floating illusion effect. The brand's designs are known for structured silhouettes, bold fabric choices, and a consistent ability to turn a concept into something wearable.



Deji and Kola

Deji and Kola have made themselves the definitive menswear choice for celebrities who want to push past the conventional suit. In 2024, Richard Mofe-Damijo wore a deconstructed Agbada from Deji and Kola made from purple aso-oke material, with intricate designs running down the length of the outfit, topped with a long flaps cap and a purple beaded staff. In 2025, Akin Faminu wore a Deji and Kola suit adorned with floral embroidery on one sleeve and a silk scarf in place of a tie, earning him the title of best-dressed male for the night. The brand has consistently shown that Nigerian menswear can be just as adventurous as the women's looks.

Prudential Atelier

Prudential Atelier had a defining moment in 2025 and has not looked back since. Liquorose wore a silver Prudential Atelier gown featuring floral embellishments at the waist, scale-like detailing at the hem, and a striking snake-like neckline that extended into a hair covering. The look earned her the best-dressed female title at the 2025 AMVCA, voted by the public. In 2026, Liquorose continued her partnership with the brand across two looks. For cultural night, she wore a custom masterpiece, and for the main awards ceremony, she stepped out in a sleek custom white mermaid gown with structural draping. Also on the 2026 carpet, Nelly Mbonu wore a highly structured avant-garde Prudential Atelier design that drew critical acclaim for its creative architecture and flawless tailoring. The brand also dressed Toyin Abraham for the main awards night in a breathtaking black, champagne, and gold structured gown, accessorised with custom neckpieces from The Jematoba and tailored to highlight her silhouette. In three years, Prudential Atelier has gone from a breakthrough moment to one of the most anticipated names on the carpet.



Abbas Woman

Mohammed Abbas Ossu and his brand Abbas Woman are relatively new to the AMVCA carpet, but the 2026 edition made it impossible to ignore the name. Ossu designed Nana Akua Addo's opening look of the night, a breathtaking sculptural gown inspired by the Cologne Cathedral in Germany, featuring dozens of towering silver and grey spires with pointed Gothic arches and delicate cross details rising from the floor to her waist. The designer told the BBC that the creation process began in November 2025 and was only completed two days before the ceremony. He also dressed Nana in a second look the same night, a mermaid gown built from layered fragments of textured material designed to look like the earth had been sculpted into a dress. Abbas Woman also dressed Aishat Mohammed on the same carpet in a fitted leather gown with a sweetheart neckline corset and a ruffled hem, leaning fully into a gothic aesthetic. One night, three looks, and a brand that has announced itself on the biggest stage in African fashion.



AGBOOLA JOSHUA: THE BOY WHO REFUSED TO WAIT

CHISOM MICHAEL





There is something about Agboola Joshua that stays with you. He is not a household name in the way that politicians or entertainers are. He does not have a stadium full of people chanting his name. What he has is something rarer a story of a child who looked at the world and decided, without hesitation, that he belonged at the front of it.

Joshua started writing code at the age of six. Not as a school project. Not because someone told him to. He did it because something in him pulled him there. By the time most children his age were learning to read chapter books, Joshua was working with HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python, Java, C++, and more. The list of languages he has built capacity in reads less like a child's hobby and more like the portfolio of a seasoned developer.

He grew up in Nigeria, in Lagos, a city that does not slow down for anyone, and perhaps that energy found its way into him. His father, an engineer, noticed what his son was building and encouraged him to go further. That encouragement mattered. Behind every record Joshua has broken, there is a family that believed in him before the world did.

In February 2023, at the age of thirteen, Joshua sat for the Amazon Web Services Certified Cloud Practitioner examination and passed. He became the youngest Certified Amazon Web Services Cloud Practitioner in Africa. But he did not stop there.

Barely four months later, he sat a two-hour examination that tested his skills in deploying, troubleshooting, and development on the AWS cloud platform and emerged the youngest Certified AWS Developer Associate in Africa.

Then came another first. In 2023, he sat for the AWS Solutions Architect Associate examination and passed, another record for Africa.

When asked what drove him to pursue these certifications, Joshua did not speak about trophies. He said cloud computing had become one of the defining technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and its importance became visible to him while working on an Artificial Intelligence project. He was thirteen. He was working on an AI project.

Joshua is also the founder of Joshfortech, a venture that provides knowledge and skill empowerment services, as well as web and mobile application solutions to businesses and individuals. Through his YouTube channel under the same



name, he teaches technology skills in a way that is easy to follow, because he understands that access to knowledge changes lives.

He has not kept his story to himself. Joshua broke a record by becoming the youngest keynote speaker at the ICTEL Expo of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry in July 2019, a first in the Chamber's 131-year history. He has since spoken at conferences including Techpoint, the Swiss Cognitive Commonwealth Conference, and the Rise Network Conference. He has appeared on TVC News, Channels TV, AIT, NTA, and in publications such as BusinessDay and Vanguard.

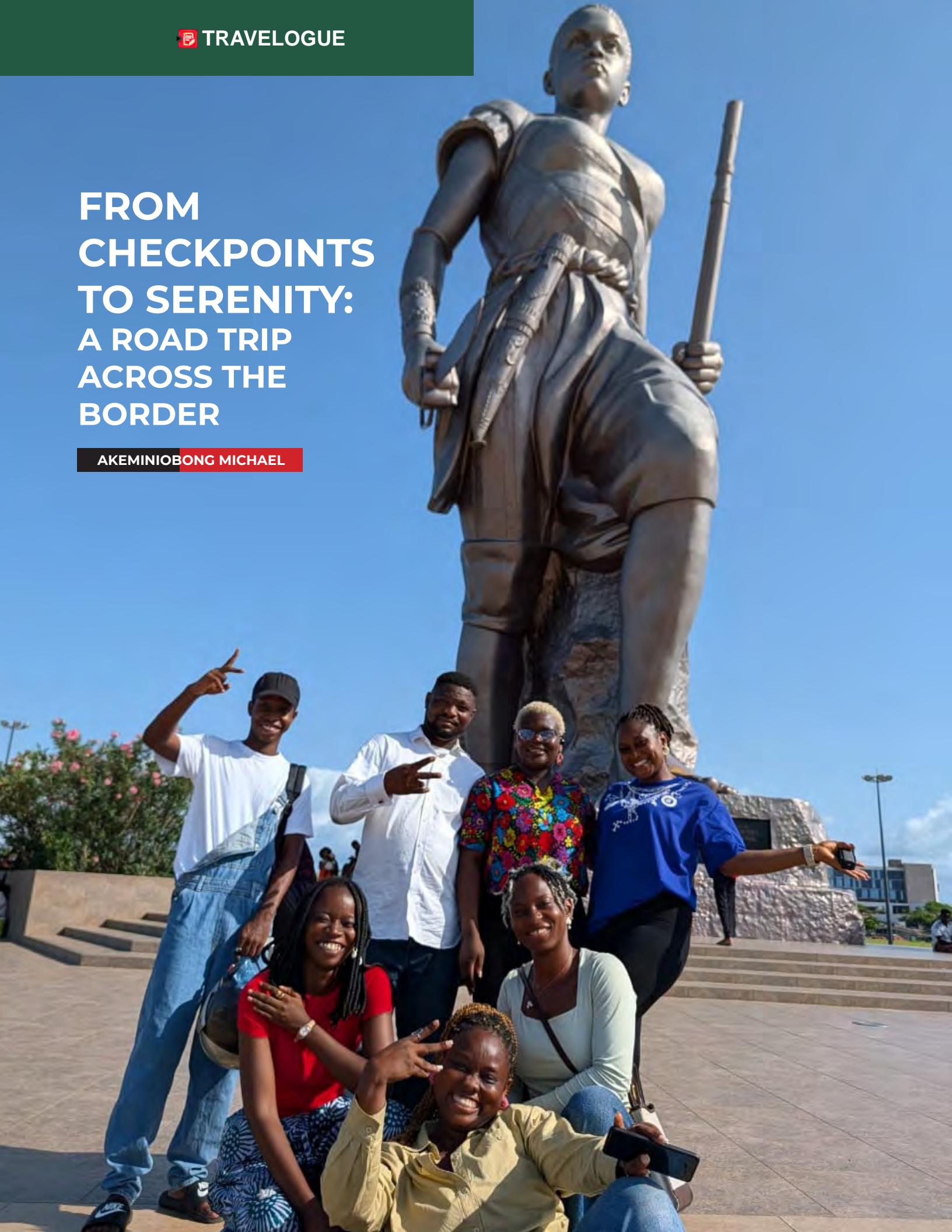
In 2024, Tech Unite Africa named him Tech Entrepreneur of the Year, a recognition of his contributions to the technology space. The previous year, he received the Early Achievers Award at the closing ceremony of the 2023 National Children Leadership Conference.

What Joshua represents is not a one-off event. He is proof of what happens when a child is given tools, belief, and space to grow. He dedicated his AWS achievement to every young person who wants to build a career in technology.

At sixteen, Agboola Joshua is still at the beginning. And that, perhaps, is the most powerful thing about his story.

FROM CHECKPOINTS TO SERENITY: A ROAD TRIP ACROSS THE BORDER

AKEMINIOBONG MICHAEL





Worker's Day 2026 was no ordinary day for me. It was the first time I stepped out of the country. I have always travelled through books, so finally being able to use my adult money to travel to another country was so exciting. I am still reeling from that excitement.

Travel through the eyes of a first-time traveler. Me!

At 6:20am the time I woke up on the first of May. Late but with excitement. You can guess the time I slept. I rushed through my dress up process, good thing I had already picked out the clothes I was going to wear two hours earlier.

This was a road trip through to our Neighboring country; Benin Republic.

I met up with my friends who had agreed to take the trip alongside me- did I mention I spearheaded the trip? Well clock it- thanks to TICPod Commons for making plans and reservations.

Note: When outside Nigeria, try as hard as you can not to compare things you know in your country to other countries especially if you are from Nigeria. I did it, so you don't have to do it. Trust me it does not help at all.

Now let's get into the gist of it.

The Departing Journey and the mathematics involved

The trip from Mile 2 to the border was a beautiful one, we had gotten a vehicle that fit all 6 of us. The driver was a pleasant man and he made the journey better.

We each paid Ten thousand eight hundred naira (after much negotiation) to get to the border. Note that the fare is over that price but because we filled the vehicle the driver agreed to take us for that price. It's advised to go as a group.

We alighted at the Seme border then took bikes through to the immigration office where we stamped our passport for six thousand naira each.

The fare from the seme border through the immigration and to the other side where we changed money and got a cab cost us three thousand five hundred for two people on a bike.

Things I saw in the journey that stood out to me.

At the Nigerian border we experienced over 10 check points all of them within walking distance of each other. I also noticed that drivers were taxed from 500 naira and above at each point, this doesn't paint our beautiful nation in a good light. It's giving begi begi vibes and corruption on a different level.

It was quite exhausting.

After we crossed the border and stamped our passports we left Nigeria behind.

From there till we got to where we needed to change money, there was not one checkpoint. This begs the question; what exactly are the use of all these checkpoints on our roads? An avenue to fight crime or to extort? In my opinion, 9 out of 10 of those check points were totally unnecessary.

Culture shock 1; Money

Benin Republic uses Cfa. Imagine my shock when I realized that they had 2,00, 5,000, 10,000 and 20,000 Cfa each as one note. Meaning you could hold 100,000 Cfa and it would just be 5 notes of 20's I was surprised.

We changed our naira, a thousand naira for 385 Cfa. I almost wept. My friend Nwaamaka had changed 60,000 naira and was given only two notes and some coins. In her words 'my 60k is now two money'.

As a group we changed 250 thousand Naira and we got 90,00 Cfa and some coins. Well for one our naira really needs to do a lot better. We didn't use cash; we made transfers. At this point we needed to get sim cards; one network really tries to be everywhere we go. The Sim cards cost less than 2,500 Cfa



Culture shock 2; Language

I need to learn French and better my Yoruba. Benin Republic is a French or in my opinion broken French speaking country but in a lot of areas your Yoruba would take you by.

It didn't exactly feel like I had left Nigeria at the location we changed money. There were several people speaking Igbo and Yoruba.

The money changer we met spoke little to no Yoruba like myself, but he spoke French, and pidgin, one thing is for sure the guy understood money.

My other companion Folake and her husband had it better than the rest of us as they were fluent in Yoruba.

The Journey inside

After the money part had been sorted, we found a cab that took us to town. My friend Funmi Richards who was in charge of the planning and organizing had a friend Donan who was Beninios meet us at the Dantokpa Market area. After meeting up with Donan, we got a cab.

In Benin they use two major e hailing apps, Yango and Gozam, it is advised to download and set it up with your Benin Sim card. We ordered two Yango's and split ourselves to each cab.

Our destination was the Amazonian Statue; to get there, we had to pass the longest graffiti wall. The longest graffiti wall is one of the major tourist site in Benin it is over 940 meters long and driving at a speed of 30km/h it was more than 5 minute.

We paid 6,000 Cfa for the Journey, it cost this much because the drivers waited for us and also took us to our accommodation.

Culture shock 3; Movements and Tourist Location

While we waited on Donan, several things stood out to me at the Dantokpa Market area; first every single person on a bike had a helmet on and no single police in sight enforcing this.

The streets had cars passing but it was not loud, no agbero shouting, no conductor straining his voice to invite passenger to enter rickety broken-down vehicles. It was all calm.

We had waited by a trash area for the plaza we waited in front of and we didn't even realize it was trash; it had no death threatening stench. That's all I am going to say about that.

As we passed by the beautiful and awe-inspiring graffiti wall, I noticed how well maintained it was. The paintings all told stories. You could see other African tribes celebrated. It felt very welcoming and as an art lover I really wanted to grab the wall, frame it and put in my room. It really was breathe taking.

When we got to the statue the first thing that stood out to me, the whole place was clean and had no gate. There were people at the statue and even a group of students there for excursion, Tik Tokers dancing, lovers walking and holding hands. It was a beautiful and free site and sight.

We went straight to our apartment after this. Our apartment roomed 4 people and the second 2 people and cost 60,000 Cfa. We booked online a day before.

Culture shock 4; Night Life and Beaches

Night time in Benin Republic hit different. Due to it being a coastal area, the breeze was to be compared to none. The quiet quaint shops, the street light that lit the street enough to see what you needed to see without competing with the night light, the properly oiled vehicles making their way to different destinations, the street swept and void of litter. It was so serene. I felt like I had walked into a passage from one of my books.

Side note: there was not one catcall. No one shouting 'hey fine girl', 'my color', 'my type' or any profanities. No speakers outside either.

We walked to the beach from our apartment; it was a long but beautiful and rewarding trek.

We got to the beach and to our utmost surprise it was FREE. Yes, free. I sighed at that moment recalling all the time I had to pay unreasonable amounts to see nature. The areas that looked private had gate fees but the fee was like a ticket to purchase whatever you wanted within that area. The amount was a flat rate of 5,000 Cfa.



Shotby Kemi Michael

The beach was clean, I mean it was not polluted. There was no area within eye sight where water had gathered plastics or items that didn't belong in it. Our walk around the beach gave us a short peak to the night life in Benin. Children drumming to entertain people and getting a little Cfa as appreciation, bike men chilling atop their bikes, coconut sellers with their wares. I had the pleasure of trying out their grilled ram in baguette, this is a little like Nigerian Suya with a bit of Mishai, except it is called Shashiga and the ram was intensely seasoned. Confession; I sucked on the bone for a long time. It was difficult to throw it away. This delicacy cost 1,100Cfa and the whole of it could serve as dinner for two ladies.

The Journey From and sights of Ouidah

Ouidah is one of the most popular locations for tourists. It is home to the sacred forest, the Python temple, the First Basilica, the location of slave trade and slave tagging and also the Door of no return. All these places we visited on our final day at Benin.

Beninose take their sacred forest very seriously, we each paid 1,000Cfa to enter and tour and take pictures of the entrance to the sacred forest. We were told the history of Vodum or Voodoo.

Right after that we visited the Python Temple. Home to Over 40 Pythons Worshipped by the Benin People. We also paid 1,000Cfa each. And yes I did put the Python on my neck.



Shotby Kemi Michael

Opposite the Temple sat the Basilica on a land given to the church by the Python worshippers. This was free. Our next stop was the site where slaves were shared, bought, sold and tagged by the colonizers. It was a free stop but it reminded us of what our forefathers went through.

The last stop for our trip was the door of no return. Here I believe is where I got really emotional. It was free and so was the beach. We had our second visit to the beach here. We got food at this point although we were not sure what to expect.

Coconut cost 25 Cfa each it was so refreshing I had 4. The fish cost 100 Cfa each and our plate of Rice, spaghetti and stew cost less than 400 Cfa. The food was not terrible and we didn't have any belly aches. Right after this we made our way back to the border. Gladness in our bellies. The whole trip from our apartment to Ouidah and back to the border cost 30,000 Cfa.

Trip tips

Make reservation beforehand. If you are not very adventurous with food and you are staying a for short period pack what you can cook. Our apartment had a kitchen. Or pack snack you can munch on. Go for immersive experience. Travel as a local and not tourist. Go as a group or join me.

Till the next time I travel. Catch you soon.

THE 25-YEAR BET: TRANSFORMING OYO TOURISM INTO A HIGH-YIELD ASSET CLASS

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



Inside the International Conference Centre in Ibadan this week were dignitaries, stakeholders, investors and partners who had gathered for the 3rd International Tourism Summit in Oyo State.

The summit focused on building a tourism ecosystem that would endure beyond the current administration and deliver long-term value to the people of Oyo.

Abigail Anaba, the Secretary of the #ITSOyoState2026 Organising Committee disclosed that about three years ago when Seyi Makinde, the governor of Oyo State was returned for a second term in office, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was created.

According to Anaba, tourism was identified as one of the core economic pillars to drive the governor’s second term in office.

She noted that before then, efforts had been made to harness the potential of tourism within the State and Oyo State has some really iconic and amazing attractions:

Bower’s Tower, Ibadan, Iyake Lake which is one of only two

suspended lakes in the world; Festivals such as World Twins Festival Igbo- Ora, World Sango Festival Oyo and phenomenal palaces built on potentially immersive storytelling, such as the tales of Elemoso in Ogbomoso.

Anaba however stated that tourism economies are not built on attractions, adding that if all it took to build a tourism economy was having attractions, many places would already be thriving tourism zones.

“Attractions, on their own, do not create value. They do not generate sustained revenue. What creates value is structure.

What sustains value is governance. And this is the shift that Oyo State has been making over the past three years,” Anaba said.

She recalled that back in 2024 when the first edition of the international tourism summit was held, the focus was alignment, “bringing stakeholders into the same conversation. Establishing that tourism is central to economic development, as encapsulated in Oyo State’s economic blueprint.

She however stated that in 2025, the focus shifted to structure which means thinking in terms of frameworks.

“The question shifted from “what do we have?” to “How can what Oyo State has be organised, prioritised, and developed.”

She stressed that in 2026, the focus is governance. “Putting in place the systems, the processes, and the institutional coordination required to ensure that tourism development is intentional.”

According to her, Oyo State is moving from showcasing assets to governing a tourism economy, adding that without coordination, structure, system to connect them, thepotential remains just that potential unrealised.

“So, what you are seeing in Oyo State is a deliberate move away from that model.

Starting from yesterday, all 33 LGAs were engaged, first in a one-hour workshop on how they can build tourism economies that will fit into the larger State framework.

“They were also taken round some state developments to help them see tourism in action.

“They toured the Oyo State Agricultural Transformation Centre, Fasola so they can see firsthand the potentials of agritourism, then they visited Iyake Lake in Oke-Ogun where they saw how a heritage site could be turned into an economic driver and finally, they visited KAP Film Village, Igbojaiye to underscore the fact that there is no such thing as, “this place is too far from Ibadan” when it comes to tourism development. All that is needed is infrastructural connectivity.”

Anaba insisted that governments do not build tourism economies alone but create clarity of direction, structure and opportunity.

She said where there is clarity, there is confidence and where there is confidence, investment follows.

25-year Tourism Master Plan

The highlight of the event was during the launch of the ambitious 25-year Tourism Master Plan and the Eleyele Lake Development Framework.

The roadmap provides a long-term strategic blueprint designed to transform the state’s creative economy into a primary driver of sub-national GDP.

According to Kola Lawal, a member of the Tourism Master Plan Committee, the project is anchored on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model that offers significant incentives for investors.

The plan targets the development of at least 33 distinct tourism resources, with Ibadan designated as the central “creative economy hub” for film, music, fashion, and performing arts, amongst others.

To ensure the project outlives current political cycles, Lawal disclosed that the state is adopting a “Rapid Expansion Model” divided into three critical phases: a foundational pilot stage, a cluster development stage, and a final phase focused on global positioning.

This structured approach aims to build a sustainable and resilient ecosystem that thrives independently of administrative changes.

The results of this “groundwork” are already reflected in the data. Since the inception of Governor Seyi Makinde’s administration, visitor numbers have surged from a modest 1,600 to over 18,000. During the same period, the hospitality sector saw exponential growth, expanding from 1,320 businesses to more than 12,000 across the state.





From Groundwork to Governance

At the Summit, Governor Seyi Makinde laid out his vision arguing that for tourism to become a viable economic pillar, it must move beyond “sweet talk” and into institutionalized systems.

Governor Makinde cited the 110-kilometer Ibadan Circular Road—conceived in the early 2000s but stalled for two decades across five administrations—as a cautionary tale of “scuttled progress.”

“Progress driven solely by leadership is not enough because leadership changes,” Makinde told investors. “If I make a mistake, it’s a one-day event, but the impact lasts four years. We are building structures that ensure progress does not depend on individuals. This is institutionalization.”

To prove this isn’t just theory, the Governor highlighted the 25-year Tourism Master Plan and the recent signing of a 15-year concession agreement with SystemSpecs Ltd for the redevelopment of the iconic Bower’s Tower.

A key highlight of the administration’s “groundwork” is the 180-kilometer stretch of pothole-free state roads connecting Moniya, Iseyin, Ogbomoso, and Oyo. This connectivity is designed to shrink the travel time between heritage sites like the Iyake Suspended Lake and creative hubs like the KAP Film Village in Igbojaiye.

Turning Film Production into Infrastructure

For visionary filmmaker Kunle Afolayan, founder of the KAP Film Village and Resort, a search for a cinematic backdrop has evolved into a masterclass in infrastructure development and tourism scaling.

Afolayan who also spoke during the Summit in Ibadan, revealed that while the initial goal for the site was purely cinematographic—seeking an authentic “visual world” for his epic production, Anikulapo—the result was the birth of a permanent tourism asset that is now redefining the local economy.

By choosing Igbojaiye for its mountains and cultural resonance, the production “exposed a larger opportunity” to move beyond a temporary movie set.

“Oyo can turn culture into a destination,” Afolayan asserted. “Film creates visibility, and culture gives meaning. Hospitality captures spend, while agriculture deepens the supply chain. The goal was cinematography, but the result was infrastructure.”

For investors, the KAP Village serves as a blueprint for how the creative arts can “unlock scale” and provide a sustainable return on investment when paired with the state’s burgeoning infrastructure.



Institutionalisierung Tourism for Survival

Kayode Fayemi, former governor of Ekiti State while speaking as the Special Guest of Honor at the 3rd International Tourism Summit in Oyo State.

Reflecting on his tenure and the current strategic trajectory of the Governor Seyi Makinde administration, Fayemi argued that the critical difference between mere aspiration and true transformation lies in the creation of enforceable frameworks that survive political cycles.

Fayemi lauded Oyo State's unveiling of a 25-year Master Plan, noting that success in tourism only occurs when ambition is codified into policy and policies are matured into resilient systems.

"Tourism succeeds when ambition becomes policy, when policy becomes systems, and when systems become institutions," Fayemi stated. "The intention must be to build frameworks that survive political cycles, so future administrations do not need to reinvent the wheel."

Drawing parallels from his experience in Ekiti, Fayemi recounted the "Herculean task" of taking over a state in 2010 with an internally generated revenue (IGR) of just N109 million a month—a figure that barely covered civil service salaries. At the time, he noted, "growth was a luxury."

To unlock assets like the Ikogosi Warm Springs and the Arinta Waterfalls, Fayemi said his administration had to stop asking what the government could fund and start asking



what the state could become. This shift reframed tourism not as a luxury project, but as a multi-sectoral activator for transportation, education, and infrastructure.

While natural assets like Oyo's Iyake Lake or Ekiti's Rolling Hills are "magnets of attraction," Fayemi warned that they remain untapped economic opportunities without the necessary infrastructural enablers.

"Sites are the magnets, but sites will not help if you don't provide the enablers for them to become attractive for the purpose in which they were envisioned," he concluded, urging Oyo State to remain focused on the "Ecology Hub" strategy that integrates environment, infrastructure, and culture into a single investment-ready product.

8 RESTAURANT CATEGORIES AND WHAT THEY ACTUALLY MEAN

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Walk into any place that serves food in Nigeria and you will call it a restaurant. The buka, the café, the suya spot, the hotel dining room, we use the same word for all of them. But spend enough time eating out and you will notice that these places are nothing alike.

That is because restaurants are not one thing. They are grouped into categories based on how they serve food, the experience they offer, and the kind of setting they create.

Here are eight of those categories and what they actually mean.

Café

A café is a place where the drink comes first. The menu is built around coffee, tea, and other beverages, with food as a secondary offering. You will typically find light bites, pastries, and sandwiches rather than full meals. One of the things that sets a café apart is that you can sit for as long as you like without anyone expecting you to order a three-course meal. Many cafés in Lagos have taken this further by providing working spaces, free Wi-Fi, and other perks that make them a go-to for people who want to spend a few hours with a laptop and a good cup of coffee. Spots like Ouida Lagos, Cafe Neo, and Hot Crust Cafe are common cafés in Lagos.

Bistro

When Russian soldiers occupied Paris in the 19th century, they would shout “bistro” meaning “quickly” in Russian, at waiters demanding faster service. The name stuck, and it came to describe the kind of small, no-fuss eating spots they frequented. A bistro is exactly that: a neighbourhood restaurant where the food is simple, the portions are generous, and the prices are reasonable. It is not the kind of place you go to mark a special occasion. You go because you want a good meal without the fuss. In Lagos, places like Danfo Bistro, and Orchid Bistro, are popular spots you can visit.

Ghost kitchen

A ghost kitchen is a restaurant you can never physically visit. It has no dining space, no tables, and no chairs. It exists only to prepare food for delivery. You place your order through an app, such as Chowdeck or Glovo, and the food comes to you. Many food businesses in Nigeria have adopted this model because it costs far less to run than a traditional restaurant.

QSR (Quick service restaurant)

This is what most people know as fast food. The menu is fixed, the service is fast, and the focus is on getting food to you quickly. You order at a counter and the food is ready in minutes. Do not go expecting a great atmosphere or an out of the world dining experience. The goal is speed, not ambience. Chicken Republic and Item7Go are among the most recognisable names in Nigeria.

Buka

A buka is as Nigerian as it gets. It is a small, informal eatery that serves local meals at prices almost anyone can afford. The menu is usually written on a board or recited to you on the spot, and the food is cooked fresh in large pots every day. You will find staples like jollof rice, egusi soup, amala, and pepper soup, served fast and in generous portions. Walk in and you are likely to find plastic chairs and tables, a counter where the food is displayed, and the smell of something cooking in the back. There are no reservations, no dress codes, and no elaborate decor. You walk in, point at what you want, and eat.

Diner

A diner is an American concept that has found its way into Lagos. It is a casual, no-fuss eating spot built around comfort food, burgers, fries, milkshakes, and breakfast items served at any time of day. The setting is usually simple, with counter seating or booths, and the focus is on filling, familiar food at reasonable prices. What makes a diner different from other casual spots is that it is open for long hours, sometimes round the clock, making it a go-to for a late-night meal. In Lagos, the format has been adapted to suit local tastes, with some spots blending American diner staples with Nigerian favourites on the same menu. Jay’s Diner is one spot in Lagos that capture the diner spirit.

Fine dining

Fine dining is the most formal restaurant experience. Everything about it is deliberate, from the table setting to the way the food is presented. Meals are served in multiple courses and the prices reflect that. Staff are trained to anticipate your needs rather than wait to be asked. The menu is carefully curated, with each dish designed to complement the next. It is not the kind of place you walk into on a whim. Most require you to book a table in advance, sometimes days or weeks ahead, especially on weekends. Most also have a dress code, so it is worth checking before you head out. Showing up in shorts and slippers will likely get you turned away at the door. Fine dining is concentrated in Lagos, with spots like Farfallino and Gaby.

Casual dining

This is the most common type of restaurant in Nigeria. A casual dining restaurant is a sit-down place where a waiter takes your order, brings your food to the table, and checks in on you during the meal. The menu usually has starters, mains, and desserts. The setting is comfortable but not overly formal. Most of the restaurants you visit on a regular basis fall into this category, popular examples include Placebo, Sycamore by One basket.

FOOD REVIEW: INSIDE MY JOLLOF REPUBLIC ORDER FROM GLOVO

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



There is level of expectation that comes with ordering jollof rice from a place called Jollof Republic. After spotting the brand on Glovo, curiosity quickly took over and an order was placed without much hesitation.

The meal for the evening was their asun jollof priced at N7,200, alongside an extra serving of jollof rice which cost N1,400 for two scoops, and five pieces of plantain for N700. In today's economy, the plantain portion especially felt like fair value.

One thing Jollof Republic got right immediately was delivery temperature. The food arrived properly hot, fresh and ready to eat, which already set a positive tone for the experience.

The asun jollof, however, was slightly underwhelming in one area. While the dish was generously packed with vegetables

and bay leaves, the actual asun portion felt limited, with only about five noticeable pieces of meat in the serving. For a dish built around asun, a little more balance would have gone a long way.

The jollof rice itself was the stronger part of the meal. Rather than the smoky, firewood-style party jollof many Lagos food lovers chase, this leaned more towards a well-prepared homemade version. Rich, comforting and neatly cooked without trying too hard to impress.

Overall, it felt like one of those meals that may not completely blow you away, but you still enjoy while eating. The jollof was solid, the portions were decent and aside from wishing there was more asun in the bowl, it was a pretty satisfying order.

EVENT INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS MOVE TO STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION, STANDARDS IN NIGERIA

CHISOM MICHAEL



Determined to strengthen capacity building, industry regulation and collaboration, the Association of Professional Party Organisers and Event Managers of Nigeria (APPOEMN) has pledged to work with the Lagos State government to advance professionalism within Nigeria.

According to the Association, its mission is to promote excellence, ethics, capacity building, and industry regulation among professional event planners, decorators, caterers, rental companies, and other stakeholders in the event ecosystem.

Speaking during a courtesy visit to Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Executive Governor of Lagos State,

Ayiri Oladunmoye, president of APPOEMN, said the visit is part of the ongoing initiatives aimed at elevating standards across the industry through training, advocacy, certification, and strategic partnerships.

Oladunmoye said the association is committed to creating a structured and globally competitive event industry that contributes significantly to employment generation, tourism, and economic development.

Babajide Sanwo-Olu, governor of Lagos State, lauded APPOEMN for its proactive efforts in organising and professionalising the event

industry, acknowledging the vital role event professionals play in driving economic activities and enhancing the social and cultural landscape of Lagos State.

Sanwo-Olu stressed the importance of maintaining high standards, prioritising safety, building competence, and ensuring continuous training for practitioners in the industry, adding that professionalism and adherence to best practices are essential for sustaining growth and earning public confidence.

The Governor also expressed the Lagos State Government's willingness to support initiatives that promote skills development, quality assurance, and industry-wide standards.

Ayiri also reaffirmed the association's dedication to working with government and relevant stakeholders to entrench professionalism, improve service delivery, and position Nigeria's event industry as a major contributor to national development.

In recognition of his visionary leadership and continued support for the creative and hospitality sectors, APPOEMN presented Governor Sanwo-Olu with an award of excellence

The courtesy visit marks another milestone in APPOEMN's advocacy efforts to secure greater recognition and institutional support for event professionals across Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the Association has concluded plans to train 1,000 waiters and hospitality service professionals in commemoration of International Waiters Day, scheduled for Monday, May 19, 2026.

This historic initiative, the first of its kind in Nigeria's event industry, is designed to equip waiters with world-class service skills, professional ethics, customer relations expertise, and practical knowledge required to excel in today's highly competitive hospitality and events sector.

According to the body, the training underscores its unwavering commitment to raising standards and strengthening the professional capacity of service personnel who play a vital role in the success of every event. Waiters are the frontline ambassadors of hospitality. Their professionalism, etiquette, and efficiency significantly influence guest satisfaction and the overall success of every event and hospitality operation.

Ayiri Oladunmoye, president of APPOEMN, said the initiative is more than a training programme; it is a movement to recognise, empower, and elevate the men and women whose dedication ensures seamless service at every successful event.

Oladunmoye said that by training 1,000 waiters, APPOEMN is setting a new benchmark for professionalism in Nigeria's event industry.

"We believe that when service professionals are equipped with the right knowledge and skills, the entire industry benefits"

"APPOEMN remains committed to advocacy, education, and industry development, with programmes that create sustainable opportunities and improve service standards nationwide," she said.

She further said that APPOEMN is investing in the future of the industry by providing structured, practical, and impactful training that will improve service delivery and professionalism, enhance employability and earning potential, build confidence and promote global best practices in the event and hospitality industry.

On her part, Adeola Sessi-Traore, Education Director of APPOEMN, said that waiters play a vital role in shaping guest experience, yet their impact is often overlooked.

This initiative focuses on building their capacity, enhancing service delivery, and creating pathways for growth within the hospitality and event industry, ensuring they are recognised as professionals, not just support staff.

BUNMI ADEDAYO FOUNDATION UNVEILS N1BN PLAN TO REACH 1M STUDENTS



...reached 550,000 learners, trained 7,800 teachers across 4 states since 2016

The Bunmi Adedayo Foundation (BAF), a Nigerian non-profit organisation focused on public education reform, on May 6 marked its 10th anniversary with a landmark Education Futures Conference held at Shell Hall, Muson Centre, Lagos.

Under the theme, "Building Nigeria's Education Future: One Teacher, One School, One Child at a Time," the event convened educators, policymakers, development partners, and private-sector leaders to reflect on a decade of measurable impact and chart an ambitious course for the decade ahead.

Since its establishment in January 2016 in honour of Oluwabunmi Omotayo Adedayo, the Foundation has reached more than 550,000 learners, empowered over 7,800 teachers and supported more than 1,300 public primary schools across Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Rivers states.

Its interventions span teacher capacity development, school infrastructure renovation, digital learning through ICT hubs, and direct pupil support through scholarships and learning materials.

At the conference, Executive Director Odedeyi Oluwakemi unveiled the Foundation's next-decade strategy, anchored on six priorities: training 10,000 additional teachers and 500 school leaders; reaching at least one million more learners through accelerated foundational literacy and numeracy programmes; expanding digital learning access to 25,000 teachers; embedding education reforms into government policy; amplifying BAF's national advocacy voice; and raising more than N1 billion in diversified funding to sustain and scale operations.

"What began as a response to a critical gap has evolved into a movement of measurable impact," Oluwakemi said. "The first 10 years have proven what is possible. The next 10 years will define what is transformational."

The conference also spotlighted Nigeria's deepening education crisis.

An estimated 10.5 million primary school-age children, representing 25 per cent of that population, are currently out of school, a figure that rises to more than 20 million when secondary school-age youth are included. Among Nigerian children aged 7 to 14, 73 per cent lack basic reading



BAF's programmes are delivered through an integrated model combining teacher development, school infrastructure renovation and digital learning.

The Foundation's train-the-trainer approach, implemented through initiatives such as the Continuous In-Service Training Programme (CISTPST) and the Subject Enhancement Programme (SEP-M), has enabled its impact to cascade across schools and communities. Its two ICT centres in Surulere and Ketu have equipped more than 11,000 students with hands-on digital learning skills.

The Foundation's school transformation projects, including the full renovation of Yaba Model Nursery & Primary School and Nathan Nursery & Primary School, have been made possible through partnerships with organisations including Tastee Fried Chicken, the Adepoju Foundation and Phoenix Global Foundation.

skills, while 75 per cent lack basic numeracy skills. Only 44 per cent of primary school teachers hold the required qualifications, while teacher absenteeism in public schools averages 24 percent.

Chairman of the Foundation's Executive Council, Professor Oluwole Ayoola Atoyebi, commended the Foundation's decade of progress while acknowledging the scale of the challenge ahead.

"Many children still lack access to quality foundational learning, and many educators require continuous support to deliver effectively," he said.

"Education is not merely a social good; it is a strategic investment in the future of our nation."

BAF invited government agencies, development organisations, private-sector partners and individuals to support its next chapter through partnerships, funding and policy collaboration.

Bunmi Adedayo Foundation

The Bunmi Adedayo Foundation is a Lagos-based non-profit organisation dedicated to improving learning outcomes in Nigeria's public education system. Established in January 2016, BAF focuses on teacher quality, school infrastructure, and digital learning access. The Foundation operates across Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Rivers states and is guided by the principles of integrity, accountability and excellence.

INSIDE WAEC'S CRISIS: CAN DANGUT RESTORE TRUST IN NIGERIA'S EXAM BODY

CHARLES OGWO



For millions of Nigerian students, a West African Examinations Council (WAEC) certificate remains the gateway to higher education and employment.

However, in recent years, the examination body has found itself battling growing public distrust fueled by result delays, technical glitches, examination malpractice, and mounting concerns over its transition to computer-based testing.

As pressure mounts on the institution to protect its credibility and modernise its operations, all eyes are now on Amos Dangut, head of the national office at WAEC-Nigeria.

The question many stakeholders are asking is whether he can steer Nigeria's foremost examination body out of crisis and restore confidence in a system many believe is under strain.

Dangut, who assumed on October 2, 2023, has been battered with a complex set of service-delivery challenges that affect students, schools, parents, and the credibility of examinations in Nigeria, is seen navigating the murky waters strategically.

The battles in WAEC are rooted in infrastructure gaps, examination malpractice, administrative inefficiencies, digital transition problems, and public trust issues, among others.

Over the years, the council faced issues such as question paper leakages before examinations, collusion between candidates and invigilators, and the use of mobile devices for cheating, among others.

Recently, the staff union at WAEC embarked on a three-day protest over welfare concerns. Industry experts believe that poor welfare concerns in workplaces fuel corruptible tendencies among the staff.

In the face of these maladies, WAEC has made some remarkable achievements to add value to education in Nigeria.

Dangut recently revealed to stakeholders that the council has started implementing a digital certificate, which, according to him, is accessible worldwide for candidates from 1999 to date.

The council also have in place robust computer-based test services at the WAEC Testing and Training Centre, Ogba, and Aptitude Tests Department, Yaba-Lagos.

The head of Nigeria's national office explained that WAEC now has a digital examiners' marks system (Digital EMS), which provides a secure platform for the capturing of candidates' marks by examiners at the marking venues and real-time monitoring by the council.



West African Examinations Council

As part of its efforts to curb examination malpractice, WAEC has introduced an examination malpractice portal, waecinternational.org/complaints for candidates to make representations.

Besides, the council introduced chief examiners' reports, a post-examination document created by WAEC senior examiners that analyse candidates' performance, identifying their strengths, common weaknesses, and key mistakes in examination answers.

Meanwhile, Dangut has promised that the results of the computer-based West African Senior School Certificate Examination (CB-WASSCE) for School Candidates, 2026, will be released 45 days after the last paper, while certificates will be printed and issued to schools within 90 days.

Chris Nmeribe, a school owner in Lagos, said the council in the last three years has shown noticeable improvement in its services, especially in digitalisation and the timely release of results.

"The introduction of online result checking, digital certificates, and electronic verification has made access to WAEC services easier and more modern.

"In terms of exam conduct, the council has generally maintained organised examinations despite challenges such as insecurity and examination malpractice," he said.

However, Nmeribe noted that issues such as malpractice, delays in some centres, and occasional logistical problems still occur.

He maintained that though WAEC has improved the speed of result release, through improved digital infrastructure, helping candidates meet admission and employment deadlines.

Nevertheless, he said concerns remain about withheld results, slow complaint resolution, and limited communication with affected candidates.

"Many Nigerians would rate WAEC's recent performance as fairly good, with clear progress made but still room for improvement," he said.

For Susan Olarenwaju, civil servant, the problem in WAEC is the corrupt staff, the leadership should first fix the integrity of the personnel in the system.

"WAEC is not actually the problem, but the people working with the leadership. I think they need a reform from within," she said.

Ultimately, WAEC's crisis is bigger than one institution or one registrar. It reflects the wider challenges confronting Nigeria's education system, from weak infrastructure and digital inequality to declining public confidence in national institutions.

Yet the stakes for reform have never been higher. For millions of students, WAEC remains a critical pathway to academic and economic opportunity, making credibility and efficiency non-negotiable.

As Dangut pushes ahead with reforms aimed at strengthening examination security, improving service delivery, and modernising operations, the success of those efforts will depend not only on policy direction but also on sustained investment, transparency, and stakeholder trust. Whether WAEC emerges stronger or sinks deeper into public skepticism may ultimately shape the future of standardised testing in Nigeria for years to come.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE BOY CHILD 2026: THE WORLD PAUSES TO LISTEN TO HIM

CHISOM MICHAEL



Observed on 16 May, the day calls on families, governments and communities to see the boy child, not just his silence

Every year on 16 May, the world observes the International Day of the Boy Child. The day was founded in 2018 by Dr Jerome Teelucksingh, a sociology and history lecturer at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago. He did not create it to compete with girls' rights. He created it because he saw boys slipping through the cracks quietly and without anyone noticing.

There are nearly one billion boys under the age of 15 on this planet. They enter life with vibrant curiosity and emotional openness, full of

questions, full of wonder. Yet somewhere between childhood and adulthood, something shifts.

The questions stop. The wonder fades. And the boy who once spoke freely learns, instead, to go quiet. That silence is what this day exists to break.

A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight

When people speak of children at risk, the image that comes to mind is rarely a boy sitting alone at the back of a classroom, disengaged and falling behind. Yet the data tells a story that is difficult to ignore.

UNESCO reports that for every 100 women enrolled in tertiary education worldwide, only 88 men are enrolled. In 73 countries, fewer boys than girls are registered in upper-secondary schools. These are not small margins. They represent millions of boys who are leaving education early and taking their potential with them.

UNESCO data also showed that boys were more likely than girls to repeat primary grades in 130 out of 142 countries studied. Reading performance data from 57 countries showed 10-year-old boys consistently scoring below girls. The gap begins early, and without intervention, it widens.

Outside the classroom, the picture is no less sobering. Boys account for the majority of juvenile detention populations in most countries, face higher rates of school disciplinary action, and are significantly less likely to seek mental health support.

And when it comes to labour, the data is a cause for alarm. The ILO reported that in 2020, boys accounted for 97 million of the world's 160 million child labourers. These are not numbers on a page. These are boys who should be in classrooms, not on construction sites or in the streets at dawn, carrying loads no child should carry.

The Weight of “Be a Man”

One of the forces working hardest against the boy child is not poverty or conflict alone. It is an expectation. From the moment a boy is old enough to understand language, he is told directly or otherwise that strength means silence. That asking for help is a sign of weakness. That tears are something to be ashamed of.

The World Health Organisation identifies road traffic injuries as the leading cause of death among boys aged 15 to 19 globally. Adolescent boys are also less likely than girls to seek mental health support, a pattern linked to cultural norms around masculinity that discourage emotional vulnerability.

Traditional expectations that boys should be tough, stoic, and self-reliant can discourage them from expressing emotions or asking for help, which is linked in research to higher rates of risk-taking, substance use, and suicide among adolescent boys and young men.

This is what happens when a generation of boys is taught that their pain is inconvenient. They do not ask for help. They find other ways to cope, and not always safe ones.

What It Actually Takes

The question this day places before every society is simple but searching: what does it actually take for a boy to flourish? It takes schools that notice when he disengages. It takes fathers, or father figures, who show him that emotional honesty is not weakness but wisdom. It takes communities that stop treating boys as problems to be managed and start treating them as people to be invested in.

While some boys may have received the message that it is not acceptable to have feelings, they desperately need to know that they are loved and valued. That message has to come from somewhere. It has to come from someone. And it has to come before it is too late.

A Day That Says: We See You

The day recognises the importance of boys' well-being and the challenges they face, while also celebrating the contributions they bring to their communities and families. In the United Kingdom, the day is marked by the annual Festival of the Boy, launched by psychologist Lee Chambers in 2026.

The boy child does not need pity. He does not need the world to lower its standards for him. He needs what every human being needs: to be seen, supported, and given the chance to grow into who he was always meant to be.

This 16 May, the world owes him at least that much.

WHY COLLECTING AFRICAN ART IS BECOMING MORE PERSONAL

A new generation isn't building portfolios. They're building memory.

There is a particular kind of quiet that falls over a collector when they are standing in front of a work they know they will buy. Not the silence of calculation, not the mental arithmetic of resale margin or auction estimate, but something closer to recognition. The feeling of encountering, in pigment or bronze or woven fibre, something that already existed somewhere inside you.

That quiet is becoming more common. And it is changing the shape of African art collecting in ways that no market report fully captures. For decades, the dominant language around acquiring African art was borrowed from the language of institutional validation: provenance, auction records, and Western museum endorsement.

These things still matter. But increasingly, collectors are asking a different set of questions. Not "what will this be worth in ten years?" but "why does this work feel like mine?" In this digest, we discuss how that shift is unfolding—and what it means for artists, institutions, and the long arc of cultural memory across Africa and its diaspora.

For most of the twentieth century, even as the contemporary African art market matured—through growing auction results at Sotheby's and Christie's, through the data assembled in Art Basel and UBS's annual market reports—the vocabulary of collecting remained largely transactional. Value was determined externally: by which biennials an artist had participated in and by which Western institution had acquired their work first. The most "serious" collectors were often those least personally connected to the work they owned.

Something is different now. Walk the aisles of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair and you encounter a collector profile that did not dominate the room a decade ago: younger, often African or of African descent, buying work not because a gallerist told them it was a sound investment, but because a particular painting reminded them of their grandmother's cloth or because a sculpture captured something about a city they grew up in that no photograph ever had. At the Investec Cape Town Art



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.



A New Generation of Art Collectors at the small & Iconic Exhibition by Patrons MCAA



Archival Works at the Smithsonian National
Museum of African Art in DC

When collecting is motivated by a genuine emotional connection, its implications shift. Collectors tend to return to the same artists across years. They loan work to exhibitions, talk about it, and bring others into the conversation. Several artists showing at 1-54 and Cape Town have spoken, in interviews with Artsy and Apollo, about the relief of knowing a work has gone to someone who will live with it rather than warehouse it. That kind of sustained patronage—personal, committed, present—changes the nature of the transaction entirely. It also raises harder questions: Does emotional collecting still privilege wealth? Who actually has access to it? Can “personal collecting” become its own form of performance, a curated signal of identity rather than a genuine act of connection?

These tensions are real, and they don’t resolve cleanly. But what is visible across galleries, fairs, and studio visits is a gradual renegotiation of what it means to own art—a growing insistence that the most important thing a collection can do is not appreciate. It is remembered. The most enduring collections aren’t the ones that outlast their owners in auction records. They’re the ones that outlast them in meaning.



Keturah Ovio

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

3 KEY WAYS TO BUILD STRONG BRAND CULTURE IN YOUR COMPANY

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Huge marketing budgets are routinely dedicated to building a brand which resonates with customers, but the most cutting-edge companies also invest in building a brand culture which excites and inspires their employees.

Brand culture is what HR magazine calls that “unique blend of psychology, ideas, attitudes and beliefs informing brand behaviour, influencing brand experience, and ultimately shaping brand reputation” – basically, the story of your company and how your team members engage with and live it out in their daily work life. And it’s well- documented that a strong brand culture promises big returns for a business.

For one, it helps companies attract – and retain – the best talent while fostering better relationships between colleagues and teams. It also ensures that employees share the company’s vision – an authenticity which will in turn draw customers and secure buy-in. Meanwhile, research testifies to the fact that the most productive employees are happy ones, meaning that a consistent, positive work culture is also a key driver of productivity.

For many HR experts, fostering a strong brand culture is imperative to standing out in today’s hyper competitive business market. And to stay ahead of the pack, companies should put brand culture at the forefront of their HR strategy, as Bill Taylor, co-founder of US business innovation magazine Fast Company, says in a Harvard Business Review article:

“The new “power couple” inside the best companies, I concluded, was an iron-clad partnership between marketing leadership and HR leadership. Your brand is your culture, your culture is your brand.” Conversely, when employees aren’t offered a strong brand culture to connect with, and thus fail to represent the

ideals of their workplace, the company can face internal tensions, dissatisfied customers or risk tarnishing and blurring its own brand image.

Much like the efforts which go into external branding, a strong brand culture doesn’t arise out of nowhere. Here are three key ways to build up a strong brand culture in your workplace:

1. Define your brand culture

It’s impossible to build up a strong brand culture without first knowing what it is. Brand culture is effectively how a company’s employees live out the values and mission of its organisation. So the first crucial step is to identify the work culture and the values that you want your employees to embody, and to set that out into a clear vision.

Finding that answer will take some soul-searching and an analysis of factors such as your company’s competencies, your customer’s needs and what differentiates you from similar options available out there. Think about it, break it down, and set it out!

2. Flaunt it

Now that you have settled on your brand culture, it’s time to flaunt it. That process starts at the top – ensure that management embodies the values and mission you have set out for your company and exhibits the behaviour you expect from your employees.

Visual branding is another way to communicate your brand culture, both inside and out. That’s why a consistent visual brand identity is also critical to cultivating a strong brand culture, ensuring your team is clear about your brand’s identity and avoiding any confusion about old and new visions.

That's especially the case if redefining your brand culture has also prompted a visual rebrand – a process which often leaves companies with stacks of templates and old presentation decks sporting the old logo and visual elements.

Fortunately, exciting new tools can help by automating the time-consuming process of keeping your docs visually compliant. They help ensure that your internal content, from templates to presentation decks, is on-brand, integrating across multiple devices so that your business communications are on-brand and up to date.

Social media also makes it easier for your employees to actively share their thoughts and feelings about your brand. Encouraging your employees to be active on social media, in a professional context, will help boost your online brand awareness and promote your brand culture online. Arm your team with the tools to be active online ambassadors of your brand: supply them with relevant graphics and brand logos for content they might share, or place social sharing buttons on your website pages so that they can easily share on their personal profiles.

3. Encouragement fosters engagement

Achieving a strong brand culture is not a static thing: a workplace culture is dynamic and must be consistently cultivated within your organisation. Now that you've defined your brand culture, reflected it in your visual branding, and ensured that management conduct aligns with your vision – it's time to actively encourage your employees to engage with your brand culture.

One way is to recognise and reward your employees when they 'live the brand' both within the workplace and when interacting with clients and stakeholders. Meanwhile, employees are more likely to connect to your workplace culture if they understand why it matters to them – so make sure you take the time to explain why your brand culture is important and how it affects them.

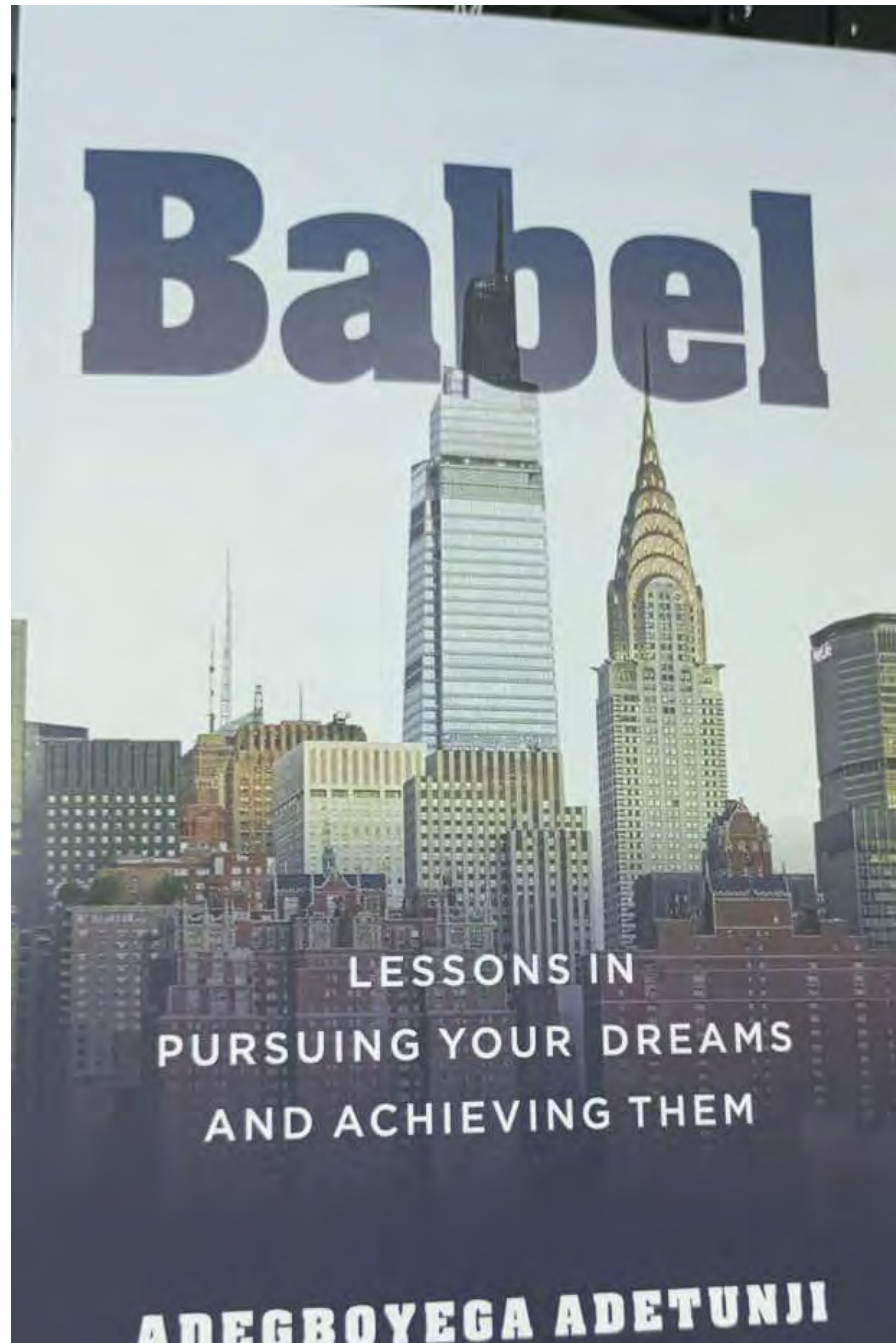
Last line

With a strong brand culture, your employees' experience should translate directly to your product or service, and to your customers' interactions with your team. By taking the time to invest in a clear brand culture, you'll be more likely to see growth and happier teams who embody the values of your company.



FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

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Where Confusion Meets Drive-A Review of
Adegboyega Adetunji's Babel

Title: Babel: Lessons in pursuing your
dreams and achieving them
Author: Adegboyega Adetunji
Year of Publication: 2024
Number of Pages: 59
Category: Self Help

BABEL: LESSONS IN PURSUING YOUR DREAMS AND ACHIEVING THEM

TITILADE OYEMADE

“Babel,” meaning confusion in Hebrew, sets the tone even before you open the book. It is a title that feels heavy and thought-provoking, immediately sparking curiosity about what Adegboyega Adetunji is trying to achieve and the direction he is taking the reader.

Then the subtitle shifts everything. It sounds more like a motivational guide than a purely spiritual text, and you find yourself asking, what exactly is this book about? Is it a Christian reflection, or is it meant to inspire action and personal growth? That question becomes the hook that draws you in.

The book is short and direct. The author wastes no time and pulls you straight into his ideas. There is no long introduction, you are immediately placed in the middle of his thoughts and perspectives.

At first, this can feel a bit confusing. Some sections may appear to question or reinterpret familiar biblical ideas, which may cause the reader to pause. However, as the book progresses, it becomes clearer that the author is not opposing the Bible. Instead, he is using it as a reference point to express his personal understanding of ambition, purpose, and human desire for progress. It invites the reader to think deeply, rather than simply agree or disagree.

What makes the book stand out is this balance. It sits between faith and motivation without forcing either side. It blends reflection with challenge, allowing the reader to think inwardly while also feeling pushed toward action.

The book is also interactive. In some sections, the author invites the reader to write down their own thoughts, making the experience more engaging and personal. He does not wait until the end to provoke reflection, he immediately challenges you to think about your life, direction,

and future. While some of the ideas may not feel entirely new, they serve as a strong reminder and push, especially for anyone who feels stuck or unmotivated.

Even if you do not agree with every interpretation, the message remains strong and consistent. It encourages reflection on ambition, purpose, and the human drive to build and become more.

By the end, you may still wonder whether the Tower of Babel was the best example to frame the message. It is a bold and unusual choice, and it naturally raises questions. But one thing is clear, Babel is not simply about confusion; it is about ambition, striving, and the complexity of human desire to rise higher.



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10 HIGHEST-PAID ATHLETES IN 2026: RONALDO TOPS GLOBAL RICH LIST

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Cristiano Ronaldo has once again emerged as the world's highest-paid athlete in 2026, with estimated annual earnings of \$260 million, driven by his lucrative contract in Saudi Arabia and a vast global endorsement empire.

Since joining Al Nassr, Ronaldo has earned around \$200 million annually in salary and bonuses, while endorsements with brands such as Nike and Herbalife contribute another \$60 million. His CR7 business empire, which includes hotels, fashion, fragrances and fitness brands, continues to expand globally.

Mexican boxing superstar Canelo Alvarez ranks second with estimated earnings of \$137 million. His income has been boosted by lucrative Saudi-backed fight deals, including a highly anticipated showdown against Terence Crawford.

Messi sits third on the list with annual earnings of \$130 million. The Inter Miami CF forward earns heavily through endorsement partnerships with Adidas and Apple, alongside his MLS salary and revenue-sharing agreements.

Here are the 10 highest-paid athletes in the world in 2026:

Cristiano Ronaldo (Football) — \$260 Million

The Portuguese icon remains the undisputed king of sports finance. Since extending his stay with Al-Nassr in Saudi Arabia, his salary and bonuses total a staggering \$200 million. His off-field empire, spanning Nike, Herbalife, and his own CR7 hotels, contributes an additional \$60 million.



Canelo Álvarez (Boxing) — \$137 Million

The Mexican superstar holds the second spot following a monumental four-fight deal with Saudi Arabia's Riyadh Season worth an estimated \$400 million. In 2026, his scheduled high-profile bouts provide a floor of over \$125 million in prize money alone, supplemented by his Hennessy and Under Armour partnerships.



Lionel Messi (Football) — \$135 Million

Messi's reign at Inter Miami CF has been a commercial masterstroke. While his base salary is \$60 million, his groundbreaking revenue-sharing deals with Apple TV and Adidas push his endorsement income to \$75 million. He also holds a significant equity stake in the Miami franchise.



**Juan Soto
(Baseball)**
— \$129.2 Million

The New York Mets slugger is the highest-paid baseball player in history. His massive \$765 million contract extension is heavily front-loaded for the 2026 season, delivering a salary and signing bonus total of \$122.2 million, with an additional \$7 million in domestic endorsements.



**LeBron James
(Basketball)**
— \$128.7 Million

Now 41 and still performing at an elite level for the Lakers, LeBron remains a marketing juggernaut. His \$52.6 million NBA salary is eclipsed by a massive \$80 million in off-court income from SpringHill Company, Fenway Sports Group, and his lifelong Nike partnership.



**Karim Benzema
(Football)**
— \$115 Million

The former Ballon d'Or winner continues to reap the rewards of his move to Saudi Arabia. Now representing Al-Hilal, Benzema's contract provides a tax-free salary of \$110 million, with minimal endorsement requirements making up the remainder.



**Stephen Curry
(Basketball)**
— \$105.4 Million

The Golden State Warriors legend is the NBA's highest "on-court" earner this year with a \$55.4 million salary. His \$50 million endorsement portfolio is anchored by his "Curry Brand" partnership with Under Armour, which includes significant equity.



Shohei Ohtani (Baseball)
— \$102.5 Million

Ohtani is a unique case in sports finance. Despite a heavily deferred Dodgers salary (earning just \$2.5 million in 2026 cash), he is the most marketable player in North America and Japan, pulling in a record \$100 million in annual endorsements.



Kevin Durant (Basketball)
— \$100.8 Million

Durant's earnings are almost perfectly balanced between his \$50.8 million contract with the Phoenix Suns and \$50 million in off-court revenue. His venture capital firm, 35V, and his lifetime deal with Nike ensure his spot in the \$100m club.



Jon Rahm (Golf)
— \$100.7 Million

The LIV Golf star rounds out the top 10. While his earnings fluctuate based on tournament performance, his guaranteed signing bonus payments from the Saudi-backed league and sponsorships with luxury brands like Rolex keep him ahead of F1's Lewis Hamilton.



THE BURIED TRUTH

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

Greg had been married to the love of his life, Victoria, for eight years. They were happy together, deeply in love and admired by everyone around them but there was one thing missing from their marriage. A child. Over the years, they had tried everything possible. Five miscarriages. Three failed IVF attempts. One stillbirth. And an ectopic pregnancy that nearly cost Victoria her life.

Each loss left another crack in her heart. The physical pain was terrible but the emotional and mental stress was even worse. Victoria slowly became a shadow of herself. She smiled less, prayed more and cried in secret. Greg stayed strong for her, but even he was exhausted from carrying hope that constantly slipped through their fingers.

After another painful miscarriage, Victoria finally decided she needed a break from everything. Her elder sister who lived in the UK invited her over for two weeks to rest and recover. It sounded like exactly what she needed, so she packed her bags and left. While she was away, she stayed in touch with Greg and her best friend, Mayen.

Mayen had been Victoria's closest friend for years. They shared everything together... secrets, recipes, tears and laughter. Their husbands were friends too and their families were deeply connected. Greg was even godfather to Mayen's little son.

One evening during a video call, Mayen mentioned that she had just finished making catfish pepper soup. Victoria immediately laughed and told her to take some over to Greg. It was normal between them. Whenever either woman cooked something special, they always shared it. So Mayen carried a flask of hot pepper soup to Greg's house with her son because Greg had specifically asked to see his godson.

It started to rain shortly after she arrived. At first, they expected it to stop quickly but it only became heavier. Since her son had already fallen asleep on the couch while watching cartoons, Mayen decided to wait until the rain eased. They video called Victoria together. She looked healthier and more relaxed than she had in months. Greg teased her about enjoying "oyinbo life" while Mayen laughed.

After the call ended, the two friends sat at the dining table eating catfish pepper soup while sharing a bottle of red wine. Mayen talked about her marriage troubles. Her husband had become distant. Their fights had become worse. Separation was hanging over their marriage like a dark cloud. Greg listened carefully and encouraged her like he always did. He had tried many times to advise both of them to seek counselling but neither of them ever listened.

Eventually, the rain stopped. Mayen woke her son, gathered her things and left. And life moved on. Victoria returned from the UK looking refreshed and happier. For a while, everything returned to normal. Then work became demanding after she received a promotion at her company. Suddenly everyone became busy. Weeks turned into months. The once inseparable friends barely saw each other physically anymore. There was always a meeting, a business trip, school activities or some emergency. Every planned outing was cancelled or postponed. They still kept in touch through phone calls and video chats but it no longer felt the same.

Then one day, after several cancelled visits, Victoria insisted that nothing would stop her from visiting her godson on his birthday.

"No excuses this time," she warned Mayen over the phone. When she finally arrived at Mayen's house that weekend, she immediately noticed something strange. Mayen looked fuller. And no matter how much she tried to hide it beneath her loose clothes, Victoria could see it clearly. Mayen was pregnant.

Victoria screamed in shock before bursting into laughter. "You wicked woman!" she shouted playfully. "You hid this from me?"

Mayen looked guilty. She explained that she had wanted to tell her earlier but kept postponing it because she feared Victoria might feel hurt, considering all she had been through. But Victoria surprised her. Instead of sadness, she hugged her tightly and cried tears of joy. Pregnancy had always been a painful experience for Victoria but it never stopped her from celebrating other women.

Besides, Mayen's pregnancy felt like good news in more ways than one. Her marriage had been struggling badly, and since she and her husband had been estranged for some time, Victoria believed this baby meant things were finally getting better between them. There was hope again.

Then, not long after Mayen became pregnant, something unbelievable happened. Victoria got pregnant too. At first, she refused to believe it. She was terrified. Every positive pregnancy test now came with fear instead of excitement. But this pregnancy was different. Weeks passed. Then months. And somehow, the baby kept growing. Victoria became deeply attached to the strange belief that Mayen's pregnancy had spiritually strengthened hers. She believed their journeys were somehow connected. People laughed whenever she said it, but she did not care.

During this period, Mayen's husband was hardly ever around. According to her, his new job constantly kept him in Kenya. At first, nobody questioned it. But as time passed, Mayen began complaining more and more about his absence. She said the distance was affecting their marriage again. She sounded lonely, emotionally exhausted and withdrawn. Whenever Victoria asked if things were truly okay, Mayen would force a smile and say she was fine.

Then the babies arrived. Two beautiful baby girls born only months apart. The joy was indescribable. After years of pain, Victoria finally became a mother. She cried endlessly the first night she held her daughter. Greg could barely contain his happiness. He treated the child like a miracle handed down directly from heaven.

For a while, life became beautiful again. The busy schedules disappeared. The women reunited properly and slowly rebuilt their friendship. Family visits resumed. Laughter returned. Everything finally seemed peaceful. Until Mayen's daughter became sick. At first it seemed minor. Then suddenly it became serious. Hospital visits increased. Specialists became involved. Different tests were carried out. Nobody understood what was wrong. The child kept getting weaker. Mayen barely slept anymore. Victoria stayed beside her as much as possible. But despite every effort, the little girl died.

The tragedy shattered everyone. Mayen became empty overnight. Victoria mourned the child deeply too. Watching her best friend bury her daughter reopened old wounds she thought had healed. People filled

the house daily with condolences and prayers, yet the grief remained unbearable. Then, unexpectedly, Mayen's husband returned. Not to mourn. Not to comfort his wife. But to gloat. He returned almost triumphantly. And what he revealed stunned everyone.

According to him, the dead child was never his. He claimed he had known from the beginning because he and Mayen had not been intimate for years before the pregnancy happened. He explained that the reason he left for Kenya was not work. He had left deliberately. As a strong believer in the customs and traditions of his people, he claimed that remaining under the same roof with an adulterous wife would cost him his own life. According to his beliefs, leaving the house would instead transfer the consequences to the child born from the affair. And now the child was dead. Exactly as the elders had warned him. The house became filled with whispers. Questions emerged about the child's paternity but Mayen refused to speak. She only wanted to grieve quietly. Her husband refused to let it go. He threatened her publicly, insisting she must confess who fathered the child or she too would die.

At first, Mayen ignored him. Then strange illnesses began. Unexplained pain. Mysterious collapses. Medical treatments stopped working. Terrified, she began seeking spiritual help from different clerics and prayer houses. And everywhere she went, the message remained the same. _Confess Or Die._

The warnings shook her deeply because they sounded too similar to her husband's threats. But confessing would destroy lives. Her fear eventually defeated her silence. One evening, with both families gathered in the sitting room, Mayen finally spoke. And the world around them changed forever. Greg was the father of her dead daughter. Silence swallowed the room. Victoria stared at her friend in complete disbelief. Greg looked at her with so much disgust. Then anger exploded from him instantly. He lunged toward Mayen so violently that people had to restrain him.

Mayen, trembling uncontrollably, reminded him about the night she brought catfish pepper soup to his house while Victoria was abroad. The wine. The conversation. The rain. She explained that Greg became extremely drunk that night. Their discussion became inappropriate and eventually turned sexual.

Afterwards, Greg passed out completely. She dressed him back up herself, carried her son and left quietly. When she later discovered she was pregnant, she decided to keep the truth hidden forever because she knew it was a terrible mistake that should never have happened. Victoria broke down while Greg kept shouting that it was impossible. He swore he could not remember anything after drinking.

Then Mayen's husband suddenly burst into laughter. Loud. Cruel. Mocking. "She raped you," he said coldly to Greg. "That is exactly what she did."

The room fell silent but he did not stop there. He seized the opportunity to destroy Mayen completely. He painted her as a promiscuous woman and claimed he had always known she was unfaithful. Nobody knew whether to believe him or not.

The confusion became unbearable. Greg sat frozen like a man whose entire reality had collapsed. Victoria could not even look at either of them anymore. And Mayen... Mayen simply sat there crying. Not defending herself. Not begging. Just crying.

Victoria was torn apart. Greg insisted he could not remember sleeping with Mayen. He swore he would never knowingly betray his wife.

At the same time, Victoria knew Mayen's husband was a bitter man who wanted to destroy his wife completely. He was manipulating the situation. His accusations sounded malicious and exaggerated yet Mayen was not entirely innocent either.

Victoria was torn apart. Greg insisted he could not remember sleeping with Mayen. He swore he would never knowingly betray his wife. But Mayen's confession was too detailed to ignore. At the same time, Victoria knew Mayen's husband was a bitter man who wanted to destroy his wife completely. He was manipulating the situation. His accusations sounded malicious and exaggerated, yet Mayen was not entirely innocent either. She had hidden the truth all this while. Her silence hurt deeply.

Greg's confusion also looked real. Victoria no longer knew who was lying, who was protecting themselves or who truly deserved forgiveness. For days, she stayed locked in her thoughts while both Greg and Mayen pleaded with her separately.

Then one evening, Victoria made her decision. She packed a small bag, carried her daughter and headed for the door. Greg stopped her, his voice shaking. "So that's it? You're leaving?"

Victoria looked at him with tears in her eyes. "No," she said softly. "I'm walking away until I know who you both really are." Then she left.



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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

MAN ON FIRE SERIES (2026)

If you are like me who enjoys action packed movies, then you would definitely enjoy this brand-new action-packed movie. I was super excited to check it out the same weekend it was released. John Creasy during his last mission watched all his team members get shot and killed, this affected his mental health so badly that he withdrew from the force. Years later an old friend hires him to work with him to investigate a terrorist plot in Brazil, what was supposed to be a very easy mission in and out of Brazil, took a different turn, when John's friend and his family except his daughter were murdered in what was known as the biggest building collapse. John decided that he would not leave Brazil until every single perpetrator is brought to book. The 7Ep - 44m each action, crime, thriller, based on a book series was created by Kyle Killen, they featured actors like Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Billie Boulet, Alice Braga, Scoot McNairy, Bobby Cannavale, Thomas Aquino, Pamela Germano, Ismael Caneppele, Raul Cebal and many more.



Although this movie was from wayback 2019, this movie was popping up on the trending timeline. I was super excited to watch 2 action packed movies back-to-back. If you enjoy war movies like "Fury", then The King would be worth every second of your time. Hal was more like a rebel, he didn't agree with some of the policies made by his father, so he left the palace and stayed with the people. When his father fell ill, he was summoned and had to help his younger brother go to war, because he wasn't as strong as he was. After a few issues Hal was elected as Young Henry V, but just at the beginning of his reign, he gets a threat as an invitation to come for war. The king must decide if he wants to go to war or not, the strategy to embark on to help them win the battle. You will need to check out the movie to discover if they won the war or not. The 140m military films, drama, period pieces, based on real life was directed by David Michôd, they featured actors like Timothée Chalamet, Joe Edgerton, Robert Pattinson, Ben Mendelsohn, Sean Harris, Tom Glynn-Carney, Lily-Rose Depp and many more.



ROOM MATES (2020)

Two friends were having issues in school as roommates. They could not just agree on things anymore and one started throwing things off the window. To settle these two ladies, Dr. Shilling decided to tell them a story of two ladies during her school days who started off as best friends but became enemies. She decided to take them down memory lane with the hope that they will learn and reconcile as friends. TO the flashback story, Devon was a very shy teenager on getting to school she met a new friend Celeste, and they kicked off as good friends and roommates. Devon found it difficult to make friends but was glad she had found a friend in Celeste, or so she thought, a few weeks down the line they begin to disagree and what was supposed to be a strong friendship quickly transcended into war and enmity. You will need to check out this movie to see how anger and resentment destroyed their friendship and lives. The 107m comedy teen film was directed by Chandler Levack, they featured actors like Sadle Sandler, Chloe East, Billy Bryk, Sarah Sharman, Nathan Lyonne, Nick Kroll, Adrian Longford, Carole Kane, Janeane Garofalo, Storm Reid and many more.



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

What is your next one hour for? Please sit back and do nothing - just breath. Take it, it's free.

.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Every moment, no matter what the situation presents requires a touch of agape love. Don't miss out!

.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Never say it's over. It's just sunrise; hope is heret

.....WhispersbyTEN

4

Don't allow your yearning out weigh your earnings.

E get why!

.....WhispersbyTEN